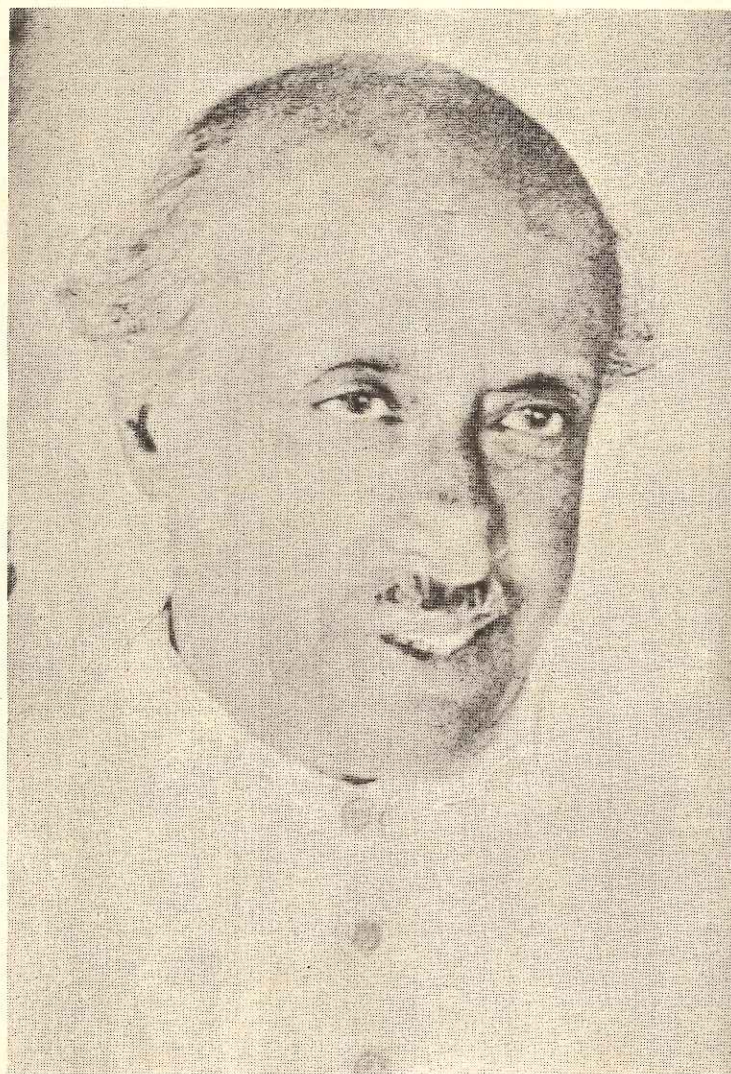


GANDHIGRAM
THOUGHTS & TALKS OF G. RAMACHANDRAN



Sri G. Ramachandran at Sixty

GANDHIGRAM
THOUGHTS AND TALKS
OF
G. RAMACHANDRAN

Edited by K. C. R. RAJA

PUBLISHED BY GANDHIGRAM

ON THE 60th BIRTHDAY OF
SHRI G. RAMACHANDRAN

8th OCTOBER 1964

12118

EDITORIAL BOARD

Chairman : G. Shridharan, B.A., B.L.

R. Srinivasan, M.A.

V. Krishnamurthy, M.A.

R. Subramaniam, M.A., M.LITT.

V. M. Chandrasekharan

M. G. Gopalakrishnan, M.A.

V. Rengarajan, M.A.

K. Damodaran, M.C.D.

Art Editor : S. A. Kanniah

Editor K. C. R. Raja



CONTENTS

	PAGE
● Foreword by Dr. Zakir Hussain	
● Editor's Note	
PART ONE : MY TRIBUTES	
● A Tribute to Tagore	... 1
● A Great Death	... 10
● To Mary and George : Pioneers of FFT	... 14
● Bapu and Bapa	... 20
● The Man Kumarappa	... 25
● Nehru is not dead	... 34
● The Man Rajaji	... 40
● Sri Sivagnana Gramani	... 46
● The Ba in my Heart	... 48
PART TWO : RECALLING TAGORE AND GANDHI	
● Tagore; The Background	... 55
● Tagore; His Philosophy	... 73
● Tagore; His Poetry	... 87
● My First Darshan of Gandhi	... 116
● A Morning with Gandhi	... 121
● Gandhi and the Indian Cultural Tradition	... 135
● Gandhi's Creative Revolution	... 164

	PAGE
● Vision of a New Society	... 189
● Tagore and Gandhi	... 201

PART THREE : THE CHALLENGE OF PEACE

● The Citizen's Duty in the Nuclear Crisis	... 214
● The Grass-Roots of World Peace	... 220
● Goa : A Portent and a Challenge	... 228
● Gandhi and the Deepening World Crisis	... 234
● President Radhakrishnan's Call to the World	... 239
● The Agonised Cry of Man	... 243
● A Venture of Faith	... 246
● Not Good Enough	... 250
● The Delhi-Peking Friendship March	... 253
● Face to Face with Khrushchev	... 257
● Nineteen Sixty Four	... 264

PART FOUR : JUST A MOSAIC

● Gandhi; A Prophecy	... 268
● Maharshi Vinoba and the Dacoits	... 272
● The Slow Rising Tide of Sarvodaya	... 277
● Gramdan and the Community Development Programme	... 283
● Revolution in Khadi Production	... 290
● The Gandhian Approach to Rural Welfare	... 295
● Rural Universities	... 310
● The Gandhian Contribution to Education	... 318
● From Santiniketan to Sabarmati	... 330
● Gandhi and Tagore : Educational Revolutionaries	... 339
● Whither India ?	... 346
● Subramanya Bharathi	... 351

FOREWORD

I have still a vivid recollection of G. Ramachandran as he was in 1926, of his keen eye, his forthright manner, his impassioned speech. He had been for some years at Visva-bharati and then at the Sabarmati Ashram, and everything about him revealed the influence of Gurudev and Gandhiji. He has matured since then, under the stresses of an active public life, but his eye is as keen, his manner as forthright and his speech as impassioned as it was when he first came to the Jamia in 1926 to teach spinning and philosophy and see if there was anything he could learn from us.

Ramachandran has been interested in many things, and now his Gandhigram comprehends many types of educational and constructive activities. But I believe Khadi and Village Industries and Basic Education have been his major fields of work. I agree wholeheartedly with the underlying principles of Gandhiji's constructive programme, but the ardour, intellectual as well as emotional,

with which Ramachandran believes in this programme and in Basic Education is something I can envy but never emulate. His love for the village is so intense, his dedication to the service of the rural people so complete! He is, beyond doubt, one of Gandhiji's heirs and successors, and he has added to this heritage the eloquence of Gurudev as will be evident from the publication.

May age add to his vigour and time continue to yield harvests worthy of his endeavour!

New Delhi
Sep. 1, 1964

ZAKIR HUSSAIN
Vice-President of India

EDITOR'S NOTE

The matter collected in this volume covers a wide variety of items which were found scattered in journals, tape-records, notes and other sources. "A Morning with Gandhiji" by the late Shri Mahadev Desai appeared originally in "Young India" edited by Mahatma Gandhi in two issues of November 1924, while the article entitled "Nehru is not dead" appeared in the "Gandhi Marg" of July 1964. From 1924 to 1964 is a long journey of 40 years. What we have collected here is only a fraction of the materials available in this period and we hope to bring out one or two volumes of more lectures and writings of Shri G. Ramachandran sometime later. But, even as it is, it took a lot of time to get hold of the matter included in this volume and then it became a race with time to bring out this publication by the 8th of October 1964, the date on which Shri G. Ramachandran completed his 60th year.

Shri Ramachandran was particular that mention must be made in this Editor's Note that his lectures were delivered without any written text and entirely from memory and that therefore it was likely that one

might find in a few places some chronological and even factual discrepancies. It should also be remembered that the lectures were delivered to a heterogeneous assembly consisting of school boys and girls, college students, lecturers and teachers and a sprinkling of visitors from villages around Gandhigram. Shri Ramachandran has found out his own way of speaking to such an audience and it is no doubt a very difficult art. I would therefore request the readers to put up with slight errors in sequence and references to events mentioned in these lectures.

What I would wish to stress specially in this Note is that we have here a study of the deep experiences of a person who spoke from life and not merely from books. Here are leaves from the chronicle of his own life. It is the mental mosaic of a man who received a call even when he was a young student and then fearlessly responded to that call in all the changing vicissitudes of his own life and the life of India. Some one said recently of Shri Ramachandran that he has never yet been discovered walking on any beaten track. He left college in the non-cooperation movement under Gandhiji in 1921. From Travancore he went to Bengal to join the Visva-bharati in Santiniketan. After graduation he went from the Visva-bharati to the Satyagraha Ashram in Sabar-mati and Gandhiji took him in hand and gave him hard training for an year and then launched him on the journey of his work of the last forty years in the troubled waters of India, struggling for freedom and a new way of life. During these years Shri Ramachandran worked in the All-India Spinners' Association, the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the Hindustani Talimi Sangh and in the All-India Village Industries Association under Gandhiji. In fact it

was Gandhiji's idea that Shri Ramachandran should become familiar with as many items of work of the Constructive Programme as possible. He also took his full share in the struggle for freedom going to prison seven times. He has also occupied places of high responsibility as a Minister in the first Thanu Pillai Cabinet in Travancore, as Educational Adviser to the Rajaji Government in Madras and Chairman of the Basic Education Assessment Committee of the Government of India. He was for nearly four years the Secretary of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and he is now the Secretary of the Gandhi Peace Foundation and the Editor of the "Gandhi Marg". In 1955 he was in Europe and in America lecturing at several Universities on Gandhiji and his work and teachings. In 1962 he went to Russia along with Shri U. N. Dhebar to press on Mr. Khrushchev, the Russian Prime Minister, the urgent need to stop all tests of nuclear devices which were poisoning the air mankind was breathing. But Shri Ramachandran has himself repeatedly said that his happiest and proudest role has been as the Director of Gandhigram. We have thus before us the life of a man who has made a place for himself outside office and in the service of the people. It is a life replete with adventurous living and we have it from Shri Ramachandran himself that he has thoroughly enjoyed every shade and tone of it. Perhaps, this is the best commentary on his life that he himself found his happiness and fulfilment in it. These thoughts and lectures give us a glimpse of that life and must be of some inspiration to the youth of our country.

It was my happy privilege to have been entrusted with the task of editing this volume. I am deeply indebted to the Chairman and members of the Editorial Board for

their generous confidence and help at every stage in my work. I should also like to record my gratitude to Messrs. Lalitha Printers Private Limited, but for whose arduous labour this book could not have been brought out in such short time. A number of colleagues and friends have been of great help. Sri V. Ramanujam transcribed the talks from the tape-records and Sri N. Srinivasan prepared the type-scripts and later helped me in going through the proofs. The two artists of Gandhigram, Sri S. P. Srinivasan and Sri S. A. Kanniah were responsible for the cover design and the general get-up of the book. To these friends I express my gratitude. I should also like to thank the Navjivan Trust, the "Gandhi Marg" and the Visva-bharati Quarterly, for permission to reproduce articles which originally appeared in them. And my thanks are due to the Secretary, Gandhi Smarak Sangrahalaya, Madurai, who, in both his official and personal capacities, did everything possible to help us expedite the work and make our stay in Madurai comfortable.

THE EDITOR

PART ONE

MY TRIBUTES



A TRIBUTE TO TAGORE

Memories, priceless beyond all words, illumine my mind. In this moment', not of sorrow or pain, but of wonder and perplexity, these memories come upon me and envelop me like streams of light. I will not shed a tear. I will not give a sigh. That today will be unforgivable profanity. It is not sighs and tears that the great passing away of Gurudev calls forth from us. That is the common thing every common death calls for. But Gurudev was not a common man. He did not live a common life. He has not died a common death. In the *Gitanjali*, several years ago when life was yet young with him, he had asked himself, "What will you offer to Death when Death comes and knocks at your door?" He had answered with marvellous and noble vision. "Oh! I will place before him the full and overflowing vessel of my life. I will never let him go with empty hands." And now in his eighty-first year with the whole world as his witness he has literally kept his word to Death, that tremendous and inescapable fulfilment of all truly great lives. To most, death is only an end.

¹ This article was written upon the passing away of Rabindranath Tagore, way back in 1941, under the title, "A student's Memories of Gurudev", when the author was in gaol for participation in the *satyagraha* movement under Gandhi.

It is a mere cutting-off. It is darkness after light. But to those like Rabindranath death is nothing but a resplendent fulfilment. For such, it has no sting whatever. Death comes to them like fruitioning after flowering. The flowering may be full of enchanting scents and exquisite colourings, but in fruitioning is the more precious and real substance of fulfilment. Gurudev has died only to be deathless. They say he is dead. I say he cannot die. Death as we ordinarily understand it stands defeated. Death as he understood it, as the friend and the fulfilment of life, stands proud and thrilled at the gift of immortality laid in its hands. "I will place before Death the full vessel of my life." He has now done that. Not a small, little, penurious, undeveloped or unrealised life has he now placed in the hands of death. But a mighty, indescribably rich, varied and noble, fully-grown, all-round, perfectly fulfilled and radiant life has he placed before Death. Is it any wonder then that Death itself stands awestruck and humbled before the burden of blazing light it must now carry for ever in its hands. Therefore let us not weep or sorrow as for a common death. Let us rather rejoice. Let us be thankful that such a man lived so greatly in our time and has died in such a magnificent fulfilment. Let us understand at last what a fraud is the common concept of death and its terrors. Let us burn to ashes the earthly body from which the breath has fled, and scatter the ashes to the sun and the winds, knowing that each atom of it will leap up again like flaming torches, like great beams of deathless light. Let us then ignore death. Let us remember Gurudev's vast and incalculable legacies of dreams and thoughts and the countless forms of beauty he created in word and song, and the innumerable achievements in which he will live for ever. Not in some heaven or other unknown and unknowable place will he live

for ever. He will live deathlessly here and in this great world, under this vast sky which he loved in all its moods and tones, in the midst of this endless and radiant Nature which he read like an open book, and above all in the minds of the millions of men and women who owed so much of their joy and their understanding to him, and in the minds of their children and children's children.

Every great man has his own special background which is partly historical and partly his own creation. It is against such a special background alone that we can see him at his best and greatest. For Rabindranath also there was such a vital background. That was Santiniketan. It was there that he blossomed to his fullness. It was there that his poems and songs rose in an increasing symphony of immortal beauty and immortal truth. It was there that he wove the patterns of his dynamic philosophy of the unity of mankind, cutting across every obstacle of race, nation, creed and caste. It was there that his vision of the *Visva-bharati* was born and nurtured. It is there that his ashes will now rest in peace for ever.

There is in Santiniketan a *Sal*-avenue. It is to that avenue that my mind runs today. There, from the eastern end comes a royal figure. Not in any kingly robe or in any external decoration does the kingliness lie. It is there in his tall and majestic figure. Some Roman or Mughal emperor might have had such a figure. He approaches in simple flowing robes which cover him from head to foot. His hair is snow-white, and yet his gait is unbent and his walking firm. His hands are held behind his back. Even from the distance his broad brow rises like a great marble dome crowned by the Himalayan snows of his hair over his great shining eyes and his nobly moulded Aryan nose. There is such serenity flowing from

him, such peace and self-possession, that you ask, "Is it some Maharshi of old, re-risen, who is approaching?" And as he approaches slowly, you see a smile lighting up his whole face, his eyes glowing like stars. Boys and girls of Santiniketan greet him with bowed heads and folded hands. He has a smile and a kind word for everybody. But the little children do not stand away in reverence like the elders. They run to him shouting, "Gurudev!" and cluster round him in utter childlike irreverence. With the children he will crack joke after joke. There arise peals of laughter from among them in which his voice is that of the most glad-hearted of children. They lay hands on his robes and pull him till he consents to sit somewhere with them in the shade of some spreading tree. They ask him questions. He gives them answers which make them break into fresh peals of laughter. Then suddenly there is silence, for he is telling them a story or singing them a song. It is a magic circle. It is the Eden of children. Elder students and other men and women of Santiniketan come and sit around, a little behind the children, and seeing them he will say laughingly, "Why are you here, you old people? This is our, the children's durbar." He was so much one of them!

Day after day he has come walking in serenity and in beauty down that *Sal*-avenue. Day after day we used to greet him there and touch his feet and feel ennobled. That *Sal*-avenue was so full of him in those great days. Those trees can never forget him. They will miss him.

It was once a rainy day. There are no class rooms or lecture halls worth the name in Santiniketan. The classes one morning started in passing sunshine. A class of little children was going on in the grove behind the library. The rain gently started without warning. The children did not

want to break up the class. The teacher was hesitating. Suddenly there was an uproarious voice coming from the side of the library. Rabindranath was approaching with an armful of umbrellas shouting, "An umbrella for a song, an umbrella for a song!" The children broke up the class at once. They ran to him joining in the fun. Gurudev had come to the library in the morning and seeing the rain start had gathered all the umbrellas in the library verandah without asking anybody's permission. And yet, it is this same glad-hearted and child-souled poet and prophet who has also given us the profoundest philosophy, and sorrowed deeply over the many tragedies of modern civilisation. This was twenty-one years ago.

Those were the first years after the Visva-bharati University was started at Santiniketan. Most of us, the first batch of students, were non-co-operators from various Government schools and colleges. Most of us were khadi-clad "Gandhi fanatics". I was the head of the gang in those days. Gurudev had written some vigorous criticism of the Non-co-operation programme in the pages of the *Modern Review*. We were much agitated over it. We were sure Gurudev was wrong and Gandhi right. We argued and shouted. Our classes became full of these wordy discussions. We made a nuisance of ourselves. The peace of Santiniketan was much disturbed by these controversies conducted with much heat. There was also of course a strong student group supporting Gurudev's views. One day I suddenly got a message from Gurudev. Professors had told him that I was leading the opposition. The message was to the effect that Gurudev was glad that plenty of discussions were going on, but that he preferred to have some light along with the heat of controversy, and that therefore he would advise a full debate, and that he also would attend the

debate gladly. I confess I felt a little nervous. In any other institution I would perhaps have been suspended or even dismissed. But our Guru was asking for further and fuller discussion! That was his way with students. A big debate was arranged. Every student in Santiniketan attended. A motion was tabled: "In the opinion of this house Mahatma Gandhi's program is the right one for India". I moved it before a crowded house. Our side let loose a flood of oratory. So did the other side. The late Sri Kali Mohan Ghosh thundered at us and defended the views of Gurudev with great vigour. Votes were taken. We won. Gurudev was all the time sitting apart, behind the students. He appeared to enjoy the debate very much. He joined in the applause for and against the motion whenever it broke forth from the students. After the votes were taken Gurudev asked for permission to speak. And he spoke. When he spoke it was all light and no heat. He prefaced his talk by saying that the debate had given him great joy. "This Santiniketan will fail if it fetters your minds or makes you fear ideas. Even if every one of you hold an absolutely different view from mine, even so Santiniketan will still be your home. It will shelter you. Today is the day of my victory because my students have said today freely and bravely that I am hopelessly in the wrong. I do not admit that I am wrong. But I want you to have the courage to say so, if that is your conviction. May Santiniketan always give you that freedom and courage!" He spoke for an hour. He pleaded against fanaticism. He did not admit that non-cooperation would succeed. It was too negative. It had possibilities in certain directions. But it was tending towards the same narrow nationalism which in Europe had made civilization into a mockery. It was impossible to reject entirely the progress of industrialism, which was like a force of nature. Industrialism

could and ought to be controlled but it cannot be erased. Mere asceticism will not lead to freedom. Freedom demanded clear understanding of objective realities and not only of moral values. Mahatma Gandhi was undoubtedly the greatest moral force in India, and hence the greater need to guard against his moral dictatorship.

Rightly did Mahatma Gandhi call Gurudev the "Great Sentinel". What nobler or more courageous Sentinel of the human spirit has India produced since Gautama Buddha, 2500 years ago! Gurudev's final words that night still ring in my ears. "Do not accept anything because I say so or because it is my view. Wrestle with these problems with your own power of reasoning. You must fearlessly reject my view if your reasoning does not agree with mine. That I am the head of this Institution gives me no right to enforce my ideas on you or to curtail your mental freedom. It is my duty in Santiniketan to guard the freedom of your mind as the most precious thing in the world. That is the mission of the Visva-bharati. Let us think for one moment of the thousands of gurus all the world over seeking to bend the mind and will of others to their own mind and will through fear and coercion of every kind, and let us think also with our heads bowed in love and reverence unutterable of this great Gurudev who taught us that the value of the freedom of the human mind was the greatest value under the sun. Never in all my life have I known a man with greater moral courage than Rabindranath. He had openly joined issues with Mahatma Gandhi on momentous occasions when the whole nation was being swept away by the magic of that super-man's resistless faith and matchless *karma yoga*. From his place as the "Great Sentinel" Rabindranath has protected the freedom of the mind in India against every attack.

There is one other memory which will also be of value. One of the last things I did before I left Visva-bharati was to read a paper entitled "Gandhi and Tagore". That paper contained the synthesis which I had built up in my own mind of Gandhi and Tagore after careful and prolonged study of both. The meeting took place in Uttarayana. Gurudev was also present. I think Dr. Formichi of the University of Rome, who was then in Santiniketan, presided. After I read my paper Dr. Formichi complimented me and turning to Gurudev asked, half jocularly and half seriously, "Now Gurudev, what have you to say on the paper?" Gurudev smiled and said, "Ramachandran has spoken of two persons, Gandhi and Tagore. Of the first I claim to know something, and of the second so little that I dare not speak about him. The Upanisads have said that he who knows himself knows everything. I know very well that I do not know everything. It follows therefore that I do not know myself." There was a round of laughter. Gurudev's sense of humour was something wonderful and his great voice would sometimes roll across Santiniketan in laughter of undiluted gladness and good humour.

I will close with the last conversation I had with him in his beautiful little mud-hut in Santiniketan, more beautiful than the palaces of kings, and yet simple like a hermitage. It was in 1939. I was on a visit to Santiniketan after several years. He asked me about my work. I told him that I had taken a plunge into politics, and gave him the story of the struggle for political freedom in Travancore. He said to me, "I always knew you could not keep away from these struggles. In a sense they are vital. In this new era in India our struggle is no longer for individual liberation only. It is also for social liberation, but these are not contradictory. One cannot exist

without the other. That is the secret we must now learn. In the struggle for collective freedom, however, let us do nothing which will kill individual freedom. I am a profound admirer of Soviet Russia, but I have a fear that individual freedom does not as yet blossom there. In your politics, never stoop to a lie. Never dishonour the man in us and never take a short cut to victory. Victory is nothing. But we must reach victory with honour, through honour. Put your trust in men, and not only in programmes. Our great leader in India, Mahatma Gandhi, is right there. We must win only through pure and honourable methods. There are two things you must carry with you everywhere as an old student of the Visva-bharati. Never give up your freedom of mind to friend or foe. Keep the windows of your mind open and free. Fanaticism is death to the human mind. And secondly, never think of any man, however little he might appear, as anything less than a man, a member of the great community of mankind, and never, never, as the member of a caste or a community or a nation or a race."

A GREAT DEATH

Only a great life can end in a great death. Dr. Rajendra Prasad's life was undoubtedly a great life and equally a great death. He had not lived a common life. During the last forty years his life was part of the life of India and of the high and mighty adventure of forging the freedom of India and making that freedom real and vital for the millions of our people. Not a chapter of the history of India in the last forty years can be written without one reference or other to the life and work of Rajen Babu, as he was affectionately and intimately known throughout the country. To millions of us, his death in the fullness of time and in the ripening of matchless honours came as the final fulfilment of a life replete with great and noble achievement. He had long suffered from a disease of the lungs and it was a miracle that he had not only lived with it so long but put in the hardest work a man can do at the same time. Even after ceasing to be the President of the Republic of India he had busied himself with many high calls of duty and he was on the eve of coming to New Delhi from Patna to attend a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Gandhi Peace Foundation when death struck at him swiftly and took him away. When the news of his

Thoughts and Talks

death came over the radio and in the newspapers a great sob of sorrow swept the nation. No death was more deeply mourned after the passing away of Mahatma Gandhi.

In the non-violent revolutions under Gandhi for the freedom of India, Rajen Babu had played a role nobler and fuller than that of any of his compeers. There were others equally valiant, self-sacrificing and devoted but none was gentler, nobler and more non-violent even amidst all the storms of political strife and controversy than he. During the last many decades he was loved and revered throughout India for his character, integrity, culture and high-souled humility. He was the same impeccable gentleman in the most stormy debate as in the bosom of his family and intimate friends. He never surrendered and yet he never quarrelled. In this he was closer to Gandhi than any other leader of India. He stood with Gandhi with unrivalled loyalty during all the years that great giant of India's history lived and led India step by step to freedom and the Republic. He identified himself with the dreams, the vision and the methods of work of Gandhi without reservation but he was no yes-man even to Gandhi. On historic occasions he differed from Gandhi but never broke away from him. On one occasion Gandhi was reported to have said that he was grateful to God that there was at least one colleague whom he could trust absolutely and whose loyalty always remained at the highest level. More than once, when the Indian National Congress went on the rocks, as at the time of Subhas Bose's resignation of Presidentship, no one had the moral courage to step into the breach and to face the crisis with malice towards none and charity for all, as Rajen Babu.

He was next only to Gandhi as a constructive worker. Bihar rose to great heights in constructive work under his leadership and when a terrible earthquake shook Bihar he organised relief work of great magnitude with consummate generalship. Thereafter his name became one to conjure with not only in Bihar but in every part of India. He never once wearied or stepped back in the battle for the freedom of India. As President of the Constituent Assembly he became the father of the Indian Constitution. When he was elected the first President of the first Republic of India the greatness of his name was inscribed for ever in the annals of our history.

As a human being he was unique. He showed that humility and dignity can be inseparable. Whether he was a third class railway passenger on a long journey or in the humble hut of a village family or on the platform of a great mass meeting or presiding over a session of the All-India Congress Committee or of the Indian Constituent Assembly, he was always the same gentle, soft-spoken, unhurried, impartial, careful, humble and high-minded gentleman in the highest sense of the word. He thus bore remarkable resemblance to the late Hakim Ajmal Khan whom Gandhi once described as the gentleman *par excellence* in the whole of the Indian National Congress at that time. But let there be no mistake about it, Rajen Babu was no weak or vacillating person. Underneath his gentleness and humility he had the strength of steel. He could be firm without being arrogant, intellectual without any pride and completely realistic without being opinionated. For two long terms he was the President of the Republic of India and no less a person than the Prime Minister himself has testified that Dr. Rajendra Prasad has left behind great traditions and sound conventions as President.

One of the most significant utterances of Dr. Rajendra Prasad in recent months was his ringing call to unilateral disarmament by any one of the great Powers at the Anti-Nuclear-Arms Convention held in New Delhi in the middle of June 1962. One leading American Pacifist at least had openly criticised Rajen Babu for supporting the present war effort in India against Chinese aggression after proclaiming the excellence of unilateral disarmament as the sovereign way to world peace. This critic is certainly entitled to his criticism and some of us might even go with him. But Rajen Babu was not a visionary who would weaken India's military defence without the nation being ready to face aggression non-violently. It was his thesis that the growing strength of non-violence must ultimately displace military defence and in the meantime he would be no party to China's invading India and enslaving the people once again as under British domination. This again is an instance of his idealism which would not shirk realism. Rajen Babu never spoke or wrote irresponsibly. That is the privilege only of reckless idealists and revolutionaries—and may their tribe increase! On them may depend the fate of the world.

And so, as we mourn the great death of a great life we, at the same time, rejoice and feel profoundly grateful that such a man as Rajen Babu was born in India and lived and worked in our country in our own time. This indeed was and is a priceless privilege. May we conclude by saying, "Rajen Babu is dead; long live Rajen Babu!".

TO MARY AND GEORGE : PIONEERS OF FFT

This was simply to be a brief introduction to the special issue of the F. F. T. Quarterly in honour of S. K. George, its first Editor. Though pulled down into a sick bed and ailing from a wasting disease, George is still luckily with us and holding on with indomitable courage and conviction to the ideals of the F. F. T. But suddenly fate has struck out and taken away Mary George from her husband who needed her every moment and from her own devoted work for those in suffering and need. And so, here is the introduction and the obituary in one.

S. K. George had deliberately chosen, nearly thirty years ago, to walk on a path which was sharp as a razor's edge. Early in life he took his M.A. and B.D. to become a minister of the Christian Church. This was towards the end of the nineteen twenties. That was the time when Mahatma Gandhi held the mind and the will of India striving to translate into actual practice some of the great teachings of the New Testament. He did that, not only in his own life but in the newly awakened lives of many millions of his countrymen

Thoughts and Talks

whom he had inspired and challenged to walk in the same direction. George saw suddenly in front of him a human person in flesh and in blood, who dared to live the Christian life and called on others effectively to do so and yet that person was a Hindu, who kept the Gita close to his soul as he did the Sermon on the Mount. This brought the thrill of a discovery to George. He saw at once and without any inner resistance what he had already intuitively understood, that the great pilgrims of the soul were to be found not only inside Christianity but in all the great religious traditions of the world. With unique courage and astonishing penetration he moved steadily towards the unordained ministry of truthful and unreserved Inter-Religious Fellowship. This took him into deeper and deeper waters, which might have drowned a lesser spiritual aspirant, but instead he floated and swam onward with inborn aptitude, integrity and determination. Gandhiji's teaching of "Sarva Dharma Samanathwa" (Equal reverence for all the great Religions of the World) came to him like the deep echo of the song in his own soul and he went to Gandhiji and offered his life to him to make this vital challenge of the spirit clearer to the people. He became quickly the purest and noblest exponent of the concept and practice of "Sarva Dharma Samanathwa" and as he did so he made the further discovery, as did Mary George in her own life later, that traditional Christianity became deeper, richer and fuller all the time. When the Fellowship of the Friends of Truth took its birth through the joint efforts of some of the prominent Quakers of the West and some of the co-workers of Gandhiji in India, it was inevitable that George was invited to become the first secretary of the new movement with Horace Alexander as the first Chairman. George also took over as the first Editor of the F.F.T. Quarterly which soon became under his brilliant

and truthful stewardship the significant mouthpiece of a new dimension in the spiritual ethos of innumerable people in different religions. The F.F.T. became a candle of light for all valiant seekers of the ultimate Truth of the absolute oneness of God and equally of the absolute oneness of the entire human family within the love and mercy of God. It shone like a gleam of hope in the midst of warring and competing religious doctrines, dogmas and creeds seeking to pull each other down and claiming exclusive seats in Heaven. It was a gentle light hurting nobody, pushing no one and its rays were like kindly hands stretched out in comradeship to every seeker walking along his or her own way. Understanding was its substance, freedom its motto, and reconciliation its Flag. Even so, now and then, the strong winds of fanaticism from the bodies of different religious systems have blown against it, but the little flickering flame never went out because this candle was self-feeding from within and not lighted from outside. Among those who nurtured the flame with his whole soul, none was more earnest or vigilant than S. K. George.

This was no easy thing for an Indian Christian to do. When S. K. George stepped out of the frontiers of his own Christian Faith to seek fellowship in truth and in spirit with devotees of God in other religious traditions he walked on a perilous path. Perhaps a Hindu or a Muslim or a Buddhist would have found it easier. George had only a few Christian companions as he walked on the chosen path and some of them faltered and dropped out on the way. But George himself never once weakened or hesitated. Among the very few who kept pace with him with steadfast loyalty was Mary George, his wife and comrade. In one sense it was even more difficult for Mary than for George. But she too had come close to

Gandhiji, perhaps even a little closer than George himself. Many years ago Gandhiji had entrusted this noble and selfless Christian woman with the work of the Kasturba Memorial Trust in Kerala and her name had become one to conjure with in social work in that part of India. After several years of strenuous work her health broke down some five years ago and she had to give up her work and retire for rest. This was a severe blow to her crusading spirit and she sought solace in taking personal interest in programmes of service in and around Trichur where she lived. When the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi started its own journal 'The Gandhi Marg' and George was invited to become its first Editor, she accompanied George to Bombay from where the journal was issued. She had also looked out for better medical aid and treatment in Bombay but after nearly two years, it was George's health which suffered even a more severe set-back than her own. A slow and wasting disease pulled down George and he had to give up the Editorship of 'Gandhi Marg' and husband and wife, both ill, came back to their home in Trichur once again. Seeing her husband prostrate and in bed, Mary galvanised herself to play the role of constant nurse and thus sublimated her own suffering in relieving George from his suffering, as far as it was humanly possible. George came to need her care and attention every moment because of his peculiar illness and Mary battled with her own life to sustain George. In this long struggle Mary's heart weakened without anybody suspecting it and when the diagnosis was made at last, it was too late and the valiant woman dropped down and passed away on the 19th of December 1959 in the American Mission Hospital at Vellore where she received the best of treatment and very affectionate care. And so, the nurse is no more but thank God the patient survives.

Mary's whole life was dedicated to the service of the poor and the disinherited. As the first agent of the Kasturba Memorial Trust in Kerala, she built up a score of excellent centres of rural social service in that area training workers for the same and guiding and helping them in their work later. She was also a member of the State Social Welfare Board in Kerala. Her own special training was in the education of children and the Balwadis (nursery schools) which she started and developed at her rural centres bear testimony to her special aptitude for the service of women and children. In all her work she made not the slightest distinction between man and man. Only a few months before she passed away, with her husband in his sick bed on the one side and her own health steadily giving way on the other, she plunged with reckless courage into organising relief work in Koorkanchery, on the border of Trichur, where smallpox had broken out with epidemic violence. Her own life was in constant peril of infection but she passed through this saga of mercy unscathed by the mercy of God. She did not, however, outlive this victory of the spirit over the flesh too long. Her physical heart had worn out and stopped dead altogether. She was buried at her own express wish inside the premises of her own Ashram of human service and as her coffin was lowered into the earth men and women of all religions mingled their tears in profound affection and gratitude. The beautiful little tomb which has been raised over her grave is already becoming a place of pilgrimage for increasing numbers of people of different religions. There is a plan to give permanent shape to the ideals and work of George and Mary by building a new institution dedicated to Inter-Religious Fellowship and non-discriminating human service in the premises where now lie the mortal remains of Mary George.

While one mourns the passing away of Mary, the humble servant of God and man, one's heart goes out even more poignantly to George who is now left without his nurse, wife and comrade as he goes steadily onwards, in spite of every physical infirmity, lonely and undefeated on his unbroken spiritual quest. It has now been decided that S. K. George will make his home in Gandhigram and will be looked after with deep affection and reverence by the Gandhigram Community. George himself and his only son Sukumar are happy about this decision taken with their consent and approval.

Mary George had very much wished to see the special number of the F.F.T. Quarterly in honour of her husband. But, alas, this was not to be. It is now published even more in her sacred memory. Readers will certainly take keen interest in going through the biographical sketch of George by Mary.

We cannot believe that Mary George is no more. We believe that her gentle and radiant spirit will continue to live in the deeper Universal Spirit of God. Innumerable men and women will treasure the memory of her life and work. It is in such a life as Mary's that we see death robbed of reality and the triumph of the spirit shining over the dark valley of extinction.

We conclude with our salutation of reverence and love to George the living and to Mary the immortal.

BAPU AND BAPA

This is a daring title. I am likely to be accused for being audacious. I shall plead guilty. Bapa will be angry at my comparing him with Bapu. Bapu himself might have had a good laugh. What I wish to do is nothing less and nothing more than to indulge in a study of comparison and contrast.

Bapa is a tall and gaunt figure. He has now grown very thin. Time was, however, when he was not only tall but big and in his long coat of khadi he then looked like a German Field-Marshal. Years ago, Bapu was on a tour of South India for the Harijan cause. Bapu and Bapa sat near each other in a big Master Buick which tore distance to shreds as it roared its way through district after district in Tamil Nad. Some of us were in another car behind and one of us was Miss Muriel Lester. At several sharp turns of the road we could see the car in front speeding onward with Bapu and Bapa in the back seat. It was then that Miss Lester once shook me and asked "Does not Thakkar Bapa look like some German Field-Marshal? Look at his height and his profile." Bapu was physically a pigmy in comparison. The contrast does not end there. Bapa has a grim look about him and those who do not know him will be awed by his big and stern presence. Bapu,

Thoughts and Talks

on the other hand, had the gift of smile and delicate refinement. Bapu always quietened and calmed visitors by his graciousness. Bapa is not much of a conversationalist, while Bapu was a splendid one. Even Bapa's jokes would be grim. Bapu could handle anyone, but Bapa knows none of the arts of even innocent diplomacy. Bapa never has any ambiguity, but Bapu could make a fellow stand on his head, when he chose, with perplexity. Bapu was many-sided, touching life at numerous points vividly and colourfully at the same time. Bapa is like a train moving on rails. His direction is single, his impulse unilateral. Bapa looks grim, but is very gentle and is even sentimental at heart. Bapu would look gracious and yet could keep his heart like rock when he wanted. Bapu understood, analysed and went forward by some supreme genius of instinct and intuition. Bapa is a glorious plodder, moving from point to point laboriously, industriously and with single-minded interest. Bapu knew when to be hard like rock and when to be gentle like a mother. Bapu had a mother's heart, but Bapa has always a father's heart. Bapa suspects intellect and cleverness and fights shy of them. Bapu caught up intellectuals and clever people and made them do his work. Once I gave Bapa a copy of a book I had written. I was then a Provincial Harijan Sevak Sangh Secretary under him. Bapa received the book, turned over the pages slowly and said, 'I am afraid when people become clever authors, they then run away from Harijan work and such other work.' Nothing mattered to him except this work. Bapa prefers steady, slow, reliable plodders to clever, able and otherwise excellent workers. Years later I gave Bapu another book I had written. He received it with his unflinching smile and said to me, 'Agtha Harrison told me about your book. She liked it very much. But this is in English. Is there a Tamil or

Malayalam version? You must ask Kaka to get a Hindi translation.' That was how Bapa and Bapu received books I had written. Bapa is very fond of coffee and you can melt his hardest moods with a real South-Indian-made cup of that beverage. Bapa has no fads in food. One remembers how strict Bapu was in his food. Bapa is not at all a politician. He hates politics. We know how Bapu was a great constructive genius and at the same time a most astonishingly clever politician. Bapu made politics his instrument for constructive work. Bapa takes up constructive work and runs away from politics as from the plague. Bapu was a great point of unity in life and work. Bapa has the steadfastness of direction and the glory of single-mindedness.

And yet how much they resemble each other. Both achieved pre-eminence in constructive work. Both have loved the Harijan cause better than any other. Both have been ascetics of a high order. Both have worked harder than any one else in the uplift of the poor and the downtrodden, hard in work and harder on the demands they have made on workers and yet most tender-hearted in their personal relations with workers. Both have been wonderful examples of loyalty to co-workers. Once, at a Harijan work centre in South India, when Bapa heard the story from the mouth of a humble worker, of how he was giving away two rupees a month to a Harijan girl in school out of his salary of Rs. 12 per month, I saw him weeping with utter abandon of simple admiration. He came home and wrote a love letter to that worker enclosing Rs. 20 as a personal gift. In the same way, how deeply Bapa could be moved by the spirit of service in humble worker. Bapu had a heart as big as the world in his little body. Bapa has as big a heart in his giant frame. Bapu was extremely shrewd

with his splendid and searching intellect. Bapa is equally shrewd with a keen horse sense in him. Neither could be deceived nor taken in easily by anyone. Both were more or less of the same age together and age did not weaken the iron will of either to serve unceasingly. Bapu was a tremendous worker and yet he could say of Bapa that he was one of the very few people in the world who could render a good account of every minute of his life to his Maker. Both have been great fighters for the poor and the oppressed. Both have been stubborn and unyielding in the work they have done for those in suffering. Both have believed with a burning faith in God and His justice. Bapu worked on a more universal canvas and pattern than Bapa. But the spirit in which they have worked has been the same, one of dedication to God in the service of man. Both have held up the noble ideals of conduct in regard to women. Both have always shown a high sense of chivalry and understanding of women. Bapa was chosen not only as the Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangh but also as the Secretary of the Kasturba National Memorial Trust. Both have contributed greatly to the awakening of women and in their service. Both have been *pucca* Baniyas in the care with which they have administered public funds. The truthfulness of both have already become legends in our country. Bapu did his work and God took him away. Bapa is still doing his work on the other side of eighty, under Providence. I remember Bapu once saying that Bapa and himself were so constituted that they must go on working till they drop down and die. Bapu was so made and he worked in such a way that he invited the tremendous and noble end which overtook him. Bapa, on the other hand, is so made and does his work in such a way that he will literally go on working till age and weakness make him drop down in harness. The end of both would be thus in the field

of action. Both have been great exemplars of *Karma Yoga* in this *Karma Bhumi* of ours. India can be proud of Bapa as it will be eternally proud of Bapu. Bapu has been called the Father of the Nation. Bapa can well be called the father of the socially downtrodden. 'Bapu' and 'Bapa' both mean father. How apt that is! Let all of us pray that Bapa, our greatest constructive worker after Bapu, the world's greatest constructive worker, may yet live to carry on the lamp of service for many more years to come! Bapa has really become the greatest Gandhian without being a Gandhian at all. Is not that a miracle?

THE MAN KUMARAPPA

You will know Kumarappa best if you meet him in Maganvadi. That is his proper setting. He created it and has lived in it for seventeen years now. It is a big place with many fine trees and cool avenues, on the edge of Wardha town. There are quite a number of buildings, big and small, but the house that Kumarappa built is the smallest of them all. It is a one-room hut, 20 feet long and 15 feet broad, with a low roof of country tiles. Inside, it is as tidy and pretty as can be. There is a little verandah which is the bed room in the rainy weather. The bed room in warm weather is the little open space between a wooden fence and the little hut, where there is a simple improvised wooden bedstead. The bath room, the dressing room, the drawing room and the dining room are all in the one room of which the hut consists. It is a truly multipurpose little room! The only furniture consists of another bedstead, a small table and a stool. There is a simple movable privy over a trench behind the hut. This is the famous Kumarappa hut. He is fonder and prouder of this hut than any Maharajah of his palace. He dislikes anybody intruding inside the little space enclosed by the wooden fence or the little hut. This is his *sanctum-sanctorum*, where he relaxes all

by himself. Dressed in his dhoti-jama and kurta he is an Indian in an Indian hut all right. But it is an Indian touched and moulded by some of the best things out of the West and it is a hut where everything is in order and in harmony. Two or three little framed pictures look sweet on the clean mud walls and the Indian brass lamp, with a wick burning in vegetable oil, adds a mystic touch to the little place. If the wind blows out the wick, he does not mind; he will light it again or just go to bed. If by chance you make the mistake of walking in, to have a word or two with him, he will get up and talk with you and move with you to the little wicket-gate, without your knowing it, and then quietly see you out. That is his famous technique of getting rid of visitors who intrude into his Robinson Crusoe habitation! He is thus a genuine individualist in his daily life. Some would call him a lonely wolf.

Kumarappa is well known for his cut-and-dry habits and methods. The watch is his inseparable companion and his whole day, down to the minute detail, is regulated by it. During all these seventeen years in Maganvadi he has hardly ever been known to miss or to be late at a function or class or interview. Once or twice I caught him coming a little earlier than necessary to a class or a meeting according to my watch and twitted him about it saying, that 'too early' was as bad as 'too late'. He quietly asked me to correct my watch saying, that he daily checked up his watch with the radio time at the Doctor's! It is a confirmed habit with him to see no one without an appointment. More than once distinguished visitors including a Minister or two, could not meet him because they had not made an appointment and so he was engaged otherwise. It once happened that there were some very important visitors in Maganvadi who had an appointment with him at 9 a. m.

He waited till 9.10 and when the visitors arrived they were told he was engaged otherwise. Even his sisters and brothers have to conform to this habit of his. Occasionally this kind of thing very much puts out somebody or other, but he does not care at all. He himself will scrupulously observe such rules where others are concerned. He would never take up someone else's time without an appointment and will be always on time. If he did otherwise, and was therefore unable to meet someone, he would not mind at all. The classical story is, how he once refused Gandhiji himself time for an important talk because there was no appointment and he was busy with some other work! But Gandhiji was the one person most likely to appreciate such a situation.

Training in accountancy has made him acquire almost a passion for precision and brevity. He writes numerous letters but most of them are on cards and his longest letters hardly come to a page of an ordinary letter paper. I have seen how with a few pointed sentences he can answer long letters from correspondents. Here he was perhaps even one better than Gandhiji. He has the trick of filling up every available inch of space on a card or letterpaper by writing on the margins and anywhere he could get a chance to scribble a few words. It is again his training in accountancy which has sharpened his habit of sifting facts from fiction and truth from exaggeration. Even while he speaks or writes with great heat of emotion he never exaggerates, but is always precise and concise. All his writings are thus characterised by clarity and pointedness. That is why when he attacks he is so deadly.

Kumarappa is a person who lives at a high nervous tension. This is so with him temperamentally. High blood pressure, from which he has long suffered, has only accentuated

his emotional makeup. He would flare up at one wrong word or gesture from anybody and then he would let himself go without reserve. This tendency in him has made him somewhat unpopular with his friends and co-workers. But everyone knows that there is no trace of malice in him and that when his temper has blown out he becomes once more the very lovable and good-humoured person that he really is. If people are not frightened of him, but meet him on his own level and are prepared to give and take, then he is a wonderful comrade and companion in any common work. The difficulty, however, is that most people are very sensitive and while they are willing to give they are not prepared to take. But Kumarappa is at all times the man willing to give and take in any argument. That is why those who know him intimately value his almost ruthless honesty and his plain-speaking. He is a good sport.

Kumarappa, even from his early boyhood, could never tolerate any injustice or the infliction of suffering on anyone. When any such situation confronted him he would at once gird up his loins for a good fight. He is first and last a fighter, but a fighter of good causes in a non-violent way. He gave up eating meat many years ago, though he was born and brought up in an Indian-Christian family in which vegetarianism could not at all have been very popular. Even on his visits to Europe and America he has scrupulously adhered to his vegetarian food. Only the other day at the Chinese Consulate-General in Calcutta, on his way to China, he satisfied his hunger by eating only some pickled mushrooms and vegetable salads at a dinner where everybody else was eating the flesh of all kinds of birds and beasts. Kumarappa is a whole-hogger or nothing. This is true of his politics and his economics. He is an extremist in both and there is no halfway house for him. His dream is of a

non-violent democracy, based on non-violent economics. No one in India has written more clearly or richly on non-violent economics or the economics of peace than he. If occasionally, Kumarappa's language becomes strong and even violent in defence of his great dream there is little harm done.

Mr. Hallam Tennyson, a Pacifist, who served for two years at a Friends Service village rehabilitation project, has a good character study of Kumarappa in an article he wrote in the 'Peace News', in November 1948, entitled, 'The Non-Violent Society.' Here are some fascinating extracts :-

J. C. Kumarappa, the Secretary of the All India Village Industries Association at Wardha, is one of those men who practise what they preach. At Cabinet meetings, English tea parties or the throne rooms of Kings, he is dressed always in the special cloth saving dhoti that he has made famous. His personality, too, is every bit as unusual and as carefully integrated with his ideals as his dress. Not for a minute does he tolerate hypocrisy or compromise with his convictions.

In his book "The Economy of Permanence" he describes how once a benevolent capitalist, who had just shown him with pride over his gold mine, turned to ask him whether he had any suggestions as to how the welfare of the miners could be improved. "Yes," replied Kumarappa promptly, "Close down the mine."

Then there was his hostess in Delhi whom he surprised by placing on her plate at breakfast the cake of Tata soap that she had provided for his

comfort and asking her solemnly how she expected him to wash his hands in the blood of the children of Malabar, where the Tata coconut groves, planted to supply fat for the manufacture of their fancy soap, have replaced the rice fields.

But such caustic comments make Kumarappa few enemies. Even as he pronounces them in that voice of his, which can have at times such a sharp and sarcastic edge, there is a boyish twinkle in his eye, an engaging grin hovering over his mouth. For in spite of his apparent pugnacity, Kumarappa, like so many others who live and work at Sevagram, is at peace with the world. He can afford to be. What has a man to fear when he can meet all his own wants, when he is no longer the bewildered, helpless victim of a system that is out of harmony with the deeper needs of his spirit? Such a man has everything to give and nothing to receive."

Only those who dedicate themselves to a cause and become selfless in such dedication earn the right to challenge the weakening of the moral fibre in others. In such a case the challenge has a ring of truth and sincerity beyond all question. Kumarappa is one of the very few in India to-day, who through a life of unbroken dedication to a cause, has earned the right to speak with moral authority to many of those who are already weakening and faltering as they try to walk in the way indicated by Gandhiji. He can challenge the economics of exploitation because his life is without exploitation of anybody. He does not even keep a servant. He eats only the food cooked in the Maganvadi general kitchen, he washes his own clothes and seldom asks anyone to do any personal service

for him. I have never yet known the head of an Institution who so little depends on chelas or others placed under his care. One day he came to the general kitchen a little earlier than food time as he had to catch a train. His food was given to him on a bench in the open air outside the community kitchen. But there was no tumbler of water. I therefore called out to one of the students to run and fetch a tumbler of water. He quietly said to me, "You are an exploiter. If you had brought the tumbler of water yourself, I would have accepted it as a little act of affection. But when you shout to a student to do the same then I am worried." That is the high moral sensibility of the man. That is why he challenges the whole of modern economics as one in which the strong ride the weak. It is Kakasaheb Kalelkar who has said of him, that if only Kumarappa were not so full of fun and frolic and would put on a loin cloth he would straightaway be accepted as a *pucca* saint. The truth however is, he is a saint in the best sense of the word. His whole life is that of a saint. But he dresses like a common man and talks and lives like a normal man. How can a saint be acceptable in India in a dhoti-jama and a clean and well-stitched kurta and a Gandhi cap stuck on the head with the proper tilt?

Kumarappa has lived Christianity, not talked or preached it. His two books, *Practice and Precepts of Jesus* and *Christianity — Its Economy and Way of Life*, contain a matchless plea for true Christianity in action, for the Sermon on the Mount to be practised. It is not the plea of an intellectual merely. It is the plea from the heart of a dedicated life. No wonder Gandhiji himself wrote, "I can recommend their perusal to every believer in God, be he a Christian or a follower of any other religion. It is a revolutionary view of Jesus

as a Man of God." A well-known Missionary Journal added, "We trust our readers will not fail to pray that the spirit of Christ, who led Kumarappa to write it, will bless its many readers. To read it is a searching spiritual exercise." I have sometimes wondered what Kumarappa would have become if he had not been trained as a Chartered Accountant and in Economics. The thought has come to me that he might well have become a great Christian religious leader. He is fundamentally a man of religion, but one whose kingdom is very much of this earth.

Kumarappa never married and it is now safe to presume that he will not marry at all. I once asked him how a man like him could ever have escaped the holy state of matrimony. He offered a curious but truthful answer: "I wanted to earn a four figure income before I married. When I touched that level Gandhiji caught me. Thereafter I had no time to get married." But having lived close to Kumarappa for nearly three years now, I can say I have hardly met a bachelor of his character and position with so little of regret that he never married. He has often struck me as a true *brahmachari*. His *brahmacharya* sits on him without any strain or affectation. That, I think, is perhaps the greatest tribute that can be paid to his character. There is nothing sour or bitter about his *brahmacharya*. He is a happy-hearted *brahmachari* who thoroughly enjoys the company of women. He will slap them on their backs and pull their ears and blossom forth into brilliant conversation and repartee in their company. He is always full of gentleness and chivalry in his dealings with women, though he can always crack a joke or two at their expense. I have heard the story of how he was once travelling with a woman friend, who occupied a different compartment in the train. He would jump down at every station and race

to her carriage to enquire if she wanted anything and wait till the train sent up its whistle to race back to his own compartment. He spoke the truth when he said that he could get no time to be married. He has built up a life of busy work around himself and wherever he is he plunges into his work. It is however very interesting to watch him in Maganvadi. He would go the round of the place regularly from time to time noticing everything. One day, as he was entering the paper department, he saw a dark finger impression on the soft mud wall. He noticed it at once and erased it neatly before he went in. There is not a stone or plant in Maganvadi which he does not know; and he is very jealous of Maganvadi. I have, therefore, sometimes told him that it is humbug to say that he has not married because he is married to Maganvadi!

There is another well-known joke of Kakasaheb Kalelkar. He has said, "If only Kumarappa knew his Hindi half as well as his English he would have long ago set the country on fire." He is a reckless revolutionary, though a non-violent one. As the years pass and as the situation in India is increasingly becoming a challenge to all constructive workers, Kumarappa will certainly combine the role of saint and revolutionary more and more authentically. His renunciation of Maganvadi and his new work in Seldoh is the symbol of what is yet to come from him. He is himself thus a challenge to all those who would take up today the new Cross and follow Gandhi. It is of profound significance that it is a Western-trained economist, an Indian-Christian and a follower of Gandhi, who has today become the challenge and the symbol of what might yet be in the India of Gandhi.

NEHRU IS NOT DEAD

The storm of anguish that swept India has hardly subsided. We can still hear the sighs and sobs of the people. Competent international observers have testified that there is not in recorded history another instance of more millions of people congregating together in such profound sorrow as they witnessed on the occasion of the passing of Jawaharlal Nehru. The human scenes witnessed in Delhi and on the banks of the Ganga in Allahabad were indescribable. The love of the millions for Nehru rose and flowed in a high tide bigger than any flood of Ganga herself through uncounted centuries.

The man who left us in the body was a giant of the history of India and of the world. Into him had converged so many of the deep and significant currents and impulses of our time that it is almost impossible to classify his personality or his achievements. He was an Indian deep down in him and yet he had become the symbol of all that was truly great and dynamic in the modern world. Drawing his emotional and spiritual nourishment from the past and present of India he opened his heart and head wide to absorb every challenge of science and of the human intellect fully and fearlessly. He loved every particle of the dust and soil of India and in fact

Thoughts and Talks

willed away the ashes of his own cremated body to be given back to that dust and soil. He served India with unsurpassed passion and devotion and yet his goal was the whole of mankind living in peace, freedom, prosperity and happiness. He lived close to Gandhi and was one of Gandhi's most disciplined soldiers even while differences sometimes came between them. Nehru thus kept his discipline and his distinction equally inviolate. Anyone else might have been overshadowed by the colossal image of Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi once said that no teacher would be worth the name who did not produce at least one student greater than himself. This reminds us of Buddha and Asoka, Christ and St Paul and Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. One wonders if Gandhi and Nehru cannot be added to this list. Ordinarily, immortality in history has largely belonged to the founders and prophets of religions who have continued to live in the minds and lives of innumerable millions of devotees from century to century. We too today can look back upon the chapter of our present history in which the image of Nehru stands radiantly close to that of Gandhi and can wonder how such things can happen again in our own lifetime.

But our sorrow must no longer cloud our minds. Nehru himself more than 16 years ago set us the example. That was when the bullets of an assassin took away Gandhi from us. No one was then more orphaned than Nehru. Even when choked with sorrow, he never once allowed his courage to dwindle. He called upon the people in clear and resonant voice to stop weeping and stumbling. Everyone was to stand erect and get back to work. All must bend their energies to carry forward the heritage of Gandhi to make a greater India and a greater world. Nehru wanted the people to pluck renewed

courage and strength from the depth of pain and loss. We too now must look upon the passing of Nehru to regain renewed fearlessness and determination to carry forward the torch he has left behind. The way ahead is very hard and difficult, but there is inspiration for us in the thought that the heroic feet of Gandhi and Nehru have already pressed forward along the same way. India still remains unmade and the world still remains on the brink of peril.

The question till now was, "Who after Nehru?" The more important question now is, "What after Nehru?" The earlier question has now been answered with dignity and discipline by the Indian Nation. It now remains for us to see how the Republic of India will handle the heritage of Nehru. Let there be no mistake about it, it is a tremendous heritage. It is not wholly identical with the Gandhi heritage. There are two thoughts on this subject at this point. In a truly basic sense Nehru was along with Acharya Vinoba the greatest Gandhian of all. While most Gandhians in their hearts have had their differences with Gandhi, they successfully hid these from the world, but Nehru never ran away from his own differences with the Master. Many people take the name of Gandhi because it suits them. We have had in recent years heart-breaking instances of this phenomenon. Let us remember, however, that Gandhi was never static and that he responded to new challenges and situations in astonishingly new ways. He was the most resilient of the world's prophets. So was Nehru among world leaders. He was no devotee of verbal definitions. His socialism for instance remains up-to-date, undefined and indefinable and yet there can be no doubt it was socialism. We recall how Gandhi refused to define Swaraj saying that the concept of Swaraj would grow and change with advancing times.

At the centre of the Nehru heritage is a new and dynamic concept of secularism in this most religious-ridden country of the world. Religion in India has taken us sometimes to Himalayan heights and equally often pushed us into the deepest depths of superstition and degradation. Examples of this lie scattered in our history, past and present. It has become necessary to rescue religion from itself in our country. Nehru's secularism offers the corrective and points to the way forward. It enshrines a new humanism which has the spirituality to be found in any religion. This secularism embodies equal justice to every man and woman and offers them the equal opportunity to live in freedom, prosperity and happiness. All differences of community, caste, creed and class crumble before the advance of such secularism. Secularism is not materialism. Materialism can become heartless. This secularism is humanism at its best and can, therefore, never become heartless or ruthless. So long as India remains firmly loyal to the Nehru concept and practises secularism, every community in this country will feel secure and free within the Republic of India. It is thus the foundation of our unity of nationhood. Without it the Republic will be shattered. It is the unity binding millions of people together in their planned and scientific endeavour to make for themselves a life of freedom, justice, equality and happiness. As against the resurgent divisive religious and communal forces it is this sense of secular unity that we must nourish with all the strength in us. Nehru's secularism is also the guarantee of goodwill to every religious community as long as they function for the true welfare of the people and for the unity and integrity of the Republic.

Next only in importance is the reconciliation of democracy and socialism. Democracy without socialism tends to become

oligarchical and fascist. Socialism without democracy tends towards communist dictatorship. Democratic socialism is the only guarantee that democracy and socialism will both survive and prosper. Nehru represented the deepest conviction and the clearest comprehension concerning the value and validity of democratic socialism in the modern age. Let us, therefore, defend democratic socialism with all our might as we face the future without Nehru in India.

Nehru stood unflinchingly for world peace. He was inflexible in his idea that wars can solve no problems. He wanted a world without war. President Johnson was absolutely correct when he said that the best memorial to Nehru would be a world without war. Twice at least Nehru helped to pull the world back from the brink of a third world war which would inevitably have become a war of human extinction. He stood like a rock against any nation committing aggression against any other.

There is no question that Nehru took India along the road of industrialisation in the full modern sense. In this he certainly differed from Gandhi. Not that Gandhi would or could have prevented industrialisation. Gandhi lived and functioned in an India which was as highly industrialised as it was then possible for the country. After Gandhi any other Prime Minister of India would also have industrialised India. But a Gandhian Prime Minister entirely working in a Gandhian way might also have built up the balances and checks necessary to avoid the evils of a new industrial society more effectively than Nehru could or did. But this is pure speculation and of not much value in the present context.

Let us also never forget that under Nehru's inspiration and guidance India has already broken new ground in so many directions of social and economic development, including the work of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission, that anyone who in the future wishes to advance along any new path will find that it is already open and that other feet have trodden on it in advance. This magnificent and many-sided endeavour of integrated nation-building is perhaps the crown of the Nehru heritage.

We have thus this manifold legacy from Nehru, much of which came from Gandhi himself. But with Gandhi these issues were embedded in the impulses and motivations of man seeking God. Nehru's allegiance to them arose from man seeking man in the highest companionship and broadest comradeship of earthly life. The two attitudes were essentially complimentary.

It is now for us to take up the great heritage from Nehru and amend or modify it in accordance with our own convictions and needs and then march forward with unclouded minds and fearless hearts to our own great destiny within the equally great destiny of mankind. And when we do so, we shall discover that Nehru is not dead, but keeping pace with us, at the top of the column, as we march on.

THE MAN RAJAJI

Rajaji's 86th birthday has come. This is no surprise. In our minds Rajaji is as old as the hills. He has been with us from the dawn of our memory in public life. In fact, many of us in South India began our education in public life under him. He is now the grand old man of India in every sense of the word. He is very likely the oldest leader who stood with Gandhiji in the struggle for freedom. But he was there even in the pre-Gandhian era, slight, nimble, clear-headed and courageous. He had made a name in law and in politics even before Gandhiji appeared on the scene. The Gandhian era did not make him. It simply gave him the opportunity which his astonishing genius required for its blossoming. When the call of Gandhiji came he responded instinctively and brilliantly. It was as though he was waiting for it. It was the late Mahadev Desai who first lost his heart and head to Rajaji and brought Rajaji and Gandhiji together. Till his dying day, Mahadev was wedded to Rajaji. What drew Gandhiji to Rajaji was his truthfulness, fearlessness and clear thinking. There is no doubt that Rajaji is the sharpest intellect in contemporary Indian politics. People think Rajaji is subtle. The truth is he is utterly simple. He is as simple as a needle or a razor blade or a rapier. He has the quick quality of recognising reality.

Thoughts and Talks

No *maya* can deceive him. Every kind of *maya* disappears before his insight like the mist before the sun. The man is yet to be born who can deceive Rajaji. Gandhiji trusted people and sometimes paid heavily for it. Rajaji never took anybody on trust. He checked up everyone's credentials simply and fully. He accepted nothing without proof. His mind always took the straight-line movement. You know a straight line is the shortest length between two points. Between the two points of knowing and trusting, Rajaji always drew this straight line. No personal affection or prejudices would deflect this straight line of approach. As a result, no one has unmasked more humbugs and charlatans in our public life than Rajaji. His objectivity is without reservation and therefore his judgment has always been unerring. I remember an old joke. Rajaji was accompanying once upon a time a Congress V. I. P. in his tour in the South. Crowds of people came to cheer the leaders at many railway stations and the V. I. P. thoroughly enjoyed this adulation. But this happened late at nights also and the V. I. P. was annoyed because his sleep was interrupted. Rajaji put on a disarming smile and said, "What we were willing to enjoy in the daytime, we cannot reject at night!"

Gandhiji in his quest of human beings discovered Rajaji and quickly grew to love and trust him. Gandhiji trusted him to the very end even when Rajaji disagreed with him and even sometimes parted company with him. Rajaji was no yes-man to Gandhiji. No other leader of India has had so much courage to differ from Gandhiji on important occasions as Rajaji. At this point there is a resemblance between Rajaji and Pandit Nehru. Pandit Nehru was also never a yes-man to Gandhiji or to anybody else. He too on occasions broke

away from Gandhiji. But Gandhiji's greatness was such that both came back to him again and again. Today Pandit Nehru is at the height of his glory and influence, while Rajaji has turned very sharply against the Congress, which he so much helped to build, and is now leading the opposition against Nehru. And yet curiously, both Nehru and Rajaji quote Gandhiji and try to follow in Gandhiji's footsteps. Politics is an astounding spectacle. There was a time when people like Acharya Kripalani and Jayaprakash Narayan could not even bear the name of Rajaji. But Acharya Kripalani and Rajaji are now very close to each other and Jayaprakash Narayan is one of Rajaji's ardent admirers. He once said that it was Rajaji more than any other man who helped in breaking the pall of fear hanging over the minds of people. He was referring to the fear of the people for Congressmen who are in authority all over India.

Why has Rajaji broken away from the Congress and turned against it? It is certainly not that Rajaji has no more any need for Gandhian and even many of the Congress ideals and programmes. His analysis appears to be that the Congress has now become a hotbed of charlatans who have climbed into the seats of power by the pure jugglery of the party machine. He thinks that talent and character are at a discount and the clever manipulator of the party machine now rides the Congress horse. He also strongly suspects that many of the things the Congress party and Government are doing, are calculated to open the way for the Communists to come in and capture power in this country. This analysis may be wrong or right but I guess this is his analysis. He therefore does not want to tolerate a Government which interferes too much in the life of the people and in all programmes of economic development. One thing

is beyond any question; Rajaji cannot be dismissed with a lofty wave of the hand by anyone in this country nor through the subtle propaganda that he is simply paying off scores against somebody. Rajaji is too great a man and his own credentials are such that he must be heard and whatever challenges come from him must be met without anger or churlishness or abuse. He is today the biggest prophylactic force in our public life. We must reckon with him one way or the other.

There are some people who think that Rajaji is all head and no heart. How little people know him! Behind his mask of scrutiny, his relentless logic and analysis, he keeps hidden wonderful loyalty to his friends, genuine compassion for the poor and the under dog and a ready appreciation of whatever good there is in any man, woman or group. He dislikes to be called a revolutionary but no man who has held the high offices he has often held has initiated and carried through more revolutionary programmes than he. It was he who for the first time in India served notice on the management of one of the biggest mills declaring that a lock-out will be considered illegal. It was he again who introduced for the first time, State-wide prohibition in this country. He was the Chief Minister who protected the daring caste Hindus who took Harijans into the Madurai temple and thereafter swiftly brought Temple-Entry legislation covering the whole of the Madras State. Anyone who mistakes Rajaji for a conservative will be a very silly person. Like Gandhiji he was neither conservative nor carried away by ideas. He has been a realist and his realism is nearer revolution than the liberalism or the big ideas of many other people.

Rajaji's name will remain imperishable in our history as a Tamil writer and savant. His spoken and written Tamil

Thoughts and Talks

is matchless. He has the genius of clothing the most difficult ideas in the simplest words. He is a supreme artist of letters. As a conversationalist he is matchless. As a thinker he always penetrates to the heart of a problem. His moral courage is unsurpassed. He knows the common people of our country as perhaps no other man and he has, on occasions, showed how much he is willing to trust them. It was because he trusted people that he lifted food controls for the first time after the Second World War. While braver men were quaking and hesitating, he acted, trusting the people and his trust was fully rewarded. To see him in his quiet, simple room on the first floor of his humble abode in Thyagarayanagar and to converse with him even for a few minutes becomes an unforgettable experience and a piece of education for anyone. His wit and humour can startle anybody. He is a very human person.

It is a pity that Rajaji and Pandit Nehru have parted company. Perhaps this was inevitable. Pandit Nehru is something like the mighty engine of a ship which is about to steam out of the harbour. When that ship however is out on the wide ocean and a tempest arises and the wild waves lash against the ship threatening to sink it, Rajaji is the compass and the anchor at the same time preventing shipwreck. I hope this is not a fantastic idea of these two personalities. It would have been tremendously good if Rajaji and Pandit Nehru could have worked together. But let us not weep they have fallen apart. Both love India passionately and bravely. Both are working on their own lines for the good of India. May be, even without our realising it, they are complementing each other. I once remember Gurudev Tagore telling us, students in the Visva-bharati, "The great men of the world will always constitute a happy joint family; it is their followers

Thoughts and Talks

who kick up all the dust of controversy." Let us not be such followers.

And finally, let every good man and true, every person whose memory is not dead and whose mind is sincere for the good of India, declare unhesitatingly on Rajaji's 86th birthday that he is today India's oldest and most precious human possession and that this country is proud of him and wish him well. At 86, this young old man is moving about this country and making his voice heard as no other person in opposition to the ruling party. It is an amazing phenomenon. Let us pray with one voice that God may give Rajaji many more years of physical strength and mental vigour for the sake of India and the larger causes of the well-being of humanity.

SRI SIVAGNANA GRAMANI

Sri Sivagnana Gramani is one of the most remarkable figures in our public life. These are days when politics mean only elections and the scramble for power. There is hardly any other politics in our country at the present time. This is complete perversion of politics. In other countries there are innumerable aspects of political life in which thinking people get much scope for discussion, debate and even for practical work for the benefit of the community. All real politics is reputedly an educational process. Politics may well be defined as public education in public affairs. Sri Sivagnana Gramani is one of the very few in our country to whom politics is more education than competition in elections and in the grabbing of power. He has made for himself a name in politics outside the politics of elections and advertisements.

I must not claim to know Sri Gramani intimately. I have known him only from a distance. I have heard him occasionally. I have, however, often come to know the power of his influence in Tamilnad and particularly among young people. Most of our politicians are only politicians and nothing else. Very few of them can lay a claim to the life of the intellect and

Thoughts and Talks

culture. Sri Sivagnana Gramani is one of them. He would make an ideal Vice-Chancellor of a truly National University.

Sri Gramani has not sold his soul to any political party. He may have his sympathies for some party or other, but he is essentially above political parties. Some would say this is his strength and some that this is his weakness. I would certainly say this is his strength. From his position of detachment he can challenge every party to stand for national unity, integration and integrity. This is what he is doing. May God bless him and make him stronger to continue to play this role.

THE BA IN MY HEART

(A TRIBUTE TO KASTURBA GANDHI)

Some 35 years have rolled by since I met Ba for the first time. And yet my memories of her are as clear as daylight. When I close my eyes and recall her to my mind what is the vision that comes to me? Not only the physical image but the mental one are both equally vivid. Physically it is a vital and vibrant spark of humanity, small in size, quick-footed, big and kindly-eyed, a round soft face, the voice clear and firm. The mental picture is one of gentleness and inflexibility, a rare combination. Ba comes back as a strong, brave woman symbolising the truth, whether in word or deed and challenging everybody to be equal to it. This full picture of the great and beloved woman can bring inspiration to each one of us as we take our place humbly in the long and interminable queue still marching in the footsteps of the Master. She was neither educated, nor an intellectual, nor a genius, nor specially gifted in any way and yet succeeded in raising herself and others with her to the heights of a woman's glory. *Unlettered, she became wise; timid, she became valiant; humble, she became great just because she saw the truth and then held on to it with all her heart and strength. She became thus the symbol of what every woman can become, the least among them.*

A Wonderful Nurse to Bapu

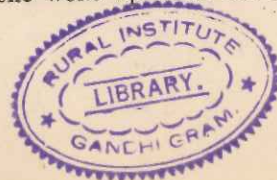
I first met Ba during Bapu's Hindu-Muslim-Unity Fast in Delhi in 1924. My professor, the late C. F. Andrews, had taken me with him to help him as he was playing the role of "Chowkidar" at the door of the fasting Mahatma. They were days of extreme anxiety and agony for Ba. I had the privilege of cooking for her or taking the food to her from time to time. I did so with awe and reverence. But Ba put me at my ease with her kind words and looks. She lived practically on fruits and milk during those days except for wheat rusks which she sometimes broke into her milk. Suddenly she would look up and say a word or two about Bapu's health as he lay fasting and then the tears would come to her eyes. She was a wonderful nurse to Bapu in his physical weakness arising from the fast. My heart went out to Ba as she endured her agony without a murmur. When Bapu broke his fast at last Ba was smiling and shedding tears at the same time, and how everyone went and congratulated her on the occasion! Bapu took up the fiery cross again and again in his life for a cause. But Ba took up her cross simply to share in Bapu's sorrows and penance. *No one can say who bore the greater burden, the great Field Marshal of non-violence as he led his people in one peaceful revolution after another and living in a continuous blaze of publicity, or the meek and indomitable woman who lived in the shadows and wept in silence. I have an idea that Ba bore greater burdens throughout her life than Bapu and that, without a murmur.*

The Hard Taskmaster

I spent the whole of 1925 as a member of Ba's community kitchen in the Satyagraha Ashram in Sabarmati. The house

was Bapu's, but his writ did not run in the kitchen. It was Ba who ruled it. There were some 20 Ashramites eating in her kitchen including some grandchildren. It was mostly a crowd of people from different parts of India. There was a Telugu doctor who swallowed chillies in secret and one or two others who slipped away occasionally to eat other food in the Ahmedabad city. But Ba ruled the kitchen with a measure of stern discipline and a larger measure of maternal love. We were three or four of us helping Ba in cooking and serving. She was a hard taskmaster, particularly to herself. It was not as though Ba was simply supervising the little community kitchen. How many of us are not merely supervisors these days? But she cooked and cleaned and swept and served like the rest of us working with her. She demanded punctuality, scrupulous cleanliness, good manners and participation in some work or other from every one eating in her kitchen. She worked with them and they saw her work and so everybody worked. Ours was thus a happy little kitchen community.

But it had its own problems. And the biggest problem was that of guests arriving without prior notice to see Bapu. The lunch would be over and everything washed up and put away and Ba would be resting and we, her cooking assistants, would be in different parts of the Ashram doing other work and then suddenly some guests would arrive. I distinctly remember the day when Pandit Motilal Nehru arrived with a number of friends unexpectedly one afternoon after lunch was over. Lunch had to be prepared again. Bapu did not call for Ba who was lying down for her short afternoon nap. He called me and asked me to call also one of the others who was then on the kitchen staff. He asked us to start the cooking and let Ba know only when she woke up from her nap. But Ba



heard the noises in the kitchen and woke up earlier and found out what was going on. She then went straight to Bapu asking why she was not called and if Bapu thought she was such a lazy old person! Bapu apologised diplomatically. Back in the kitchen Ba asked me why I had not called her earlier and I took shelter under Bapu's words. Ba's English was always very pleasant to hear and what she said on the present occasion was particularly nice. She said, "Bapu call you. Why you not call me? Why you open kitchen without permission?" I apologised humbly. The next moment Ba made herself busy and Motilalji and his friends were served a splendid hot lunch in record time. When Motilalji complimented her she beamed with delight.

My Special Education Under Ba

I have had my education in more than one place and under a few great Gurus. But my education under Ba stands out as something very special. My daily routine under Ba had in it the genuine elements of Basic Education long before Bapu expounded *Nai Talim*. I said my *Namaste* to Ba at 4-30 a. m. at the door of the little community kitchen every day. If I was late by a minute she would say, "Why you late, go hurry and bring milk?" That meant I had to run with three big pots to Ashram dairy without another word and bring back the morning supply of milk. Two pots would be cow's milk and the third small pot would contain Bapu's goat-milk. Then I would light two coal stoves and boil the milk. Ba would be watching and herself busy preparing part of the breakfast. Breakfast was served at 6-30 a. m. and Ba was a great one for insisting on everybody eating a good breakfast.

She would particularly insist that no one shirked eating a piece of red gur with the cold Chapaties left over from the previous evening. White sugar was taboo. If she saw anyone rejecting the gur she would come up quickly and see that the delinquent swallowed it without further ado. She had the good-bad habit of the Indian mother forcing more food upon the children. Lunch time and a couple of hours before would be full of work and bustle in the kitchen. Fires would be burning, vegetables boiling, Chapaties rolling with Ba presiding at the very centre of the picture. With what speed she could roll the Chapaties, roast them over the live coal and then toss them on to a plate for smearing Ghee on them! Ba's *Kadhi* (Curry) was a favourite item with all of us. Ba gave some work or other to every member of the kitchen community to do. The evening meal was another occasion for quick work and then cleaning up. Ba always took her food after the others had finished and it was her particular delight to make her assistants sit down with her and ply them with food. If you did not eat well her quick question would come, "You not well? Why you not eating well?" She had no respect for weak stomachs though she would be very sympathetic. She would take motherly care if any was ill. But she always looked happy when someone sitting with her ate a good meal. I have already mentioned her fondness for coffee and I won my first spurs with her by making good South Indian Coffee for her. She did not fully approve of Bapu coming into the kitchen and meddling with food arrangements. She would herself prepare Bapu's own food with meticulous care, but that was another matter. Bapu knew Ba's mind very well and seldom put his foot into the kitchen.

What I learnt under Ba in that little kitchen at the Satyagraha Ashram were lessons in strict punctuality, spotless

cleanliness, unflinching good conduct, cooperativeness and strict obedience to rules. These lessons have helped me considerably throughout my life. Years later I was a prisoner at the Central Jail in Vellore. Rajaji once came to see me in my cell from another part of the same prison where he was in the A class. I was in the B class. He paused at the door of my cell and hesitated to come in and said, "Your cell is so spotlessly clean, I do not want to come in and bring any mud or sand into it." He was being cynical and friendly at the same time. I told him, "I learnt this from Ba", and then I related how Ba would not tolerate one dirty spot or speck in her kitchen. Ba never tolerated any unnecessary argument. All work was a duty and no one should argue about duties to be performed. Her whole life was one long saga of duties performed without arguments and without hesitation.

A Radiant Legacy

Later my niece Saraswathy married Ba's grandson Kantilal. It was an inter-caste and inter-provincial marriage. She never raised any objection. She had completely given up caste and caste distinctions. I remember Bapu telling me that it pleased him very much that Ba never said a word against the marriage proposal just because it was inter-caste. From the earlier days when Ba had not given up caste, it was a long journey in her pilgrimage with Bapu when she at last gave up caste altogether.

When Ba passed away as a prisoner of the British Government on the 22nd February, 1944 I was the working Editor of the "Indian Express" in Madras and wrote a leading article entitled "The Moving Finger Writes" which enraged the then Governor of Madras so much that he threatened to smash the paper. My article attacked Lord Wavell who was the then

Thoughts and Talks

Viceroy of India characterising him as a moral coward afraid of releasing an ailing old woman on the point of death from the prison into which he had cast her. I wrote that an Empire afraid of a Ba was a doomed Empire.

Bapu left his indelible imprint on the history of India and the world. But inside that imprint and at its very heart will remain the image of Ba. Bapu and Ba were inseparable, each strengthened the other. Each was completed by the other. One without the other would not have reached the heights to which both climbed up at last, leaving a radiant legacy for India and the world.

PART TWO

**RECALLING
TAGORE AND GANDHI**

(Talks given to students in Gandhigram)

TAGORE ; THE BACKGROUND

Let me today tell the story of Rabindranath Tagore, his life, his work and, above all, his poetry, to my students in Gandhigram. I have now and then spoken about Rabindranath Tagore here. We celebrate every year the Tagore-Day and if I am here on that day, I talk of Tagore. But I did not get till now an opportunity to give a fuller story of Gurudev Tagore, a story which I can give you not from any book but out of the pages of my own life.

I was 18 years of age when I broke away from the traditional educational system and went to Santiniketan. Those were the times when the Poet himself lived in Santiniketan and, what was more, took classes for his students. There were other great names associated with Rabindranath Tagore during those glorious days of Santiniketan. One great name was that of the late C. F. Andrews. I do not know how many in this generation, particularly younger people, remember or know about C. F. Andrews. Mahatma Gandhi interpreted his initials "C. F. A." as "Christ's Faithful Apostle" and it has been said by more than one careful student of India's present history that Andrews was probably the noblest Englishman who ever came

out of England to serve India. It has also been said that so long as the memory of C. F. Andrews lives in the mind of India, India and England will be friends. The President of the Indian Republic said the other day in Tokyo that India and England had become better friends after our country had attained freedom. We fought England long for our freedom. But after freedom came, India and England became good friends and today in international politics and culture, there are no two countries closer to each other than these two countries. We can look back and say to ourselves that C. F. Andrews was one of those who forged this link of friendship between India and England.

C. F. Andrews was my English Professor in Santiniketan. I remember the thrill with which I first reached Santiniketan. My elder brother and I got down at the Bolpur Railway station, 5 or 6 miles away. There was an old bus which carried us from Bolpur to Santiniketan. As the bus neared Santiniketan, I said to myself, "Here is the place which after long desire and seeking, I am approaching. What kind of a place will it be?" Then the bus turned in at the main gateway. I found avenues of trees and long dormitories hidden under the shade. It was a beautiful place with the horizon stretching away in a downward slope to the distant landscape. The picture, as I saw it first, is a picture which I have never forgotten. I also remember my first sight of Poet Rabindranath Tagore. My brother and I had our bath and our lunch and somebody said to us that at 3 O'clock the Poet would give us a few minutes. Many minutes before 3 p. m. we got ready. My brother was then going to compete for his I.C.S. and he was a bit of a boss already. He dressed up in *pucca* European style but I had already become a simple

Khadiwala and so I retained my *dhoti* and *kurta*. Each one performed his toilet with great care saying we were going to see the great poet of India!

As we walked up, we saw a beautiful mud hut. Now a mud hut carries no meaning as I mention it in words to you. A mud hut would at once mean something ugly. But the first sight I had of this little hut gave me a thrill again. On the thick wall were beautiful figures moulded by the fingers of the artists of Santiniketan, and as one came near the door, there was a beautiful entrance to the hut. In the centre was a room with windows open to all four sides. Other rooms were tucked away not to obstruct the views from these windows.

There was no one in this room. This gave us a breathing moment. We were waiting to see the Poet, eager and even somewhat anxious, and then suddenly, the door curtain of a room opened and he walked in. One of the professors of Santiniketan who had come with us introduced us to the Poet. I gazed at the Poet in wonder. It has been said and said with truth, that God and the angels must have conspired in Heaven to produce a man of unsurpassed beauty of features and bearing. They must have said, "We shall send out to the world now a man who would be the most godly-looking."

Many people have compared Rabindranath Tagore to the traditional picture of Jesus Christ. As I looked at the man, standing framed against the afternoon light that came streaming in from the windows, I was lost in admiration. It was a tall, majestic figure and robed in a peculiar style. I had never seen that style before; long flowing robes from neck to foot, in two or three folds. If God and the angels had conspired to

make him one of the handsomest of men, some tailor must have conspired again to make beautiful clothes which fitted him so well. The Poet must, in those days, have been particular of his hair—how his long and beautifully combed silver hair fell in locks over both sides of his noble head. And then the mighty brow—how a head could have so much space for the forehead, is still a mystery to me. There was the dome of this brow and over it, like a crown of snow, was the white hair tumbling down and below was the majestic aquiline nose. It was not a round face, but a long oval face. And then like the silver hair, the silver beard. The great dark eyes looked at you and there was deep graciousness in those eyes. He came forward and shook hands. He sat in a cane chair and we took two other cane chairs nearby. He was talking more to my brother than to me. The Poet then turned to me and asked, "What subjects are you taking in *Visva-bharati*?" I had not made up my mind. But I had to tell him something. I blurted out, "Literature, Sociology and Philosophy, Sir." "That will make a good combination," was his encouraging comment. In a few minutes the interview was over because there were many others waiting. So we stood up, bowed to him and came out. This first impression was that of a noble, gracious and great personality. But that impression was not complete at all because I did not then know the heart and the intellect of the Poet. It took a long time to get to know him more fully.

In a day or two, I joined Santiniketan. Let me now tell you something of the background of Santiniketan against which you have to see the personality of the Poet and understand his life, work, thought and poetry. Every great man has his own special background. It is the same with Mahatma Gandhi. Supposing you met him in New Delhi or Bombay or

Calcutta, you might understand something about him. But if you went to Sevagram and saw him in the setting which his genius had made for himself, then it would be a different Gandhi that you see, a Gandhi in the framework in which he reveals himself spontaneously. Take even an ordinary painting. An artist paints the picture of somebody. It is there on the canvas—good enough—but when the painter takes that canvas, finds out the frame in which it must be set, puts the frame round it and gives all the finishing touches and raises it to the proper height on the wall and you look at it, then that picture becomes far more real. If this is true of a painted picture how much more true it is in the understanding of a great personality! If you want to understand fully the personality of Tagore, nothing would be better than to see him in the setting of Santiniketan.

Now what kind of place was Santiniketan? The most curious thing about the place is that, if we take it by itself and keep it separate from its surroundings and ideas, and then look at it, few of us would admit that it is a specially beautiful place. Our Gandhigram in the enclave of the blue Sirumalai hills, is more beautiful than Santiniketan. Yet if you walked into the Santiniketan campus and moved about, saw everything, you will have a sense of breath-taking beauty about what you see. How does this magic work? It is situated on a gently raised level of land. When you stand in Santiniketan and look towards the four sides, you see vast stretches of landscape in front of you, rolling away slowly down to the distant horizon. There is just a trace of a hill far away but no trace of the sea anywhere which always adds beauty in a landscape nor even a river nearby. But inside Santiniketan are majestic avenues of trees and lovely paths run under their shade. The buildings

fit into the environment without a strain. There is a mango grove, where all the important functions are held. The most distinguished visitors are received in the mango grove. All the great occasions of the year are celebrated in it. This grove plays a vital part in the Santiniketan tradition. I remember how Mahatma Gandhi himself was received in the mango grove.

The whole place is full of trees and buildings look only secondary. Most classes are held in the mango grove and under the shade of trees in the open air. Only when the sun is very hot or when the rains come will students and teachers go into the class rooms or sit in the verandahs. At night people studied and slept in their rooms, but much of life during the day was lived in the open air. This is very much changed now. Santiniketan is now one of the Chartered Universities of the Government of India and many big buildings have come up and a part at least of the old beauty is gone. But I am talking of the year 1922, when I first went there.

Let us now take a look into the life at Santiniketan. My brother and I went to have our bath at the well. It was a big well reached through an archway. Then came a circular enclosure around the well. As we went in, we saw an elderly and ascetic-looking person taking his bath. My brother turned to him and enquired, "Is it possible to see the Poet sometime this afternoon?" The man smiled and said, "If you are putting up in the Guest House, you must tell the Guest House Manager to fix up an interview with the Poet." My talkative brother did all the talking with this person and at one point he said, "I have brought my younger brother to be admitted in the Visva-bharati. I would also like to meet the Principal of

the Visva-bharati sometime. Do you know where he lives?" This person at once pointed to a small thatched hut and said, "You see, there under the mango tree, that hut. That is where the Principal lives." Later after our interview with the Poet, we discovered this little hut and walked in. There in the verandah, on the floor, was sitting this same man who was with us at the bathing place. My brother went up to him and said, "You told me the Principal lived here. Will you please tell him that we would like to meet him?" Then the man smiled and quietly replied, "Please sit down. You are talking to the Principal." My brother got a shock and we sat down on a mat on the floor. My brother said, "I am very sorry. I didn't know you were the Principal." His reply was, "Why should you be sorry? There is nothing to be sorry about; you did not know me." And so he went on talking. He answered all our questions, helped us in the matter of my admission and then we left him. As we were coming away, my brother said to me, "What a shame, Ramachandran! I didn't know that this man at the bathing place who looked so simple would be the Principal of Visva-bharati!"

Now I must tell you who he was. His name was Pandit Vidusekhara Shastri. Even at that time, he was reckoned as one of the greatest Sanskrit scholars of India. His research in Sanskrit brought him to the study of Pali. He studied Buddhism and discovered that some of the great works on Buddhism were in the French language. So he learnt French. In the course of his Sanskrit studies, he discovered what the Germans had done in research in Sanskrit. So he learnt German as well. By the time I went there he knew these European languages and, in addition, Tibetan and Chinese, because Buddhism had overflowed from India into Tibet and

China and into the farthest corners of Asia. I discovered quickly that he was not only a great scholar, but a great patriot. For this was 1922 when Mahatma Gandhi was sweeping the country with his first non-violent revolution. In fact, many of the students in the Visva-bharati were those who had left their colleges in response to the call of Mahatma Gandhi to serve the country. Vidusekhara Sastri was very devoted to Gandhi. Gandhi had given India the message of sacrificial spinning and some of the most intellectual and outstanding leaders in the land were spinning half an hour a day as a mark of identification with the masses in the villages. So this Principal of Santiniketan took that message from Gandhi and never sat at his noon meal before he had done his half hour of spinning. He had no servant in his house. He swept his own house, washed his own clothes, and cooked his own food. He was a widower. He really lived the life of a scholar-saint.

I once played a prank on him. He would usually get up at 4 O'clock in the morning, then begin sweeping his house, putting everything in order and cooking his breakfast because all classes would begin at 6 a. m. Now, sometime in the second year of my life in the Visva-bharati, Pandit Vidusekhara Shastri fell ill. Yet he would get up early, though a little later than usual, slowly do the usual house-work and instead of going to the college, sit in his own house and do some reading and writing. I found that he was not getting up at 4 O'clock in the morning. He would get up at 5-30 and then slowly begin his work. I discovered where he kept his broom, bucket and cooking vessels. On the second morning of his illness, I got up very early and went to his hut. He was still sleeping inside and I went and gently opened the door and started sweeping the floor, washing his vessels and

tidying up everything and then quietly ran away. At about 6 a. m. he got up, rubbed his eyes and saw somebody had done everything that he had to do. He smiled and wondered who could have done this. He asked one or two students. Nobody could tell him who it was. He never asked me because I was in another class. I did it a second time and a third time. He was under the impression that one of his own research students who lived close to him in one of the other huts was doing it. The next morning like the house keeper who wanted to catch the cat which came into the kitchen, he kept a watch, keeping his window open. He heard somebody opening the kitchen door and kept perfectly quiet. I went in and began sweeping, washing and tidying. He saw the culprit, gently closed the window and slept on. At about 9 a. m. I was in the library hunting for some books when I saw Pandit Vidusekhara Shastri coming slowly along the narrow corridor of the library. He came to me and said with a laugh, "Ramachandran, I have discovered that there is a cat which comes to my house early in the morning. This wonderful cat can sweep, wash and arrange all my vessels." Then he took my hands and said, "You make me feel like a real Guru in the ancient Gurukula tradition of India. God bless you." I remember this picture 36 years after it took place. Pandit Vidusekhara Shastri, after I left Santiniketan, was invited by the Calcutta University to take over the Chief Professorship of Sanskrit. He has left behind him many very valuable books which he wrote. I have not even a photograph of him. But I have only to close my eyes to get a picture of the lean, ascetic and saintly figure of the man standing in front of me. He resembled Sri Rajaji as we know him today.

In the years I spent in Santiniketan, Rabindranath Tagore was at the height of his achievements. He was in the glorious autumn of his life. That is often the richest part of one's life when one feels a deep sense of fulfilment. The Poet then had reached the richest fullness of life and had become world-famous. His vigorous and dynamic philosophy was not without an effect on current human culture and events.

He had built and nourished Santiniketan and after that the Visva-bharati, the first International University of India. Visva means 'Universal' and Bharati means 'culture'. Scholars and students from the ends of the world came to the Visva-bharati to live and study there in peace and happiness. I remember my room mate was a Norwegian boy. He had read about Poet Rabindranath Tagore and about Santiniketan. He told his father that he wished to go to India to study philosophy. The father was a banker and he asked his son what was philosophy and poetry going to do for him! The boy ran away from home and worked his ship's passage to India. He became one of the students at Visva-bharati and we lived together in the same room. He was a very sensitive fellow and I distinctly remember occasions when he and I had some good intellectual fights. So students came from different parts of the world. Professors also came from many countries. Every year one very distinguished European Professor would be invited to come to Santiniketan to deliver a series of lectures on some special subject. During my time I was lucky that the four visiting professors were Professor Sylvian Levi (France), Dr. Winternitz (Germany), Dr. Formichi (Italy) and Dr. Stein Konow (Norway), all renowned Indologists.

The whole place had nothing narrow or fanatic about it. We lived there as a community of world youth. There was

no caste or class, no communalism or racism in the Visva-bharati. Our culture was Indian, but reaching out to world culture. We were in a deep and broad world-outlook and an intellectual and artistic atmosphere.

Rabindranath kept his intellect and ideals crystal clear. He was a very fearless person. I think I have very seldom come across in all my life a man who knew less of intellectual and moral fear than Rabindranath Tagore. You know 1922 was a great year in the history of India. It was in that year that Mahatma Gandhi had fully come into the life of India and taken up the leadership of the people. He had generated the first non-violent revolution in India. It was called the Non-Cooperation Movement and it swept the country like a great storm from one end to the other. It uprooted many things; it shook many institutions. Many colleges were left empty and even British Courts and the Provincial Legislatures were boycotted. They were thrilling days in India's history and Mahatma Gandhi was awakening and inspiring the millions as never before. Every word he wrote and every word he spoke echoed and re-echoed in every town and village in India.

Then suddenly the Sage of Santiniketan and the Saint of Sabarmati clashed with each other. One day Gandhiji opened the *Modern Review*, one of the highest class journals in India then, edited by Ramananda Chatterjee and the first article he saw was "The Call of Truth" by Rabindranath Tagore. The whisper went round in Santiniketan like wild fire that our Gurudev, our Chief Acharya of Santiniketan, had written a grand criticism of Mahatma Gandhi. Most of us, students, were Gandhi's followers; we were in fact fanatic Gandhians. We had left colleges in response to his Non-Cooperation Movement. We were therefore very much excited. We

started reading the article which contained Tagore's criticism. Tagore said in effect in that article that Gandhi was the soul of India, that after the Buddha there never had risen in our country a greater person, but at the same time, even this great man of India's destiny was making a great mistake. He was establishing a kind of moral and mental dictatorship which was worse than political dictatorship. Here was a man whose word had become law to millions of unthinking people swept away by the worship of the Mahatma. People had become like the sheep following the shepherd. This was intellectual and even moral suicide. Tagore then turned to the Charkha. He said he liked the Charkha and wanted the Charkha to spread in India. He was willing to sit down and learn to spin. But if Mahatma Gandhi said the Charkha and nothing but the Charkha would win our freedom, it was a clear case of misleading the people of India. Freedom cannot come by simply spinning on the Charkha. Freedom could come only through innumerable programmes of action. So he warned Mahatma Gandhi to think again and not to establish a moral dictatorship over the conscience of India.

We were angry and said, "What right has Tagore got to challenge the Mahatma?" We argued up and down in loud voices and there was a lot of trouble; some of the students even shouted anti-Tagore slogans inside the Visva-bharati itself. We waited to see what Gandhi would do. Gandhi was editing the "Young India"; and in those days no home was complete without a copy of "Young India".

So in the next issue of "Young India" came Gandhiji's reply. We opened our copies of this journal and began reading. One heading was "The Great Sentinel". Tagore's challenge came under the title "The Call of Truth" and Mahatma

Gandhi's answer came under the caption "The Great Sentinel". He said that he had no words to express his deep gratitude to Poet Rabindranath Tagore. He pictured Tagore as the great sentinel of the human spirit, warning people against fanaticism, and blind following. Mahatma Gandhi said he wanted every Indian to read every line of what Tagore had written. He wanted the whole of India to discuss the subject and also the warning which had come from Tagore. But, he added, that he had a quarrel with the poet who had said he was establishing a moral dictatorship. Gandhi wanted to assure him that he would rather perish than establish any dictatorship, even moral. He wanted every man and woman to think for himself or herself. He always insisted that no one should touch khadi or spinning, unless there was complete understanding of these. He did not seek to establish moral dictatorship in India because he himself wanted the freedom of the human mind above everything else.

There were then certain economic arguments in the Poet's article and Gandhi answered them. In one particular paragraph, he gave a somewhat sharp reply. He said to the Poet something like this, I speak from memory only, "If you trace the source of every pie that comes into your hands you will see that they come out of the toil of the villagers of India. There are the wealthy people, the educated people and there were great institutions in the country. But they all get their sustenance from the village producers and give hardly anything sufficient in return. This was morally wrong and must be corrected. One of the ways of doing so was voluntary spinning". So Gandhi dealt with the economic challenge and said, he wanted poetry, philosophy and beauty for every man and woman but they must first have had at least one square

meal a day. What was the use of poetry and philosophy and beauty for the hungry and the naked, for those who have nothing except toil and sweat throughout their lives? He challenged the Poet in turn and said that Santiniketan and its music, dance and culture were good and necessary, but they must filter down to the millions in the villages. So the Poet must come down from the heights of poetry and philosophy and stand with the people of India shoulder to shoulder in the struggle for freedom and food. Then his songs will be richer and his poetry sweeter.

It was a great essay. It was one great man arguing with another great man, lifting the discussion to the highest level. As this controversy developed, people took one side or the other. The great scientist, Acharya P. C. Ray took sides with Gandhi against Tagore. Others took sides with Rabindranath Tagore. Then suddenly some of the students in Visva-bharati also made up their minds to make their contribution to this confusion! The Students' Association called for a meeting. Somebody came and asked me, "Would you read a paper on Tagore and Gandhi at this meeting?" Now like the Irishman in the story, I was only too ready to join the fight. You know that story. Two Irishmen were fighting in the street, one fellow hitting the other. A third Irishman was coming down the street. He came up, stood and watched the fight for a minute and said, "Gentlemen, please wait a moment." They said, "What do you want?" He asked, "Is it a private quarrel or can I also join?" I was perhaps the the Irishman of the student community in Visva-bharathi. I said that I would read a paper and everybody said, "Ramachandran will read a paper fully supporting Gandhiji and opposing Tagore."

So most of the students in Visva-bharati and many of the teachers came to the meeting. There was, among others, a powerful supporter of Tagore, one of the Lecturers. He came to listen to me and he must have made up his mind that if I said something against Tagore he would deal with me properly. I moved a resolution, which was something like this: "In this controversy in regard to the immediate tasks to be accomplished in India, Mahatma Gandhi's programme is the only right programme and anyone who attacks that programme is against the best interests of India." I said it was all right for the great Poet to sit in Santiniketan, singing his beautiful songs and writing his magnificent poetry and weaving the texture of a world-philosophy. These were necessary and vital. But to reconstruct the shattered life of India was a different matter. It was this Herculean task that Mahatma Gandhi was trying to accomplish and it could not be done unless all joined together. It required the hardest work at the lowest level of Indian life. It required the cooperation and regimentation of the millions of the people. And so on and so forth. Then, of course, someone attacked the resolution. There was a great debate and many people spoke—for and against. A vote was taken. My resolution won. The support for the other side was very good and reasonable and the lecturer who also spoke did very well. We all returned to our hostels carrying the argument to our beds. Next day sometime in the forenoon I got a note from Gurudev Tagore, which simply said, "Ramachandran, I wish to see you." I thought the matter was being taken up at the highest level and I did not know what would happen. I was a little nervous. I went and Gurudev Tagore asked me to sit down. Then he said, "I was greatly delighted to hear that my students

had a keen debate on whether their Chancellor is right or wrong and I am even more delighted that, by a majority, you had voted that your Chancellor is in the wrong." I said to myself, "What am I hearing?" I came to be reprimanded, to be told I was a fool. Here was the great Chancellor of Visva-bharati saying with a smile on his face that he was delighted to hear that his students argued fearlessly in Santiniketan and finally adopted an adverse resolution. And then he told me, "I want you to recall the Visva-bharati Sammelan and I too want to speak to the students." I could only say humbly, "There will be no greater privilege than to listen to you." He then said to me with a twinkle in his eyes, "Even if I prove that I am right, will you like to hear me?" I had the good sense to reply, "Yes". I came back and met all my friends who were waiting anxiously. When I told them what had happened, they too could hardly believe their ears.

The next day, the whole of the Visva-bharati gathered to hear Gurudev. Then Gurudev's car arrived. He got out and smiled at all of us and came into the Hall. There was pindrop silence. He said something like this - again from memory - "When I established Visva-bharati, I had one great dream in my heart. I myself, as a boy, had a very unhappy life at school. Teachers would jump at me, compel me to think along their lines. So I ran away from school and when I grew up, I said I must establish somewhere a school and a college, where boys and girls will grow up in complete freedom of the human mind. The foundation of Santiniketan, the foundation of Visva-bharati is the freedom of the human mind. Every boy and girl in Santiniketan and in the Visva-bharati must be absolutely free to think, grow and develop along his or her own lines. I have heard with the greatest delight of the

debate you had yesterday. I told Ramachandran that I was particularly delighted that the motion had gone against me. I have not come here to attack your motion. I do not want a single word to be taken away from it. But I want you to give me a hearing." And then he explained his point of view at great length with great eloquence and conviction. He revealed such reverence for Gandhi, such deep love for Gandhi, that those of us who listened to him said to ourselves, "Is it of this man that we spoke yesterday as a man obstructing Gandhi? This man understands Gandhi, knows Gandhi, more than all of us put together." He was not willing to agree with Mahatma Gandhi in everything. He spoke about khaddar, spoke about village industries, about non-violence and the emancipation of the untouchables. He said that in all these matters Mahatma Gandhi was giving India great leadership. But he warned that not one of us should accept anyone of these simply because they came from Mahatma Gandhi; we should hear him, understand him, discuss his views amongst ourselves and accept them only if by our own reasoning we agreed with him. He said, "I want the whole of India to follow Mahatma Gandhi, but they must follow Gandhi, thoughtfully, understandingly and knowingly but not blindly." And then his voice rose as he said, "Anybody following Gandhi blindly is doing the greatest injustice to the greatest man of our country. This is my thesis." Then he looked round finally and said, "I have promised Ramachandran that if anybody wants to speak after me, he or she will be free to do so." I then stood up and said: "Gurudev! you have no idea how humiliated and humbled we feel. Yesterday we were proud that we knew something. Today we see your great-heartedness, your nobility of thinking and your great vision. Forgive us. But we are happy that because of our intransigence, you came out and opened your

mind to us. So we have no regrets for yesterday." Then I did something which I generally don't do, I went forward and touched his feet and said, "I have nothing to say and I don't think anyone else is going to say anything." There was complete silence in the Hall till Gurudev stood up, gave his *namaste* to all of us and went to his car. We followed him. There was no clapping and no cheering, but only the deepest reverence in our minds to this greatest of our teachers.

Now this is a picture of Tagore which I have never forgotten. He was indeed a great sentinel of the freedom of the mind.

So I remember his gracious personality, his intellect, his genius to befriend young people, the manner in which his heart could meet the heart of the youth of India in those days. He always came down from the great heights of his art and vision in order to meet the young people at their own level, to love them and get love in return from them. It was in Santiniketan he lived and worked, wrote his great songs and poems, thought out his dynamic philosophy of life and progress and finally passed away in the fullness of time. Santiniketan remains the greatest monument to his memory.

TAGORE; HIS PHILOSOPHY

I have tried to paint the background against which one can look at the personality of Rabindranath Tagore and understand it a little. But there is a much deeper background than a description of Santiniketan or some of his personal qualities. Someone once said that the history of India is the history from the Buddha to Mahatma Gandhi. He was probably right in a way. We might as well say that the cultural history of India is our history from the Upanishads to the Gitanjali. May be, we can amend it and say that the cultural history of India is the history of India from Valmiki and Kalidasa to Rabindranath Tagore. The thought of Valmiki and Kalidasa naturally comes to mind when we think of the vital cultural background of Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy, poetry, thought and works.

Tagore's mind was deeply embedded in the philosophy of the Upanishads. He knew his Sanskrit well. He had grown up in one of the most cultured families of Bengal where the study of Sanskrit was like the air which the boys and the girls of the family breathed. His father was called 'Maharshi' Devendranath Tagore and the Maharshi was a profound

scholar of Sanskrit and one of the great leaders of the Brahma Samaj movement. Tagore from his early years steeped his mind in the thought and culture of the Upanishads. I remember once Tagore saying to us in a class, something from the Upanishads which at once suited the occasion and the lesson he was taking. It was something like this. "The human mind is continually being pressed down by the dead weight of wrong thinking; mental and spiritual superstitions weigh down the mind of man. The Upanishads teach us that if we release the mind from this dead weight, then it becomes like a flaming arrow, hitting the mark unerringly."

On another occasion I remember Tagore teaching us, "It is said in the Bible, it is a very great teaching of the Bible, that you should love your neighbour as yourself. There is in the Upanishads, an advance even on this. That is, that you and your neighbour are really one. It is not a question of somebody loving somebody outside himself. The Upanishads point not merely to the need of true love between neighbours but to your utter identity with your neighbour, as two sparks of life from the same fire of the Divine." Now this was a startling truth, the complete identity of all human life, which Gurudev stressed and which the Upanishads proclaimed.

So his mind was saturated with ideas from the ancient wisdom of India. He was a great lover of Valmiki and he once said that there has never been in world literature, a greater natural poet than Valmiki. I remember that he said that in Shakespeare, Nature sometimes waits at the door for human recognition. Shakespeare allows Nature to peep in through the window and sometimes to come in at the door.

But in Valmiki Nature is at the centre of life and life is woven round Nature. The cultural background of Rabindranath Tagore is thus the cultural background of India. But he was not a man who would retreat into the past and stay there. He went into the great past to recover its treasures and then to press forward into the greater future. I have never known a man who intellectually more completely rejected the idea of every reactionary thought than Tagore. Always, he looked forward, though he took all the strength that the past could give him.

There is his great book called "Sadhana" with chapters entitled, 'Realisation in Beauty', 'Realisation in Truth', 'Realisation in Action' etc. The whole book is an essay on self-realisation. This book gives the best in the past of India as reborn in the mind of one of the world's greatest Moderns. Here is India of the great past reincarnating in modern form and substance. So are other books like "Creative Unity" and "Personality" which represent a high synthesis of ancient and modern wisdom.

At this point I may mention something which we must never forget. Tagore hardly ever wrote a single line of prose or poetry in any language except Bengali. Almost the entire body of his works which we have today in English is translation of what he originally wrote in Bengali.

I remember we were many South Indian students in Santiniketan. He always spoke in Bengali in Santiniketan. I once led a small students' deputation to him and said, "Gurudev, this is very unfair to us. We are not Bengalis and Visva-bharati is not a Bengali institution, but an International

University. You are a great teacher and you refuse to speak a single word in Santiniketan except in Bengali language!" He looked at me, became a little thoughtful and said, "There is something in what you say." And then added, "I cannot be fair to you unless I am fair to myself. You know I cannot speak the English language properly." Now it was one of the greatest masters of the English language in India who was telling us that in comparison to his knowledge of his own mother-tongue, his knowledge of English was so poor that he dared not speak in it. When he spoke, when he took classes, when he took part in discussions, except rarely, he would talk only in Bengali.

Wednesday is the weekly holiday in Santiniketan. There is no other holiday in the week, probably because Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, his father who founded Santiniketan, passed away on a Wednesday. On every Wednesday Gurudev would come into the small, simple, open temple to speak on spiritual matters to his students. He never spoke except in Bengali on these occasions. His love of the Bengali language was a love all by itself.

When Tagore passed away, great tributes were paid to his memory from all over the world. In London, the then Secretary of State for India, Mr. Amery, said about Tagore, "One of the most remarkable things about this great Indian poet was his marvellous mastery of the English language." But the Poet himself would say he did not know English well enough to speak it well. The simple truth was he loved his Bengali best.

Now Tagore stood out not only for the unity of India; he stood valiantly for the unity of mankind. Visva-bharati was

built, if I might say so, upon a triple foundation. This has been stressed by the Poet again and again. This consists of:-

1. The unity of mankind. To him there was no white or black or brown or yellow man, nor the upper caste or lower caste or any class. Man was first and last just man, pure and whole.
2. The freedom of man and of his mind. This was a matter over which the poet could easily become prophetic and passionate in his utterances.
3. The right to happiness. The quest of civilisation is the undiluted happiness of men and women. Wherever true human happiness is betrayed, civilisation goes under.

So when the Santiniketan school, after nearly 30 years of existence, became the Visva-bharati University, the basic concept of the University was that of the union of world cultures.

The Visva-bharati was founded on the rock of the belief in the unity of the human race and on the conviction that unity can be achieved only through the unity of all the cultures of the world. Therefore, the Visva-bharati became the great reception hall for all the cultures of Asia and Europe. It had Bengali at the centre of its life because this institution was in Bengal. Then there was naturally Sanskrit, Pali and Hindi. Later on, Tamil was added as the chief Dravidian language; from abroad there was German, French, Chinese and Tibetan.

Remember this was thirty years ago, long before India became free. Here was a thinker and a poet who said even

then that national freedom was not the adequate goal of India. He wanted India to look far beyond political independence. He inspired India to look towards the day when the world would become one. He, therefore, founded the Visva-bharati on the concept that mankind was one indivisible family, that the testament of that unity was the unfettered freedom of man and specially his mind and that the test of civilisation was the real happiness of men and women everywhere.

Now Gandhi also, like Tagore, took the view that national freedom would come some day and there was the need to look toward the more distant vision of a new, just and peaceful human society. At the time we were under total subjection culturally and I remember Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das saying at the Gaya Congress that the cultural conquest of India was almost as complete as the political conquest of India. But even under such subjection, the soul of India remarkably rose again and again and stood up before the world declaring its indestructible autonomy. This deep cry has come from the heart of India through the uncounted centuries, vibrant with her *sadhana* that nothing could ever destroy her soul. It was Tagore's view that at no time was India really or totally subjugated in her mind. It is fascinating to think about India in these terms. It was when we were under political subjection that, a Raja Ram Mohan Roy came, the Ramakrishna Vivekananda movement arose, Dayananda Saraswathi appeared and scientists like Bose, Raman and Ray and poets such as Rabindranath, Iqbal, Bharathi and Vallathol gave the world new light and an outburst of beauty.

Then what is the meaning of subjection? If it does not kill your soul, if it does not give you the feeling that you are

fettered beyond recovery and if your soul continually rises up pushing away every obstacle, then subjection becomes meaningless. The history of India in those many years before freedom is a history which challenged subjection from within. Tagore was the finest and noblest symbol of that challenge.

Now Tagore travelled in many countries in the world. He won the Nobel Prize for literature. His writings became famous. Then after the First World War he went to Germany. The German people received him and heard his message of peace long before Mahatma Gandhi delivered that message. He delivered the message that war can solve no problem, that the only way of building the unity and prosperity of all mankind was the way of peace. Tagore did not use the words *Ahimsa* and *Satyagraha* but his meaning was the same.

I shall give you one remarkable story at this point. Tagore went to Japan after the First World War. Japan had become a world power. When Tagore spoke first at the Tokyo University, a big crowd of people came to listen to him because they had heard of his fame. In the very first lecture he delivered a moral attack upon militarism in Japan. He said people had taken him to Japanese schools and he had seen little Japanese boys dressed like soldiers, strutting up and down, as though they were to grow up and conquer the whole world. The entire system of education had become militarised. And then he said something which made them very angry. He said that it was only when the Japanese people proved to the satisfaction of the world that Japan too could rear the bloodhounds of civilisation in her kennels that she became a great power before the world. But he said, they had one of the most exquisite and artistic cultures in the world. There was hardly

anything in the world that could compare with it. But all this was being destroyed in the attempt to ape European civilisation. The Japanese became very angry and they wrote and they said that after all, Tagore was the poet of a defeated nation! He came from a conquered country. The second day he spoke again. The audience was very small. But he lectured even more forcefully against militarism. He left Japan as a very sad man because he found that the message of peace and goodwill that he came to deliver was not acceptable to the militant Japanese people. We now know how atom bombs blasted and destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki years later. Was not Japanese militarism heading for this catastrophe? Japan became an imperialist power, attacked the mighty body of China and tore it into pieces. The Japanese invasion of China is one of the saddest chapters of Asian history. You remember the old saying of the Bible "He who takes the sword shall perish by the sword." Man turns his back upon such teachings and goes into violence and military power and invites disaster. Look at what happened to Germany. When I saw Berlin in 1955, it was still an unbelievable picture of destruction. So many years after the war, the whole city had not recovered from the terrible disaster which fell upon it. Mighty buildings had crashed, many factories were blown up and grand palaces razed to the ground. The great church where the German Emperors used to worship was also smashed. It looked as if it would take many years to rebuild Berlin.

So, Tagore delivered his message of peace and internationalism to a war-weary world. He said his own country must look beyond the frontiers of nationalism, towards a world order in which the human family would be one. For a man to say this 40 years ago when nationalism was erupting

in India and elsewhere, was moral courage of the highest order and when he found opposition to this idea, even then, he kept on redelivering the message with unabated vigour and conviction.

When he went to several European countries after the first War and delivered his message of peace, big crowds came and listened to him with great respect. A German paper wrote that there never was after Jesus Christ a greater teacher of peace than the poet-saint from India. A distinguished German thinker, Count Keyserling, after meeting and talking with Tagore testified that he was the most universal and complete human being he had ever known. He used the words 'most complete human being' because Tagore was not only a poet but a philosopher, a dramatist, a novelist, a Social Reformer and an Internationalist whose message was vibrant with hope and vision.

His philosophy was one which emphasised the unity of man. In fact, one of his quarrels with Mahatma Gandhi at that time was that Gandhi was placing too much emphasis on nationalism in India. He warned Mahatma Gandhi that nationalism could become a dangerous trap for the soul of India. The Poet wanted India to look far beyond the frontiers of nationalism. Gandhi's response was as noble as the Poet's challenge. He said in effect, "I cannot die for mankind before I learn to live for India. Unless India discovers its freedom and attains its nationhood, it can make no contribution to internationalism. A weak India, a broken India, an enslaved India can do nothing for mankind, and so I am seeking to release India from subjection. I am releasing India from bondage, so that there can be an India which will live in order to be ready to die for mankind, if necessary."

The second aspect of Tagore's philosophy is the freedom of man and specially the freedom of his mind. His whole soul raged against every kind of dictatorship, because his thesis was that if man studies the whole history of the world he would find that there is nothing more precious that has emerged through the ages than the freedom of the human mind. There have come to man through the ages of his history, poetry, philosophy, painting, architecture, culture, science, and progress. If you examine all these things and ask the question "What is the greatest gift of history to mankind?" Tagore's answer would be "The freedom of the human mind". Wherever that freedom is in peril, all civilisation and culture are in peril.

Now in this Tagore was not alone. Great world thinkers stood with him at that time. There was the great French writer and thinker Romain Rolland. He had also won the Nobel prize and his books had become greatly known throughout Europe. When the First World War came, the French Government wanted the French writers to attack German culture. Many French writers fell into this trap of hate. The first casualty in a war is truth! But Romain Rolland gave a resounding moral challenge saying "I am not a politician. I am a man of letters and literature has no frontiers. I will not utter a lie or propagate hate even for my fatherland". The result was that within a short time he found himself an exile on the heights of Switzerland. He never perhaps went back to France. He lived and died an exile.

Now he and Tagore and other writers joined together in those tragic and difficult days to uphold the truth that for men of letters, of culture and of philosophy, and for poets and painters, there could be no war amongst themselves because in

such a community there was a brotherhood cutting across all national frontiers. You see, therefore, that the freedom of the human mind was for Rabindranath Tagore the most precious heritage of history.

I remember when I came from Santiniketan to Gandhiji's Ashram in Sabaramati, people there talked about a good few 'musts' to me. I replied that I was a free man and was going to think and work along my own lines. I got into some trouble but it was Gandhiji himself who came to my rescue. He saved me from some of his well-meaning disciples. But I am profoundly grateful to God that I had by then some understanding of the meaning of the freedom of human mind. Freedom is not licence. If I hurt you it is not freedom. If I vilify you it is not freedom. It is licence. Freedom is the right of every human being to think for himself, create a world of imagination and vision for himself and to grow up in that world with no one forcing him away from it by insisting he must go this way or that. May be many people who are free-minded may join together for a common purpose, but even that should be voluntary and should come from understanding and conviction.

Then, finally, his philosophy was one of human happiness. He used to say very often that no education was worth the name in which the boys and the girls were not full of happiness in their classes. If, in the process of education, boys and girls became unhappy, frustrated and subservient then there was something fundamentally wrong with that education. And so, he insisted on freedom and happiness in his school and his university.

These were, therefore, fundamental ideas in the philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore, the unity of man, the freedom of

man and his mind and man's happiness in this earthly life. The Indian mind is often apt to be ashamed of and apologetic of happiness. Tagore broke away from that traditional view. Some of his great poems in the *Gitanjali* bear witness to this. But of this, later.

I said to you something about my first meeting with Rabindranath Tagore. Let me now say a word about my last meeting with him in Santiniketan. I had gone there a few years before he passed away. I have a very vivid recollection of the occasion. I was then in the thick of the fight for the freedom of India and going in and out of prison. During one of the intervals from prison, there was an invitation from the Malayalees of Calcutta asking me to come there and talk to them about what was happening in Travancore. They had promised me a few thousand rupees for the struggle. We needed money very badly in those days to run the campaign. So I went to Calcutta and having gone there, I went to Santiniketan. Gurudev Tagore was then there. I wanted to see him and he called me to him very kindly. I went and touched his feet and he talked to me at some length and when I was coming away, I said to him "Gurudev, it is a long time since I left Santiniketan and I have now seen you after many years. May be it will be many years before I come back to Santiniketan and will be able to see you again. Please give me a message, not a message for publication in newspapers, but a message which I can lock up in my heart for ever." He was very pleased and a little moved at my request. He looked thoughtful for a minute, smiled (I distinctly remember that smile now) and said "Wherever you are and whatever you do, you must remember you are a child of Visva-bharati and you will be a child of Visva-bharati not simply by saying to yourself that you are

a child of Visva-bharati but by being loyal to one ideal above all others. In all your dealings with men and women, make up your mind that the greatest thing about all men and women is just that they are men and women. Education, wealth, power, or any greatness are all extraneous and accidental but the mere fact that a man is a man is the greatest thing about him. Biologically and spiritually this is the truth. If you keep this in your mind then there are no castes in your mind, no communities, no races and no classes. You look upon man as man and respect him as man." I took this message from him with folded hands. Alas, I never saw him again. But I have tried to carry this message in my heart during all these years, sometimes successfully, sometimes not so successfully, sometimes even forgetting it but always coming back to it. Later on, I realised that Gurudev had defined for me the deepest basis of Sarvodaya without my realising it then.

I have tried to give you in this talk something of the philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore. He was no *sanyasin* or ascetic turning away from life. He lived his life normally, richly and fully. He rejected nothing that nature or life offered him. He took everything and made it part of his living and radiant sadhana. He was a great poet. He wrote much beautiful music. He was a great dramatist and story writer. He was a noble philosopher. He was a great educationist and a great teacher. Before he died he became a great painter. He wrote a song for every mood of the soul, for every gesture and season of nature, for every rhythm of the human emotions. I have a notion that his songs will long outlive even his poetry. But often in him poetry and music were one and inseparable.

Now songs cannot be translated. You can translate poetry with some difficulty. Supposing you take some of the exquisite poems and songs of Bharathi and translate them into English, what would happen? If you read the English translation, you will get nothing of the beauty of the original Tamil composition. Can we translate Tyagaraja's *Kritis* into English and French? So many of the great songs of Tagore remain untranslated and untranslatable. I hope they will never be cheaply translated because if that is done, they will perish. If anybody wants to know them, let him learn Bengali and know them first hand.

Tagore was a many-sided genius, the first of a new type in an integrated world culture.

TAGORE; HIS POETRY

If someone had asked Tagore whether he was a dramatist, story-writer, novelist, philosopher, literary critic, painter, prophet or poet, he would have unhesitatingly said that he was a poet first and last. Every other expression of his art would be only secondary. Some of the world poets and thinkers have defined and elucidated the significance of poetry. But for Tagore, poetry was the highest expression of the human soul. Therefore, we see him saying in the *Gitanjali* that only as a poet could he reach God:—

“ ... I know
that only as a singer I come before thy presence.”

No doubt, his dramas, essays, short stories, novels, paintings, philosophical writings and inspired talks were all parts of his profound self-expression, but without his poetry these would not fit into their proper places. Poetry was the sun of the solar system of his genius round which the other planets of his manifold art revolved. To Tagore, poetry at its best was God's most authentic voice speaking and singing through the instrument of the human mind and, therefore, poetry represented beauty, truth, wisdom and goodness in one integrated process. That being his concept of poetry, it is no wonder that he would often say he was only a poet and nothing but a poet!

Who is really a poet? And what is the function of poetry? There are innumerable classical statements on this subject. But there is one statement by a remarkable poet of our own time - George Russell - which we might consider. George Russell has written: "In poetry is found the sincerest and the highest utterances of the human spirit. All poetry is written on the mount of transfiguration and there is in it the mingling of heaven and earth. If a man is not sincere in this manner of speaking, his speech betrayeth him." In the Bible, there is the story of Christ's transfiguration. He stood on a hill and his disciples were looking on, when he suddenly gave them a vision of his *Vishwarupa*. This vision of the *Vishwarupa* is what you come across in the Gita also. Lord Krishna gave Arjuna a vision of his *Vishwarupa* and then Arjuna saw the continuity of life from beginning to eternity and so his duty, his *karma*, became clear to him.

Therefore, this reference to the mount of transfiguration means that all poetry is written on the mountain-top of vision, looking at the totality of life and understanding the depth of truth. Poetry throbs with the beauty and the reality of truth, absorbs truth and then pours it out in words of beauty. All great poetry arises from vision, understanding and realisation. Then Russell further says ... "There is in it the mingling of heaven and earth." That again is significant. You know poetry is sometimes considered as though it is in the air like the clouds, never coming down to the hard earth of reality. Russell says that poetry represents the mingling of idealism with realism, heaven standing for idealism and earth for realism. And then he adds that in this manner of speaking, if a man is not sincere, his speech betrayeth him. You know we can do many ugly things and get away with it

all in this world. But one cannot get away with false poetry because if you produce false poetry it will stand self-exposed. It takes no time to discover false poetry—that is in the very nature of poetry. If you are really not a poet you can never convince the world you are really a poet, whatever you do about it. But if your poetry is real poetry, the world will know it and cherish it whatever happens. It comes out like the blossoming of a flower. No one can hide the truth and the beauty of true poetry.

What is the function of poetry? All of us are fond of poems. Everyone of us can quote something from some poet or other, often when we are alone. Some lines of poetry come sometimes to all of us. I remember in prison how our doors would be closed at 6 p. m. We would be in separate rooms and in my cell, all by myself, I would recite or sing for all I was worth. I would recite long lines of Malayalam poetry. It is curious that I hardly recited an English poem in prison though I knew more English poetry than Malayalam.

Now how does poetry come into the world? To begin with, there is an imaginative mind and heart full of deep emotions. Then something strikes a chord in the mind and in the heart. The person looks at something and suddenly says, "Oh! How beautiful this is, how sweet this is!" He may be looking at the sunrise or a flower or a face forgetting everything else. Now if a person observes beauty or truth or goodness and is merely thrilled by them, no poetry is necessarily born. The thrill can only be the first step in poetry. After the mind and the heart join in a common thrill, in a common experience of emotion, if there is also an urge to express, to speak, to write, then you come to the second step in poetry. There are people who look at beauty and truth and

love them. But they do not take a pen and write; they do not sit back and whisper words to themselves nor would they paint. So the second step is the urge to express oneself in terms of what one has experienced. It is like the pangs of childbirth. Something has to be born from the mind and the heart of the poet and it struggles for expression. This is the struggle in the soul of the poet. Expression is, therefore, the third step in poetry. Some words are coined, some lines written, either in the mind or on paper. Those words hold within them the image of the beauty or the goodness that struck the mind. They enshrine within themselves what the poet has experienced. In other words, words become the vessel in which the poet seeks to hold the image of beauty or truth or goodness which he has experienced and by which he is thrilled. If all this takes place, then poetry is born.

There is a test which we apply to find out if what has been born is real poetry or merely the jingling of words. There are many persons who jingle with words and think they are poets. But if the work is real poetry, there is a test that it must stand. It is not enough that the poetic heart and mind has great experiences and that these experiences are put into the vessel of words. It must be put in such a manner, with such artistry, with such depth of feeling and such sense of beauty that anyone reading it anytime, must get for himself or herself the same experience through which the poet had passed once upon a time. It has been said that poetry is the art of putting eternity into the fleeting moments of the poet's experience. After all, when a poet has experienced something and has written his poem that experience passes away and new experiences keep coming on. So there is a change of experience, a stream of experience through which the poet's mind passes.

But if he enshrines his experience in poetry he develops the art of holding that experience for ever in the vessel of words, in words of beauty, feeling and meaning.

Now if we keep in mind what George Russell said, then we see at once that poets are inspired teachers of mankind, inspired revealers of beauty and truth. When Rabindranath Tagore said, as he has said so often, "I am a poet and nothing but a poet", he was not rejecting claims to greatness. He was taking to himself the greatest claim to greatness.

One of Tagore's great books is the *Gitanjali*. 'Anjali' means 'offering' and 'Git' means 'poetry' or song. So *Gitanjali* is the offering of poetry and song to man and God. This again is significant. Many people make many offerings to God. The rich man offers money. The women offer flowers. The *Karmayogi* makes an offering of action without attachment. Now what can a poet offer? He cannot offer money. He is often poor. A poet cannot offer a concrete programme of human revolution and action. He can only offer the best he can produce and that can only be his poetry.

In the *Gitanjali*, in one of his earliest poems, Tagore says:—

"When Thou commandest me to sing, it seems my heart would break with pride; and I look to thy face, and tears come to my eyes.

All that is harsh and dissonant in my life melts into one sweet harmony—and my adoration spreads wings like a glad bird on its flight across the sea.

I know thou takest pleasure in my singing. I know that only as a singer I come before thy presence."

Here is the pathway of the poet towards God. The pathway of a *Karamyogi* is his action. The pathway of a *Gnanayogi* is his intellectual quest after God. But the only pathway through which the poet approaches God, realises God, is his poetry. Therefore, he says, 'Only as a singer do I come before thy presence.' That gives again an insight into what poetry means to the poet. To a true poet, his highest pathway of realisation is poetry and, therefore, politics, society, wealth, riches, power and glory are all nothing to him, compared to the gift of poetry. To him the first and last testament of greatness is his poetry and no poet will surrender his poetry for anything in the world. And so when Tagore offered his poetry and song to God and man he offered the best and the highest in his power and genius. Take Subramanya Bharathi. I am not a Tamil scholar and I do not want to claim any close knowledge of his genius. But I have studied Bharathi with some care. I studied his works with a great teacher, the late Kalki. Krishnamurthi and I were working together many years ago in Shri Rajaji's Gandhi Ashram at Tiruchengode. I was the Manager of the Gandhi Ashram and he was working there as Personal Assistant to Rajaji. He had read something I had written in English and translated some of my writings into Tamil. We became friends and evening after evening I sat with him as he read or recited from Bharathi and explained the meaning of the verses. The vision that came to me was the vision of a poet who died very young, a poet who was not appreciated while he lived. He lived and died a pauper. In fact he was sometimes hungry and had no food to eat. As I listened to his poetry I said to myself, "Here is another Tagore in another language." He did not have all the facilities which Tagore had to grow and to develop into a world figure. But there is the same exquisite genius of a poet in Subramanya

Bharati. He too wrote 'patriotic songs like Tagore did. He wrote beautiful 'Pappa Pattu' - poetry for children - exactly the same as Tagore did. Bharati would interpret the deepest yearning of India's soul. Tagore did the same thing. May be, Subramanya Bharati is not as great a many-sided genius as Tagore - poet, dramatist, literary critic, story-writer, novelist, and philosopher which Tagore became. But all that genius was in him. It is curious in the case of Subramanya Bharati that his poetry came out of his suffering, out of his poverty and struggle. The name of Bharati will live because he interpreted the soul of the Tamil people as no other man did. I remember many things that Kalki used to read and explain - the genius of Bharati to hold a whole world of meaning in a few, crisp Tamil words. I think this is the genius of the Tamil language. As I listened to Bharati's songs read and recited by Kalki, I realised that Bharati was among the immortals of poetry. Bharati was an "unacknowledged legislator" of the Tamil mind. He wrote his poetry on the mount of transfiguration; in his poetry there was the mingling of heaven and earth. And in the manner of his speaking through his poetry his speech never betrayed him.

What then is the function of poetry? Its function, as I said, is to put eternity into the fleeting glimpses of beauty and truth. What the poet sees, what the poet feels, what he understands, must live for ever in his poetry. Secondly, a poet must reveal the truth without fear and without hesitation, because he rises upon great wings of inspiration and looks at life face to face. There is no going round and round to discover truth. There is no long search or analysis. What a philosopher takes a whole life-time to know, the poet will take one moment to experience. So a poet must reveal the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, fully, richly and without fear or favour. He must

reveal it in such a way that we love the truth that he reveals. A politician may reveal some truth, but we may hate the manner he does it. An intellectual may reveal a truth and we might get headaches in understanding what he has revealed, but when a poet reveals the truth, he reveals it in such a manner that we love it and we get the same experience through which he passed.

Edward Thompson, who studied Bengali and read Gurudev in the original Bengali, has written a big book on Tagore. Some people considered it a superficial book. I remember the *Modern Review* writing about this book that there were some mistranslations from the original Bengali into English which would make the old women of Bengal have a good laugh! Making allowance for all that, it remains one of the best books on Tagore in the English language. In that book, the author ultimately asks the question whether Tagore would take his place with Shakespeare or Goethe. He did not say with Kalidasa or Valmiki because he did not know enough about them. He doubts whether Tagore's place is as high as to be with Shakespeare or Goethe. Edward Thompson's verdict is that Tagore would be among the first in the second rank of the world's poets. Now we need not accept this judgment. But we realise that even a cold-blooded Englishman could write this about Tagore. The judgment of Thompson is not final and cannot be final because Tagore's poetry is in Bengali and Thompson was not really a Bengali scholar. One great Bengali author told me once, "Tagore will take 50 years to recover from the English translations of his works. These translations are so inadequate, so incomplete and imperfect that to judge Tagore by these translations is to misjudge him completely and some day people will have to study Tagore in

the original Bengali to know his greatness and it may take fifty, sixty or a hundred years before people of other lands learn Bengali to understand Tagore". This is a very significant statement. At the same time let us remember that the Nobel Prize was not given to the Bengali *Gitanjali* but to the English *Gitanjali*, which shows that even in his life-time his poetry survived the ordeal of translation. In fact, Tagore's works have been translated into many languages, sometimes undergoing the ordeal of a double translation. I can recall a story which shows how the translations of Tagore's works were valued by people in distant parts of the world. You know there was a revolution in Spain before Franco took over. It was a great battle to establish the Republic of Spain. Pandit Nehru went to Spain then and spent some time with the Republican Army. Once Nehru was in one of the trenches. Towards evening the soldiers were resting in their trenches. Nehru suddenly heard a song in Spanish which sounded thrilling and so he asked what that song was. It was the Spanish translation of the poem of Tagore which begins with "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high." It is the song of Indian patriotism but lifting patriotism to the highest level. I know most of you know this piece of poetry. Someone has called it the noblest patriotic poem written by any poet in any language. Here it is:-

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action—

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake. ”

Tagore composed this poem as expressing the patriotic fervour of India and in that poem he paints the picture of the India that must finally emerge, the picture of the country which can be equal to any country in the world. The first quality of such a country would be fearlessness. As I have said earlier, the greatest passion of the poet was the passion for the freedom of the human mind. So knowledge must be free. Every child must be entitled to the highest education as the free gift of that new India. And then he wanted an India where life was not broken into castes and communities, by narrow domestic walls, an India where the clear river of reason was not lost in the desert of dead habits. Most of us, particularly young people, talk big of revolution, but when it comes to action we prefer retreat and surrender. If somebody in a family wants to break caste, we fight that person with all our might and yet we talk of a casteless society. Dead habits and superstitions are all around us like a dunghill. All these dead habits Tagore wanted to put away. Then he wished that India must continually strive towards a greater and nobler life. This is no narrow patriotism, nor the pride of country, but the glorious vision of a liberated India in a liberated world.

Tagore's poetry is like a veritable ocean. The Visva-bharati University has published Tagore's original poems in

the Bengali language running into many volumes. Luckily for Tagore and the world, he lived long. He drunk deep of the thought of the modern world. He had read much of all the great poetry of the world. His knowledge of English literature was wide and profound. His mind was of course soaked in Indian culture. When he began to write poetry, it came out of his soul like a Gangetic stream, running away with him and almost drowning him in its flood. His poems came to him out of his own deep *sadhana*. It is an old tradition in India for our saints and sages to rise before the sun rises. We look reverently at the sky and watch the beauty of the infant morning. In all our yoga practices, in our study of music and philosophy, we have the tradition to get up before sunrise and practise our lessons. Equally important is the *sandhya* time, the twilight before night. Tagore would come out of his little beautiful mud hut in Santiniketan and sit out in the open long before the sun rose or just at sunset time. Sunrise and sunset at Santiniketan are enchanting. It was on these occasions the poet sat in meditation and drew out of his soul and the soul of Nature his poems and songs.

Let me now refer to a few selections from his poetry: Here is one of his poems :

“Life of my life I shall ever try to keep my body pure, knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs.

I shall ever try to keep all untruths out from my thoughts, knowing that thou art that truth which has kindled the light of reason in my mind.

I shall ever try to drive all evils away from my heart and keep my love in flower, knowing that thou hast thy seat in the inmost shrine of my heart.

And it shall be my endeavour to reveal thee in my actions, knowing it is thy power, gives me strength to act."

The poet would keep his body pure not simply because it was his body, but because it was the body that Divine grace touched every day and every moment of his life. If the body was to be worthy of Divine touch and grace, it must be kept pure and immaculate.

Here is another great poem, which is very often quoted. The poet wants to worship God. He seeks God everywhere. He goes into the temple, the church and the mosque. God was not in any of these. He went to the seats of power and he went to the great intellects, but did not find his God. He discovered that God was with "the poorest, the lowliest and the lost". God was with the toilers of the world. Then he wanted to bend and touch the feet of God in worship as Indians do. He found, however, that he could not bend low enough to reach the depths of suffering and poverty where God's feet were caught and held in the lives of "the poorest, the lowliest and the lost".

"Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and lowliest, and lost. "

Look at the combination of the words, "the poorest, and lowliest and lost". The world reckons little of these people. But it is with them that God moves.

"Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost. "

This is a more revolutionary song than the "La Marseillaise" of the French Revolution, or any song of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. The revolutionary urge develops further in the

next poem. He goes into a temple and sees the priests sitting there. He looks at them and then in a wave of revolutionary emotion, he asks them to open their eyes and see that their God is not before them. They close their eyes in order probably to deceive themselves that God is there. But God is there with the toilers, with the stone-breakers, with those whose clothes are covered with dust and whose bodies drip with sweat. So in a passion he asks them to get out of the temple and stand where God stands with the toilers in the field. What a wonderful song for socialism in our country of endless rituals and ceremonies! The poem rises in a crescendo of the spirit :-

"Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!

He is there where the toiler is tilling the hard ground and where the pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!

Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found? Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us all for ever.

Come out of thy meditation and leave aside thy flowers and incense! What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained? Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow. "

Let me now come to some poems of utter sweetness, poems of love, of dedication. Here is one :—

Thoughts and Talks

“Let only that little be left of me whereby I may name thee my all.

Let only that little be left of my will whereby I may feel thee on every side, and come to thee in everything, and offer to thee my love every moment.

Let only that little be left of me whereby I may never hide thee.

Let only that little of my fetters be left whereby I am bound with thy will, and thy purpose is carried out in my life—and that is the fetter of thy love.”

Occasionally people will say that all these songs are mystic songs. In fact Tagore himself once said to us, “If you try to see mysticism in every line I have written, you will not understand me.” The song may be a song addressed to God or one addressed to the beloved; whichever way you look at it, you can get the thrill of joy and beauty from it.

Here is another poem :—

“When the heart is hard and parched up, come upon me with a shower of mercy.

When grace is lost from life, come with a burst of song.

When tumultuous work raises its din on all sides shutting me out from beyond, come to me, my lord of silence with thy peace and rest.

When my beggarly heart sits crouched, shut up in a corner, break open the door, my king, and come with the ceremony of a king.

When desire blinds the mind with delusion and dust, O thou holy one, thou wakeful, come with thy light and thy thunder.”

Thoughts and Talks

Here is the cry of the mind for the Redeemer in every situation of life.

Now here is a nice little story :—

“I had gone a-begging from door to door in the village path, when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance like a gorgeous dream and I wondered who was this King of all kings!

My hopes rose high and methought my evil days were at an end, and I stood waiting for alms to be given unasked and for wealth scattered on all sides in the dust.

The chariot stopped where I stood. Thy glance fell on me and thou camest down with a smile. I felt that the luck of my life had come at last. Then of a sudden thou didst hold out thy right hand and say, “What hast thou to give to me?”

Ah, what a kingly jest was it to open thy palm to a beggar to beg! I was confused and stood undecided, and then from my wallet I slowly took out the least little grain of corn and gave it to thee.

But how great my surprise when at the day's end I emptied my bag on the floor to find a least little grain of gold among the poor heap! I bitterly wept and wished that I had had the heart to give thee my all.”

Even this is not mysticism. You might call it an allegory. You give a grain of corn and you get a grain of gold. It is the law of moral life. It is the challenge that you get more than you give. There is no getting without giving.

Now look at this. This is one of the songs which I have always loved very much :—

“Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well.

O thou beautiful, there in the nest it is thy love that encloses the soul with colours and sounds and odours.

There comes the morning with the golden basket in her right hand bearing the wreath of beauty, silently to crown the earth.

And there comes the evening over the lonely meadows deserted by herds, through trackless paths carrying cool draughts of peace in her golden pitcher from the western ocean of rest.

But there where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flight in, reigns the stainless white radiance.

There is no day nor night, nor form nor colour and never, never a word.”

Now this idea “Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well” was painted by the great Bengali painter, Nandalal Bose. It is a very simple painting. There is the tiny, final end of the long twig of a tree stretching into space. A little tiny twig stretches out into the infinite space and on that twig is a little nest with a few birds fluttering in and out. At the bottom of the painting is written, “Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well.” The nest is very important to human life. Equally important is the infinite sky to the human mind. The nest is the earth, the home we make, our finitude as one might call it. No man can run away from finitude saying, “I am an unfettered human soul. I care nothing for the earth.” The roots must be in this life, but the branches must spread out into the infinite sky and we should be capable of a quick movement from the nest to the sky and from the sky back to the nest

again, the nest representing a well-ordered human society and the sky representing the infinite of aspiration.

His poetry was never always up in the clouds. It was rooted in the hard earth, but always reaching out into the farthest limits of beauty and truth. There are great revolutionary streams in his poetry. There is patriotism in his poetry, but it is a patriotism never narrow, never aggressive, but creative and envisioning the whole world bound together in love and beauty. There are streams of love – earthly love and divine love – which are so illuminating that the dullest hearts can respond to their throbbing call.

Here is yet another poem which I am certain you would like to hear :-

“That I want thee, only thee — let my heart repeat without end. All desires that distract me, day and night, are false and empty to the core.

As the night keeps hidden in its gloom the petition for light, even thus in the depth of my unconsciousness rings the cry — “I want thee, only thee.”

As the storm still seeks its end in peace when it strikes against peace with all its might, even thus my rebellion strikes against thy love and still its cry is — “I want thee, only thee.”

Now look at some of these lines. Every storm creates a stir unsettling peace, but the poet says when a storm breaks up peace and rages against peace, even so the storm is inevitably leading to peace because a storm is never a normal condition. However much a storm may rage in the heart and soul of man, that storm cannot last; it is making its way steadily towards peace. He reveals that storms and conflicts are not normal

but interruptions. What really is valid and normal in the life of man is peace.

Here is a very striking poem again. The lovers had spent the night together - may be God and man or may be human lovers. The lover had departed and the beloved finds something left behind as a memento. She suddenly finds it is not a garland of flowers that he had left behind, but a sharp sword. And then she says, "Oh! What is it thou has left behind for me?" She realises that what has been left behind is the challenge to action, the challenge to duty at the highest :-

"I thought I should ask of thee — but I dared not — the rose wreath thou hadst on thy neck. Thus I waited for the morning, when thou didst depart, to find a few fragments on the bed. And like a beggar I searched in the dawn only for a stray petal or two.

Ah me, what is it I find? What token left of thy love? It is no flower, no spices, no vase of perfumed water. It is thy mighty sword, flashing as a flame, heavy as a bolt of thunder. The young light of morning comes through the window and spreads itself upon thy bed. The morning bird twitters and asks, "Woman, what hast thou got?" No, it is no flower, nor spices, nor vase of perfumed water — it is thy dreadful sword.

I sit and muse in wonder, what gift is this of thine. I can find no place where to hide it. I am ashamed to wear it, frail as I am, and it hurts me when I press it to my bosom. Yet shall I bear in my heart this honour of the burden of pain, this gift of thine.

From now there shall be no fear left for me in this world, and thou shalt be victorious in all my strife.

Thou hast left death for my companion and I shall crown him with my life. Thy sword is with me to cut asunder my bonds, and there shall be no fear left for me in the world.

From now I leave off all petty decorations. Lord of my heart, no more shall there be for me waiting and weeping in corners, no more coyness and sweetness of demeanour. Thou hast given me thy sword for adornment. No more doll's decorations for me! "

So the lover looks at the sword and trembles wondering what it is for and then in contemplation discovers the meaning of the sword as the challenge to duty and action.

From this grand concept of action and duty, we now come to a gentle and wistful poem:—

"On the slope of the desolate river among tall grasses I asked her, "Maiden, where do you go, shading your lamp with your mantle? My house is all dark and lonesome,—lend me your light!" She raised her dark eyes for a moment and looked at my face through the dusk. "I have come to the river," she said, "to float my lamp on the stream when the daylight wanes in the west." I stood alone among tall grasses and watched the timid flame of her lamp uselessly drifting in the tide.

In the silence of gathering night I asked her, "Maiden, your lights are all lit — then where do you go with your lamp? My house is all dark and lonesome,—lend me your light." She raised her dark eyes on my face and stood for a moment doubtful. "I have come," she said at last, "to dedicate my lamp to the sky." I stood and watched her light uselessly burning in the void.

In the moonless gloom of midnight I asked her, "Maiden, what is your quest, holding the lamp near your heart? My house is all dark and lonesome,—lend me your light." She stopped for a minute and thought and gazed at my face in the dark. "I have brought my light," she said, "to join the carnival of lamps." I stood and watched her little lamp uselessly lost among lights."

Many of us may wonder what its meaning is. This poem is characteristic of Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore was not only a poet, but a saint. But he was a modern saint, if one might say so, who integrated into himself some of the greatest things in the ancient traditions with a positive attitude towards life. I remember again and again Tagore saying that all negation is untruth and that truth is ever positive. Generally a saint renounces everything and retreats into himself; he lights his own lamp inside his soul and then tries to look at the world with the light of that lamp. This poem gives you a different philosophy altogether.

The idea of a positive approach is reflected further in another poem :—

"Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught of thy wine of various colours and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim.

My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame and place them before the altar of thy temple.

No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight.

Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of joy, and all my desires ripen into fruits of love."

Here the two dynamic currents of thinking are :—

- 1) "No, I am not going to live a negative life. I am not going to starve myself and then sit back and weep. I shall live the full life of man but as I do so and as I look at beauty and realise and enjoy it, I shall not be thinking only of that beauty, but of the Creator of that beauty so that even through the normal human enjoyment of all that God has given, I will move towards God."
- 2) "I reject nothing; I accept everything and transmute whatever I accept into the substance of divine worship out of which will come the blossoming of love and service."

He lost his wife when he was only middle-aged and later a beloved daughter. There were thus tragedies in his life. There are some wonderful poems born of sorrow which he has written without mentioning names. Here is one :—

"In desperate hope I go and search for her in all the corners of my room; I find her not.

My house is small and what once has gone from it can never be regained.

But infinite is thy mansion, my lord, and seeking her I have come to thy door.

I stand under the golden canopy of thine evening sky and I lift my eager eyes to thy face.

I have come to the brink of eternity from which nothing can vanish—no hope, no happiness, no vision of a face seen through tears.

Oh, dip my emptied life into that ocean, plunge it into the deepest fullness. Let me for once feel that lost sweet touch in the allness of the universe.

He has lost something ; he knows he cannot gain it back, but he seeks through that loss to gain the frontiers of eternity.

Usually we are all very much afraid of death. Who is not ? As middle age comes and we have passed the age of 55 or 60, we are wondering what is going to happen. Everybody has an illusion that somehow he is not going to die yet, for death is so unpleasant. Tagore's philosophy was that death is a great fulfilment, that life without death would be trivial. Like the leaves that become flower, the flower which becomes the fruit, the fruit which drops down and appears to die, but is reborn again, life is an eternal pilgrimage; and death looked against the background of such a pilgrimage becomes a fulfilment. The traditional Hindu philosophy is that death is like casting away one set of robes for taking on another. But more than that, it was Tagore's philosophy that if a man lived fully, richly, completely and made his life into a life of great understanding and achievement, then such a life would wait and watch for the coming of death as though death is the greatest gift of life. So he wrote :—

“On the day when death will knock at thy door what wilt thou offer to him ?

Oh, I will set before my guest the full vessel of my life — I will never let him go with empty hands.

All the sweet vintage of all my autumn days and summer nights, all the earnings and gleanings of my busy life will I place before him at the close of my days when death will knock at my door.”

He will not give to death a starved and petty life, nor a life without colour and glory. It is not a rattling skeleton that he wants to give into the hands of death, but a mighty gift made out of his experiences and his many-sided self-expression. So he would wait for death as though waiting for a friend and give him the full gift of his completed life. And so again :—

“O Thou the last fulfilment of life, Death, my death, come and whisper to me.

Day after day have I kept watch for thee; for thee have I borne the joys and pangs of life.

All that I am, that I have, that I hope, and all my love have ever flowed towards thee in depth of secrecy. One final glance from thine eyes and my life will be ever thine own.

The flowers have been woven and the garland is ready for the bridegroom.

After the wedding the bride shall leave her home and meet her lord alone in the solitude of night.”

I said to you that Tagore has wonderful poems and songs for children and I once again compare him to Bharati who has given us his “Pappa Pattu”. Here is a poem entitled “The Champa Flower”. A child says to its mother :—

“Supposing I became a *champa* flower, just for fun, and grew on a branch high up that tree, and shook in the wind with laughter and danced upon the newly budded leaves, would you know me, mother ?

You would call, ‘Baby, where are you?’ and I should laugh to myself and keep quite quiet.

I should slyly open my petals and watch you at your work.

When after your bath, with wet hair spread on your shoulders, you walked through the shadow of the *champa* tree to the little court where you say your prayers, you would notice the scent of the flower, but not know that it came from me.

When after the midday meal you sat at the window reading *Ramayana*, and the tree's shadow fell over your hair and your lap, I should fling my wee little shadow on to the page of your book, just where you were reading.

But would you guess that it was the tiny shadow of your little child?

When in the evening you went to the cowshed with the lighted lamp in your hand, I should suddenly drop on to the earth again and be your own baby once more, and beg you to tell me a story.

'Where have you been, you naughty child?'

'I won't tell you, mother' That's what you and I would say then."

Now there is another poem full of simplicity and at the same time full of majesty. It could be the simplest of poems and yet be the most mystical poetry, whichever way you choose:-

"When I bring you coloured toys, my child, I understand why there is such a play of colours on clouds, on water, and why flowers are painted in tints—when I give coloured toys to you, my child.

When I sing to make you dance, I truly know why there is music in leaves, and why waves send their chorus of voices to the heart of the listening earth—when I sing to make you dance.

When I bring sweet things to your greedy hands, I know why there is honey in the cup of the flower, and why fruits are secretly filled with sweet juice—when I bring sweet things to your greedy hands.

When I kiss your face to make you smile, my darling, I surely understand what pleasure streams from the sky in morning light, and what delight the summer breeze brings to my body—when I kiss you to make you smile."

When you give coloured toys to the child and see in the face of the child its reaction of happiness at the gift, when the little one bubbles with happiness, its whole world becomes a world of toys. When you look at this phenomenon, then you understand why God paints the skies at morning and in the evening and why flowers are clothed in colours. Is there any earthly reason, why a certain flower is beautifully yellow and another white? The whole meaning and mystery of life, all its beauty, becomes clear to the poet when he looks at the joy of the child as it plays with its coloured toys. There is wisdom, there is purpose in life and, we men and women, the everlasting children of creation, playing with nature, derive from it the same happiness, the same thrill, that children get when they play with coloured toys. When you sing and the child begins to dance, the poet discovers another meaning to the mystery of life. Was it not a great English poet who said looking at a sensitive plant that if he could understand it, root and branch, he would know the entire meaning of life? Here is Tagore saying that looking at a child and its play and its joy he too understands the meaning of life.

Then here is a prayer and it is a poet's prayer. This is no *swami's* prayer or even a saint's. We have the Lord's Prayer and we have the *Gayathri* of Hinduism. And the

great prayer in Buddhism '*Dharmam Gachami, Sangham Gachami, Buddham Gachami!*' Also the great Koranic prayer. But look at the prayer of this poet. I would rather pray with the poet than with any prophet of the world :—

“In one salutation to thee, my God, let all my senses spread out and touch this world at thy feet.

Like a rain-cloud of July hung low with its burden of unshed showers let all my mind bend down at thy door in one salutation to thee.

Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains into a single current and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to thee.

Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to thee.”

Now he does not ask, as the ascetics would ask, that in one salutation to the Lord all his senses should be uprooted or suppressed. On the contrary he prays, let all my senses spread out and reach their fulfilment as dedication at the feet of the Divine; like the rain-cloud of July let all my mind pour down worship at Thy door in one salutation to Thee. “Rain-cloud of July” is a beautiful picture. Heavily laden with rain, since the rain has not poured out, they hang low in the sky with the promise of rain. So like these rain-clouds coming close to the earth, his mind, laden with all the truth, with all the sense of beauty and goodness, bends down to touch this world at God's feet. Let all my songs, he says, gather together their diverse strains into a single current and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to God. It is impossible for me to give you the full

depth of the meaning of these lines. For a poet, his songs, his poems are the greatest things and as a poet recites his poems, and sings to himself his songs, he finds the greatest *ananda* of his life. The poet says here that all his songs, all the poetry he has written, may join together into a stream of silence flowing towards the Divine. He is willing to surrender to the Lord even the *ananda* of his own self-expression when he says that all his songs might flow into a sea of silent worship. You can offer all other kinds of worship—flowers, faith, devotion—but when a great poet says that all his songs and poems might become silence at feet of the Lord, then something is said in the world of prayer for which there is no match in the human languages. He is offering the greatest worship that a human heart can offer. Then finally “Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests, let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to Thee.” You know cranes fly long distances. Hundreds of miles is nothing to a crane when once it starts flying home from one land to another. Therefore, the poet thinks of these birds. They may have come from far away; may be, they came from over the Himalayas to the banks of the Ganges and the Yamuna and are flying back over the mountains at the call of the changing season. Flying quickly, day and night, back to their nests. In the same manner he says, let the soul take its eternal voyage back to Thee, Oh Lord!

Let us look at the poem on the Taj Mahal in Agra. A great Emperor built the Taj as a monument to the memory of his beloved queen. Rabindranath Tagore called it once a dream in marble. Far away from the Taj is the old palace of Shah Jehan in the Agra Fort. By the time the Taj was completed, Shah Jehan was old and dying. So he wanted his bed to be placed

in such a way as to enable him to continually look at the Taj. As his life ebbed away, he wanted to raise his eyes to the Taj which was a monument to his beloved queen. This Taj has defied time and yet has preserved its beauty as completely as when it was built. Here are Tagore's lines on the Taj. "You allowed your great kingly power to vanish, Oh Shah Jehan, but your wish was to make eternal your tear drop of sorrow." The Emperor allowed his kingdom to perish. Even before Shah Jehan breathed his last, the pomp and majesty of the Moghul power was being shaken. He did not care but he took care of his "tear drop of sorrow" at the passing away of his beloved queen and wished that this should become an imperishable symbol of love in the whole world. "Oh! Shah Jehan, you allured time itself with beauty, made time your captive and crowned formless death with fateless form." This is a poor translation of the original exquisite Bengali lines; we get, nevertheless, something of the meaning of the original lines and their loveliness.

Here is another poem :—

"I dreamt that she sat by my head, tenderly ruffling my hair with her fingers, playing the melody of her touch. I looked at her face and struggled with my tears, till the agony of unspoken words burst my sleep like a bubble.

I sat up and saw the glow of the Milky Way above my window, like a world of silence on fire, and I wondered if at this moment she had a dream that rhymed with mine."

I must not go on with these selections from Tagore any longer. All I have done is to introduce my listeners to the magnificent and exquisite panorama of Tagore's poetry, full of truth and beauty.

Rabindranath Tagore passed away after long illness and much physical pain. He was operated upon, but the operation did not save his life. He knew that death was coming and so he gathered all his powers even while death was pulling him down. He gathered his powers like a *yogi*, made his mind clear as crystal and the whole fountain of his art came gushing up as he wrote new songs in Bengali. He wanted that one of his songs should be sung as his body would later be reduced to ashes at the funeral pyre. He wanted every particle of his ashes to listen to this song. Its meaning may be given roughly as follows :—

Till now I was the captain of this little bodily vessel of mine. I held the rudder of this little boat till now, guiding it through my finite life. But now, O Lord, I surrender the rudder into Thine hands. Take the rudder and launch this boat into the radiant ocean of infinity.

He was thus surrendering his spirit into the hands of the Universal Spirit in the supreme faith that death does not end life.

MY FIRST DARSHAN OF GANDHI

The year was 1924 and I was then a student in the Visva-bharati University at Santiniketan. The late C. F. Andrews was my favourite professor and I lived very close to him in mind and in spirit. I could not then have been more than twenty years of age. Something suddenly happened in my life which gave it a turn from which I never could come away in all the rest of my life.

In those days in the Visva-bharati I had set myself up as an intellectual and I loved nothing better than to challenge every kind of ideology and concept. I found endless delight in posing as an agnostic and held that the very idea of God was anti-reason! God was not needed at all to make men and women good. In fact, God had never succeeded in doing that yet! The moral and spiritual life was largely the artistic life of poise, dignified behaviour and intellectual clarity. I was always debating and arguing with vehemence. It was into this life of mine that something came like a flash of lightning, illuminating my inner world and changing it for ever.

C. F. Andrews suddenly received a hundred-word telegram from Maulana Mohammed Ali who was then the

Thoughts and Talks

President of the Indian National Congress. The telegram conveyed the news that Mahatma Gandhi had gone on a fast of twentyone days in Delhi to bring about unity between Hindus and Muslims and that a great conference of the leaders of all the communities was being summoned in the same city. Maulana Mohammed Ali asked C. F. Andrews to come to Delhi immediately and to take care of Gandhi during the fiery ordeal. The whole of Santiniketan was plunged into gloom. Never before had Gandhi undertaken such a long fast. He was also reported to be in indifferent health. Could he survive such a long fast? Even if the mind was strong, would the frail body stand the test? There was a crowded meeting of students and teachers in the library hall in Santiniketan at which Andrews spoke with deep feeling. He caught the night train and left for Delhi. I lost my sleep. I was thrilled and shattered at the same time. Two days later, Andrews summoned me to Delhi to come and help him. There was an excited meeting of the students who gave me a touching send-off. Within the next forty eight hours I reached Delhi. The Delhi Railway Station was full of khadi-clad and white-capped Congress Volunteers. From every part of India, Congress leaders and workers were pouring into Delhi. The mighty pull of the moral conscience associated with the Gandhian fast was stirring the souls of vast numbers of men and women in India. Within a few days, Delhi had become the centre of many cross-currents of pilgrimage from every part of India. One of the Congress Volunteers identified me, drew me out of the station, put me into a tonga and we went straight to "Dilkhush", a beautiful, quiet house on the edge of the city in which Gandhi lay fasting. As our tonga neared "Dilkhush", we passed through growing crowds of men and women and as we turned at the gate, I saw some five to six thousand people sitting in

solemn silence on the roadside and on the lawns and in the shade of the trees. A deep anxiety hung in the air like some heavy rain-cloud of July.

Many wonderful things happened during the next few days. Andrews occupied a small room on the ground floor opposite to the staircase which led up to the first floor and it was in a room on the first floor that Gandhi lay fasting. I was kept busy day and night helping Andrews wash his clothes, bring his food, sweep and tidy his room and last but not least, deal with his correspondence and the unending stream of visitors who filled the small room all the time. So far as Gandhi was concerned, Dr. Ansari had strictly forbidden all visitors except a few of his closest co-workers. It was in that small room of Andrews that I saw for the first time, the Roman figure of Motilal Nehru, prince-like Jawaharlal, sharp and ascetic Rajaji, dynamic Chittaranjan Das, the immense Ali Brothers, tall and valiant Swami Shraddhananda and a host of others. For more than a week, I did not get even a glimpse of Gandhi. I was a prisoner in that room on the ground floor. And then, one evening, Andrews asked me to accompany him to attend Gandhi's evening prayers and I felt the thrill of the thought that at last and for the first time I was going to see Gandhi at close quarters.

The sun had just set as I climbed the stairs behind my venerable professor. By the time we reached Gandhi's room, it was full of silent figures sitting on the carpet on the floor. The electric lights had been switched off. In the dim light of evening, I could only see a thin and indistinct figure on the cot wrapped in folds of snow-white khadi. I knew that was Gandhi. He looked a frail figure etched in delicate, peaceful lines against the indistinct evening light which came in through

the open window. I could also distinguish the faces of the leaders of Muslim, Christian, Sikh and Hindu communities sitting around the cot with bowed heads. Then someone suddenly struck up the cadences of the prayer, the pattern of which has become classical in later years in the history of India. Again and again the voices of prayer rose and fell inside that room. There was complete silence after the prayers; no one spoke a word.

I watched the scene and heard the prayers with all the critical and intellectual attitude I could summon. I said to myself that I must not be swept away. I tried to keep a hold on myself. But, even as the prayers were going on, something began to pound inside me. It was not a physical experience, but a mental one absolutely. I saw the frail figure on the bed and looked at the many mighty men of India's destiny sitting with heads bowed in reverence around the central figure on the cot. The question came to me, how did this little man succeed in becoming the unquestioned leader of a political revolution and how on earth did he perform the magic of linking that revolution with non-violence. How could at all a man of prayer become the leader of a revolution? All distinctions of caste, religion and creed melted in the power of devotion to the unseen God. My mind caught fire. The truth came to me in a flash that God existed and ruled the conscience of humanity. The intellect might not touch God and reason might also fail to reveal God. But, God did exist. No myth could hold and rule the hearts of men and women. God was truth and love in one and he who lay on the bed fasting, so that Hindus and Muslims might come together in goodwill and in understanding, was the symbol of that truth and love. The spirit of God appeared to hover close within that room.

A man had brought God into the room. I felt it unmistakably with the touch of my mind. I said to myself, I may never see God nor know God fully, but this human symbol proved the truth of Godhood. I would follow the man who had brought God into the room. I took a silent vow.

This was thirty and more years ago. I have tried to keep the pledge I gave to myself inside that room in "Dilkush". I know I have often failed and slipped and even fallen. But, I have never once stopped trying to hold on to that pledge with all the strength in me. I met Gandhi again and again after the above event. I lived close to him and worked under him for nearly a quarter of a century. More than once during these last many years I have sometimes shocked or amused my friends by telling them that if I had not known Gandhi, I would have been a life-long atheist and that perhaps the only party of which I could have become a member was the Communist Party! But, the moment I understood that a man of God could at the same time become the unhesitant and valiant leader of a great political and social revolution, I ceased to be an atheist and had no more need for the membership of the Communist Party. I have met innumerable other men and women who have said the same thing to me in different words. The world will realize in the coming years that Gandhi has furnished the only alternative to the challenge of Communism in the modern world. The world must ultimately go the way of Lenin or Gandhi. All other ways will only be modifications and amendments of these two paths which have already been cut on the earth of history.

A MORNING WITH GANDHI

(This is a record, written in two parts by the late Mahadev Desai, in "Young India" of 13th and 20th November 1924, giving the questions asked by G. R. and the answers given by Gandhiji. G. R. was then a student, 20 years of age, at Visva-bharati.)

Among those who visited Dilkush, during the weeks of penance and prayer, there was a young student from Santiniketan, named Ramachandran. He is one of the pupils of Mr. Andrews and he had no difficulty in persuading his teacher to permit him to stay at Delhi for some time. On the evening when Mr. Andrews left Delhi, he took Ramachandran upstairs and said to Gandhiji, 'I have not even introduced Ramachandran as yet to you. But he has been here all the while with us, helping us. He wants to ask you some questions and I shall be so glad if you could have a talk with him before he leaves tomorrow to go back to Santiniketan'. The 'tomorrow' was a silent Monday, and so Ramachandran stayed a day more. On Tuesday morning he had to take his train for Calcutta. Exactly at half past five, after the morning prayer, he was summoned. He had set down his questions, —the doubts and difficulties that tormented him. Yet he could not altogether trust himself at first to be able to ask all that he wanted to. But

ultimately he mustered sufficient courage and he found to his utter surprise that in a moment Bapu's gentle inquiries about him, his place, his studies, had left no room for hesitation or nervousness. It is impossible to reproduce all the conversation that Ramachandran was privileged to have that morning with Gandhiji. I can but present the barest summary.

'How is it,' proceeded Ramachandran, 'that many intelligent and eminent men, who love and admire you, hold that you consciously or unconsciously have ruled out of the scheme of national regeneration all considerations of Art?' 'I am sorry' replied Gandhiji, 'that in this matter I have been generally misunderstood. There are two aspects of things,—the outward and the inward. It is purely a matter of emphasis with me. The outward has no meaning except in so far as it helps the inward. All true Art is thus the expression of the soul. The outward forms have value only in so far as they are the expression of the inner spirit of man.'

Ramachandran hesitatingly suggested: 'The great artists themselves have declared that Art is the translation of the urge and unrest in the soul of the artist into words, colours, shapes etc.' 'Yes', said Gandhiji, 'Art of that nature has the greatest possible appeal for me. But I know that many call themselves as artists, and are recognised as such, and yet in their works there is absolutely no trace of the soul's upward urge and unrest.'

'Have you any instance in mind?' 'Yes', said Gandhiji, 'take Oscar Wilde. I can speak of him, as I was in England at the time that he was being much discussed and talked about.'

'I have been told,' put in Ramachandran, 'that Oscar Wilde was one of the greatest literary artists of modern times.'

'Yes, that is just my trouble. Wilde saw the highest Art simply in outward forms and therefore succeeded in beautifying immorality. All true Art must help the soul to realise its inner self. In my own case, I find that I can do entirely without external forms in my soul's realisation. I can claim, therefore, that there is truly sufficient Art in my life, though you might not see what you call works of Art about me. My room may have blank walls; and I may even dispense with the roof, so that I may gaze out upon the starry heavens overhead that stretch in an unending expanse of beauty. What conscious Art of man can give me the panoramic scenes that open out before me, when I look up to the sky above with all its shining stars?' This, however, does not mean that I refuse to accept the value of productions of Art, generally accepted as such, but only that I personally feel how inadequate these are compared with the eternal symbols of beauty in Nature. These productions of man's Art have their value only so far as they help the soul onward towards self-realisation.'

'But the artists claim to see and find Truth through outward beauty' said Ramachandran. 'Is it possible to see and find Truth in that way?'

'I would reverse the order,' Gandhiji immediately answered, 'I see and find Beauty in Truth or through Truth. All Truths, not merely true ideas, but truthful faces, truthful pictures, or songs, are highly beautiful. People generally fail to see Beauty in Truth; the ordinary man runs away from and becomes blind to the beauty in it. Whenever men begin to see Beauty in Truth, then true Art will arise.'

Ramachandran then asked, 'But cannot Beauty be separated from Truth, and Truth from Beauty?'

'I should want to know exactly what is Beauty' Gandhiji replied. 'If it is what people generally understand by that word, then they are wide apart. Is a woman with fair features necessarily beautiful?' 'Yes' replied Ramachandran without thinking.

'Even' asked Bapu, continuing his question, 'if she may be of an ugly character?'

Ramachandran hesitated. Then he said; 'But her face in that case cannot be beautiful. It will always be the index of the soul within. The true artist with the genius of perception will produce the right expression.'

'But here you are begging the whole question,' Gandhiji replied, 'You now admit that mere outward form may not make a thing beautiful. To a true artist only that face is beautiful which, quite apart from its exterior, shines with the Truth within the soul. There is then, as I have said, no Beauty apart from Truth. On the other hand, Truth may manifest itself in forms which may not be outwardly beautiful at all. Socrates, we are told, was the most truthful man of his time and yet his features are said to have been the ugliest in Greece. To my mind he was beautiful, because all his life was a striving after Truth, and you may remember that his outward form did not prevent Phidias from appreciating the beauty of Truth in him, though as an artist he was accustomed to see Beauty in outward forms also!'

'But Bapuji,' said Ramachandran eagerly, 'the most beautiful things have often been created by men whose own lives were not beautiful.'

'That' said Gandhiji, 'only means that Truth and Untruth often co-exist; good and evil are often found together.'

In an artist also not seldom the right perception of things and the wrong co-exist. Truly beautiful creations come when right perception is at work. If these moments are rare in life they are also rare in Art.'

All this set Ramachandran thinking hard. 'If only truthful or good things can be beautiful, how can things without a moral quality be beautiful?' he said, half to himself and half aloud. Then he asked the question, 'Is there truth, Bapuji, in things that are neither moral nor immoral in themselves? For instance, is there truth in a sunset or a crescent moon that shines amid the stars at night?'

'Indeed', replied Gandhiji, 'these beauties are truthful, in as much as they make me think of the Creator at the back of them. How also could these be beautiful, but for the Truth that is in the centre of creation? When I admire the wonder of a sunset or the beauty of the moon my soul expands in worship of the Creator. I try to see Him and His mercies in all these creations. But even the sunsets and sunrises would be mere hindrances, if they did not help me to think of Him. Anything, which is a hindrance to the flights of the soul, is a delusion and a snare; even, like the body, which often does hinder you in the path of salvation.'

'I am grateful,' exclaimed Ramachandran, 'to hear your views on Art and I understand and accept them. Would it not be well for you to set them down for the benefit of the younger generation in order to guide them aright?'

'That' replied Gandhiji with a smile, 'I could never dream of doing, for the simple reason that it would be an impertinence on my part to hold forth on Art. I am not an art student, though these are my fundamental convictions.'

I do not speak or write about it, because I am conscious of my own limitations. That consciousness is my only strength. Whatever I might have been able to do in my life has proceeded more than anything else out of the realisation of my own limitations. My functions are different from the artist's and I should not go out of my way to assume his position.'

Ramachandran now turned to the next question. 'Are you against all machinery, Bapuji?'

'How can I be', he answered, smiling at Ramachandran's naive question, 'when I know that even this body is a most delicate piece of machinery? The spinning wheel itself is a machine; a little tooth-pick is a machine. What I object to, is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on 'saving labour' till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all. I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all. Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might.'

'Then, Bapuji,' said Ramachandran with eagerness, 'you are fighting not against machinery as such but against its abuses which are so much in evidence today?'

'I would unhesitatingly say 'yes'; but I would add that scientific truths and discoveries should first of all cease to be the mere instruments of greed. Then labourers will not be overworked and machinery instead of becoming a

hindrance will be a help. I am aiming, not at eradication of all machinery, but limitation.'

Ramachandran said, 'When logically argued out, that would seem to imply that all complicated power-driven machinery should go.'

'It might have to go' admitted Gandhiji, 'but I must make one thing clear. The supreme consideration is man. The machine should not tend to make atrophied the limbs of men. For instance, I would make intelligent exceptions. Take the case of the Singer Sewing Machine. It is one of the few useful things ever invented, and there is a romance about the device itself. Singer saw his wife labouring over the tedious process of sewing and seaming with her own hands, and simply out of his love for her he devised the sewing machine, in order to save her from unnecessary labour. He, however, saved not only her labour but also the labour of everyone who could purchase a sewing machine.'

'But in that case,' said Ramachandran 'there would have to be a factory for making these Singer Sewing Machines and it would have to contain power-driven machinery of ordinary type.'

'Yes' said Bapu, smiling at Ramachandran's eager opposition. 'But I am socialist enough to say that such factories should be nationalised or State-controlled. They ought only to be working under the most attractive and ideal conditions, not for profit, but for the benefit of humanity, love taking the place of the greed as the motive. It is an alteration in the conditions of labour that I want. This mad rush for wealth must cease, and the labourer must be assured, not only of a living wage, but a daily task that is not a mere drudgery.'

The machine will, under these conditions be as much a help to the man working it as to the State, or the man who owns it. The present mad rush will cease, and the labourer will work (as I have said) under attractive and ideal conditions. This is but one of the exceptions I have in mind. The sewing machine had love at its back. The individual is the one supreme consideration. The saving of labour of the individual should be the object, and honest humanitarian considerations, and not greed, the motive. Thus, for instance, I would welcome any day a machine to straighten crooked spindles. Not that blacksmiths will cease to make spindles; they will continue to provide the spindles; but when the spindle gets wrong every spinner will have a machine of his own to get it straight. Therefore, replace greed by love and everything will come right.'

Ramachandran was evidently not satisfied with this. He had understood Gandhiji to be against all machinery and he had felt that this was right too. So he wanted to go to the root of the matter. But it was getting late and he had many more questions to ask. 'Don't mind losing your train,' said Gandhiji, smiling. 'I am prepared to satisfy you. You may ask any questions you like this morning, and it won't tire me now in the least.'

The young friend had by no means exhausted his list of questions. The assurance from Gandhiji that he would give him full liberty that morning put him entirely at ease and gathering courage once more he proceeded with the next question which dealt with the institution of marriage.

'The third question', said Ramachandran, 'that I would like to ask you is whether you are against the institution of marriage.'

'I shall have to answer this question at some length,' said Bapu, 'The aim of human life is Moksha. As a Hindu, I believe that Moksha is freedom from birth, by breaking the bonds of the flesh, by becoming one with God. Now marriage is a hindrance in the attainment of this supreme object, in as much as it only tightens the bonds of flesh. Celibacy is a great help, in as much as it enables one to lead a life of full surrender to God. What is the object generally understood of marriage except a repetition of one's own kind? And why need you advocate marriage? It propagates itself. It requires no agency to promote its growth.'

'But must you advocate celibacy and preach it to one and all?'

'Yes,' said Gandhiji,—Ramachandran looked perplexed—'Then you fear there will be an end of creation? No. The extreme logical result would be not extinction of the human species, but the transference of it to a higher plane.'

'But may not an artist or a poet or a great genius leave a legacy of his genius to posterity through his own children?'

'Certainly not,' said Bapu, with emphasis, 'He will have more disciples than he can ever have children; and through those disciples all his gifts to the world will be handed down in a way that nothing else can do it. It will be the soul's marriage with the spirit; the progeny being the disciple,—a sort of divine procreation. No! You must leave marriage to take care of itself. Repetition and not growth would be the result, for lust has come to play the most important part in marriage.'

'Mr. Andrews,' said Ramachandran, 'does not like your emphasis on celibacy.'

'Yes, I know,' said Gandhiji, 'that is the legacy of Protestantism. Protestantism did many good things, but one of its few evils was that it ridiculed celibacy.'

'That' rejoined Ramachandran, 'was because it had to fight the deep abuses in which the clergy of the age had sunk.'

'But all that was not due to any inherent evil of celibacy,' said Bapu, 'It is celibacy that has kept Catholicism green up to the present day.'

Ramachandran's last question was about the much discussed 'Spinning Franchise'. Ramachandran assured Gandhiji, at the outset, that he was a spinner, but had to confess that he, with three friends at Santiniketan, only began spinning after they had heard of the Fast. He also affirmed that he believed in universal spinning. But he could not understand how the Congress could compel its members to spin. Persuasion and not compulsion should be the method.

'I see,' said Gandhiji, 'you go even farther than Mr. Andrews. He would not have the Congress to compel its members; but he would fain become a member of a voluntary spinning association, with rules about spinning. You object to any such association whatsoever?'

Ramachandran sat silent.

'Well then,' replied Gandhiji, enjoying the argument, 'I ask you, has the Congress any right to say that its members shall not drink? Will that be a restriction of the freedom of the individual too? If the Congress exercised that right of enjoining abstinence from drinking, there would be no objection. Why? Because the evils of drink are obvious. Well, I say that in India today where millions are on the brink

of starvation and plunged in utter misery, it is perhaps a much worse evil to import foreign cloth. Think of the starving millions of Orissa. When I went there, I saw the famine-stricken. Thanks to a kind Superintendent, who was in charge of an industrial home, I saw also their children, bright, healthy and merry, working away at their carpets, baskets, etc. There was no spinning, because these other things were much in vogue at the time. But on their faces there was the lustre of joyful work. But when I came to the famine-stricken, what did I see? They were merely skin and bone, only waiting to die. They were then in that condition, because they would under no circumstances work. Even though you had threatened to shoot them, if they refused to work, I am sure they would have preferred to be shot, rather than do any honest work. This aversion from work is a greater evil than drink itself. You can take some work out of a drunkard. A drunkard retains something of a heart. He has intelligence. These starved men, refusing to work, were like mere animals. Now, how can we solve the problem of getting work out of people like this? I see no way except that of universalising spinning. Every yard of foreign cloth, brought into India, is one bit of bread snatched out of the mouths of the starving poor. If you could visualise as I can the supreme need of the hour which is to give India's starving millions a chance to earn their bread with joy and gladness, you would not object to the Spinning Franchise. I take the Congress to be a body of men and women who accept the paramount necessity of spinning. Why should it not ensure the integrity of membership in the body by making it compulsory for every member to spin? And you talk of persuasion! What can be better persuasion than that every member of the Congress spins regularly a certain quantity of yarn every month? How would it be honest for the Congress

members to ask people to spin, when they do not spin themselves?'

Ramachandran replied with great earnestness. 'But how can you exclude people, who do not spin, from the Congress? They may be doing valuable service to the nation in other ways.'

'Why not?' asked Gandhiji, 'What is the reason for the property franchise? Why is it necessary for a man to pay four annas to be a member? And why is age considered a necessary qualification? Would the eight-year-old violinist prodigy of Italy have the franchise? John Stuart Mill, however clever he may have been when he was seven years old, with his knowledge of Greek and Latin, had no franchise at that age. Why were these prodigies excluded? Some men will have to be excluded under any franchise. No; today many will not accept my position, but I have faith that the day will come,—it may be after my death,—when men will say that after all what Gandhi said was right.'

It was now seven O'clock and Ramachandran had missed his train. But he had gained what was infinitely more precious. The next morning, before starting, he was fortunate enough to get another talk,—this time a brief one, but one that at last converted him.

'So, Bapuji, Truth is the main thing,' said Ramachandran, resuming the previous day's conversation, 'Beauty and Truth are not separate aspects of the same thing.'

'Truth' repeated Gandhiji with greater emphasis, 'is the first thing to be sought for, and Beauty and Goodness will then be added unto you. Jesus was, to my mind, a supreme artist, because he saw and expressed Truth; and so was Muhammad,

the Koran being the most perfect composition in all Arabic literature,—at any rate, that is what scholars say. It is because both of them strove first for Truth, that the grace of expression naturally came in; and yet neither Jesus nor Muhammad wrote on Art. That is the Truth and Beauty I crave for, live for and would die for.'

Ramachandran reverted to his difficulties as to Gandhiji's logical position with regard to machinery. 'If you make an exception of the Singer Sewing Machine and your spindle,' he said, 'where would these exceptions end?'

Gandhiji replied, 'Just where they cease to help the individual and encroach upon his individuality. The machine should not be allowed to cripple the limbs of man.'

'But I was not thinking just now of the practical side, Bapuji,' said Ramachandran. 'Ideally would you not rule out all machinery? When you except the sewing machine, you will have to make exceptions of the bicycle, the motor car, etc.?'

'No, I don't,' said Bapuji, 'because they do not satisfy any of the primary wants of man; for it is not the primary need of man to traverse distances with the rapidity of a motor car. The needle, on the contrary, happens to be an essential thing in life—a primary need. Ideally, however, I would rule out all machinery, even as I would reject this very body, which is not helpful to salvation, and seek the absolute liberation of the soul. From that point of view, I would reject all machinery, but machines will remain because, like the body, they are inevitable. The body itself, as I told you, is the purest piece of mechanism; but if it is a hindrance to the highest flights of the soul, it has to be rejected!'

'Why is it a necessary evil?' asked Ramachandran, 'May not after all some artists be able to see Truth in and through Beauty?'

'Some may,' said Gandhiji, 'but here too, just as elsewhere I must think in terms of the millions. And to the millions we cannot give that training to acquire a perception of Beauty, in such a way as to see Truth in it. Show them Truth first, and they will see Beauty afterwards. Orissa haunts me in my waking hours and in my dreams. Whatever can be useful to those starving millions is beautiful to my mind. Let us give today first the vital things of life and all the graces and ornaments of life will follow.'

Here the long conversation ended, and early the same morning Ramachandran started on his way back to Santiniketan rich with Bapu's blessings, wondering how far the teaching of his Gurudev, Rabindranath Tagore, would harmonise with that which he had just heard, and how far there was a fundamental difference.

GANDHI AND THE INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITION

To-day we turn to a brief study of the life, work and teachings of the greatest man this country produced since the Buddha. You will remember that in my last talk on Rabindranath Tagore, I had spoken about the three great Yogas of India, Gnana yoga, Bhakti yoga and Karma Yoga. I added to these a yoga of my own coinage. I called it Kala Yoga, and said that it is often a synthesis of Gnana, Bhakti and Karma. Now this is true of every yoga and this is the uniqueness of every yoga that a Gnana yogi, when he climbs to the heights of Gnana also becomes a Karma yogi and a Bhakti yogi. A Bhakti yogi when he climbs the highest peak of devotion, finds that he is at the same time, a Gnana yogi and a Karma yogi. And to-day I shall deal with a Karma yogi who climbed to the greatest heights any man has climbed in India since the Buddha and he discovered this about himself—and many of us discovered this about him—that when he climbed the peak of action he became a Mahayogi of Bhakti, of Gnana and, it might seem fantastic, of Kala also. The height of fully integrated manhood, when man and God become almost one, is the ultimate goal of all Yoga. So

whether you begin as a Karma yogi or Bhakti yogi or Gnana yogi, when you have climbed the greatest heights, you arrive at the same meeting point of integrated manhood mingling itself with the spirit of God. Gandhi was the supreme Karma yogi of India. If Tagore is the climax of Indian culture, commencing from Valmiki and Kalidasa, then Mahatma Gandhi is the climax of the man of action, beginning with the Buddha and Sankaracharya. I am mentioning these two names, the Buddha and Sankaracharya, deliberately because Mahatma Gandhi was a unique combination of the Buddha and Sankaracharya. The Buddha was he, whose heart went out to every other human heart in the world, and who gave a new definition to religion altogether. He did not say that religion was the seeking of God by man. To him religion was the seeking of man by man. The Enlightened One sought all mankind in order to wipe the tear from every eye. All religious life, all spiritual striving, said the Buddha, must have one object—to lift the burden of sorrow from the minds of men and women. All other aims were secondary and all other work must join in this supreme act of lifting the burden of sorrow from every human heart. People asked the Buddha, "Do you know God?" He said he did not know. There was so much human suffering, so much work to do to lift the burden of sorrow from human hearts that he had no time to seek for the ultimate mystery. He never denied God; nor did he affirm God. He left God as a big question-mark for every individual soul to answer in its own way and he never limited the freedom of any individual soul to find the answer it needed. If somebody said there was a God, he had no quarrel with him. If somebody said he did not know if there was a God, he had no quarrel with him either. But of one thing he was positive and no teacher either before or after him was more positive about this than the Buddha-

that the mission of spiritual striving was to remove the burden of sorrow from every human heart. So he had infinite compassion, compassion not only for human beings but for the least of living life. When he saw somebody about to sacrifice a goat to a god or goddess he went up and said, please stop this; and then if there was a quarrel or an argument, he would add, take my neck, but release this animal. So great was the power of his heart that the Buddha succeeded in saving the animals every time. That was the Buddha, the most compassionate servant of man in recorded human history.

Then came Sankaracharya, the mighty man of intellect. I remember a great German philosopher and scholar, Dr. Winternitz, who lectured to us in Visva-bharati, saying that he recognised only two intellects of the highest calibre in the world. One was his countryman, Emmanuel Kant and the second was Sankaracharya. I think if there is an impartial study of the achievements of the human intellect the place of Sankaracharya would be at the top. He left a mark upon the soul of India which the many uncounted centuries that followed never wiped away. Sankaracharya has been often misinterpreted and misquoted. He was a towering intellect and as he went from one part of India to the other challenging other philosophies and systems of thought he never met his match in all his life. In logic and in argument he always conquered the day. He died young like Vivekananda. I have sometimes said to myself that Vivekananda must have been Sankaracharya reborn in India. Now Gandhi combined in himself the great heart of the Buddha and the great intellect and logic of Sankaracharya. That is why I would say that when you look at the history of India in this particular manner you look at history stretching from the Buddha to Gandhi.

Now, what kind of a background was it from which Gandhi emerged in the history of India? Our history is a very long history, much longer than many Western scholars have been willing to admit. They have often put the Rig Veda at about 2000 or 3000 years before the Christian era and therefore said that the history of India is a history of 4000 years. Suddenly, somebody dug in some places in what is now Pakistan and discovered the remains of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa and then history went back another 3000 years. There is, of course, nothing much to be proud about it if somebody says that his culture is 1000 years old or that it is 5000 years old. You know we can be very old and still be very useless. It does not mean much that a civilisation is old except that it satisfies someone's vanity. Whether that civilization was a vital one, a just one, a great one, a beautiful one is what matters and not merely the age. In fact, the younger Greek civilization, can claim to be a great civilization, great in philosophy, great in poetry, in drama and in sculpture. This was true also of the Indian civilization. But we have not always the proof of it as clearly as in the case of the Greeks. About Mohenjo Daro and Harappa, we have something under the earth and we have to do a great deal of guesswork—guess work can sometimes be completely wrong and sometimes completely right—and one never knows when one makes guesses from pottery and from remnants of such things. But this is true that the history of India is as old as the history of any other country in the world. For my purpose today I want to fasten my mind on the history of India as we see it, and that is more or less the history from the earliest Vedic period to our times. What is this background of Indian history? As I am talking of history, I am not thinking of dates, of kings and conquerors, of conquests and annexations. I am thinking

of the history of the people, of their striving to lift themselves from lower levels of culture to higher levels. When we look at it that way one or two things stand out more prominently than anything else in the cultural life and tradition of India. You may say that it is good enough to be emulated today, or that you cannot imitate what happened many centuries ago. I am passing no judgement but it is crystal clear from a study of the history of India from the earliest Vedic and Dravid roots to modern times that in this country only those men held power who renounced it. If somebody accumulated wealth or power he was respected but he was not put on the white throne of reverence which is above all other thrones. But when a man renounced greatly and made that renunciation the instrument of his service to men and women, that man we put on the white throne. We gave our full *pranams* to that man. Even in the old days when there were mighty Kings and Emperors in this country, side by side with them, was the radiant figure of the Rishi and Saint of India. The Rishis never came into the great palaces and capital cities except on special occasions. They lived in the hermitages and more often than that the Rishi came to the palace and the capital cities, it was the King or the Emperor who went to the hermitage to bow before the the Rishi. The King put away his crown, his sandals and all his fineries and with folded hands of reverence he walked bare-headed and barefooted to the hermitage of the Rishi. The Rishi was a fakir or a beggar possessing nothing except perhaps the loin-cloth that he wore. His roof was made of woven leaves and he lived in utter simplicity but the visiting King prostrated in front of him. Therefore, the acceptance by India of the man of renunciation as the leader and the teacher, from whom should come the laws and the regulations of life, is one of the characteristics of the Indian tradition.

With my own eyes, in my own life-time I saw this thing repeated in the life of Gandhi and in the life of many people who surrounded him. Gandhi lived in a tiny mud hut in Sevagram. I have seen the great leaders of India coming into that mud hut to meet him. Inside was sitting another Rishi of India, another man of supreme renunciation, clad like the old Rishis in a loin cloth, reclining on the floor on a wooden seat; and I have seen our great leaders, who are today ruling India, coming into that hut to consult him and pay homage to him. Take the Rashtrapathi of today, the first President of the first Republic of India, Rajendra Prasad. I have seen him coming there, all humble and with hands folded, bending at the small door and going in to sit on the floor in front of the man reclining on the wooden seat. No chairs, no sofas, but a clean soft mud floor. Rajendra Prasad would sit humbly in front of Gandhi and discuss with him. You may say Rajen Babu was, after all, a man of high humility. He was bound to do this. What about Sardar Patel, the man of steel, who never bent his head before any other human being in the world? I have seen him also coming humbly into that hut with all of himself held in, sitting in front of Gandhi and taking counsel and going out. You may say that even the Sardar was a follower of Gandhi and therefore he was humble before his leader. But then what about our new man of destiny in India, Pandit Nehru, modern among moderns, who never believed in asceticism? I have seen Pandit Nehru doing exactly the same thing, coming in humbly and quietly to sit at the feet of Gandhi. So the continuity of this tradition is seen once again in the history of India in modern times when one would have thought it impossible.

I now come to the second significant aspect of the cultural tradition of India. This cultural tradition refused nothing

which was good, nothing which was pure and nothing which was beautiful. From whichever side truth, beauty and goodness came the doors of India's cultural tradition were wide open to them. We did not say, "This is the Christian tradition and we do not want it", or "This is the Muslim tradition and we do not want it", or "This is the modern Western tradition and we do not want it". The Parsi, the Christian, the Muslim, the Jew and the European have all become part of India's humanity. They have lived together and they still continue to live together. No country in the world has so many men and women belonging to so many different religions and cultural traditions as India. In the old days, when the Buddha started challenging some of the things in the Vedic religion, he challenged the rituals, and said that 'homas' and sacrifices were in vain; there was only one 'homa' and one sacrifice—i. e. the 'homa' of one's life, the sacrifice of one's life for others. He taught, like Tagore who wrote later:

"Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!

Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and the pathmaker is breaking stones".....

This means that we must make our life into the sacrifice which will lead to the service of fellowmen. Hinduism and India did not reject the Buddha. There is a false story that India drove Buddhism out of India. What India did was to bring the whole mansion of Hinduism under the formative influences of Buddhism. Hinduism accepted and absorbed the best in Buddhism and was at peace with itself and the whole world. Even today there is more Buddhism inside the body and soul of India than in all the Buddhist countries put together.

This shows that we did not reject Buddhism. We absorbed Buddhism and the Buddha himself.

Then came the great challenge from Sankaracharya to the teachings of Buddhism. Sankaracharya stood like rock for the ancient Sanatana religion, not the present Sanatana religion which has become fanatic and cut away from reality, but the real Sanatana Dharma which came from the Vedic cycle of our culture. Sankaracharya reasserted the Vedic foundations of Indian culture and in doing so he also absorbed everything which he thought was good in Buddhism so that, later on, some of the great critics of Sankaracharya said, "This man is outwardly fighting Buddhism, but inwardly taking everything from it into himself". They called him the Hidden Buddha of India's history. Now Gandhi too represented this supreme characteristic of India's tradition, rejecting nothing that was good and great. How often has he not said that his concept of Sarvodaya came to him when he read Ruskin's book 'Unto This Last'? He did not think that when he said so it was in any way derogatory to him. Then how often has he not said that the 'Sermon on the Mount' has been to him like a beacon in the troubled journey of life? How often has he not said that Tolstoy taught him something of the art and the science of Satyagraha? Then about the Gita, has he not said over and over again that in the darkest hours of his life when everything appeared to be shattered and broken and all the dream-world that he had built up for India was smashed and there was nothing but utter darkness surrounding him, he recited some of the slokas of the Gita to himself in the secrecy of his soul and then strength and hope came back into him with a mighty surge! I remember, in that great discussion with Rabindranath Tagore to which I referred in my

talks on Tagore, Gandhi said in some part of the reply he wrote :

"I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to blow about my house as freely as possible... But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any of them."

He wanted to stand firm on his own foundation and then accept whatever was good from all sides. That is the real concept of absorption and synthesis. Absorbing a thing does not mean that you commit suicide and then absorb something. Only a strong man can take something and give something. A beggar has nothing to give and nothing to take. It is the strong man who has the courage to give and take. The coward and the weak man want nothing and give nothing. This is the plight to which many of us have reduced ourselves in regard to the languages-problem of India. We say we want our language and nothing else. A growing and dynamic language has much to give and much to take. That was the attitude of the culture of India. Our culture always stood out like a giant against the background of the fluctuations of history and said "My arms are wide open ; bring me all the gifts of the world; I will take them and I have plenty of gifts to give you." This commerce of the spirit is no one-way traffic. 'Give and take' has been the great strength of India. Mahatma Gandhi represented that strength fully. I sometimes make myself guilty of the statement that Mahatma Gandhi was not wholly an Indian. I would not even call Gandhi a typical Indian; he had so many things about him which he had taken from the West and absorbed within himself. The very idea that non-violence is not for individual conduct, that non-violence is not for the saints and the rishis, that it must come into the lives of millions of

people, that non-violence and the masses must come together, is itself basically a Western idea. Here is an old and ancient tradition mingling with the modern world. Otherwise, Mahatma Gandhi would have been like some of our other saints, a hundred per cent believer in Ahimsa, may be closing his nose and mouth lest a fly may go in and, as he walks along, sweeping the floor so that ants may not be killed! He would then have reduced himself to utter futility because his faith in non-violence was that great. That he did not become a Saint or Rishi of the cave, that he did not become the head of a religious sect but that he plunged into the lives of the millions of India and forged for them this new weapon of non-violence with which they could fight the mightiest imperial power in the world, itself seems to me the testimony that this man was not wholly Indian. He represented a revolutionary synthesis. That is why the whole of his religion became inter-religious in outlook and substance. When he recited the Koran, the Hindus objected; when he recited the Gita, the Muslims objected and so he recited both and went along his way. He sang hymns from the Bible and said to each one of the men and women who followed him, "Here is a priceless hymn; learn it." The whole of his religious life was a synthesis of religions.

Let us then come to his politics and economics. Have you ever heard of a Saint giving a realistic political and economic programme to his nation? Or of a Saint producing a concrete national education programme? That was what Gandhi did. His politics and economics were not divorced from religion or spiritual ideals. There again he was all the time seeking a synthesis between spirit and matter, between heaven and this world. He wanted both the spiritual and

the material to work together right down here on the face of this earth. He insisted on the validity of this world; he never, for one moment, called this world 'Maya'. The world was real to him, and he challenged every man and woman to deal with this reality here and now. Don't run away from this world: don't hold your nose and utter *mantrams* sitting in a faraway cave: open your eyes, your ears and your hearts to the great currents of life beating about you and accept the challenges of life, react to life and remake life—this was his teaching. Tagore sang about this; Gandhi lived it. In some song of Gitanjali, Tagore said:

"Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found?
Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the
bonds of creation; he is bound with us all for ever."

Deliverance is not to be found in renunciation but in binding ourselves to the realities of life. That is Tagore's song. Gandhi was the man who represented and symbolised in himself the truth of that song. So this is the background of Gandhi—power from renunciation, power from wanting nothing for himself, but everything, material and moral, for his fellow-men. Gandhi represented the power of renunciation leading to the power of action, creating a new individual and a new society. He rejected nothing which was good and great from any other system of thought or action and so he was never in conflict with anything except what was evil and what pulled down life. The concurrent running of good and evil is the law of life. That was why Socrates had to take the bowl of poison before his fellow-citizens of Athens. They punished him; they judged him and said that he must die by drinking poison. That was the way of killing in those days. Then came Jesus, who was crucified. Then came Gandhi—who

was shot dead, like Abraham Lincoln in the United States. Lincoln was the man who redeemed millions of people from slavery. Therefore, these are the heroes who faced up to the challenges of life and never ran away from them. If somebody asks me to sum up in one sentence Gandhi's teaching, I would not begin with mentioning non-violence, I would not mention truth nor would I mention love in the first breath. All these are there fully and radiantly. I would say the greatest teaching of Gandhi was action here and now in the face of every challenge of evil. To evade an issue was for him moral and spiritual suicide. You may put on khadi, you may never drink, you may use only *gramodyog* articles, you don't have caste on your mind but if when a moral issue arose and you evaded the issue, all these are cancelled and you have committed moral and spiritual suicide. Mahatma Gandhi never evaded any issue. He might be a free man outside or he might be inside a British prison; but when a challenge came, if there was the least life left in him, he took up the challenge and faced up to the issue. Once the British Government locked him up in the Yerawada prison and cut him away completely from the world around him. There were no newspapers for him, no interviews, in fact, nothing that kept him in touch with what was happening outside. And the British Government in London made a decision called the Communal Award. Now anybody would have said, what can Gandhi do now? He was in prison and was not in touch with his people. He could not even write a letter to anyone and here was the Communal Award which he considered evil being forced by the British Cabinet upon India. Out of the silence and the helplessness of the prison, he proved that for a Satyagrahi, there is no such thing as helplessness. From inside the jail, he delivered a

challenge to the British Cabinet. Within less than a fortnight, British public life and the whole of Indian public life were churned up like a sea in a tempest and the Communal Award was changed and a decision given altering the previous decision. How could he do it as one buried alive inside the prison? Because, so long as life lasts, there is that strength and that power of the spirit in every human being to face up to a challenge.

These three things should therefore sum up the main characteristics of this great man of India's and the world's history. First of all, he embodied that characteristic of Indian culture that power can come only through renunciation; secondly, he took from whichever side it came, the good, the true and the beautiful and made it his own and thirdly, he showed that the meaning of a moral and spiritual life is ceaseless action against evil.

I shall tell you how social education was born in Sevagram. Mahatma Gandhi was sitting out and working at his files in the open air—he always sat out in the open air if the sun permitted it. He saw a villager coming into the little enclosure of his hut. He looked at Gandhi and saw him working and, from behind, he quietly passed along another gate. He should not have come there, for there was another path. But Gandhi said no word. Suddenly he saw the man make a frightful sound within his throat. He brought out heavy phlegm from his throat and spat it out and then went his way. Immediately, Gandhi tapped on the desk. One of his co-workers came. He said, 'Don't frighten that man, but go with him and take him to those in charge of Basic Education. Tell them what this man has done. Now if Basic Education means anything it must carry conviction to that villager that

what he did was wrong." From that day a whole programme of Adult Education began in Sevagram. Therefore any spiritual seeking, cut away from life, is a turning-away from truth itself. But when you seek something for the good life of the community, then the spiritual value comes in. You may know the story of Dharmaputra in our tradition. He was going to heaven; he was entitled to go to heaven because he was the man of supreme righteousness. But he had his faithful dog with him. At the gate of heaven, the gatekeepers stopped him, saying "You can come in but your dog cannot come in". Then Dharmaputra said, "If my dog cannot come with me, I do not wish to come in myself." Here is the reality of spiritual striving. If he had said, after all it was only a dog, but that he was Dharmaputra and so walked in, then he would have betrayed spirituality.

These currents of Indian culture were gathered into the life of Mahatma Gandhi. He was a modern because he knew what the modern world was. He knew modern culture. He knew industrialisation and scientific development. Born in a pious household with a devout mother, he went out and qualified to be a barrister in London and then worked as a lawyer in far-away South Africa. During all such life he was gathering into himself what appeared to be conflicting impulses. But by integrating them into himself he became the greatest man of action of our history.

This then is something of the background of Gandhi. But what about the man himself? The other day I said to you that God and His angels must have conspired together in heaven to make a most handsome man when they created Rabindranath Tagore. They probably said they must create a man great in body, great in mind, great in intellect. No such

conspiracy took place in heaven when Gandhi was created. He might easily have looked like anybody sitting here. He was a common man, an ordinary man; and let me tell you that the greatest thing about Gandhi was that he was a common man and an ordinary man to begin with. He was no god. He did not say, "I am God. All ye come and worship me." He said he was a man and nothing but a man, that he should be accepted as a man or rejected as a man and that he was no special incarnation of God, except in the sense that every human being was in a way an incarnation of God. He was not even a specially gifted man. All his high qualities and all his greatness came from his *tapasya* and his ceaseless striving. When he began his life early, he was like you and me, a very common man, with average intelligence and average ability. In his younger days he was a very shy and timid fellow. In school if there was a meeting of students, he could not say two words, he would hang down his head and if some visitor came and asked him a question he was so frightened he would not give an answer. But this timid, ordinary, average child grew up to be a man about whom Pandit Nehru said afterwards, that he followed Gandhi not because he was a Saint, but because he was the bravest man he came across in all his life. How did this Saint come from timidity to courage, from turning away from facts to the man who represented the facts and needs of India as no other man, from shyness to complete self-confidence, from incapacity to what made him the greatest political and moral revolutionary of the twentieth century? How did this change come about in this man? It came through conscious seeking and striving, step by step, never retreating but always advancing. Among the personal characteristics of Gandhi this is one to be reckoned with more than all others. He was continually striving; he fell but got up again, he refused

to sit down when he was pulled down. He got up again and again and marched on. This must have been God's gift to him. Nobody can manufacture this gift in his own self. God did not give him a great intellect or organising genius or great literary powers to begin with. God did not give him any particularly high spiritual insights but when he created him, he gave him the power to strive and strive ceaselessly. This one gift became greater than all other gifts. It brought all the other gifts to him and he became the spiritual giant of this age and at the same time a tremendous political revolutionary. Even his matchless language in which he spoke and wrote came to him only later; they say he started a new era in Gujarati prose. I think it was the Rt. Hon'ble Srinivasa Sastri who was himself a master of the English tongue who once said that there were only a handful of men in India who could really speak or write correct English and that Mahatma Gandhi was one of them. He became a great writer and a great speaker and he could carry with him hundreds of thousands of people listening to him, not merely in words, but in action. How did all this change come? My answer is, striving, ceaseless effort. If only this little part of his life can be put into our own, then there is nothing we cannot do. There is none among us so small that we cannot become great by continuous effort. If at least this little lesson of Gandhi's life is learnt and absorbed then he has not lived in vain. If the most timid amongst us, the least intellectually developed, the weakest and the very last will strive and strive ceaselessly then he or she can pull up with the most gifted and pass beyond them. There is no short cut to achievement. Gandhiji's life proved that there was no achievement which could not be had through effort, through ceaseless striving. Later on he held his own amongst the greatest statesmen of the world. British Cabinet Missions

came, he met Viceroy and Prime Ministers and leaders of men from all over the world and in every dialogue, in intellectual argument, he held his own with anybody.

Louis Fischer says somewhere in his biography of Gandhi that a conversation with Gandhi was always a piece of education. He never tried to show he was clever. He never tried to show that he was expounding something which others could not understand. You listened to him and you knew that this man was speaking the truth and the whole truth. He would hide nothing from you. His were simple straight words which revealed his mind.

Now let nothing that I have said give you the impression that Mahatma Gandhi's personality, even physical personality, was an insignificant thing. It began as a very insignificant thing. He was a nobody to begin with, physically and mentally. But later on, when he grew to his heights as Mahatma Gandhi, his personality also became tremendously dynamic. I have seen him in a crowd of many leaders. I once saw him with Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das, Hakim Ajam Khan, the Ali Brothers, Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajagopalachari. In a moment one saw that Gandhi's was the dominant personality. All of them met him and listened to him with reverence and trust. Everything about him represented growth through ceaseless striving. And a time came when even his physical personality became dynamic. I will give an example. There was a great Christian priest of the United States named Rev. John Haynes Holmes. He said in 1920, in a sermon in the Community Church of New York, that Mahatma Gandhi was then the greatest living man in the world. He analysed three characters of the contemporary world at that time. One was Romain Rolland, the great French philosopher and writer. The other was Lenin

and the third, Gandhi. In India the first non-violent revolution had broken out at that time and Gandhi's name was in every newspaper of the world. John Haynes Holmes analysed Romain Rolland and said that this man lived above the field of battle, he soared above the earth, watched and understood life but never plunged into it. Romain Rolland was a great visionary and a dreamer, a great idealist. Then he spoke of Lenin and paid matchless tributes to Lenin. He said that when Lenin took over, Russia was a shattered and broken country with no army, no industry and with everything in ruins. But this giant among men took over that broken Russia, put all the parts together and made it into an invincible power so that wave after wave of the armies of other hostile nations which rolled towards Russia was beaten back. And he organised backward Russia into an industrial nation. But then, John Haynes Holmes said, Lenin was too much in the field of battle. He became ruthless. He knew the realities and dealt with them relentlessly. But his eyes were not fixed on the distant horizon, when a new human society based on truth, love and non-violence must come into the world. Lenin's ruthlessness clouded his vision. He wanted to collectivise the farms. Hundreds of thousands of farmers resisted and they were liquidated. In his ruthlessness his humanity and his vision became clouded. Rev. Holmes then went on to say there was another man living and working in and leading India, who was a new type of revolutionary and who combined in himself the idealism of Romain Rolland and the practical realism of Lenin and that was Mahatma Gandhi. John Haynes Holmes had never seen Gandhi. He had seen some pictures of Gandhi and he had said in that sermon that Gandhi was an uncouth man with long ears, thick lips and a flat nose etc. Some twelve years afterwards, Mahatma Gandhi went to the Round Table Conference in London and

Rev. John Haynes Holmes crossed the Atlantic and came to England to see Gandhi and talk to him—the Gandhi about whom some years ago he had said he was the greatest man in the world then. There was a great reception for Gandhi in London. When Rev. Holmes entered the hall Gandhi was sitting on the platform. So he came as far as he possibly could in the crowd and sat and watched this man. And later on he wrote a series of articles about Gandhi saying what a mistake he had made about the personality of this man! He had once called him uncouth. But he said, in one of his articles, that even in his loin-cloth Mahatma Gandhi always carried the air of royalty about him. He remarked that there were many kings who were dressed up as kings but looked like clowns, but this man, who was dressed like a fakir, looked every inch a king. He had dignity, poise, courtesy, culture and the highest refinement. Let me also tell you, from my personal experience that in refinement of conduct, there was never a man who could beat Gandhi. Probably the only match was Rabindranath Tagore. And when they met it was refinement at its very highest! Gandhi could be in any crowd of the most refined people in the world and hold his own.

Let no one, therefore, run away with the idea that because he began as a normal child, he remained in that condition. He pulled himself up. He grew to great heights through striving. He developed a dynamic personality which one could see at a glance when one looked at him. Suppose you met Gandhi in a crowd of 10000 people at a railway station. You could immediately pick out Gandhi. There was something about the way he walked, the way he talked, the way he conducted himself. And then, Gandhi was no sour-faced ascetic. He was an ascetic, very ascetic in many things about

him. His food and his clothes were extremely simple, so simple that people were sometimes frightened by his simplicity. He was an ascetic all right, but not a long-faced, dull-looking, sour ascetic. He was a most glad-hearted ascetic. There never has been ordinarily in the public life of the world, a man who laughed more and made more people laugh than Mahatma Gandhi. Great jokes would come out of him—superb jokes. It was a new type of asceticism. He took from asceticism everything that gave strength to him. He rejected nothing from life which strengthened and uplifted life. He was a saint full of laughter; his laughter was not the laughter of the sophisticated man who laughs with an apology. Gandhi's laughter was genuine and uproarious laughter. You must know some of the great jokes which he made in his life-time. Two of them were made in England. There is a sort of regulation dress in England called plus fours. A cheeky London newspaper reporter—newspaper reporters are expected to be cheeky—got hold of Gandhi in his loin cloth and said, "Mr. Gandhi, what are you wearing?" It was winter time in England. Gandhi said, "Oh you people in England wear plus fours. I wear minus fours." The newspapers next morning came out with this joke and said that this man from India was a man of sparkling humour. Then he once went to the Buckingham Palace, for a party which King George V gave. One must dress in a particular way, stand in a particular way, talk in a particular way when one is in the presence of His Majesty the King Emperor. The Round Table Conference was sitting and Mahatma Gandhi was the sole representative of the Indian National Congress. Every other person represented himself there. But here was the man who represented the millions of India. All knew that the Conference had met to make peace with Gandhi. Gandhi too was invited to attend the

party at Buckingham Palace. It was made very clear that Mahatma Gandhi would go only in his loin cloth and his shawl. First His Majesty the King Emperor was very annoyed. But the British Prime Minister must have told His Majesty that this man was the most important man at the Round Table Conference and that he could not be shut out from the party. So he was allowed to come in his loin-cloth. Gandhi motored up to the Palace. His Majesty shook hands with him. Later on a little paper was circulated among Gandhiji's personal friends, as to what exactly happened. It was not for publication in the press. There was a little conversation between Mahatma Gandhi and the King. It was not very cordial. His Majesty is supposed to have asked him, "Mr. Gandhi, why are you fighting against my officers in India?" Gandhi answered at once, "Your Majesty, you certainly do not wish me to argue that with you at this very pleasant party". So that passed. Then at some other stage the King-Emperor asked him, "Have not the British people been very kind to you?" Then Gandhi said, "This is not the first time I have come to England. I have come here before and I have always been treated with the greatest kindness. I am very grateful, Your Majesty". "Then why do you fight against my Government?" was the next question. Gandhi replied again, "Surely Your Majesty, you are not asking me to argue that point now when you are my very kind host". When the party was over and Gandhi was coming out of the palace another cheeky reporter approached him and said "Mr. Gandhi, how did you manage to get in, in that dress? Did you meet the King? What happened?" With a twinkle in his eye he said, "Do you know what happened? I met the King and he wore clothes enough for both of us". That led to great laughter and fun in the British Press.

Gandhi never allowed himself to be dull. He was full of quips and jokes and glad-heartedness. It was such a man who led this country and led it in one of the most unique revolutions of history.

There is one other aspect which we should not forget here. Many people with whom I discussed this, tell me they did not know this about Mahatma Gandhi. You remember Dr. Stewart Nelson, the eminent Negro scholar, who came to Gandhigram. He said to me when I explained this to him, "But Mr. Ramachandran, this is not known about Gandhi." What he said was not known was this: Gandhi combined in himself the softness of the rose-petal and the hardness of the hardest steel. At one moment he would be playing with children like one of them. At another, he would be tenderly nursing the sick. You know in Gandhi's Ashram, we had a joke among ourselves. If you wanted to see Gandhi by yourself, you must fall sick! The next day he will be standing by your bedside. If you are healthy you may not see him for weeks and weeks together or talk to him. But if you develop a little temperature and put a blanket over you and lie down, the Ashram Manager would give Gandhiji the list of persons who were sick and the next morning when he went round, you would hear the click-click of his sandals and he would be standing near your bed asking, "How are you?". He will take your hand, feel your pulse and then enquire about the kind of food you took. I once was really ill. He came to my bedside. This was in the Satyagraha Ashram in Sabarmati. The year must have been 1924-25. You never get coffee or tea as a rule in the Ashram. Like a good South Indian I wanted my coffee, now that I was ill, but where was I to get my coffee? Even when I slept, I dreamt of a cup of coffee somewhere down in

South India. The next morning, I heard the click-click of his wooden sandals. I knew he would be coming. He came and stood by my bedside and made enquiries. And then he suddenly asked, "Is there any particular thing which you would have drunk or eaten in your own home if you were ill like this?" I said to myself, "God, here is my opportunity." And very hesitantly I said to him, "I would very much love to have a cup of coffee". Then with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes he said, "What! Coffee? You incorrigible South Indian!" He walked away briskly. He went to the kitchen, the family kitchen where many of us usually took our food. He found nobody there. He lighted the fire, boiled the water, made the coffee himself, put it on a tray and half an hour later, I heard the same click-click of his sandals coming back. I said, "What is this? Gandhiji has come and gone once, why is he coming back again?" I was a little worried. Then with his tray of coffee he came to the bed, put it on a stool and said, "See, I have made some light coffee for you. I am sure you will say it is not as strong as you make in South India. But you will enjoy this. Somebody else will come for the tray." Even before I could say "Thank you", he had gone. That was the man. I was saying that you should see him playing with children. Then he would become one of the children. When you were sick he became the tenderest nurse. Some of you must have seen the picture of Gandhi who daily went to a leper friend of his to wash his sores. So, at one moment he was tender-fingered and tender-minded, but the next moment when great national problems faced him or the call to action came, he suddenly transformed himself into a man of steel. There was no weakness; no compromise. It was either do or die.

I have a clear memory of one or two instances.

I was with Gandhi in the Sabarmati Ashram when the Akali Sikhs were conducting the Jaito Satyagraha. The police indulged in terrible brutalities. The Akali Satyagrahis were sometimes so beaten up with lathis that they lay unconscious in pools of their own blood. And yet the brave Akalis remained completely non-violent. Gandhi sent C. F. Andrews to enquire and report. The report confirmed the worst news so far. Gandhi spoke at the evening prayer that day. His voice took on its metallic ring. He said he would not shed a single tear for the Satyagrahis. They had chosen the path of suffering to right a wrong. They must pay the price. His pity was for the British Raj and their police, who were degrading themselves. He concluded by saying, "Unless India can produce at least one million satyagrahis like these Akalis willing to shed their own blood and die non-violently, Swaraj can never come." He was not weeping for the handful of suffering Akalis. He was asking for a million more martyrs for India's freedom. He was ready to be the first martyr himself but he wanted a million to follow suit.

There was another occasion, much later during the Second World War. The Japanese were on the rampage all over South-East Asia. And a rumour came that the Japanese Navy was approaching the shores of India. The Madras Governor and the Europeans suddenly ran away and within a couple of days they were sitting safe far away on the top of Ootacamund. There was great panic all along the coast from Calcutta down to Tuticorin. Offices were shifted over-night. It was a critical time. It was at this time Gandhi struck out with his final non-violent revolution called the "Quit India" movement. When Gandhi decided to launch the movement at such a critical hour of India's history when the Japanese invasion of India seemed

imminent, many of his best co-workers and colleagues said it was not right because if we fought the British we would be helping the Fascists and the Japanese. Even Pandit Nehru hesitated. Nehru spoke at a meeting in Allahabad indicating that he did not see his way clear. If we started a battle against the British in India then we would be weakening the Democracies against Fascism. If India remained quiet what was to happen to India? So he went to Gandhi at Sevagram, and, I was told later that, one of the most difficult discussions between Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru then took place. Gandhi insisted that the "Quit India" movement must stand, that there should be no compromise on this question, that the fear of a Japanese invasion should not neutralise the coming revolution. Gandhi spoke, as I heard later, somewhat like this: "If now we do not fight the British and state unhesitatingly that we shall not participate in their war as slaves of the British, it would mean that India did not count and was lost. If now we do not fight I will tell you what will happen when the Japanese invade India. Those who will not fight the British, in the name of some argument or other, will go with garlands to welcome the Japanese invaders. If we do not now develop the strength to fight the conqueror sitting inside the house, we will never develop the strength to fight the conqueror who is yet to come. So if we intend to fight the Japanese unto death non-violently, then we must develop the strength here and now to fight the British even in this hour of peril." It was this argument that completely converted Nehru. Nehru went back to Allahabad and at another public meeting he said words to this effect: "I had a long talk with Mahatma Gandhi. I now see light in front of me and I invite the Nation to plunge into the 'Quit India' movement with all the strength it possesses". On another occasion, after freedom came, our Hindu-Muslim

troubles were at their height. Mahatma Gandhi was then walking through Noakali which had been ravaged by bloody communal riots. Nehru flew to Calcutta and then went to Noakhali to consult Gandhi on the serious communal troubles in Bihar and elsewhere. And he came back to Calcutta and in an interview said, "I went to Gandhi full of troubles and hesitations. I felt darkness around and somewhat helpless. But I have now come away from talking to Gandhiji, strengthened and encouraged, to face the challenges that are ahead of me." And then in a mood of reverence he spoke aloud, "Sometimes I wonder from what inner sources Bapu (Gandhi) draws his unbreakable strength!" So while on the one hand Gandhi could be tender and affectionate like a mother or lover, sweet like a flower and gentle like gentleness itself, when the call to action came he became a man of steel, the Field-Marshal of his non-violent army. The disciplines he imposed on his non-violent soldiers were harder than the disciplines that any General ever imposed on his army. He led them to non-violent battle and when people died or were imprisoned, when families were shattered, he never shed a tear, saying they had undertaken these voluntarily and for a cause. They were shedding no blood except their own. You remember the Biblical saying, "When you have put your hands to the plough, do not look back." That was his spirit. And in another place Jesus said something which represented Gandhi's attitude on such occasions, "Let the dead bury the dead." This meant, the living should advance. He was never wedded to any particular type of non-violent action at all times. In the 1920's it was the Non-Cooperation movement. In the 1930's he did not repeat the Non-Cooperation movement, he started the Salt Satyagraha movement. In the 1940's he did not repeat Salt Satyagraha, he started the "Quit India" movement. He was a realist,

reacting to new situations in new ways. That is why we look on Gandhi as a man who grew every day of his life. He grew by accepting all that was vital in any situation, and by reacting to changing realities and conditions in new ways. If somebody puts Gandhi into a mould or says this or that was the last teaching of Gandhi, he will make a very serious mistake. If Mahatma Gandhi lived today he would not stand still but move forward.

Many people hold that the greatest thing about Gandhi was his unflinching non-violence, the new collective power he gave to non-violence. I have no doubt that this is one of the greatest things about him. But there was in Gandhi one thing greater even than non-violence. He himself put it in language of matchless simplicity. He said that if—mark the word, if—the choice before him was only between cowardice and violence, he would choose violence. Now this from Mahatma Gandhi is very significant. If some other leader had said this there will be no special significance. But when Mahatma Gandhi, to whom non-violence was the very breath of his life, said this, it meant that the one thing which was greater even than non-violence to him was action. The greatest teaching of Gandhi was and is that we must act here and now and never run away from reality. If we do not act, non-violence is worthless. If in the name of non-violence we do not act we betray non-violence. Inaction and non-violence are contradictory. An evader or a coward is never really non-violent. Gandhi said that non-violence is the weapon not of the weak but of the strong. This does not mean that we should act violently when we want to act. Because Gandhi at once followed up his call to imperative action by adding that the choice need never be restricted to cowardice or violence,

because there was another and better way i. e. that of non-violence. But if for somebody the only choice lay between violence and cowardice then he should not run away even from violent action. If one is a man of action, continually and sincerely acting to the best of one's understanding, even one's mistakes will be corrected and forgiven. Your mistakes have a chance to be corrected by yourself and by events. But inaction is a complete moral and spiritual negation. It is a vacuum. And why must action mean only killing and destroying? That is mis-action, which is none better than inaction. So we must act in the right manner, with love, with truth, and with a constructive mind. In a man of sincere action, even violence may be forgiven. But never is inaction forgiven. Having said that, Gandhi added, the choice before every man and woman is not only between cowardice and violence, but much more between cowardice and non-violent action. Because the way of non-violent action is open to every man and woman, however weak or beaten down he or she may be, physically. Moral strength is inherent in every human being.

These are some of the things which we must keep in mind as we go forward with the study of this man. I say thank God, he was only a man. He was no God. Thank God, Gandhi never said he was a God. He misled nobody by saying that he was a special incarnation. Even while he lived there were attempts to make him into a God. He fought those attempts so relentlessly and taught his friends and followers so fully not to treat him as a God that, I am quite sure, he is not going to be made a God by this generation or any generation to come. Some people tell me that though people who personally knew Gandhi very well will obey him and treat him as a man, the next generation and the generation after will

make him a God. I do not think so because in his own writings, teachings and work he has made it crystal clear that the best way to destroy him is to make him into a God. Make Gandhi into a God and Gandhi is finished. Keep Gandhi as a man and as the centuries pass, this man will grow in stature and in glory. Let us not make the mistake of destroying Gandhi by making him into a God. Let him grow and let us grow with him in the concept that he was a common man who pulled himself up to the height of greatness through his own ceaseless efforts.

GANDHI'S CREATIVE REVOLUTION

We have seen a little of the background against which we should understand the life and work of Gandhi. We have also seen something of the personality of the man. Unless we keep these in mind, the picture I give of another aspect of his life will not be as clear to you as it should be. For I want to present Gandhi to you as a great realist and as one who understood the facts and needs of India with unsurpassed accuracy. We shall have a poor conception of Gandhi if we always think of him simply as a gentle and sweet saint. This is no doubt true but Gandhi became the Mahatma, and the matchless leader of the people of India not merely because he was a great saint, because in India we have had innumerable saints, but for other reasons equally. Even today, there are saints and good men in India. But they have not taken the place of Gandhi. Gandhi was the supreme realist in the history of India.

Gandhi came back from South Africa having discovered the concept and technique of Satyagraha. He discovered in Satyagraha the art and the science of how the weak can stand up to the strongest in the world. While it is true that Satyagraha is not the weapon of the weak, it is equally true that it is the weapon which the physically weakest can handle against the

Thoughts and Talks

politically strongest. When Gandhi came back to India he gave a promise to his political Guru, Gopala Krishna Gokhale, that for one year he would make no speeches; he would go round and study the facts of India. He had some knowledge of India even before. He had read books about India. He had met our leaders and he had travelled wide in the country. But now for the first time, he was looking at the face of India without any curtain. He wandered all over this country. He searched India and asked the people innumerable questions. He and his wife Kasturba Gandhi and a small band of workers went from province to province, studying the situation. He kept his ears close to the earth of India and listened to the rumblings coming from deep within the soil. What his ears heard, his eyes saw, troubled him deeply. He felt he was studying a volcano—asleep outwardly but raging within. Many things happened after this study. For instance, there was the great Indigo satyagraha in Bihar. It was waged against the Indigo planters who had made tens of thousands of Indian peasants practically their slaves. The Indigo plantations were like small kingdoms, inside which a European planter lived and ruled the country about. Mahatma Gandhi attacked this system peacefully and won his first great battle for satyagraha in India. He fought another battle in Gujarat, the Borsad Satyagraha, against those who were crushing their tenants in a part of Gujarat. He won another battle there. All these are different chapters of this story. What I want to emphasise at the moment is that he closely and carefully studied the facts of India.

What was the picture of India which stood revealed in front of him as he studied this country more and more? The first thing was the indescribable poverty of the people. The

average national income per head stood at two annas per day ! He looked at this poverty, and discovered it was soul-crushing poverty, of which the city-dwellers had very little knowledge and for which they cared even less. He found political leaders going up and down the country, from Calcutta to Bombay, Bombay to Delhi and Delhi to Madras, but nobody looked fully at the villages of India where eighty per cent of the people lived. Political leadership was concerned with the thoughts and hopes of less than twenty per cent who lived in the cities of India. Gandhi said this was wrong arithmetic ! The then political leadership thought that the twenty per cent of the people living in cities and towns was more important than the eighty per cent living in the seven hundred thousand villages. He put it picturesquely, when he said that even arithmetic was getting perverted in India. Under foreign rule and under the British type of education, the educated community was functioning as though 20% was more than 80%. Gandhi said the life in the villages was the most important part of the life of India and if that life was ruined, India would be lost altogether. Then came poignant and tragic words from him when he said that the lamp of life was burning low in the huts of eighty per cent of the people of India and any small whiff of ill-wind could put out the little flicker that still persisted with astounding tenacity. But life was steadily ebbing away. He said this grinding poverty was the most appalling fact of India, that someone had to deal with it. No politics was worth the name which turned its face away from it. It would be the politics of unreality.

Secondly, he came up against colossal illiteracy and ignorance among the people. He found a curious combination of conditions. People had strong commonsense and within the

very narrow limits of daily life, the rural masses understood what was good for them, what was useful for them and what was needed by them. But beyond that little circumference, their ignorance was terrible—ignorance of the laws of collective sanitation, a terrific thing in any country, ignorance of the laws of nutrition, equally bad anywhere and ignorance of those common social laws which alone can bind all the people together in a modern and progressive nation. Instead of social laws and customs binding the people together, he saw them breaking up life into innumerable isolated bits of communities, castes and sub-castes. He saw how caste and communal differences were shattering the life of India. He felt he did not meet Indians as such anywhere, but only Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, Komattis, Chettis, Naidus and Pillais, untouchables, Muslims, Christians etc. He met people who said they were Gujaratis, Tamilians, Bengalis, Punjabis etc, but almost none said he was an Indian. There were little bits of territory and big bits of prejudices everywhere and people were taking their name and strength from these bits.

Finally, he found disease and death everywhere. No country in the world had so many indescribable diseases as India. Recently an Indian doctor was in Soviet Russia and while she was discussing with the doctors there in Moscow they asked, "What are your prevalent diseases?" She gave a list and they said in their big hospitals of many beds there was not a single case with any of those diseases. They did not know these diseases. So poverty, ignorance, disease, death and the shattered life of the people confronted Gandhi all over the country.

Gandhi sat down, thought over it and asked himself whether this was the India of the Upanishads, the India of the Gita, or as we might say in the South, the India of the Thirukkural.

How can anyone make India a great country? As he pondered over this he took a pledge within himself that his politics would be the politics of the people, the basic politics which would raise the life of the people. He would stand with the people as a fellow-worker, live with them, think with them, eat with them, dress like them, talk to them and become one of them. That was why Jawaharlal Nehru once said in his Autobiography, that Gandhi did not merely represent India but that Gandhi was India and India was Gandhi. There are people representing India in the United Nations, in the Foreign Embassies, in foreign conferences. Gandhi was not representing India that way. He was India itself. He became part of the life, the blood and the bone of India.

And how did he do that? This is the most fascinating story about Mahatma Gandhi. As he sat back and pondered over these problems, he took a pledge in his heart which he never once broke till the three bullets of the assassin suddenly took him more than thirty years later. He let his life enter into the great bloodstream of the life of the people. He did not stand aside, as many leaders did and simply watch their life. And step by step, the process of identification with the people began and was completed. Other leaders looked at him and were troubled in their hearts. They said, "Here is a man doing quixotic things. How can we follow such a man?" Gandhi's was not an identification with the people in theory. It was an identification in practice, in day to day living.

Let us study a little this process of identification. Gandhi began asking himself the question, 'When did this terrific poverty begin in India?' There were records of Indian history to show that there was a time when India was one of the most prosperous countries of the world. Our finished products

flowed out to other countries. India was probably the earliest country in the world to develop the art of cotton cloth-making. Our cloth-making industry became a mighty industry and people in Greece, in Rome, in Baghdad, waited for the caravans to arrive from India to buy their fine textiles. We produced extraordinarily beautiful textile goods. The Indian muslin and the Indian calico earned throughout the world an unrivalled name, the muslin for the aristocrats and the calico for every man and woman in the then civilised world. When we started spinning and weaving, people in Europe did not know what cotton was. They had never heard of cotton, they never wore cotton. There was no silk in Europe. There is a story that somebody took to England a cotton pod. People looked at it and said this must be the special wool of some lamb growing in the Himalayas, for they could never imagine plants producing this kind of material. I am told there is a picture in the British Museum where it is shown what the British people first thought of a cotton pod. It is the picture of a plant with a lamb sitting on the top of it. The cotton pod is shown as though there is some inextricable connection between the lamb and the plant. So our cloth began to go to the world markets. There were other articles like spices, metal goods, ivoryware etc. which also the outside world got from India. Then later on, came the conquest of India. The British came begging for a little land here and a little concession there, but step by step, like the story of the Camel and the Arab, they took possession of India. One of the earliest things they did was to take away cotton from this country and start spinning and weaving in their own country. There came a time of competition between Indian cloth and British cloth and British Parliament passed stringent laws against the import of Indian cloth to England. When competition came the British held political power and

ultimately, they won in the competition. Our textile industry declined and died. As it declined and died their textile industry grew and prospered. This was the first process of industrialisation in England, for industrialisation started with the textile industry. The facts of history can prove that industrialisation in England was built over the graveyard of industries in India. A time came when the flood completely turned and instead of India exporting cloth, we had to wait in India for English ships to arrive to buy our clothes and wear them. In the wake of the conquest of the textile industry, they brought many other goods from their markets and flooded the markets of India. When ships came to India fully loaded with cloth and other goods, they did not go back empty. They took back raw materials from here. This commerce suited them very well. Raw materials came to England, finished products went back to India. It was a case of political power joining up with economic power and beating down Indian industry.

Mahatma Gandhi looked at this picture and analysed the economic situation in India. Forty years ago, when India was still in subjection to the British Rule, he arrived at the conclusion that the poverty of India began with the destruction of our cotton industry. The cotton industry was our most wide-spread industry. It was not confined to a province, to a region or a district, but was spread from Cape Comorin to Kashmir and from Karachi to Chittagong. Gandhi said that just as the poverty of India began with the destruction of the spinning-wheel and the handloom, our prosperity must come back to India by reviving the spinning-wheel and the handlooms in the villages. No man or woman must be without work in the villages. I want you to listen very carefully to this argument. There are many other cottage and village industries. There is

the ghani, pottery, blacksmithy, carpentry, leather-work etc. If you, however, look at it objectively you would find there is no industry which was spread like flood throughout the countryside and went into every home like the spinning-wheel. I was recently talking in Delhi to an official in the Community Project Administration and I was saying to him, 'You have many training centres for handicrafts and village industries. Your motor vans are carrying implements from place to place and demonstrating them. You add up, on one side, all the money you are spending to day on all these enterprises of yours and, on the other, estimate how many more people have taken to these village industries and how much more income they have earned since you started these enterprises. Collect facts from all over India, every province of India. Add up all that and I will show you that in the Madras State only, more people have got employment through the Charka in the first Five Year Plan than all the others put together and that these spinners and weavers have earned more money than in all your other items put together.' "I added, "Now take the Madras State. The Madras Government itself is producing khadi in many village centres. In the last five years they have employed in addition to the old spinners who were brought into the picture by Mahatma Gandhi, more than sixty thousand spinners and more than ten thousand weavers. The money distributed to them runs into several crores of rupees. Now put this on one side and take all the other industries on the other and you will see that that this one industry gives more employment and income to more people in India than all the other industries."

Mahatma Gandhi discovered forty years ago that by restoring the cloth-making industry, viz., ginning, carding,

spinning and weaving—four processes and each one a varying process—to the village he would immediately put a few more annas into the pockets of millions of people than any other industry in India. This discovery was not a theoretical discovery. He worked out facts and figures and said that the poverty of India began when its most widespread village industry was destroyed by unequal competition and political pressure and if one has to revive the prosperity of India, one must begin exactly at the point where that prosperity was attacked and lost. Gandhi was a man to whom thinking and acting were concurrent processes. So this curious man, who returned from South Africa and wandered about India, discovering these truths of India, suddenly said that he was going to plunge into the Charkha Movement. There was nobody who could help him. But he got hold of two of his close friends. One was Maganlal Gandhi and the other, Sankarlal Banker. They went round, discovered a few charkhas in some of the villages and brought them to him. Gandhi said they were not good enough. So he started improving the charkha. The charkha we use today is a great improvement on the old traditional charkha. He established his Ashram on the banks of the Sabarmati and called it the Satyagraha Ashram. The whole of the Satyagraha Ashram became a training-ground for the spinning and weaving organisers of India. Some people said, “Gandhiji, you came to win the freedom of India. We thought you were going to give us political leadership. But what nonsense is this spinning and weaving?” Gandhi said that this was his politics. His politics was the politics of giving food to the people and thereby binding himself and the people together in such a way that nothing would break that bond. Gandhi took up the Khadi movement. He built it step by step. There came a day when spinning spread and

spinning-wheels hummed in every part of India. Spinning became not merely economic activity but political and social activity of the highest order. It bound the leaders and the masses together with hand-spun thread. And who learnt to be spinners? Chittaranjan Das, the mighty man of Bengal, Sir P. C. Ray, one of our greatest scientists, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad, Prakasam and other giants of our history. Now the British became thoroughly frightened. In fact, later on, every time there was a political struggle, the first places the British would attack were the Khadi production centres. In Bihar, they burnt the Khadi stores because every inch of Khadi represented some working instance of patriotic fervour in India. Nehru called Khadi, ‘the livery of freedom’. Khadi became a mighty business and spread throughout India. I remember I went and worked for Khadi in Tiruppur in the early nineteen-twenties. I became a ‘Khadi’ worker under the Charkha Sangh. I remember the huge quantities of yarn that came from the villages. Godowns were packed from floor to ceiling with handspun yarn. Cart-loads of it were coming in and hundreds of weavers were making a living. Khadi was not a mere small village industry. It became a national movement and only those who have lived through those years can know something of the magic of the movement. Younger people to-day, often cynical or self-centred fellows, thinking only of themselves and nothing else and arguing all the time but doing nothing, can talk about it lightly. But to those of us who lived through this revolution, nothing is more sacred than this symbol of our revolution and you, who today enjoy the fruits of that revolution, dare not treat it with contempt. Khadi, started thirty years ago, is still valid in India. Anybody pretending to be an intellectual or an economist and then arguing against Khadi, is arguing

against the realities of India. What we then did as private individuals the Government of India is doing today through a Statutory Commission — the Khadi and Village Industries Commission. There is to-day more khadi being produced and worn in India than at any time in our history. So this was Gandhi's first item in the constructive programme. And he said he could not ask other people to spin if he did not spin himself. Till the day he died, his spinning hour was the most sacred hour of his life. However busy he was, he never went to bed without his spinning done for the day. When he went to the Round Table Conference in London and was putting in eighteen hours of work a day, he sat up and did his spinning after midnight. I remember one particularly poignant situation in which I saw him spinning. He was undertaking his twenty-one days of fast for Hindu-Muslim unity in 1924. On the thirteenth or fourteenth day, he became very weak and the doctors said he should take sugar. He replied that the rules of the fast made it imperative that he should not touch sugar. But he had become so weak that he could not sit up even for prayer. I remember Dr. Ansari examined his pulse and told Rajagopalachariar and others who were attending on Gandhi, "Babu has touched the danger line. He is so weak that his pulse might stop any moment." So C. F. Andrews went to him and said, "This is what the doctors are saying. We are forbidding you to spin today. The strain may be too much for you." Gandhi could hardly talk, his voice was very weak. He took a slate or something and wrote, "Charlie, I thought you were a man of prayer. Even you, have you forgotten the power of prayer? My spinning is my daily prayer. If you take it away from me, my life ceases." He added, "Put the charkha in front of me. Let me do my half an hour of spinning and then test my pulse. If it is not better, I will not take the charkha tomorrow."

Now what were they to say to such a man? They put the charkha in front of him and propped him up against the pillows. The picture of it is as clear before my eyes as I see you sitting in front of me today. He was a little bent. The pillows were behind his back. There was a white piece of cloth on his head. He sat up, took the wheel and slowly started, first with a slow movement and then quickly and concentratedly he spun for half an hour. He looked at the watch. His time was up. He stopped spinning and lay back. The doctor took his pulse and said, "This is a miracle. His pulse has improved". That was his faith in the Charkha as the symbol of the awakened villages of India.

Now why did Gandhi insist on his daily spinning? Not because daily spinning brought food and clothing for himself. It was part of his philosophy and practice of identifying himself, even in the busiest of days, with the poverty-stricken people of India. And this must be made clear beyond any doubt to you that here in Gandhigram, spinning is one of the disciplines which we all accept. Everytime we make new admissions into our schools and colleges, we make it clear that there are certain fundamental disciplines here which nobody should attempt to break. We have built up this place; we are doing this work in order to carry out certain ideals and in carrying out those ideals, there are certain minimum disciplines. Come in if you accept them. Don't come in if you don't accept them. Spinning as a sacrificial gesture is at the core of the Gandhian disciplines. We are not spinning only to make cloth for ourselves. Our spinning is an offering to a great cause, that of the villages of India. The aim is conscious identification with the village people in their poverty and, therefore, doing something which millions of them do or can do and making what you produce, a

voluntary gift to the people. It is what we call Sutra Yagna—sacrificial spinning. It assumes meaning, colour, tone and significance when it is done deliberately, fully knowing its implications. So spinning and the Khadi Movement became the earliest symbols of the Gandhian Revolution.

As Gandhi and thousands of village workers penetrated the villages with the Charkha in their hands as the instrument of a new way of life, so to say, they discovered that there were many other ancient and excellent village industries which required to be looked into. So, in the wake of the Khadi Movement came the All-India Village Industries Movement. That Khadi led to Village Industries was inevitable. This is the significance and the merit of Khadi. It did not end as Khadi but became the point of an advancing revolution in the villages of India. If it had not, if we had produced Khadi and ended there, it would not have been a vital programme. But as workers went into the villages with the spinning wheel and as their spinning-wheel began to rotate in the villages, Khadi workers looked around and saw more of the realities of rural India. They realised that there were many other village industries, which if they strengthened, could give an added income to the people. So Khadi inevitably led to the Village Industries Movement. And it was in the Village Industries Movement that Mahatma Gandhi discovered one of the great men of India, the late J. C. Kumarappa. Kumarappa had returned to India after higher education in England and the United States. He met Gandhi. They talked and suddenly Gandhi asked him, 'Kumarappa, you are a trained economist. I want to reconstruct our village economy. Will you help me?' Kumarappa replied, 'I don't understand you.' Gandhi said, 'It does not matter; first I will try to understand you and then

you please try to understand me.' And so Kumarappa became one of the principal lieutenants of Mahatma Gandhi. For twenty years, he was the Secretary of the All-India Village Industries Association. If today there is recognition of the importance of village industries it is largely due to this man of dedication and his work.

Now Khadi was the first item in the Constructive Revolution under Gandhi. He started the Akhil Bharat Charkha Sangh, a very powerful body which influenced effectively even the political life of India then. It had many branches, many production and sales centres and many educated people working in the organization. The Village Industries movement spread through the All-India Village Industries Association. It also became a great movement in India under Gandhi. Among the founder-members were Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Frontier Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Sir P. C. Ray, Jammalal Bajaj and others. This was the second item in the Gandhian Revolution. And everytime he started one of these movements, he toured the whole of India, spoke at hundreds of meetings explaining the scope and significance of the programme and drew millions of people into it. Nehru has said somewhere that the Charkha might be a little thing by itself; but when a million people began to spin on it, it became a tremendous thing; and he added, "Whatever Gandhi touched, became a very big thing in India."

The third item in the Creative Revolution under Gandhi was the movement for the emancipation of the untouchables of India. Now how did this movement come into the picture? Gandhi took Khadi and Village Industries into villages and then found that neither the Khadi Movement nor the Village Industries Movement would advance because of the caste system

and caste prejudices. Only a certain caste would spin. Only a certain caste would weave. Nobody else would touch the spinning wheel or touch the handloom. Nobody would become a potter except the potter. Caste was built on the rock of specific and everlasting vocation. Gandhi wanted all vocations to be open to all people. He did not come to the caste problem from a book or from a theory. He came up against it as a terrific obstacle in the way of his movement of national reconstruction. As I have already said, for Gandhi there was no gap between thought and action. As soon as he made up his mind that the caste system was an evil, that it was shattering and obstructing the life of India, he gathered all the moral momentum of his personality to attack it and he attacked it more relentlessly than any other man in India's history.

I had the unique privilege of organizing Mahatma Gandhi's Harijan Tour in the Tamil country. I was then the Secretary of the Tamil Nad Harijan Sevak Sangh. He gave nearly three weeks to Tamilnad. We began from Madras, went down to Cape Comorin and came back. Every day he would address three to four meetings. A friendly firm in Madras put a Master Buick at his disposal and the back seat was made into a sleeping contraption. He practically lived in that car and moved across the land like a storm. Everywhere he went, tens of thousands of people listened to him. His message that caste and untouchability must go if India was to live, rang over the whole of India. He said that so long as untouchability continued, India could never be free. So he made the removal of untouchability and the breaking up of the caste system a life-and-death problem. You remember Gandhi told the British Government in a famous speech earlier at the Round Table Conference that if it was necessary, he would give his whole

life to redeem the untouchables. He challenged Dr. Ambedkar at the Round Table Conference and said that while Ambedkar was his brother and friend no one could challenge his own right to represent the 'untouchables' of India. He said that Ambedkar could choose any constituency of the 'untouchables' to oppose him and he, Gandhi, would give him a beating!

Now let us look at the U. S. A. Even in 1960, their schools and colleges are not all open to the Negroes. The Negro problem was, after all, only a three-hundred-year-old problem. The untouchability problem of India was a three-thousand-year-old problem. Can any one find one single school in India today which can take the stand that the untouchable cannot come in? It is impossible. How did this miracle happen? How did this change come in India? Our problem was much deeper and worse than the problem of the Negroes in the United States and yet we almost solved it.

You remember when the first free Cabinet of India was formed Gandhi said to Pandit Nehru that Dr. Ambedkar 'the untouchable' should be included in the Cabinet. Both Nehru and the Sardar were not in favour saying that this man had been attacking and maligning the Congress as no other man in India. How could such a man be brought into the Cabinet? Gandhi held that it was the atonement India must make to the 'untouchables' of India. So Dr. Ambedkar became the Minister for Law in the first free Government of India. Here also now in the Madras State, we have Shri Kakkan, an 'untouchable', as the Minister for Public Works.

Most of the obstacles in the way of the Harijans have therefore been swept away in law and many in practice. If there are still some left, they are hidden in the hearts of men.

In all public matters, in regard to all public rights, there is not the slightest distinction today between the 'untouchable' and the so-called Brahmins. I say 'so-called' Brahmins, because I don't admit there really are any more Brahmins in India today. The Brahmin of today is a complete fiction. Gandhi said again and again later in his life that there can be only one caste in our country—the Indian. He said in Noakhali that the mission of his life was to create a casteless and classless society in India. If there is now the chance of caste being completely uprooted in India, it is because of the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi through the Harijan movement. He collected large funds and put them at the disposal of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, which carried on a relentless agitation for the complete emancipation of the untouchables.

I remember the day when the temples of Travancore were opened to the Harijans. There is a wrong impression that it was the Madurai Temple that was first opened to the Harijans. Long before the Madurai Temple was opened, 2000 temples in Travancore were opened to the Harijans including the private Padmanabha Swami Temple of the Maharaja of Travancore. It was only after Travancore led the way that Madurai picked up courage to follow in the path. Later, all over the country, temples were opened, schools were opened, and all public rights given to Harijans. We have now written into our Constitution that anybody acting on the basis of untouchability will be punished under the law. Observance of untouchability today has been made a criminal offence under the Indian Constitution.

The fourth item in the Creative Revolution initiated by Gandhi was the movement for the emancipation of women. This we now call the Kasturba Trust movement. Gandhi's wife Kasturba died in prison. She and Gandhi were then in

prison together. The British Government would not release her from prison even when she was at the point of death. The Viceroy refused to release her saying she was a most dangerous woman. If she came out and conveyed Mahatma Gandhi's message to the people it would mean more trouble for the British Raj. So the Government let her die in prison. When she died, Gandhi was in prison and all our great leaders were in prison too. The people of India, struck with sorrow at the passing away of Kasturba Gandhi, wanted to collect Rs. 75 lakhs in her memory. Gandhi was then completing 75 years of life. They wanted a Trust to be constituted in the name of Kasturba Gandhi for training women to work in the villages of India. They actually collected far more than Rs. 75 lakhs, i. e. one crore and thirty lakhs of rupees or so. With this money was built in every province in India, a centre to train women for village work. We had one here in Gandhigram for five years till it moved off to its own premises near Erode. It is called Kasturbagram just as this is called Gandhigram. Selected women are trained for two years and then sent out as Gram Sevikas. I remember some years ago, when were checking up the work, there were some fifty branches of the Kasturba Trust in Tamilnad alone; and each branch had one Midwife and one Basic Teacher. This combination of a resident Midwife and a Basic Teacher proved very effective in village reconstruction.

I was recently at the All-India Headquarters of the Kasturba Trust at Indore. It is a big institution called Kasturbagram again. It has its hospital, training schools, Basic school, pre-Basic school, a good farm and so on. Girls learn farming and village industries; they learn to be basic teachers and midwives. In the last ten years or so they have put into the field in India more than two thousand fully-trained

women workers. So this is the work for women through women and it has created far-reaching results in India.

Then came another movement from Gandhi which has now become more significant than all the others, i.e. the Basic Education Movement. It aims at bringing up the children of India in a system of education in which Khadi, Village Industries, a casteless human society, complete freedom and equality of women are all integrated harmoniously. The child would grow up in that atmosphere. It is not that somebody has to teach the child all these afterwards. He learns and lives that life in school day after day. Basic Education conserves all the great values of the Constructive Programme. But it does not stand still. Let none run away with the idea that the Constructive Programme has worked itself out and the last word has been said on it. If the foundation is strong and we have grasped the values of the Constructive Programme fully then advance can and must be made from within the programme itself under the stress of new conditions.

In the Constructive Programme, the individual is important and society is important. But the importance of society should not beat down the value of the individual. If you destroy the value of the individual, you will ultimately destroy the value of collective life also. This is probably the greatest mistake the Communists are committing in the world. If you make the individual an automaton obeying orders from somewhere, if you make him part of a machine, you crush the individual and you make him a slave. If any party destroys the sanctity of the individual, it would have ultimately destroyed the significance of humanity itself. The sanctity of the individual, the claim of the individual to his own life, to his own way of thinking consistent with universal good, this is the central

value of the constructive programme. If an individual has to grow intellectually, emotionally and ethically he should not be made simply a part of a great machine. There are skills of the fingers, skills of the brain, skills of the heart and all these must develop in an integrated manner. This does not mean that there would be no machines, nor does it mean that there would be no industrialisation. But industrialisation and machine production must be properly balanced with the values of individual creativity. One should not destroy the other. Now Gandhi said that while on the one hand we may have centralised production for such things as can be produced only centrally, there are innumerable other things which can be produced in a decentralised manner and if we do so, we spread out employment to lakhs of villages without losing needed production in a big way. I want every one of you to understand clearly that Mahatma Gandhi was no enemy of the machine or industrialisation. He, however, opposed with all his might the machine destroying the individual and making him an automaton. Now take the locomotive engine. A locomotive can be made only in the great Chittaranjan factory in Bengal. It cannot be made in Sevagram or Gandhigram. So what can be produced by centralised, large-scale productive methods should be produced in that way, but we must balance that with widely distributed employment in the rural areas. If you produce goods at one end and the monster of unemployment at the other, the latter will some day create total social disaster. We must balance production with employment. We must balance large-scale production with spreadout production. This must be the purpose of national planning in a country like India. It appears that, faced with the irresistible facts of India, the Planning Commission is slowly coming to realise the value of this view. They have now set apart crores of rupees for

small-scale and village industries. They have realised the contradiction of producing material goods at one end and unemployment at the other. I remember Acharya Kripalani saying recently, 'Gandhiji's idea was that every home in India should become a tiny factory by itself'. Take the case of Japan, for instance. About 50% of the consumer goods produced in Japan are produced in homes and not in factories.

We have in India a terrific population growing year by year. We cannot now go and colonise other parts of the world. It is the fact of India, the need of India, the inescapable challenge of India that we should try to build up as far as is possible, a self-sufficient economy. It does not mean that we shall produce everything here, giving nobody anything and receiving nothing. But in regard to the major needs of the millions of people in this country, if we do not build up an economy as nearly self-sufficient as possible, we would be courting disaster. Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon said the other day that we should become self-sufficient in the production of arms in India. He, as Defence Minister, can think only of arms, which is only a fraction of the Indian problem. The great problem of India is food, clothing and housing—the elementary needs of life under any circumstance. We must build as far as possible a self-sufficient economy in order to give the maximum employment to the people and conserve the wealth of the country for an immense and growing population.

In Basic Education it is not as though we are artificially imposing something on the people, but we want generations of children growing up in a new outlook and in a new way of living. When Basic Education says, you will get learning only if you do some productive work or when Gandhi said knowledge, learning, intellectual and cultural growth must all

be woven round productive work and must come from the processes of productive work, we have something far more revolutionary than anything that even Karl Marx ever said or wrote. It means this : the more a boy is capable of productive work, the more he will learn and the more he will know. The world is not going to tolerate in the coming times, its knowledge and learning being the monopoly of people who do no productive work, or that those who do productive work are continually kept out of bounds of learning. That kind of social order is very nearly finished. The new leaders of India will have to be leaders who can tuck up their sleeves and stand and labour with the people. It is only such leadership that we will accept in India in the coming days. So education in and through productive work is a dynamic idea. I think we have hardly understood its meaning even today. If the processes of learning are woven round productive work of all kinds needed in this country so that the producer becomes learned, we shall have revolutionised Indian society beyond recognition.

So, step by step, while Gandhi lived, he built up the constructive programme. Political freedom alone was not enough; economic freedom also was necessary. This is the common ground between Sarvodaya, Socialism and Communism. We want economic freedom added to political freedom. Basic Education makes this possible peacefully and constructively through education. Every other method would lead to violence. The greatest instrument of peaceful revolution is education. There is no more powerful instrument in the armoury of the creative revolutionary than education and anyone who puts away education as the instrument of change and accepts some other short cut, will make a serious mistake. Here in Gandhigram, therefore, we accept the validity of

education through work. We must realise that there is no greater revolution possible in human society than to nurture generations of people in intellectual and cultural growth, through processes of productive work. It does not mean that nothing will be learnt outside productive work. Many things probably will be learnt even outside productive work, for you cannot reduce life into one single formula. We must not stand for any fanaticism. But the central idea that productive work is the noblest, richest, most potent instrument of education and therefore, of social revolution, must not be rejected.

So Gandhi took us on step by step. He was not theorising, nor lecturing. Every single item he worked out in his own life before he asked someone else to accept it. He started spinning, he started weaving, he put on his own khadi before he asked a single man or woman to do so. He adopted village industries and took the products of village industries. He gave up white sugar and polished rice; instead, he took hand-pounded rice, ghani oil, brown sugar etc. as the best for the body, long before he asked a second man to do so. And before he asked the people to give up untouchability he had given it up and he had brought a 'pariah' girl into his house as his own daughter. Towards the end of his life, he took the vow that he would attend no marriage in which one party was not an 'untouchable.' So he fought untouchability himself before he asked others to accept it. He started a Basic School in Sevagram. Gandhi said a good Basic School will be the symbol of the new educational revolution in India. So he did everything himself before he asked anybody else to do it.

Long before freedom came he taught us the meaning of that freedom. He taught us what the content of that freedom

should be and he gave shape to that freedom in the life of the people. Recently, an American wrote in a well-known journal, "The greatest thing about Gandhi was that even before the British declared India free, he made India free in her own mind." He showed how Gandhi ran a parallel government in India. He ran his own political programme, his economic programme, his educational programme. He brought the people more and more to turn to his constructive programme and to turn away from the Government. In fact, the freedom of India arrived at the point when Gandhi had completed his processes of a parallel Government in the outlook and life of the people. He was a creative revolutionary to whom politics meant not public speaking nor vote-catching, but reshaping and building up the life of the people. It is from this reshaping of the life of the people that he drew all his strength in his battle against British Imperialism. The Communists organized secret conspiracy, gathered small arms, spread literature, got ready for a violent outbreak which never came. But Gandhi's was a different technique—that of the open conspiracy. He told the people, "Make up your minds you are free. Who can make you a slave? Look the ruler in his face and say, I am no longer your subject. I will not obey your law. I will not pay your taxes. I am a free man. I am going to shape my country's life in the manner I want." So Gandhi delivered this message of freedom before we became politically free, made us free even while the British thought they ruled. Finally, the British Parliament put the seal on something that had already taken place. I remember what the Secretary of State said about it in the Parliament in London — "We cannot hold India any more except by brute force. We can only stay there as friends. The time has come when we must make up our minds that either we keep machine guns in every village or

get out and be friends with India." Gandhi made it impossible for the British to rule India. When freedom had to be given they consulted the leaders of the people and handed over power. This was the supreme triumph of the Creative Revolution under Gandhi. Strength growing from within, power accruing from within and growing into an irresistible force that the British knew they had lost India before they got out of India. The British would have found it the costliest thing in the world, politically, economically and morally, to have remained in India for even one more year than they did. They are a wise and clear-headed people. Their great statesmen saw this truth and so they left India before it was too late. And when they parted, India and England became the best of friends in the world.

Gandhi's Creative Revolution was thus a political, economic, educational, social and moral revolution—the grandest creative revolution the world has ever seen, culminating in one of the greatest political triumphs of history—without bloodshed and without rancour. The Constructive Programme was the instrument of Creative Revolution.

VISION OF A NEW SOCIETY

Gandhi's goal was not simply the political independence of India. His goal was a perfectly just human society resting on non-violent sanctions. Justice must reach every man and woman. Power should nowhere be concentrated. It should be distributed. Peaceful and non-violent sanctions should hold social justice firm and secure. This concept of a New Society Gandhi called "Sarvodaya". I am afraid we have made the concept of Sarvodaya somewhat cheap by the light-heartedness with which we are using the word. You will presently have a Sarvodaya Tea-shop or Sarvodaya Tobacco, or may be a Sarvodaya Bus Company. Yes, we cannot have a monopoly of this word. Anyone will be free to use it. But I am afraid we have cheapened the word somewhat, even within the few years during which we have used it.

In my talks on Rabindranath Tagore I tried to give you a gist of the last message which I received direct from his mouth. The Poet had said to me that as a student of Visva-bharati there was one thing which I should never forget, *i.e.*, that the greatest thing about a man is that he is just man. The very fact that someone is a man or a woman, should be enough for me to give the highest respect to that person because

man, standing at the apex of creation, himself becoming a creator in many ways, is the greatest product of creation. Man has come on this planet after millions and millions of years of evolution. The Poet told me that all the differences between man and man were petty distinctions which might well have arisen in the last few centuries. When you look at the history of man which is millions of years old, these petty differences that have come to the surface of life will seem utterly meaningless.

I have had to refer to this message many times. Talking the other day in Bangalore at the Tata Institute of Sciences, I had to answer a number of questions on Sarvodaya. One of the persons said to me, "An educated man is certainly more important than a fool and a wealthy man more important than a poor man." For moment I thought I could give him no answer. Suddenly I closed my eyes and remembered Gurudev Tagore's words. So I was able to give the answer, "Your education, your being powerful, your being intellectual, all these may have happened in the life of mankind in the last few decades or centuries. But the history of man is millions of years old. If all of us were just men and women for millions of years and then developed some differences in the last few hundred years, these differences are totally immaterial in the history of mankind. Now look at any man, the poorest man, the weakest man, the most undeveloped man, his history is also the history of millions of years. He could not have become a man unless he had passed through millions of years in which he was evolving into a man from lesser man to greater man. You forget this tremendously long common history and remember the petty differences you have created in the last few centuries or so. In 10,000 years or 20,000 years, where will be these differences?"

Have we not seen, in our own life-time, so many changes taking place? When I was a boy I looked at the world, trying to understand the world; when I look at it today it is a different world altogether. Values have changed. New challenges have come. New things are happening and we are marching onward. All this has happened in thirty to forty years. We are petty beings thinking of differences created yesterday and the day before, forgetting the unity of millions of years of human history." I gave this answer back at the meeting and the response was, "Yes, there is something in what you say." Because he was a scientist, he at once understood that man has a history of millions of years behind him. We have marched together for millions of years, but suddenly some differences have arisen due to many external factors. Let us not exaggerate them, let us not minimise the commonness of the humanity embedded in every man and woman.

Now this is the foundation of Sarvodaya. In the Sarvodaya concept of human society, we do not give more importance to a man or woman because he or she is educated or clever or wealthy. All men and women are of equal validity. Gandhi, while still in S. Africa, had read a book by Ruskin called, "Unto This Last". If you read that book, you will see Ruskin raises the issue that no society is a good society which neglects even the least in it. That society is the best which takes the maximum care of even the least individual. You must seek out the last man and unto that last man you must take the message of deliverance. If you do not, then you are building a false society. I remember when Mahatma Gandhi came to Travancore after the great Temple Entry Proclamation in that State, he spoke at probably the biggest meeting that Kerala had ever seen. There must have been about five lakhs of people at

the meeting. Gandhi was on a high platform along with Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Ayyar, Sir Jagadeesh Prasad and others. Gandhi said something absolutely astounding for which nobody was prepared. He said, "Many years ago when I came to Kerala, not an untouchable but an unapproachable, a Nayadi, was introduced to me. Where is that Nayadi today? Does that Nayadi, wherever he may now be in Kerala, feel that these temples have been opened to him also? Has the message of Temple Entry reached that least little human being in Kerala? If it has not reached him, the Temple Entry Proclamation is meaningless to me". Now this was a daring thing to say. Everybody was expecting Mahatma Gandhi to praise the Proclamation. He brought them down to the earth of reality by saying that if this message of deliverance had not reached that least little Nayadi in Kerala, then the Proclamation was in vain. This is the mental attitude which says that the strong shall not rule and the intellectual shall not dominate. In this new society the least is as big as the greatest. We keep on saying that in a political democracy every single person is as important as every other, because each has a vote. Why do we give a vote to every man and woman, to the unlettered and the uneducated, to the man and woman without a pie in his or her pocket? Because, in politics we recognise everyone as equal. But political democracy is only a shadow of real democracy. Political democracy has to become economic democracy. As a famous English saying goes, the speed of the fleet is the speed of the last boat.

A social order in which we say that the least is entitled to the same consideration as the most powerful is, therefore, the only concept of a completely just democracy. All other concepts are compromises with truth and justice and cannot be the ultimate aim of human society.

Now Gandhi believed in this concept literally. I have told you of the leper who was his personal friend, for whom he built a little house behind his own and to whom he went out everyday in the morning to wash his sores. When he did that, he was practising the concept of 'Unto This Last'; he was doing to the leper what he would have done to his own wife and children. In religion we talk of the one family of man under the fatherhood of God. The whole of mankind is one family and there is only one supreme father who is God. Having said that, we do everything contrary to this idea. It remains on paper, it all remains in words. What is going on is utter hypocrisy. Sarvodaya faces up to the challenge of the idea, 'Unto This Last'.

There are many other social and political concepts in the world today. The most common is the concept of Democracy, on which countless books have been written. But they all deal with political democracy. The significant thing about political democracy is that every adult man and woman has a vote. This inevitably means majority rule. It must be very clear in our minds that in a Democracy, the majority has the right to rule, the right to make laws, the right to conduct the affairs of the State. There is no challenging this. The majority may consult or conciliate the minority, but the will of the majority will prevail in a Democracy. The minority may plead, may beg, may fight and get concessions, but ultimately the minority will get nothing except what the majority concedes. Democracy, reduced to its simplest meaning, is the ordering of society by the majority.

Democracy has tended to become somewhat of a mockery in the world today. American Democracy is largely finance-democracy. The Republican Party is supposed to represent

big money. They deny it. In fact, when I discussed this with American friends, there was the denial that the Republican Party represents big capital. Then there are the Democrats. The difference between the Republicans and the Democrats is very difficult to find when you talk to people in the U. S. A. It almost looks like the difference between 'Tweedledum and Tweedledee'. Over that difference, however, they wax eloquent and fight great battles of the ballot box. But money, influence and power play a considerable part in American Democracy. So it does in most other political Democracies including the Congress Democracy in India.

Probably the one fairly real Democracy in the world is British Democracy. I think the British people represent a more highly trained electorate than any other in the world. The British elector knows what he wants and votes to power whom he wants. I shall give an instance. Winston Churchill was the hero of the Second World War. People said that Churchill's eloquence was as instrumental in winning the war as the armaments of the U. S. A. and the heroisms of the battlefield put together. The power of words that Churchill demonstrated has no parallel in modern times. England was being beaten down to its knees. The whole of Europe was lying prostrate before Hitler. And yet, this leader, in the British Parliament, lashed out like a lion and his magic words winged with courage and determination kept the British nation alert and undefeated through the most desperate years of the war. The war ended. Elections came in Britain and everybody thought Churchill was coming back with a rush to power. But the electorate proved that they did not require any more a War-Prime Minister; they wanted a Peace-Prime Minister and straightaway voted him out of office. It was a staggering blow

to Churchill and he never fully recovered from it. No electorate in the world would probably have done what the British electorate then did. British Democracy is perhaps less overridden by power and money than most other Democracies. But even so, it is majority rule and it can run, legislate and impose even with a bare majority.

Communism and Socialism are other forms of Democracy. Communism represents an astounding phenomenon in political development. It is minority rule over the majority. It holds that a determined, devoted and organised minority has the right to decide what is good for the unthinking majority. A secret conspiracy organises a revolution and seizes power and a few people sit together and dictate to the rest. If, in the course of that dictation, ruthlessness and relentlessness have to be employed, they employ it with all their strength, liquidating vast numbers of people. They do it in the belief that some day the majority will say that they had done what was right for all. Then there are varying types of Socialisms and they all mean a strong Central State, employing State power to legislate and carry out social reforms giving little quarter to minorities.

On the other hand, Sarvodaya holds that majority rule can be as oppressive as any other. Equally, minority rule is bound to lead to dictatorship and violence. What then are we to do? Sarvodaya's answer is that there should be non-party or all-party government to begin with. The parliamentary party system is considered by Sarvodaya as only the second best in Democracy. Real Democracy is not parties clashing with each other, raising big funds, making speeches to drag people to vote this way or that, but all people agreeing on what is good, recognising differences and resolving them peacefully. It all looks very difficult because it is rule by common consent and not by a

majority or a minority. Take a home - a husband, a wife, the children and relatives. If on any issue one member says a thing must be done one way and another says it must be done in another way, then there comes agreement based on mutual love. Nothing is settled by vote. A settlement takes place on the basis of affection. Sarvodaya holds that rule must be by general consent. This, of course, presupposes a highly evolved citizenship.

Now this is so far as the political aspect of Sarvodaya is concerned. The economic aspect is even more revolutionary than the political. Vinoba says that the purpose of an ordered society is that those who possess must offer part of their possession to society voluntarily, through goodwill and understanding. He has said recently that the most potent instrument of revolution is education. So Sarvodaya depends a hundred per cent on educating the people into the acceptance of right methods and right objectives. If in politics there should be agreement and consent rather than competition and conflict, then in the economic field, we must offer everything that we do not require for ourselves to the common pool of human needs. It must be a voluntary surrender which helps to build up the material, mental and moral climate and resources of a society. Competition is often considered the basis of progress. In fact there are people who say that without competition progress is impossible. But if it becomes cut-throat competition, it leads to tensions, imbalance and disaster. Political competition and economic competition lead to imperialism. Today political imperialism does not pay because nobody will tolerate it. But it is being subtly replaced by economic imperialism. There is no place for any such domination in the concept of Sarvodaya which envisages a just and peaceful

world. Sarvodaya would mean at one end Panchayatiraj and at the other, a World Federal Order.

Jayaprakash Narain is our great interpreter of the Sarvodaya ideal. He challenged Pandit Nehru recently saying that he had remained long enough as Prime Minister and he should come out of office, train someone else to take his place and stand with the people and organise them from below. A man of the stature of Pandit Nehru, he said, is required for this great work. A Government may be strong but if the people become weak, it means the foundations are crumbling. Jayaprakash Narain after his recent tour of Europe gave us the testimony that when he presented the Sarvodaya concept of a new human society in countries abroad, people listened to him with keen interest because they also were seeking a way out of the crisis in Democracy. In some countries in Asia, the party system of Democracy has broken down and there is an unhealthy reaction in favour of Dictatorship as pointing the way to the quick solution of difficult problems. Democracy has to advance or retreat, it cannot stand still.

Democracy has to strengthen the forces of cooperation and harmony within itself, replacing the competition and conflict of parties. In the economic sphere Sarvodaya stands for a large measure of decentralisation of the structure of production and distribution. This does not mean the giving up of industrialisation but the regulation of it by effective moral and human sanctions. The whole motive force in Sarvodaya would be that of love and service and not of the lust for power.

Is this just Utopia? Is it possible to establish a Sarvodaya society based on love and cooperation and on non-violent sanctions? It is too late in the day in human history to equate

such a concept to the impossible. 50 or 60 years ago, it would have been impossible to think of a political and economic system doing away with private property and private profit. Throughout the centuries human society was rooted in the sanctity of private property and private profit. The sanctity of these two was considered unquestionable. But the Communists have succeeded largely in Russia and elsewhere in building up a political and economic system throwing out the sanctity of property and profit. It may certainly be argued that this was done through ruthless dictatorship. This was certainly true. But let us not forget that many political revolutions, quite apart from Communism, were also won through violence and bloodshed and just as political freedom thereafter settled down to normality so also the Communist revolution has also begun to settle down to normality. It is not for us therefore to be down-hearted about the possibility of establishing Sarvodaya. I think we can establish Sarvodaya more quickly and effectively than Communism in our country.

Let us also remember that there is within Communism itself an explosive contradiction. Communism is achieved through violence and ruthlessness. This trains vast numbers of people in secret conspiracy, organised violence and cruelty. A people so trained might some day turn against Communism itself and tear it to pieces, once they become restless under tyranny. What is established through violence can be lost through violence. This is why there are continuous bloody purges in Communist countries and large numbers of the people are liquidated along with the leaders of yesterday. It is to avoid this tragedy that Communism is seeking today to come back to normality and perhaps when it does so fully and unreservedly it will come nearer to Sarvodaya.

There is no such contradiction within Sarvodaya. On the other hand, there is in it a self-evolving and self-propelling inner urge. Once a people take to non-violence and seek to establish cooperation and harmony instead of competition and conflict, then they start a chain reaction of developments which inevitably moves on to a just and peaceful social order. The major issue therefore is to start the process with vigour and conviction. We want justice and complete justice to every man and woman in society. We believe that the power of love is greater than the power of hate provided the forces of love are properly organised. It was this organisation of the power of love that Gandhi called Satyagraha. When Gandhi started Satyagraha, there was laughter and contempt thrown at him. But before Gandhi fell to the bullets of an assassin he had demonstrated the tremendous working power of Satyagraha in shattering an empire and in laying the foundation of a new society in India. If Communism succeeded in Russia under a Lenin, we must make up our minds that Sarvodaya can and must succeed in India under a Gandhi and a Vinoba.

It is only through non-violence that Sarvodaya can come. For Gandhi, Satyagraha was the means and Sarvodaya the goal. Gandhi's logic was irresistible that a great and good end can be reached only through good and pure means, *i.e.*, those of non-violence. We must look upon Sarvodaya as the latest and most scientific development in Democracy. Some European and American friends have raised the question how Sarvodaya can be explained in Western terminology. The answer is quite simple. Sarvodaya may be defined as Democratic Socialism, based on the largest possible measure of decentralisation of political and economic power, consistent with the unity and strength necessary for a stable society, and to be achieved

through entirely peaceful means. A Sarvodaya society can certainly be conceived within a Sarvodaya State. When there are a number of Sarvodaya States in the world, the next step will inevitably be a World Federal Structure. Just as within the Sarvodaya State various groups will cling together in cooperation and harmony instead of competition and conflict, the Sarvodaya States can and will come together in a programme of world cooperation and world harmony. This need not be an idle dream at all for humanity as it advances towards a greater civilisation and a more integrated culture.

These then are the two greatest gifts to man from Gandhi, the method of Satyagraha and the goal of Sarvodaya. Ultimately it is this method and this goal which will confront the method and goal of Communism. Sarvodaya is as unhesitant as Communism. Satyagraha is as challenging as any revolution. Gandhi thus stands before history as the prophet of a new social order and as a revolutionary who invented a new and dynamic weapon which the weakest can handle against the strongest with success. If we can study Gandhi more fully, understand him more courageously and follow him more steadfastly, then all of us who do so can share in the challenge and responsibility of turning the entire current of human history in a new and glorious direction. Either we do this or slip down the precipice of ever-increasing competition and conflict towards total disaster in a nuclear war. The final picture, therefore, is that of Gandhi standing on the mountain-top of vision but with his feet planted firmly on the earth calling us to redeem ourselves instead of destroying ourselves.

TAGORE AND GANDHI

We often indulge in comparisons and find that they obscure even more than reveal the truth. When we compare two great human personalities we are apt to be partial to one or the other and most often comparisons are made to show that one of them is greater than the other. Luckily for me, I cannot make such a mistake because when I look into my mind there is not in it the slightest trace of any such inhibition. I shall not decide till my dying day who is nearer to me in spirit and for whom of these I have deeper love and admiration. That being my attitude, my comparison will not be for the purpose of proving who is the greater, but for drawing out in contrast with each other, the full greatness of each. I have sometimes said that if an Indian student fully learns Tagore and Gandhi that student would have nearly exhausted the study of the whole history of Indian culture. A full study of Tagore and Gandhi qualifies an Indian student as nothing else can for the deepest understanding of Indian culture. Tagore and Gandhi have undoubtedly been the two outstanding and dominating figures of India in the present century. No two persons could be so different from one another in personality and temperament. Tagore, the aristocratic artist turned

democrat with proletarian sympathies, represented essentially one of the deep cultural traditions of India, the tradition of accepting life in its fullness and interpreting it creatively. Gandhi, fundamentally a man of the people, almost the embodiment of the Indian peasant, represented the other ancient tradition of India, that of renunciation and service. Tagore was primarily the man of thought and Gandhi of concentrated and ceaseless action. Both in their different ways had a world outlook and both were at the same time wholly Indian. They represented different but harmonious aspects of India and complemented each other gloriously.

Gandhi and Tagore were as different from each other as two human beings could ever be and yet they represented jointly that supreme synthesis of the spirit of India which has never died down in all the centuries of her history. They represented what was never in conflict but what was always complimentary to each other.

Before I go into the philosophy of that synthesis, I want to speak of the personal affinity between Tagore and Gandhi. They were the best of friends revering and loving each other. I have seen them together. Let me give you the first picture I have of a meeting between Tagore and Gandhi. I was then a student in Santiniketan. We suddenly heard that Mahatma Gandhi was coming to Santiniketan. The year was 1922 or 1923. When the students heard that Gurudev had invited "the Mahatma" to Santiniketan and that Gandhiji was coming, there was a great flutter among us. The flutter increased when we heard that Jawaharlal Nehru was also coming with him. To get Gandhi, Tagore and Nehru together in one place and to see them together, we at once realised, was going to be a great event. We held ourselves ready to see Gandhi arriving. And

he arrived, if I remember right, in the afternoon. Tagore's cottage was astir. Earlier in the afternoon Gurudev had asked his grand-daughter to bring him his Khadi gown. This smart little kid turned to Gurudev and asked, "Why do you want a Khadi gown today? You don't put on a Khadi gown everyday." The grandfather said to the child, "Don't you know, Mahatma Gandhi is coming?" The child persisted, "Why should you put on a Khadi gown because Mahatma Gandhi is coming?" And then Tagore said, "I am the host and he is going to be my guest. If a host should honour the guest, he must do such things as will please the guest most. So I am going to put on Khadi." The child was not convinced, so the story goes. But the Khadi gown came out and Tagore, dressed in it, waited for Gandhi. We too were waiting and watching—two long rows of students, of nearly two furlongs stretching towards the hut in which Tagore lived and to which Gandhi was coming. Then we heard the distant horns of the motor cars. There was a flutter again and the cars passed. I managed to be right at the hut where the meeting was to take place. The first car brought Gandhi and Nehru. As soon as the car stopped, Tagore quickly came down the steps and opened the door of the car and Gandhi jumped out. Tagore opened his arms and the little figure of Gandhi completely disappeared in the embrace of the tall and gracious poet. Gandhi was hidden for a moment in the big robes of Tagore! Then holding each other like lovers they came up the steps. Tagore asked him, "Did you have a comfortable journey?" Gandhi replied, "What does it matter! I was coming to meet you. That was the greatest happiness in my mind." Then there was a beautiful reception. Santiniketan receptions are very beautiful and artistic. Soon after the reception, Gurudev said to Gandhi, "Now I will take you to where you are to stay." He was to

stay at the Guest House. And what had happened in the Guest House? The artists of Santiniketan had combined to make a set of rooms upstairs as beautiful as they could make it with simple things arranged in a beautiful way. The bedroom of Gandhi was also most tastefully decorated. They all got into cars and drove away to the Guest House. Somebody took me in a car and I managed to be there again in time. Gurudev took Gandhi from room to room. Gandhi looked at one room, then at another and when he came to the bedroom he turned round to Gurudev and said, "Gurudev, this looks like a bridal chamber!" Gurudev at once replied, "Yes, it is a bridal chamber." Then Gandhi with a burst of laughter asked "But where is the bride?" Gurudev was equal to the occasion. "The bride we are offering you today is the ever young bride of Santiniketan!" Gandhi joined in the joke at once, "So even a toothless old man like me can still get a bride!" And laughter echoed and re-echoed in the room. Having seen that Gandhi was properly settled and everything was arranged nicely, Gurudev went back to his cottage.

But there is a most amusing sequel to this story. In the night Gandhi wanted to have his cot taken on to the terrace, because he always slept in the open. So the decorated cot met a sorry fate. All the decorations had to be taken away and the cot was dragged out on to the terrace. Everything was upset. Art ran away that night and charkhas and a carding bow took its place for Gandhi's programme of spinning. Next morning Gurudev came to see Gandhi and talk to him. He came up and looked this way and that. All that his art students had done had gone to pieces. Everything had been upset. He came to Gandhi's room. Gandhi was sitting on a mat on the floor with a little desk in front of him and he at once stood up to receive his host.

Gurudev asked Gandhi, "Now Mahatmaji! What has happened? What have you done with the bridal chamber? Where is the bride?" Gandhi burst into laughter again and said, "I told you I am a toothless old man, so the bride ran away. I have searched for her. She has gone and hid herself."

Now this was their first meeting during my days in Visva-bharati. I have written the full story of this in my book called "A Sheaf of Gandhi Anecdotes".

I shall refer to another characteristic meeting between Gurudev and Gandhi. This was in Delhi. You know Santiniketan and Visva-bharati are very big institutions, but they were not Government institutions. They were non-governmental Foundations, like Gandhigram, taking grants from Government, but finding their own resources and functioning autonomously. Every year Tagore had to collect funds to keep Santiniketan and Visva-bharati going, over and above whatever grant came from Government. How did he manage to do that? There were, of course, some people who gave donations. But every year Tagore would take a group of trained students with him and go to Calcutta, Delhi, Bombay, or Madras and stage one of his own great dramas. He would personally guide the performances and occasionally himself participate in one. He would thus collect a good amount of money which would go into the Santiniketan treasury. Tagore once came to Delhi with his students' troupe, though he was in very indifferent health.

Gandhi was also in Delhi and he felt deeply concerned. When Tagore's Secretary had earlier come to Gandhi, he had asked, "Why is Gurudev in Delhi now?" The Secretary replied, "He has come to collect money for Santiniketan."

Gandhi looked thoughtful for a while and said, "But I read in the papers that Gurudev is not keeping good health. Why did you then allow him to come to Delhi?" The Secretary said, "What else can we do? Santiniketan is dearest and nearest to his heart. He wants the institution to go on." Gandhi's mind must have done a little quick thinking. He told the Secretary, "Now I am going to see Gurudev. Before I do that I want you to tell me how much money Gurudev needs this year to keep Santiniketan and Visva-bharati going. If I can find that money he should go back to Santiniketan and rest." This news was taken to Gurudev who was deeply moved and he said, "No, let us not trouble Mahatmaji. There are so many calls upon his time. We should not add to them." But the Secretary was shrewder than the Master! He got all the figures ready before Gandhi arrived to see Tagore. If I remember right, the amount needed was about eighty thousand rupees. So Gandhi went and saw Tagore. They embraced each other and sat down to talk. After a few minutes, Gandhi said, "Gurudev, this is very wrong. I know your health is not good. Why then do you travel so much and take this strain of the collection of funds upon yourself?" Gurudev gave the reply "I do this often from year to year; otherwise my institutions cannot continue." Gandhi at once rejoined, "I have had a talk with your Secretary and I understand what your need this year is. I am going to make a request to you. Please go back to Santiniketan at once and take rest. In the meantime I am finding all the needed funds for this year for you." Gurudev was deeply moved but he accepted the plea of the Mahatma and went back to Santiniketan. Gandhi called on a few rich men to help and obtained the amount he wanted and sent it at once to Santiniketan. This brought Gurudev and

Gandhi closer to each other. Gurudev realised that in Gandhi he had a friend on whom he could count in spite of differences of ideas and programmes of work.

Much earlier than all this Mahatma Gandhi was fighting the battle for Indians in South Africa. Gurudev Tagore then gave him great moral support. Tagore made up his mind that he must send somebody from India to help Mahatma Gandhi. He asked C. F. Andrews and Pearson, both of them then professors at Santiniketan, to go out to South Africa. Andrews thus became a constant link between Gandhi and Tagore. There is a beautiful painting by Abanindranath Tagore, the great Bengali painter, showing Gurudev Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi sitting and facing each other with Andrews behind Gandhi. It is a symbolical painting. Gurudev is shown sitting calmly and majestically facing wiry, little, firm Gandhi. They appear to be in dialogue with each other. Andrews behind Gandhi is the picture of a divided mind. He loved both Tagore and Gandhi and sometimes agreed with one and sometimes with the other. The whole picture is a superb study in character.

When Mahatma Gandhi first returned from South Africa with his family and friends he wondered where in India they could all settle down. Tagore sent them an affectionate invitation to come straight to Santiniketan. So Mahatma Gandhi and his group went to Santiniketan. Santiniketan thus became Gandhi's first home after South Africa. But pretty soon it became clear that Santiniketan could not hold Gandhi. Tagore, of course, gave Gandhi full freedom to function and even to change Santiniketan. Gandhi introduced several reforms. He sent away all the servants giving them other work. Teachers and students were to do all the sanitation work, sweeping, cleaning, scavenging etc., and also to cook and

serve food in batches in turn. The whole life of Santiniketan was upset. Tagore never said a word. But the teachers began to complain and then the students. Gandhi saw what was happening. He did not want to force himself and his ideas on Santiniketan. So he decided to quit and he did so very gracefully and with no irritation in his mind or in the minds of those left behind. Both sides realised the incompatibility of the new ideas and methods with the traditions in Santiniketan. But even today there is a Gandhi Day in Santiniketan when all the servants get a day off and the teachers and students do all the community work themselves.

Another historic meeting between Gandhi and Tagore took place in the midst of throbbing historic events in the Yerawada prison where Gandhi was a prisoner. Gandhi had come back from the Round Table Conference in London. From inside the prison Gandhi had started a fast unto death on behalf of the 'untouchables' of India. It was the great Harijan fast. Tagore kept in close touch with Gandhi while the fast was going on. Even as Gandhi was beginning his fast, came a letter of benediction from Rabindranath Tagore. The fast dragged on and India was shaken with emotion and sorrow. Gandhi was old and feeble and his strength began to ebb away. Then the news began to spread all over India that Gandhi was sinking. The whisper went round that Mahatma Gandhi would not survive the fast. Gurudev Tagore heard the whisper and immediately started on his journey to the Yerawada prison. He himself was old and ill at the time. As Gurudev was entering the Yerawada prison came the news that the British Cabinet had yielded to Gandhi and Indian public opinion and that they had reversed their decision in regard to the untouchables, in the "Communal Award",

enabling Gandhi to break his fast. Gurudev Tagore walked in saying that he had arrived rejoicing on the wings of glad tidings. That was their great friendship.

Later came the final meeting. Gurudev Tagore was very unwell and doctors had given up hope. Mahatma Gandhi journeyed from Sevagram to sit at the bedside of the dying poet. They held their hands together and looked into each other's eyes, no one could say which pair of eyes held greater reverence and love for the other. Then Gurudev Tagore said something very moving to Gandhi. He said, "Gandhiji, I am going. My anxiety is about Santiniketan and Visva-bharati. I am leaving these in your care and when I am gone you must look upon them as your own." Gandhi promised at once to do so. After Gurudev Tagore had passed away, Gandhi looked into the affairs of Santiniketan and Visva-bharati and gave full support to them. Luckily India became free and then Visva-bharati became a 'Chartered University' of the Government of India.

Their two great lives met again and again at the highest level. They were different from each other in many ways. And yet like two very high-souled prophets they remained close in the highest friendship, and mutual reverence. Tagore and Gandhi demonstrated that two people could be the greatest of friends with many vital differences between them.

I have already referred to the controversy that once took place between Gandhi and Tagore. You will remember I told you that Gurudev Tagore once challenged Gandhi, saying that Gandhi was establishing a kind of moral dictatorship in India and a moral dictatorship sometimes was even worse than political dictatorship. I also recalled how Gandhi answered back

at the same high level. Long, long after that controversy was over, the great French thinker, Romain Rolland read about it. In his book on Mahatma Gandhi, Romain Rolland wrote that he had never known a controversy conducted at such a high level, neither party yielding to the other and still revering and understanding each other fully and unreservedly. Some of Rolland's words on the subject will remain classic for ever:—
"Oh, Tagore, Oh, Gandhi! Rivers of India like the Indus and the Ganges; clasp within your double embrace the Orient and the Occident, the one, a great radiance of light streaming from the Divine fountain and the other, a matchless saga of the noblest and most heroic action. May you both mingle your waters again and again to fertilise the soul of India and of mankind".

Now what did Gandhi represent and what did Tagore represent ultimately? In answering this question, I want to refer to what we called the three great yogas in the philosophy of India. One is Gnana Yoga, the yoga of the highest intellectual understanding; another is Bhakti Yoga, the yoga of utter devotion, and self-surrender to God and the third, Karma Yoga, the yoga of ceaseless action. Yoga means as many of you may know, 'Union'. It is the process under which the soul of man comes into union with the Universal Soul. So union with God through Gnana is one of the great yogas of India. Union with the Divine through Bhakti is another great yoga. Union with the Divine through Karma is the third and, we might say, the most challenging of all. A man like Aurobindo Ghosh was a Gnana yogi. He was perhaps the supreme Gnana yogi of the century in India. If you look at Ramakrishna Paramahansa, he was the supreme Bhakti yogi, representing utter self-surrender to God. I think Jesus Christ

also was a supreme Bhakti yogi. The whole of the teachings of Jesus was utter surrender of the individual will to the Divine Will. Gandhi was the greatest of our Karma yogis in this age.

We all know something of these yogas. But I think that this does not complete the circle of yogas. There is still another yoga of which we have not thought nor written much. And that is, if I may coin a new word, 'Kala Yoga', the yoga of realisation in and through Beauty. In my opinion, this Kala Yoga comprehends the other three yogas. Inside Kala Yoga, there is Gnana, there is Bhakti, and there is Karma. Poets and singers have often sparked off revolutions. We have the song "Bande Mataram" in that category and also "La Marseillaise". You all know the part these songs played in the history of India and France. Some of the bravest revolutionaries of India went to the gallows or were shot, with the "Bande Mataram" song on their lips.

We must add to Gnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga, the Yoga of Kala in its widest and deepest sense. If we do that and if our understanding of Kala Yoga is complete, then Tagore would be the great master of this yoga in India. He was a great intellect; he was filled with Bhakti; he was steeped in Karma. He built up the complex of some of the greatest institutions of India. There are many other things about Tagore to which I have not referred at all. For instance, side by side with Santiniketan, he built another institution called Sriniketan, something similar to Sevagram for rural reconstruction. The first leader in India who gave the greatest value to village reconstruction, was Tagore and that, long before Gandhi had returned to India from South Africa. The ideals left to us in this regard in the words of Gurudev Tagore himself will read today like the latest documents of

Community Development. What should be done in the villages? That through self-help the villages must rebuild themselves from within, that others can only help and guide, that the destiny of the villages is in the hands of the villagers themselves, these and many other things Tagore made crystal clear even before Gandhi arrived on the scene. He realised that the whole of rural reconstruction is largely a programme of self-sufficiency. Agriculture was the most important item; next to agriculture were cottage and village industries. In Sriniketan you will see many village industries taught and organised. Tagore was, therefore, also a Karma yogi. Comprehending all these and adding to all these the great gift of his poetry, of his imagination, of his *kala*, he becomes the supreme symbol and fulfilment of the cultural renaissance of India.

The Indian renaissance is still working itself out. I do not think that the forces of the Indian renaissance have ceased. What is now necessary is greater contact between the great cultural cycles within India itself. We have the Sanskrit cycle of culture. Pandit Nehru was asked once, "What do you think is the greatest gift of the past to India?" Without hesitation he said, "The greatest gift of the past to modern India is the cycle of Sanskrit culture". This does not mean that the Tamil cycle of culture is one bit less important than the Sanskrit cycle. I think that the two greatest cycles of the culture of India are the Sanskrit cycle and the Tamil cycle. Tamil is the 'Hindi' of South India. Anywhere in South India, one can manage with Tamil. In Mysore, in Kerala, in Andhra, Tamil will pass. There is no question that our Tamil culture is a great cycle in itself. Only a dead culture will take nothing from another. Let us not make carcasses of our cultures, taking

nothing and giving nothing. Not all the petty-minded people of the world working together can suppress the intercourse of of different cultures within India. India is indivisible. It shall remain one. I want every young man and woman living in Gandhigram to say to himself or herself, "This indissoluble unity of India, this integrated culture of India is the greatest of our possessions." Tagore represented that unity and that integration. To him, India was one and indivisible. His poems represented that unity and his philosophy and life strengthened the fibre of that unity linking it with world unity.

As I close this talk, I would ask you to study Tagore and Gandhi afresh, understand them more fully and make their vision of the unity of India and the unity of mankind sink deeper into your minds.

THE CHALLENGE OF PEACE

PART THREE

THE CITIZEN'S DUTY IN THE NUCLEAR CRISIS *

We must not beat about the bush. We must look at the problem fully and squarely and without the slightest delay. The question is, "What is the duty of the citizen in the present crisis?" Everyone of us knows, ought to know, something of the real nature of the present crisis. We are all in every country facing the possibility of a nuclear war or its consequence. We had two World Wars in our generation which inflicted such misery, suffering, loss and death that the very memory of them must make us shudder with horror and shame. And yet, are we not drifting steadily and inescapably towards a third World War which might annihilate mankind? Let none of us hug the illusion that, since in a nuclear war mankind itself might be destroyed and there is hardly any chance of either side winning, such a war will not actually come. This and similar other illusions are at the moment the most serious danger to clear thinking and it is just clear thinking which we now need most.

Through the invention, testing and perfecting of nuclear weapons and the setting-up of vast military organisations to use

* From the July 1962 issue of the "Gandhi Marg"

these weapons at a moment's notice, we are face to face with the prospect of the global butchery of not only millions of combatant forces, but of civilian populations of men and women and children covering almost the whole world. Further, it is now well-known that colossal genetic damage will be done to the race, with the result that millions of children will be perverted even within the wombs of their mothers. Such a world calamity is now not only possible, but is being prepared for steadily, relentlessly and with a full knowledge of all the consequences by the Christian leaders of the Democracies of the West and equally by the Communist leaders of the Socialist Republics. To quote the words of Bertrand Russell, "Murderous humbug such as would have shocked almost everyone when I was young, is now solemnly mouthed by eminent statesmen."

The citizen is the core of organised society. It is his will that must prevail because it is his fate that is at stake. What will be destroyed in a nuclear war is the life, property and the children of the citizen. A Government or State or any organisation of society may be destroyed and then recreated, but once the roots of life of the citizen are destroyed in a nuclear holocaust, then everything is destroyed. This is the crux of the matter and this is why the citizen must think and act today as he has never done before.

It has been truly said that wars begin in the minds of men. Primarily, therefore, the problem is that of plucking out the roots of war from the minds of men. But this is neither so simple nor so easy as it might appear. Human minds are nowhere at any time isolated from organised society with all its laws and regulations, its taboos and inhibitions and, above all, its social, moral and spiritual values. Human minds function

only in such a context. We must keep this in mind as we consider the duty of the citizen in the present world crisis.

What then must the citizen do today in the face of the imminent threat to the whole of his existence? Here are a few suggestions :

(1) Accepting the truth that war starts in the minds of men, the citizen must immediately purify himself or herself in any manner in which he or she has faith. All can begin with a day of prayer and fasting throughout the world. Such a unity of hearts and minds of millions of men, women and children in all the continents turning the searchlight inward can be the first significant step forward in our programme of peace.

(2) The citizen must make up his mind that today he has a duty to perform to save himself and everything that he stands for and the world. Without such a realisation, he will betray himself and the world. This realisation must be backed by a clear understanding of the consequences inherent in a nuclear war and even in preparations for it.

(3) The educated citizen, having understood the issues, must make them clear to the less educated citizen. This means setting in motion at once a chain reaction in the understanding of the issues involved. This must quickly become a world movement of people's education.

(4) The UNESCO should immediately organise a world-wide programme of people's education to carry conviction to every man and woman that a war today can solve no problem and that the settlement of all conflicts between nations must be sought for only through peaceful approaches and negotiations, preferably within the framework of the United Nations.

(5) After a quick and sincere essay in self-purification, the citizen must establish forthwith, correct relations with the immediate environment. This would mean chiefly his or her endeavouring to correct peacefully and without dealy any injustice to any fellow-citizens within reach.

(6) The citizen must then consciously help in creating the climate in which goodwill and friendship can be established with countries between which and his own there are problems and tensions generating mutual fear and hate. This would represent the constantly widening area of peace and understanding. The citizen must link hands with every other citizen inside each country to produce such pressure of public opinion as will make every government realise that people will no longer tolerate the preparations and tests of nuclear weapons now going on which will lead to global butchery. Thereafter citizens so linked to each other inside their own countries should stretch out their hands across national frontiers to grasp the hands of other citizens of other countries in a common pledge to prevent every preparation for war in every country. The object should be to create a world peace movement strong enough to paralyse the possibility of any country starting a nuclear war.

(7) It is not enough to say that every citizen should strengthen the United Nations. It is now necessary that it should be made clear beyond any doubt that any member-nation or State resorting to military force to settle any dispute with another will be guilty of treason against the United Nations and that moral and economic sanctions will be forged against such misconduct. The United Nations must be strengthened in every way to deal with international disputes and conflicts and to settle them within the framework of its own

peaceful processes. The citizen in every country must now insist that the United Nations' authority to settle international disputes must be made secure and unchallenged.

(8) People's 'Peace Ships' should be sent immediately from various countries to the Pacific Ocean area where current tests of nuclear weapons are being held. At the same time Peace Brigades should be organised to march into every country where similar tests are held. This would mean the development of the International Shanti Sena.

(9) The Convention should elect a small delegation of two or three persons, whose names and character have already won worldwide recognition, to go to Geneva and to press before the conference there the viewpoint emerging from the Convention. Later this delegation should go to the United Nations and face the General Assembly with their demands.

(10) Lastly, the duty of every citizen is to discover once again the meaning of his or her faith in God and in the moral government of human life. This means nothing less than a deliberate attempt on the part of the citizen to undergo a process of moral regeneration. In the case of those who believe neither in God nor in religion, the challenge will be to their reason and conscience to save mankind from total death and disaster in the name of justice and peace.

The whole of our programme of thought and action has to be one of creating effective world public opinion through mass education and through carefully selected programmes of direct non-violent action. There is no question that all wars are evil, but if we do not stop the testing and use of nuclear weapons here and now, no human endeavour will be of any avail afterwards to stem the tide of any war. If we are men

of religion and believers in God, let us rediscover once again how our religion and God are fundamentally and totally opposed to the global butchery which is now being so carefully prepared. Let us not betray our religion and our God today. If we are Democrats with the slightest faith in the basic tenets of Democracy, let us realise that no Democracy can be worth the name which betrays the people for any reason whatever to the total death and destruction of a nuclear war. If we are Socialists or Communists, let us not mouth slogans of peace and at the same time prepare for destroying mankind. No Socialism or Communism can survive for a day in a world burnt and destroyed by atom and hydrogen bombs. Whatever our religion or political or social creed or system and our way of life, not one of these will survive a nuclear war. Let us guard ourselves against creating a cold war in our worldwide endeavour to prevent nuclear war. Let every man and woman in every country stand up fearless and alert and join their voices of protest to declare with all the strength in them that the peoples of the world will no longer be driven like sheep to nuclear slaughter. Time presses and the sands are running out in the hour-glass of history. Let not millions of children today feel that we are not good enough or organised enough to guarantee them a chance to grow up and to know life as we did.

THE GRASS-ROOTS OF WORLD PEACE *

It is impossible to believe in the sanctity or in the ultimate validity of nationalism. I think nationalism and what are called Nation States have become largely menaces to the human spirit and to human society. Perhaps in Europe and America there are more mature countries which are willing to go beyond the frontiers of Nation States. But here in Asia, with the newly awakened nationhood of many of its peoples, we are in the grip of nationalism and we are proud of our new Nation States. The European and American peoples are at a great advantage in comparison with the people of India because they can think a little more quickly than we can of the world as a whole; we are much more concerned with the problems inside our own country. But we need not go all the way of the European and American countries to learn the lessons that they have learnt. We should be able to learn from history. I do not believe that

* This article is an excerpt from G. R's Welcome Address, as Chairman of the India Committee, at the Tenth Triennial Conference of the War Resisters' International, held at Gandhigram, in December 1960. It appeared in the "Gandhi Marg" of January 1961.

these powerful Nation States and their governments will ever make the peace of the world. By their very structure and composition, by the very inner law of their being, I think they are incapable of making the peace of the world. The collapse of the Summit at Paris was not an accident. It was inevitable in the history of today. It collapsed even before it met. May be, the next one will collapse after it has met. I do not think any summit will make the peace of the world. It is the base, the common people, that will have to make the peace. I simply cannot understand how anyone can imagine that half a dozen people meeting somewhere in the name of countless millions of people can make the peace of the world. Some day little groups, meeting in tens of thousands of places in the world, standing for peace, federating together and creating a people's movement might make the peace of the world. So I am, so far as I can think about it today, a sceptic and I cannot bring myself to believe that big and powerful Nation States are going to make the peace of the world. I think they will not. What then can we do? I foresee that the next great step in peace-making in the world would be for the peoples to turn their faces towards their own governments. No government is standing for peace as we understand peace, not even the Indian government. The Indian government is as much armed as any other government, consistent with its resources. If it had more resources, there will be more and bigger arms. Each one of us in our own country must create a people's movement against the attitudes of governments which consider that war is still a method for settling any problem in the world. This is treading on dangerous ground, this cuts across what is called patriotism and nationalism. I think the peace-makers of the world must get beyond patriotism and nationalism. Man is one. Humanity is one and we are citizens of one world. This is a very difficult concept. But unless we

reach up to that level some day, peace-making will remain a pious dream. If we let our own governments commit our people to war, then where are we? One remembers with gratitude the work that is being done by the peace workers, by those who want to abolish nuclear warfare totally, in England, the United States, and other countries. I wonder if in India we have done even that much to turn our faces towards our own government and to say that we give them no moral right to commit our people to war, for any purpose whatsoever, because we are convinced that war is a total evil. It is this conviction that binds us together and brings us together at this conference. If there is any shadow of a doubt anywhere in our minds, that after all war can do some good, then we destroy our creed. We then commit moral and spiritual suicide within ourselves in regard to this basic problem of world peace. So, may be, if we are treading this path, which is sharp as a razor's edge, we shall some day have to come in conflict with our own national governments everywhere, refusing them the moral right to commit our peoples to war for any reason or purpose.

But we must remember that the war-makers of the world are a powerful community. They have tremendous material resources at their command, and even the psychological resources for awakening the passions of patriotism and nationalism and working people into a kind of fury against some enemy State. Against that, what have we but our conviction and our faith and our dedication? On the other hand, it is unfortunate that the peace-makers of the world are themselves divided. There has come about a kind of broad division in peace-making, two camps of peace-making. One suspects the other. I think this is not morally right, nor is it good peace strategy. Peace-making is the monopoly, of no

party, no country, no group in the world. Peace has become today such a terrific and emergent need for bare survival that whoever asks for peace is a friend and an ally. We must not divide the forces of peace-making in the world. We may be as cautious as you like, as circumspect about it as you like, refusing to be taken in by every kind of pretension, but let us not cut the peace-forces of the world into sharp and hostile divisions, glaring at each other, so that peace-makers themselves create a new kind of conflict in the world over the issue of peace. If we do that, we shall weaken ourselves. With open eyes, with open minds, and certainly with clear convictions, we should be able to close our ranks all over the world. All parties, groups and peoples deliberately standing for peace, whatever be the reason, must unite.

Dr. Radhakrishnan, the great Indian philosopher-statesman, has said that the cold war is in some ways even more dangerous than the hot war, and it was his wish that this Conference must give a ringing challenge against the poison of the cold war which is now rising in high tide all around us. The cold war corrodes men's souls and prepares for the destruction of their bodies. We now see signs of it in our own country, in this country of Gandhi and Vinoba—cold war between Pakistan and India, and between China and India. May be, if somebody works up our passions, we in India are as much prone to cold war and hot war as any other people in the world. May be the heritage which has come from Gandhi and the inspiration which today comes from Vinoba may help us a little to stand on firm ground. But one has yet to see how far and how long these influences can succeed with the same kind of human material in this country as exists in every other country. We must nevertheless not become parties in any sense to the cold war.

There has been some criticism that Indian peace-workers look at European and American peace-workers and say they are not doing enough constructive work. I think we have outlived such a view now. We have realised that European and American and other peace-workers do a lot of constructive work along their own lines. Having said that, I do not hesitate to say that all of us peace-workers all over the world are not doing sufficient day-to-day work which alone can lead to the peace of the world. Peace-making begins from the roots of life, it is not something that merely flowers at the top. How we order our economic life together is part of peace-making. You cannot have an exploiting society building for peace. You cannot evade the issue of injustice and then talk of peace. I think peace without justice will be a complete fraud. Gandhi used prophetic words. He said he did not want "the peace of the graveyard". It is easy to have the peace of the graveyard. If we are thinking of the peace of human beings living together, on terms of equal rights and privileges and sharing everything justly together, then our present society has to be completely transformed before it can become the crucible which can hold the fiery lava of the peace which lives and throbs in the hearts of men and women. We want a radical change of social conditions effected peacefully. Here again is a challenge to each one of us peace-workers in our own countries. As we go back to our work, let us look at the society in which we live, discover the roots of injustice and apply non-violent pressure to pluck them out. Every little non-violent struggle to turn injustice into justice is a token for peace. If we do that we gather more strength, more unity, and we grow towards a just and lasting world peace.

Somebody once asked me, "What do you think was the greatest thing that came from Mahatma Gandhi?" and a few

friends who were sitting with me thought at once that I would mouth the words "non-violence". I did not. I said the greatest thing that came from Gandhi was his challenge that we must act here and now, for justice, wherever we are. You may put on hand-spun cloth, you may carry out all the hundred and one commandments of the Gandhian creed, but if when you saw injustice you evaded its challenge, then you have committed moral and spiritual suicide. To evade an issue is to run away from truth and therefore from the whole possibility of non-violence. The greatest thing about Gandhi was his teaching and example that we must act here and now to bring about justice, and then immediately, of course, followed the next teaching, that all action must be non-violent. But if you ask me about the first motion or projection of Gandhi into the world I would say it is that there must be action and no evasion of challenge. To Gandhi inaction was violence.

Gandhi has sometimes been misinterpreted in certain Pacifist and Quaker circles. For instance, once Gandhi did say if the only choice before him was between violence and cowardice he would advise violence. This indicates no preference at all for violence. If you knew the life of Gandhi, the basic teaching of Gandhi, the whole work of Gandhi, this would fit like a perfect piece into what he stood for. Action was first with him, but with the inevitable corollary that all action must be non-violent, because every other action was self-defeating. I think unless we understand this about Gandhi, we do not understand Gandhi at all. Act now, act today, act here, act in the present living moment when there is an issue facing you. If you turn your face away from the issue mouthing big words, and may be, even following all the other virtues,

then you betray non-violence. You will then stand naked before your Maker as somebody who has committed moral and spiritual suicide.

We are fond of talking about unilateral disarmament. The Indian says to the Englishman, you are the fittest for unilateral disarmament; and the Englishman turns round and says to the Indian, you are from the country of Gandhi and Vinoba and so you start the game. I think not one of us has the right to ask anybody else to unilaterally disarm. If we are not prepared to do it, let us at least keep our mouths shut and not ask other people to do this. We can unilaterally disarm only ourselves.

Then we come to the Shanti Sena. This is the most positive thing which emerges from the whole of this background. The usual argument is—I have heard this even from people who are dedicated to non-violence—that we have not built up the Shanti Sena, that we have not yet organised the people for non-violent action (they don't say how long it will take) and so, in the meantime, if there is aggression what can we do except meet it in the traditional military way. I think when we say this, we completely give up the case for non-violence. Anyone wishing to defend his country violently against a violent aggression is taking a tremendous risk today. Now take India. Can India stand a real great attack from one of the major powers? Our defence will crumble in a few days against a major onslaught of a major power. Even as between the most powerful States, defence is now a mockery. You can only destroy, you cannot defend.

Now in such a world, to take recourse to violent defence under the plea that we are not yet fully prepared for non-violence is to make nonsense of violence. If you are not

prepared today, you are not going to be prepared tomorrow. You must take risks in this tremendous venture of faith here and now. Gandhi was willing to take the risk. You may say there is no Gandhi in India today. I know there is no Gandhi. But why cut at the roots of Gandhi which are still with us? No man is too small, no man is too disorganised, no man is too weak to put his faith in God and in himself and to say, "I believe in non-violence and will take a risk here and now". My thesis, in brief, is that no country today will take greater risks by accepting non-violence than by turning to violence for self-protection.

GOA : A PORTENT AND A CHALLENGE *

The annexation of Goa was swift and decisive. The whole matter is now a *fait accompli*. In several countries of Africa, the Middle East and Asia there has been much rejoicing that the antiquated, crude and miserable colonialism of Portugal has been given a hard kick, and that particularly by India. The Indonesian Government has drawn inspiration from the Goa incident and suddenly announced that it would take steps to annex West Irian, by force if necessary; and may be, before this appears in print, a new situation might confront the world in this connection. There is a new and accentuated impatience with colonialism wherever it still lingers. Evidently India has struck a blow the reverberations of which might echo throughout the world for some time to come. Inside India also there are millions of people who are jubilant over the annexation of Goa and who believe that the minimum violence that was employed was not only fully justified but had become utterly inescapable. After all, the Indian people are neither very different from others nor are they in every situation particularly more non-violent. And surely, the Government of India, even

* From the "Gandhi Marg" of January 1962.

while it has all along pressed for peaceful methods to solve international conflicts, had never once taken the view that military action was ruled out altogether in dealing with every aggression, old or new. India has regained a few thousand square miles of territory which had been taken away from her and not returned even after she became independent, as had happened in the case of French possessions inside the country. India thus may well have the satisfaction that at last no part of her territory is any longer under the control of an alien government. This suits national pride and self-respect. It may even be said that the annexation of Goa is Nehru's gift to African countries still held under the cruel heels of colonialism and that it is a fitting reply to the horrible tyranny of Portugal in Angola and elsewhere. Such countries might draw strength from the fact that even the most peaceful of Prime Ministers in the world today had reached the point when it was impossible for him to tolerate any longer colonialism on the soil of his country. World attention is thus focussed not only on the reality of colonialism but even more on the imperative need to end it here and now everywhere in the world. Colonialism itself, it can be argued, represents the quintessence of violence and its repudiation in practice totally by India today is itself a blow for peace in the world.

All these are legitimate views and thoughts arising from the annexation of Goa at the present time by the Government of India. But if that were all, the matter would end there. The grim fact, however, is that it is not all. There is something more to be said about it. No one in recent years has taught the people of India more emphatically than Nehru that the political body of the international world is one and indivisible and that military force or violence applied at any point on

that body would affect the whole of it. To be fair to Nehru it must be repeated that he had never forsworn military action in every situation and at all times. Nehru is not a private gentleman. He is the Prime Minister of a State and a State always implies military sanctions against aggression from without or violent revolt from within. This is a fact from which no one can run away so long as one subscribes to the validity of a national State. The issue is therefore not one of non-violence *versus* violence. That is a much larger issue which the great statesmen and leaders of the world are continually evading. The precise issue now is different. Here again, it is Nehru, more than any other statesman, who has stressed with the utmost conviction and even passion that war solves no problems and that every international conflict must be resolved only through peaceful methods of negotiation. Challenged on the floor of the Indian Parliament by some of those impatient of his policy of patience over Chinese aggression in Ladakh and elsewhere, Nehru reiterated vehemently that he would go on and on negotiating in the manner and spirit of Gandhi. The issue is therefore not whether Nehru accepts non-violence as the only code of conduct but whether he has given up the idea that international conflicts must be solved only by negotiation or peaceful approaches. There are some critics who do say openly that the Government of India has won somewhat cheap applause over Goa while lacking in courage to face up to the far bigger and more recent military aggression by China.

There is no question that the prestige of India has gone up considerably in Africa and in vital parts of Asia, but equally, there is no question that India can no longer stand before the world as a nation firmly committed to the methods of peace and negotiation for solving international disputes. India has

already set in motion a chain reaction which is likely to lead to a series of explosions of violence against colonial powers and possessions, which might in turn lead to a world war. This might be good for the liquidation of colonialism but bad for world peace. At the Belgrade Conference of non-aligned nations Nehru had stood firmly by his conviction, which so much annoyed some African nations, that the problem of war and peace was a far more urgent and crucial one than even that of colonialism, even if the latter was undoubtedly one of the burning issues in the modern world. The effect of the annexation of Goa by force will now be to reverse the priority so brilliantly expounded by Nehru at Belgrade. All over the world colonies will be attacked without much thought of negotiation or peaceful methods of settlement because Goa has thrown up that challenge to everybody concerned. Thus indirectly, and even perhaps directly, violence and war have received added sanction as legitimate weapons for the solution of international conflicts. Whatever may be the motives of England, France or the U. S. A., they have all now a plausible stick to beat India with. Even if Adlai Stevenson was caught in a mood of exaggeration and emotional imbalance when he said that the United Nations itself might now be destroyed, it will not be for India to look horrified. Every time a nation takes the law into its own hands outside the United Nations, whatever be the provocation, it would mean a nail driven into what might become the coffin of that great international organization. The biggest hypocrisy may be what is now becoming manifest in England over Goa. But this will furnish no excuse to India at all. From now on India must be content to remain in the common ranks of the nations which protest, maybe sincerely, that they stand for peace and at the same time resort to military action when it suits them. We have now become one of many. We have no

special claim to advocate peaceful methods before anybody. It may be proved that Portugal had refused to negotiate at all. That was just why there was this international dispute. But India settled it by the use of superior force. If China refuses to negotiate in regard to the withdrawal of aggression, what shall we do? Till now our declared policy of settling international disputes by negotiation and peaceful methods justified our conduct. We have, however, broken that policy and we shall not have any justification hereafter for inaction because of our policy.

Speaking recently at a gathering in New Delhi of the Shanti Sena from Bihar, Nehru confessed that his heart went with the Shanti Sainiks but his head refused to do so. He was referring to practical difficulties. Such difficulties were inherent in the very concept and structure of a Nation State. The world would today judge Nehru's action only as that of a Prime Minister, whatever be the limitations attaching to that exalted position. No other Prime Minister in the world would have come to a meeting of the Shanti Sena to give it his good wishes and blessings. And yet even the Prime Minister of India gave up the principle of negotiation and the peaceful approach in relation to Goa. It was thus clearly the failure of the peaceful approach in this international dispute. This is the crux of the matter.

There is then a special word needed for all of us in India who talk so much about non-violence and the Shanti Sena. The non-violent followers of Gandhi and Vinoba had no solution for Goa except pious and futile words and proposals of ineffective action. Up till now no word has come from Acharya Vinoba himself. There is nothing he can now say to alter the course of events that have already happened. Jayaprakash

Narayan has issued a statement rejoicing at the liberation of Goa and at the same time sorrowing over the use of force. His attitude appears to be in no way different from that of people who are congratulating Nehru, because even they would readily agree that it would have been better if a settlement had come through peaceful negotiation.

When will it be realized that non-violence must face and be ready to take incalculable risks before it can neutralize violence and become a force to be reckoned with even among nations? We shall need more patience, unity, training, discipline and, above all, more courage than that of armed soldiers if non-violence is to get even a sporting chance in this terribly confused world.

The non-violent man in India has no moral right to throw a stone at Nehru. He can throw that stone only at himself. This, of course, cannot be the final answer to the portent and challenge that is Goa today.

GANDHI AND THE DEEPENING WORLD CRISIS *

The shadow of another world war has deepened over humanity. Everyone knows that such a war would drive the world into annihilation. During many years the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. have deliberately piled up weapons of destruction of incredible magnitude. Within a few days, even hours of the start of a war, either of these powers can fling upon the other, nuclear explosives which can wipe out their countries, turning their boasted civilizations and ways of life into scorched deserts of death. Not only that, but the after-effects will mean the stunting and perverting of what may be left of millions of human beings into monstrosities. There is nothing to prove that there would be anything Christian about the nuclear weapons of the Western democracies nor anything Socialist about those of the Communist bloc. Both the great powers and their allies are playing the identical diabolic game of naked and brute violence up to the limit of their capacity.

Behind us stand uncounted centuries of human endeavour for progress, culture, civilization and peace. We know something

* From the 'Gandhi Marg', October 1961.

at least of traceable history from the Buddha to Gandhi. We have had the great religions and their ethical systems. We have listened to the compassion of the Buddha, the love of Jesus, the philosophy of the Vedanta, the faith of Islam and, last but not least, the invincible non-violence of Gandhi. We have had great cycles of culture, which have come and gone leaving their mark upon the human mind. Poets, philosophers, architects, painters, sculptors and musicians have added to the stature of man and pulled him up to higher levels of living. Above all, the progress of science has revolutionized life, alleviating pain and liberating man from disease and poverty. And yet, why have we come to the brink of a precipice without parallel in human history? In seeking an answer to this question there flashes into our memory something that Gandhi wrote in 1925 in the pages of *Young India*. He was almost defining the seven deadly evils of the modern world. They were politics without principles, wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity and worship without sacrifice. Gandhi was evidently looking at the sharpest outlines of life when he drew up this formidable list of evils gripping the world today.

The Belgrade Conference of Heads of State and Government of Non-aligned Nations could do nothing more than to plead with President Kennedy and Premier Krushchev to come together and negotiate to avoid war. By a cruel irony of fate or an equally ruthless stroke of strategy Russia had already broken the ban against further nuclear tests even before the Conference met; and hardly had it ended when America did the same. Here is competition in the colossal misconduct of two great powers. The horrible race is now once again on.

One wonders if it is not already too late to stop the irresistible drag towards the precipice. Just as the two leading powers are unable to extricate themselves from the coils of their own *karma*, the Non-aligned Nations have also given an exhibition of their helplessness. It is certainly good to plead with Russia and the United States to come together to negotiate for peace. The Belgrade Conference has done well to press for this in full strength. But this was exactly what some of the identical leaders of Non-aligned Nations tried to do at the United Nations some time ago—and nothing came of it. It is too much to hope that by simply bringing President Kennedy and Premier Krushchev to talk to each other world peace would be brought appreciably nearer. They did meet some time ago in Vienna and it is just that meeting that started the widening of the cleavage. We have had nothing but explosions and counter-explosions of temper since then. What the Belgrade Conference should have given thought to is the question of forging political and moral sanctions which would make it difficult, if not impossible, for the two great powers to plunge the world into war. The extreme urgency of the crisis was realized at Belgrade, but there was neither the moral vision nor the political courage to warn Russia and the United States that all the Non-aligned Nations would be compelled to treat the aggressor as the enemy of mankind and to employ every available non-violent sanction against it.

Alas, there was no Gandhi nor the full and unafraid voice of Gandhi at the Belgrade Conference!

There is no doubt that the issues of disarmament and peace will come up vigorously at the next session of the United Nations. There will be strong and brilliant speeches and perhaps some little lessening of the present tension. The leaders

of the Non-aligned Nations might succeed in pushing away the crisis for a time, however brief. But the time is more than ripe to face up to the challenge of forging every possible sanction to make war impossible now and hereafter. The question of total disarmament can be evaded any longer only at the peril of every other measure that might be devised to bring or preserve peace proving infructuous or jejune. Anything else than a firm decision for total disarmament will be a cowardly evasion and a shameless betrayal. If the next session of the United Nations will not commit every participating nation to the programme of total disarmament, it would soon find itself travelling on the same journey which led the old League of Nations to utter bankruptcy and self-defeat. The least that the Non-aligned Nations can do if the great powers do not agree to total disarmament, will be to withdraw from the United Nations and to give the call for a world Disarmament Conference outside the aegis of the U.N.O. Ultimately it will not even be the Governments of the Non-aligned Nations but their people who will have to band together to resist war as the greatest of all evils in the world today. If the peoples from the non-aligned countries would sound the bugle of total resistance to war, there can be no doubt that even the peoples of the countries of the great powers will rally to their side, creating a World Peoples' Revolution in favour of peace. At the moment we are all like the little birds making their nests in the crater of a volcano which might explode any moment. Let no one treat with contempt the attempts that are being made by the Pacifists and the War Resisters in Europe and America and by those who are building up the Shanti Sena in India to awaken the common people everywhere to stand together to resist war. To treat such attempts with scorn will be tantamount to saying that the people everywhere count for nothing in the terrible

gamble into which their Governments have entered in blind self-interest and ruthless competition to get the better of each other. The people count today and will count more with every day that passes. All power is with the people, and once the people fully realize the danger of war in the present world-context they will either compel their Governments to accept the inevitability of total disarmament here and now or tear them down as obstacles to the peace of the world.

No world teacher has a more significant message for the world today than Gandhi, the invincible Captain of Non-violence. In resisting the evil of war in the world today we must study once again the techniques evolved by him for uniting millions of people in the non-violent revolution to achieve world peace. We repeat that we must not rest content with asking Governments to save the world but mobilize the conscience and will of peoples everywhere to resist war. When we attempt to do this truthfully and fearlessly we shall at once find Gandhi at the top of the columns, marching nimbly along and leading us to peace and liberation. Only those who knew Gandhi or have very carefully studied his life and work can share in this seemingly impossible faith. But let us remember that during his life-time Gandhi marshalled millions of the common people in India in the non-violent revolution which compelled the British to withdraw from the country. He taught us scientifically the techniques for uniting masses of people for non-violent direct action. We must now readopt them to meet the present world crisis.

PRESIDENT RADHAKRISHNAN'S CALL TO THE WORLD *

We must not exaggerate and, equally, we must not under-
stress the significance of the visit of President Radhakrishnan
to the United States and Great Britain. We must study this
historic event with care and understanding. The outside facts
themselves are startling. For the first time in history there is
this Republic of India and Dr. Radhakrishnan is its President.
Even if he were not the President, he has his place in the front
rank of the world's philosophers and thinkers. After Rabindra-
nath Tagore he is our noblest internationalist uninhibited by
political partisanship or narrow national prejudices. For the
first time this President of the Republic of India went out on a
State visit to the United States and Great Britain. The first is
the world's most powerful and opulent Democracy and the
second, perhaps its oldest and most stable one. The President
of India faced in the U.S.A. and in Great Britain very highly
organised and advanced political systems and their votaries. He
was at the same time also confronting deep prejudices and mis-
understandings about India in these countries. He was, however,
no stranger to them or their culture and heritage. He had also

* From the 'Gandhi Marg', of July 1963.

through the years interpreted to them the culture and heritage
of India as no other man of this land since Vivekananda. He,
therefore, spoke to them as one with authority, the authority of
the human spirit seeking to reach out to all human beings in
goodwill and fellowship. Luckily also, Dr. Radhakrishnan is
not only a master of thoughts but equally a master of the spoken
word. His thoughts and words therefore were delivered at the
highest level.

Perhaps the President made a deeper impression in Great
Britain than in the U.S.A. Correspondents of some of our news-
papers have quickly cabled that though on the whole the
American people were warmed and drawn to the President by
his idealism and eloquence, the deep-seated prejudices against
India still remained largely unresolved. American newspapers
did not even give adequate coverage or attention to the
President's utterances. It is quite likely that both in the U.S.A.
and in Great Britain many people were well prepared for the
flow of high thoughts and eloquence which they knew would
come from the philosopher-President and were thus also
prepared in some measure to keep their prejudices and convic-
tions intact. The President certainly achieved everything that
a personal approach could. But in this era of the Cold War,
with its cruel cynicism and tragic faithlessness, people might
well cling to their prejudices and attitudes which have deep
roots in past history and in present competitions and conflicts.
While, therefore, we salute the President for what his superb
personality and eloquence have achieved, let us be under no
illusion that the heavy clouds of pride and prejudice have cleared
to any considerable degree. Let us also realise, once and for all,
that so long as we stand by our own fundamental convictions
and special attitudes we must not expect the gushing goodwill

of those who hold equally fundamental convictions and special attitudes and with whom we are not frankly aligned. We cannot have it both ways. In the absence of open or tacit alignment there will always be strict limitations to the political and economic goodwill we can secure from them. The sooner we realise this the better for us.

Quite apart from any political or economic gains which might accrue from the President's visit there are certain inestimable gains in terms of world peace and world unity with which we can reckon. In dealing with such matters, the President was naturally at his best and his thoughts and words on them acquired remarkable power and sincerity. Dr. Radhakrishnan made it clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that the time must come quickly when nation-states will have to surrender part of their sovereignty to build up a World Federal Order. There is too much talk about disarmament and too little about such a World Federal Order. The two hang together inescapably. Just as disarmament is an old subject, so also is the idea of a World Federation. But what is significant today is that this call has come from the President of the biggest Democratic Republic in the world. Dr. Radhakrishnan did certainly stress also the imperative need for disarmament and the discarding of all nuclear weapons. But he stressed this along with the call for a World Federal Order. That such a World Federal Order must emerge, sooner or later, may be treated as an axiom of history. Have we not today the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R. and the Indian Union, each containing innumerable States or Republics? It is inconceivable that war can break out among such constituent States and Republics since they all come under Federal or Union laws and authority. There was a time when these constituent States and Republics warred fiercely with one another. What is

today possible inside these far-flung Federations and Unions must, sooner than later, become possible inside an appropriate World Federal Order.

What then can we do to make the movement for a World Federal Authority keep pace with the movement for disarmament? Will the distinguished President of the Republic of India in collaboration with other world leaders and Heads of State*take the initiative to focus world opinion on this issue and then formulate the preliminary concrete steps to achieve the establishment of a World Federal Authority? We are talking of national integration in India and are whipping up national patriotism. These are pitiful little things in the present-day world in which the conquest of outer space and the suicidal annihilation of the human race appear in a terrible juxtaposition. India can save itself only by pointing the way to the world to save itself. From the Buddha down to Gandhi we can discern and hear this cry ringing out of the ages and the soul of India that mankind is one and indivisible and everything militating against this fundamental human unity is a betrayal of God and man. Within our own life-time Gandhi taught us to value the freedom and welfare of India only in terms of the freedom and welfare of mankind. More than once he stated without reservation that he would gladly see India perish if thereby Mankind could be redeemed. He lived and died for this truth and we who take his name must advance with it to redeem ourselves and the whole of mankind. Otherwise both may perish. Mankind can only live or die together. Let not Dr. Radhakrishnan rest content with verbal appeals, however lofty and sincere. He has understanding, wisdom, sincerity, conviction, humility, courage and opportunity enough to make a supreme contribution. Many of us would pause for his response.

THE AGONIZED CRY OF MAN *

The psychosis of war is a terrible thing. Its roots are embedded in fear and its branches spread out into the sky of anger and hate. When people's minds are gripped by this psychosis, they become blind and may deliberately march towards the precipice. Then almost nothing can stop their drift to disaster.

It was no less a person than the philosopher-President of the Republic of India who said recently that the round of nuclear tests taking place in the world was a competition in crime. Caught in a maelstrom of fear and hate, the two mighty power-blocks headed by the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. are undoubtedly engaged in a competition in crime without parallel in history. As a consequence, a cloud of fear has now extended over almost the whole world. At the same time there have appeared on the horizon silver linings of redemptive hope. Small minorities of people in many countries, including those of the power-blocks, who have realised how the whole of life and civilization are in peril, have risen up in moral and spiritual protest against the crime of dragging the whole world towards total disaster. For the first time the

* From the 'Gandhi Marg', of July 1962.

Thoughts and Talks

issue of non-violence has become an urgent and inescapable world issue. Small groups of people pledged to non-violence, in countries like England, the United States, Germany, France, etc. have come up seeking a way out. Such non-violent groups are slowly beginning to make an impact on the world conscience. If these groups can quickly grow up and grasp their hands across the world, then something will have happened which might well be the answer to the threat of the use of nuclear weapons in a third and final war. Earl Russell's brilliant and inspiring leadership shines like a lamp in the darkness of man's shaky destiny.

The recent Anti-Nuclear-Arms Convention held in New Delhi under the auspices of the Gandhi Peace Foundation drew the whole mind of India and perhaps of several countries of Asia to an urgent recognition of the need for all peoples of the world to stand together to prevent another war. The conviction has deepened that only the people can stop the impending disaster and that governments have become helpless in the flood-tide of their own fears and suspicions. The New Delhi Convention was something unique. It was inaugurated by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the former President of the Republic of India. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the present President of the Republic, addressed the opening session and on the platform were ranged India's most authentic leadership, exemplified by the presence of Sri Jawaharlal Nehru, Sri C. Rajagopalachari, Acharya J. B. Kripalani, Sri Jayaprakash Narayan and others. But the Convention was more than a national one. It was international in composition and in the wide sweep of its vision and strategy.

While the Convention has been hailed as a success by many competent observers inside and outside India, my own view is

that it simply cleared the issue and struck a blow for immediate cessation of all tests of nuclear weapons. It went further and pointed to the one and only remedy of a frank and unashamed acceptance of non-violence in the present world situation. It recalled the memory of Gandhi, who had lifted millions of the people of India to the heights of non-violent and heroic action. But when all this has been said, it is necessary to add that the Convention failed to evolve a cogent programme of effective non-violent action at the Indian and world levels. With what moral authority or conviction can India insist on peace and goodwill between Russia and the United States without solving her own problem of war and peace with Pakistan? The whole of this question was evaded. Even on the question of unilateral disarmament, which was brought up by Dr. Rajendra Prasad in his soul-stirring inaugural address, the Convention would not take a decision. It was not even seriously discussed. But let us be thankful that the Convention did meet. It has left a deep mark on the mind of India. It might still lead on to something more significant. May the spirit of Gandhi, which is still strong in the soul of India, guide us onward and may we all become worthier and readier for his unseen captaincy.

A VENTURE OF FAITH *

As recommended by the Anti-Nuclear-Arms Convention held in New Delhi in June, the Gandhi Peace Foundation is sending a Delegation to the capitals of the four Nuclear Powers—Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the United States.

The leader of the Delegation is, very appropriately, Sri. R. R. Diwakar, Chairman of the Gandhi Peace Foundation. The other members of the Delegation are Sri. C. Rajagopalachari, Sri. U. N. Dhebar, Sri. B. Shiva Rao and the Editor of the Gandhi Marg.*

The most distinguished member of the Delegation is Sri. Rajagopalachari. Astonishingly youthful and resilient in spirit at eighty-four, this great co-worker of Gandhi has for over a decade written and pleaded more often and more convincingly on some of the great issues of our time, and especially on the nuclear crisis, than perhaps any other Indian leader. His voice in India is comparable to that of Earl Russell in Britain. He brings to the present task unquestionable authenticity and an

* G. R. himself. He is one of the sponsors of the World Peace Brigade and the Secretary of the Gandhi Peace foundation. This article appeared in the 'Gandhi Marg' of October 1962.

unimpeachable sincerity rising above all political and tactical controversy.

Sri. Diwakar is also a life-long co-worker of Gandhi and a reputed journalist and author. His book on Satyagraha continues to be a classic on the subject. It was he, again, who presided with distinction over the Anti-Nuclear-Arms Convention. Sri. Dhebar, a former President of the Indian National Congress, is today one of the most trusted and valued co-workers of Prime Minister Nehru. His was the hand that guided, more than any other, the entire work of the Convention. Sri. Shiva Rao has behind him a remarkably rich experience of public life in India, Britain and the United States and has for long been associated with India's work in the United Nations.

The only sanction behind the Delegation is moral and spiritual, even though it has the goodwill and support of the Prime Minister of India. The unbroken heritage of India, from the Buddha to Mahatma Gandhi, is the mainspring of its moral and spiritual sanction. The deathless spirit of Gandhi brooding over the destiny of India and, indeed, of all mankind will undoubtedly bless and strengthen the hands of the Delegation. Hopes and fears will be commingled in the minds of its members as the Delegation goes out on this great venture of faith.

The Delegation will not be a negotiating body, as it will possess neither political nor State authority. It will not attempt to show to the Nuclear Powers the terrible dangers that await all mankind in any nuclear war. The governments and people of these countries know far better than anyone else what the risks are. It will certainly not assume that either side wants

war; it will go further and take it for granted that both sides do not want a nuclear war and are keener than anyone else to avoid such a war. It will not presume at all to teach the contending powers what is so obviously their duty in the impending crisis of global death and destruction.

The Delegation will keep in mind the ceaseless efforts that are being made in Geneva by the Soviet Union and the United States to arrive at a mutually acceptable test-ban treaty and the contributions made by the non-aligned nations towards finding a way out of the impasse. At the same time it will not close its eyes to the evidences of history and the imponderables that have so often in the past reduced innumerable negotiations to nothing or led to sudden world explosions.

The members of the Delegation will stoutly hold on to the faith that neither President Kennedy nor Chairman Khrushchev will be found lacking in the vision, courage and determination to save mankind from extinction.

It will not be the business of the Delegation to apportion praise or blame. On the contrary, it will be its business to study most carefully and understandingly the present narrowed down differences between the chief contenders and to help, where possible, in reconciling these by truthfully interpreting the residual fears and difficulties of each to the other.

The Delegation can ill afford to forget, in the exigencies of the moment, the fundamental nature of the conflict between the two contending social systems and the deep-seated historical reasons that make a reconciliation so very difficult. But it will stress the liberating trends that have come to the surface on both sides in recent years, especially under the leadership of

Thoughts and Talks

Chairman Khrushchev in the Soviet Union. What will be left of either democracy or socialism if in a reckless clash between the two both are reduced to nought? Reason inexorably points to the way of reconciliation and peace, based on the utter inevitability of truthful and peaceful coexistence. The Delegation will stand by this at all costs.

The eventual outcome, the Delegation is convinced, is in the hands of Providence, or History, by whichever name you call the ultimate reality of events. Therefore, even when it is aware that it has something vital to do, the Delegation will not fail to realize that there is a margin which can be filled in only by something beyond anything it can itself achieve.

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.

That is why the mission of the Delegation is a Venture of Faith but it is a faith firmly rooted in reason and, at the same time, willing to step beyond reason when that reason seems unable to meet the challenge.

NOT GOOD ENOUGH! *

The partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty signed in Moscow is good—but not good enough. It is good because, for the first time after the Austrian Peace Treaty, there is another agreement at last between the United States and the USSR, with Great Britain having its hand in the pie. But there are two danger signals already flashing on the horizon. The first is the non-cooperation of France and China, and the second that underground tests are going on vigorously. So long as underground tests continue, there is really no effective test-ban, partial or complete. The terrific peril to the world still stands, though slightly diminished. When a thing comes too late, it comes too little. This Test Ban Treaty could have been signed years ago. Why was it not signed then and why has it been signed now? It is true one must not look a gift horse in the mouth. Nevertheless this particular gift horse requires some scrutiny. France is already a sizable nuclear power and China is on the verge of becoming another. The fear in the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. might well have been this fear. If the Test Ban Treaty establishes a monopoly of nuclear power for the U. S. S. R., the U. S. A. and the U. K., with underground tests permitted, then

* From the "Gandhi Marg" of October 1963.

one wonders. While Russia has refused nuclear weapons to China, there is no guarantee that the U.S.A. will refuse the same to West Germany or even to France. While the U.S.S.R. and its allies have no disagreement on the Test Ban Treaty, the U.S.A. has to face opposition even within its own territories. The spokesmen of the USA are pacifying the aggressive elements in their country by saying all sorts of things which really vitiate the signing of the Treaty itself. Also, the Test Ban Treaty already signed will be completely worthless if it does not quickly and effectively lead on to further steps for disarmament. No such step is yet visible anywhere. That is why it is too early to crow over what has happened.

The interrelation between disarmament and some kind of a World Federal Authority is inescapable. So long as powerful nation-states have to watch their frontiers against aggression, disarmament can never really come. World federalism and world disarmament are the two sides of the same coin. Which nation or nations will put the first step forward in the march towards world federalism and world disarmament? Pandit Nehru, speaking recently in New Delhi, said that federalism can only follow disarmament. This seems to be somewhat unclear thinking. A measure of world federalism and disarmament will have to appear together before fear can be lifted from the minds of men. Pandit Nehru has repeated times without number that fear prevents disarmament and stands in the way of world federalism. What is the way out from the pall of fear overhanging the world? India is afraid of China. What is the way out for India itself? If fear is the greatest enemy of peace in the world, what is India doing under Nehru for the conquest of fear? Is increase of armaments the answer to fear? Curiously, Pandit Nehru said again in New Delhi that the more

powerful a nation the greater its fear. It is no longer enough, in the year of grace 1963, to repeat platitudes which everybody knows. Pandit Nehru referred to Gandhi and his legacy to India. Dr. Radhakrishnan, the President of India, has sounded a clarion call that nations must surrender part of their sovereignty to an appropriate world authority. In an earlier issue, the Gandhi Marg invited the President of India to indicate the first preliminary step to be taken. Can it be anything other than a World Convention of those who have signed the Test Ban Treaty, either within the framework of the United Nations or outside it, for the purpose of formulating the preliminary steps for the creation of such a World Federal State or Authority? It is no use repeating that science and technology have brought the space age itself close to us, that old values must give way before new values etc. and then go on ploughing the same furrows of nineteenth century national patriotism as before. Unfortunately, under the fear of China, India has retreated from the methods of peace for making peace and has fallen back on the old method of war to establish peace, which is a totally out-dated and unscientific method today.

It is not as though anybody can work a miracle or make peace through a conjurer's trick. Equally, you cannot talk of big things and new things and then turn tail and run away from them and still pretend you are going in the right direction. No one can throw a stone at another, because all are equally guilty. But no confession of guilt can be the equivalent of the positive steps that must be taken to deliver mankind from fear and suicide. We have today in India an outstanding philosopher-President, a noble Vice-President and a great Prime Minister. If these three cannot put their heads together and make some plan to bring world leaders to take up the double challenge of disarmament and the creation of a World Federal Authority in the wake of the Test Ban Treaty, then Gandhi has lived and died in vain in this country of ours.

THE DELHI-PEKING FRIENDSHIP MARCH *

Earl Russell is understood to have said that the Delhi-Peking Friendship March is the first sign of sanity in India which became visible to him since there came the explosion along the India-China border. We are not so sure. There have been other signs as well. There was the Anti-Nuclear-Arms Convention in New Delhi in June 1962 followed by the visit of two delegations of the Convention to Washington and Moscow to meet Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Khrushchev and to press for the immediate cessation of all nuclear tests. There was then the strenuous effort to build up the Indian Shanti Sena and to organise peace work in the border areas. There were important meetings of non-violent workers to plan concerted non-violent action and to combat war hysteria. The Delhi-Peking Friendship March was only a natural consequence.

This is not to say that Gandhi's India has lived up to the challenge of non-violence in the present crisis. That was not going to be easy in any case. Even if Gandhi had been alive today, he would not have asked the Government of India to shut up and surrender to the Chinese. That never was his way. But he would most certainly have prepared the people

* From the 'Gandhi Marg' of April 1963.

to resist Chinese aggression non-violently as he did at the time of the expected Japanese invasion during the second World War. Western Pacifists have criticised their Indian comrades for doing nothing or being led away by the overwhelming climate of military preparations in the country. This is not wholly fair or just. The Chinese attack took the country by surprise and it certainly needed time for the non-violent forces to draw together and by the time this started happening the Chinese unilaterally withdrew. Then came the Colombo conference and many people expected that the conference might find the way out to a peaceful solution. In spite of some mud-slinging at it, there can be no question that the Colombo proposals have made a contribution to the cessation of active hostilities. The Indian Government has accepted the Colombo proposals. The Chinese Government has not. All these were matters from which the people could not stand apart. The votaries of non-violence in India had to take stock of all these factors.

If there is a recrudescence of the war again on the Indian border there is bound to be a significant witness, even unto death, to non-violence from inside India.

It is against this background that we must look at the tiny trickle of faith, hope and charity which started on the first of March 1963 from the Gandhi Samadhi in Rajghat, New Delhi towards Peking. Fifteen humble and dedicated pilgrims from three continents have begun their long trek to Peking. They stepped out after a programme of inter-religious worship at the Gandhi Samadhi. A big and representative gathering of men and women from every walk of life in Delhi assembled to bid them *bon voyage*. There were a few blackflag wavers to protest against any attempt to befriend the Chinese. These

were representatives of extreme Hindu communalism. There was no clash at all between the blackflag wavers and the Friendship Marchers. This itself was another vote for peace between antagonists!

The Friendship Marchers had no pride that they were going to solve the problems of the present conflict like magic. They were humble people and they carried in their hearts nothing but the flavour of goodwill and love. They would march on foot through several hundreds of miles of Indian territory before they came to the border of China. While in India, they would ask the Indian people not to give way to hate and anger against the Chinese people. The people of India and China had been friendly to each other through the uncounted centuries. Our leaders had pointed this out over and over again. The time must come once more when the two peoples would be friendly again. In the meantime there was this conflict and the upsetting of peace and goodwill. It was necessary to resolve this conflict peacefully. If allowed to enter into China and to continue the march to Peking the Friendship Marchers would deliver the same message to the Chinese people. The attempt was thus to build a tiny bridge of understanding between the two peoples who were already on the verge of surrendering their souls to hate and anger.

It is a great tribute to the Government of India that they have permitted the Friendship Marchers to walk through many hundreds of miles of Indian territory doing such propaganda at a time when they are building up the defence potential to the utmost extent. It is even more a tribute to the people of India that even while their minds have become red-hot over the present crisis they have welcomed the Friendship Marchers in village after village and town after town, giving them hospitality and listening to their message. This shows that in India the hard core of the people's experience under Gandhi has not

altogether melted away. The soul of the people is not yet sold to hate and violence. It is to this soul of the people that the Friendship Marchers will address their appeal. People will naturally want to know what should be done if China attacks again. It will be for the Friendship Marchers to explain on the one hand all the developments that have taken place and how efforts are being made to find a peaceful solution. If finally such attempts fail and the Chinese attack again, the Marchers will not hesitate to indicate how there can be organised non-violence to resist even aggression. All this will not be easy again, just as even military defence to be successful will not be easy either.

One does not know what will happen as the Marchers come to the Chinese border. Will the Marchers be allowed to go in or will they be turned away? If the Marchers are allowed entry they will go to Peking spreading the message of goodwill. But if they are prevented they might well be obliged to offer Satyagraha. Then, one of two things can happen. The Chinese can shoot them down or they will win their entrance first into the Chinese hearts and then into Chinese territory. Both ways it will be a victory for the Satyagrahis. Their martyrdom might set fire to the human conscience throughout the world or they would bring about a change of heart in the Chinese.

There can be no loss or defeat for the Satyagrahis. Their defeat or loss can come only if they falter or retreat. An unbelieving and even cynical world is watching. But let all those who realise that violence and militarism have already become stupid and irrational and that a violent world can now only commit suicide, watch this experiment with a prayer in their hearts and a word of blessing on their lips.

FACE TO FACE WITH KHRUSCHEV

Shri U. N. Dhebar and I reached Moscow at the end of September 1962 as the members of one of the two delegations of the Anti-Nuclear Arms Convention held in Delhi. The other delegation consisting of Sri C. Rajagopalachariar, Sri R. R. Diwakar and Sri Shiva Rao went to Washington at the same time. Both the delegations were out to plead with world leaders to stop all testing of nuclear weapons as this was poisoning the air which mankind was breathing. Our delegation met a number of top-ranking Russian leaders but Mr. Khrushchev was not then in Moscow. So we flew out to meet him at the city of Ashkhabad, the capital of the Turkman Republic. It was a flight of about one thousand miles. We reached Ashkhabad in the evening and our appointment with Mr. Khrushchev was fixed for 8.00 a. m. the next day.

A couple of minutes before 8.00 a. m. the next day our car entered the gates of a compound with a modest looking, double-story bungalow a hundred feet inside. We drew up under a porch. My mind was in flight. I knew that in the next few moments I would meet one of the two or three mightiest men of the time. How would he receive us and what would he say? I expected that some Secretary or other official would meet us at the porch and then take us along to

Thoughts and Talks

the great man. I looked round and there was hardly any obtrusive security arrangements. The place looked quiet and peaceful. Of course, as we drove along the roads earlier we saw big crowds lining on both sides because Mr. Khrushchev was expected to drive down that way sometime later. It was like the crowds which come out in India for Pandit Nehru. Our car stopped under the porch. A door opened and there stepped out none other than the great man himself, with a smile on his face and with outstretched arms. Behind him were only the translators and a charming woman secretary. It took my breath away, the utter informality of the arrangement. We shook hands and Mr. Khrushchev led us up to the first floor and into a room furnished in the simplest manner. There was a small round table with a few chairs and a little to the left another table with soft drinks on it.

In a few minutes we were sitting round the table. By a lucky coincidence I was exactly opposite to Mr. Khrushchev who had Sri Dhebar on his right and the Indian Ambassador Sri Dutt on his left with the translators in proper place. We exchanged greetings. Sri Dhebar proved himself to be a polished and expert diplomat in the manner in which he conveyed to Mr. Khrushchev greetings from Dr. Radhakrishnan, Pandit Nehru and the people of India. Mr. Khrushchev returned the greetings with sincere warmth. There was a joke when Mr. Khrushchev suggested that Pandit Nehru was working too hard and should come to Russia for some rest and recreation and Sri Dhebar replied that Pandit Nehru might give the same advice to Mr. Khrushchev who was also working himself to death. There was some good-humoured laughter and then we plunged into the subject of nuclear tests. I do not propose to deal with the details of the discussion. The discussion

lasted two full hours. Mr. Khrushchev spoke with sarcastic bitterness about the U. S. A. surrounding Russia with bases. He called it a hostile ring built around Russia. He pointed out with biting cynicism that his rockets needed no bases near the U. S. A. ! He read some extracts from the New York Times giving the utterances of leading spokesmen of the U. S. A. to show that the Americans wanted deliberately to drive Russia into heavier and heavier military expenditure because the Russian economy, unlike the American, will crack under such expenditure. He pointed his finger to the open window and said that the border of Iran was only sixty miles away and right near the border within Iranian territory there were American bases. Then he switched on to conditions in Russia. He asked us to find out one man or woman in Russia who wanted war. He said there would be no such man or woman in Russia, not because the Russians are non-violent but because peace was the first condition of survival and growth of the country. In the Second World War Russian man power had been drained away beyond endurance. Millions of men and women had perished. There was not a single home which had not lost more than one member in the war. Russians hated war but if an enemy attacked, they would be utterly wiped out and the attacking country wiped out also. He added that Communism needed no war to spread in the world. His faith in Communism was invincible. It reminded me of the faith of Christian missionaries who openly hold, that the conversion of the entire world to Christianity was only a matter of time. He said Communism had sturdy legs and even sturdier wings. It would walk over mountains and wing over the oceans and so on and so on. He was emphatic that Communism did not need smoking and ruined cities and countries to spread. That would impede the spread of

Communism. Communism was adapting itself to the new conditions of the nuclear age.

Shri Dhebar put the case for the immediate cessation of all tests of nuclear devices cogently, persuasively and convincingly. Mr. Khrushchev gave his own answer to prove he was ready but not the Americans. What he objected to was legalised espionage under cover of inspection. He used humorous language when he said that the Americans knew that there were scientific instruments which could detect explosions, that he knew they knew and yet they were saying they did not know! At some point I interjected to say it was not enough he did not want war but he should take steps to prevent any war even if those who wanted war began a war. I said Mahatma Gandhi was a genius who not only did not want a war himself but prevented the other fellow from starting one by making his weapons useless against non-violence. He took up the point at once and agreed it was necessary to make it impossible for the other fellow to start a war. I was reminded at this point of Pandit Nehru's dictum that peace can be made only through peaceful approaches. I wondered if Mr. Khrushchev was not admitting the truth of that dictum though only indirectly.

Apart from words and arguments the final impression he left on my mind might be summarised as follows:-

Mr. Khrushchev would never himself start a war. He would not be guilty of taking upon himself such a responsibility knowing fully the consequences. The world would be destroyed in a nuclear war and there would be neither victor nor vanquished. Mr. Khrushchev also would not abet in starting a world war because it would come to the same thing, the destruction of the world. Even more, if some one started a world war he

would block it with all his might. Mr. Dhebar and I came away with the conviction that Mr. Khrushchev was undoubtedly one of the most powerful and convinced sentinels of world peace.

But during the two hours I was looking at Mr. Khrushchev. I could have stretched out my hands and touched his bald pate as he could have put out his hands and touched my equally bald pate. I watched every line of his face, every shade of his eyes and every gesture of his hands. I knew I would never have another chance like this to sit in front of him for two hours listening to his voice, catching up with his arguments and sizing up his personality. Thank God no one appeared to notice my insatiable curiosity. And so I indulged in it to my heart's content.

Mr. Khrushchev is an astonishing and most remarkable person. He has in him tremendous punch. Curiously he reminded me of the personality of Mr. Winston Churchill. Both have the appearance of a wild boar with tusk down. Both are thick-necked holding up tough faces in which the light and shade chase each other swiftly. The eyes of both are sharp, penetrating and with a glitter of deep passion. One can push Mr. Khrushchev a little and push him back a little. But he will bound back with a roar and a punch which will be irresistible. It is not wise to push him. He is then an utter realist. He is no slave of theories. He looks at the world with terribly practical eyes. Nothing that will help him escapes his eyes nor anything that will hinder him. He is always balancing what will help and what will hinder. He is a supreme strategist who can decide precisely the balance one way and the other. He will hug everything that will help and checkmate anything that will hinder. He is no great intellect. He is the embodiment of

common sense and realism. In an argument he makes up by his grip on details and facts and his unassailable loyalty to a certain basic ideology. His logic can be ruthless like that of a peasant driven to bay. He is no blood-thirsty monster at all. Though he has no need either for God or His Angels, there is in him a deep sympathy and affection for mankind and he would do nothing reckless to hurt them. He is fond of children and can play with them boisterously. He has few graces of refinement. He dresses simply and lives simply. He is full of jokes and quips. Like Sri Rajaji, he is full of anecdotes, stories and parables. He is a powerful speaker. He represents today the profound liberalising influences which have come deep down from the advance of Communism towards its own fulfilment. Let no one mistake these influences as weakening Communism. They will stabilise Communism and make it more acceptable to more people everywhere. He has not encouraged any personality cult about himself. Russia is full of statues and busts and portraits of Lenin. He is not competing with Lenin at that point. There are of course many portraits of him but nothing like what happened in the case of Stalin. One special impression about him is, he would be a good friend and a bad enemy. He loves Russia with a passion which is nothing less than that of Nationalism. But he is quick-witted enough to know Russia is only one of the Republics of the U. S. S. R. and he would do everything to make the Union firmly united on a broad basis of realistic Socialism. His manners can be quite charming and winning when he wants. We saw him and heard him and argued with him when he was in the friendliest of moods. His affection and admiration for Pandit Nehru were unquestioned. Through Nehru he loved the whole of India and therefore would help India to the best of his ability. He had many fond memories of his visits to India. I

was convinced it would be good for India to cultivate this great man's friendship as Sri Rajaji helped so brilliantly to cultivate the friendship of Mr. Kennedy. It is remarkable how Sri Rajaji himself told me more than once in recent months that Mr. Khrushchev has become the most reliable and competent friend of world peace. I told him he should send his compliments direct to Mr. Khrushchev who would no doubt appreciate this gesture from such a man as Sri Rajaji. It was Sri J. J. Singh, an inveterate friend of the U. S. A. who told me that he never went to sleep without the prayer that no Stalinist conspirator should succeed in removing Mr. Khrushchev from life or his present place in world affairs because he was convinced that there was nothing better the U. S. S. R. can today give the world than Mr. Khrushchev and his policies. Let me close with that thought.

NINETEEN SIXTY FOUR *

Nineteen Sixty Three went out under the shadow of the terrible tragedy of the assassination of President Kennedy. The New Year has come in without the world having fully recovered from the shock and sorrow of his death. This President of the United States had within a short time become the symbol of the urgent vitality of the movement for world peace. There is no task more difficult and tantalising in the world today than peace-making. President Kennedy had taken a plunge into this task with appropriate caution, firmness and daring. Prime Minister Khrushchev luckily kept pace with him and together they had achieved a primary but significant breakthrough in the cold war which more than once had reached the brink of a Third World War. President Kennedy is dead but President Johnson is keeping well on his predecessor's tracks and the great Russian leader is still at his post. The new heads of Government in Great Britain and in West Germany have also staked their faith in peace in the New Year. In the Middle East, Pope Paul's unprecedented pilgrimage to Jerusalem and his passionate appeal for peace from the soil of the sacred land to the conscience of man have created sympathetic echoes throughout the globe. The Arab-Israel problem is one of the

* From the 'Gandhi Marg', of January 1964.

hardest in the world but the reverential reception of Pope Paul by the Muslim ruler of Jordan and the Jewish Prime Minister of Israel with only some hours in between revealed a ray of hope in a climate of impenetrable darkness. In India, Prime Minister Nehru has handled the border conflict with China with patience and deep understanding, thus keeping open the possibility of a negotiated settlement. In India again, the forces for peace have never been stronger than they are today, thanks to the radiant leadership of Acharya Vinoba. That brings to mind at once the remembrance, that within the United States, the resurgent Negro revolution is once more focussing world thought on the power of non-violence. It is a case of the meek seeking to inherit the earth. It is equally a case of the coloured race showing the white race the meaning and scope of Jesus Christ's teachings.

The world situation in 1964 however is still most complicated and uneasy in spite of the partial test ban treaty. The differences and tensions between China and Russia are not good for world peace, as also those between India and Pakistan and Indonesia and Malaysia. Underneath the external rumblings are the deeper realities of the struggle for economic domination. Political conquests are no longer popular or possible but attempts at economic conquests are very much in the air. Deeper even than political and economic rivalries is the decay of the moral and spiritual reserves of mankind.

The biggest challenge of 1964 is that of world peace. That peace and justice are inseparable is a self-evident truth. Peace and justice cannot grow separately. They must grow together or not at all. A world in which many peoples are in political subjection or under economic domination has little chance of peace. It is lucky therefore that the New Year can show many

new peoples in Asia and Africa having emerged into freedom. Such freedom in most cases mean simply political freedom but with it economic freedom is impossible. One of the most remarkable things in this present epoch is that on the whole the new free countries of Asia and Africa have firmly ranged themselves on the side of world peace. The Bandung Conference, the first gathering of Asian and African leaders, was literally a peace conference. The principles which came out of the Bandung Conference still remain a great testament of peace in the present world notwithstanding the aberration of China sometime later. The Colombo Conference under the leadership of the world's first woman Prime Minister soon after the Chinese broke into the northern border of India also struck a fine blow for peace. It is perfectly clear today that the new free nations of Asia and Africa will never tolerate another world war. At the United Nations the leaders of Asia and Africa have repeatedly stood out equally for justice and peace. The situation in 1964 is therefore not without genuine possibilities for world peace. The times are pregnant with a new destiny for mankind.

But someone has to take time by the forelock and generate a great initiative. The biggest question facing us therefore is who will lead the way and how. No nation or people can ask another to take the initiative. We can only turn the searchlight inward in India to answer this question. No people and no nation has ever had a leader like Mahatma Gandhi within the memory of man. He demonstrated that millions can be trained and inspired to undertake non-violent direct action to achieve immense social objectives. There are also still with us in this country two outstanding leaders who knew Gandhi and worked with him very closely and who are confirmed votaries of peace, Acharya Vinoba and Pandit Nehru. They are both deeply loved

by the people of India. There is also a philosopher-President of the Indian Republic with an unrivalled name for courage and clear thinking. If these three leaders can become completely united and give the people of India an unreserved call to build world peace in 1964, there will be a mighty response which can shake the whole world. It is no longer enough for the India of Gandhi to be working out successive Five Year Plans or grappling with problems of National Integration. These are necessary and must be attended to. But unless India today takes a deep breath and lifts itself from its own problems to the major problem of the world, it would have failed in its duty and put aside its responsibility.

Let 1964 witness India acting vitally and courageously in the direction alike of World Federalism and World Disarmament. Let our three great leaders assume the responsibility for calling a conference of world leaders to chalk out a programme, step by step, to bring about a world federal arrangement and world disarmament. They might well begin with a small select conference which could later be expanded to include all those concerned. Let us neglect no single duty within India in the field of national reconstruction but let us put the whole of that programme in the context of a new human society founded on peace and justice. We shall long miss commensurate leadership after Nehru, Vinoba and Radhakrishnan. We have no time to lose. We must get out of the ruts of national egoism. We must build a world society or perish in Armageddon.

Let 1964 ring out the old and ring in the new. Let the dead bury the dead. Let the living join hands at the cost of everything to build world peace without which we shall lose everything.

PART FOUR

JUST A MOSAIC

GANDHI— A PROPHECY *

Gandhiji is in many ways a simple man. He is unique only in this that he fearlessly lives the truth as he knows the truth. More, he enables countless men and women, often totally unknown, to live according to his own high pattern. This he does without any earthly authority or power. He is not the head of any State nor will he ever consent to be one. He has become a mighty moral force behind the new State in India and is increasingly becoming such a force in international affairs. He has not set up a new religion nor will he ever do so. He has gathered into himself the finest contributions of all religious thought and striving, thus producing a new spiritual synthesis of the utmost significance for the future of a universal human culture. He is not an ascetic who has turned away from life. On the contrary, he has drawn the utmost strength from the best in asceticism to bind himself more fully with the life of the common people. Moreover, he has kept alive in himself deathlessly and in the midst of the most terrible trials and difficulties the ineffable spirit of laughter.

* This is the last chapter of a little book, "The Man Gandhi" which G. R. wrote in 1947, less than a year before Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated. Readers will note the relevant prophecy in the chapter.

Few people can laugh as he can and few people can infect others with laughter as he can. He is not a narrow-minded and cheerless saint. His tolerance is wide as the sky and deep as the ocean. No saint has ever taken care of his bodily health as this saint of India. To him all ill-health of the body is fatal to the growth of the spirit. That is why he has nurtured his body on such food as can give the utmost vitality. If such food has been simple it is in consonance with the latest and most scientific discoveries in the realm of dietetics. His daily walks and massages, his careful timings of food and rest, etc. will astonish anyone of the old-world type of ascetics. He has shut out nothing from his physical life except what will weaken it or make it ill. He has shut out nothing from his mental life except what would take away from it the undying strength to battle for the freedom of India and of the common man throughout the world. And his life is like an open book. There are in it no hidden chapters. He has kept it deliberately open, as the only way of truthful life and in order that all those who care to can read it and profit by it. He is today nearing his eightieth year and yet the simple and pure discipline of his life has been so real that, those who see him today at his work can only marvel at the abundant vitality of his body and mind. He has looked after his body and he has looked after his spirit in such a way that each seems to lend unending strength to the other. If his actual achievements till now in the regeneration of his people along manifold lines fill the mind with wonder, it can safely be prophesied that his greatest achievement is yet to come. He has lived greatly and those who know him know that he will someday die even more greatly. Such a man as Gandhi can never die an ordinary death. Like Christ he will someday die on his own Cross. The cross in the world to-day is bound to be a different cross to the one on which Christ

gave up his earthly life. Even as these lines are being written Gandhi has turned away from all politics. He is treading the path of a unique pilgrimage, so unique that none dare prophesy today where it will lead him and India. In one of the inaccessible villages of East Bengal ravaged by the fires of human hatred and anger he has pitched his humble tent. While political leaders are finding ways and means of strengthening their respective positions, he has taken upon himself the burden of rebuilding the foundation upon which alone every party and every group in this country must ultimately depend for strength and succour. Many great calls have come to Gandhiji to which he has responded fearlessly and nobly. Perhaps the greatest of all calls has come to him now, to test the power of non-violence for cementing the unity between the Hindu and the Muslim, who are today locked in an inextricable embrace of hatred and violence. This problem of Hindu-Muslim unity, as it has developed in India, has a significance for the whole world. He who will or can solve this problem will be able to solve every problem of religious or racial conflict in the world. And what stares the world in the face today is the spectre of a colossal racial war which might burn up the whole of mankind in its insatiable fire. If Gandhi wins in East Bengal he will win throughout the world. Will Gandhi win or perish in East Bengal? Whether he wins or perishes one thing is certain, he will have blazed a trail which will stand as an everlasting monument of the triumph of good over evil. In one sense he can only win and he must win. In a cause like the present in East Bengal there can be no defeat for a man like Gandhi. Christ was not defeated on the Cross. Gandhi will not be defeated in East Bengal.

Let us be grateful that Gandhi the man is still with us, breathing this earthly air that we too breathe, striving with us to achieve those ends which are dear to us, treading the path which all of us can tread, even the least amongst us, if only we care to, and above all, giving us the example of a life in which our past and our future stand reconciled, as also many of those claims of the present which appear so contradictory and conflicting.

MAHARSHI VINOBA AND THE DACOITS

Recently India rang with the news that *maharshi* Vinoba had quietly walked into the ravines of the Chambal valley in Madhya Pradesh and that his call of love and gentleness had touched the hearts of several hardened and notorious dacoits who came and surrendered to him. During the last many years these ravines had echoed with the gun-shots exchanged between the police and the dacoits. A thrill passed over the country as the news of the voluntary surrender of the dacoits came out in the papers. President Rajendra Prasad sent a telegram to the *maharshi* which struck many as representing the thoughts of countless people who were watching the new experiment. In the telegram the President had said, "The whole nation looks with hope and admiration upon the manner in which you have been able to rouse the better instincts and moral sense and thereby inspired the faith of dacoits leading to their voluntary surrender. Your efforts come to most of us as a refreshing proof of the efficacy of the moral approach for reforming the misguided and drawing the best out of man. I can only pray for complete success of your mission and offer you my regards and best wishes." In the wake of this significant telegram there came a flood of appreciations from many sides.

A little later, however, doubts and hesitations began to manifest themselves in some quarters. Those who had handled the dacoit problem as a police problem were perturbed. Their case was that dacoits were inveterate criminals, soaked in blood and evil, who should be given no quarter but hunted down or exterminated. This view was fully consistent with the theory that this was really a police problem. The police were not expected to woo the dacoits through the approach of love and non-violence. It would be ridiculous for anyone to have expected the police to handle the situation as one of moral or spiritual challenge to themselves. The authorities in charge of law and order found the direct approach of the *maharshi* disquieting and upsetting. The dacoits who surrendered inevitably acquired some kind of a halo which was intolerable. The nefarious criminals of yesterday could not be allowed to appear in the role of heroes today. Several thousands of the police had been involved in the operations against the dacoits for many years and some of them had paid with their lives for doing their duty.

When the authorities therefore stated that their normal work had become more difficult and complicated through the injection of the method of moral transformation, there was a wave of understanding sympathy for the police. The public were caught between the horns of a dilemma: the appreciation of a new technique of non-violence in action on the one hand and, on the other, the growing apprehension that the new method might not solve the whole problem and yet leave the task of the police harder than before. This sort of action and reaction in the public mind should not surprise anybody. This has happened every time a great person appeared in history with the courage and conviction to apply the law of love and non-violence to new situations. Socrates was forced to swallow poison and to kill himself, Jesus was crucified and Lincoln and

Gandhi assassinated for adventuring with new methods for the redemption of erring humanity.

The *maharshi* has remained unperturbed by the cross-currents of public sympathy and his appreciation of the surrender of the dacoits to him has been equalled only by his understanding of and gentleness to the police. In one of his statements he opened his heart wide to all the policemen deployed against the dacoits in the Chambal valley. His words still ring in our ears. "Non-violence has been a potent force in the spiritual world. Mahatma Gandhi tried it in the political field and during the last nine years an attempt has been made to try the principle in the socio-economic field. This time, in this area which is ridden with 'dakus', as they call them, I got an experience I never had before. Hearts have been melted and the whole atmosphere is surcharged with the presence of God. Those who had taken to dacoity have come in a penitent mood and left altogether their old ways. It seems God has worked a miracle in their hearts. I can only express my gratitude to God the Almighty, in whose faith I am humbly trying to tread the path of love and compassion and truth." These are gentle and humble words which should perturb nobody.

It has been stated in some quarters that the police had already partly solved the problem by capturing or killing a number of dacoits and that, given more time, they would have finished the task. This is a tall claim. Let us look at the facts. For many years several thousands of the police force have been locked up in this area at enormous cost to the tax-payer. Where some dacoits were caught or shot others have taken their place and the frightful game has been more a draw than a complete victory for one side or the other. Equally, the *maharshi* has also not solved the problem. He has only created a moral momentum which has reached out to the dacoits. The State

will not abdicate its authority and function. The *maharshi*, who is a moral revolutionary, will not be prevented either from pressing on with his programme of ethical transformation. The major question, therefore, is how to reconcile these two forces at work. There need be no insuperable difficulty, provided that there is mutual understanding and sympathy and the determination to look upon each other as complementary forces in an extremely difficult situation.

Behind the whole of this controversy there is the long-standing challenge for the discovery of fresh human approaches to the whole problem of crime. We have already fairly solid experience in such human approaches in dealing with criminals after they have been caught and imprisoned. That is why we are very proud when we establish new types of prisons where convicted criminals are treated with humanity and dignity in a redemptive manner. No one now raises the cry that criminals will be spoilt in such prisons and that thus crime will be encouraged. What the *maharshi* has done is to go one step further and employ the human approach to the criminal even before he is pushed into a prison. Why should anybody object to such an experiment? Just as humane prisons are a new adventure in the redemption of criminals after conviction, the *maharshi's* is another experiment in the conversion of the criminals even before capture or conviction. Both these have their limitations, arising from the hard realities surrounding the whole question of crime and its punishment and prevention. But these limitations must not be allowed to block the experiment either at the pre-conviction or the post-conviction stages.

When we look at what has happened on the India-China border, we see that China has actually annexed territory which, we firmly claim, belongs to India and the Chinese are still in

occupation. We have not ordered our troops to drive out the Chinese from this area. If our facts are correct, then what has taken place is nothing less than large-scale political dacoity. But even in regard to this major issue, we are willing to continue to employ only the approach of negotiation which is the approach of non-violence. It may probably be found on analysis that it is just the type of people who are attacking Pandit Nehru who are also attacking the *maharshi*. Any new approach to an old problem upsets such people. But this is certainly a new development in the world, that war is not precipitated in anger or in haste and that war itself is considered such a total evil that all the patience and goodwill employed to keep back war are considered worth while and legitimate. That is why India has not gone to war over Goa, or the People's Republic of China over Formosa, or Pakistan over Kashmir.

What then are we to do with the situation created by *maharshi* Vinoba's new experiment? No one dare treat it with contempt and, equally, no one is fully ready yet to accept it as a complete solution. Therefore, advantage should be taken of the mental ferment now created to give more thought at the highest level to the whole problem of crime and its punishment and prevention. A high-level National Seminar should be organised in which State authorities and leaders of public opinion may be brought together to study the problem afresh. We might invite to such a Seminar outstanding experts from other countries who have tried to deal with crime as a social and educational issue. The findings of such a Seminar may probably help in developing more human approaches in dealing with those who commit crimes against society and even in creating the climate for the prevention of crime itself. Those concerned should give some serious thought to this proposal.

THE SLOW RISING TIDE OF SARVODAYA *

If there is one thing clearer about Sarvodaya than anything else it is that Sarvodaya has come more and more to represent the ideals and practices which came from Gandhi. No one can run away from this truth of the matter. Sarvodaya may be good, bad or indifferent, but the concept and practices embedded in it are nearer to Gandhi than anything else we know. This at once gives Sarvodaya tremendous importance and the character of a supreme challenge. Almost everything that Gandhi stood for had something revolutionary about it and even so his ideals and methods had to pass through the stages of ridicule, indifference, criticism, opposition, acceptance, rejection and reacceptance. Even the colossal stature of his personality did not bring him exemption from these inescapable stages of travail. Sarvodaya also will have to face the same long process of birth and growth. Today Sarvodaya appears to have survived the stage of indifference and ridicule. It is now facing criticism, which is a good thing. It is also slowly gathering momentum in the minds of the people. Vinoba and Jayaprakash, more than most others, have put Sarvodaya on the map.

* From the "Gandhi Marg" of July 1961.

The *Bhoodan-Gramdan* movement brought a new dimension to the earlier Gandhian Constructive Programme and brought the concept of Sarvodaya into focus. The world received an astonishing lesson in the application of non-violence in an area of economic revolution. But no one looks upon Vinoba as a politician even though it can be shown that he is hammering away at fundamental politics, the politics of *loka-sakti*. Jayaprakash, on the contrary, is the intellectual exponent of the politics of Sarvodaya. The more he has moved away from power politics, the more immersed he is in the politics of Sarvodaya. He has always been a politician and he is more than ever today. This is in his favour because this is the era of politics and Sarvodaya cannot do without a brilliant and outstanding political spokesman. Like Nehru in the earlier days Jayaprakash also has the advantage of having behind him a legend of mystery, personality and of being above all personal and petty conflicts and intrigues. And just as Nehru, more than any other leader of India, has put socialism without orthodoxies before the people, so has Jayaprakash expounded Sarvodaya as an open-minded and elastic creed.

In his presidential address at the thirteenth All-India Sarvodaya Sammelan held in Andhra Pradesh, Jayaprakash Narayan has presented a fuller and a more coherent picture of Sarvodaya, with many of its implications, than perhaps he has ever done before. We have the advantage of having his thoughts in cold print. It is good to have this clear exposition of Sarvodaya in the present Indian and world context, because so many people are interpreting Sarvodaya in so many ways—again as in the case of Socialism—that people are apt to be confused. Critics thus get something tangible to attack and camp followers so much to quote.

Jayaprakash's voice proclaiming Sarvodaya may not exactly be a voice crying in the wilderness, but it is certainly something very near to it. Newspapers and journals published only scanty extracts from his presidential address and there were hardly any editorial comments. Here we come up across a strange phenomenon in our country. Away from the big cities and the big people in them, under the surface of daily life and events, low down where the rural masses live, a vast deal of Sarvodaya literature is circulating and spreading in the many languages of India. There are books, pamphlets, weeklies and notices slowly and steadily carrying the message of Sarvodaya to innumerable people in every part of India. Hundreds of meetings are being held in the rural areas in many States without even a ripple of publicity appearing in the bigger newspapers and cities. There are thousands of dedicated workers who are silently at work taking the name of Gandhi and Vinoba and their message once again to the people. It is therefore likely that while Jayaprakash's presidential address has created no stir whatever in the cities, it has reached more people in the smaller towns and villages than one is apt to believe.

There are certain basic ideas which have emerged clearly in Jayaprakash Narayan's thesis at the Sarvodaya Sammelan. It would be worth while to look at some of them.

To begin with, it is now crystal clear that Sarvodaya is not running away from politics either in panic or in disdain. Even while it is not indulging in power politics it is seeking to reach down to the depth "where live the poorest, the lowliest and the lost". To the extent it succeeds in this it will carry the masses with it. This too is rock-bottom politics.

The emphasis is not on *rajya-sakti* but on *loka-sakti*, not on the Government and Governmental action but on the people and people's action. *Rajya-sakti* is but the reflection of *loka-sakti* and those who run after *rajya-sakti* neglecting *loka-sakti* are chasing a chimera. This again is the utter reality of the politics of democracy.

Sarvodaya must ceaselessly aim at developing *loka-sakti* in such a manner as befits Indian conditions. This has several vital implications. Sarvodaya should not be confined only to dedicated individuals or groups working here and there. It should find fulfilment in a mass movement, i.e., a movement of the people and for the people. It is not simply a question of linking all the centres of work together but taking up issues which affect the masses and which will unite them throughout the country in common programmes of action aiming at their self-redemption.

Loka-siksan is the immediate challenge for creating *loka-sakti*. Conceived aright and executed on a nation-wide scale a great movement of *loka-siksan* can bring the masses up to the pitch. This is not being done and must be done as early as possible.

The human instruments through which *loka-siksan* should flood the country can well be the *shanti-sainiks*. The *shanti-sena* must therefore be organised extensively and fully to become the instrument for the marshalling of *loka-sakti*. Without the *santi-sena* there can be no genuine *loka-sakti* and therefore no Sarvodaya.

Panchayati-raj under whichever auspices it is organised, must be taken up by everyone and made into a great national reality. In Panchayati-raj the people have now something in

which they can take the first great step in a constructive revolution.

National planning is not alien to Sarvodaya but very much a part of it. It is absurd to say that Sarvodaya and national planning are contradictory. National planning today under governmental aegis shows considerable imbalance and a certain measure of misdirection and consequent unreality. Sarvodaya planning will have to be from below and large-scale and small-scale industries should be developed without either undermining the other. Small-scale industries in Indian conditions ought not to be treated as a temporary adjunct to prop up large-scale industries, but as a vital and distinct part of long-range increase of national production.

Gandhi's teaching that if Sarvodaya workers will take care of the voters the voters will take care of the nation, must be taken seriously. Today the voters are exposed to innumerable evils and temptations and they have hardly any real voice in selecting the candidates who will represent them in the parliament and State legislatures. They have simply the choice of voting for one or the other of a few candidates imposed on them from above by the party system and once somebody is elected the voters have hardly any control or even touch with their representatives. Therefore, the proposal is put forward for setting up Voters' Councils for the selection of candidates and for keeping close contact with representatives once elected. This is considered to be a programme of great significance and potentiality.

Then above all Sarvodaya is for the whole world and for mankind everywhere. It is no narrow nationalism. Its nationalism will fit in with the broadest internationalism

because it aims at the elimination of competition, domination and violence as between nations. On its flag is inscribed not "Jai Hind" but "Jai Jagat".

Not one of these ideas expounded by Jayaprakash can be dismissed with a wave of the hand in the India which still remembers Gandhi and which still has a Vinoba. Even so it is not enough to formulate ideas. Someone must formulate the appropriate and adequate programmes which will lead to the accomplishment of the idea. It is at this point that Jayaprakash Narayan's thesis at the recent Sarvodaya Sannam is weak and uncertain. Jayaprakash wants, for instance, a mass movement to realise the ideals of Sarvodaya. He himself has clearly admitted that the great wave of the *Bhoodan* revolution has receded and it is not possible to recall that wave again. If Jayaprakash's thesis is sound—it looks like it—then the Sarva Seva Sangh should find out from the people themselves what are the most urgent issues upon which they are all willing to unite and for which they are willing to produce a mass movement of non-violent action. Even a people's movement will require commensurate leadership at every level. Is that leadership available? If it is argued that a people's movement will find its own leadership as it goes along, is there that faith in Vinoba or Jayaprakash that such leadership will be found? This is the faith that made Gandhi and threw the whole of India into his frail but mighty hands. If Jayaprakash stops with merely giving India a new thesis, however good, without going further forward by evolving a programme, he will have achieved little.

GRAMDAN AND THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Prime Minister never misses an opportunity to stress that the community development programme is the most revolutionary programme in present-day India. There is no question that after the earlier great wave of the constructive programme under Gandhi the present programme represents the second nation-wide movement in village reconstruction. If it is forging ahead of every other such programme throughout Asia, it is undoubtedly because the Gandhian movement had prepared the country to understand, appreciate and respond to the impetus of such a movement.

But, if the community development programme is revolutionary, gramdan is even more revolutionary. Gramdan means a large fund of unity of mind in the village, a readiness to face radical changes in the social and economic structure of the village, the courage to walk on a new road and the readiness on the part of the individual to make a sacrifice in favour of the community, and therefore, something precise, unambiguous and challenging in the confused situation affecting the rural areas today. If community development means anything, it means these, more than anything else. Let us realise

therefore, that gramdan is no factor outside community development, but something which is at the core of it. Gramdan is community development.

The village in India represents the deathless vitality of India. Vitality cannot however stagnate, because the moment it does so it ceases to be vitality. Gramdan is a mental and economic revolution representing the re-assertion of the vitality of the village in terms of new conditions in free India and in the modern world. Gramdan is a complete break away from the tradition of private ownership of land which has been the rock upon which the life of the village in India has rested during uncounted centuries. And yet, the entire spirit underlying gramdan is in harmony with the spirit of the culture of India which has always put renunciation far above power.

The dynamics of gramdan is that it must lead to gram-nirman (reconstruction of the village). No village can pass the test of gramdan and fail in the test of gram-nirman. If there is failure in gram-nirman, it only means that there has not been the reality of gramdan. That is why the Prime Minister said in Gandhigram, on 8 December 1957, that ultimately gram-nirman would be the only test of gramdan. What is crucial in gramdan is not the release of land from private ownership, but the release of the mind from social self-seeking towards social integration. If that is not the core of community development, then there must be a misuse of words somewhere. If gramdan as it is developing in India today represents in a very real sense the core of community development, then that programme and gramdan must become one. If the Indian people are to advance peacefully and constructively towards democratic socialism, then there can be no escape from such a union of these two movements.

It is therefore a fortunate outcome that Vinoba, the undisputed leader of the sarvodaya workers, and Nehru, the inspirer of the community development programme, are keeping in close touch with each other and influencing each other. This understanding and cooperation, however, have not yet permeated the rank and file on either side, which only shows again that where even the leaders agree, the followers will not sometimes. Something must be done about this quickly and effectively. The achievement of the unity of sarvodaya workers and those engaged in the community development programme is one of the most urgent and most needed tasks in India today. In spite of the attempts made so far, this unity still remains uncertain and ineffective. The recent Mysore conference of the leaders of political parties was a good beginning. It must now lead to actual working unity in the ranks throughout India. Otherwise, it will only remain a start without a move-on and much less a finish.

At one point recently community development workers from different parts of India and a small group of sarvodaya workers came very close to each other. This was at the fifth Inter-State Regional Seminar on Community Development held in the first week of April 1957 at Kodaikanal. The seminar set up a sub-committee, with some of the development commissioners from the different states and E. W. Aryanayakam, Dr. S. Gurupatham and G. Ramachandran as members. There was a thorough discussion and many difficult moments, but ultimately a statement emerged which was later presented at the plenary session of the seminar and passed unanimously. This statement, if accepted in spirit and letter and worked jointly, can undoubtedly bring the gramdan movement and the community development programme together integrally. It deserves careful

consideration by everyone concerned. Here is the statement verbatim :—

It is fully recognised that gramdan, wherever it has taken place, would have greatly helped in creating the mental climate most appropriate for community development. What the community development programme has all along earnestly tried to achieve and has only partly succeeded in achieving, may well be accomplished more effectively, fully and quickly in the gramdan villages.

Recognising that this new mental climate has come from the moral momentum created by Sri Vinobaji and sarvodaya workers, it is agreed that the best results in harnessing the new moral forces for national reconstruction could be achieved through the closest cooperation between the sarvodaya workers and all those now engaged in community development.

It has, therefore, become a matter for serious consideration whether, in areas in which a sufficiently large number of gramdans have taken place, such villages should not be brought under one or more special development blocks in which may be launched a fuller and more integrated programme of community development than has been possible yet in other areas generally.

Such a programme shall have to be inevitably considered and drawn up conjointly by a sarvodaya group set up for the purpose by Sri Acharya Vinobaji and by the appropriate personnel of community development. Thus any programme to be carried out will have to be such as will be acceptable to those who have laboured to bring about gramdans and at the same time consistent with the broad

outlines of the community development programme which is already in operation in innumerable areas of the country.

This will mean that what might emerge as the programme in gramdan villages should be a deeper, more comprehensive and more effective fulfilment of community development.

It should not be difficult to arrive at an arrangement under which programmes jointly evolved are under the guidance of someone selected for the purpose by the sarvodaya group concerned and under whose overall supervision all the personnel engaged in community development will work together with sarvodaya workers as one team in gramdan villages.

It should be remembered in this connection that the ultimate responsibility of execution of agreed programmes from village to village will rest very largely on village panchayats. Where such panchayats already exist, they may be reconstituted on a clear understanding of the new responsibilities and duties that will rest on them in view of the dynamic situation created by gramdan and that, therefore, all the various personnel of community development will come into the picture only in a secondary and advisory capacity.

It will be of the utmost importance that gramdan villages learn to stand on their own legs firmly so that whatever external help may be needed and given may not tend to weaken the morale of the people as they reconstruct their own lives on the basis of the maximum possible self-reliance and self-sufficiency.

In the light of such planning and organising, there would be created an ever-increasing sphere for the closest cooperation between the people and those engaged in the work of community development leading to far-reaching consequences fraught with the greatest good for national reconstruction.

Sometime later at the sixth Development Commissioners' Conference at Mussoorie the same matter came up for discussion and there were certain findings. Though these findings cover a more detailed area of discussion, it is a weaker statement than the one adopted at the Kodaikanal seminar from the point of view of the integration of gramdan and community development. Sarvodaya workers will not be enthusiastic to merely accept a few places in the block advisory committee. It is at this point that the Kodaikanal statement went further in order to bring in sarvodaya workers. One good example of how any government in India can effectively bring in sarvodaya workers is seen in the working of the 'Sarvodaya Scheme' with the full concurrence of the Bombay government. Sarvodaya workers are not going to be won over by the stretching out of a patronising hand by those in charge of community development. The crux of the matter is that there should be mutual understanding and real cooperation between both groups. It would be good to have an all-India conference of leading sarvodaya workers and community development personnel at which will be present Nehru, Vinoba, the Congress President, etc. and about a hundred workers drawn from both sides. Such a conference should be unhurried and should come to close grips with practical problems without getting tied up in disputes over ideals and theories. It may be followed by regional conferences of the same pattern. Agreements should thereafter be worked truthfully.

The whole of the above argument is based on one fundamental idea. It is that the community development programme and the gramdan movement are the two most revolutionary aspects of national reconstruction in India. They have not yet come together to add strength to each other. There should now be no delay in effecting such a unity of purpose and work. This is one of the major issues in India today. The practical idealism and selfless devotion of the sarvodaya workers must now combine with the tremendous personnel and material resources available to the community development programme. If this does not happen, we shall be turning away foolishly from one of the greatest possibilities in the India of today.

REVOLUTION IN KHADI PRODUCTION *

“You can cheat God but you cannot cheat arithmetic” was the half-humorous and half-serious challenge Mahatma Gandhi once threw at an intellectual visitor who was fond of argumentation. Nevertheless, it is a fact that many of us are often engaged in the delectable task of cheating even arithmetic! Every school boy knows that eighty per cent of our people live scattered in more than five hundred thousand villages even in this year of grace 1964. Most of them live in utter poverty and ignorance and suffer from diseases of all kinds arising from malnutrition and insanitation. Millions perish every year from preventible diseases. It cannot be said that the condition of the masses in the rural areas has altered to any considerable extent since India became an Independent Sovereign Republic. We are all happily indulging in the thought that India on the whole is advancing rapidly to prosperity and happiness. The progress of the twenty per cent who live in the towns and cities is equated with national progress. This cheating of arithmetic is rampant in the minds of the educated and privileged classes in the urban areas.

* From the ‘Gandhi Marg’, of April 1964.

The picture is, however, not wholly dark. Within our own life-time we have seen two great waves of village reconstruction sweeping over India. The first was in the life-time of Gandhi through his great Constructive Programme of Khadi, village industries, Harijan emancipation, Prohibition, Basic Education and women's and children's welfare under the Kasturba Trust. Gandhi, for the first time in several hundreds of years, made the classes turn their eyes and minds towards the masses in the villages. He was no enemy of the cities. In fact, he was a great friend of all Municipal work and organisation. But he was inexorable in his conviction that unless the villages of India, at their own level, became more prosperous, healthier and happier the nation would perish and with it the cities also. Gandhi knew that the roots of Indian life lay spread deep within the rural soil and that these roots, more than anything else, must pull up the nourishment for the growth of India. Whatever may be the plans we have made and executed since Independence this fundamental Gandhian analysis still stands unassailed. For a quarter of a century and more the Gandhian Constructive Programme was the only testament of hope for our village masses and they have never once gone back to their earlier past of despair. Gandhi himself drew immense strength from the awakened masses of the villages as he delivered blow after blow at the mighty edifice of British rule in India and ultimately shattered it. The memory and experience of the Constructive Programme never died out from the memory of the people.

The second wave on a nation-wide scale came from two sources almost simultaneously, the Community Development Programme under Pandit Nehru and the Bhoodan movement under Acharya Vinoba. The Community Development

Programme brought all the resources of the National Government into the field of rural reconstruction. Finance, trained personnel, new techniques and planned organisation swept into the villages in a flood-tide. Out of this came many vital schemes of self-improvement and self-reliance in the villages of India. There were, however, vital areas of rural reconstruction which the Community Development Programme could not and did not touch, like casteism, communalism, unjust distribution of land and other sources of wealth and innumerable social evils and malpractices. Acharya Vinoba's Bhoodan movement went deeper into the soil and boldly faced up to the challenges of economic inequalities. From the Bhoodan movement sprang a multiplicity of activities which brought back again a new lease of courage, self-reliance, unity and determination to the village people to be masters of their own destiny.

The Community Development Programme advanced towards Panchayatiraj and the Bhoodan movement took a revolutionary stride towards the great adventure of Gramdan. For the first time in human history, non-violence began operating within the deep realities of the economic changes affecting the fundamental fabric of rural life over a vast area.

In the entire field of the Gandhian Constructive Programme, hand-spinning and hand-weaving had always occupied a central place. In free India the production and consumption of hand-spun and hand-woven cloth has increased manifold. The astounding facts and figures can be had from the publications of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission. Today, the most fastidious tastes can be satisfied in Khadi cloth of every variety. Even foreigners go flocking into the Khadi Bhavans to buy beautiful Khadi of every description. Khadi is also beginning to be fancied outside India. All this

proves that Khadi is as relevant today in rural reconstruction as it was ever before. Khadi being cent per cent the product of the villages was aptly given a subsidy by the National Government to keep it going in competition with mass production by the textile mills. The Indian textile mills are well organised and produce an unceasing stream of cloth for consumption in India and outside. No one is trying to attack them or pull them down in the name of Khadi. Khadi represents a deep undercurrent of industry in the rural areas from which millions find employment and a chance to live. It is something like food production and consumption in our country today. Everywhere you see hotels and restaurants springing up like magic and this is true of rural areas also. Millions of people consume food in these hotels and restaurants. But does this mean that cooking in the homes is no longer valid or less important? Home-cooking continues unabated and improves from day to day at its own level. Similarly Khadi and the textile mills run concurrently, each at its own level and catering to different demands. Now suddenly those in charge of the Khadi movement under inspiration from Acharya Vinoba Bhave have struck out in a new revolutionary direction. The subsidy given at the consumer level is now transferred to the weaver's level. Hereafter anyone producing hand-spun yarn can get it woven into cloth free of cost, the cost being borne by the National Government. This means that rural communities and groups producing hand-spun yarn will get all their yarn woven into cloth free of cost and if such communities and groups also grow their own cotton they will get cloth at the price of cotton. This step can and might lead to far-reaching consequences in the area of production at the village level. Only the wisdom and the experience of a Vinoba, whose life is utterly identified with the life of the village could have

inspired such a step in village production. If the Khadi and Village Industries Commission will take adequate care of the mechanics and procedure of the new programme and add to them adult education among the masses in the villages on all the relevant issues involved, then something might yet happen in the poverty-stricken villages to add immense strength to the foundations of our national prosperity. The Prime Minister of India and our peerless leader of non-violent reconstruction have united to sponsor this move. The time may come when a similar technique may galvanise other suitable village industries. The village industries programme has been the weakest link in the Community Development movement. Here then is the corrective and it is for the Ministry of Community Development to take the fullest advantage of what is now happening. It is only in the Madras State that Khadi production is organised on a very big scale directly under Government auspices. The result is that Community Development and Khadi work have strengthened each other. If the Community Development Ministry and the Khadi and Village Industries Commission can truthfully join hands together, the shattering cry of distress from the villages of India might well become less heart-breaking.

THE GANDHIAN APPROACH TO RURAL WELFARE

The rural community in India is not merely one among several communities in the country. It is the one major and overwhelmingly dominant community. It is not a fraction or a part of India. It is India itself, almost the whole of it. This is the first thing of which we must be utterly clear in our minds. Let there be no mistake about it. It is the fact and the arithmetic of the matter. The rural community is more than eighty per cent of India. This was so for many centuries and this will remain so for a long time yet to come. If today the many millions of the rural community march into our towns and cities, they will crumble under the mighty impact.

Mahatma Gandhi once said: "You may cheat God but you cannot cheat arithmetic." Many of us in India, are, however, given to cheat this arithmetic in practice while fully upholding it in theory. Every single person will admit that eighty per cent of the people is almost the whole of the people, that what affects them is of no little consequence. No programme in our country can become a national programme if it is not

Thoughts and Talks

a rural community programme and yet, whenever there is a programme of national improvement, there comes the unflinching tendency to concentrate it in some vivid patches in our towns and cities. Programmes of public health, labour welfare, housing and education are good examples of what happens. Let it be clear beyond a shadow of doubt, therefore, that rural community welfare in India is nothing less than national welfare itself.

The truthful acceptance of such a view need never mean that towns and cities will be neglected. They cannot be neglected because the people in them are vocal, organised and even militant. On the contrary, the rural community is dumb and exploited and has stood unorganised for many centuries. It was only in the Gandhian era that the rural community awakened and stirred itself up. But even now vast tracts of the rural areas are greatly neglected and they cry out for the most elementary amenities of life.

It was Mahatma Gandhi who for the first time accepted the full validity of the rural community and placed it at the very centre of his constructive programme. The whole basis of his constructive programme was village reconstruction. Khadi, Village Industries, Harijan *seva*, Basic Education and the Kasturba Trust work were all, one step after another, to complete the picture of village reconstruction. It was Gandhiji's unassailable thesis that the rural community must remain at the very centre of all national planning. That Gandhiji succeeded in doing this in his own life-time and that he has left a legacy in this regard are the most conspicuous of his achievements. The Community Projects and the National Extension service, which have now begun to cover the country, represent undoubtedly the continuity of the

forces released by Gandhiji in and through the constructive programme.

The history of the rural community in India is an astonishing one. It represents the survival of what is of great value against overwhelming odds. It is a long history and, in a large measure, the history of India itself. The rural community is scattered over the length and breadth of the country in some five and a half lakhs of villages. These villages are the oldest institutions in our history. Here again let there be no mistake about it. Our villages were, and even now are, nothing less than living institutions of the people. If anybody looks upon the Indian village as merely a colony of houses there will be no understanding of the village at all for him or her. The village has represented the growth of life and culture in India. It has remained the basic unit of our social organization and nothing that has happened till now has changed its fundamental character. From the Vedic to the present times there is an unbroken continuity of village tradition. We cannot break up this tradition. It is also not right to try to do so.

To uproot the village tradition will mean the uprooting of hundreds of millions of people. That will be a dangerous thing to do. Have we not seen in recent years the tragic and disastrous consequences of uprooting even a fraction of the people from their living ground as happened in the wake of the partition of India? It is our business to solve problems and not create fresh ones which no one knows how to solve. This is not a plea against change and modification. Changes and modifications there must be. Some of the changes we require are even radical. The caste system with its menace of untouchability must go root and branch. Many of the

feudal characteristics of the old order must also be swept away. But we must destroy nothing which will weaken the basic vitality of the village tradition. We must not destroy anything we cannot replace with something better and in time. We must take up the village and plan to keep it as a village and yet reconstruct it in the light of the progress and the freedom of mankind. It is in these villages we will make or mar the history of India. Can it be doubted that the political freedom of India itself came as the first fruit of the deep stirring of rural India?

Our village people are generally hard-working and shrewd, with a clear idea of what is good for them. Even if they resist for a time new ideas and methods of work, they jump at anything which they find will benefit them. Theory and talk do not generally interest them. But practical and profitable work attract them at once. For centuries they have lived under the pressure of exploitation by innumerable forces from outside, the nature and extent of which they were unable to discover. In dealing with the rural community, therefore, we are dealing with many millions of people in the group of needs, challenges, fears, suspicions and hopes.

While the rural community is a vast one, the problems profoundly affecting its life and growth are complex to a degree. Political, social, economic, moral and cultural factors have combined to create a situation which can stagger any thinker or reformer. There is not one single vital issue which is not complicated by innumerable other factors. Let us take, for instance, the problem of economic development. The whole of this problem is affected by the caste system, the religious and cultural traditions and the conflict of ideologies. The problem of food and land are inextricably mixed together,

making the land-hunger of the landless a major issue. The problems of unemployment and village and small-scale industries are interlocked, creating the challenge for a mixed economy in which industrialisation and decentralised production must proceed without the one destroying the other. Public health in the rural areas has created a challenge again for preventive rather than curative work. We must conduct education keeping in mind that India is a poor country and yet cannot do without the best education possible.

The Gandhian constructive programme was a movement of the people, by the people, for the people. It began with the emphasis on Khadi. It became the Charkha movement. Till this movement started village reconstruction had not found its feet. People talked of village improvement and some workers went into the villages but they came back quickly. Workers did not stay down in the village. For the first time the Charkha movement tied workers to village life and kept them there. No one could organise charka work in the villages and then run away from there. Under Gandhiji's inspiration hundreds of workers not only went into the villages but made their homes in them. The charkha could not and would not flourish in towns and cities except in a symbolic way. But it did spread and develop in the villages.

The village worker doing charkha organisation found it was a full time job. As he thus lived in the village, he became more and more aware of other needs and problems and he was drawn deeper and deeper into the village soil. It is interesting to remember how many of those who are Ministers in the Government at the Centre and in the States are people who in earlier days were charkha workers in villages. Sri Rajendra Prasad, the Rashtrapathi, was for many years the

Khadi Chief of Bihar. That meant he lived and worked many years in the villages of Bihar. Shri C. Rajagopalachari lived in the same manner in an out-of-the-way village in the Salem District for many years. He won fame and distinction as the Khadi Chief of Tamil Nad. Even the redoubtable Sardar Vallabhai Patel was for long a constructive worker in Gujarat. Shri Nehru himself became a spinner and Khadi hawker in Uttar Pradesh. Today the All-India Spinners' Association has workers in every State and district who live and work among the people. Wherever Khadi has spread the spirit and technique of village service have also spread. In the wake of the Khadi movement came the All-India village industries movement. This was one step deeper into the village soil.

Thanks to this movement the organisation and improvement of village industries have now come to stay and are part of the permanent pattern of national planning. The recent setting up of the All-India Khadi and Village Industries Commission by the Government of India shows clearly that the claims of the charkha and of village industries are no longer ignored. As Gandhi and his co-workers got more and more involved in village work, they came up against the evil of untouchability and the caste system and so there came along the Harijan Sevak Sangh. The Sangh represented a double line of advance. The first was one of atonement by the so-called higher castes and the second was one for developing the self-respect and the courage of the Harijans themselves. Gandhi also undertook the extremely difficult responsibility of creating a movement for a national language and we thus have the Hindustani *prachar* movement. And then came the Basic Education programme, which also is now spreading steadily though slowly as part of the educational reconstruction

undertaken by the Central and State Governments. We must also mention the great Kasturba Trust movement, which has already put into the field of rural service more than a thousand trained women workers.

All these movements came out of the living and throbbing needs of the rural community and have grown and spread from out of the life of the people themselves. Gandhiji never did any propaganda except through such movements themselves. There is no question that the Gandhian constructive programme has made only slow progress but it has its roots already in the hearts of the people. The programme has thus become, to the extent it has grown, a programme of the people, by the people and for the people. The workers in the constructive programme are mostly humble people coming out of the common stock and without university or any other higher education. The *Bhoomidan* movement itself is the fruit of the Gandhian constructive programme. In and through the *Bhoomidan* movement, Acharya Vinoba is daily demonstrating how vital and radical changes in the mind of village India can be effected by awakening and canalising the *shakti* of the people from within.

The Five Year Plans and objectives and methods of the Community Projects and the National Extension service are still not understood by many sections of the people. How can a whole people cooperate in national reconstruction without a clear knowledge of the aims and methods involved? Something must be done and done quickly to make the people understand what is being planned and done. This is the work of mass education or of social education in the widest sense. Such education must precede or at least go hand in hand with actual work being done. It is at this point that our actions are the weakest. Whatever we have done so far has hardly touched the

life of the vast rural community. We can, however, be thankful that under the inspiration which came from Gandhiji and which is today sustained by Pandit Nehru, we are on the whole moving in the right direction. What is necessary is to persist and intensify the work over ever-widening areas till we touch the life of the rural community on every side and in every part of the country. There will be no short cuts in this work at all.

It will be worth while to analyse briefly the present situation and to indicate the fundamental ideas and methods we must adopt to bring about a better life of the people. Let us not look too far behind. Let us take the rural community at the point it has come to at the present time. Thanks to many historical, political and social forces which have been in operation for a fairly long time, the rural community is now wide awake and eager for advancement. It has also understood that the only secret of advancement is self-help. Wherever self-help is demonstrably the first step to advancement, that step the rural community is now ready and eager to take. We must now take the people at this point.

Are we ready to do this? Under the Community Projects and the National Extension service the passion for advancement and the readiness to participate and cooperate will come up like a rising flood. The big question is: will the Government have courage enough to meet the rising flood half-way? If not, a revolution is inevitable and it may not be a peaceful revolution. If, on the other hand, the Government can help in regulating and controlling the situation, then the energies of the people can be induced to flow in constructive and life-giving channels. Nothing can be more fatal than to go half-way in awakening and rousing the *shakti* of the people and then to run away from it. After having done the pioneering

work, we should not allow other forces to step in and reap a rich harvest in terms of their own programme.

We must plan and put through not only programmes of external improvement but also programmes for the improvement of the inner man. Looked at this way, we realise the need at once for a material and a moral and a cultural programme growing side by side. It would be good to illustrate this point. Agricultural improvement is an important item in our work. But that is not enough. We must take up without delay a far more equitable redistribution of land. If this is done peacefully and with consent, as Acharya Vinoba is doing, we add at once a moral element to the material. Take again another instance. Agricultural improvement will certainly give some more purchasing power to the people. More education will create a hunger for a higher standard of life in the village. But if we leave the matter there, the people with some more purchasing power and craving for a better standard of life will simply become the market for foreign goods or goods manufactured by big capital outside the rural area. But if we add the programme of the maximum possible village self-sufficiency through improved and organised cottage industries and village industries, we bring in at once a sense of high responsibility and mutual service among neighbours, the moral and cultural values of which will be incalculable.

Take again programmes for cultural and recreational entertainments which must go into every village. It is not enough to have a lot of projectors, films, visual aids, etc. The artistic talents of the people must be stirred and harnessed, thus leading to self-development. There are vast treasures of talent in our people for such a purpose. Equally important will be the whole question of the intentions and ideals of such

a programme. Our aim must be a great cultural renaissance from out of the heart of the people. Such a renaissance must draw inspiration from our own history and tradition and bring it forward for a fruition of the new needs and aspirations of our people. This will at once make our work deep-rooted in the moral and spiritual tradition of our country and at the same time link it with whatever is noble and good in the modern tradition and outlook.

The Gandhian constructive programme never failed to furnish a vital, moral and spiritual background to secular activities contained in it. When the khadi movement was started in 1920, it was not merely the economic aspect of it which was stressed but there grew up behind it a wave of moral idealism. To buy khadi was not only good village economics but sound national morality. Harijan emancipation was not merely a fight for the freedom of the underdog but the moral and spiritual duty of the so-called caste Hindus from whom atonement was due to the so-called untouchables. Basic Education was not only sound education but would lead to the blossoming of the finest in the moral and spiritual traditions of India. The Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati and later Sevagram in Wardha became not only places of training but of pilgrimage. All those engaged in the constructive programme developed in larger or smaller measure a missionary zeal and at whatever point they worked, they felt the inspiration that their work was necessary in a great programme of national reconstruction. They were soldiers of the grand army of Gandhi; they were the builders of a new society and they were the torch-bearers of a new civilization. That was the spirit and vision inside the constructive programme.

There are in India today innumerable *ashrams* and institutions which are patiently and steadfastly working out the

Gandhian programmes with such modifications as have become necessary. When the World Pacifist Conference met towards the end of 1949 in Santiniketan and in Sevagram, delegates from foreign countries, who for the first time heard of the constructive programme, asked to see some of the institutions carrying it out. They had, of course, visited the headquarters of the Charkha Sangh, of the All-India Village Industries Association, the Goseva Sangh and Basic Education in Wardha and they did get a glimpse of the fact that these institutions in Wardha were in touch with innumerable workers throughout India engaged in some item or other of the constructive programme. What the visitors actually saw amazed them.

It would be a long list, if one were drawn up, which will show the names of institutions and workers throughout India engaged in constructive work. It has been computed that there are nearly ten thousand full-time workers engaged in such activity in the whole country. It is not possible to give a full and detailed picture of all such work. But the picture in South India may be given briefly and South India here will mean Tamilnad, Kerala, Andhra and Mysore. There is no question that Tamilnad leads in constructive work. There are at least twelve outstanding institutions in Tamilnad and Kerala. These are the Gandhi Ashram at Tiruchengode, founded some thirty years ago by Sri C. Rajagopalachari, the Gandhi Niketan at Kallupatti in the Madurai District, the Gandhi Ashram near Chidambaram, Gandhigram near Dindigul, the Gandhi Seva Sadan at Perur in South Malabar, the Kasturba Ashram in Trichur, the Grama Seva Kendram near Palghat, the Nai Talim Sangh near Feroke in Malabar, the Basic Training School and allied institutions in Perianaickenpalayam in Coimbatore district, the Kasturba Kanya Gurukul in Vedaranyam in Tanjore

District, the new Kasturba Gram near Erode and the Madurai Constructive Workers' Sangham.

All these institutions have done good work for many years and won the goodwill and cooperation of the people. Besides these bigger institutions there are innumerable centres of work in villages under other auspices or on their own. There are some fifty centres of village work, each under two trained women workers under the Tamilnad branch of the Kasturba Trust alone. Andhra also has a long and noble tradition of constructive work and there are several institutions and quite a small army of constructive workers. The remarkable thing about all this work is that while khadi, village industries, Harijan emancipation, spread of Hindi, Basic Education, are all practical and secular activities, they are all at the same time linked with the ideology of Sarvodaya. Sarvodaya is in the minds of constructive workers, the only alternative to Communism and so the constructive programme has emphasised equally ideology and practical work. In fact there is no greater force in India today standing in the way of an onrush of disruptive or subversive forces than the cumulative influence of the Sarvodaya ideology and the Gandhian constructive programme. The greatest need in our country today is for linking up this programme with the Community Projects and the National Extension service programmes. If these could come together in complete mutual understanding and cooperation, then the heart of the people could indeed be won over to peaceful methods for achieving all the radical changes that the situation calls for. If these do not come together but go on in their separate ways, there will be frustration and delay all round in the task of village reconstruction which is really national reconstruction.

The following may well be the main items in outline for lifting up the rural community as quickly as possible to a fuller and better life and on which Gandhian constructive workers and those working in the Community Projects and the National Extension service may jointly and cooperatively concentrate. These items are balanced in such a way as to combine the material and moral implications which are necessary to build up a peaceful, prosperous and just society in India. They are :

1. More food through better agriculture and an equitable redistribution of land through peaceful methods of persuasion.
2. Better food through mass education in the elementary rules of dietetics at the village level.
3. Better health through the above and through a national sanitation drive touching the life of the people on every side.
4. Improvement and organisation of cottage and village industries, leading up to the maximum possible regional self-sufficiency in the rural areas linked to the philosophy and outlook of mutual service and neighbourliness. This must mean the unfoldment of multi-purpose cooperation.
5. Cheap life education, self-sufficient for a universal minimum quantum of knowledge and for earning a livelihood within a maximum period of ten years. This should be available to every boy and girl. This may well be Basic Education with suitable changes and modifications.
6. Self-government from the bottom through panchayats.
7. Moral rearmament of the people through cultural and recreational programmes deriving inspiration from the past traditions of India and going forward to link up with the best traditions of the modern world.

None of these are new items. But they must now be taken up in a new spirit. Technique must mingle with the spirit. Material improvement must mean moral rearmament. Enjoyment and recreation must elevate the cultural level instead of dragging it down to the dust as is often done now. It is not enough to achieve a working synthesis of the many programmes of material development. It is even more necessary to achieve a working synthesis between all the material development on the one hand and the moral rearmament of the people on the other. This is the work of all works now in the India which Gandhi created and which Nehru is sustaining. If we do not do this, India will fail in its great mission. If we succeed in doing this, we shall blaze the trail for every country and the whole world.

The rural community in India must achieve its own welfare and thus point the way to the welfare of mankind. Throughout Asia there are other rural communities. There is a great one in China. The message of synthesis of material and moral advancement must, however, go out of India, the India of Gandhi and Nehru.

Rural community welfare in India has thus a double mission. To begin with, it must be achieved in a peaceful and constructive manner which, while changing the external conditions of life for the better, will also add strength to the moral fibre of rural humanity. Secondly, such a development must react vitally on the whole of the rural community in Asia and especially South East Asia. It must become the answer of the unbeatable spirit of man to the ruthless compulsions and dictations of Marxism and Communism. There is no other way to counter Communism except through this peaceful constructive rural revolution. India must stand fast by the

fundamentals of the Gandhian constructive programme without making it into an impervious orthodoxy. The core of that programme is the synthesis between the material and moral advancement of human society. To this we must cling with all the strength in us. And, at the same time, let us not close our hearts to the need for modifications and changes in the programme as we go forward. Orthodoxy leads to fanaticism and fanaticism is the enemy of truth within the mansion of truth. Nor can there be any orthodoxy about modernism. Let the advocates of modernism remember the terror and peril to which it has brought humanity with the atom and hydrogen bombs in the foreground and thus learn to be a little humble in the midst of all modern achievements.

Neither thoughts nor words, however lofty, can achieve anything. The work for the welfare of the rural community is a many-sided and most difficult one. It is going to be long and laborious. We must, therefore, cultivate not only clear minds but strong guts. The soul and the nerve must keep pace with each other. We will have to build slowly and step by step. One can only pray that the great God of India's history will give the people the clarity of mind, the strength of will and the humility of spirit which alone will enable them to fulfil their high destiny in a world, which is on the verge of either total disaster or complete transformation.

RURAL UNIVERSITIES

The very idea of Rural Universities appears as something new and strange to many people today. But, is not that itself something very strange in a country with the immemorial educational traditions of India? When we look back at the panorama of the history of our country, we see the Gurukula, the great hermitages of the scholars and philosophers and also Universities like those of Nalanda and Taxila. The tradition of what we now call the Rural University was thus in the blood and bone of the history of India. And yet, the very idea of a Rural University has now become something strange and even fantastic to many of us. Is not this another proof of the perversion of Indian history in the last few centuries? The ancient Indian idea that higher education should be made available to all young aspirants, whether rich or poor, in peaceful surroundings far away from the bustle and noise of the cities and linked to productive and useful bodily labour has run like a golden thread through the history of education in India. And are not these among the essential characteristics of a Rural University? But, under British rule and perhaps even earlier, the rural areas became more and more neglected and emphasis shifted to a few hundred towns and

cities. What went on during this period was a relentless process of sucking up into the towns and the cities all that was of value in material and human resources in the villages. Like every other good thing, higher education also migrated from rural to urban areas so that a time came when parents of village boys and girls had to sell their lands and property to keep their young folk at colleges in the cities. This was a terrible predicament and full of far-reaching consequences in the life of the people. Among the consequences was the one under which all higher education became the prerogative of a small fraction of the fortunate few and it clearly went out of the reach of millions of those who needed it and for whom it was nothing less than their birthright. Under British rule most of the external and inner symbols of culture and higher life were slowly plucked out from the rural soil and replanted in urban ground. The universities and colleges were all in the cities, so much so, the city and higher education became hopelessly linked together in the minds of the common people.

It took a long time for any healthy reaction to reassert itself against such a fatal tide. But reaction did come. It started first in a small trickle and then gathered speed and sweep and we are all yet in the grip of it. We have certainly not seen its final stage. In the first and early tide of healthy reaction, we see the emergence of the Gurukula University at Haridwar established by the Arya Samajists, the Visva-bharati university at Santiniketan established by the great poet and philosopher, Rabindranath Tagore, the National University at Adyar founded by Dr. Annie Beasant and a few other similar institutions. And then some thirty years ago came to be established the great Vidya Peeths when Mahatma Gandhi swept the

country with the first great Satyagraha Movement and of these, three at least remain today, and have earned a great name for themselves. These are the Vidya Peeths of Gujerat, Bihar and the Jamia Millia, the last of which is so intimately connected with the name of Dr. Zakir Hussain, one of the greatest educationists in India today.

I wish to pick out specially the Visva-bharati University at Santiniketan for a very brief analysis to throw light on the characteristics of a Rural University. The Santiniketan ideal of education was not merely the transplanting of city education in a rural area. It was something much more and involved the deeper process of ruralising education so that it became, on the one hand, part of the peaceful rural background and on the other, sought its synthesis with the main challenges of education in modern times. Santiniketan proved that the highest education can be conducted in the midst of Nature and far away from the cities and under conditions of simple, clean and truly artistic living. Open-air classes and boys and girls growing up in harmony with the rhythm and cadences of Nature are at the centre of the Santiniketan experiment and these would have been impossible in a city setting. Poet Tagore also insisted from the very beginning on what has just now become fashionable in our country, symbolically at least in the universities and colleges, namely, bodily labour to produce bodily needs. Training in handicrafts thus became a vital corollary in the process of ruralising higher education. The great poet also made it clear beyond any doubt that there were great values of Truth, Beauty and Goodness embedded in the ancient rural culture of India which must be rediscovered and renourished as part of the foundation of a Rural University. He, at the same time, pointed to the urgent need to effect genuine

synthesis between the ancient values and the great values created by modern civilisation. The contribution of Santiniketan at this point has yet to be fully studied and appreciated by those in charge of educational reconstruction in independent India.

In recent years, it is the University Commission generally known as the Radhakrishnan Commission which brought out conspicuously once again the idea of Rural Universities. But, somehow, the report of that Commission has been put on the shelf and some of its splendid and excellent ideas have not been taken out for experimentation. In the meantime, another school of thought has strongly taken the view that there should be no division of universities into urban and rural ones and that there should be established a chain of universities in the rural areas to be known as National Universities. This is only a battle over names. After all, do we not draw distinctions between industries and village industries, city health work and rural health work, city projects and village projects and city housing and rural housing etc? When it is remembered that even today more than 80% of the people still live in rural areas, that their villages are many centuries old and that we are engaged at many levels in rural reconstruction, there appears to be no need at all to labour under the inferiority complex when using such an expression as 'Rural Universities'. Every Rural University will be a National University, because it will be rooted in national realities and reach out to fulfil national needs.

It is certainly necessary to analyse the positive contents of a Rural University and its fundamental characteristics. This subject can only be very briefly touched upon in a single talk like the present one. The following ten points will, however, be relevant in any such consideration :

(1) A Rural University should be founded ideologically on the conviction that there are certain material, mental and spiritual values in the ancient rural civilisation and culture of India which require to be rediscovered and renourished and that, not necessarily, in conflict with the values of the scientific and technological developments in the modern world.

(2) Among the values of a Rural Culture would be peacefulness of daily life in place of restlessness and the fret and the fury coming from such restlessness; cooperativeness and adjustments in place of competition and strife in the economic order; decentralisation of political and economic power and resources in order to reach out to hundreds of thousands of villages; the proper balancing of material and moral claims of life and above all, a deeper and functioning artistry permeating the common life of the people. There will be no question of setting aside modern science or technology but their application on a more broad-based, human and humane manner will have to be truthfully accomplished.

(3) A Rural University should take higher education to the doors of the people where they live close to the soil and with agriculture as their main occupation. Therefore, inevitably much of higher education in rural areas will be in and through agriculture.

(4) Closely allied to agriculture would be the place of village industries and handicrafts. Rural Higher Education will thus be, in a measure at least, woven around village industries and handicrafts.

(5) A Rural University should neither be too big nor centralised. It should be comparatively smaller than the Urban University but at the same time it should spread out its programme through extension methods.

(6) A Rural University should depend more and more on local resources, both human and material and aim at a large measure of self-sufficiency through the productive work of its own teachers and students.

(7) Two languages at least will be compulsory, namely, the mother tongue or regional language and Hindi, the national language. Any other language like English may be added to these two, but there should be no subtraction from these two.

(8) There should be no steam-rolling to produce identical patterns everywhere, but local colour, tones and traditions must be allowed to come in freely without losing certain general standards and attainments.

(9) While providing for a measure of specialisation in techniques, a Rural University will aim at the development of integrated personality in men and women so that the future citizen will know how to lead a balanced life. The economic, social and spiritual claims must be reconciled in the character and outlook of the growing generation.

(10) The Rural University must revitalise the whole rural area in which it is situated. Life inside the campus should illuminate and reflect itself fully in the increased education, prosperity and happiness of the people in the rural area. That certainly would be a real test.

Mahatma Gandhi was the first great teacher in the modern days in India to point the way to the rebuilding of life in rural areas. For him, rural reconstruction was without a doubt national reconstruction. Educated India, before the coming of Gandhi, had forgotten even the rudimentary arithmetic that eighty per cent of the people in the rural areas represented the nation far more truly than the twenty per cent in the cities.

Educated India had hypnotised itself into the belief that twenty per cent of the people in the cities must be taken more seriously and looked after accordingly than the eighty per cent in the villages. It took many years for Mahatma Gandhi to educate the educated people in the country to understand this simple arithmetic. The result has been nothing less than explosive. For the first time in many centuries, we now not only know, but we wish to plan on the knowledge, that what matters most in national reconstruction is rural reconstruction. It is this knowledge that must point the way today to the establishment of a net-work of Rural Universities in every part of India. Rural Universities, if and when established and keeping enshrined in themselves the ten fundamental characteristics elucidated above, can transform the entire face and character of our country. If that is true, what greater task can there be in educational reconstruction than the establishment of such universities, quickly and without delay?

But the Central and State Governments are as yet only on the threshold of such a programme. The Government of India through its Ministry of Education has recently sponsored the establishment of ten Institutes of Rural Higher Education. But it has set about this work very hesitantly. What should, however, hearten those concerned is that a step in the right direction has been taken. These Institutes of Rural Higher Education may well pave the way for the Rural Universities of the future. Even as it is, some non-Governmental educational bodies have already stolen the show in this regard and in two or three places at least, Rural Universities have already appeared on the scene. These are in Sevagram in Sanosara, and Anand in Gujerat. There is, however, neither clear agreement nor understanding yet concerning the concept of a Rural

University and how it should be built up and developed. It would be a good thing for educationists interested in this matter to meet together, study the whole question carefully and arrive at certain basic conclusions to guide the growth of Rural Higher Education in India.

Gandhigram which has been given one of the new Institutes of Rural Higher Education has started the work under all present limitations and hesitations. Gandhigram was greatly blessed in that the Rashtrapathi, Dr. Rajendra Prasad himself very graciously inaugurated its Rural Institute of Higher Education on the 17th of August 1956. It is our hope that after forty years this experiment will lead Gandhigram to the establishment of a full-fledged Rural University. A small band of dedicated workers has taken upon itself this difficult task, but they have the faith that the undying spirit of Mahatma Gandhi will guide them as they go forward on the great quest. There can be no failure in such an undertaking. The objective conditions in India call out for such a consummation. What is needed are clear vision, sustained efforts, and the readiness to admit and correct every mistake. May these be granted to all those in different parts of India who will from now on labour hard to build up the structure and content of Rural Higher Education!

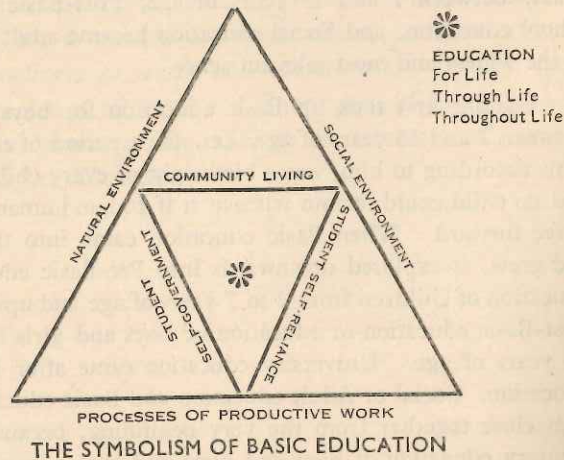
THE GANDHIAN CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION

Gandhi looked at life as a whole and as a unity and on education as the only revolutionary instrument of lifting life continually to something better, richer and fuller materially, culturally, morally and spiritually. Nearly twenty years ago he deliberately gave his educational programme the name '*Nai Talim*', meaning New Education. Under *Nai Talim*, education became life-centred, instead of textbook-centred and *Nai Talim* was defined as education for life, through life and throughout life. *Nai Talim* became divided into Pre-basic, Basic, Post-Basic, University and Social education. Pre-Basic was the Nursery school part, Basic was elementary education for a period of eight years, between 7 and 15 years of age, Post-Basic was High school education, and Social education became adult education in the widest and most relevant sense.

Gandhi first took up Basic education for boys and girls between 7 and 15 years of age, i.e., for a period of eight years. This according to him, was a birthright of every child in India and no child could remain without it if Indian humanity was to move forward. When Basic education came into the picture and grew, it explored downwards into Pre-Basic education or education of children from 2 to 7 years of age and upwards into Post-Basic education or education of boys and girls from 15 to 18 years of age. University education came after Post-Basic education. Social or Adult education and Basic education were kept close together from the very beginning, because the elementary education of boys and girls and that of parents were

intimately related to each other; one could not succeed without the other.

The overall plan of Basic education may be represented in the form of a symbol (see figure). The outer triangle will indicate that teachers and students working and learning together should derive lessons from the natural and social environments and also woven round the processes of productive work. The catchment area of learning will thus consist of the natural and social environments and the processes of productive work. The processes of productive work will thus constitute only one-third of the catchment area. The inner, inverted triangle will indicate that teachers and students would build up cooperatively an integrated school community, sharing in turn in all community work, developing self-reliance and a measure of self-sufficiency; and all this to be based on the self-government of the students, under which the school Assembly would elect a Cabinet of Student-Ministers for planning and carrying out community work inside and outside the school and self-assessing achievements and failures.



This symbolism leads straight into the heart of the Gandhian concept of education, which aims at the development of all the faculties latent in boys and girls and the all-round growth of their personality, both as individual human beings and as partakers in building a just, peaceful and progressive society. Gandhi had once poetically said that he wanted not only thinking brains but thinking fingers. He put all his reasoning against the common divorce between learning and working. He wanted work to vitalise learning and learning to vitalise work. He, therefore, sometimes referred to Basic education as education in and through work. The traditional Indian educational system of the last hundred years or so typified such a divorce and Gandhi, like Rabindranath Tagore, was a constant rebel against it.

A practical question concerns the manner in which the learning of the subject-contents of the Basic school syllabus is to be linked with actual experiences and life-situations in relation to the natural and social environments and the processes of productive work. From class to class in the eight years of a Basic School, teachers and students should jointly map out areas for the study of both the environments and then collect, arrange and record the data in two separate Log books, one for the natural environment and another for the social environment. Naturally, the area would be small in the earlier classes and bigger in the later classes and, equally, the data collected in the earlier years would be simple and elementary and more and more complex and detailed in the later years. It would also not be as though the Log books would be completed in a few years; on the contrary, the Log books would get more and more data from year to year as the study would widen and deepen and become treasure-houses of raw materials of

knowledge from which teachers could draw lessons from time to time, related to the subject-headings in the syllabus. And because boys and girls would have taken their full share in gathering the data, the linking of their experiences in this regard with subjects to be learnt would be fruitful and pleasurable. In regard to weaving lessons around the processes of productive work, this would be done by keeping careful records of the work done from day to day as also of the discussions in regard to every question of "how" and "why" which arise in the course of the discussions. This would be the third treasure-house of data open to teachers and students for linking experience with the subject-headings in the syllabus.

The distinction between play and work is well-defined in Basic education. Work and play cannot be alternatives. Play for boys and girls above seven years of age would be in addition to work, and not in place of it as in the earlier years at the Nursery school level. Play has a place in the Basic school, but only in addition to work. Work becomes drudgery only if it is simply mechanical and done beyond the capacity of the children concerned. On the other hand, when learning is interwoven with work it satisfies mental demands and thus becomes exciting and joyful. Moreover, work would be extremely simple for the smaller children and would be properly spaced out and regulated with their growth in age, so that at no time would work be more than what children at different age-levels could do. It is true that unimaginative teachers over-stressing productive work might introduce the element of drudgery into a Basic school. This has to be carefully guarded against by emphasising every time that the object of Basic education is education and that production is only a corollary, however vital or important. Productive work in Basic

education is [an instrument of education and not an end in itself.

It was Gandhi's faith that mental and moral development on the one hand and development of technology on the other should not be divorced from each other. In the field of education this implies the bringing together of productive work and learning into one integrated process. All should help in production at some level or other and all should get learning through it at the same time. A community in which some would toil and produce in the sweat of their brow and others would only consume, would be an unjust society. It is not intended that everyone should do everything, because there would be appropriate arrangements for the division of work. To create a Sarvodaya society as envisaged by Gandhi, boys and girls should grow up acquiring as much of learning as possible in and through productive work. They would thus not turn away from productive work and at the same time become educated. If this integration of learning and working is not achieved in the lives of boys and girls in schools, it can be achieved later only through compulsion and coercion, which would damage their minds.

Gandhi had, at a very early stage, been attracted to Tolstoy's philosophy of bread-labour. In his earlier educational experiments he had probably over-stressed productive work and under-stressed intellectual development and these two had been kept as separate processes. Later he discovered the flaw and gave equal emphasis to both and put them together into one integrated process of learning through work and working for learning.

Is it possible to avoid textbooks altogether in Basic schools? It is one thing to say that elementary education

during the first eight years ought not to be wholly textbook-centred and another thing altogether to say that books can be given up completely. Books would certainly be necessary. There should be plenty of reading books for boys and girls and reference books for teachers. What must be avoided is pinning the minds of boys and girls to textbooks, leading to cramming and memorising. Even memorising will be necessary, but it should not be forced through the textbook system. Education is more than memorising and concentrating on specific lessons in textbooks. Perhaps it might also be possible to produce a new type of textbooks which could take the place of present ones and which, without pinning down the minds of boys and girls only to specific lessons, may through the method of suggestion rouse their intellectual curiosity to learn much more than what is in the book. Basic education does not rule out books, but it is certainly against making elementary education textbook-centred. In one sense what is objectionable is not the use of textbooks but the misuse of textbooks. Progressive education everywhere has brought about a change in the traditional role of teachers. The teacher is not a person who just teaches, but one who assists children to learn.

It should be kept in mind that productive work as an instrument of learning is imperative in Basic education. If productive work is to yield knowledge under various heads, then such work has to be planned, regulated, executed and assessed as educational projects of work. Planning and regulating productive work, from very simple beginnings onwards, has to be carefully and scientifically done. This will certainly be education. Then comes the stage of execution, when productive work stands out as productive work. At this stage, work cannot be careless, casual or shoddy. Productive work has also to be as good as possible, consistent with the age-groups

of children. In the earlier years production in the farm or workshop will yield little, but later the produce of innumerable boys and girls will not be inconsiderable. Whatever is produced should either go back to the management or to the boys and girls themselves. To begin with, the idea was that the produce should belong to the management. This might help in expanding elementary education in a poor country like India. Later this idea was changed and it was considered proper that whatever the children produced should belong to themselves. In terms of the conditions in India, self-sufficiency came largely to mean giving every child in a Basic school one noon meal a day and two sets of clothes per year. What prevented many children from coming to school was the lack of these two and if these could be supplied through the productive work of a Basic school, that school would be full of children. There will, of course, be a percentage of children who would not need these two, because their parents would be well enough. But the majority of the boys and girls would need them. Boys and girls studying in upper classes would produce more and make up for under-production in the lower classes. Teachers would work with the children and wherever parents and relations volunteered to help, that also would be encouraged.

Productive work is to be conceived more as an instrument of education than for productivity. Productivity in terms of economic value is only a necessary corollary. Care has, however, to be taken to ensure that productivity is not stressed at the cost of intellectual growth. Gandhi had said: "The test of success is not simply the self-supporting character but that the whole personality has to be drawn out and developed through productive work in a scientific manner". Music and drawing are an essential part of Basic education and their purpose is to bring

out and develop the aesthetic talents of children. This shows again the comprehensiveness of the Gandhian concept of elementary education. It should not be forgotten that Gandhi considered the development of the skills of the fingers as an inescapable part of any good education for boys and girls.

Pupil teachers admitted for training in Basic teachers' training schools are generally required to have completed High school education. In some places they are called matriculates. The period of training is for two years. Keeping in view what the teacher would have to do in running a Basic school, the training school is itself run on the basis of a cooperative, productive, learning, self-reliant and self-governing community with the Headmaster as the official head and the elected pupil teacher, often called "Prime Minister", as the non-official head of the community, and these two collaborating with each other to raise the level of the institution as high as possible.

Every pupil teacher has to learn one major and one subsidiary craft and there are certain broad standards set to evaluate his productive capacity. He has also to learn a number of subjects like child and adult psychology, school administration, language teaching and the contents of the syllabus etc. He has specially to learn how to assist children to learn through experience and by linking experience with knowledge and understanding. In other words, he has to get a sound working knowledge of the science and art of correlation.

Correlation is the method of linking experience and learning together. This might appear an over-simplification. But experience, in this context, covers the three areas already mentioned, namely, the natural environment, the social environment and the processes of productive work. If all these three areas

are carefully studied and fully utilised, there is hardly any knowledge the elementary school boys and girls need to acquire which cannot be drawn or derived from them. Learning from experience is more natural, fruitful and simpler than learning through books, which is a roundabout method. Through a long period of time, during which teachers kept up the traditional methods of teaching through textbooks, the more difficult method has become apparently the simpler and the more natural and simpler method of correlation appears to be harder and more remote. There is an illuminating story coming down from Plato. Some prisoners were kept for a very long period of time in a dark underground cave. Living in such a condition their eyes got used to the darkness and could see, at least partially, in darkness. When they were released at last, they began to blink in the sunlight and to grope about. Teachers, finding it easy to teach specific items from textbooks, got used to this method at the cost of the children and their full mental growth and now find it difficult to give up the old teaching methods and to actively and scientifically assist children in learning by guiding them through planned processes of doing and experiencing.

Correlation is both a science and an art, and there are some pre-requisite conditions which have to be fulfilled before it can succeed. Even a clever teacher would fumble without such preparation and training, but even an average teacher could fairly succeed with the necessary preparation. While the teacher has to handle correlation carefully and precisely, he has also to enable learning by children to be an exciting and joyful process by handling correlation also as an artist. Hence a Basic teacher has to fulfil the following conditions: (1) mastery of one major craft and good knowledge of one or two subsidiary crafts; (2) full knowledge of the subject-contents of the

syllabus under different headings, which means a good deal of brushing up of general knowledge; (3) practice of community living based on their own self-government and sharing in community work; (4) appropriate practice teaching, not only in a model school attached to the training school but in a few ordinary schools nearby, emphasising the art of training at every stage; (5) continuous increase of general knowledge through discussions, reading and group study; (6) practice in organising various types of productive activities and experience in relation to the subject-contents of the syllabus; and (7) application of the law of love in practice to all situations in the training school as a prelude to doing the same later in the Basic schools. Basic education rules out any physical punishment of children. In fact under student self-government, disciplines are evolved from within and corrections made as part of self-assessment. Teacher-training in this process begins in the training school.

In choosing a craft or production work for use in a Basic school, the following considerations are to be kept in view: (1) Since the purpose of a craft or productive work in a Basic school is mainly to learn through it, it necessarily follows that the craft or productive work should be full of possibilities for education; the more the better. (2) It should be a multi-process craft or work involving different activities. One good example is gardening and another is cotton craft. This latter involves plucking of cotton, cleaning and sampling cotton, ginning, carding, spinning and weaving, leading on to dyeing and printing and also to tailoring. (3) It should be capable of being regulated from simpler to more complex processes, suiting the capacity of children from earlier to later grades. In other words, it should be a craft capable of growing with the

children from grade to grade. (4) It should be a complete craft and not a truncated one. This means a craft from the raw-material stage to the finished product at the end of the eighth year. This will bring in the pride of consummating whatever is begun and the joy of production. (5) What is produced should not be fancy goods to be kept in a glass shelf for exhibition. Products should have a social value and should be capable of being utilised by the school and the surrounding community. This does not rule out artistic production. In fact, unless what is produced is also artistic, it would not generally be acceptable to anyone. (6) The craft or productive work should be capable at some stage of being broken up into projects encouraging group work and cooperativeness in production. (7) Such craft or productive work should be germane to the locality or the region. Raw materials should be within easy reach and some traditions of skills should be available in the area—whatever possible concerning the craft or productive work chosen.

Gandhi did not favour external examinations for Basic schools. He wanted that continuous assessment of the life, work and studies of students by the teachers should replace external examination. Internal assessment thus plays an important role in the Basic school. In the cumulative effect, the life, work, habits, outlook, and the social and moral characteristics developed throughout the period of schooling are given adequate consideration in the final assessment along with attainments in academic and theoretical subjects.

The Gandhian concept of a social order is called "Sarvodaya". The nearest equivalent in the English language to Sarvodaya would be something like "Just, Peaceful, Decentralised and Democratic Socialism". The "Unto This Last"

concept of social justice of Ruskin is implicit in Sarvodaya. It literally accepts the position that the speed of the fleet is the speed of the last boat. Therefore, we have in Sarvodaya the idea that full and equal justice should reach the weakest and the least in the community before it can be called a just and truthful community. Sarvodaya treats as unsatisfactory the rule by the majority, as in Democracy, or the dictatorship of a determined and ruthless minority, as in Communism, or the ever-increasing State control, as in Socialism. Sarvodaya seeks to achieve justice for everyone through peaceful methods. It stands for revolution by consent and not by coercion of any kind. Among all the peaceful methods of revolution, education is the most potent. It is the Number One weapon in the entire arsenal of non-violent revolution. And justice once achieved should be maintained and nourished only through democratic processes. This last means progressive decentralisation of political and economic power, subject to some elastic federal authority only. It is towards the consummation of such a social order that Basic education points the way through the transformation of the human mind right from childhood.

FROM SANTINIKETAN TO SABARMATI

When I passed out from the Visva-bharati in 1925 and was packing to go straight to the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati there were many jokes at my expense among my friends. One of them said I will have to pack again fairly quick at Sabarmati because he was sure I would not stand the life there. Another joke was, Gandhiji himself would turn me out pretty soon. My long hair, my love of poetry and literature and my intellectual conceits would get short shrift at the Mahatma's hands! I told all my friends I would prove they were mistaken. Luckily, Gurudev Tagore himself had given me a few lines to be sent to Gandhiji, saying that he was happy he was sending one of his best students to the Satyagraha Ashram.

I reached Sabarmati after a terrible summer journey late in the afternoon. I was taken to the guest room by one of the members of the Ashram. This room was neat and tidy without any furniture at all. So I took my box and bedding into the room and closed the door to arrange things inside as best as I could. There was not much time however, for I was summoned to Gandhiji's cottage for the evening meal. There I saw Kasturba and her assistants ready to serve the evening meal. After the bare guest room, the food was a pleasant surprise. It

was an excellent and wholesome meal and very satisfying, with delicious chappatis and dal and vegetables with rice for those who needed it. There was curd and gur at the end. I said to myself I am certainly going to survive very well on such food. Then came the evening prayers on the raised ground on the bank of the Sabarmati river, only a stone's throw from Gandhiji's cottage. This piece of ground covered with white sand was already almost full when I took my place in the rear. Just a couple of minutes later, I saw the beloved figure of Gandhiji arriving and he took his place facing the crowd and with the singers next to him. Then came the call 'Shanti', 'Shanti' and the prayers began. This was not the first time I was sitting at a Gandhi prayer. The recitations from the Gita rose and fell in sweet cadence and this was followed by a couple of hymns sung beautifully and at the end came the now world-famous Ramadhun i. e. Raghupaty Raghava Raja Ram and Patheetha Pavana Seetha Ram.

Immediately after prayers Gandhiji would go to bed on a cot in the open air in front of his cottage. His health was not very good at the time. He had also only recently emerged from one of his vicarious fasts. I was summoned to his bedside and as I went near and bowed to him he beckoned to me to sit down on a mat spread on the ground near the cot. And so I sat down and waited for him to speak. He began with a smile and asked, "Why have you come to me after all your years at Santiniketan? I have neither poetry nor music nor philosophy to offer you here. I suggest, you stay with me for a few days and look about and find out what is going on in the Ashram and then only decide if you want to stay or go. Gurudev has written to me about you and you are certainly welcome". I was a little puzzled. Was Gandhiji hinting that

he doubted whether a student from Santiniketan could fit into the life at the Satyagraha Ashram? I made up my mind quickly to take up the challenge. I told him I knew what awaited me at the Ashram, that I had not come expecting what I had already received at Santiniketan and that my aim was now to receive what the Satyagraha Ashram could give and so on. He listened patiently, shaking his head from time to time but letting me to go on till I had finished. I was discovering that Gandhiji was one of the best listeners in all the world. But when I had finished he came back to his original thought that I should decide nothing but wait and decide only later. I insisted however that I had come to stay and would stay unless he wanted me to go. He smiled again and said I appeared to him to be obstinate and he liked it and so he would talk to me more than he wanted at first. Then he did speak at some length. He told me his first course for students at the Satyagraha Ashram was to learn how to be an efficient *Bhangi* i. e. scavenger. Next would come ginning, carding, spinning and weaving. There will be no lectures and no classes but there would be elders and teachers who would be glad to talk and discuss with me on subjects connected with village reconstruction. Would this kind of work and study satisfy me? I replied at once nothing would please me better. He joked again, 'Don't be sure but you can certainly give yourself a trial.' I promised to do that and then he called someone. That someone turned out to be Surendraji. He appeared on the scene, a short, stout, middle-aged person wearing nothing but a loin cloth. He appeared the picture of health and equanimity. Gandhiji turned to him and told him that I was going to be his student in scavenging and sanitation and that he should take me on and train me. Gandhiji also told him about my background. Surendraji looked pleased and welcomed me. Then I went back to the

guest room and slept soundly wondering what the morrow will bring.

And so my life began in the Satyagraha Ashram. Gandhi shifted me from the guest house to a room on the first floor of what was then called the 'Chatralaya'. It was the biggest building in the Satyagraha Ashram with more than thirty rooms and halls on the ground and the first floor. Gandhi also invited me to become a member of his family kitchen and to take my food there. He suggested that I might help Kasturba in the work of the kitchen at stipulated hours. During the next three months therefore I became both a scavenger and a cook. Looking back in retrospect I again and again get the feeling that this double course in cooking and scavenging was my first apprenticeship for Basic Education later. As the days went by I began to enjoy this adventure more and more. Kasturba was a hard taskmaster and to help her in running the family community kitchen became a strenuous course in the strictest disciplines of punctuality, sanitation and cleanliness, and in obedience to rules and regulations. I have written elsewhere the story of my training in Kasturba's kitchen. Surendraji proved himself to be a perfect professor of the theory and practice of scavenging. Himself a Brahmin and a Sanskrit scholar he did this work of scavenging with much love for the work. There were nearly six hundred people living in the Ashram and it was the law of life that sanitation should be perfect and beyond criticism. Gandhiji himself had done this work for a long time and showed the way. He was scavenger No. 1 in the Ashram. Therefore, those assigned to this work did it with a sense of mission.

Here is the brief picture of sanitation and scavenging work at the Satyagraha Ashram as I saw it in 1925.

There were some thirty community latrines. My first impression was that I had never seen cleaner latrines in my life. There were then several roads, paths etc to sweep and clean every day. Everywhere within eyesight there were kept dustbins with a placard telling people not to throw about waste materials but to put them into the dustbins. Then there were class rooms and workshops to be kept scrupulously clean. There was no hired scavenger or sweeper in the whole place. Residents form themselves into groups of volunteers to do this work in turn. In my group I had a Chinese young man and a German woman. A little later, Mira Ben, Miss Slade as she was then called, joined us. The four of us had some ten latrines to clean. At 7-00 a. m. we would go to the latrines. The arrangement inside was very sensible. There was a kind of double-commode. This meant two buckets placed one behind the other inside a rectangular wooden commode-frame. You open the flaps to take out the buckets. The front bucket was for urine and the second one for night-soil. This appeared to me to be an improvement over the single vessel commode. In a corner in the room was a wooden box with fresh earth in it and an iron ladle. There was a placard in each room indicating how to use the commode and asking every user to leave the latrine as clean as it was when he entered. There was a broom in one corner with which to sweep the floor before a user left. So early every morning we would open the flaps of the commode and take out the two buckets, very heavy and nearly full with their contents. We would take these buckets to the end of the garden where Surendraji waited near the compost pit he had made. We would empty the buckets into the pit and wash them clean and pour the wash-water in also. One more washing of

the two buckets and disinfecting them with phenyle and then the buckets would be kept to dry against the sun. We would then pick up two other buckets waiting from the previous day after the same treatment and bring them to the latrine and place them inside the commode frame and close the flaps. We would wash and clean the hard latrine floor and sprinkle on it disinfectant lotion. We would also put a little dry earth from the box on the bottom of the new buckets. The whole place became so clean there would not be a fly inside. We would then close the door and come away. We cleaned all our latrines in this way. The difficult points were two; the first was as we took the heavily loaded buckets to the end of the garden and the second and worst was when we shook and emptied the buckets into the compost pit. The matter would not come out easily and there would be the stink of it and the ugliness of it. Washing the buckets was also pretty tough work. All the time Surendraji would be attending to several compost pits, covering and arranging the waste matter in the proper way and adding green grass and leaves and some fresh earth so that there would be no smell or flies. We would all then run to the Sabarmati river and take our bath. This process was also repeated sometimes in the afternoons.

One day I met Gandhiji as he was going to his bath room, a little away from his cottage. I bowed to him and he spoke to me enquiring how I was standing the test! I told him I was standing it very well. He said that Surendraji had given him the same report about me. I felt very proud. Then he told me something which I have not forgotten to this day, "This is the test I give to my scavengers in the Ashram. The latrines they clean should be so clean and without any bad smell or any ugly sight that I can bring my food and take it inside any one

of the rooms. Can you stand that test?" I put on a bold face and said yes. He took me at my word and said he was very glad.

Then there was my work as apprentice-cook under Kasturba. At 4-30 a. m. I would be at the community kitchen, pick up a few vessels and go to the cow shed to bring the milk. One vessel would be for Gandhiji's goats' milk. I would be back at the kitchen in less than half an hour. I would then clean and light the coal stoves and set the milk to boil, clean and tidy up the kitchen and several vessels. At this point Kasturba would enter the kitchen and there would be other work to do. Breakfast would be ready for some thirty people by 6-30 a. m. and I would become one of the servers. Then I would come cleaning and tidying again. I would then run to join the scavenging squad.

There were further rounds of work at the kitchen between 10-30 a. m. and 12-00 noon and also between 3-30 p. m. and 5-00 p. m. In between, I went to the carding and spinning classes and later in the year, to the weaving class. There were one or two proud moments again during the year, when I first presented some beautiful slivers I had made to Gandhiji and he used them and said he wanted them regularly for his spinning. Then again when I had woven my first khadi piece I took it to him and presenting it, bowed before him. He examined the cloth and said that for a first piece it was pretty good. I requested him to use it and he said he would by making them into a few bedsheets.

After a day's hard work the evening prayer at 6-00 p. m. came as a beautiful interlude. One felt uplifted and relaxed at the same time. I was never tired of absorbing through my

ears the cadences of the Gita recitations. And then often after the evening prayer Gandhiji would speak. He always spoke in Hindi and I picked up enough Hindi quickly to follow him. His voice had a musical rasping quality about it, like the Irish brogue, which I loved very much.

There were precious incidents during this year. I have spoken or written of them elsewhere. Gandhiji wrote more than once to my Professor in Visva-bharati, the late C. F. Andrews expressing his satisfaction and happiness that a student from Santiniketan had fitted in so well into the life of the Satyagraha Ashram. After the evening prayers I would often join the little crowd round Gandhiji's cot and listen to his inspiring words. When there was time I would go and sit near the late Shri Kishorelal Mashruvalla or Shri Mahadev Desai and talk and discuss many things with them. This intellectual life was all the more precious because it always came after hard work and busy hours. I was particularly happy when Shri Mahadev Desai would take my help in the work of 'Young India'. There were innumerable distinguished visitors and it was a rare privilege to meet them and to talk to them when they came away from their interviews with Gandhiji. It was in the Satyagraha Ashram during this year that I was commissioned once to look after Shri Jawaharlal Nehru when he was a guest in the Ashram. I distinctly remember his complimenting me for placing a well-arranged flower vase on his table saying it was the first time there was such a thing on his table in the Ashram! Gandhiji gave me very graciously a stipend of Rs. 25/- per month in addition to free lodging and food. Shri Maganlal Gandhi who was then the Manager of the Ashram and a man of iron discipline did not like this and remarked to me, "I do not know why Bapu

is spoiling you like this." And this was because of a stipend of Rs. 25/- per month!

Then at last the year came to an end. I was returning to the south for a little holiday before joining up as a Lecturer in the Jamia Milia in Delhi under Gandhiji's instructions. Kasturba was a little inconsolable and said in her piquant English, "I sorry you going. Who will come tomorrow to help me. I tell Bapu not allow you to go". How sweet that was to hear from the mouth of the gracious but tough little lady who was the Queen of Gandhiji's household! But my sweetest moment came when I went to touch Gandhiji's feet and to take leave of him. He said among other things, "I have written to Andrews that I am now prepared to revise my opinion about the students in Santiniketan. It has been my impression that it would not be possible for them to live and work with me. I now know I was mistaken".

It would have broken my heart if I had let down my Alma Mater. Thank God I did not do so. I had gathered many great ideas and much idealism in the Visva-bharati at Santiniketan. But I had received a strong dose of realism and practical training in the Satyagraha Ashram. It is my personal conviction that Tagore and Gandhi are the greatest teachers India has produced in the century.

TAGORE AND GANDHI: EDUCATIONAL REVOLUTIONARIES

Tagore was not just a poet, nor Gandhi a mere saint. The Poet was a philosopher, a story writer and novelist of almost unrivalled distinction. He was a dramatist and a literary critic. With great zeal for social reform he attacked many evils. He was a patriot who understood and loved his country. He was at the same time one of the foremost internationalists of his day. Alongside he was dedicated to rural reconstruction. As an artist he created in colours and forms something of what he had expressed earlier in spoken and written words. Above all, he was a complete human person who had grown fully as a man and looked at life as a whole. Gandhi the Saint was a thinker. His analysis of the problems that surrounded him was crystal clear. He revolutionised the society of his time with far-reaching consequences. He was also a master of the spoken and written word and many passages from his writings will remain classics as long as human memory survives. He was a matchless political leader. As an economist he faced realities and suggested and carried out practical solutions. A great patriot and freedom fighter, he was above all a humanist and

Thoughts and Talks

peace maker. A complete study of these two personalities, very different from each other and at the same time very similar to each other, is one of the most fascinating adventures for any student concerned with the renaissance in India.

This brief thesis is no attempt to list or explain the many fundamental similarities and affinities between Tagore and Gandhi. It will, however, seek to discover what is perhaps the closest affinity between the two, i. e., their role as educational revolutionaries. As the years pass their revolutionary contributions to educational reconstruction in India will be seen in their fuller perspective.

Rabindranath Tagore was the first educationist in India to fearlessly reject a book-centred system of education for boys and girls. During the years I was a student in the Visva-bharati at Santiniketan this protest against textbooks and the book-centred system of education came from Gurudev again and again. Those were days, the earliest after the creation of Visva-bharati, when Gurudev himself taught students, young and old. The first thing he would do as boys and girls came to sit round him was to ask them to put away their textbooks and note books. He would say, 'listen to me, ask me questions, let us talk to each other, let us argue and let us understand'. He would add, 'we can understand very little sitting here, let us enter into the hearts of Nature, let us walk into the villages and meet people face to face and thus let us learn.' There is plenty one can quote from Gurudev's writings. Let that be done by others who want to. But I would like to fall back entirely on my own experience as a student, forty years ago in Santiniketan. Gurudev loved books and wanted us all to read books and love them as he did. But he was convinced, to pin the minds of boys and girls to a prescribed textbook would

simply encourage memorising instead of learning. A textbook limited the growing mind and the expanding sense of enquiry.

Gurudev was again the first among our educationists to insist that the hands should keep pace with the mind. He wanted creative work through which the hands would produce beautiful and useful articles. The importance of handicrafts like pottery, carpentry, handloom-weaving and leather work in the general programme of education of boys and girls was underlined. His allegiance to these crafts was not simply an expression of the 'Swadeshi' movement of his time. As the hands developed marvellous skills in the crafts, the intellect also became enriched and the personality of the student became fuller. He certainly did not attempt to work out the scientific and systematic correlation between the development of the skills of the hands and those of the intellect and personality of the students. He was a poet and an artist and he wanted that this inter-relation should develop spontaneously and under conditions of freedom and elasticity.

Gurudev never accepted that the object of education was simply the accumulation of knowledge. He unhesitatingly proclaimed that education should give all round development of the human personality in which the physical, the intellectual, aesthetic and spiritual growth would be harmonised into one integrated process. He therefore emphasised freedom and joy as of basic importance in the education of boys and girls. This meant the elimination of physical punishment, examinations and therefore of fear and every humiliating restriction from the Santiniketan system of education. Gurudev was the most uncompromising prophet] of the freedom of the human mind in modern India and he stood sentinel over this freedom with a tenacity and courage unparalleled in our history. He

wanted boys and girls to be fearless, free and open minded, self-reliant, full of the spirit of enquiry and self-criticism with their roots deep in the soil of India but reaching out to the whole world in understanding, neighbourliness, cooperation and material and spiritual progress. What could be a greater objective in any education and what could be a nobler method of achieving this objective than the one indicated by Gurudev?

Gurudev experimented with new methods in rural reconstruction and built up Sriniketan. At the heart of Sriniketan was Gurudev's firm conviction that villages cannot be rebuilt merely with strength borrowed from outside but only through that rediscovered within the village itself and harnessed to clear new creative purposes. Every village development activity must aim at the growth of the initiative and self-reliance of village people themselves. Village reconstruction must be an integrated programme in which the physical, material, mental and spiritual elements should be fully balanced with one another. Gurudev was perhaps the first thinker and leader in modern India who gave us the vision of *Samagra-Grama-Seva*. Sriniketan was not separate and cut away from Santiniketan and Visva-bharati. It was an integral part of Visva-bharati so that intellectual, academic and aesthetic growth could be extended to identification with the life of village people and to the service of the villages without conceit or patronage or any imposition from above.

We thus see that Gurudev's concept and programme of education were comprehensive. When Gurudev gave new shape and impetus to education in India he stood out as the first great educational revolutionary of our time. To the extent the Visva-bharati remains true to this radiant and full-blooded concept and programme of education, it will reflect the life, thought and

genius of Gurudev. Otherwise, this great institution will simply become a caricature of what Gurudev stood for.

There is a halo of history surrounding Gandhi's revolutionary contribution to educational reconstruction. The aim of Satyagraha is freedom and justice. Suffering without surrender and retaliation becomes the instrument of the satyagrahis and his battle. Now this requires training and education. Inevitably, such education has to be through life, for life and throughout life. Unless generations of men and women grow up holding fast to certain ideals and disciplines touching life on all sides, they cannot become satyagrahis, i.e. human instruments of love in action, without fear and without hate. It also becomes essential for a satyagrahi to function effectively that suitable social conditions should be created. Educational revolution under Gandhi thus sought to fit the individual for a new society and to create a new society in which the individual could function effectively.

Nai Talim was the name Gandhi gave to education as he conceived it. Leaving aside all the trappings and details, necessary and relevant as they are, only the core of *Nai Talim* may be briefly described here.

Education must set before itself not only the creation of a totally just, democratic and peaceful social order based on non-violent sanctions but also indicate clearly and precisely the methods of achieving such an objective. Such education must begin with the earliest years of childhood and continue throughout life.

The school should help in developing the full personality of the student, drawing out all his talents and bringing them into harmony with one another.

This means education of the mind and the intellect should be combined with that of every physical and bodily skill. This leads to the rejection of any book-centered system of education and the acceptance of a creative and life-centred system. Life and work are coeval. Life ends where work ends. In a country like India a creative and life-centered system of education must keep productive work at the centre and such productive work must be carefully regulated from year to year in consonance with the aptitude and capacity of the growing child. But the aim of *Nai Talim* is not simply the production of articles however useful or beautiful. Productive work is only the means to the end which is the complete education of the child and the full development of its personality.

Education is drawn from three main sources constituting the catchment area of learning, i.e., the natural environment, the social environment and processes of productive work, each one of these three sources being of equal importance. The child thus grows in harmony with nature, properly integrated with society and taking delight and pride in productive work because all such work is transmuted into the substance of learning. The child puts his roots into his own soil and then reaches out to an expanding vision of life, its purposes and duties.

The development of the sense of freedom, initiative and responsibility should be achieved through the self-government and self-help of children inside the school community. Therefore, every school has its parliament and its chosen cabinet of ministers in charge of sanitation, punctuality, and internal disciplines.

Examinations should be replaced by the continuous assessment of the achievements of children throughout the year including a measure of self-assessment.

The school must be closely linked with the community and vice versa. This means extension in the best sense of the word.

Children growing up in the love and pride of productive work, learning through kinship with Nature and the social environment, getting trained in self-help and self-government and even self-assessment, progressively become the free and cooperative citizens of a democratic society in which there is no high and low, no distinctions of caste and class, everybody standing for justice and peace. The schools thus become the starting point of a non-violent revolution for a new social order.

A careful comparison of the concepts and practices of education which came from Tagore and Gandhi will show how, starting from different points, they almost converge in the end. The approaches appear different but both faced common problems and challenges and offered solutions in regard to which there is a broad area of agreement. Like Gurudev Tagore who kept Sriniketan and Santiniketan close together within the frame work of a broad-based educational programme, Gandhi wanted the school to be the starting point of a creative revolution inside the village.

There are educationists in India who sometimes challenge the claims of Tagore and Gandhi to be educationists at all. We must not quarrel with them. We must not at the same time hesitate to proclaim that Tagore and Gandhi were the most outstanding educational revolutionaries of our time in India and both have left imperishable marks on the whole process of educational reconstruction in the country, though we have not properly assessed the startling contribution of both to national reconstruction.

WHITHER INDIA? *

In the days before India became independent one of the favourite themes of speakers and writers used to be "Whither India?" After India became free this theme had tended to fade away. But recently it has suddenly reappeared with unexpected frequency.

We had somehow come to think that there was no need to raise such a question in public and much less in a spirit of controversy. We had set up a Parliament elected on the basis of adult franchise. The Congress, which had marshalled the people in the fight for freedom, had become the ruling party. Pandit Nehru became the Prime Minister. A Planning Commission was set up and planning became a great preoccupation. The Congress and the Government did not hesitate to declare socialism as the aim of national development. We thus felt that we were in the current of democracy, planned national reconstruction and socialism. Under such auspicious circumstances, where was the need to raise the old cry of "Whither India"? Like Pippa in Robert Browning's famous poem, we were willing to say, "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world".

* From the 'Gandhi Marg', of October 1960.

We have, however, begun to discover to our dismay that everything was not as rosy as it appeared. One internal crisis after another struck at India and made the country reel under each blow. There was the original outburst of passions in the wake of redrawing the map of India on the basis of language. There was then the setting up of a Communist Government in Kerala, quite properly, under the Indian Constitution. But some time after, there was an unprecedented mass upheaval of the people against this new Government resulting in its overthrow. Some time earlier, the Chinese had marched into our territory in the north and swallowed a sizable bit of it near the Himalayan border and the concept of *panchashila* got a hard knock on the head. Several thousands of Sikhs have gone to prison in the Punjab over the Punjabi Suba agitation; and after a long period of conflict and strain the decision has been taken to set up Nagaland within the Indian Union in the north-east of the country. We have then had very recently what appeared to be a national strike of government employees which sought to paralyse the whole administration. Restlessness and indiscipline of youth and students have become almost chronic. Above all, what has now happened in Assam is something indescribably terrible and shameful, throwing up the phenomenon of a large number of refugees fleeing from one State to another within the family of States inside the Indian Union. There is growing up in the Madras State a political party openly advocating disruption, with its elected representatives sitting on the floor of the Madras legislature and its influence steadily increasing among students and youth. All these indisputably constitute a dark and dismal picture.

That there is another side to the picture, and a very bright one, is certainly true. We have faced most of the challenges to

the unity and integrity of India with courage and conviction and brought the country out of peril again and again. There is a long list of brilliant achievements to the credit of the national Government and the people of India. It will not do, however, to gloat over achievements, when we remember on the one hand that each crisis has left behind many painful scars and, on the other, that the sum total of these many disasters is a moral crisis shaking the new nation and the young Republic to its very foundations. Anyone indulging in complacency in such a situation will be guilty of treason against the unity of the people and their birthright to advance rapidly towards their great destiny. We must now take stock, without any delay or equivocation, of the shattering fact that there is a weakening of the moral fibre of the nation. The supreme task of the leaders of the people and the Government should now be to analyse the cause and to lay down the remedies clearly and firmly. That the remedies will have to cover innumerable areas and levels of national life and may take time to effect a cure should not frighten anyone determined to lift the people from the present rut of moral decay. We have the parallel of the National Planning Commission making their plans touching the life of the people on every side. What is now needed again is some type of a National Commission for the moral reconstruction of the people. No economic prosperity or scientific advance would be worth the name if they are built upon the moral decay of the people. Freedom from want and the scientific outlook are essential for the progress of the people and might, to some extent at least, influence moral reconstruction. Where there is want on every side and life is riddled with superstitions, all talk of moral reconstruction would be a mockery. Even so, the moral fibre of a people can never be sustained only on economic prosperity or scientific knowledge. Moral strength is largely a thing in itself, deriving sustenance

from spiritual and cultural sources. The fertile waters of the spiritual and cultural renaissance under Mahatma Gandhi are being allowed to dry up. This is happening in spite of the Bhoodan and Gramdan movements and the radiant personality and example of Maharshi Vinoba, as also of the profound allegiance of Pandit Nehru to some of the fundamental moral values generated by the genius of Gandhi. Nothing is needed more today than to get back deliberately and with all our strength to the moral and spiritual values of the Gandhian era. Millions of students in schools and colleges know nothing of Gandhi or his life and work. In the Universities the intellectual tradition is one that despises these values. Students and youth have no roots even in the cultural background of India. While many other things are changing, University education is still running along the old tracks and manufacturing, at heavy cost to the nation, a steadily growing stream of educated men and women who are largely aliens in their own country. There is another conspicuous instance which comes to mind at once—and that is of Rabindranath Tagore. Our country probably reached its highest cultural watermark in the luminous life, work, poetry, philosophy, and teachings of this poet and prophet of modern India. If University education were true to the soil of India, young people in the Universities would have been enabled to draw deep intellectual and cultural sustenance from this great source. Even this is not happening in appropriate measure.

We do not feel ashamed, therefore, to plead for the setting up of a body which will plan and guide the moral reconstruction of the people. Such a body might well be called a National Commission for Moral Reconstruction. Our wisest and noblest of leaders, like Maharshi Vinoba and Dr. S. Radhakrishnan,

who are not in party politics should be invited to work on such a Commission. It should be a free and autonomous body capable of influencing the moral and cultural regeneration of the people and, specially, of students and youth. It may well be argued that moral and cultural regeneration cannot be made to order and can come only from sources and factors which are beyond the depth and width of any organisation. We refuse to accept such a platitude. Throughout history spiritual and cultural forces have been generated and sustained through a variety of institutions and organisations. We will certainly have to avoid all dogmatism and every trace of fanaticism. To do so will not be beyond human endeavour.

We are not wedded to any particular proposal. But we insist with all the strength in us that the cultural and moral reconstruction of the people is an issue which we shall evade only at the peril of our freedom and nationhood. Political independence has not brought about the unity and emotional integration of the people in this vast country. It has created ruinous separatist tendencies. Under the pressure of new responsibilities accruing from freedom we have lost ground morally and spiritually. We must not hesitate, therefore, to demand that our leaders in Government and outside should squarely face this issue and not evade it any more. It is an issue of life and death in terms of the unity and integrity of the nation and the Republic.

SUBRAMANYA BHARATHI

Oh Bharathi, Oh Bharathi,
Heroic and exquisite sarathi
Of the quivering soul and mind
Of the radiant renaissance of my land.

You lived but a few tortured years
In this soil of sweat and tears,
And yet garnered in resonant rhymes
All the shades and tones of our souls.

You plucked with bleeding hands
Every thorn out of our storied past,
And then plunged with all your might
Onward towards tomorrow's beckoning lights.

You drank deep from the ancient streams
But never lingered on their slippery shores,
You took the old in both your hands
And bent it like steel for the coming times.

Not a mood or tone of the human mind,
Nor a whisper or sigh inside Nature's heart,
Failed to evoke the swift response
In the throbs and thrills of your glorious art.

Thoughts and Talks

To you Nature became an open book,
And the many-coloured petals of the soul
Opened to your quick and searing gaze
Like the flower at dawn before the sun.

Tamil was resonant on your tongue,
But truth and beauty were in your soul,
And so your tongue became the flute
For the songs you sang and made universal.

You proved beyond all our doubts
That while the roots in you did count,
It was the wide sweep of the myriad branches
That made the tree that was you.

You passed away too young,
You lived and died in pain,
Your youth was our age,
And your pain our shame.

But what pain or shame can now touch
The widening frontiers of your fame,
As a million souls bend to touch
The fringes of the rays around your name?

