

**BAPU**  
**A Unique Association**



# BAPU

## A UNIQUE ASSOCIATION

REPRODUCED

Volume IV —

GHANSHYAM DAS BIRLA



**RETROCONVERTED**  
B. C. L.

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Author with Bapu



## समर्पण

वायु की यह प्रथम प्रकाशी वायुकी समर्पण

वायुने समय २५८ मुझे जो पत्र लिखें

जो मैंने जो उन्हें लिखा उन सबका यह संग्रह

है। महेश्वर माई इत्यादिने भी जो मुझे लिखा

या मैंने उन्हें लिखा, उन सबका भी समावेश इसमें

इसलिये है कि वे सब पत्र-व्यवहार वायुकी उाहा,

प्रैरणा या सहायिका ही हुआ है। मैंने भी जो

उन लोगों को लिखा वह सब वायुके लिखे ही था।

उन सबकी वायुके ही पत्र व्यवहार मानकर

इस प्रकारान में इसलिये स्थान दे दिया गया

कि यदि मेरे पत्रों को निकाल दिया जाय

तो कारी खुलना टट जाती है।

वायुके अधिकतर पत्र हिंदी में ही हैं।

५८ यदि कभी पत्रोंने मुझे अंग्रेजी में लिखा, या तो

उनकी शक्ति से महादेव माई इत्यादिने उंग्राम में  
 प्रकृतिलिखी, ती उन सब पत्रों का हिंदीमें उग्रा ३  
 पत्रके रहनें समावेश हुआ है। अब उंग्राम का  
 प्रकाशन होगा। ती उगीतरह सब हिंदी पत्रों का भी  
 उंग्राम में उग्रा ३ पत्रके समावेश होगा।

इस प्रकाशन में वायुके मातृका की उध्य-  
 धन कातेका जन समाज की एक उग्रपत्र उव-  
 तलमिल जाव है। शिक्षा भी मिलती है, क्यों कि  
 वायुके पत्रों में सब तरह का महाभा है। सब  
 से महत्व की बात मह समाजकी है कि इन सब  
 में व्यक्तित्व अदेश, राजनैतिक, धार्मिक  
 आदेश गोभी हैं। एए-एए महा समाजकी ५८  
 एए स. यु यु प्रकृतें हैं। एए प्रकृतें उरगाए हैं,  
 जो उम जन समाजके जीवनमें उपयोगी हैं। शिक्षा-  
 उर है हैं। उनके जीवनमें उवतराए हलें योग्य  
 हैं।



इसके अर्थ का अर्थ मैं मेरा कोई विकल्प नहीं था।

यदि मेरी पुत्र वधु करना था तो ऐसा। यह प्रार्थना  
मुझे अच्छा लगा। मैं मैंने उसकी मान लिया।

इसी का फल यह प्रकाश है। अर्थ का अर्थ  
तो। उल्टा दुःख प्रकाश में उलिया का है। पंडित  
विद्याजी रचित मेरी कई अर्थों प्रभाव दिखे।

पुत्रपरीक्षा के पूर्व पूर्व प्रत्यक्ष था। श्री

श्री प्रदीप रंगन दल मेरे प्राचीन मित्र हैं। उन्होंने

इस बारे में व्यवहार को बहुत कुछ प्रमाणों के बिना

गणना उन्हें निश्चय देने का प्रयास किया। उनके

उपहार कुछ प्रमाण इस प्रकाश में निश्चय दिखे। यह

दल का एक ही मेरी मेरी प्रश्न का मतलब निश्चय

यही आ रही है कि वे प्रभाव हैं। इसी भाषा

में ही उन्हें पढ़ी जा सकती है। प्रकाश के गरी

हिंदी।

तब तो अधिक प्रकाश में काका का मतलब  
बदली का है। अंधी जगह में प्रकाश का प्रिय

मे जो सिद्ध है उगमें दादा कामें मरवा लुपितो मे  
व्याप है। दादा एव हायु युग है। उगने  
हसिंगरी प्रसिद्धा लि (वर्ष) गुमे उद्यंत वृत्ताभा  
विधा ।


उपानदा एततो पर है कि लोको को वायु  
के मगुष एतयो - मराचकानरी - मममते मे  
हरामतामि । पर मरमी रतु है कि लो दो  
होवयो के वाद पर संवत्त उगुम मंगार  
वनमतेगा, को कि वायु दल उहनी ममती  
हो दो हो काम व वादरी उमरुगो । पर  
मरी मममरे । हसलिये भी पर मंगार उग-  
उमव है ।

मेरे जीवन मे ईश्वर की पर दया करी है  
कि मे वायु का प्रेम पा मतो रारी - पर मयर्क उर  
काम व रारी - उगरे मयर्क मे ममममती (वा. उ।  
उगमे दादा मरुदल परे ममते कि ममी मने  
पाये । मगवान का पर ममम उद्यंत उगुदर है ।

इह.दा.प.की लि.लि.के गुणो उच्येत तातोपै.  
कमेति -

"यम-त-ग-की विनम युज्य  
उच्यते इति तं उच्यते

यस्योपै उच्यते तातोपै  
इति उच्यते तातोपै

यम-त-ग-की  




## Dedication

This Gift of Love from Bapuji (*Bapu ki Prem Prasadi*) is dedicated to Bapu.

This is a collection of letters which Bapu wrote to me from time to time and also those which I wrote to him. The letters which Mahadevbhai and others wrote to me as well as those I wrote to them have also been included in this collection for the reason that they were written under Gandhiji's instructions, inspiration or with his consent. In fact, even the letters which I wrote to them were all meant for Bapu only. Therefore, considering all these as correspondence between Bapu and myself, I have included them in this publication since, if I were to exclude those letters, the entire connecting link would be broken.

Most of Bapu's letters are in Hindi. Whatever letters he wrote to me in English or on his behalf Mahadevbhai and others wrote in English, have been translated into Hindi and included in the Hindi edition of this collection. Similarly, now in English edition of this collection, the letters in Hindi have been rendered into English and included in this collection.

This bunch of letters provides an incomparable opportunity to the people to study the mind of Bapu. They get education as well; for Bapu's correspondence covers an assortment of many absorbing topics. What is of supreme importance is to understand this fact that whatever exhortations or directions that one finds here, be they individual, political or ethico-religious, are not just those of a great man or Mahatma but of a saintly man and the outpourings of a friendly soul. As such they are useful in the life of the common man, edifying and worthy of emulation by all in their daily life.

At first, I had no intention of bringing out these in print; but

my daughter-in-law Sarala was very insistent. Her insistence appealed to me and so I acceded to it. This publication is the outcome of that. It is Durga Prasad Mandelia's enthusiasm and labour that saw the book through the press. Pandit Viyogi Hari also gave several useful suggestions.

The late Shri Sudhir Ranjan Das, retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India, was a very old friend of mine. He read the entire correspondence and suggested that some letters which were of a personal nature might be excluded. Accordingly, certain letters have not been included in this publication. My friendship with Justice Das extended over an unbroken period of 55 years : Such longstanding friendship is not something which comes by easily in life, even if one assiduously seeks it.

Above all, I am extremely indebted to Kaka Saheb Kalelkar. He occupies a special place among the few surviving chosen co-workers of Gandhiji. He has laid me in a deep debt of gratitude by writing the Foreword to this collection.

The purpose of printing this collection is to help people in understanding Bapu's heart — not the heart of a Mahatma but that of a human being. There is an added reason. Maybe, some hundred or two hundred years from now, this collection may become an invaluable treasure because the unfoldment of Bapu's real life will begin only after a century or two. This is my view.

It is indeed God's infinite mercy on me that I could become the recipient of Bapu's love in an abundant measure, that this relationship lasted 32 years, that I could learn a great deal from my association with him and that through him I could gain the friendship of great souls like Sardar Patel. Such is the bountiful grace of the Lord on me. I derive great contentment from the successful culmination of this venture because—

The spotless standard of Yama's troops  
Comes before my eyes be-dimmed by age  
And fighting a losing battle with diseases  
This mortal frame doth droop day by day.

## Preface

Gandhiji was very regular in his correspondence. It was by this means alone that he was able to maintain a hearty relation with innumerable people and was able to influence them to maintain high ideals in their lives. To enter with his heart into the individual life of the person with whom a relation was established and to help him in his development, having understood the individual's ability, his special nature and its depth, were the peculiar features of his correspondence. Hence Gandhiji's correspondence is as important as his writings and speeches. To understand the personality of Gandhiji, his correspondence is very useful. I have observed that his style of writing letters is also a typical one. Few world leaders have left behind them such a volume of correspondence as has Gandhiji.

I have always had the feeling while reading Gandhiji's correspondence that I was taking a dip in the sacred Ganges and sipping its waters. Always it was a purifying and pleasant experience for me to read his letters. The surrounding climate of its contents is purifying, life-sustaining and soothing.

Because of this I was very happy when Shri Ghanshyamdasji sent to me the entire bunch of his correspondence with Gandhiji. I began reading it with immense enthusiasm. As I went on reading, it became clear to me that this correspondence is not merely confined to the letters exchanged between Ghanshyamdasji and Gandhiji but also includes those exchanged between the late Mahadevbhai Desai, who was a close friend of Gandhiji, and Ghanshyamdasji. Apart from these, there is the correspondence with other friends of Gandhiji, many leaders and workers of the nation, Viceroys and politicians. There is also a description of their interviews. In short, a valuable history of the present times is to be found here.

Seeing this, I exclaimed, "Ah, if only this material had come into my hands five years ago!"

Today, I am 91. I am becoming increasingly forgetful. I go on forgetting so easily many a valuable fact. I have to record with sorrow today I am not able to dive so deep into this correspondence as I would have been able to, had this material reached my hands five years earlier. Yet I feel that the basic structure of my thinking on fundamental ideals has not changed in me. It is with its aid that I dare plunge into this ocean.

Before the year 1915, our people had experimented with several solutions for the attainment of Independence. We adopted the use of extremist methods. We also tried the path of petitions and prayers. We made efforts to make industrial progress. We started social reform movements for reforming society. We also fervently increased our faith in religion. We trod the path of swadeshi and boycott. Also we used bombs and pistols. We, Indians, tried with devotion, all those solutions that occurred to us or were suggested to us for the gaining of swaraj. Yet there was neither swaraj near at hand nor there was to be found a ray of hope. Some of our efforts, instead of removing the British Empire, only helped in strengthening it much more. The whole country was in utter despair when in 1915, Gandhiji returned to India from South Africa.

In South Africa where there was no Indian Government, nor Indian environment, Gandhiji with the help of uneducated, almost uncultured and hapless Indians, started a powerful satyagraha campaign and reaped success in it. We had heard and read about the activities of this leader of action, Gandhiji, and his new experiment. As soon as he returned to India, Gandhiji toured from the Himalayas to Rameshwaram, explaining to the people his vision of satyagraha. Those to whom swaraj was a cause were attracted towards him. Soon the heart beats of Gandhiji had their echo in the pulse of the people and both were tuned to the same wave length. The entire country, without the least hesitation, was ready to follow him. Gandhiji became a great representative of Indian culture and India's aspirations. He spoke the language of sacrifice, restraint and magnanimity which was also the confident language of the



Indian masses. The nation, seeing his uncommon humility and extra-ordinary self-confidence, became confident that he would surely achieve something.

Even as all rivers empty themselves into the ocean, becoming one with it, so too, all of us who dreamed of swaraj despite our different mental make-up, different backgrounds and different ways of life, went, and joined him. We gladly accepted his leadership and fully played our role in the activities directed by him.

Among the chosen few close workers who came in contact with Gandhiji at that time, the place of Shri Ghanshyamdasji is a special one.

This everybody knows that Shri Ghanshyamdasji is one of the few wealthy men of India. His primary field of work has always been in the industry. This too people know that he earned well and spent his wealth for good causes with open arms. Whenever there was need for money, Gandhiji without hesitation conveyed his desire to Shri Ghanshyamdasji who responded forthwith. Of the many sayings of Gandhiji, the following is very important: "The wealthy should not consider themselves to be masters of their wealth, but consider themselves as trustees and use it for the welfare of the society. Having the feeling that the wealth of the society is with him and that he is its trustee, the wealthy person should spend his wealth." Though, in principle, Shri Birlaji did not accept this teaching of Gandhiji he had taken this to his heart. The educational institutions, charitable guest houses and hospitals that are to be found all over India in the name of the Birlas are standing testimony to this. Apart from his own institutions, there are many others in the country that are run mainly from the charities of the Birlas. Almost all the institutions of Gandhiji have been benefited from the wealth of Shri Ghanshyamdasji. Perhaps none, apart from late Jamnalalji Bajaj, had contributed so much to the Institutions of Gandhiji as Shri Ghanshyamdasji. There is a famous story.

Gandhiji had come to Delhi. During the same period, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore also had reached Delhi to make collections for his Visva Bharati. Gurudev organised a programme of dance and music at different places and at the end of the programme asked for donations from the people. Gandhiji

felt unhappy on hearing this. That such a famous person as Tagore, in his old age, just to seek donations and that too a mere Rs. 60,000 was forced to go about organising programmes of dance and music was something which Gandhiji could not bear. He suddenly remembered Ghanshyamdasji. Gandhiji sent a message to him through Shri Māhadevbhai Desai that six of the rich men should each contribute Rs. 10,000 to Gurudev and save India from a sense of shame. It is needless to say that Shri Birlaji contributed the whole amount as a secret donation to Gurudev and made him carefree.

Not only did Gandhiji receive donations from Birlaji for his institutions but he made Birlaji contribute to others' causes as well. Who these persons were to whom Gandhiji made Birlaji give donations and to what extent Birlaji offered his wealth at the feet of Gandhiji will be known from this collection of his letters.

In a way, really this was a unique revelation of the relation between Gandhiji and Birla.

But one should not think that giving donations liberally was the only relation of Birlaji with the activities of Gandhiji.

There were two streams of work—both important—which Gandhiji had placed before the people, for getting swaraj. One was the constructive stream and the other political.

Gandhiji found that the high-low strata of society which was fundamental and the feeling of 'myself and himself' which was favoured by the cultural group were the two important factors on which the entire superstructure of Indian society rested. The result was that though peace, health and the principle of co-existence were to be found in our social life, yet we have been incapable of preserving national unity and independence. The entire history of India is a proof of this weakness of ours.

It was the chief aim of the constructive activities of Gandhiji to remove this our national weakness of the present and to create a new society full of life and all-round development in the future. Gandhiji placed before the nation 18 to 20 programmes such as Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, development of khadi and village industries and the propagation of the national language, for the achievement of the above two ideals. He used to say that the fulfilment of the above pro-

gramme would be indeed complete independence.

The programme chalked out was not one depending on servitude having its basis in charity and religion. It was a prophetic effort to unite India of the vast landscape consisting of many races, many faiths and many languages. Mental revolution leading to revolution of the life and from that to the total revolution in society was the programme chalked out. In this revolution Gandhiji gave a new meaning to old values.

Shri Ghanshyamdasji recognising the revolutionary possibilities of this programme accepted it with all his heart. Many letters in this collection reveal to us the deep faith of Birlaji in Hindu-Muslim unity and in the eradication of untouchability, and the efforts he made to bring them to success. If he had any difference of opinion with Gandhiji, it was perhaps to some extent about the economics of khaddar. In this he maintains his own individual opinion. Yet it attracts our attention that though having an independent opinion, he like a dedicated soldier, was spinning with the wheel. Not only this, he took the vow of khadi. Gandhiji was impressed with this nature of Birlaji, which loved discipline. To show his joy, Gandhiji presented Birlaji with a special type of spinning-wheel. He praised the thread spun by Birlaji and asked him not to abandon his sacred work which he had started.

Gandhiji had a speciality or distinction. He quickly recognised the good of men and made full use of them for the welfare of the nation. Gandhiji had more confidence in us than we had in ourselves. While moulding us, he made our weak faith strong. In the end, he was able to extract from us more work than was possible otherwise.

• Though a rich man, Ghanshyamdasji was not affected by the illusion of wealth. Gandhiji had recognised this. He also had observed the skill of Birlaji in managing worldly affairs. To help him in the development of his personality, Gandhiji had shown him a path and in this we see the light thrown by a prophetic educationalist on many big and small aspects of the all-round human personality. This is a special characteristic of Gandhiji's letters.

More important than this is the fact that a picture of the modest, spotless life of Ghanshyamdasji can be seen in this collection.

It was no wonder that Ghanshyamdasji was attracted towards Gandhiji. Observing Gandhiji's dedication to religion, his forthright straight path and also the intensity of his search for truth, he became Gandhiji's best devotee. Birlaji considered it his duty to take on his shoulders the burden of any responsibility which Gandhiji had laid. And he fulfilled it with a full heart.

But he had dedicated himself enthusiastically and with a full heart to the political work of Gandhiji. In this collection of letters we are able to see the inside story of those events that happened behind the curtain between Gandhiji and the government at that time. The days of those times were such that something or the other was always happening in the camp of Gandhiji which created history. Ghanshyamdasji had a special and deep interest in this aspect of Gandhiji's activities. Having given his close attention to every small or big thing that occurred, by degrees he was considered to be one among the chosen few who knew well the political mind of Gandhiji. Soon he projected himself with confidence before the English statesmen as a reliable interpreter of the political mind of Gandhiji. He considered it his responsibility to convey to the English statesmen the way Gandhiji's mind worked and also he conveyed to Gandhiji the mind of the English statesmen. It was a self-imposed task which he accomplished with uncommon dexterity and success.

In this book the picture that presents itself to our mind of Ghanshyamdasji in a special way is that of a skilled statesman. This reminds us of Lord Krishna who went to the darbar hall of the Kauravas for a peaceful solution (of the demand of the Pandavas).

Having gone through this correspondence that went on for nearly 32 years, my first impulse was to advise Birlaji to divide it into three separate books. In the first one, only the correspondence between him and Gandhiji was to be included. How Gandhiji dived deeply into the many problems of his day, how he understood the subtle nature of each problem, how he showed the path to his personal followers and lastly how he showered his love on them, all these could be clearly seen by us from this part.

In the second book, only the correspondence of Birlaji with late Mahadevbhai Desai was to be included. This would have

enabled us to enjoy the fragrance of the personal and intimate conversation between two close friends.

In the third book, all the rest of the material could be included which may be important for history.

On reconsideration, I felt that this should not be done. Whatever material is here should be published together in the order in which it is found. Well, the size of the book may increase. If so, it may be bound in two volumes. This is not a book written for whiling away our leisure hour. This is an ocean which has a great historical value. When the future generations want to understand our times, then this source book would become very useful and interesting. Much material would be found packed in this book that would interest the students of history. This is a bunch of very valuable historical documents, whose full worth only the future generations will know.

To me, a Gandhi fan, this book has given transcendental joy.

The credit goes to my young friend, Shri Ravindra Kalelkar, due to whose labour I am able to write this preface at this age and in this state of health.

*Affectionately yours,*  
*Respectful Vande Mataram of*  
KAKA KALELKAR



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**1940**



# 1

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA,  
January 2, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

The enclosure was written yesterday. Vallabhbhai says, "It is not going to plain sailing in Delhi. Jinnah's ire is waxing instead of waning. He has the princes at his elbow. He may refrain from opposing the declaration but he is sure to interfere with whatever task is undertaken in Delhi. He enjoys the support of a sizable number of conservatives among the civilians. As it is, our Government is also conducting its affairs in the same old fashion. Gibson is ruling the roost in Rajkot. He has elevated Chinoy to be the Diwan and has confirmed Virawala and his son in their present position. Things are not going to improve in Rajkot so long as Gibson is there."

What Sardar says about Gibson is quite correct. Chinoy is even worse than Virawala, if it is possible to be worse than him.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

# 2

CALCUTTA,  
January 12, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADDEVBHAI,

I am glad that Bapu received the speech of the Viceroy well. The anxiety of the Viceroy to settle the question could only be realised by coming in contact with him. In fact, I found that the disappointment spread itself not to the Viceroy's person alone but to the whole family. The cuttings that I have been receiving from England show a definite reaction against putting undue emphasis on the minority problem. The Viceroy's speech

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therefore is really heartening. His assertion that justice between communities will have to be done is also good. It amounts to telling Jinnah that if he did not settle, H.M.G. will take it on themselves to give suitable assurance to the minorities but that the advance could not be checked.

But I think we should now take the next step. The Viceroy has taken so far many steps only to be disapproved by us. I think Bapu should now respond to his appeal and give him help. The stage has reached when Bapu should feel confident enough to ask for an immediate meeting.

I myself think that Constituent Assembly is the most effective machinery for settlement of the communal question. In the past, we concluded many pacts without achieving any finality. We should not take any such risk this time and therefore it is only proper that we should deal this time not with the "leaders" but with the minority itself. For this reason alone, Constituent Assembly is essential. But even on this question I don't think much difference would be found if by Constituent Assembly we mean only an Assembly of elected representatives. To get an Assembly duly elected by people is possible by other methods also. We need not stick to Adult Franchise and all that. Even an ad hoc small body of known leaders, if its findings are finally ratified by the provincial Legislatures, can be equivalent to Constituent Assembly. Or we need not have an agreement on this question today. If we go back in office after making it clear that we would not participate in any constitution making unless it is done by some sort of elected assembly, we perhaps gain the object. I am sure Bapu could find hundred and one ways to meet the situation. Perhaps we can now accelerate the pace of Dominion Status and the Communal Settlement by getting in rather than remaining out.

I do not know why unnecessary distinction is sought to be created between Dominion Status and Independence. Even if we want to sever connection, we can do so after we achieve Dominion Status of the Westminster Statute type. Why should we ask Gt. Britain to cut us off from them? If we so desire, we can ourselves take the responsibility after we are given the freedom to do so. Then if we sever the connection, we will do so with the full consent of the electorate. By asking Gt. Britain to cut us off the Commonwealth, we are asking them to do

something which our own electorate should have the right to do. In fact, Gt. Britain can very well say: "Why should we take the responsibility? If you so desire, you may sever the connection after you have achieved Dominion Status." And I think it would be quite logical on their part to say so.

I read your speech at the Hindi Prachar Sabha. I think the "शेर" that you recited perhaps was not quite correct. In any case, I know it in a different way. I have tried to "correct" you in the enclosed cutting. Even if yours may be correct, mine, I am sure, reads better! You have done mistakes in all the four lines! But your speech was really good and the language extremely attractive.

The enclosed letter from Chowdhary Biharilal will interest you. I am writing to him that I will be prepared to give him 100 rupees a month. I don't think he should need as much as 250 rupees a month. But if Bapu feels that he should be helped with a greater sum, please write to me.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEGAON

3

SEGAON,  
WARDHA,  
January 14, 1940

DEAR LORD LINLITHGOW,

I have read and re-read your Bombay speech. I write this, however, to put before you my difficulties. Dominion Status in terms of the Statute Westminster and independence are taken to be equivalent terms. If so, should you not use the terms that fits India's case?

I have no doubt you had very good reasons for the way you have dealt with the question of minorities. But I have serious

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doubts about the implications of your reference to that question. I do not at all understand the reference to the scheduled castes.

If you think that you would like to see me you have but to wire or write. I shall be with the Working Committee till perhaps the 22nd inst.

*I am,*  
*Yours sincerely,*  
M. K. Gandhi

## 4

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
January 15, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Your long letter. I quite see all that you say including the inherent impossibility of England declaring Indian Independence. But Bapu does not. He says the only reason why he got the Govt. to make the point about the variety of Dominion Status clear was that he wanted to tell them that if they really meant by it the Statute of Westminster variety it was not different from independence and they should hesitate to declare the objective in India's terms. However if everything goes well, and the whole thing hangs, on this Bapu would reconsider—though he firmly believes that the Viceroy understands his viewpoints better than anyone else. In fact he says if he (Bapu) was in England he could easily get England to use the word 'Independence' instead of 'Dominion Status'. However, the letter has gone today. I think you will like the language. I enclose a copy.

What you say about the lines quoted in my speech is quite true. The thing is this. I did not read the printed speech—the speech was printed after the event and I did not see the proof. There is no doubt that in the third and fourth line the order of जवानी and बुद्धाषा was reversed—just a slip. If the *Harijan Sevak* which has reprinted the speech has repeated the blunder, I will



have to send a correction. But I am glad that you found time to read that speech! I wonder what made you read it.

About Biharilal your decision is correct. Bapu says that if he gets Rs. 100 a month he should get nothing more for medical treatment. Bapu had offered him free medical treatment and no other payment. Instead he has succeeded better with you. Rajaji who was here read your letter to me and remarked in his cynical way: "Mahadev, how I wish he had tuberculosis so that we may have a pension of Rs. 100."

Yours,  
Mahadev

5

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA,  
January 17, 1940

MY DLAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

All of your letters have reached here. I had gone out once again, this time in company with Balchand in order to inspect his factory areas. One of these days I am going to have a long talk with you on this subject.

Meanwhile I am enclosing a vigorous interview given by Bapu to a *Times of India* man. However, it was not made use of by the man as it had failed to serve the purpose he had in mind.

This I am scribbling away in great haste.

Yours,  
Mahadev

**World Conscience the Supreme Arbiter**

SEGAON,  
WARDHA,

January 4, 1940

Thus began an English Reporter who came the other day to interview Gandhiji:

REPORTER: There seems to be a deadlock coming, indeed if one does not already exist. Cannot we take advantage of a nominated group of a really representative character to come to some sort of an agreed solution?

GANDHIJI: A nominated group of a really representative character is a contradiction in terms. Such a group can only represent the nominator. For the purpose of discussion the nominator would be finally the Viceroy. You will not call such a group one of a really representative character. If you have in mind a small number of representatives, I for one, would accept only one representative, say Jinnah Sahib, provided he is elected by the free vote of the millions as, say, is the President of the U.S.A.

REPORTER: Would you really?

GANDHIJI: Why not? Is there any flaw in this statement? I claim to be the greatest democrat of modern times. My faith is built on non-violence and therefore I have faith in human nature.

REPORTER: But while the minorities are deadlly opposed to a Constituent Assembly, can you offer them this form of representation now with any hope of their accepting the position?

GANDHIJI: Anyone who objected to the right thing, puts himself in the wrong. British statesmen have induced the belief that they want to end the imperialistic system and treat those under them as free. Having induced that belief Congress naturally wanted to test its sincerity. The answer must therefore be irrespective of what India wants or does not want. Now the question arises to whom is the answer to be given. If there were a rebel power trying to seize the reins of government, it would be the rebel power. But here is no rebellion. Congress is the main organisation. But I confess that in view of rival organisations, power cannot be transferred to it. If

then Britain is to make good her declaration, she can easily do it by summoning a constituent assembly of elected representatives and enforce the constitution framed by it. Representatives of minorities will frame safeguards for their protection. It is possible that even the representatives may fail to reach a constitution acceptable to an overwhelming majority, including safeguards for minorities. Even so, Britain will have proved her bonafides. I hold, however, that a properly elected assembly is bound to produce a workable constitution.

REPORTER: Supposing a referendum were taken and it was found that a Constituent Assembly is not wanted, would you accept the verdict?

GANDHIJI: I must.

REPORTER: If a generally accepted scheme is prepared by nominated persons, would you accept it? Or do you object to nomination as such?

GANDHIJI: There is no meaning in my acceptance or rejection. Acceptance to be valid must be by a properly elected body. It takes the place of existing government or their nominee or nominees.

REPORTER: Supposing you could be sure of achieving democracy through a nominated assembly, would you reject it? Why not wait and see what form of nomination be offered?

GANDHIJI: I would always suspect nomination for it can never satisfy all. Election is the only satisfactory method. In spite of Congress claim and boast the Congress is an organisation representative of only 3 million voters out of a population of over 300 million. Therefore the Secretary of State was justified when he said that Congress was not representative of the whole nation. And therefore the Congress challenges all to go to the people. Even the princes can as individuals and so can Europeans domiciled in India. That they will not, is not our fault.

REPORTER: What place would you assign to the princes in democratic India?

GANDHIJI: I would give them a fat commission as trustees of their people. I would say to them, however, that they must work for this commission. They would have the same privileges as the British King enjoys. They are after all his vassals. They cannot be greater than her. The King of England cannot

hang a man. He can only act through proper channels. He is a private citizen, though the first one. If I can like monarchy at all, I would like the limited monarchy of England. And why should not the people of the states determine what they want? As far as justice for the people is concerned I have already said their Supreme Court must be subject to the High Court of India.

REPORTER: Might it not be that the English form of democracy will be unsuited to India ?

GANDHIJI: That is for the Constituent Assembly to decide. The time when self-styled representatives or nominees could decide for India is gone for ever.

REPORTER: Do you think the assembly would suggest an economic form of democracy?

GANDHIJI: I give the Assembly credit for sanity. So far as I can see, this is the best method. But if a better can be produced I would accept it.

REPORTER: May it not be that while Britain is sincere the delay is due to the terrible situation of war in which she finds herself today?

GANDHIJI: I have not lost faith in their sincerity and that is why I am still wooing them. I am wooing my own people to build up their power. I am preparing for a fight, if it must come, but I am doing my level best to stave it off. I believe that Britain's past is responsible for all the prevailing dissensions.

REPORTER: What if Britain lost the war?

GANDHIJI: I would be sorry if Britain lost. But I would not feel helpless. Supposing Russia, Germany, Italy and Japan formed a combination to seize India, I should not feel perturbed if India, as a whole, had accepted non-violence as her fixed policy. Through non-co-operation India could defy any combination. So you see my sympathy for Britain is absolutely selfless. If Britain is really right, God will inspire her to make the declaration about India and put herself right with India. I do not want Britain to win right or wrong. If India were wrong India must perish. I have often said that Hinduism will perish if Hinduism allows the practice of untouchability to remain. I would go so far as to pray for India's destruction if she went wrong, even as Stead

prayed for England's defeat in the Boer War. In spite of all her great resources it is wrong on Britain's part to strain too much her faith in her strong arm. I rejoice that she still prays to the God of love and not to the God of gunpowder and therefore I still hope that she will call her aid the moral support of a free India. She gets today material support from India because she is a dependency. What I want Britain to do is to get moral support of India and wish. Would to God that the war ended on a moral issue and the conscience of the world became the final arbiter! That can only happen if Britain had the moral support of a Free India. Anyway that is my view.

A. K.

6

SEGAON,

January 17, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

This I am especially writing in Hindi. Bhulabhai and the others have been here. They told Bapu all about the talk they had with the Viceroy. What they told him made him wonder if his own likely interview with the Viceroy was going to serve any useful purpose. Our own stand was that what the Viceroy had said in his Bombay speech did not make for any progress towards the desired goal. It would, in fact, be difficult to justify our action on the lines suggested by him on moral grounds. As a matter of fact, what transpired between them and the Viceroy has stiffened Bapu's own attitude and he has begun to doubt if his first letter to the Viceroy should have been written at all. Paradoxically enough, all this has only served to incline Bapu in favour of penning yet another letter for the Viceroy. Yesterday I had told you over the phone that no such letter was contemplated. But Bapu had a disturbed sleep last night and by this morning he came to the conclusion that a letter has got to be written. Along with the letter Bapu also sent a tele-

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gram requesting the Viceroy to postpone replying to the earlier letter till the receipt of this one. Now everything is in the lap of God. Bapu is convinced that the Viceroy understands him well enough and that he is, after all, a nice man incapable of double talk, thinks aloud and shares his own views. All this was not to Rajaji's liking in the beginning, but ultimately he falls in line with the general concensus.

*Yours,*  
Mahadev

7

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA,  
January 23, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Two letters have come from H. E. Both are good. I enclose copies. Bapu has written in reply suggesting the 4th of February. His letter is also very good. I am sure H. E. will appreciate it.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

VICEROY'S CAMP,  
BARODA,  
January 17, 1940

DEAR MR. GANDHI,

Many thanks for your letter of 14th January which reached me last night. I need not say how very glad I am that you should speak so kindly of my speech at Bombay, and how much I appreciate what you say. I shall be delighted to have a talk at any time convenient to you. I do not reach Delhi until tomorrow evening, and I look like being rather busy for the first few days after settling in, while you, as you tell me, will be busy

with the Working Committee. Would it be convenient for you to come up at the end of the month or in the first couple of days of February? Any date which would suit you after say, Monday, the 29th of January, would be perfectly convenient for me, and we could arrange an actual time for our meeting later.

With all good wishes,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Linlithgow

January 21, 1940

DEAR MR. GANDHI,

Many thanks for your letter of 17th January. Your telegram to me crossed, I fear, my reply to your earlier letter.

I quite understand your feeling, and am grateful to you for the consideration which your letter has shown me. But I think myself that much the best thing, if there is any doubt in either of our minds, is to have a talk. If we can reach agreement, so much the better. No one as you know will be happier than I. If there proves as the result of our conversation to be a necessity for further consideration of certain points, then let us not be deterred by that fact only. But I am certain that there is far more risk of misunderstanding in correspondence than there may be in conversation. If therefore you care to come and see me on any date convenient to you at the beginning of next month, and if you would suggest a date that will suit you, we make arrangements and fix a time.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Linlithgow

WARDHAGANJ,  
January 18, 1940

GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
PILANI

IMPORTANT LLTTR POSTED TODAY DELHI.

MAHADEV

SI GAON,  
WARDHA,  
January 23, 1940

DEAR LORD LINI ITHGOW,

I thank you for your two cordial letters, the last having just come in, I heartily endorse the sentiment I read in your letter that even if we fail to reach an agreement during the forthcoming talks, we must try again.

I can reach Delhi any day after the 4th February. I must leave Delhi on 11th at the latest to attend a meeting of the Harijan Sevak Sangh in Segaoon. I would appreciate a telegraphic reply, if you can conveniently send it.

*I am,*  
*Yours sincerely,*  
M.K. Gandhi



10

WARDHAGANJ,  
January 27, 1940

LITHEE HARIJANSEVAK MEETING HERE AS ANNOUNCED OR THERE  
FROM SIXTH. DON'T EXPECT ME THERE AFTER MY SPECIAL WORK  
FINISHED OR CHOOSE DATE AFTER MALIKANDA AT WARDHA.

BAPU

11

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
January 27, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Bapu is queer. He felt that he would be required to stay in Delhi for only a day. This was pessimism. But he also held that in case the others were also called, making his stay for a longer period necessary that would be a different matter. And that was optimism. On top of this, however, he says that on the assumption that he would be required to stay on till the 10th, why call a meeting of the Harijan Sevak Sangh on that date. And not on the 6th on the supposition that he would not stay longer than a couple of days. If you had announced the date of the meeting as the 6th or 7th, it would have been better. Since you did not announce the date, Bapu is taking advantage of it. And all the while his heart is in the hospital here. The Gujarati edition of *Harijan* contains article titled "To the Gujaratis". It has been written by Bapu himself. He read it. Segaoon has now been rechristened Sevagram and an application has already been made to the Government for making the necessary changes in the records. This will be done as a matter of course. But it would have been more appropriate to name this place as Lunatic Asylum.

Yours,  
Mahadev

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA,  
January 31, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

You will be interested to hear that just when you spoke to me on the phone about your talk with Zafrulla I had finished an article on Jinnah and placed it before Bapu. I did not tell you about it because I had no confidence that Bapu would pass it. It has however been passed and gone in this week! There is another article which also you will like, but to my mind the best part of it was cut out by Bapu, lest it should irritate Jawahar. The article is a page from Irish history, and having summarised the facts on the constitutional question I had quoted Griffith to this effect; "We took an oath to the Irish Republic, but as President de Valera himself said *he understood that oath to bind him to do the best he could for Ireland*. So do we. We have done the best we could for Ireland. If the Irish people say, 'We have got everything else but the name Republic, and we will fight for it, I would say to them that they are fools.'" And I quoted the words with this comment: "These words contain a little warning for some of our overardent spirits too." This Bapu scored out. I asked Bapu, if he did not agree with Griffith. He said he did, but it was not proper to say it!

If you see Sikandar on the 2nd, I suppose you will ring me up and tell me what happens.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

13

**Task Before Us**  
(By M.K. Gandhi)

ON WAY TO WARDHA,  
February 6, 1940

There need be no disappointment among Congressmen for failure of the negotiations between H.E., the Viceroy and me. We had met to explore the possibilities of a settlement. I had seen the germs of it in the Viceregal pronouncement in Bombay. But I discovered that I was mistaken. The Viceroy's hands were tied down. He was not to go beyond the four corners of the offer now before the country. Perhaps it represented too his own opinion.

But nothing has been lost by our meeting. In spite of the failure we have come nearer each other. There is a clarification of the situation. Non-violence requires great patience. The failure is only apparent. There can be no failure since both the cause and the means are just. This meeting has brought us nearer to our goal. If the Viceroy was clear in his enunciation of the British policy, I was not less clear in enunciating that of the Congress. The negotiations, so far as I know, have not been closed. Meanwhile we have to educate the world as to what we stand for. India cannot be one of the many Dominions, i.e., partner in the exploitation of the non-European races of the earth. If here is a non-violent fight, she must keep her hands clean. If India is not to be co-sharer in the exploitation of the Africans and the degradation of our own countrymen in the Dominions, she must have her own independent status. Its content and nature must not be dictated or determined by British. They must be determined by ourselves, meaning the elected representatives of the nation, call such an assembly what you will. Unless British statesmen definitely concede this, they do not mean to part with power. Neither the question of defence nor that of the minorities nor of the princes nor the European interests need come in the way of her making the clear declaration. Not that the important matters just mentioned do not require serious consideration and adjustment. But they will yield to just and proper treatment only when the required

declaration is made and followed up immediately by corresponding action in so far as it is possible. Without it, Britain's war with Germany cannot be claimed to be just, certainly not unselfish.

What is to be done then? Declaration of civil resistance? Not yet. I mean what I say when I ascribe sincerity to Lord Linlithgow. He is doing his best to understand us and his duty to his superiors and his nation. With all his traditions he cannot be made to jump to our position. He cannot be hustled into it and we must despise our opponent or belittle his strength. It would be wrong to assume weakness in him and seek to take advantage of it. His weakness will not make us strong or fit. And his strength need not baffle us if we are strong. Our duty is therefore to make him feel our strength. This we shall do, not by civil resistance but by putting our own house in order. Whilst we may not allow the British Government to plead the minorities and the like as a bar to right action on their part, we may not blind ourselves to the fact that these questions exist and demand solution at our hands. We may dismiss from our minds the impossible and utterly antinational stand taken by Quaide Azam Jinnah. We cannot dismiss the Muslims from our consideration. The same may be said about the other problems. We must educate public mind on these, clear our own minds and know where we stand in relation to them. Maulana Saheb tells me that Congressmen and Congress committees are not always considered in regulating elections to popular bodies and that local boards are not always dealing justly by all the communities. We have to be above suspicion. Congress committees have to take infinite pains to examine every single complaint. None may be dismissed as too trivial for consideration. I have letters and telegrams bitterly complaining that at some elections for Congress committees, Local Boards, and the like Muslim, Harijan or Christian claims have been neglected. Wherever this happens a golden opportunity of doing justice is missed. We may not resort to civil resistance out of our impatience or to cover our shortcomings. It is not a panacea for all our ills, internal and external. It is a specific and sovereign remedy for extraordinary situations. But let us be ready for it. I say with a full sense of my responsibility that we are not ready. It is true

that even if we were ready, the time for it is not ripe. It may be any day. Let us not be found wanting when it comes.

14

February 8, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

After Bapu left, I heard from reliable source that Bapu did not leave a friendly impression on the mind of the Viceroy. It was felt that Bapu was very stiff, uncompromising and unresponsive. It was expected that Bapu would take the concrete things one by one and would try to contribute towards a settlement. The Viceroy tried to open discussion on army, and princes, wanted Bapu to meet people and solve the problems with the Viceroy's help. He had expected reciprocation and felt disappointed that Bapu "did not try to put any plank on the gulf that seemed to exist".

The natural conclusion drawn was that Bapu was influenced by Leftists and that he was after a "fight". The Viceroy had also expected that Bapu would stay on for more interviews when requested to do so, and that he would not be in a hurry to terminate the conversation. And because he was in such unseemly hurry, they thought that he had gone back with rancour and that civil disobedience movement would be the only outcome of such a position.

Bapu was not quite correct in thinking that the Viceroy appreciated his position and that there was no misunderstanding. The Viceroy did feel disappointed at Bapu's attitude. Myself and Devdas both share the feeling of the Viceroy because we also feel that Bapu was unresponsive and unhelpful.

However, when I heard this from Sir Jagdish, I told him to disabuse the mind of the Viceroy and also Laithwaite that Bapu had gone with any rancour or disappointment or that there was civil disobedience in the air. Sir Jagdish informed Laithwaite about this who asked me to see him. I met Laithwaite this morning and the matter is cleared up.

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I told Laithwaite generally about the talk that I had with Bapu and explained to him that Bapu felt that it was not a political pact that he was after. He was after a moral conversion. Mere political pact may degenerate into another Rajkot Award.

After my talk, Laithwaite regained his cheerfulness and said that with the background that I gave him, he understood the whole position and no longer entertained pessimism. He asked me if I had any constructive suggestion to make. I frankly confessed that I had none. Perhaps you would be able to tell me if something could be suggested. General ideas are all right but you have to give them a practical shape. And in my opinion the time has come, or it would come after Ramgarh Congress, when we should try to give the ideas a concrete shape. If we really desire a settlement in the near future, then we have to look upon the question from both points of view. Even moral conversion is possible only if you appreciated the opponent's difficulty and tried to help him.

Bapu may have good reasons to be unhelpful at present but that he was so, we all feel. Perhaps he thought that inaction was the best action just now. Since I know Bapu for so many years, I came only to one conclusion that he had good reasons for being stiff and that when he told me that he was quite hopeful about the situation, it was not a mere pious hope but that he was expressing his determined feeling.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEGAON



SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
February 8, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have conveyed your telephonic message to Bapu. His impression is that these people have been receiving complaints from Home that personal contract with Gandhiji should have been broken off so abruptly. The other thing is that Bapu has told these people that he could manage to prolong his stay till the 13th provided, of course, that his presence was needed. Bapu maintains that all that is happening just now is reminding him of the circumstances in London leading up to the Minority Pact. He admits that his attitude is rather stiff at present but he says that this element of stiffness has been in evidence ever since the Viceroy had told him that since he could not take to him in a representative capacity it would be pointless to hold talks. Bapu had to meet this remark with his own to the effect that he was talking in a general capacity. It is quite in order for Laithwaite to observe that the Viceroy has got only one year left to complete his term of office. But it should also be borne in mind that Bapu alone is capable of holding back the tide of the civil disobedience movement and this he is already doing and will continue to do so till the very last.

I had prepared a draft for a letter to Laithwaite and had shown it to Bapu. He said there was no occasion for writing to him at all. I am enclosing it just for your perusal.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* Much economy was exercised last time in providing us with meals for our journey. Have there been changes in the stuff? Are we going to meet in Calcutta? Bapu has tentatively fixed the programme for leaving this place in the evening of the 15th, by Nagpur Passenger reaching Calcutta in the morning at 5 a.m. How about our making for Birla Park direct, taking our bath and our breakfast and catching the 8 a.m. train for Santiniketan? You have been squandering money upon us; I

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would like you to see for yourself whether the money is well spent by accompanying us.

M. D.

### 16

February 9, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I got the article from *Harijan Sevak* before it reached from you direct, and I marvel at Bapu's way of handling a most delicate situation. It is really a wonderful article. I was wrong in criticising Bapu in my yesterday's letter that he refused to appreciate his opponent's difficulty. As appears from this article, he has already done so. I fear we are at times apt to forget the high moral plane in which Bapu swims. In our zeal for freedom and being conscious of our weakness, we look more to the end than to the means. Whereas for Bapu, means and the end are both one and the same. I will try to rub it into my mind that if we look after the means, the end is automatically achieved. Looking at it even as a practical man, I have no doubt that the formula of Dominion Status without real change of heart of Gt. Britain is liable to become a thing like Gwyer's Award. I think the heart is already towards a change. Maybe India and England may start competition vying with each other in manufacturing cordiality and friendship. So it is better to have patience and wait.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEGAON



17

February 10, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI<sup>1</sup>,

I should like to know Bapu's reaction to such a statement<sup>1</sup> if it were made. It was prepared at one time by Rajaji and myself and Devdas both felt that it was very satisfactory. But I wonder what would be the reaction of Bapu. If he does not like certain portions of it, I would like to know which they are and also how would Bapu like to remould it.

To prepare such drafts on mere hypothesis may seem, at first instance, waste of time, but education imparted to some of us would not altogether be wasted and hence this encroachment on Bapu's time.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEGAON

Encl. 1

<sup>1</sup>The draft statement was enclosed but is not available. —G. D. B.

18

February 10, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I am likely to see you in Calcutta. I note that Bapu and yourself are reaching there on the 11th morning. There is no chance of my going to Malikanda. I am going to Calcutta after a long time and perhaps will devote some time to my work. It is a good idea if Bapu reaches there at 5 in the morning, takes his bath and meals and then leaves for Santiniketan. You know last time he had promised to stay at Loyalka's house. Even if for 2/3 hours, why not stay there? He would feel very happy,

and besides, it is an extremely quiet place. Please send me a wire if Bapu decides that way.

I am leaving this place on the 12th evening for Benares and will be in Calcutta only on the 17th morning, a little later than Bapu's arrival there. Please therefore send me a wire to my Benares address (LUCKY—BENARES) informing me whether Bapu is likely to stay in Calcutta, and if so, whether at my place or at Loyalka's house.

Please ask Bapu and let me know in what connection the Viceroy had used the phrase "moral conversion of England". I think Bapu told me that the Viceroy had said something like this to him: "I see that you want moral conversion of England and you want that England and India should jointly govern the world" or something of that nature. I do not know in what context it was said and how it was said. Please write to me after enquiring of Bapu.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEGAON

### Is It War?

SEGAON,  
February 13, 1940

The Builders of the British Indian Empire have patiently built its four pillars—the European interests, the Army, the Princes and the Communal Divisions. The last three were to subserve the first. It is clear to the realist that the builders have to remove the four pillars before they can claim to have given up the Empire or the Empire spirit. But they say to the nationalists or the destroyers of the Empire spirit, "You have to deal with all the four pillars yourselves before we can treat India as an Independent Nation instead of being our dependency." They say in other words "guarantee the European interest, make your own army, treat with the princës and with the communalists other-

wise known as minorities." The Destroyers retort "You imposed the European interests on us, for their defence you built an army and kept it a close preserve, you saw that you could use the then existing princes for your own purpose, you made them and unmade them, you created new ones, you armed them with powers they could not enjoy before with safety, in fact you partitioned India so that it would never rise against you in one mass. You saw again that we were cursed with the caste spirit, you took advantage of our weakness and refined it till at last claims are made which, if they were satisfied, there would be no single Indian Nation and no independence. Add to all this the fact that by your policy of disarmament you have emasculated a whole nation. But we do not blame you for the past. On the contrary, we admire your bravery, skill and spirit of adventure. You have copied other Empire Builder who proceeded you. You have improved upon them in a variety of ways. But if you profess, as you have professed, that you have decided to give India her due, then you have to remove from our way the obstacles you have created. You are entitled to ask us to recognise the difficulties in the way of your making delivery and even to help you. If you are honest you will leave us to do the best. You must trust our sense of justice not your strong arm, to make us to what is right and proper. Hitherto you have determined our fate for us. Now if you are earnest you will not only let us determine the method and manner of governing ourselves but even help us to do so, if we want your help.

Lord Zetland has given the answer to the Destroyers which I paraphrase as follows: "We mean to hold on to what we have. Within that orbit, we will let you have such freedom as we think is good for you. This war that we are fighting is to prevent the disruption of our empire. We want your help, if you will give it on these terms. It is good for you and us. But we will do without your help if you will not give it. You are not the only party we have to deal with. There are many in India who recognise the benefits of British Rule and pax Britannica. We propose to win the war with the help we can command from India through the loyal agencies. Their services we shall recognise by the grant of further reforms when the time comes. This is what we mean when we say we shall make the world safe for democracy. For we are the most democratic power in the world. Therefore, if

we are safe, so are those who are with us. Those like India who are under our tutelage will be initiated into the art of democracy in gradual stages so that their progress may be uninterrupted and they might not have to go through the travail we had to go through." I hope the paraphrase does no injustice to Lord Zetland. If it is fairly correct, the issues are quite clear. Between the two—the nationalist and imperialist—there is no meeting ground. If therefore Lord Zetland represents the British Government's considered view, it is a declaration of war against nationalist India. For all the four pillars stand firm, rock like. The more the nationalists try to deal with them as if they were problems for which they were responsible, the firmer they must become. I cannot conscientiously pray for the success of British arms if it means a further lease of life to India's subjection to foreign domination. I write this last sentence with a heavy heart.

M. K. Gandhi

## 19

SEGAON,  
February 14, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Zetland's speech has turned out to be particularly clumsy and malodorous. Bapu is feeling irritated. His response has been markedly sharp. Herewith a copy of the article in which he has given vent to his feeling.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

Encl. 1

20

BIRLA PARK,  
CALCUTTA,  
February 22, 1940

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
GANDHI SEVA SANGH  
MALIKANDA (DACCA)

PLEASE GET RAJAJI'S FORMULA RECAST BY BAPU.

GHANSHYAMDAS

21

GANDHI SEVASANGH,  
MALIKANDA (DACCA),  
February 23, 1940

GHANSHYAMDAS  
LUCKY  
CALCUTTA

BAPU'S HANDS TOO FULL. ARRIVING CALCUTTA TWENTYSIXTH MORN-  
ING FOR PATNA TWENTYSEVENTH EVENING.

MAHADEV

22

GANDHI SEVA SANGH,  
MALIKANDA (DACCA),  
February 23, 1940

MY DEAR BAJRANGLALJI.

I have just sent a telegram to Ghanshyamdasji—giving him our programme. We arrive at Sealdah at 5.55 by the Dacca

## 28 BAPU—A Unique Association

Mail on the 26th and leave on the 27th evening by the North Bihar Express.

Will you kindly get for me the issue of *Asia* for January? It contains an important article on spinning. If the copy can be had from a bookshop you may purchase it, if not please borrow it from the Imperial Library and copy the article for me.

Please tell Ghanshyamdasji that Bapu's hands are full and he is unequal to revising Rajaji's draft here but he will do so at Calcutta.

We might easily have been able to leave here this evening, but for Profullo Babu's sake and for workers in Bengal, Bapu is staying until the 25th evening. The rest of the Sangh members will leave here either today or tomorrow.

*Yours,*  
Mahadev

## 23

GANDHI SEVA SANGH,  
MALIKANDA (DACCA),  
February 23, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Bapu has not been able to find time even to touch Rajaji's draft.

Your telegram about Benthall has arrived. You may fix up 3 p.m. on the 27th.

The climate as well as the atmosphere here are just fine. Only the climate prevailing in Government circles remains vitiated.

Poor Profullo, what can he do? Goondaism cannot be fought with counter-goondaism.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

24

GANDHI SEVA SANGH,  
MALIKANDA (DACCA),  
February 24, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have shown your telegram to Bapu. He seemed to dislike the plan, but then he said "All right".

Our party has swelled like a snowball, as usual. Kishorelalbhai has been ill all these days and the doctor here says that there has not been a proper diagnosis. He suspects T. B. and says he should be thoroughly overhauled by Dr. Bidhan and a chest expert. What do you propose? Do you want him to go to Loyalka's with us or to your place? I mean what will be more convenient for Bidhan Babu? You will kindly decide as you think fit. How far is Loyalka's place from yours? Kindly tell him that we will be about ten, and that he should reserve one room for Kishorelalbhai and his wife—if you decide that he should stay with him. Please speak to Bidhanbabu also about Kishorelalbhai and fix up an appointment for him.

Benthal meets Bapu at 3, and Shyamaprasad Mookerji at 4. Shyamaprasad may not know Loyalka's place. Please tell him where to go.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

25

ON WAY TO WARDHA,  
March 3, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Will you kindly send or give the enclosed to Andrews if you can see him? Perhaps it would be best, whilst you are there, to see him every alternate day. I forgot to give him the letter when I went to see him. It is a letter from his sister.

The future seems to be dark at the present moment. But I

am thinking of sending you one or two drafts (as your Secretary) to be sent to our friends in England.

The journey has been very quiet and peaceful and Ba has no fever.

*Yours,*  
Mahadev

26

CALCUTTA,  
March 8, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I have read the advance copy of Bapu's article which you sent to Bajrang. Bapu has thought too loudly in this article and hence one can see the movements of his mind in a magnified form. I like it discourages civil disobedience altogether. You know I hate civil disobedience. In the name of non-violence it has encouraged violence. In the name of construction, it has destroyed many things. Yet it brought about a wonderful awakening in the country. But if this psychology continues, any Government, even our own would become an impossibility. They all will come out against our own government and through terrorism and corruption make all good governments impossible. Hence my dread at anything that will lead us towards a mass movement. I admit the sting of disobedience movement is taken out immediately it is made non-violent. But is that really so? Bapu insists on non-violence in thought, word and deed. But I regret not even the closest co-workers of Bapu have assimilated this spirit. And action is only a reflection of thought. Hence my horror at any talk of civil disobedience. It is because of this that partly I liked this article. But again I like the last para of Bapu's article. I agree that Bapu is a misfit in the Congress. He is being exploited because the leaders know that he alone can lead the country to a successful mass civil disobedience movement. But while people want him to help, they will never fulfil his programme. There does not seem to be any will



to do so. The truth perhaps is that none believes in non-violence. Everybody in political circles wants an upheaval and not a non-violent fight. I can say for myself that I have got no living faith in non-violence although I have got intellectual faith in it. But I don't think that helps much. Bapu could be of better help to the country if he was entirely out of the Congress because then he could perhaps become a better mediator. By identifying himself too much with the Congress, he has effaced the distinction between himself and the leftists. Non-violence and violence have become, in a way, synonymous. I think this is the most anomalous position and I feel disgusted of this position at times. If you so desire, you may show my letter to Bapu. Bapu's non-violence has a better chance of success if he is alone. It is a mockery that the Congress should try to represent this creed when it is not qualified for this.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI D. SAI  
SEGAON  
WARDHA

27

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
March 11, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Your long letter. I understand and appreciate all that you say. I placed it before Bapu who read it but I could not gather his reaction to it, as he is silent. Assuming that all that you say about C.D. is true—and you are perilously near Arthur Moore in what you say—do you suggest that violence would be better than civil disobedience however inadequate? I do not think so. Human nature with all its weaknesses must have some medium of giving vent to its protest, and if you deprive opp-

ressed humanity of even civil disobedience you deprive it of all it has and drive it to abject cowardice. I am putting it very strongly but I am expressing my clear conviction. I am sure that we will progress from honest error to truth and then from truth to truth. I have written a long article for *H.T.*, Congress Number, yesterday. I do not know that Devdas or you will like it, but if Devdas publishes it I want you to see it.

If Bapu says anything about your letter I shall let you know. Will you kindly tell Bajrangji that I am very thankful for his very full letter about Andrews? I showed it to Bapu and shall let you have Bapu's views on the matter tomorrow.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* We leave for Ramgarh tomorrow evening by the passenger train!! What about the talk with Bidhan? Did you succeed in getting him to absolve Bapu?

## 28

CALCUTTA,  
March 14, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I was thinking of coming to Ramgarh to see Bapu but then I felt that I would unnecessarily be wasting his time. I had no other business except to press it again on Bapu that in my opinion we are going the wrong way and as the position is very critical, he should reconsider the position in the light of the views held by some of us. But then I realised that it would hardly have any effect on him and so it was better not to encroach on his time.

I had jotted down my views on paper and I am enclosing a copy of the same herewith. I would suggest that you should place them before Bapu when he is at leisure. And perhaps after reading them he will himself say that I did the right thing in not coming to press them on him.

You must have read about the London outrage. I fear the situation is getting worse. Anti-British feeling is fast gaining ground which must in the end result in violence.

The Russo-Finnish peace has brought the danger nearer to home.

*Yours,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SIIRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
RAMGARH

29

CALCUTTA,  
March 15, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I had a talk with Bidhan and I got him to absolve Bapu from his promise. I did not write to you because he said he would himself write. I feel tempted to ask Bidhan to revoke this decision because then Bapu will have to pass through Calcutta! But I am keeping restraint on my desire.

Why did you interpret my letter as arguing that even violence could be better than civil disobedience, however inadequate? I agree with you that human nature must have some medium of giving vent to its protest and for that purpose civil disobedience, even if be a bit uncivil, is better than violence. Satyagraha in its true form is, of course, the best remedy. But what I say is this that we are giving display of our desire to protest without fully exploring the avenue of an honourable settlement. At times I feel that we are over emphasizing the fighting part of our programme and ignoring settlement through persuasion. We have pitched our demands so high that we have made it impossible for Englishmen to come to an honourable settlement. That is where I complain. There are others even in the Working Committee who feel like myself. But in the presence of Bapu, I and perhaps many others, feel a sort of opti-

mistic confidence which I at any rate lose immediately I begin to coolly analyse the position when no longer in his presence. This I think is succumbing to heart and ignoring the head although God alone knows which is more stupid! However, doubts about the wisdom of our present policy haunt me. We are passing through a critical period and so I said to myself that I must again put my doubts to Bapu. So I jotted down my thoughts and have sent you a copy for whatever it is worth. When I consult my heart, I feel that eventually Bapu must win because even though he may commit mistakes, he will commit less mistakes than other human beings. God must guide him. But this is talking with faith. When I consult my head and do a bit of "rational" thinking, I come to no other conclusion than this that we have not played our cards well.

But you need not waste your time over me. And if you do so, you should do so only to educate me. In any case, whatever I write, good or bad, please show it to Bapu. Bapu said to me many times that I should continue to influence him because seemingly I might not succeed but unconsciously he might get influenced, And so I am flooding you with all these thoughts. They also give me a little peace of mind.

*Yours,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADLVBIHAI DESAI  
RAMGARH

30

March 17, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

I have gone through your letter and your note. I share your distress but it is my firm belief that we cannot possibly accept anything less than what we are asking for. I have not been able to detect any shortcoming in my plan. As a matter of fact it is they who stand to gain by it. If they are not found agreeable that will only go to show that they are not inclined to give

India the whip-hand. The manner in which the princes have been deporting themselves is proving increasingly obnoxious. Who told you that I am disinclined to come in contact with the princes. All I need is a faint gesture coming from their side and I shall be found ready to establish rapport with them. In fact, it is they who are avoiding me.

*Blessings from  
Bapu*

*PS.* If you so desire I am ready to come to Calcutta to participate in the Seva Sadan function.

### 31

SEGAON,  
via WARDHA,  
March 17, 1940

MY DIAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I got Bapu to go through your letters. Never did I entertain the notion that what you write to me is just in order to exchange views with me, though I certainly believe that, maybe, by writing to me you indirectly wish me to convey things to Bapu more thoroughly. Therefore I place all your letters before Bapu as a matter of course.

I have never held the view that you would prefer violence to incomplete non-co-operation. What I said was that your approach reaches perilously near to Moore's and he, of course, considers violence to be the better course. The fact is that suffering humanity needs a catharsis for its pent-up feelings. And Bapu is busy perfecting just that device through a slow progress, and either he will succeed in his difficult task or perish in the attempt.

Once again Bapu has decided to take a major step in his life's career. You may know its nature before this reaches your

hands. Unless you are thinking of calling Bapu to Calcutta I may come down myself in order to acquaint you with the recent development, if you so desire.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

32

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA,  
March 29, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

You wanted to take me to Delhi but God wanted me to go to Calcutta instead. Bapu feels it would be a good idea seeing Andrews on the day fixed for his operation. Which explains why I am rushing to Calcutta. This train is abominable, not letting a fellow scribble anything. Here is a letter from Shiva Rao which has just arrived. Please glance over it, particularly the portions marked by me. If the position is really such as he says it is, we should feel quite optimistic as to the fate of our formulae. I should be reaching Calcutta on Sunday morning. We shall talk over the matter when we meet.

Today Rajaji has had protracted talks with Bapu. As the result of this *tete to tete* Bapu has discovered wider implications of non-violence, saying, finally, that if the Muslims continued to fashion their affairs in the manner they are doing now we would have to overhaul our entire programme. It is quite likely that when the Working Committee meets on the 15th, Bapu will place something brand-new before it. If in the mean time your ambassadorial mission is crowned with success, it would be a major gain.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

19-A BALLYGUNJ CIRCULAR ROAD,  
CALCUTTA,  
March 30, 1940

MY DEAR MAHATMAJI,

A friend from Delhi, who very often meets the Viceroy, has sent a letter to me. He says that the impression left by your last interview on Linlithgow was that at first you wanted to lead him up to a certain point, and when he tried to reach it, then you left him altogether. He further writes that if you had cleared the position from the very beginning that the Dominion Status of the Westminster variety would not be acceptable to you, the Viceroy would have comprehended the situation. But it was not done. You insisted on the reply of the question whether the Status conferred on India would be of the Westminster variety or not. Linlithgow drew the conclusion that if he would get this point cleared, a way for further negotiations would be opened. He drew the attention of the Home Government to this fact with all emphasis, and assured her that his position would be strengthened if he gets a chance of making such a statement. He also insisted that so far as that declaration was concerned, it should not be mixed up with the communal problems. The League may be opposed to it to any extent, but the political destiny of India could not be now changed. But when the basis of negotiation was clarified, and he (the Viceroy) made an announcement with the surest hope of your approval, then all of a sudden you changed your attitude and declared quite unequivocally that India could not accept it. This weakened the position of Linlithgow, and the Home Government considered him to be incapable of understanding and dealing with Indian situation. In short, Linlithgow had a deep grievance against your attitude.

Here ends the letter. When I was in Delhi last time, I had come to know of similar things through other sources.

So far as the real question is concerned, I do not think that the Viceroy has a reasonable cause of the grievance. Your question about the Westminster Status clearly meant that when it continues the right of cessation, the British Government should not hesitate to allow India to decide it through her own

free will. You did not mean that India would give up the right of self-determination and recede to a position where she would accept whatever the British Government condescends to give her in a patronising way. But leaving aside the real problem, perhaps it would have been better to remove the misunderstanding if Linlithgow so feels that he has reason to be aggrieved. The reaction of the Delhi letter on me is that Linlithgow feels that he has been met with the tactics of a politician, rather than in a way which is solely yours. However, the reactions of Linlithgow have no foundation in reality, and there would be no harm if only this aspect of the affair is clarified through a letter.

You may take up whatever line of action you deem fit in this respect. I have only laid the full information I got from the letter before you. The writer of the letter is a responsible and respectful man.

*Yours sincerely,*  
A.K. Azad

### 34

SFVAGRAM,  
WARDHA,  
April 4, 1940

DEAR LORD LINLITHGOW,

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad writes a long letter from which I enclose herewith the relevant portion.

I shall be painfully surprised if you can confirm the report received by the Maulanasaheb. Mine was a simple inquiry. We had come so near each other that there was no mental reservation between us. And if anything was left obscure there was no difficulty about going straight to the point and clearing obscurities. That Dominion Status may not be acceptable to the Congress had been cleared at the interview which led to my inquiry. The object was to know where each party exactly stood. I should be very sorry indeed to discover that I left on your mind the impression that if Dominion Status of the



Statute of Westminster variety was meant, the Congress would accept it.

I must refuse to give any credence to the suggestion that you had lost caste with the Cabinet because you had allowed yourself to be overreached by me as the report implies. I have not known British statescraft to be so easily moved from its dispositions as suggested by Maulanasaheb's correspondent. And I shall hope that you could never consider me guilty of wanting to overreach you.

Whilst I am writing to you I want to have another thing also off my mind. I have already told you that in my son Devdas you have a warm hearted champion. He has been writing long letters to me trying to convince me that I did you a gross injustice in abruptly terminating our last conversation. He discounts my assurance that the conversation ended because both you and I saw that the gulf between us was found to be too unbridgeable to be handled at that moment by prolonging conversations. Indeed it was your expression that it would be more manly for us to end the conversations the very day we began them and make the confession to the public. I at once accepted the accuracy of your characterisation. Devdas says that was said out of courtesy, if not British pride, and that you were eager to prolong the conversations. He is thus most disconsolate and thinks that my interpretation of your attitude is wrong. You alone can help me to settle domestic dispute.

M.K.G.

35

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA,  
April 4, 1940

DEAR MAULANASAHAB,

You shall address me as you like. I do not know that you addressed me differently.

I have written to Lord Linlithgow as suggested by you.

I quite agree with you about the Pattabhi episode.

I am inclined to think that there should be a considered reply from you to the Lahore resolution.

*Yours sincerely,*  
M.K. Gandhi

36

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA,  
April 5, 1940

DEAR SIR RADHAKRISHNAN,

I could not reply per return. Mass C.D. may or may not come. There is room for two or more opinions. I shall not precipitate. But so far as the national claim is concerned, there can be no abatement. There is ample room for compromise after the mind becomes one. So long as the British Government think that they should have the decisive voice, the Congress should be the opposing body. I know the choice lies between two courses, opposition or acceptance of what can be had today. My whole life has been passed not to yield anything on the fundamentals, no matter how weak one may feel, Up to now I have had no cause for regret in having adopted that course. This unbending attitude of the British grieves me. I was going to use the word irritation. But it is not to be found in the non-violence dictionary. Do you not see that princes have no power to treat with us? I ask you to be patient and firm.

*Yours sincerely,*  
M.K. Gandhi

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA,  
April 12, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Enclosed please find copy of the Viceroy's reply. Please tear it up after reading it. Devdas's debate with Bapu continues. He maintains that had Bapu made too obvious to the Viceroy that Dominion Status of any kind would remain unacceptable to us but that let him spell out what kind of it he contemplates offering, then the Viceroy's likely response would have been to the effect that an academic discussion of this kind had better be held some other time. I find substance in Devdas's argument, but there is little we can do about it. At times Bapu creates a misunderstanding and then finds it difficult to retrieve the situation. Bapu is so multisided that while we see only one aspect of what he says or does he himself has quite different aspects of it in his mind.

When I reminded Bapu about your query he said let that wait till some fresh opportunity occurs. So the reply he has sent contains no mention of it.

Shiva Rao seems to have made sort of commitment. You might have seen his statement. He talks of the right of self-determination and then he also makes a mention of committees. He might come here. If I gather something from him I shall let you know what it is.

Is it possible to convey to you an idea of the inferno we have been experiencing here. Bapu's own cottage is well furnished with *khas* curtains, so the ladies surrounding him can possibly have no idea of what it is like outside. My problem is to get bucketfuls of water and a man to sprinkle the curtains with it. And in spite of the air-conditioning inside his cottage he occasionally loses his cool and complains of the weather.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

PS. Shiva Rao had left some other documents here for us to read. Herewith their copies as well.

CALCUTTA,  
April 17, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADJVBHAI,

You might have drawn the attention of Bapu towards the rejoinder of Liaquat Ali Khan. I fear Liaquat Ali's criticism has some strength. Bapu's writings, if they are to be taken literally, do sound inconsistent. We know Bapu will have no difficulty in giving a correct interpretation; but the fact remains that more often than not, Bapu is misunderstood by his opponents, and even those who are in close touch with him, find it difficult at times to correctly gauge his mind.

When I was in Wardha, Bapu was in fact arguing against Rajaji about partition. And now he says he would resist it, although in a non-violent manner, with all the forces at his command. Such misunderstanding is not confined to the Viceroy or to Liaquat Ali but also to many other quarters. Moore, with whom I was lunching day-before-yesterday at his house, was very much puzzled. He says he reads so much contradictory matter in the *Harijan* that he virtually gets confused. He wants at times to write to support Bapu but he himself does not know what exactly is Bapu leading towards and thinks that there is confusion in Bapu's mind. We all know he is not correct in reading confusion in Bapu's article, but we also ought to know what people feel and think about them.

What will be Bapu's reaction towards the suggestion that Government should take up their attitude on the following lines:

"For the achievement of the goal of India, which H.M.G. have in view, substantial agreement on communal matters among the various communities is very essential. H.M.G. regret to observe that communal tension is increasing day by day. After studying the point of view of both sides, H.M.G. feel that the first prerequisite for achievement of the goal is to establish communal harmony; and with the object that final settlement may be arrived at between representatives of both sides, H.M.G. have decided to dissolve provincial Assemblies and allow a fresh election. After the election is held, representatives for the purpose of carrying on communal negotiations will be elected by members of provincial Assemblies, every community electing its

own representative. The number of such representatives will be decided upon at a later stage in consultation with the various communities. It is hoped that it should be possible to arrive at a settlement between such elected representatives of various communities. Such a settlement is the first prerequisite for smooth working of any constitution that may later on be framed to achieve the final goal. It is hardly necessary to remind that any constitution framed with a substantial backing of all the major communities will be difficult to resist, as far as H.M.G. are concerned.

*Yours,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADLVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

39

CALCUTTA,  
April 17, 1940

PUJYA BAPU,

Halifax's letter is quite clear. He has a grievance against you that we are determined to ignore their difficulties. That is the burden of his song. He stresses the point that "There is hope in co-operation, our motives are pure." Well, well. And what is your reaction to it? And what kind of a reply am I to send to him? Kindly guide me.

*Yours humbly,*  
Ghanshyamdas

CALCUTTA,  
April 19, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Zetland's speech does not appear to be bad. It is conciliatory. So far as he is concerned, the door is open. The following sentences are worth considering :

".... we accept the reasonableness of the claim that Indians themselves should play a vital part in devising the sort of constitution which they deem best suited to the circumstances of their country."

"These are in the main the reasons why we cannot dissociate ourselves from the shaping of the future constitution of India. But that does not mean that the future constitution of India is to be a constitution dictated by the Government and Parliament of this country against the wishes of the Indian people. The undertaking given by His Majesty's Government to examine the constitutional field in consultation with representatives of all parties and interests in India surely connotes not dictation, but negotiation."

I think this is not a bad formula. It should be possible to bring about an understanding perhaps on the following lines :

1. While H.M.G. declare Dominion Status of the Westminster Statute type to be the goal of India, the Congress' goal is one of Independence. But self-determination through negotiation having been conceded, it is agreed by H.M.G. that whether the future constitution of India should be based on Dominion Status or on Independence is a question which will have to be negotiated between H.M.G. and the Indian representative Assembly. H.M.G. will not rule out any negotiation on the basis of Independence if that be the demand of the Representative Assembly.
2. For the purpose of negotiation, the members of provincial Assemblies will elect a body of representatives based on communal representation, the ratio of communal represen-

- tatives in the body of representatives to correspond to the ratio of the communal members in the Provincial Assemblies. Such a body of representatives will first settle the communal question amongst themselves and thereafter will negotiate with H.M.G. as regards the form of constitution that is to be adopted for the future Government of India.
3. As regards the question of princes, whether they should be brought in the new constitution or whether the constitution should be confined only to British India, it will be negotiated between the Representative Assembly and H.M.G. In case it is decided that princes should be included, then there will be further negotiation between princes on the one hand and Representative Assembly on the other hand.
  4. The question of framing a new constitution will be taken up immediately on termination of War.
  5. In the intervening period India will be so treated as if she were enjoying Dominion Status.

I think such a formula should meet the position of both sides. But all depends on Bapu. My own feeling is that just now re-establishment of any personal contact between Bapu and the Viceroy is out of question. It will unnecessarily create complications and rouse speculation. But if Bapu thinks that there are "germs of settlement" in Lord Zetland's speech, then perhaps he should start correspondence with the Viceroy; and after the matter is fairly clarified, then will be the time for him to establish contact again. What does Bapu think of this?

The stalemate is undoubtedly demoralising. Bapu told me in Wardha that we were not losing anything out of such a position. But I fear there is great difference between the way he thinks and the way the man in the street does. Bapu does not visualise any struggle in the near future whereas the man in the street thinks that preparations are being made for a struggle. Bapu is talking of retirement from the Congress whereas the man in the street thinks he is going to lead civil disobedience movement. I think this is a dangerous position. If it is possible to end the stalemate, which I think it should be, then efforts should be made. And since Zetland says that the door is open,

it is up to Bapu to take the initiative. Lord Halifax also says that it is for Bapu to point the way. I agree with him. What is Bapu's reaction to my suggestion?

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

41

SI GAON,  
Via WARDHA,  
April 19, 1940

MY DIAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

The letter you have sent is of extraordinary importance. He is mulling over it. He will tell me later what to write.

I am afraid Bapu has destroyed the file. The file itself was there but on turning it over it was discovered that the papers we were seeking were not in it. Bapu remarked, "After reading them I destroyed the lot. We must not preserve such material. I am very definite about it." Have you, by any chance, a copy of any of them? But Bajrang's own shorthand note-book must surely be there.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* I shall write to you tomorrow again. Just now Bapu is busy talking with Maulana Saheb. Bapu placed the matter of coming out again before Maulana Saheb with great earnestness. This again failed to secure the necessary sanction.

M. D.



42

CALCUTTA,  
April 20, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

This seems to be the after-effect of my lunch with Moore. I wish Bapu or you would write personally to Moore.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SELVAGRAM

43

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
April 25, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

The letter written to Delhi is rather harshly worded. But my feeling is that the reply we are going to get will be found easy on the language. It could even seek direction. If that proves to be the case, Bapu will certainly show the way. For the time being Bapu remains suspicious as to their motives. What is happening just now is a mere repetition of what took place at the time of the 2nd Round Table Conference, and again in Rajkot, with this difference, of course, that in the present instance the scenario is much larger—at least that is how Bapu feels about the entire drama. It is quite possible that Bapu writes to Halifax after he gets a reply to his communication to the Viceroy.

I feel awkward when you put through a trunk call and I find it impossible to communicate to you something reassuring. But that is how it is, and I am helpless.

A letter from Rameshwarji has come through today. He wants Bapuji to come but Bapuji seems to have made up his mind not

to stir out of here. How long are you going to stay there? In case you choose to go to Bombay why not take this route. I am to leave for Bombay on the 30th and after staying the whole of the 1st of May I shall be starting for and staying at Surat from the 2nd to the 3rd.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* This time Bapu is quite clear about not resorting to civil disobedience in his article in *Harijan*. Make it a point to read it.

M. D.

## 44

CALCUTTA,  
April 26, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

War is taking a bad turn. Denmark is already swallowed and Norway is in the process of being finished. Scandinavia has been a happy family so far, civilised to the extreme and most peace-loving. I had read that in Scandinavia real democracy ruled, that there was so little disparity between the highest and the lowest. These small countries were cited by the author as an example of what could be achieved by way of equal distribution of national wealth without resorting to socialism.

I was only last year discussing the virtues of Scandinavian administration with Kher. And now it is all over! Yesterday Reuters in pathetic terms related how the population of Norway under the rain of bombs and machine-gun bullets was fleeing from towns completely demoralised and in panic. It is shocking that such good people should so suddenly be reduced to this helpless condition simply because they had neither the will nor the resources to develop the technique of destruction into a fine art. The futility of violence, and also, I fear, its temporary efficacy, is being proved. Of what avail was the violent defence

of Norway? And yet for the time being bigger violence of Germany seems to have succeeded!

Let us hope eventually everyone will see the futility of violence and a new era may dawn. But are we really making a non-violent contribution towards the world problem? Of what avail is our non-violence to Norway, Sweden and Denmark? Virtually, are we not giving a handle to Germany? True, we are doing nothing beyond embarrassing Great Britain and perhaps we may say that such an embarrassment is inevitable and is not caused deliberately. But the fact remains that England is in distress and by our action we are embarrassing not only England but all other good nations who have been victims of aggression. We are not likely, it seems, to succeed in changing England's heart. And victims like Norway, etc. can never appreciate our attitude.

In the light of our present attitude, the international world can with justification misinterpret our past help to victims of aggression like China and Spain. Were they more deserving of our help than the present victims? And if not, then why this distinction? Simply because an Imperialist power, even for the sake of its own interest, happens to decide to do something which is noble and moral! Bapu has never regretted his action during the last War when he vigorously recruited people for military purpose. This time his attitude looks a sharp contrast although he says that both the attitudes are right ones.

Doubts assail me again and again whether our position is morally sound. Bapu, of course, knows better. But I write again to say that I feel that we ought to have made a better contribution. I don't think Bapu will agree, but it is better to put one's doubts before him every now and then. He too, I find, changes and perhaps in this matter too he may.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

45

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
April 29, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Nothing from the Viceroy so far. As soon as anything arrives I will let you know. In case his letter arrives in my absence, I am leaving word with Bapu to write to you.

Your letter of yesterday was rather important. I gave it to Bapu so that something could be written for *Harijan*. Your reasoning, though appealing enough, is by no means unassailable. Society has been advancing the same set of arguments all the time. A sufficient answer should be sought from Bapu.

I should be returning here in the morning of the 9th.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* Herewith an account of the conversation with Hicks. Please also show it to Moore and ask him to do something in response to Bapu's appeal in regard to Andrews's legacy.

M. D.

46

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
April 30, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Here is Bapu's reply to your letter. It will go in as an article in the next issue. Your letter will be published on the top of this article. I do not know if this will satisfy you.

No letter from Simla yet!

*Yours,*  
Mahadev

**Enclosed Article**

My correspondent is not alone in bemoaning the lot of most cultured and inoffensive people like the Danes, and the Norwegians. This war is showing the futility of violence. Supposing Hitler becomes victorious over the Allies, he will never subjugate England and France. It will mean another war. Supposing the Allies are victorious, the world will fare no better. They will be more polite but not less, ruthless, unless they learn the lesson of non-violence during the war and unless they shed the gains they have made through violence. The first condition of non-violence is justice all round in every department of life. Perhaps it is too much to expect of human nature. I do not however think so. No one should dogmatise about the capacity of human nature for degradation or exaltation.

Indian non-violence has brought no relief to the cultured Western powers because it is still poor stuff. Why travel so far to see its inefficacy? We in India are torn asunder in spite of the Congress policy of non-violence. The Congress itself is distrusted. Not until the Congress or a similar group of people represents the non-violence of the strong, will the world catch the infection.

India's aid to Spain and China was merely moral. The material aid was but an insignificant token of it. There is hardly an Indian who does not feel the same sympathy for Norway and Denmark who lost their freedom overnight. Though their case is different from Spain and China, their ruin is more complete perhaps than that of Spain and China. Indeed there is a material difference even between China and Spain. But there is no difference so far sympathy is concerned. Pauper India has nothing to send to these countries except her non-violence. But as I have said this is not yet a sendable commodity. It will be, when India has gained her freedom through non-violence.

There then remains Britain's case. The Congress had caused no embarrassment. I have declared a policy that I shall do nothing to embarrass Great Britain. She will be embarrassed if there is anarchy in India. That, the Congress so long as it is under my discipline, will not support.

What Congress cannot do is to lend its moral influence to Britain. Moral influence is never mechanically given. It is for Britain to take it. Perhaps British statesmen do not think the

Congress has any to lend. Perhaps they think that all they need is material aid in this warring world. If they do, they will not be far wrong. Morality is contraband in war. My correspondent has given up the whole of his case for Britain when he says 'we are not likely to succeed in changing Britain's heart'. I do not wish ill to Britain. I shall grieve if Britain goes down. But the moral influence of the Congress cannot be available to Britain unless she washes her hands clean of India. It works under its own unalterable condition.

My friend does not see the difference between my recruiting in Kheda and my attitude now. During the last war the moral issue had not been raised. The Congress was not pledged to non-violence. It had not the moral hold on the masses it now enjoys. I was acting on my own in all I did. I had even attended the war conference. And to be true to my declaration I had been recruiting at the cost of my health. I told the people that if they wanted arms military service was the surest way to get them. But if they were non-violent like me, my appeal was not to them. There was no non-violent man among my audience so far as I know. Their reluctance was based on ill will towards Britain. This was gradually giving place to an enlightened determination to throw off the foreign yoke.

Things have changed since then. In spite of the unanimous support that Britain got during the war from India, the British attitude was translated into the Rowlatt Act and the like. The Congress accepted non-violent non-co-operation to meet the British menace. There is the memory of the Jallianwalla Bagh, the Simon Commission, the Round Table Conference, the emasculation of Bengal for the sake of the misdeeds of a few. The Congress having accepted non-violence I do need to go to the people to give recruits. Through the Congress I can give something infinitely better than a few such recruits. Of that evidently Britain has no need. I am willing but helpless.

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
May 15, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

We have got to give what Biharilal asks for. In Gujarati there is a saying, "Once the head is wetted, it has got to be shaved." There must be some matching saying in Marwari, like "Why be afraid of the mallet, when you have placed your head in the mortar?" He does not seem likely to servive.

Devdas rang up this morning to give news of Holland's surrender. Belgium may share her fate before long. Now Bapu should establish direct contact with the British Cabinet. Using the Viceroy as a medium, he should explain India's position fully. This may fetch some concrete results.

On hearing the news Bapu remarked, "There is nothing extraordinary about it." Hitler's stocks are steadily rising in his eyes. I said, "That is all right so long as you do not say so publicly."

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

Enclosure

C/O MAHATMA GANDHI,  
SIVAGRAM,  
WARDHA,  
May 18, 1940

DFAR SETHJI,

My name is Bal Kalelkar and I am the second son of Kakasaheb Kalelkar, formerly the Vice-Chancellor of Gujarat Vidyapith, whom you know personally. I was for years with my father in the Ashram at Sabarmati.

The purpose of writing this letter is to seek Financial assistance from you, for my higher studies in the Massachusetst Insti-

tute of Technology at Cambridge—Mass. (U. S. A.) which is considered the best institute of its kind in the whole world.

Financial assistance is absolutely necessary because, neither my father nor I own any property. For over twenty years, my father has been a close associate of Mahatmaji, and has since been working more or less on honorariums only. My education in the Bombay University was made possible partly by my good luck in producing good results in examinations which secured me scholarships and prizes, and partly with the help that a few friends of my father willingly rendered.

I am in need of Rs. 9,000 for the proposed course of study in America. I am hoping to win scholarships and prizes there, and thus enable myself to take my D. Sc. (in Engineering) instead of an M. Sc. only. But I may not bank on the possibility of winning scholarships in America, and sail without securing the requisite of my studies.

I would like to mention just at this stage that, I am terribly afraid of burdening myself with a debt and thus cripple myself in the very threshold of my career. Therefore, *I venture to ask for a scholarship pure and simple.* Let me hasten to add, however, that I consider myself responsible enough constantly to bear in mind the moral obligation which would demand a repayment of the scholarship money by way of personal services, if not in cash.

*I beg to remain yours faithfully,*  
Bal D. Kalelkar

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA,  
May 21, 1940

MY DLAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

I have your letter. I have written to Madhav separately. You must all be grief-stricken over Sumitra's demise. But is this not



the fit occasion for putting our faith in God and our knowledge of things on high to an acid-test? I have no doubt in my mind that all of you will emerge triumphant from this fiery ordeal.

Europe is going through the holocaust of internecine carnage, reminding one of the Yadava's family quarrel in the days of yore, with what result, we all know. Be that as it may, my heart is hardened in this respect.

*Blessings from  
Bapu*

49

May 23, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Bajrang had left with you a copy of the Birla College brochure. Bapu had promised to write something about it. Please place the brochure before Bapu in case you have not already done so.

We have taken a final decision about the Birla College now. We are writing to the Jaipur State that unless they give us permission to open Degree classes and remove all restrictions about appointments and dismissals of staff within July 1941 when the next session begins, we would close down the institution. The position has become so intolerable because we cannot move to the right or to the left without coming into a clash with the state. We want a free hand about appointments and dismissals of staff. The Degree College may wait but freedom about appointments and dismissals we are not prepared to mortgage to the state. There are a number of inefficient teachers on the staff and I have a keen desire to replace them by really good men and thus raise the standard of teaching in the college. But we are not allowed to do this. And therefore we have decided that unless we are given freedom in this respect, we would remove the institution to some part of British India.

Personally I am sure such a situation may not arise because the state will not have the courage to deny us the right that is ours. But if they do not realise their mistake, then I have made up my mind to remove the institution to British India.

Let Bapu read the brochure and write something in our favour if he feels like it. But the time may come when he may have to write something very strong.

*Yours,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

50

May 24, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

What I said to you on phone has not been confirmed. I do not know who spread the rumour. The gentleman in question was at Matheran. When the rumour came from all sides, I enquired twice at the gentleman's house and the news was confirmed. We then asked the Associated Press which did not confirm the rumour. How could the house confirm such a rumour is beyond my comprehension. But I had taken the precaution of telling you not to send any telegram until the Associated Press confirmed the rumour.

I am returning Roger's letter to you. A copy of his letter to me is being sent to you. Both of them tally.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADLVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

51

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA,  
May 30, 1940

BIHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

This from Bal. He wishes it sent just as it is. I said if it must be sent then let me do the sending. But no special significance should be attached to fact that I am forwarding it.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

52

MAGANWADI,  
WARDHA (C.P.),  
June 3, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

There must always be some occasion for excitement here. Somebody stole a letter addressed to Bapu by a girl. Along with it went his own pen. Thereafter the pen was recovered from the place where it must have been thrown by the person who did it. Bits of the torn letter were also found lying about the same place. Bapu was mortified. He felt it could not have been the handiwork of any of the servants; someone from among us must have done this. Forthwith he gave the ultimatum that if nobody came forward with a frank admission of the guilt by Friday he would launch a fast for an indefinite period. We have all been busy sleuthing the culprit but without any result. This interplay of hidden passions swallows up a lot of our time.

Now Italy too seems to be preparing to jump into the fray. And yet these people are riding the high horse. Who knows what is going to happen?



By now you might have gathered the implications of such expressive terms as fifth column and quisling. The former, of course, denotes the enemy with the gates. The latter stands for someone who has chosen to betray his country. Just as the original owner betrayed Norway. The 2nd June issue of *Times of India Illustrated Weekly* has an interesting article dealing with these two terms which have already passed into usage.

That letter has not even been acknowledged. Nor do I hope it will be.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* I have noted what you have to say about ghee. By this time I must have digested tons and tons of ghee of that quality. Supply of *bel* is being regularly maintained by Birla Park. If this token of your affection abides I should feel happy indeed. I shall let you know what transpires on Friday next. I have been making persistent efforts to avert the crisis, to get the crisis averted in fact.

M.D.

53

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA,  
June 4, 1940

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

I understand what you say about Ba

You may come any time you like along with the children. Though the days are rather hot, the nights are quite pleasant.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

SETH GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
BIRLA PARK  
MOUNT PLEASANT ROAD  
BOMBAY

54

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
June 6, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Your phone call. Early in the morning I had quite a lot to tell Bapu. I said, "Had you been quite definite as to the identity of the person who has committed this act of sin, there would have some justification for your going on a fast as an act of penance. But how can you undertake fasting as a measure to discover the sinner? It is presumptuous to claim or aspire for omniscience which is one of God's attributes. Therefore please do give up the idea of going on a fast. There are also some undefinable factors your fasting is likely to entail."

Bapu scribbled out on a piece of paper, "I will keep your argument in mind."

This encourages me in my hope that the fast may not come off after all. Personally I do not feel that someone from among us took the letter and the pen. We may be just so many pigmies in stature as compared to Bapu, but none of us will go far as to hold back until the danger of his fast actually overtakes us.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

55

MAGANWADI,  
WARDHA (C.P.),  
June 6, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

That episode of theft has taken a turn for the worse. Yesterday Bapu all of a sudden turned upon Amtussalaam, saying, "I

suspect you. You must admit your guilt without delay." I was taken aback. Amtussalaam protested, "I have nothing to do with it. I am innocent. Allah is my witness." After making this declaration she did not touch food; she has begun her own fast. I told Bapu, "It was rash to accuse the girl, just as it was rash to announce your intended fast." Before long he will realize that an act of injustice has been committed. He is then certain to make amends by doing justice to her a hundred-fold and that also will be a form of injustice. Bapu has done this previously on several occasions. At the present moment, however, Bapu remains adamant. For the time being I have only this to tell you that Bapu will begin his fast as per schedule. I shall have more to say about this matter tomorrow morning when we talk over the 'phone'.

A reply to that letter has arrived. In his last letter Bapu had said in effect. "This mass slaughter must stop. You are losing and if you fail to come to terms this mass slaughter will increase in volume. Hitler is not that bad, and you have only to wish and this holocaust will come to an end in no time. I am ready to go to Germany or anywhere else for that purpose if you so desire. Please convey this message to the British Cabinet as well." I had considered this piece of advice on the part of Bapu as sheer impudence, but the reply we have received is surprisingly nice. It says in effect, "We are engaged in War and will continue just as long as necessary to achieve our objective. I understand and appreciate your anxiety, but everything is going to be all right in the end. We both are deeply touched by your concern for our two sons." And that was all.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

56

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
June 10, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I read out to Bapu both Liaquat Ali's letter and your own. Your attitude is absolutely free from blemish. I was in receipt of Shiva Rao's letter dealing with Sikandar's formulae. Bapu wrote back in answer that the formulae needed drastic changes but that he himself would not do it, let them do that themselves. It would be more appropriate, he said in effect, to forward the formulae to Maulana and to Jawaharlal. Herewith Shiva Rao's letter. Kindly return it.

So the danger of Bapu's impending fast stands averted at last. The credit for it should go entirely to my efforts and to my vigorous remonstrance. Never before had I had the temerity to protest against any of Bapu's steps so strongly. Even after he actually started fasting I wrote a lengthy letter to him saying that the fast had nothing religious about it, therefore I would continue to oppose it until it was given up. Two hours thereafter Bapu announced his decision to abandon it.

If Sardar has returned from Satara, please show Shiva Rao's letter to him and also acquaint him with the substance of Bapu's answer.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

57

BIRLA AROGYA MANDIR,  
NASIK ROAD,  
June 11, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I am coming after the Working Committee meeting. Madhav said he wanted to stay with Bapu at his leisure and he thought

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Bapu would be very busy just now. So, we are all coming perhaps on the 19th or 20th, whenever Bapu is free. Please let me know which date will be better. I will stay there for two days perhaps, but Madhav and Vasant will stay longer. Would it be possible for you to accommodate them at Sevagram?

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADJVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

58

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA,  
June 12, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

You can come even now, but the heat has appeared again and is unbearable! The best thing would be to come after the 20th, for the W. C. people will be lingering on until the 20th, I am afraid. Madhav and Vasant can come whenever they like and they will both be accommodated here, if they will be ready to rough it out.

*Yours,*  
Mahadev

SHRI GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
BIRLA AROGYA MANDIR  
NASIK ROAD (G.I.P.)



59

BIRLA SANATORIUM,  
NASIK ROAD,  
June 12, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADLVBHAI,

I am returning the papers that you have sent me. As you will see; I am writing this from Nasik and therefore I have no opportunity of showing the papers to Sardar.

But what is the use of these drafts unless they are accepted by the Viceroy? Bapu correctly said that it was for them to make the changes in the draft. I still feel that something will come out, but perhaps the time is not yet ripe.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

Encl.

SHRI MAHADLVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

60

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
June 13, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Herewith I enclose Shiva Rao's letter which is eloquent of the state of things at the headquarters. Suicide evidently seems to some people to be better than surrender.

How long are you staying at Nasik?

Please return Shiva Rao's letter.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

61

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA,  
June 13, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

This was a bolt from the blue for your family. I don't think your family has experienced a similar tragedy so far. I do not feel equal to the task of writing to Madhav Prasad separately. Bapuji has sent a wire to Rameshwarji and another to Calcutta. I keep reminding myself of this comforting *shloka*:

Bad days come and go;  
Good days also come and go;  
Forget all about the bad days,  
Remember only the good days.

I am not writing to Rameshwarji either. I share your grief. I mean it literally, Durga says the girl's face has haunted her throughout the day. I am at a loss to find words to console you. You are God-fearing and a devotee. From your own vast storehouse of True Knowledge you will surely find words to give you the peace you need at this juncture.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

62

June 14, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

About the death of the Rajkot Thakore, the first announcement that was made on the radio, which I also heard, was that while on a Shikar trip, he was taken away by a tiger. The second announcement came the next day that his heart failed but that his *body was found*. And then the subsequent announcement came that his heart failed while ascending a *machan*. The

first announcement was heard by others. It appears that it was not a simple case of heart failure. Whatever be the truth, I fear it is the Nemesis that has worked in this case. Veerawala and then this man! Bapu must have sent a wire of condolence to the wife of the Thakore.

The following announcement was made on the radio last night from Berlin:

In India it has been stated in official quarters, and specially by the Governor of Madras, that if Great Britain granted Independence to India, it would not last long since in case of a German victory, Germany could not allow India to remain free. We wish to make this declaration with the consent of official quarters and also with the consent of the German leaders that in case India is freed by Great Britain, Germany has no desire, in case she wins, to take that freedom back. In fact, Germany has got great regard for the sacrifices being made by India to attain freedom through non-violent means. And whatever freedom she has got, or whatever she may get in future, will be fully respected by Germany. The relations between Germany and India have been most cordial in the past and it is the desire of the Government here that cordiality should in future increase.

The announcement was made in Urdu but I have paraphrased it. It was a much longer declaration than what I have paraphrased. Germany's promises are perhaps of little value, but in breaking pledges England has been no better since we are concerned. In case Bapu rewrites to the Viceroy, perhaps this is a point which may not be ignored.

Amery's interview to *The Hindustan Times* is not very helpful. He talks of "great decisions". But he forgot that South Africa's great decision, before she got Independence, was the Boer War and Ireland's decision w. pistol bullets. On the other hand, we have taken a great decision by not embarrassing Gt. Britain in her time of distress and have thus shown great chivalry. On the other hand, the Khaksars, in a way allied with the Muslim League, have already started, perhaps in association with Germany, attacking law and order. It is rather incongruous that those who made a noisy display of their loyalty should

be the first to embarrass the Government, whereas those who have always fought against it throughout their lives should do everything possible not to embarrass it.

But one could put a better interpretation also on Amery's speech. He might be saying : "You take charge of the Government and you will be in possession of freedom before you or ourselves realise it. It will be easier for England then to recognise the state of affairs that would then be prevailing. On the other hand, if you ask for Constitution first and Independence next, it will take perhaps a much longer time. Therefore why not have freedom first and Constitution next?"

Perhaps you have read Sir Purshottamdas's speech at the Town Hall meeting. I must say that he has shown great courage in speaking out his mind so frankly. He was criticised for this by subsequent Indian and European speakers, but he has uttered the truth.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADIVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

## 63

SI GAON,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
June 14, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Did you see Lumley? Please tell me everything about the interview.

Mirza Ismail's man came here from Ooty with his letter. It was mostly padding, or just as sweetly worded attempt to make up with me. But the information it contained was to the effect that a preliminary conference must be held without the shadow of a doubt but that before calling such a conference its constituents and their strength must be determined, and that it

should not take more than three days, from the 27th to the 29th, to do that. The letter also said that the terms of reference had been conveyed to him. Bapu's one-line answer was that what he was suggesting was a substitute for a Constituent Assembly, to be held to decide about the Constituent Assembly's functions. Poor Mirza! He must be feeling sorely disappointed. It seems he misunderstood Bapu's viewpoint. It often happens that Bapu's seemingly simple bits of information land people into a state of mental confusion as to their real purport. God knows how many people must have been misled by the interview Bapu gave to the *Times of India* man.

You forgot to leave behind that publication on minorities. Please send it now. There is another book, *Civitas Dei*, by Lionel Curtis which has been in print for over a year. It may be available at Taraporevala's or Thackers. Kindly arrange to send it immediately. In case it is not available there, it must certainly be in the Asiatic Society's library. Lionel Curtis has treated the subject of communal electorates with an amount of severity not equalled by any other writer. This Curtis equals Dwyer in his doubleminded tactics. Please send the book certainly asking Bajrang to search it out somewhere. If it is in the library, ask Bajrang to trace it through reference of communal electorates and then get it typed. The post meant for us should catch the mail there before 4 o'clock at the General Post Office. We have not received any communication from Simla so far.

How is your health now? What is the telephone number there? My *pranam* to Rameshwarji.

Yours,  
Mahadev

June 15, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

While replying to an objection regarding inconsistency in 'Question Box' of *Harijan*, Bapu has given rise to another

inconsistency. Bapu says, "I have written many things which may not appear consistent enough. And I have done so knowingly because I knew that I would not realize ahimsa during my lifetime to a desirable extent." After this he again writes, "My optimism will sustain for ever. No scientist involves himself half heartedly while experimenting. The age of mystic experiences is very much there and they will remain so long as God is there."

Now tell me which of the two things is correct. I think the second thing is correct. At least I was impressed by its fancy.

*Yours,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADJ VBHAI DLSAI  
SEVAGRAM

65

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA,  
June 15, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Thank you for yours of the 14th. The news broadcast by Berlin Radio is interesting. We do not have a radio set, that is why we are ignorant of what takes place elsewhere and what anybody is saying. The better course would be to present a radio set to Bapu, even if he does not like the idea.

Amery's interview turned to be an absurd experience. Devdas had asked me to send Bapu's comments but he did not like to say anything. But Bapu could have published your comment as it is a frank assessment and to the point also!

Yes, I liked the speech of Sir Purshottamdas, at least its beginning part. The rest also is sufficiently good provided we are aware of one who is making it !

I do not know what our all competent cabinet intends to do. We have not heard anything from the Government, nor does the cabinet have any new suggestion to give.

Till what time shall you be able to come here?

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

66

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA,  
June 16, 1940

MY DIAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

The War news makes one's head reel! It looks as though we were nearing the deluge.

After the Working Committee there are the meetings of the A.I.S.A., Gandhi Seva Sangh, and a number of similar things which will keep Bapu engaged until the 22nd. You had better therefore fix your arrival here on or after the 23rd.

There was a funny letter yesterday from Laithwaite saying the German wireless had broadcast the news that British Government agents were planning for Gandhi's assassination, and expressing the fear that the wish was father to the thought and that it might well be that German agents might well plan this thing in order to create vile propaganda against the British. It would be therefore well for everyone here to be careful, and would Gandhiji care to have unobtrusive police placed there. H.E. would be very glad to do it!

I have written a letter of thanks, but said that Gandhiji wants no such thing as having lived under the threat of assassination for a generation he had come to learn by experience that not a blade of grass moves except by His will and no assassin can curtail anybody's life or a friend protect it. This was Bapu's language of course.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* I am having a septic tank built here. Would Bajrang get a proper porcelain seat from Bombay? There are none available in the market here. It should not be of the complicate variety which is cleaned by a top-flush, but of ordinary variety cleaned by pouring water down.

67

June 17, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

In spite of all that you wrote back to Laithwaite, I am sure you will be very careful about what has been told by him. The Khaksars may be planning anything and therefore it is better to be careful which I have no doubt you are.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SLVAGRAM

68

BIRLA HOUSE,  
July 20, 1940

MAHADEVBHAI  
SLVAGRAM  
WARDHA (C. P.)

BRITISH PLAN EVACUATION CHILDREN FROM ENGLAND TO DOMINIONS. SHOULD NOT INDIA INVITE 117 THOUSAND CHILDREN AS REFUGES? THIS WILL BE GOOD HUMANITARIAN GESTURE AND WILL BE APPRECIATED BY GOD AND MAN.

GHANSHYAMDAS



69

SEAGON,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
July 22, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Roger Hicks' letter, just arrived, is worth reading. Bapu is quite correct in remarking in his article titled "Our Duty" which is due to appear in *Harijan*, that the British stand is in no need of our help. The sentence quoted by Roger throws a flood of light on the mentality of these people. The stark fact remains that there is a world of difference between our angle of vision and theirs! As to our conceptions or what is right and what the reverse thereof.

Roger is due here to meet Bapu. More will be known after the meeting.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

PS. Kindly return the letter.

70

SEVAGRAM,  
July 23, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

After your phone call I told Bapu. The delicate nuance of Bapu's remark eludes description in words. It can only be conveyed by word of mouth.

The expected Simla communication has arrived. He says he cannot answer certain queries by virtue of his obvious involvement the nature of which he has left to Bapu to guess. All the same Bapu's letter has been forwarded to the Secretary of State. And that is about all.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

SEVAGRAM,  
July 10, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

The enclosed will be an agreeable surprise for you!

Dastane, a very good Harijan of Bhusawal, has built a Harijan Home there. It will be an Udyog Mandir where he will go to stay with his wife. He is a Chitpawan Brahman and has a reputation to lose. He wants you—president of the Sangh—to perform the opening ceremony. Bapu thinks it would be good if you could accept the invitation. Your presence will be a great impetus to the Marwadi community there. Will you go? If you will, you have to suggest a convenient date.

What a reply Jinnah gave to Maulana! What impudence!

यदा-कदा पुचति वाक्त्राण ।  
तदा-तदा जातिकुल प्रमाण ॥

(From a man's taunting speech you can judge his origin and his family.)

Four days ago a rabid jackal appeared in the Ashram and bit five people, one of them being Narayan! We were all asleep and it was about 11.30 p.m. They are all being given antirabiserum injection. But it is a most dangerous thing—this bite.

Let us pray to god that everything will be all right.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

CALCUTTA,  
July 16, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

These copies of two letters, one from Lord Halifax and the other from George Schuster, will interest Bapu. I dislike

Schuster's letter And I don't understand why Halifax should object to selecting individuals by election However, these letters are now old story. Perhaps new developments may take place now

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SLVAGRAM

73

CAI CUTTA,  
July 17, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

The proof of my pen-picture on Bapu have already been sent to you directly from Delhi Please read the same and send me your opinion You may be able to give few more incident of Bapu's life which might be included in the book at various places

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SLVAGRAM

74

SLVAGRAM,  
July 18, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

The proofs have arrived. I am revising them from beginning to end.

Herewith a cutting which makes interesting reading. Does

Birla College also maintain a Montessori department? One of these days, in this life to be sure, I am cherishing hopes of touring the whole world in your company. The itinerary will include, beside Palestine, the schools run by the Soviets.

Yesterday a wire came through from Maulana Saheb, reading, in effect, "You must come to Poona. When are you arriving?" Bapu sent a telegram in reply, "What about your own promise to come here? Please keep your work. I do not think it advisable to come to Poona in pursuance of our common objective. I am not coming."

What next? Let us wait and see.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

75

SEVAGRAM,  
July 19, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

There is little in substantial in Schuster's and Halifax's letters. But the fact that the Government has done nothing so far in having an expanded Cabinet gives one a lingering hope that they have been seriously thinking over the Congress' offer.

Oh yes, there are rabid jackals also and this is one of the hazards of life in the evenings here. This is the first time I came to know of it. This is the first time, too, of a man being attacked and bitten by a jackal while asleep inside a house.

As soon as your proofs came I proceeded to read them, or rather enjoy reading them in company with Narayan. Narayan developed high fever yesterday. Even after 36 hours the fever has not abated. He was administered as many as seven injections. These have now been discontinued. We are all worried. But what will avail us by worrying when there is someone above us who does all the worrying for all of us? Bhavabhuti says this much so vividly, "The creatures only play their parts on the stage of Time."

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

July 27, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Prabhudutt Sastri wants to go to Sevagram to see Bapu and stay there for a few days. Perhaps he wants to consult about his future life. He is retiring from service. Please let me know if Bapu is prepared to grant him an interview and if so, when.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
WARDHA

SEVAGRAM,  
July 27, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Today I asked Bapu about Bhusawal. Bapuji says he appreciates your hesitation as something natural, but if barring this feeling of hesitation there is nothing to prevent you from visiting the place, then you must go. This is one of the rare instances of selfless devotion to the ideal of service discernable among the workers of Bhusawal. Before writing to you Bapu had made it a condition for your visit that they would not feel tempted to ask for any donation from you. They promptly wrote back that such was not their intention at all. The sole purpose of their eagerness to invite you there was that your presence there would inspire the local businessmen to take greater interest in the local Ashram. Therefore your visit to Bhusawal is desirable. This is what Bapu says. Now please let me know which dates would suit your convenience.

Bawla has had the fever again. But now it has come down. This may have been due to the injections. Injections are the Devil's own broth but there is no escaping them. The risk in-

volved in keeping away from the serum is so great that only a top-ranking medico can afford to make this experiment. God was kind and the jackal considerate in sparing Bapu, otherwise he would certainly have declined the serum and that would have placed us in a fix.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

PS. Here is a tit-bit. Yesterday when the Brothers Kumarappa arrived here, armed with the All-India Village Industries Association report, Bapu remarked : "You have achieved something worthy of someone assigned to the task of preparing a report of some Government department. There is hardly any justification for assessing the value of this production so high. In contrast to your report here is Birlaji's Birla College report—a model of restraint and modesty. Do read it." The two brothers quietly took their leave; they also took the Birla College report with them. They will certainly read it.

78

CALCUTTA,  
August 1, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I want to put some good photographs in the new book of mine on Bapu. Devdas tells me that Kanu has got very good selections. Will you please select half a dozen photographs from those selections and send the same to me for approval ?

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

SEVAGRAM,  
August 4, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Who is this Prabhu Dutt Shastri? Neither Bapuji nor I remember to have ever met him. Bapuji would like you to tell something about him. Then alone will it be possible to write to him. Will he be found willing to come and stay here?

We need your help in another, and quite important, matter. Bapuji is being flooded with complaints about the Government creating highly paid war-time jobs and filling them with Europeans. The salaries sanctioned for them are much too higher than they had ever earned. The other complaint is about raising funds through resort to sheer brute force. Bapu has written to the Viceroy about these two complaints. He replied back asking Bapu to quote chapter and verse to substantiate the complaints when alone would it be possible to take some concrete steps. This we have got to do. We shall certainly make use of the correspondence we already have in our possession, but we should like to have some more material from your side. Please, attend to this matter without loss of time, provided of course, you are in a position to collect some such material. Your Federation had passed a resolution on this subject and I have gone through the speech, delivered in support of that resolution. The speeches themselves are of little use, but the basic fact that the key positions in the Defence Department are being manned exclusively by Europeans is relevant to the issue and constitutes a precise complaint. Who are the beneficiaries? How many new jobs have been created? Where were the men picked out for these jobs working before? We need facts to go by.

For the book I am arranging to send specimen photos.

The mongooses as pets have begun to prove themselves as a pest. They invade every nook and corner of the rooms, with the kitchen marked out for their special attention where they often commit nuisance. The other day a cat wrenched out an eye of one of these and the day following made a thorough job of it by killing it outright.

Please go over the enclosed communication from Maurice Gwyer.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

80

CALCUTTA,  
August 6, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I am returning the letter from Sir Maurice.

Now about giving you chapter and verse on two questions that Bapu has raised with the Viceroy, I fear as far as donations under compulsion are concerned, I have not got any direct information. A friend of mine coming from some up-country was once telling me that the Collector of his District was putting a friendly pressure over him for a large donation. But I am sure he would not be prepared to come forward as a complainant. Apart from this one instance, I don't know any further.

As regards creation of big war jobs, I have heard complaints and shortly I will send you a note on the same. But I must warn you before hand that while there is a case, there is also exaggeration.

With refrence to Prabhu Dutt Shastri, he is a Professor of Philosophy. He is supposed to be a learned man and has been working in Calcutta University for a number of years. He comes from the Punjab. He is now retiring from the service. He has been telling me that he wants to devote himself to public service under the advice of Bapu. He seems to be a well-intentioned man, but I have not taken his intention very seriously so far. As a matter of fact his interpretation of public service and Bapu's interpretation may be quite different. But he has expressed his desire so many times to go to Sevagram and stay there for some few days and he has pressed me to write to you, and I am doing this. In case you allow him to go to there and stay for a few days, I will warn him before he leaves and tell



what is in store for him. And perhaps he may get frightened. But this will be the test of his intention. I will talk to him after I receive your reply.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYR. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

81

CAI CUTTA,  
August 7, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I have got this note prepared by Mr. Dhadda of Indian Chamber of Commerce. This gives as much information as we have been able to collect. From this you will see that the charge that all the key positions are held by Europeans is quite correct. The whole supply Department is manned by Europeans. There have been increase of emoluments in many cases, but there may be explanation for that. In my opinion it is not so much emoluments that matters, but what matters is why all these key-positions are held by British officials. If, however, an improvement in the position is to be made, I don't think mere inclusion of Indian officials would be of any great advantage. I know the Supply Department is being worked just now in a very extravagant fashion and if the money of tax-payers is to be saved, then the Government must employ experienced businessmen as their whole time officers. Besides, one should take special care to see that those businessmen who are thus employed are not put in-charge of such purchases in which they are directly interested. If this was done, then of course lacs would be saved. But that is not possible perhaps as long as we have got our own Government at the Centre.

From the tax-payers' point of view, I don't think inclusion of Indian officials would make great change. It may perhaps if right type of people are selected.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

82

SEVAGRAM,  
August 8, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

we are expecting a phone call from you today. The trunk rang up twice but informed us that the line was not working. Yesterday I duly informed Bapu that you want Rajaji summoned here. Yes, yes, of course, but would that serve any purpose? On the contrary, he said the Working Committee members were likely to misinterpret the move and place him in an awkward position.

The fact of the matter is that the Viceroy has sent a communication to Maulana Saheb as well. A reply has got to be sent and for this purpose also a meeting is unavoidably necessary without loss of time. The Viceroy's communication contains the hope that the new plan would meet with his approval. He is now expecting a reply. He also says that if Maulana deems it desirable to meet him he is welcome and can choose any date suiting his own convenience. Maulana has got to respond to this gesture.

Please go through Rajaji's letter of yesterday's date. If it does not show that the action has been misinterpreted, what else does it show?

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

83

SEVAGRAM,  
August 9, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Both of your letters have reached here. The facts cited in the longer one are going to be of great value to us.

Bapu has told the Viceroy in so many words in the course of his recent communication to him that his statement was extremely disappointing, that there was no occasion for publishing it, that its implications were dreadful, etc., etc. Let us wait and see what kind of a reply we are going to get. Maulana Saheb has been silent for quite some time and we have no inkling of what he proposes to do. Presumably he is busy discussing things at Allahabad.

Please pay special attention to the Prabhu Dutt Shastri, don't forget about the rabid jackals, nor about the snakes either. Alongside such matters please also keep in mind the fact that at the present moment malaria is raging here. The weather will improve by October, so make your plans for visiting this place accordingly, and before starting don't forget about giving me a week's notice.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

84

CALCUTTA,  
August 11, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADI VBHAI,

I am returning this letter from Rajaji. Evidently I must have misunderstood him on phone.

This has been further given to me by Mr. Mehta. It might be of some help.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

85

CALCUTTA,  
August 12, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

This has appeared in the *Hindu Outlook* which is the paper of Bhai Parmanand. I am not quite sure whether I should treat it as a compliment or as a libel. In any case, this might give you in your busy time a slight relaxation and amusement, and hence I am enclosing it herewith.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

86

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA (C.P.),  
August 14, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

The list from Gagan Behari Mehta has arrived. This also will prove quite useful. Bapu wants to know if he could mention Gagan Behari's name, as also Siddharaj Dhadha's in making use of the list. That is, can he mention their names in course of the letter he is going to write to the Viceroy.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

87

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA,  
August 14, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have your letter and the libellous enclosure. These fellows are a shame to Hinduism, and yet some of our Hindus swear by them. Why don't you run the paper in for libel?

I am taking up your MSS in right earnest today. I had so many irons in the fire—one being Narayan's illness and another being his examination! As I am a fond father (as you know very well) he got me while he was in bed to read out to him his Hindi books. That is I helped him to revise them. But in doing so I educated him and educated myself too, for the only good thing about me is that I am a student through and through and hope to remain one until the end of my days. Your books too I hope to finish with him. That will help me to find out which passages are not easy of understanding by the ordinary reader. You will forgive the delay, please.

Yours,  
Mahadev

*PS* I again spoke to Bapu and he after all agreed to make a statement. He might have made a longer and fuller one, but he said that would lead me into deeper waters and I should then have to tear the Viceroy's statement to shreds. I do not want to do it.

- The enclosed letter is just for your amusement. You
- have sons who are transparently honest.
- That is God's greatest boon.

M.D.

CALCUTTA,  
August 17, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

As far as Dhadra is concerned, his name could certainly be used in his official capacity as a secretary of the Indian Chambers of Commerce. While Mehta says that the note sent by him is exactly not his own note but given to him by a friend and, therefore, he would not like to take false credit.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI D'SAI  
SFVAGRAM

89

SFVAGRAM,  
August 18, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Dastane was here yesterday. If September alone would suit you he would have you in September. But he fears that rains would spoil the function and he therefore presses for some date in October. From there you can go to see Ajanta too. I have half a mind to accompany you to Bhusawal. Please let me know if October will suit you.

A friend of mine Dr. Bhaskar Patel has applied for the post of a medical referee for the Bombay Presy. under the Hindustan Co-operative Insurance Company. He is one of the most genuine Congressmen I know. Has been to jail several times and did a lot of Congress work. He is an M.D. from Germany M.R.C.P. of Edinburgh and T.D.D. (England) and is now a lecturer in Tuberculosis in the J.J. Hospital, Bombay. He is a most conscientious doctor, and is sure to do his work well. Could you put in a good word in his behalf to Dr. Bidhan and

Nalinibabu? He has done such an amount of free service to us that I feel no hesitation in pressing his claim. I would have written to Nalinibabu myself but I thought I ought not to do so in my position as Bapu's man. You could do it more effectively. If you think you can help, please do so. If you do not for any reason whatsoever feel you should not do it, of course I will understand.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

90

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
August 18, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Your letter. Basant's letter was not found enclosed with it. But it is not necessary to send it now that I have already replied to him.

You say Kunzru has also been invited. I hear that Nalini also has received a similar invitation, but the reply he has sent is quite fit and proper. He showed Girja Shankar Vajpayee's telegram to Maulana who wrote back to him in plain language that so long as they failed to secure 'the Congress' co-operation all these tactics would end up in smoke. Please convey my gratitude to Nalini Babu for the sort of reply he has sent. Bapu, too, liked it very much, indeed.

Amery's statement is simply outrageous. Even the Viceroy or Zetland had not gone that far in their statements, bad enough though these were.

What is going to be our watch word is known only to God. For the present no cut and dried attitude is possible. Bapuji has made up his mind to get the Working Committee to reconsider his resolution dealing with the matter of nominations.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* Yes, Bapu also was of the view that action for libel should be taken in regard to Parmanand's article. If the paper is just a rag, no such action needs be taken.

M.D.

91

CALCUTTA,  
August 19, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADLVBHAI,

October will suit me still better. I won't fix the dates just now as I suppose there is no hurry about it. You may, therefore, kindly tell Dastane that I will postpone the visit to October.

With reference to, Bhaskar Patel, on enquiry I have found that before your letter reached, the Hindustan Insurance Co. had made some different arrangement. Instead of appointing a medical referee they have appointed a small committee with a Doctor as one of its members who would be paid for the number of cases received by him. I would have got Dr. Bhaskar Patel in as one of the medical members of the committee, but I find that they have already appointed Dr. Gilder. Therefore I fear nothing more is to be done now.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

92

SEVAGRAM,  
August 19, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I told you this morning how Bapu was asking them to retrace their steps. He has now definitely told them so, or else they



definitely do without any kind of guidance from him. He has written to the Maulana a letter which may one day be published. But if it is not published, you will see it when we meet.

The Dr. Patel I wrote to you about is Bhaskar Patel. It is quite likely that Sardar may have spoken about Nathubhai Patel, another doctor, who is senior to Bhaskar but has none of his patriotic record and none of his popularity. Bhaskar was on the Prohibition Board too and a tower of strength to the Board. He had German degree, the orthodox medicoes here would not recognise the degree, so on release from jail in 1933 he went to Fdinburgh, took the MRCP and then specialised in tuberculosis and got the diploma of T. D. D. which very few have in India. He is slightly junior to the others, but because he is junior he needs some outside income whereas the others have much bigger incomes and do not need to add to their income. If we are ever in Bombay I shall introduce him to you. His daughter is a teacher in Rameshwarbhai's house.

Yours,  
Mahadev

93

CALCUTTA,  
August 20, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

This paper of Bhai Parmanand is owned by him, but he is not the editor. It has no important circulation. Any action against the paper would hardly have any effect on Parmanand. I am not, therefore, bothering about it.

Bapu's language at times sounds contradictory. In his latest article he says, "I never look upon *Mahabharata* as a mere record of earthly warfare. The poet had described the eternal warfare between truth and untruth, violence and non-violence, right and wrong." Then in the next sentence he says, "How the Great Vyas has demonstrated that in this war the victor was no better off than the vanquished." If the war had been between

right and wrong, then why “right”, if it were the victor, he should be no better off than the vanquished “wrong”?

Will you kindly instruct the proper authorities to send me a copy of the *One Step Forward*?

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

94

August 28, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I enclose herewith a copy of Agatha's letter. It contains too much about the Indian Students Union and so little about the Indian situation. I don't feel inclined to send any money to this Union. But I wonder whether Bapu has got any view about it.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

95

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA,  
August 29, 1940

DEAR LORD I INI ITHGOW,

I thank you for your letter of the 23rd instant—My reminder was proof of my anxiety that the letter should not miscarry.

My distress is going deeper. Recent events disconcert me.

My complaint about 'exactions' and inflated salaries is already before you. I fear that free expression of public opinion will presently be suppressed with a heavy hand. No discordant note will be allowed. Perhaps wars cannot be carried on otherwise. That is one of the many reasons for making them hateful.

If things go on as they are and if Congress remain supine, the Congress will die a slow death.

In the domain of politics your words alarm me. I must confess I do not understand some of them.

The profound differences between Congressmen and me are practically bridged. They nearly feel that it was wrong to have decided in advance that a state could not be run without an army. All hope for the world seemed to have been lost so far as the Congress was concerned. If you are interested in this part of the inner history of the Congress, you shall have it.

If I cannot help the British Government, I do not wish to embarrass them. But this desire must not be carried to the extent of committing *harikiri*.

But before I take any step, I would like to lay bare my heart and mind to you and seek light if it is darkness that envelops me. If, therefore, you think that it is worth while our meeting, you please wire appointment. I am seeking the interview in anticipation of the 13th which is the date for the meeting of the Working Committee. If our meeting comes off before that date, it will be helpful. If you will feel embarrassed to meet me or would otherwise not meet me, there need be no telegram sent me. I shall take your silence to mean that you cannot see me on the issue raised by me. If you cannot, I shall not misunderstand you. I hope you will find it possible to pardon me for causing you trouble when your attention should not be diverted from the task before you. My object in seeking an appointment is to leave no stone unturned, first to avoid all possibility of an error of judgment and secondly to put before you my case before taking any irretrievable step.

I am,  
Yours sincerely,  
M. K. Gandhi

96

CALCUTTA,  
August 31, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I am expecting the final proofs of my book to be ready in a week's time. Now if the book is to come out on the 2nd of October, then you should send me your Foreword as soon as you can.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

97

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
August 31, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have finished the book. Now I am going to deal with the topics one by one. Are you not going to split the reading matter into separate categories? If we could sit together in Delhi the job should not occupy us for more than a couple of days.

A communication has been despatched to the Big House. It will reach their hands tomorrow, or maybe, the day after since tomorrow is a Sunday. A reply should be here by Tuesday. Please give me a ring in the evening of Monday or the morning of Tuesday so that I could tell you about the date of our departure, assuming that a reply by wire, as requested, arrives by then. He dare not refuse. Babu's letter is full of pathos. Can you manage to be in Delhi, provided, of course, you have the time? If you start in the evening of the day after we do, that would be quite all right.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* Have you seen Agatha's letter? I, too, have begun to question the desirability of sending something for the Students' Union. But I shall let you have Bapu's wish in this respect.

M. D.

98

VICEREGAL LODGE,  
SIMLA,  
September 2, 1940

DEAR MR. GANDHI,

Many thanks for your friendly letter which I was glad to receive. I am not quite sure that I have correctly understood your point, and if I have not you will I know forgive and correct me, though I am grateful for the pains you have taken to let me know your mind. I am distressed that you should be in any doubt as to the policy of H. M. G. or as to the meaning of anything that I have said, and I warmly appreciate it when you say that "if I cannot help the British Government, I do not wish to embarrass them". Their policy, I had thought, clearly set out in my statement, and in view of your doubts I can but regret the fact that Maulana Abul Kalam Azad should not have taken advantage of my offer to see him and a friend in advance of the formal Congress reply. I had hoped that had he done so it would have facilitated the framing of the Congress reply, and without in any way prejudicing his own position he could have let me know the points on which he was uncertain; then I would have done what I could to make the position clear. My letter of 4th August to the Maulana, which has now been published, made clear my anxiety, and my hope that Congress, no less than other parties, would within the terms of my statement be prepared to co-operate with me in the Central Government and in the War Advisory Council; and you will acquit me of any insincerity if I say how deeply I regret that so far they should have been unwilling to do so, for the statement is a genuine

effort on the part of H. M. G. to bridge the differences that stand in the way of progress, and to bring all parties together in responsible and fruitful co-operation for an immediate practical common purpose, without prejudice to their respective political positions or to their normal peaceful political activities.

2. Your letter encourages me to think that there may be misunderstanding and I shall of course be most happy to see you, and to talk over the position with our accustomed friendliness, on any date and at any time you may choose though I must in fairness to you make it clear that my statement, read with the Secretary of State's speech, represents the decided policy of H. M. G. Nor I am sure, will you misunderstand if I say that, in the light of the Maulana's reply to my earlier offer of an interview, I should have to make it clear to the public that on this occasion the initiative did not come from me.

3. I will write separately to you about the cases you have mentioned to me—the reports I have so far received suggest that certain of them at any rate are without foundation, or exaggerated, but in any case that matter, important as it is, is not at the moment directly in issue.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Linlithgow

99

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA,  
September 6, 1940

DEAR LORD LINLITHGOW,

I thank you for your prompt reply to my letter of the 29th ultimo. I had your wire too. I appreciate your hesitation to send me an appointment straightaway.

Whenever I come, if I do, as a result of this correspondence, of course the announcement will be that I had sought an appointment. As I can see things now, it is likely that after the forthcoming meeting of the All-India Congress Committee, I

shall renew my request for an appointment. For I wish to take no step without first discussing things with you and making myself sure that there is no room left for any misunderstanding.

I was well aware that your statement and the Secretary of State's speech represented the decided policy of H.M.G. Had we met, I would have sought a clearance of my doubts about the manner in which the policy is being enforced and put before you more fully my grounds for dissatisfaction which, I must say, daily events are deepening. I do not at all mind the Congress wandering in the wilderness. Nor should I at present engage in a fight with the Government over their policy if it were based on grounds which could be understood by the plain man. But I must not be a helpless witness to the extinction of a great organisation which I have held under curb on the ground of refusal to embarrass H.M.G. at the present critical juncture. I must not have it said of me that for a false morality I allowed the Congress to be crushed without a struggle. It is this thought that is gnawing at me.

As to the Maulana Seheb's disinclination to see you I had clearly understood that you would give him the option either to see you, if he felt like it, or to send you a written reply. You did, as a matter of fact, give him the option. But instead of sending a written reply he first wanted to ascertain whether he was free to discuss the announcement itself, and when he was told that he was not, naturally he chose not to take up your time over discussing details of enforcing a plan of which he thoroughly disapproved. Don't you think, taking the position in the light I have understood it, that he was quite correct in not visiting you?

I must deal with my complaints about the allegations as to pressed contributions and higher salaries in another letter if it becomes necessary to do so. Meanwhile I thank you for the pains you are taking over my complaints.

*I am,*  
*Yours sincerely,*  
M.K. Gandhi

100

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA,  
September 8, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Madhav came in last night and is staying with me. I am trying to make him feel completely at home, and I am sure I will succeed.

I have delayed sending my foreword and suggestions so long, but I am sending them now. Even if you cannot publish the book on the Jayanti Day I would urge you to carry out the few suggestions I have made. I am very sorry I could not send these earlier. But I hope even this is not too late.

Please recast the Foreword as you please—at any rate correct—or see that someone fully qualified corrects my rotten Hindi and licks the thing into shape.

We leave for Bombay on the 11th. I shall send with Mahadev copies of important correspondence.

The foreword and the suggestions are going by separate book-post. Please acknowledge receipt.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

101

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA,  
September 9, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

After all I sent on the MSS in my own hand, so that you may see my own language. Corrections are made in pencil by Ramnarayan Choudhury, and then, if necessary, make your own corrections. It is best, I think, that my language goes in just as



crude as it is. Mahadev is making himself useful too. He copied the whole MSS, which he will bring himself and did a fair amount of translation into Hindi.

*Yours,*  
Mahadev

102

CALCUTTA,  
September 10, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEV BHAI

I have received your Foreword with suggestions.

Of course I am going to divide the book into sections and the proofreading will be done very carefully. No mistake, as far as possible, will be allowed to creep in either in the Sanskrit quotations or in the Hindi text. I will adopt most of your suggestions in the third proof which I am getting shortly. Kaka Kalelkar has also made some suggestions and some of them were identical with yours. You have explained the killing of calf in somewhat different manner than mine. Strangely Kaka Kalelkar also advanced the same arguments. I said to him that my interpretation was that one should not be अनासक्त permanently, and yet it is possible to be for a moment when the decision is taken. But I admit the force of your argument and I will recast it. It is true that in many matters I have interpreted Bapu according to my own light and that interpretation may not perhaps be acceptable even to Bapu. But I have said to Bapu many times that even if he interprets himself, the language would still be complicated and, therefore, it was better that I stuck to my own interpretation. And he agreed. After the book is published, some day I will ask Bapu to tell me whether I have interpreted him fairly intelligently. And his answer will be very interesting.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEV DISAI  
SEVAGRAM

103

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA,  
September 11, 1940

MY DEAR G.,

The enclosed will tell its own tale. What happens next, God alone knows. Let us hope and pray for the best.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* Did you like the Foreword? Tell me frankly for I prize your opinion.

M.D.

104

WARDIAGANJ,  
September 21, 1940

GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
CARE LUCKY  
CALCUTA

FULSINGJI FASTING REGARDING WELL FOR HARIJAN IN VILLAGE  
MOTI YOUR ESTATE HISSAR. AM TOLD YOUR INTERFERENCE ALONE  
CAN SAVE LIFE PRECIOUS WORKER. MUSLIM AND HINDU JATS OPPO-  
SING ANY WELL FOR HARIJAN. THIS WELL ALMOST FROM PUBLIC  
DONATIONS AND WOULD HAVE BEEN FINISHED BUT FOR SAID  
OPPOSITION.

GANDHI

105

BIRLA PARK,  
BALLYGUNGE,  
CALCUTTA,  
September 22, 1940

MAHADLVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM  
WARDHA (C.P.)

CHHAJURAMJI ILL BUT HAS ALRFADY WIRFD BHAGATJI THAT HF  
UNDERTAKTS COMPIITION WEI L I VFN WITH HIS OWN MONI Y EITHER  
WITH CONSENT OI JATS OR THROUGH GOVERNMENT PROTECTION AND  
HAVE ASK'D BHAGATJI GIVE UP FAST. CHHAJURAMJI HAS FURTHER  
PROMIS'D MI TO PROCFID TO MOTH IMMIDIATLLY HF RFCOVERS.  
HAVI WIRLD MYSILF SHYAMLAL. PIRSUADF BHAGATJI N'OW BREAK  
FAST. I THINK BHAGATJI NOW SHOULD GIVE CHHANCE CHHAJURAMJI  
TO FULIH HIS PROMISF.

GHANSHYAMDAS

106

8 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLACE,  
CALCUITA,  
October 4, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

So I am hung up here. Urmila Devi said she had seen the Dy. Police Chief and he had suggested that if Krishna Kumar wrote to the Police Commander saying Dhiren's arrest had dislocated work and so on he would recommend his release. I drafted a letter accordingly and it has gone. She also said that the Police Chief would be returning here today from Darjeeling and that I might meet him. But he has not come. So I am going to Darjeeling, Godwilling I say Godwilling, for Gangaprasad who is going to Darjeeling and whom I was to have accompanied says there is no accommodation on the train ! I am tell-

ing him that if only one seat is available, I can go as his servant! But he does not listen to me. Anyway it is no use waiting here. If I must see N., I must after him incense on the heights of Darjeeling.

I saw the Poet. He will stay on, it seems. He has extraordinary vitality and wants to live another ten years.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

107

CALCUTTA,  
October 8, 1940

GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
PILANI

RETURNED FROM DARJEELING PRACTICALLY EMPTY HANDED. REACHING WARDHA TOMORROW. WRITING.

MAHADEV

108

PILANI,  
October 9, 1940

PUJYA BAPU,

I had made a mention of Krishnadas Gandhi's comment in *Harijan*. You had asked me to write something on it. Herewith that something. I have written this with the idea that it will be used as a Letter to the Editor. Together with your own reaction to it.

Among the arguments advanced in support of khadi, mine originating from economic considerations, are rather fewer in number. Or it may be that I have not that much faith in its

effectiveness. That explains why I have refrained from making any mention of the arguments generally advanced in support of khadi. But what I have written should furnish sufficient material to warrant your own comment. It may be made use of, if you think proper.

I shall certainly try to write something for *Harijan Sevak*. But all depends on whether I have time to spare.

I am reaching Delhi in the next three or four days.

Yours humbly,  
Ghanshyamdas

*PS.* My own set of arguments favouring the use of khadi are of an essentially spiritual nature. They hardly qualify for general application.

G.D.

## Enclosure

### A Necessary Correction

*Harijan* of September 17 has partly reproduced on its page No. 288 an article by Shri Krishnadas Gandhi which originally appeared in *Maharashtra Khaki Patrika*. The quoted article tells us that India annually consumes in all 6330 million yards of cloth. This includes cloth imported from foreign countries, produced by Indian mills, cloth woven from yarn produced by Indian mills, and pure khadi, i.e., four categories of cloth. Out of this, imported cloth accounts for 630 million yards, 4090 million yards produced by Indian mills, 1670 million yards woven out of Indian and imported yarn on Indian handlooms and 1025 million yards of pure khadi. Thus the Indian mills' share works out as 0-10-6 out of a rupee, foreign cloth 0-1-6 anna, handloom cloth slightly less than 0-4-0, and pure khadi 1/3 pie only. Thus it can be said that khadi occupies a negligible place in fulfilling the nation's needs.

Further on Krishnadasji says, "It has been said that the cost of these 6330 yards of cloth comes to 2,000 million rupees after

deducting the cost of cotton dying. In other words this amount will go to 120 million villagers. If, instead of that, we produce all our cloth in our mills then Rs. 470 million would be swallowed by labour, salaried staff and others, while Rs. 800 million will go to swell the pockets of the capitalists or would be spent on gadgets of ostentatious living. If this went direct to the villagers then 12 million strong labour force will have an additional amount of Rs. 10 per head per year.

I am afraid the entire estimate suffers from the defect of miscalculation. There are more weighty arguments calculated to bolster the cause of khadi. Therefore it does not add to, but in fact takes away from, the importance of khadi in our national life if we resort to weak and untenable reasoning. It is quite possible to arrive at conclusion that would support the case of khadi if we rely on facts and figures which are accurate. Therefore to erect an edifice in support of khadi on faulty figures is self-defeating, and all the more undesirable.

It is of course, not possible to be accurate about figures down to the last pie, but so far as the mills' production is concerned, near-correct figures are always available and are quite adequate to sustain the validity of our case.

The average cost of cloth ranges between 0-2-3 and 0-2-6 per yard. This cost applies to cloth with 40" width and produced from the yarn numbered 20 and 30, while dyed cloth, printed cloth and specially designed cloth costs more. But the higher cost is due to the fact of the cloth being dyed or printed and is applicable to both mill-made cloth and khadi. Therefore, in order to establish a comparison between the two kinds of cloth we shall have to accept raw cloth as the basis. At present the cost of raw cloth is nearly 0-2-3 per yard and if we assume that all our requirements are going to be met with mill-made cloth the cost of 6330 million yards of cloth comes to rupees 900 million and not rupees 2,000 million. The cost of the cloth we are importing at present comes to 0-2-3 per yard after paying the customs duty. Therefore 0-2-3 can be safely accepted as the cost.

Once we accept rupees 900 million as the cost and not Shri Krishnadas's 2,000 million many of the arguments will be effectively met.

But how this amount of rupees 900 million is distributed

will be clear from the table given below:

	Cost %	Price (in millions Rs.)
Cotton	51	455
Mill stores, packing & spare	5	4.50
Starch	2.5	2.25
Coal	2	1.75
Labour	23.5	21
Staff	2.5	2.50
General charges, interest & insurance	3	2.50
Depreciation	4.5	4
Profit	6	5.50
Total	100	89.50

From the above it will be clear that according to my calculation profit and depreciation account for Rs. 95 million. More often the rate of profit falls while the cost of labour rises. But in my anxiety to strengthen the case for khadi I have formulated the above table on the basis of the mills' profits during their salad days. Out of the amount of Rs. 900 million, cotton will consume Rs. 455 million and labour Rs. 235 million. Thus only Rs. 275 million remain for 'gadgets of ostentatious living' as Shri Krishnadasji puts it. His estimate was that the amount thus saved would be to the tune of Rs. 200 million. There is a big difference between the two figures. But if we go deeper we will find that part of the amount spent on starching, coal, management and stores goes to labour in one form or another. If we have planning, which is quite feasible, the manufacture of textile machinery, production of store items and starch in our own country will give a big slice of the amount of rupees 200 million labour.

The one great factor working against the mills is that they are mostly clustered in urban areas and, therefore, have a baneful effect on village life. That is why most of the mills in Bombay and many in Ahmedabad are on the decline. If the Govern-

ment so desires it can promote dispersal of the mills in the rural areas. The operation should not take more than a couple of decades.

We should proceed to compare the good points of khadi cloth *vis-a-vis* mill cloth only after taking all these factors into consideration. The picture I have envisaged will, by the time the objective is realized, leave a mere 50 to 60 million rupees for the capitalists, of course after deducting the depreciation charges. Starch, store items, textile machinery manufacture will bring another 10 to 15 million to the capitalists. Thus, after taking all the economic aspects into consideration the only thing that can be claimed on behalf of the mills is that by the time the plan is translated into action the mills, if they are allowed to function as at present, will bring in a profit of Rs. 50 million to 75 million. At present, after deducting the depreciation charges, the capitalists are not earning more than Rs. 50 to 60 million. According to official figures the labour force at present comprises 5 lakh to 5.5 lakh hands. Accepting the official figures as correct every worker gets Rs. 35. But according to my estimate a mill-hand does not get more than Rs. 25. Therefore I assume that the labour force does not comprise 5 lakh or 5.5 lakh, but nearly 7 lakh.

There is room for changes in the above table in keeping with the varying rates and conditions prevailing in different mills. As for example, some mills pay more for cotton while some other spend more on labour. But the rate of profit I have estimated is rather on the high side while actually it is lower. The valuation of the mills at present should not be placed higher than Rs. 1,000 million. This being the position, depreciation and profit should not claim more than 10 million. If someone were to put together the profits earned by all the mills, the discovery will make interesting reading. My belief is that the actual profits would then appear to be less than my estimate.

It was not at all my intention to present the mill's side of the case, but it is quite likely that my contradiction of Shri Krishnadasji's figures creates the impression that I have come out in support of the mills. I am helpless. But if we went to lend strength to khadi's case from the economic point of view we should also have before us the mills' position as it actually is, and then to proceed to work for khadi's victory in this war



of rivalry. But that is possible for official agencies, or the Millowners' Associations of Bombay and Ahmedabad. Whatever be the case it is absolutely necessary to modify Shri Krishnadas's figures.

109

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA,  
October 10, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJJ,

N. (Sir Nazimuddin, the Prime Minister of Bengal) was even more polite than the Viceroy, asked me to dine at his place, gave me some seven hours, but was adamant. The C.A.D. of Calcutta seems to be rotten. They have tried to make out that Dhiren is a devil of the deepest dye, that even whilst he was in your employ he has attended secret meetings of Anushilan parties where secret storage of arms, etc. was discussed. Dhiren has given the lie direct to this allegation. He was exasperated when I mentioned the charge. I enclose copy of the letter I am addressing to N. today. Let us see what happens. Babu says we must see the thing through.

In haste,

*Yours,*  
Mahadev

**Enclosure : Copy of Letter to Sir Nazimuddin**

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA,  
October 10, 1940

DEAR SIR NAZIMUDDIN,

I am grateful to you for having given me all the time you did in Darjeeling, and for also telling me what according to

your information was the substance of the charges against Shri Dhirendra Mukerji. I am also thankful to you for giving me permission to interview Shri Subhas Chandra Bose and Shri Dhirendra Mukerji. I am sorry however that my interview with you should have ended just in a stalemate, you failing to convince me and I failing to convince you. But let me tell you that I came with an open mind and during my interview with Shri Dhirendra Mukerji went into all the charges against him, without entering into the details that you said I ought not to do. My interview with him leaves me as convinced as ever of his innocence and I bespeak your indulgence to go into a detailed report of the talk that I had with him. I was sorry that your restriction imposed upon me the severe handicap of not mentioning certain names, otherwise my talk could have been more definite.

To take up the charge of objectionable activities between his release from jail and his taking up appointment under Shri Birla.

He had no hesitation in admitting that he went to Allahabad not once as you said but two or three times, that he went to Lucknow, and to Rajshahi.

He went to Allahabad to see his ailing father and his brother (who by the by is no communist, as your report said, but is a practising pleader of some eighteen years' standing, and other relations. He denies that any men indulging in objectionable activities met him. One man did go to his house—a man called Sudhanshu Mukerji an ex-detenu and a nephew of Sir L. G. Mukerji, a former judge of the High Court. He gave up politics long ago, and is running a shop and had come to his brother to collect money due to him on account of certain bills.

He went to Lucknow and from there to a village where there the Summer School organised by Shri Narendradeo was held and where the latter had invited him to address the students. If any C.I.D. police had a report of his speeches (two or three) it could be ascertained that Shri Dhirendra Mukerji addressed himself to the importance of non-violence, for the success of any programme of socialism. He was invited to the Winter School also, but he declined, as then he had decided to take no part in active politics.

He went to Rajshahi and addressed a youth conference there, but he could not recollect what he had said there. It was an open conference and if his speech was of any importance police report of it could be called for.

The last of his activities during the period is the Hazra Park meeting and the South Calcutta conference. In his speech, as your report says, he appealed for volunteers and money in order to make the conference a success. His speech as Chairman of the Reception Committee was a formal character and had nothing to show that there was anything in common between Shri Nariman's politics and him (I may add incidentally that Shri Nariman has never, so far as I can say, made speeches inciting violence.)

I asked him, without mentioning any names, if he had met during this period any ex-terrorists. He said that Shri Sachin Sanyal met him in Delhi when he had come to see Gandhiji and me, that Shri Sachin Sanyal wanted to present a book to Gandhiji, and as he was in a hurry to go and could not get an interview with Gandhiji, he entrusted Shri Dharendra Mukerji with the task of making the present to Gandhiji. He had no further talk of any kind with Shri Sachin Sanyal.

Shri Dhiren Mukerji was, during this period, member of various Congress Committees and of the Executive of the B.P.C.C. but though he was member of the last body, after he gave his word to Shri Birla that he would take no part in active politics, he did not attend any meeting of the A.I.C.C. "Three months before I actually took up appointment under Sheth Birla", said Shri Dhiren Mukerji to me, "I firmly resolved to give up all politics even mentally, for I could not be faithful to both simultaneously, and so I did not attend even the meetings of the B.P.C.C. executive, though I might have been wiser perhaps if I had tendered my resignation altogether of my membership of that body."

I asked him repeatedly, if after taking up appointment under Shri Birlaji he attended *any* meeting—formal or informal, private or secret—of the Anushilan Party or *any* party. He said emphatically: "*No* meeting of any kind. As for the Anushilan Party I never believed in the programme or policy of that party."

I asked him again: "It is suggested that you met and dis-

cussed things with objectionable people.” To this he replied: “I have not gone out of my house even once to meet any of the people Government may have in mind. I have deliberately not attended the weddings and Upavita ceremonies of my many ex-detenus, I should be accused of any active association with them. Some of these people, I admit, have come to my place mostly to pay social calls and in order to find out if I could secure them any jobs. As it happened, one ex-detenu went to my place *after* my arrest, for the same purpose and was surprised and disappointed when my mother told him that I had been arrested. The I. B. officer who came to arrest me at dead of night said: “I am surprised, Dhiren Babu, that I should have orders to arrest you, when I know that you severed your connection with politics long ago.”

In conclusion, Shri Dhirendrababu said: “I am surprised and pained beyond measure that the I. B. people should falsely try to implicate me. I should gladly report myself to Sir Nazimuddin if he should want me, and submit to an exhaustive cross-examination by him. What pains me most is that I should be accused of having broken my word to Bapuji and Ghanshyamdasji.”

The result of my close examination of Shri Dhirenbabu is the confirmation of my conviction that he is innocent, and that the reports you have received are based on incorrect information.

In view of his categorical denials, I would ask you please to discharge him. He has a job which brings him just enough to supply the wants and medical needs of his mother and which leaves him time just enough to be by her side. It is highly improbable that by deception he should endanger his mother's life and forfeit the confidence he has enjoyed of Gandhiji, Birlaji and myself.

But if this letter is not considered enough justification for his discharge, may I suggest when you return to Calcutta, you may be good enough to examine the police officials concerned who have made the reports against Shri Dhirenbabu, and also that you may kindly examine Shri Dhirendra Mukerji? I should, if you desire, gladly come again to Calcutta to help you in

finding out the truth. I am sure that when you are satisfied of his innocence, you will not detain him a day longer.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

**110**

October 13, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Thanks for your letter from Sevagram.

I am sorry that you have not been successful. But we shall pursue the matter and I am confident of success in the end.

I haven't heard the latest from Wardha, but someone told me that he heard on the radio that Bapu was writing another letter to the Viceroy.

By the way, I had sent a small article in Hindi for *Harijan Satak*. It was more in the shape of a letter than an article.

I am going to Delhi shortly from where I will go on business tour. During the middle of November I propose to go to Bombay and then will visit Bhusawal. On my way back to Calcutta, I will get down at Wardha.

I hope you are all well.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

111

SEVAGRAM,  
October 17, 1940

P. S. V.  
VICEROY'S CAMP

I OBSERVE THAT CENSORS HAVE BEGUN TO REMOVE FROM MY PRESS STATEMENTS SENTENCES WHICH THEY CONSIDER OBJECTIONABLE. I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER THIS IS PART OF POLICY LAID DOWN FROM CENTRE OR MORE LOCAL ACTION. I CANNOT ISSUE ANYTHING WHICH MIGHT BE MUTILATED WITHOUT MY CONSENT. DANGER IS OBVIOUS. REMOVAL OF KEY WORDS OR SENTENCE MAY ALTER WHOLE MEANING. IF MUTILATION OF STATEMENTS IS CONSIDERED NECESSARY IN DUE COURSE PERHAPS IT WILL BE EXTENDED TO HARIJAN WRITINGS. IF IT IS POSSIBLE TO KNOW GOVERNMENT POLICY DEFINITELY I CAN SHAPE MY COURSE ACCORDINGLY. I CAN CONTINUE MY WRITINGS ONLY IF I AM UNHAMPERED. SHALL REPLY EARLY.

GANDHI

112

NEW DELHI,  
October 19, 1940

GANDHI  
WARDHA

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TELEGRAM OF OCTOBER 17TH. I POSTPONED REPLY UNTIL REACHING DELHI TODAY. I HAVE CONFIRMED FROM DEPARTMENTS HERE THAT NO ORDERS HAVE BEEN ISSUED REGARDING CENSORSHIP OF YOUR PRESS STATEMENTS.

PSV

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA,  
October 20, 1940

DEAR LORD LINLITHGOW,

I am exceedingly obliged to you for telegram. •

I had hoped that the instructions issued were merely local. Since sending you my telegram I have had further news that New Agencies had been informed that they were not to distribute my message directly as they have done hitherto. But that all such messages were to be sent to headquarters at Delhi for censorship before they were distributed.

I also send you herewith a copy of notices received by registered publications. I should like to keep the public informed of the development of individual C. D. which is being carried on under my strict supervision. In view of the notice I dread to send anything for printing to the local printing Press, for if I did send anything and the order were accepted the local printing Press which is purely a commercial concern may come in for penalty. For the same reason I have hesitated to send any public statement. My chief motive in sending such statements would be to regularise the movement so as to ensure unadulterated non-violence. Up to now the response has been fully up to expectation. I was not certain about the Trade Union Congress. But its President who came to see me has assured me that no strike of a political nature will be resorted to without my consent.

Shri Vinoba Bhave's addresses are from the Highest plane. I have been sending Mahadev Desai to follow him and give me a full report of what he says. He is a strict disciplinarian and therefore will carry out most difficult instructions. His first extempore speech was not as I would have delivered it. Living in seclusion he had not followed closely the correspondence between us. He had therefore put the worst construction on it. I immediately sent him instructions that our code was to put the most favourable construction on the opponent's language. He accepted the correction and made the earliest amends by making a public admission. And his address of yesterday was unexceptionable.

His main work, whilst he is free, will be to emphasise the necessity of the constructive programme and not to bother about C. D. (which will, for the moment, be confined to himself) being offered by others. All his development I would like Congressmen and the public at large to know. It is an education in courteous and non-violence conduct. And although we are at war with each other we might observe the law which I claim specially belongs to the human species. But I know that the decision rests with you. I can only plead.

*I am,*  
*Yours sincerely,*  
M. K. Gandhi

114

*Express*  
H. E. VICEROY  
NEW DELHI

WARDHA,  
October 21, 1940

“HARIJAN” HAS RECEIVED NOTICE DATED 18TH THAT NOTHING CONNECTED WITH VINOBA’S SATYAGRAHA MAY BE PUBLISHED WITHOUT PREVIOUS REFERENCE CHIEF PRESS ADVISER DELHI. THIS I VENTURE SAY IS SERIOUS INTERFERENCE WITH LIBERTY OF PRESS. I HOPE THIS DOES NOT REPRESENT CONSIDERED POLICY GOVERNMENT OF INDIA. I BASE MY HOPE ON YOUR KIND WIRE OF 19TH TO WHICH I HAVE REPLIED BY LETTER.

GANDHI



THE VICEROY'S HOUSE,  
NEW DELHI,  
October 24, 1940

DEAR MR. GANDHI,

I have given all possible consideration to your letter of the 20th October and have seen your telegram of the 21st. My further enquiries and the papers which you have sent confirm me in what I told you in my telegram of the 19th October, viz., that no censorship orders were issued by the Central Government. What was done was to advise local Editors in their own interests to refer for scrutiny any matter which might be prejudicial report and the publication of which might therefore expose them to penalties under the Defence of India Rules. This, I am informed, is the usual procedure by which the Press are able to obtain advice in doubtful cases.

2. I can, of course, appreciate your desire for freedom to conduct a civil disobedience movement in the way that commends itself to you and I can understand that for that purpose you wish to enjoy unrestricted access to the public through the ordinary channels of publicity. Although, you evidently wish me to believe that this movement which you have initiated will be more dangerous if you do not enjoy these facilities I must credit you personally with the desire that it should succeed in its avowed object, that of persuading the public to withhold all support from India's war effort. I must, therefore, assume that any opportunities afforded to you would be used solely for that purpose. In so far as you ask for my co-operation in such a plan I must once more make it plain to you as I did in our conversation at the end of September that both I myself as the representative of His Majesty's Government in this country and the Government of India as responsible for its security have a very definite obligation to perform, and it would be disingenuous of me were I to leave any doubt that activities the effect of which may be prejudicial in terms of the prosecution of the war, and which infringe the law, cannot but attract the provisions of the law; and that it would not be possible for me or for the Government of India, consistently with the formal obligations falling upon us, to acquiesce in them. You know how greatly I regret

that there should be this conflict of view between yourself and Government as regards the limits within which speeches of a certain character or activities of a certain character affecting the prosecution of the war may be allowed to pass unnoticed, but a point must inevitably be reached at which here as at home and elsewhere in the Empire they cannot but attract, as I have said above, the sanctions which the law provides.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Linlithgow

116

NEW DELHI,  
October 24, 1940

*Most Immediate*

MR. GANDHI  
WARDHA

YOUR TELEGRAM OF 21ST. I HAVE ASCERTAINED FROM HOME DEPARTMENT THAT INSTRUCTIONS ISSUED TO "HARIJAN" AND TO ALL OTHER PAPERS WERE NOT MANDATORY BUT ADVISORY AS INDICATED IN LETTER RECEIVED WITH YOUR LETTER OF 20TH OCTOBER TO WHICH I AM REPLYING SEPARATELY OBJECT IN VIEW BEING IN INTEREST OF EDITORS AS PUBLICATION OF PREJUDICIAL REPORTS WOULD RENDER THEM LIABLE TO PROSECUTION UNDER DISTANCE RULE 38.

VICEROY

117

WARDHA,  
October 25, 1940

H. E. VICEROY  
NEW DELHI

THANKS FOR WIRE OF 24TH. IT HAS COME AS PAINFUL SURPRISE. ADVICE WHOSE REJECTION MAY INVOLVE PENALTY IS VERY LIKE MANDATI. AS MORE ADVICE NOTICE WAS SUPERFLUOUS. EVERY EDITOR IS PRESUMED TO KNOW LAW UNDER WHICH HE EDITS HIS PAPER. IN CIRCUMSTANCES I HAVE BEEN RELUCTANTLY OBLIGED TO SUSPEND PUBLICATION OF THREE PAPERS FOR WHICH I AM RESPONSIBLE. I HAVE ISSUED PRESS STATEMENT WHICH IF NOT CENSORED YOU WILL HAVE SEEN. SUSPENSION WILL BE WITHDRAWN IF I AM LEFT SCOT FREE FOR RESUMING PUBLICATION. HAVE NO DESIRE PUBLISH WEEKLIES UNLESS YOUR GOVERNMENT APPRECIATES THAT THEY ARE FRIENDLIEST NOTWITHSTANDING THEIR HARSH CRITICISM AND EVEN ADVOCACY CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE.

GANDHI

118

SILGOAN,  
Via WARDHA,  
October 26, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

So Government latest notification is the reply to Bapu's telegram ! Viceroy's reply says almost as much. Our latest activities cannot but "attract the sanctions of the law"—that is the latest phrase I have learnt—and the reply seems to be final. I should not be surprised if no more letters are even acknowledged.

So *Harijan* is now extinct and I find my occupation gone. I cannot exactly say how Bapu's mind is working, but he is against sending many people to jail. This notification puts a stop to all public activities—I do not think they will even allow Jawahar's

name as Vinoba's successor to be published !

Satyanarayan from Madras is very keen on having you to preside over the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Annual Convocation, and Bapu says you should accept the invitation. I suppose you have no objection. You must have been to South India, but you have not seen the Hindi activities. These people are doing good work.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

119

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA,  
October 26, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSIYAMDAS,

I liked your article very much. I gave it to Krishnadas. His rejoinder is not as good, but probably you would like to send your own answer to it.

So *Harijan Sevak* has ceased publication. But do I need it now? I am only a seeker after Truth. I had not imagined that *Harijan Sevak* would have to be discontinued so suddenly, but even empires rise, decline and fall.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

PS. I am also sending your article by book-post. Please return the same.

120

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
October 28, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

It is becoming increasingly clear to me that Bapu is going to take the extreme step inasmuch as the latest notification is beyond endurance, and Linlithgow's last letter is even lacking in grace. A letter is being drafted for him, as also one for the Working Committee members. I feel bewildered. I had not relished this vicarious suffering for the people even in my dreams. It is only the others who stand to suffer. But is Bapu going to heed? Yesterday he permitted me to have my say, but the effort is pointless. Jawahar is arriving tomorrow. Show this to Devdas, I was thinking of giving you a ring but then decided to see you personally. No date has been fixed yet.

Could you do one thing? Why not put through a call to Churchill and the others, or send cables to them, and tell them that this Gagging Ordinance has left Bapu no alternative to the extreme step? I myself cannot hit upon appropriate language. Why not call Devdas for drafting the message? The other thing I wanted to suggest is that Shiva Rao be asked to send a cable to the *Manchester Guardian* to the same effect. Bapu has sent a cable to Karl Heath but he has made no mention of all this in it. The cable only said, "Have entirely failed. Latest Ordinance aimed at choking completely voice non-violence."

Please do as you deem proper.

Yours sincerely,  
Mahadev

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA,  
October 30, 1940

DEAR LORD LINLITHGOW,

I have to thank you about your letter of the 24th inst.

As to the first paragraph of your letter, I have already given you my reaction to the notices referred to by you.

The second paragraph is astounding. Reducing your language to simple terms you tell me that I must be punished, if I do not behave myself. I hardly needed to be given the warning. But I do not mind it. The language used by you shows the pains you have taken to conceal your meaning in as gentle words as the English language and your exalted office will let you.

But I was wholly unprepared for your assumptions. I have nowhere said that I desire freedom to conduct a civil disobedience movement in a way that commends itself to me and that for that purpose I wish to enjoy unrestricted access to the public through the ordinary channels of publicity. You will see from my statement—copy of which is hereto attached—that I have claimed that civil disobedience can be conducted without publicity through newspapers. This statement was published before your letter reached me. Indeed, if civil disobedience depended for its conduct upon the mercy of the government against which it was directed, it must be poor stuff, utterly worthless for the purpose intended. It seeks through self-suffering to convert the opponent.

You then say: "Although, however, you evidently wish me to believe that this movement which you have initiated will be more dangerous if you do not enjoy these facilities I must credit you personally with the desire that it should succeed in its avowed object, that of persuading the public to withhold all support from India's war effort." There is no warrant in my letter for the belief entertained by you. The whole purpose of my letter has been missed. It was to commend to your sympathetic attention the fact that I was taking extraordinary precautions to ensure non-violence, and the further fact that to that end I was

restricting the movement to the fewest possible typical individuals. I had hugged the belief that you would, as a friend, be pleased with the information, and recognising the fact, you would not put yourself in the wrong by passing the wholly unnecessary drastic Gagging Ordinance you have passed. You have by that ordinance, demonstrated to the world that you could not conduct the war through India except by stifling public opinion. I had hoped that you would be satisfied with such aid as the princes, moneyed men and professional warlike classes could give you. They could not come under my or the Congress influence.

I am sure you will not compare India with Britain. In Britain you have the Houses of Parliament through which the nation acts. Here you have powers derived not from India but from Great Britain that no single individual in the wide world enjoys over so many people. I had hoped that you would use them with restraint. It was for that purpose that I had sought the last interview and stayed beyond my time so that I might not be said to have rushed you. For the moment the hope has been dashed to pieces. I ask you to believe me when I tell you that in every single step I have thought of you and your people as your and their true friend. One day you will feel the truth of this remark if you do not today.

But I accept your verdict for the moment. I do not want to conduct the movement secretly. Nor can I allow non-violence to perish by default. I might, therefore, give the only thing I have in me to give—my life. I told you about the possibility of a fast, prolonged or unto death. I was waiting on God to find what is to be the case. I am trying hard to avoid it but I may not be able to do so. You will have another letter from me when I have come to the final conclusion.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has been with me. I had invited him to be the next resister. He had consented. Your ordinance came after. And the fast idea possessed me. He has an open mind on the fast. But he thinks, and I have agreed with him, that the contemplated resistance by him should be completed before entertaining the idea of the fast. Therefore the very next step is to be his civil resistance. As soon as the date and place are finally decided I shall let you have them for your information.

I hope you will not resent this letter. I have written as a friend to a friend and not as a member of the public to you as the Viceroy. I have not written to seek publicity or to make a point against you. I will not publish this letter or any part of the recent correspondence between us without your consent.

*I am,*  
*Yours sincerely,*  
 M.K. Gandhi

## 122

November 2, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I have your letter of the 26th. Devdas showed me your letter to him.

I note that Bapu wants me to preside over the Dakshina Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha function. You say, "I suppose you have no objection." I fear I would feel very much relieved if Bapu would not order me to go to South. I have developed an inveterate shyness for such public functions for more than one reason. I had fought election in 1931. For nearly forty days I had then to travel from place to place and address public meetings at the rate of 7 or 8 per day. And that killed my enthusiasm for public meetings for ever. I sincerely believe that I am not fit for such a job. I can never disobey Bapu's wishes but let me keep myself in my own shell. I think I am quite competent for constructive and quiet work. But if I am asked to stand on a platform I would act only mechanically. And I fear I may create even jealousy. After Bapu reads this, he will, I am sure, see my difficulty and save me from this.

I have informed Dastane that I am coming. Let me see how I like it.



I have Bapu's another letter about the figures of khadi to which I will reply later on.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SFVAGRAM

**123**

THE VICEROY'S HOUSE,  
NEW DELHI,  
November 2, 1940

DEAR MR. GANDHI,

His Excellency asks me to write to thank you for your letter to him of 30th October.

*Yours sincerely,*  
J.G. Laithwaite

M.K. GANDHI

**124**

November 6, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I dread the impending fast of Bapu, and yet I find it difficult to understand its philosophy. Bapu has said that he would keep out of imprisonment because his going to jail would be the greatest embarrassment to Government. It is obvious that his fast would be a still greater embarrassment. How does he then recognise this with his desire not to embarrass? I know his policy of non-embarrassment is subject to non-extinction of our day-to-day life. But to escape extinction, he started satyagraha

only on a restricted scale. He deliberately planned a lesser embarrassment to Government. Why now this biggest embarrassment of all? There is always a risk in fasting which could not be ignored. If the fast —Heaven forbid—proves to be fatal, then the British Government for ever will be branded with the curse and bitterness between the two nations will become a permanent feature. This aspect of the question should not be ignored.

There is another question to which I desire an answer from Bapu. Since he did not want to lead the satyagraha himself in order to avoid imprisonment, did it also mean that he did not want to write anything in the *Harijan* which might lead to his persecution? You cannot make distinction between writing and speaking. And if you want to avoid speaking in order to avoid imprisonment, you should also avoid writing such things which would lead to imprisonment. Am I correct in the assumption that Bapu never desired to break the law either through speaking or through writing? If that be correct, then the suspension of publication of the *Harijan* becomes unnecessary. Because the notice, as far as it applies to the *Harijan* automatically becomes superfluous.

Then there is one more question. Every act of non-violence, it is intended by Bapu, must lead to a change of heart. Self-suffering does undoubtedly lead to such a result. But if self-suffering is not only positively embarrassing to the opponent but is also a source of causing permanent bitterness, then does it not cease to be non-violent? I suppose it is possible to have fast with and without coercion. In some cases coercion is deliberately intended. Perhaps it is desired that moral coercion should divert the aggressor from aggression. But this may not necessarily change his heart. For changing the heart self-suffering minus the embarrassment alone perhaps could be efficacious. One against whom the fast is undertaken should himself be made to realise the necessity of a change of heart. He should clearly see that the man who fasts does it purely for *tapash-charya* and has, directly or indirectly, no desire to embarrass. The Harijan Fast of 21 days was perhaps of this kind. The Hindu-Muslim Riot Fast was also of this kind. But the fast against the Award and the fast against Rajkot were of a different nature. In the latter, coercion was definitely intended.

In the former, only change of heart was intended.

But this is all my own interpretation. I wonder what Bapu has got to say, and under which category is this impending fast going to come. Is it going to be a fast of coercion or pure *tapashcharya*? Please enlighten me on all the points that I have raised after having read this letter to Bapu.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghānshyamdas

## 125

### Speech of Mahadev Desai at the Press Conference Held at Delhi

November 10, 1940

I do not know what right I have to stand before you today expecting your courtesy and your indulgence. I am neither the manager, proprietor or editor of a newspaper claiming the largest circulation of all dailies in Western India or Eastern India. I am—or rather I was, the editor of a humble weekly called *Harijan*, and that too by courtesy. For the real editor used to be Gandhiji without whose permission not one line could appear in that weekly. That paper has stopped circulation in the circumstances that I suppose you know somewhat. I say 'somewhat' because the world has not seen the correspondence with Government which led up to the final closing down of the paper. But I may tell you that it has been voluntarily stopped by Gandhiji in pursuance of the satyagrahi or Christian precept of giving your clock to the oppressor who demands your coat, walking with him twain who asks you to go one mile. As a representative of such a paper I cannot help talking here some of the implications of the precept—Resist not evil by evil—preached nearly two thousand years ago. As such I am afraid I am a round peg in a square hole.

But let me put you at your ease. I have not come here to deliver an anti-War speech, though I confess that I am filled in

every pore of my being with the determination to fight the scourge that threatens civilisation and peace on earth and goodwill to men. Nor have I come here to give you an idea of the feeling that oppresses the mind and heart of Gandhiji who thinks all the 24 hours of the British people and British rulers and how best to help them, and yet knows that these regard him as their enemy.

I have come as a modest Pressman to share your sorrows and difficulties and also as a satyagrahi to place the satyagrahi's case before you and to enlist your support.

The Chairman has given us the news of the withdrawal of the offending Notification by Government. I am glad and I congratulate Government on the dawn of sanity in their minds. But don't you go away with the impression that all that was needed to be done has been done? The Press adviser is still there and you have heard from so many friends how he is operating. In a word, I would say that the operation of his advisership is chaotic to say the least of it. You, Mr. President, published C.R.'s splendid statement on Pandit Nehru's arrest and also Sardar Vallabhbhai's statement. But the Bombay papers did not as the Press Adviser did not pass them. You write an article on the extension of Lord Linlithgow's term of office. It is read by the thousands of your readers in Madras but a vital paragraph from that article wired by a correspondent is not deemed worthy of publication in other papers by the Press Adviser. Then you are forbidden to say anything about hartals, but a Press correspondent of a paper supporting Government may send a lying report that the attempt of such and such a Congress Committee to bring about a hartal in a particular place diagonally failed and it is published. Take the revolting case of the *Sainik*. The paper publishes the A.P.I. version of Shri Vinoba's speech—a version that has been passed by the Press Adviser and published in other papers. But the police raid the *Sainik* Press and order it to be closed down. I take it that the withdrawal of the Notification means an end of the vagaries of censorship and of the office of the Press Adviser and also a reparation to be made to the *Sainik*.

I take it that the cancellation of the Notification carries with it the withdrawal of all those obnoxious orders and notices. I do not know if all of you are aware of cold-blooded notices

about Gandhiji's contemplated fast. It permits us gracefully to publish the news of Gandhiji's fast, if it comes about, but not Gandhiji's statement explaining the reasons. The Press Adviser had thus anticipated the content of the fast and provided against it. The wonder is that he did not also anticipate his death and provided against it.

Pray pardon my being bitter. I cannot help it. I am sure you also feel the insult as much as I do, and I expect that however much this Government will sin against the light, you will not be guilty of doing so. In a word, this Press censorship must go. The Press Adviser may continue to advise Government but may not inflict his advice on us.

Having said this let me now address myself to things which are unaffected by the withdrawal of this order. For what is at the root of the whole trouble? It is the assumption that the satyagraha movement is calculated, if not intended, to help the enemy. That belief is honestly held, I admit, but at the back of it are ignorance, distrust and fear. I wish I could dispel all the three by a little bit of loud thinking before you. Is it suggested that any one of those who are primarily concerned with the satyagraha movement are secretly in league with Hitler? Then they should have been in concentration camps or banished immediately the war broke out. Has any one of them uttered a word in praise of Hitler's method? Even in the course of his beautifully dignified utterance from the dock, Pandit Nehru said.

"There are very few persons in India, I suppose, whether they are Indians or Englishmen, who have for years past so consistently raised their voices against Fascism and Nazism as I have done. My whole nature rebelled against them and on many an occasion, I vehemently criticised the pro-Fascist and appeasement policy of the British Government."

As for Gandhiji his whole soul rebels against the deluge of hatred and blood and suicide that is fast enveloping mankind, and what pains him beyond words is that a nation like the British—not devoid of brave and noble people—should stoop to the level of Hitler and his methods and even aim at out-Hitlering Hitler. To them Gandhiji says: "You want to win the war no matter by what means, no matter at what cost. We want you to win the war not by foul means but fair, not by dragging the name of democracy in the mire but by upholding it, not by

answering brutality by brutality, savagery by savagery, vandalism by vandalism, but by proclaiming to the world that you shall have none of this hideous business. But if you will not listen to us, why not spare us the agony, why drag us also down the abyss?

Do you call this helping the enemy?

But the Government fear that all this propaganda, the anti-war speeches by satyagrahis, are calculated to help the enemy. I should like to know how they help the enemy. So far as the British Press is concerned, there is an effective embargo on all cables sent abroad. I do not know that this embargo serves the interest of truth but it does effectively protect Government from exposure of their doing, if they think that helps the enemy. They forget that their repression and their Gaggling ordinances help the enemy very much more than anything else. For if the enemy comes to know of it, as the enemy *does* know that Pandit Jawaharlal has been given a savage sentence and that Gandhiji might have to undertake a fast, he can proclaim to the world that Britain is not fighting the war with India's co-operation but by effectively choking the voice of her tribunes and clapping them into jails.

We are also told that we are seeking to take an undue advantage of Britain's difficulty. It is nothing short of an ungrateful libel. If that was the object why should the Congress have waited one long year before deciding to launch a strictly limited form of civil disobedience? If we wanted to embarrass the Government, we might have done it in a thousand and one ways. Mr. Thompson who is an honest and critical student of affairs in India has pointed this out in his book *Enlist India for Freedom*. Perhaps you do not know that Gandhiji is being blamed in certain quarters for making a fetish of non-embarrassment. If we wanted to embarrass Government, we might have launched mass civil disobedience—at the risk of Jallianwalla Baghs, we may be told, but do a few Jallianwalla Baghs matter in this land where poverty and disease take total of millions? If we wanted to embarrass Government, we might have effectively produced dissatisfaction in the army and munition factories. But the "Congress," Gandhiji declared in his manifesto, "has no desire to surround munition factories or barracks and prevent people from doing what they like." All that he insists on

is the right to "tell the people of India that if they will win swaraj through non-violent means, they may not co-operate militarily with Britain in the prosecution of the War."

In this connection, let me tell you one or two things about Gandhiji and Jawaharlal. Let me say that Gandhiji has opportunities of creating dissatisfaction in the army. Only the other day a fresh recruit came to Gandhiji as he was collecting money for Harijan Fund at the Station, emptied his pocket and said he was ready to tear off his uniform if Gandhiji commanded him to do so. But Gandhiji dissuaded him from doing so. And Jawaharlal who might easily have exploited his opportunity on one occasion refused to do so. An English officer in the army went to him with a striking letter of resignation addressed to the Officer Commanding and asked for Jawaharlal's advice. He deeply sympathised with the young man, but warned him against taking the step which would amount to gross insubordination and might have dire consequences. Not that the young man counted the cost, but Jawaharlal did not want him to do anything rashly. It is this Jawaharlal Nehru who has been thought fit to be in His Majesty's prison for four years. This is not the place to say anything about the savage sentence imposed on him, but let me tell you by the way that if you were to study his statement before the court—which, if anything must be stronger than the speeches for which he was tried—contains nothing more than the resolutions of the Congress Working Committee since September last year. That however is by the way.

If we wanted to embarrass Government, we might have launched all kinds of boycotts, and made it difficult for government to carry on. If Gandhiji wanted to embarrass government, he would have filled columns of *Harijan* with the stories of coercion, oppression and intimidation for the exaction of the War Fund. Our file of letters contains in proof of this is a few inches thick. There are numerous instances, but I shall confine myself only to two or three. Let me say this is not for the Press and I would ask them not to make use of it. There is the case of a zamindar who had to fork out Rs. 50,000 for the War Loan by sheer intimidation. First his gun license was seized, then he was threatened with prosecution and he was left in peace only when he paid Rs. 50,000. Only the other day I had the pathetic

story of several villagers who had to sell their belongings and cattle in order to pay to the War Fund and who applied to the District Magistrate for a refund of the money, as they were starving. There are cases of people being asked to stand in the sun and of a man who had to sell his grand-daughter's ornaments in order to satisfy the exacting War Fund collector. In this matter British India is as good or as bad as Princes' India, perhaps the latter is worse. There are cases from the states of physical beatings and physical torture. Let me tell you that Government's attention has been drawn to these cases, but Gandhiji deliberately refrained from making them the object of propaganda.

If Gandhiji were so minded, he would have filled the *Harijan* columns with stories of the loot that is going on in the name of patriotic services and stories of robbery. The *New Statesman* and *Nation* had an article some time ago exposing the nepotism and robbery to which the British Cabinet had resorted. Gandhiji has not thought it right to exercise even the liberty that the *New Statesman* and *Nation* has done. He might have done many more things but he did not in sheer self-restraint, and in pursuance of the policy of non-violence and non-embarrassment.

I think I have shown therefore that the charge of wanting to help the enemy, embarrassing the Government, making Britain's difficulty our opportunity is a gross and ungrateful libel, and if I have carried conviction to you, I want you brethren to lay the spectre of that charge. If I have failed to convince you, invite you to come to Sevagram, question and cross question Gandhiji on this crucial point. I invite Mr. Moore particularly to come to Sevagram and have discussion with Gandhiji. I do not know an honest journalist than Mr. Moore and I am sure that when we can convince him he can be trusted to carry conviction to Government.

If you answer this libel, you can make your protest against the Gagging ordinances most effective. There is no vestige of excuse for them. 'There is nothing very extraordinary in these ordinances', we are told. 'We have suspended our Constitution and bidden goodbye to the liberties we have enjoyed for centuries.' I think every one of you must proclaim it from the house-tops that there is no parallel between Britain and India. There they have a Government of their own, constitution of their



own making, and every right to suspend their constitution if they feel it imperative in the interests of their country. We have none of these things here. We are under an undisguised autocracy, and we are being dragged into a fight with which we have no concern, and are threatened with dire consequences if we fight for our own freedom. "Freedom is in peril. Defend it with all your might", proclaim posters in Britain. But we are told that battle-cry is not for us. They have ordinances there but for them they are self-denying ordinances. With us similar ordinances are Gagging ordinances. In imposing them on us on the strength of the British analogy, they are trying to impose on us in mid-summer the British furcoat of mid-winter. It will not do.

And yet the fact of the matter is otherwise. They have no such ordinances in Britain, none in the Empire, and if they have them the application of them is nowhere so brutally drastic as in India. It is in Britain that a British judge observed in the course of his judgment in an action brought against the *Daily Worker*. The expression of views, no matter how unpopular, how fantastic or how wrong-headed they may appear to the majority, is a right, and a right which I, among others, am paid to see preserved. I subscribe wholeheartedly to the words that fell from the lips of Mr. D. N. Pritt, K. C. that it is those views which are held by only a few, those views that are unpopular, those views which do run counter to the views of the great majority of mankind, particularly in times of emotional crises, such as war, it is those views which this Court should be particularly zealous to protect." Please mark the words "those views which do run counter to the views of the great majority of mankind." If a British Judge felt that he was being paid for protecting those views, how much more is it imperative that views which are being held here not by a microscopic minority but by the great majority of people in India should be protected?

And in South Africa as Mr. Bloom, Counsel for Defence in Dr. Dadoo's case said: "If Europeans are allowed to go about the country preaching rebellion and talking of future storm-troopers, it surely cannot be held that it is an offence for non-Europeans to voice their desires for equal rights, the abolition of poll tax, the right to vote and to own property." But in South Africa preaching rebellion and talking of storm-troopers

does not embarrass the Government, and does not help the enemy, if it is done by Europeans.

Here the mere right to propagate non-violence as an effective substitute for War, when indecent savagery is being perpetrated by the warring nations of Europe—even this elementary right dear to one as one's life breath—is denied to us, and proclaiming it is an offence and described as helping the enemy. In South Africa papers run by Europeans may write whatever they like, but *Indian Opinion* run by Gandhiji's son may not do so. But let me say in fairness to the governments of General Smuts that there is no such thing as the heinous Gaggling Ordinance here and the savage punishment of five years that an infringement takes with it. All that was done there was that the offending issues of *Indian Opinion* were forfeited to Government. It is open to them to do the same thing here.

There is another aspect which distinguished conditions in Britain from conditions in India. The British Cabinet is, as I have shown, same enough not to restrict the freedom of expression of views and what is regarded as news helpful or useful to the enemy is concrete news of that character. For instance, the publication by the *London Times* of the news that the Canadian troops had sailed for France was regarded as coming in that category. Here in India there is no fear of this kind of news being published by our papers. Whatever truth or lies about the War our papers publish is what is conveyed to us by the Government and the semi-government news agency. Our poor papers cannot afford the costly necessity, it is not a luxury, of foreign or military correspondents. Where then is the meaning of any ban on news calculated to help the enemy? And yet even where there was a plausible case for such a ban the National Council for Civil Liberties in the Conway Hall, London raised an effective protest against it. "We can probably beat Hitler if we can beat Duff Cooper and Sir John Anderson", said Mr. Frank Owen, the Editor of the *Evening Standard*. "No", he declared, "We must be free to speak, free to write, free to converse among ourselves. We must be free to send a message to those men and women friends in other lands who today are in chains." Gandhiji's appeal to Every Briton was allowed to be wired out to England, because he was then regarded as a friend. He is now regarded as an enemy and when

he gave an interview to a British newspaper correspondent the other day the interview was prohibited by the Censor.

Let me in this connection state the satyagrahi's case and what he is asking for. I think I have demonstrated that he is not asking for any liberty greater than is being enjoyed in Gt. Britain and South Africa, perhaps less. The British judgment I have quoted from makes no distinction between ethical conscientious objectors and political conscientious objectors. It simply states that the right of an honest expression of opinion howsoever unpleasant or unpalatable must be protected, and the actual state of things in South Africa goes very much further. Let me tell you that it is a libel to say that we are hindering the war effort. We do not go near recruiting depots, we do not surround Muniton Factories and as Gandhiji has declared, we have no intention to do so. We do not want to stop anyone who voluntarily wants to help the war. What we do want to stop is the exaction that is going on by means of coercion, intimidation, and torture, and we want to tell the people of India that if they will win swaraj through non-violent means, they may not co-operate militarily with British in the prosecution of this War. We want to prevent India from catching the infection of war-mindedness. Is there nothing extravagant about this? I met an Englishman the other day who is not a pacifist. He said he would join the army when he goes home for "there we are fighting for liberty", but what "I cannot tolerate is the way the war effort is being prosecuted in India and liberty being crushed."

It is up to you the Fourth Estate to fight for this elementary right to be conceded to the satyagrahis. If you can secure it, there is no satyagraha, no political prisoners, and no problem before Government deflecting them from their war effort. I am sure you can do this most effectively, you who have been boosting this War day in and day out and taking in all the news that is purveyed to you as gospel truth. The Government owe it to you if they have any sense of gratitude. I hope you will take it up and thus make it possible to resolve the present impasse. It is a great contribution that it is in your power to make, and I hope you will do it. I wish you goodluck.

I hope I have not abused your courtesy and the patience with which you have listened to me.

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA,  
November 11, 1940

DEAR MR. LAITHWAITE,

I have to thank you for your letter of the 2nd inst.

I must not offer any apology for this letter. For in answer to the Government measures regarding the Press I have given up making public statements on the struggle between the Government and the Congress, and I want to avoid secrecy regarding my plans. I shall, therefore, continue to send you periodical letters unless His Excellency desires otherwise.

I had hoped to be able to confine civil disobedience to two or three typical cases and supplement them, if necessary and if the call came, with a fast, limited or unlimited. But the members of the W. C. were very much perturbed over the contemplated fast. Wires also pressed in upon me from all sorts of men and associations prevailing upon me not to fast. I felt that if I was not to fast, I must in some way answer the action of the Government in regard to Pandit Jawaharlal. My restraint depended upon a measure of reciprocity from the Government as I had hoped in my letter of the 30th September in the following words: "I shall hug the hope that it will be possible for the Government to work out their policy in the spirit of the Congress position." But I do not complain. I must not. Only I feel I should explain my change of plan.

The changed plan consists in extending civil disobedience to qualified persons selected from particular groups. The groups douched at present are the members of the W. C., the Legislators, the members of the A.I.C.C. and a few others. I felt that with the Pandit dealt with in the manner he was and the almost simultaneous arrest of Shri Achut Patwardhan, who has proclaimed his faith in non-violence, I should not restrain members of these groups and the like if they satisfied my test as to non-violence and the constructive programme.

I send you herewith a copy also of the instructions I have issued to Congressmen which you will please show to H. E.

There is one other matter to which I wish to draw his attention. My son, Devdas, has sent me notes of the recent interview

with certain editors by the Hon'ble the Home Member. In it the Hon'ble the Home Member is represented as having said "Mr. Gandhi's object is to paralyse India's war effort and thus to help Hitler." If Sir Reginald said these words, I can only say that he is wholly wrong. I claim that nothing that I have said can warrant Sir Reginald's extraordinary statement. Indeed I have said repeatedly and so have Pandit Jawaharlal and almost all the numerous Congressmen who have been\* jailed that we do not want to help Hitler. I have never said I wished to paralyse Government's war effort. But I have said that those of us who do not believe in war as war or in the war on behalf of British imperialism, which they hold the present British effort to be, should be free to propagate their views in a non-violent manner. What will, however, help Hitler and the enemies of Britain is the present utterly irresponsible and repressive policy of the Government including the wholly unwarranted arrests and imprisonments. I had expected that those in high places would observe fairness and not go to the extent of putting into the mouths of humble workers like me words which they have never uttered

*Yours sincerely,*  
M. K. Gandhi

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NEW DELHI,  
November 11, 1940

PUJYA BAPU,

I have gone through Shri Krishnadas's rejoinder. There is no need to reply to it in detail. He has certain wrong ideas about mill-cloth, so I thought it proper to send him a mill's account. That mill can be treated as representing the view-point of the textile mill industry in general. But it is not possible to be accurate to the last pie.

The old article, my answer, and some specimens of cloth are being sent by separate post.

*Yours humbly,*  
Ghanshyamdas

**Enclosure : Shri Ghanshyamdas's Reply**

**Birla Cotton and Spinning Mills, Limited, Delhi**

November 7, 1940

1. The prices are exclusive of 5% commission. These prices are based on the market rates of 1940.

2. To bring them at par with the present-day market-rate, we have to add 10% more to them.

3. To these prices we have to add another 13% to meet the profit of the intermediaries and the expenditure incurred on sending the goods from the mill to the customers.

(a) 5% for managing agents, selling agents and brokers.

(b) 8% for the buffer agents.

4. All these prices are for cloth of 40-inch width.

5. The average price of the cloth of 40-inch width in 1940 was two inches and a quarter; it was exclusive of the commission.

6. The manufacture of the good quality cloth of today was for name sake in 1940.

November 11, 1940

When we proceed to compare two categories we can obtain the best results by placing them on the same footing. When at night we look at the sky some of stars, though much larger than the Sun, appear to be tiny sparks of light. This is so because the Sun is so much nearer to us than the stars. Though it is not possible to drag down the stars and the Sun to the earth for the purpose of establishing a contrast between them at least in our imagination we should place them on the same footing. If we did not do this we would erroneously assume the Sun to be larger than the stars.

Similarly if we are to compare mill-cloth with khadi, we should compare coarse mill-cloth with coarse khadi, or superfine mill-cloth with superfine khadi. The question of the matching categories of yarn is also relevant to a sound comparison but I propose to rule this aspect out for the purpose of our discus-

sion. When khadi woven from yarn No. 40 is compared with mill-cloth produced from higher quality yarn, the former will prove to be much higher in price. Therefore I have leaned slightly in favour of khadi by keeping the question of matching qualities of yarn out of our present discussion. But if we accord similar treatment to coarse cloth or quality cloth the result of our comparative study will prove to be disappointing. Similarly you have to keep the system of distribution aloof with the Spinners' Association's empire before your mind's eye. And if you want khadi to be treated as an ideal objective, you will have to accord the same status to the mills even when the capitalist has ceased to matter and the entire textile mill industry stands nationalized. In my view the proponents of khadi will continue to enjoy the status of a rival no matter whether the mills are individually owned or are nationalised. Therefore we should confine ourselves to a comparison of the rival systems of distribution, and before proceeding to do so we should place them on the same footing. Let no one say that if we cannot bring the Sun and the stars physically to the earth it would be a waste of time and effort to place them on the same footing in imagination. The argument is valid but not if we are to compare khadi with mill-cloth inasmuch as it is quite possible to place the rival categories of cloth not only in imagination but also in practice.

In this anxiety to lend strength to his case Shri Krishnadasji has advanced all the good, wholesome arguments he could muster in favour of khadi, namely, we should always use simple, design-free cloth, spin at home, get the yarn woven into cloth by the village weaver, dye it in colours locally available, thus dispensing with the shop keeper and doing without the order imposed from above, etc., etc. He has also raised khadi, now being produced without any consideration to idealism, to the high pedestal of lofty idealism and, having accomplished this, has proceeded to compare it with mill made cloth in the production of which no idealism is in evidence. This is not fair. Why should we not see mill-cloth with similar aura of idealism before setting out to compare the two categories of cloth? In order to bestow mill-cloth with some kind of idealism we shall first have to manufacture textile machinery in our own country, disperse the mills, now clustered in cities, all over the country,

nationalize the entire industry, improve labour conditions, pay it better and do all that is necessary to do in order to make labour the Nation's concern. No imported cotton may be employed in the manufacture of cloth; instead, we should grow quality cotton in our own country in order to spin superfine yarn. Thus either we should place both categories on the same pedestal, or we should compare their mutually shared objective conditions.'

If we were to adopt the latter course, khadi would prove costlier than mill-cloth since it does not last as long as the latter. It also entails a more expensive looking after, and it is certainly coarser than mill-cloth, while khadi made from superfine yarn is incomparably costlier than the matching cloth. If khadi fails to last longer than it does now the nation will ultimately have to pay more for clothing the people, thus rendering khadi a costlier apparel. This must be kept in mind.

A point has been made to the effect, even if the cost of a yard of coarse cloth at 0-2-3 were to be accepted as correct, it would make no difference to the consumer as by the time this single yard of coarse cloth reaches him its selling price becomes much more than 0-2-3. Therefore the question is not what it costs to produce it but of how much the consumer has to pay for it. This question is quite valid, but it is equally relevant in the case of khadi. Anyway I have already argued the desirability of placing the two categories of cloth on the same level and have no inclination to say more in support of it. But for the information of Shri Krishnadasji I am giving here the details of the selling price of different varieties of mill-cloth—coarse, dyed, designed, printed and so on.

In one of our mills in 1940 the cost of production of all varieties of cloth—coarse, dyed, bleached, designed and printed—worked out at 0-2-4½. I am enclosing the samples of these varieties of cloth with price tags attached to each one of them. These prices are for cloth with 40" width. There are three middle-men between the mill-owner and the consumer. If their profits are added to the cost of production, then it comes to 13%. At this rate the consumer had to pay 0-2-8½ pic for each yard of cloth in May, 1940. It means that had India produced the entire quantity of 6330 million yards of cloth in its own mills in May, 1940 the price of the entire quantity of cloth



would have been 106 million rupees. This would take care of all the items of expenditure including dying, bleaching, the middleman's handling profit, brokerage and profits. But the railway freight has not been included in this amount and works out on the average to 4%. But if these items of expenditure are to be included in computing the cost of production of mill-made cloth, similar computation will have to be made in case of khadi. Even when the ideal stage is reached by khadi, provision for railway freight will have to be made at least for the transportation of cotton, if not of cloth. Cotton will have to be brought from other provinces for use in Bengal, Eastern U.P. Bihar and Orissa. Whether the money derived from the price of cloth goes to swell the pockets of, beside the mill-owner, the shopkeeper, the dealer, the broker of the village money-lender should be treated as sometimes like a waste or as payment for their labours, depends upon how we view the position. It is difficult to envision a situation in which the petty shopkeeper will have no place even when the ideal stage is reached.

Be that as it may, I have given the actual cost of production of cloth. Now conclusions may be drawn from it according to individual predilections. It must be borne in mind that the current selling price of cloth has increased slightly, the prices cited by me are on the basis of the position obtaining in May, 1940. Before the War the price level had even gone down. Since the War the prices are tending to go up and may rise still higher.

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### **Substance Gathered on the Telephone of the Contents of Gandhi's Letter to Mr. J.G. Laithwaite**

November 11, 1940

In answer to the Government measure regarding the Press, I have given up making any statement. I want to avoid secrecy regarding my plans. I shall continue to send letters to His Ex-

cellency unless he desires otherwise. I had hoped to be able to confine civil disobedience to two or three and supplement it, if necessary, and, if the call came, with a fast limited or unlimited. But the Working Committee were perturbed over the fast. I feel I must yield to the Working Committee and in some way answer the action of the Government in regard to Jawaharlal. My restraint depended on a measure of reciprocity on the part of Government, as indicated in my letter of the 30th September.

The changed plan consists in extending civil disobedience to qualified persons selected from particular group. The groups touched at present are members of the Legislature and members of the Working Committee. I felt that with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru dealt with in the manner he has been and the almost simultaneous arrest of Achyut Patwardhan, I should not restrain the desire of the Working Committee to extend civil disobedience, provided they satisfied my tests. I send you a copy of instructions I have sent to Congressmen.

My son, Devdas, has sent me notes of his conversation with Sir Reginald Maxwell in which the Home Member is reported to have stated that I am anxious to help Hitler. I can only say that it is wholly wrong. Nothing can warrant Sir Reginald's extraordinary statement. We do not want to help Hitler. I have never said that I wished to paralyse Government's war effort. But those who do not believe in war or this war conducted by British Imperialism should be free to propagate their views. What will help Hitler is the utterly irresponsible repression that is now carried on.

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### Extracts from Mahadev Desai's Delhi Diary

November 11, 1940

: 1 :

Met Mr. Puckle (Director General of Intelligence) and Sir Richard Tottenham (Additional Home Secretary) said to be in

charge of the C.I.D. portfolio.

T's talk at dinner was strictly non-political. He talked about his recent service as Army Secretary and a subordinate officer of the Civil Service in Madras long years ago. With the exception of Maxwell the whole Home Department may be said to be run by "Madrassi" civilians—Conran Smith and Thorne and Tottenham. He referred to Bapu's statements and articles and wondered whether he wrote them or dictated them. On my saying that he had dictated some of the most weighty of his statements and sent them to the Press—*e.g.*, one after the Truce of 1931—without the change of a comma or a word he said he was amazed. "I do not claim that extraordinary power of concentration and I could never dictate a statement." Talking about articles when I said that he wrote them mostly on silent Mondays, he said: 'That thing I am sure every one of us can copy with great profit. How I wish a day's silence in the week was imposed on the whole world. Much of our strife would end.' He gave me the impression of a bureaucrat of the old type, rather cynical and hard.

Puckle came and sat beside me after dinner. Said he knew me through Laithwaite. Talked of men and things and books outside politics in a most polished and engaging manner. Then asked: "Will it be possible for the Mahatma to issue the *Harijan* now?"

I: I hope so, but I am not sure. I had a talk with my colleague on the phone and I think Gandhiji will await my return before he comes to any decision. The language in which the order withdrawing the Notification is couched is most objectionable, but I agree that it need not affect the *Harijan*. But assuming that he can start the *Harijan* again, would you stop short at that?

P: What is to be done?

I: Is there no way out of the impasse?

P: How Mr. G. seems to be an impossible man. I have never doubted his sincerity, but he seems to have contradicted himself. He does not seem to realise the logical consequences of his statements and actions. He does not want to embarrass, but he does embarrass.

I: I have dealt with the question in my speech yesterday

of which I shall send you a report. How does he embarrass by insisting on the liberty of expression, when he limits it by declining to address his appeals to the army or munition workers?

P : I see that but the effect of propaganda is great.

I : It may be great, but not to the extent of affecting the help you receive from the Princes, moneyed men and the warrinded classes. His appeal will not touch them.

P : What puzzles and perplexes me is that one who was an asset to us for 16 months should have ceased to be that asset.

I : Let me put a question to you. Do you think what you say is psychologically possible? You credit a man with honesty and sincerity and capacity to estimate spiritual values and you also regard him as an asset. Is it possible for such a man to suddenly cease to be that asset? I think it is psychologically impossible.

P : He may by mistake.

I : No, there is something radically wrong about the assumption.

P : Assuming that the liberty he claims is given him, where is the guarantee that it will not be abused by the vast number of people?

I : If you agree that G. has been a considerable influence for restraint during the past you have to trust him to exercise that influence in the future. The whole matter reduces itself to one of trust and distrust.

P : I am glad you are talking to Maxwell and Tottenham. It is those people who matter. Maxwell you know is an ill man. And he had to face several C.D. movements. They have taken a lot out of him.

I : I know he has looked worn and exhausted whenever I have seen him. But you don't mean to attribute his ill health entirely to our wickedness?

P : No, no. I only want you to consider the psychological factor. He is bitter and not free from prejudice.

It was close on 11 p.m. when we got up. Tottenham came again with Srinivasan and the latter said: "Mahadev, can perhaps enlighten us. Did Jawaharlal ask people not to join as

recruits and not to give money in his Gorakhpur speech, *i.e.*, before he had been selected as a satyagrahi?"

I : I do not think so. He could not have done it. He has said as much in his statement before the court.

T : But I have seen Government reports of his speeches, which no doubt he has challenged.

I : Do you find anything in his statement? Could he have said in his speeches more than he has said in his statement?

T : He has.

I : Have you seen the judgment? Have you ever read poorer stuff than that?

T : There I agree with you. It is very poor indeed, and we were all amazed at the sentence.

Srinivasan : You must do something to reduce that sentence.

I : I am not concerned with it. I think the conviction is wrong. His statement is an indication of all he could have said and in his statement he has said nothing more than we have been saying in our Congress Resolutions ever since September last year.

Inglis came in at 10.30. He said he would make use of my speech. What he said this morning revealed the stubborn Scotch in him. The liberty we claim, he said, was not enjoyed in England. I mean who asked people not to join as recruits or not to pay money would be clamped in Jail.

I : The pacifists do it. The *Peace News* does it. As for political objectors there are a few in England for it is your War, you are a free people. Here it is not our War, but one imposed on us, and that makes all the difference.

Inglis : The judgment you have cited only says that the right to express those views in print is protected, but not the right to utter those views in public.

I : I am surprised. Both rights are identical. Only facts differ, as I have said, inasmuch as England is a free country, and no one need raise an agitation on political grounds

excepting the communists. But the judgment does give these that right. But what about South Africa where their speeches are full of fire and brimstone?

November 12, 1940

Tottenham said Maxwell had asked him to see me and to convey anything that I may have to say to him. After that if I needed to see him, I might, do so, but the Assembly left him little time.

T. had read my speech carefully and also the article on Vinoba, both of which I had sent him. The point that I had made, viz., the right of the pacifist in England to preach whatever he liked, barring the liberty to address munition workers and the army, was entirely new to him. He had looked up the correspondence once again and he sought enlightenment from me.

It took me about half an hour to explain the whole thing to him. But he said: "I had thought that the mention of the munition workers and soldiers was illustrative and not restrictive. But the latter part of the letter shows that G. claims the liberty to address both of these not for himself but others."

I : You have not seen his latest statement. I read out portion from the statement on C.D.

T : So he has revised his position.

I : No, the correspondence shows that he insisted on the abstract right.

T : I see now. And the distinction you make between and conscientious objectors I had not realised. The political correspondence makes it clear those who object to all war and those who object to this war. Well let us get on. I see also the distinction you have drawn between England and India.

I : And between India and South Africa.

T : But you agree that the law is the same.

I : The law may be the same but it is administered differently. In South Africa the Europeans openly talk of rebellion and future storm-troopers. And even the law in South Africa is different. Smuts in consideration of Hertzog's party has made the law there elastic. It definitely protects the right to condemn the whole war policy of Government but it gives no right to condemn a particular war measure.

T : Please don't take me into those intricate details. What I note is that when a European infringes the law there he goes scotfree.

I : All right, for our present purpose I am content that you note that. And even an Indian who is alleged to have defied the law is let off with a sentence of £25 or one month's imprisonment. Even that judgment has been appealed against and the Supreme Court may reverse the decision.

T : I see. Now I would like to understand from you is the quick changing position of Mr. Gandhi. He spoke of unconditional co-operation in the beginning of the war, and there was a chorus of applause. "Good old Gandhi", they exclaimed. Then came bargaining and politics and now comes civil disobedience.

Explained at length Bapu's attitude in the beginning based on the trust that England would act on the square, that even then he had made it clear to the Viceroy that he meant nothing more than moral co-operation, how the politically minded W.C. could not trust England and insisted on a declaration, how England had failed to act on the square, Viceroy's declaration and Amery's statement and so on and how Bapu had waited on whole year or more and now launched restricted individual C.D.

T : But the position is this: That he promised moral co-operation, now he would not even give moral co-operation. The moral co-operation he promised was unconditional and still today he refused to give that moral co-operation.

I : Perhaps if you will read this statement he made after the A.I.C.C. to a representative of the *News Chronicle* the position will be clearer than I have been able to make.

(He reads the statement.)

T : I see. During the year he has found that England has not played the game and that makes all the difference.

I : That's it. He had begun with faith, that faith was blasted.

T : I see. Now I would like to see how he says he does not want to paralyse war effort.

I : He has said it in so many words. Have you seen his letter to H.E.?

T : No.

I read out the paragraph where Bapu says Government should be content with what help they received from princes, moneyed men and warlike classes, and that he and the Congress had no influence on them.

T : I see. But he would influence them, if he could. The desire is there, not the capacity.

I : Yes, if you will so put it. But if he had the capacity and if he carried the whole of India with him, he knows that you would not resist him as you are doing. The fact is you are getting some help which you may describe as voluntary which he does not touch, but you are also getting involuntary help—by force, coercion and intimidation—against which he would raise his voice. And I want to note the extent to which he goes in his desire not to disturb those who want to help and feel for some reason or other that they must help. Birla Brothers he could prevent from helping but had never prevented and even permitted.

(I gave one or two more instances.)

T : I am very glad.

I : And did I not tell you even Vinoba said in his first speech which you describe as very violent.

T : He himself said so.

I : Yes, but even in that speech he said that well as he could prevent a man from joining as a recruit, he would not do so. He would be content with appealing to him from the platform.

T : I know it.

I : Does not that satisfy you?

T : But when you make the appeal you do not want



them to help. You know Hyde Park. People are allowed to talk there rank nonsense, as it is taken as such and no one takes them seriously. Here you address ignorant masses and can easily inflame their feelings.

I : You have seen the speeches Vinoba and Jawaharlal have made. Is there anything of the kind there? And you must know that Jawaharlal must have made several hundred speeches during the year without inflaming the masses.

T : You mean to say he would have been in jail long before this but for Mr. Gandhi's influence.

I : You may put it that way. You have so exasperated him that you have left him no alternative.

T : But then he might have done so a year ago.

I : You suggest that it was *our* fault that we wanted for one whole year and more.

T : No. All I say is that you have been playing a political game.

I : And you think G. is now playing a political game?

T : He has failed so far and this is another move.

I : You will use that language if you feel like it, but you are steering clear of facts. You forget the Congress has deliberately retired from the field of power politics. It will not go into power. And I want you to understand that it is G.'s non-violence that has made it do so. The fast idea, let me tell you, is not new. He mentioned it to the Working Committee long ago when he found that their attitude would result in making the whole country war-minded and wipe out the work of 20 years. That would make life insupportable for him.

T : I understand. What I feel, without disrespect, is that the W.C. has men who change from time to time.

I : You people also do so. But what is noteworthy is that the Working Committee has deliberately accepted G.'s advice not to go into power for the duration of War and now limited itself to the demand for liberty of speech.

T : I see all that. But how does it take us nearer the political solution?

I : It cannot I grant. But that is the consequence of your having declared India as a belligerent without her consent.

T : There I agree with you, and I know it was wrong.

But you people shifted your ground. Your quarrel was against India being declared a belligerent without her consent, then it became a matter of bargain.

I : Where is the bargaining when I tell you that Congress does not desire to get into power for the duration of war ? And as for bargaining, let me say that those who are engaged in bargaining always have no business to cast the stone at others. But you are not accusing Gandhiji of bargaining ?

T : No. But I do think that he knew that the Congress was losing all its influence and power and so he has launched this movement.

I : Then what could have prevented him launching a mass movement and put in 50,000 or a lakh in jail?

T : You cannot. There are a few hundred people in Jail ?

I : A few thousand.

T : No, you are mistaken. A few thousand have been convicted but not more than 1200 are in jail.

I : If you agree that a few thousand have been convicted I have nothing to say. I am amazed that you do not see that Gandhiji in his studied pursuit of non-violence and non-embarrassment has restrained his hands and has not deliberately filled the jails which he might have done.

T : Then what does he gain by this limited individual civil disobedience movement?

I : Self-satisfaction. He can give expression to his non-violence and enable people who feel like him to have the same satisfaction.

T : You mean he wants to do it as a protest.

I : Yes, as a gesture of protest, you might say.

T : Protest against what? Against the failure of negotiations?

I : Against being dragged into the war, against our will.

T : That was the original reason, but later it sank into the background.

I : How dare you say so? The whole trouble has arisen out of that root evil.

T : Supposing the right were conceded, would it not lead to paralysing of all war effort?

I : It would in a way if we had say thousands of meetings in the country. Your administration would perhaps be

paralysed by having to deal with all these meetings. But there comes in what I said the matter of trust. You must trust Gandhiji how he uses the liberty in the best way possible. Because the right is denied to us, it is vehemently asserted. When it is conceded it would not be used in an offensive way. There used to be in the past Flag Satyagrahas. When at the end of a settlement the right was conceded, it was rarely used.

T : It is a mutual thing. You have ceased to trust us. Not that we have given no reason—we made promises during the last war and we did not keep them. But this war has come as a terrible reminder and you must believe that at the end of the war there will be a revolution in thought. Trust begets trust.

I : But if you can believe that G. can pursue his non-embarrassment policy to the extent of making a fetish of it, as some of his critics say, after a settlement he would pursue it more successfully.

T : But how does that end the constitutional impasse?

I : It will make it impossible. It will make the atmosphere ready. After this one issue is removed you can discuss the constitutional issue.

T : I do not want to seem to criticise the Viceroy but I do feel that if he had in the beginning taken all the Premiers into confidence and all the Provincial Legislatures the belligerency issue would not have been raised.

I : I am glad you see it. That can be done after you have settled it with the Congress.

T : But Mr. Desai, you want Vinoba's speeches to be all reported by the papers. Would not the papers help in the anti-war propaganda.

I : No more than they are helping in the war propaganda. Why should they publish Sir Richard Tottenham's speech and not Vinoba Bhave's speech? They have to pursue an impartial policy. Why should they have to publish the rank communalism and anti-racial venom of Sikandar Hayat Khan and not publish Jawahar's speeches?

T : That's all right. But without meaning any disrespect may I say that there is a slight insincerity in wanting Vinoba Bhave's speeches to go into the Press.

I : How?

T : You have explained in your article why you had the meeting in a village, why you did not want theatrical display and so on. Why then do you want publicity.

I : May I put a proposal to you? Grant us the right to say and preach what we like, carry on anti-war propaganda to our heart's content. I am prepared to agree not to publish our speeches in the papers. Are you prepared to do it?

T : Who am I? I am not Secretary. I have no authority. I have to communicate to the Chief what I have heard from you. Let me tell you that I do not see even the Viceroy's and Mr. Gandhi's correspondence.

I : But secretaries can do a lot. If you have followed what I have said it should not be difficult for us to forge out an agreed formula.

T : Where big people have failed, it is difficult to hope that we can succeed.

I : No. Big people with their terrible preoccupations may not have much time. Smaller people like us can discuss and argue for days and perhaps help to bring about a better understanding.

I am glad you have given me 2½ hours today. I won't tire your patience any more. But another letter must have come today from Gandhiji and that will land us in further discussion. But I am always at your disposal and you can summon me whenever you like after you have discussed the matters with Sir Reginald. Please send copy of your note of our conversation to Laithwaite too. So that I may not have to cover the same ground.

We talked incidentally on rumours and bazaar *gups*. I said: "You know how Gandhiji effectively prevented panic from spreading."

T : Don't I know? He was most helpful.

I : Now that you feel he has ceased to be helpful you have left him. You are behaving like a man who eats up the sound part of an apple and cuts off the rotten part. But man is not an apple. If you think that Gandhiji is a considerable influence for restraint and the balance of advantage

arising out of it is greater than the disadvantages you have to make up your mind not to antagonise him. You must have him with all his limitations and his weaknesses.

T : I see the point, and that perhaps sums up the whole of our talk well.

: 3 :

November 12, 1940

Maxwell had said in his letter to me that I should have the business talk with Tottenham but that he would like to meet me at his house in his private capacity and to renew old acquaintanceship. So I called on him in the evening. Tottenham had not evidently informed him that I might see him again if necessary.

He began the talk with the war and all it meant. "Mahadev, you can have no idea of it. My elder son is in the army, younger who is 16 is at school which was bombed three days ago, and wife is doing war-work, collecting herbs for pharmaceutical works. They are staying in a part where bombs are being rained every day and one never knows what is in store for one the next moment."

I : I know, I can have some idea.

M : Well, then all that we are now concentrating our attention on is to end the war and not to allow it to go on a day longer than necessary.

I : I know that too. You said so to the Press people. What pained Gandhiji and every one of us was your remark that Gandhiji by his movement was paralysing war effort and thereby helping Hitler.

M : I know. But if you take the consequences of his actions how do you escape the fact? I know he does not want to help Hitler, but what else can be the result?

I : On the point that the war should end as soon as possible and not a day later than it is possible to end it, we are agreed. Only how it is to be done is the question. You say it can be done only in one way. We say it should be done in a

different way and we should appreciate each other's position.

M : But if you succeed in persuading the whole of India to non-participate in the war, don't you strengthen Hitler?

I : The fact is that we don't succeed. If we do, if the whole of India listens to Gandhi, you would not resist him any longer, you would not impose the war on India, and you would listen to what he says.

M : I do not quite see the point.

I : But you do see that we cannot persuade the whole of India to our point of view. As Gandhiji has said, the princes, moneyed men and the warlike classes are untouched by us. There is a non-descript class who wants our guidance and we address them. This class is being forced into helping the war and we want to prevent it.

M : You cannot get a better Viceroy for this than Lord Linlithgow. He has put his foot down on compulsion.

I : He may, but what about the cases that are happening day in and day out. Our life is growing every day.

M : Are you sure that those are all genuine cases?

I : There may be exaggeration, a few may not be even genuine but the bulk of them cannot but be true. Some of the cases to which H. E.'s attention has been drawn were examined by us and they are true. Even when we were in Simla a very flagrant case came to our notice. We examined the man. He was a responsible officer in the Imperial Bank and he knew what he was saying. He had documentary proof and he said he did not mind his case being placed before H. E.

M : That was just the right thing to do. But why must you have a campaign about it?

I : We can otherwise give them no protection. People are being crushed and coerced, and we cannot bring every case to H. E.'s notice.

M : But why must you tell these people not to pay to the war fund or not to join as recruits? Why will you prevent those who want to pay or those who want to join as recruits?

I : We don't. I can give you instances in which with Gandhiji's knowledge people have paid money. Birla's case noteworthy. One of our own Ashram boys<sup>6</sup> who is an

engineer wrote asking for advice as to what he should do, should his services be demanded under the Services Conscription rule and Gandhiji said if he felt like it, he might offer his services.

M : I am very glad. But what can be the effect of shouting slogans like Brahmadvait did ?

(Takes up Brahmadvait's case and reads the slogans he shouted.)

I : Those who feel like acting upon the slogans will do so, and those who don't will not. I go to my village. People are sure to crowd round me. What am I to tell them? I must tell them what I feel, and I know that there are people with stakes there who in spite of what I say will pay something if they have not already done so. Perhaps they will not come to me for advice and deliberately avoid me.

M . Well, well, I should have thought that the correct position for a man like Mr. Gandhi to take would have been to address a manifesto to the people of India stating his own position as he did so in his appeal to Every Briton and then be quiet.

I : If he was a recluse what you say would be right. But millions look to him for guidance and he has to guide them from day to day. What is he to do?

M : Well, it is an answer that every one has to give himself. What is one to do in his terrible crisis? I am a believer in non-violence but I also believe that non-violence can come only when the world has gone through a terrible fire of purification. We have to help in the process, we cannot shirk it. Give this message from me to Mr. Gandhi.

I : I will. He has as much respect for your innermost feelings and he expects you to have for his, but his method is different. He tolerates you, you must tolerate him.

M: Toleration is there, but, we cannot forget what is happening at home.

Talk went on in this strain for some length of time, when I said almost bluntly: 'Sir Reginald, let me put a straight question to you. Have you set your face against a settlement with the Congress? If you have, then there is an end to all argument.'

M : No, I have not.

I : Then it should not be impossible to gerge out a formula agreeable to both. There is, I think, agreement on the principle of 'live and let live', and some words that you have said to me lead me to hope that a formula is possible.

M: But, Mahadev, keep me out of it. It is entirely a matter for H. E. and you had better put it to Laithwaite.

: 4 :

November 13, 1940

Saw Laithwaite at 12 and was with him until 1.45. He had Bapu's latest letter on the table and referring to it he said "Let me send word to Mr. Gandhi through you that we will always be glad to have letters from him. I told Mr. Birla that though we were technically at 'war', our relations were as friendly as they used to be. In sending reply through me H E. was just observing the form but every thing that comes to me will be immediately placed before H. E. and he is glad that Mr. Gandhi will keep him fully informed. Let me also tell you how relieved we all were to hear that the fast was off. I say this not because our personal admiration for the Mahatma but because he means everything to the Congress."

I : Thank you, but if you will let me add he wishes you could see that he was of as much value to Government as to the Congress. In fact, the feeling constantly oppresses him that whilst he takes every step with the good of the British always in his mind, every one of the steps is misunderstood and he has now come to be regarded as their enemy. I was talking to Mr. Puckle the other day.

L . I am glad you have met all these people. I wanted all of them to make your acquaintance.

I . Yes I am glad I met Mr. Puckle. He was refreshingly frank and I liked him. He said it was a puzzle to Government that one who had been such an asset to Government for 16 months should have ceased to be that asset. And this was



what I told him. (I tell him what I told Puckle.) I wonder if you see what I mean.

L : I see it quite clearly. That really brings me to the latter part of Mr. Gandhi's letter wherein he refers to Sir R. Maxwell's statement about him. There is no doubt that Mr. Gandhi has said times without number that he does not want to paralyse Government's war effort. There is no doubt about his sincerity. But what is the practical effect of what he is doing? Seeing the influence that he carries with the millions how can one escape the fact that whatever he says and does, and whatever men like Bhave and Jawaharlal, who are selected by him, say and do, would have its effect on the millions?

I : That question has, I think been answered by Gandhiji in his correspondence. He has said that his influence or the Congress influence will not touch the princes, the moneyed men and the warlike classes. (I mentioned here the cases of Birla and others whom G. had not prevented from making their contributions, the case of the soldier, and of the student whom Bapu had said that he was free to do what he liked )

L : Oh yes, Mr. Birla had also told me about himself. It is quite like the Mahatma, but you know that while Mr. Birla can make up his mind, the villagers are unsophisticated people and are swayed by whatever Mr. Gandhi says.

I : There too G. has laid down the limit—imposed it upon himself, viz., that he would not—only he but that the Congress did not desire to surround munition factories or barracks or to prevent people from doing what they liked.

That led us to a long discussion of the Viceroy's letter to G. and the implications thereof.

L : I tell you I realised for the first time from your article on Vinoba that there were difficulties about certain phrases in that correspondence and I want now to understand it from you.

(The correspondence is called for from the office, and in the mean time :)

L : It is so difficult sometimes to understand the Mahatma's meaning and he often misunderstands us and I

am glad you have come. When correspondence cannot get us nearer the truth, talks like these can.

I : I am glad you say that. But I am but a feeble exponent of his views, and I will not hide from you the fact that I came here in fear and trembling.

L : Oh, no, Mahadev, don't say so. Had you any doubt that you would get a hearing from me?

I : No, nor had Gandhiji. I had the fear not of failing to get interview from you but of failing to represent Gandhiji adequately. In fact, I said to Gandhiji as much, and I would not have come if he had not encouraged me to come.

L : Then let me tell you that I read all that appears in *Harijan* over your initials with as much care as I read G.'s writings. I know no better or clearer exponent of G.'s views and philosophy.

(The clerk brings in the paper containing the Viceroy's Simla letter to Bapu.)

Laithwaite seems the next carefully, is puzzled over my distinction between 'illustrative' and 'restrictive' and says: "This is a point which H. E. must see and decide for himself."

I : In fact, when we had this difference of opinion over the implications of that phrase, G. even thought of writing to H. E. for making the implication of that clear. But he was so sure of his meaning that he did not feel like bothering him, and both Vinoba and I came in for a thorough telling off. But I am now clear about the meaning for the last clause leaves no doubt. What you may not do, says the clause, is to disturb the allegiance of the two clauses mentioned. This restrictive liberty G. claims for the political conscientious objector. You have conceded it to the pacifist but not to the political objector.

L : I see the point. So you represent the pacifist group as distinguished from the political group. The one is opposed to all war. The other is opposed to this war on political grounds. But the political grounds include all kinds of things.

I : I am opposed on both grounds. Perhaps the ethical ground is more prominent. But then the pacifists have a double grouse—the ethical and the political both, the poli-

tical objector has only a single grouse. Political grounds arise from India being declared a belligerent against her will, and forced war help. Also on the ground of the war being an Imperialist war. But I agree that the whole thing covers a multitude of 'sins'. My further point is that we are asking for no more liberty than is enjoyed in Britain and the Empire.

L : You have made that point in your speech. But a man in Britain who appeals to the recruits not to join the army would be run in.

I : About the appeal to the recruits we are on common ground, but what you may not forget is the difference between Britain and India. You may do whatever you like with yourselves and your liberties, but you cannot do so here. In South Africa they preach rebellion and conjure up the prospect of storm-troopers.

L : I know, but it is a Dominion.

I : And you have told us time and again that we are as good as a Dominion.

L : We have to prepare India to be declared a Dominion but let us return again to Maxwell's point. I was saying that while Mr. Birla and others like him were intelligent and could make up their minds, others could not and the effect of your preaching on their minds would be disastrous.

I : Let me tell you that the three classes G. has mentioned will remain untouched, but there is a large non-descript class who wants our guidance, who is the victim of compulsion and to whom we want to address our appeal. Sir Richard thought he was making a strong point against me when he said: 'So it is no lack of desire on Mr. G.'s part. It is lack of capacity.'

L : What did you say?

I : Yes I will tell you. My reply is that the desire is there which is the same as the desire that the whole of the world should accept the gospel of non-violence, but he knows that the world is not accepting it.

L : I see, I see. In brief, all that Mr. G. is doing is prompted by the motive of establishing non-violence.

I : You have put it correctly. Here let me tell you something about the fast. You know that it is not a recent

matter, it is even older than G.'s last visit to Simla. He had first broached the matter before the W. C. He said that if the idea of national Government was accepted it would mean that India would lapse from non-violence into war-mindedness. That is a process he could not contemplate with equanimity.

L : I understand it clearly. But to come again to the effect of propaganda, if you please.

I : Do. I am here at your disposal to talk as long and for as many days as you like.

L : Thank you. You say Mr. G. does not want to address his appeal to the army. Now suppose Mr. G. was addressing a meeting 25 mile from Allahabad or Jamshedpur his voice would surely be heard by the troops in Allahabad and the munition workers in Jamshedpur. And when H. E. had his talk with Mr. G., H. E. pointed out to him Jayprakash's speech. Mr. G. said he agreed that it was not in conformity with non-violence but he also insisted on J's right to speak in the way he did.

I : First as to Jayprakash. Gandhiji insisted on the abstract right, but as he has explained in his statement that right would not be exercised, not only by him but by the Congress.

L : Not even by J. if he was released.

I : I expect so, for he belongs to the Congress and G. has stated emphatically that the Congress has no desire to surround the barracks of munition workers.

L : As regards the effect of G.'s and Jawaharlal's speech I see that you say. But I want you to see what you are up against. You are up against this age of excessive publicity. I say excessive because you do not know what kind of rumours are going on in the country. For days together the rumour was thick in villages that the King had abdicated and fled to Canada. It was Vinoba who dispelled that rumour. Only the other day I heard from one who had spoken to an Indian soldier going in a troop special that 72 soldiers in an Indian regiment were shot. I said to him he was talking nonsense and he ought not to spread the rumour. Well if you give us the liberty of speech you give us the opportunity of dispelling such rumours and misapprehensions.

L : You say you would help the war effort by dispelling these misapprehensions.

I : I did not know that you could be sarcastic like that!

L : By no means, Mahadev. Pardon me if I have hurt you. Let me try to think what I said, for the telephone that rang a moment ago broke the thread of my thought and I forget exactly what I said.

I : Well you said—'So you would help the war effort by dispelling these misapprehensions.'

L : Did I? Let me make my meaning clear. I meant to say you want to help us over the war effort by dispelling these misapprehensions.

I : You may say so. We want to help the spread of truth and prevent the spread of lies, if that will help Government. But let me press a further point about publicity. You know the publicity that this wretched radio is giving to all kinds of rumours and the anti-war propaganda that 'the Berlin Radio is doing'? How many people are listening to it? How can you prevent it unless you were to destroy all the radios? So you must not fight shy of this publicity. You must be satisfied that Gandhiji will not address his appeals to the munition workers or the army. Let me tell you of an incident that happened in 1921. Mahomed Ali and Shaukat Ali were arrested in that year for tampering with the loyalty of the army and the services. After their arrest Gandhiji published a manifesto—of which lakhs of copies were distributed—signed by about 50 leaders from all over India—appealing to the army to leave the services of the British. If Gandhiji was so minded, i.e., if he was bent on mischief and abandoned the non-embarrassment policy, nothing can prevent him from issuing today a manifesto of that kind.

L : I see the point. But you know we did not mean to run in Jawaharlal at all.

I : Then why did you?

L : You see he made excited appeals to the people in the Gorakhpur District—the place of Chauvi Chauvi riots.

I : Are you sure that he said in his speeches very much more than he said in his statement before the Court?

L : I cannot say no. It is a question of facts.

I : Well, I suggest that he could not have done so. He

was to have begun satyagraha on the 7th and then he would have certainly preached non-participation. But you were in a desparate hurry to take him in. You would not wait even till the 7th. That is what Gandhiji calls 'want of reciprocity'.

L : Well, regarding reciprocity, there is action and reaction and both of us are equally to blame. We say you did this and you say we did that and there is no end to the vicious circle. Regarding the speech we do not know the facts. I agree that his statement is a most temperate one and skilfully worded. But his speech is a question of facts. If you break the law you have to suffer the consequences.

I : All we are asking you to do is to amend the law so that we can make such speeches and there is no agitation. Now you have to be clear on two points. Does anyone interfere with voluntary effort? Are you prepared to stop the involuntary effort? I was talking with Sir Reginald and I said to him that if we could be agreed on this point we might be able to arrive at an agreed workable formula. But he fought shy of it and referred me to you. But I sat thinking over what he said. I said to myself: Let me think out and frame a formula.

L : Out with it.

I : No, I have some hesitation in doing so. I have no authority from Gandhiji and it is entirely my own I put it down in black and white a few minutes before starting to see you.

L : Do give me a copy. It commits neither you nor me. But let us consider it.

(I read the thing out to him.)

L : Do let me have a copy of it on entirely non-committal basis. You have a hope that Mr. G. would accept it.

I : I have a hope. But let me make this clear that there is every chance of his rejecting it too and blowing me up. Then I should have no hesitation in telling you that G. had blown me up for having made an utter fool of myself and there should be an end to the matter. You will destroy the formula and forget it.

L : Agreed. The word 'political' in your draft makes me gasp! A casual talk about the *Harijan* gave me an opportunity of delivering Bapu's message. I said: 'G. said that

I should say to you that he was not anxious to restart the *Harijan* unless you wanted it, i.e., to say that unless Government felt that it was of service to them. If they expressed that desire he would start it in spite of the Notification! That is how he put it. And let me tell you that if *Harijan* was going on he had the intention of addressing open letters to Hitler and Mussolini telling them what terrible havoc they were making themselves responsible for and asking them to desist in the name of humanity. But you have made it impossible to do so.

He laughed and thanked me warmly for coming and asked me to come again the next day at 2.30. As I was going, he again looked at Bapu's letter. I said: "It is good to have the strength of a giant but not to exercise it as a giant. You are the stronger party."

L : No, you are stronger.

I : We won't quarrel about that. But I was going to say that you could stop all this, if you made up your mind. 3000 people in jail is nothing to you. G. has thought of sending these as the representatives of the Congress. If all who speak for the Congress are quietly settled in jail, the non-Congress people will have no grouse against us. But as for you it will be a different matter. The imprisonment of these would certainly impede war effort. Rather than that give us the liberty, there is no agitation, no prisoners.

November 14, 1940

Saw Laithwaite again at 3 p.m. He said : "I am afraid we are nowhere near a solution of our problem. And as regards your interpretation of that particular point in H.E.'s correspondence, perhaps it would have been well if Mr. Gandhi had the point cleared up. You may still write to me and I shall make it

clear. I agree with your interpretation rather than with Mr. Gandhi's, but we shall put it up to the legal luminaries. My reason not to accept Mr. Gandhi's interpretation is that a prospective recruit is as good as a registered recruit. A youth of 17 who is likely to be called up in a year is a prospective soldier, I do not know the law at home, but I think a man who tries to persuade him not to enlist would be run in. Or take a prospective munition worker. A man may not be in a munition factory but be qualified to work there. I should hold it wrong to say to this man—you shall not join a munition factory. There is suppose a cocoa tin manufacturing company. It may be taken over to be converted into a shells factory some day. Now you cannot say that you would be within the law if you asked the tin-workers not to go to work in a shells factory. But you may have the meaning made clear.

I: And the difference between Britain and India makes no impression on you?

L: The difference does not affect the fact that a fierce war is going on.

I: I see. And your interpretation means that even the liberty to profess his belief is denied to the political objector?

L: I cannot say straightaway. But I presume it is. But the whole thing may be cleared up. Mr. Gandhi need not write, you can write to me.

I: Do you know that Justice Stable's judgment I have quoted gives to all objectors the liberty to express their views?

L: Perhaps the law has been made more stringent since that judgment. I am afraid we are up against an insuperable difficulty. I have tried to understand your position as best I could, but I have to judge the whole thing by the practical effect. We cannot allow any kind of anti-war propaganda.

I: But the explanation I gave you yesterday has made no impression on you?

L: No. It does not carry intellectual conviction.

I: You are not convinced that the three classes I named are not within the pale of our influence? They have, as you say, a mind of their own. If they are left untouched you should be content.



L : But what about what you called the non-descript ? You can work terrible havoc by preaching to them. At any rate you undermine their morale.

I : But you too work havoc amongst them. Of course there are differences between district and district. The Allahabad Collector is said to be careful and there are few cases of coercion there but in Gorakhpur it is all coercion. How is that to be stopped?

L : Well, well, we are out to win the war and we must overcome all impediments. That is the conscientious obligation falling upon us all.

I : There is a simple reply to it. You live and let live.

L : I don't want to be combative but I ask you, if you think your propaganda does not have any effect on the war effort why pursue it?

I : For our own existence. On the one hand there is little effect concretely on the war effort and on the other hand if we do not exercise the right, we smother ourselves.

L : But there is little support for non-violence in the country.

I : If that is so, you can afford to ignore us.

L : No. By little effect I did not mean that it could be ignored. Wherever the people's faith in non-violence they listen to Gandhiji. He says—don't do a thing and they don't do it. And then imagine the Pandit addressing kisans and students.

I : I thought I had met that argument yesterday.

L : Yes you mentioned the radio. But the radio does not leave a permanent effect on people's mind. Propaganda by men like Gandhiji and Pandit Jawaharlal does have that effect.

I : Well I suggest that the radio—I mean the Berlin radio with its mischievous propaganda has far more effect than our propaganda. We do not mean mischief. But the mischievous propaganda of the radio reaches about 50 times the number of a hundred radio sets in India. You prevent the effect of that propaganda.

L : I know you take that view but I am sure we could not allow a breach of the law or the least little interference with it.

I : That is why we are asking you to abrogate or amend the existing law to the extent of allowing us the free expression of our opinion.

L : And it is there that we are face to face with an insurmountable difficulty.

I : I know you are trying to think hard. You say there should be voluntary war effort. No one should be asked to join against his will, no one to contribute money against his will. Are you ready to broadcast a declaration to that effect? I cannot promise what reaction it would have on our position. But are you prepared to do this?

L : (A long pause. Almost no reply. And then) Even the limited effect your activity will have on our war effort affects our survival.

I : My point is that it does not so much affect your survival as the refusal affects our survival. It smothers us completely.

L : There it is, let us come to your draft. I admit you have tried your very best to meet Government position, but I have explained my difficulty about the munition workers. Then there is the political objector. You know there are satyagrahis and there are non-satyagrahis. You cannot check the utterances of these.

I : Gandhiji has in his instructions summed up the scope of the political objection. I do not know why you shy at the very mention of Imperialism and the statement that this war is an Imperialistic war. Even a loyalist like Sir Homi Modi says Imperialism is as dead as Queen Anne and nearly half of South Africa is opposed to the war because it is an Imperialist war. For your benefit I have brought a few questions from an article in the *Nineteenth Century* on South Africa and the war that I was reading this morning. There the propaganda is seriously affecting the war effort because it is violent propaganda led by men like Mr. Pirow. And yet it is allowed. What a difference between India and South Africa.

L : The other word in your draft I should like altered is the word 'prevent'. I should like to use the word 'seek to persuade'.

I : That does not meet our case. For prevention means physically stopping people which means violence. Whereas

persuasion means no such thing.

L : But perhaps successful persuasion amounts to prevention.

I : The tragedy is that with all the will in the world to settle our quarrel, we cannot succeed. You said yesterday correspondence does not take us nearer the truth. Have you exhausted all avenues of negotiation?

L : I see what you mean. But you must not forget that we are 'at war', and H.E. could not meet whilst the war is going on. We can meet as often as you like.

I : I am glad you are not pressing the situation to its logical conclusion for I represent him who is leading the war.

L : (Laughs) And then it is good that there are natural friends like Mr. Birla who have kept on his contact with me.

I : I meant to say that discussion and negotiation could be possible at any stage of the war. Both the parties can cry a half for a moment, we suspending our movement and you your indiscriminate arrests. I say indiscriminate deliberately. Gandhiji you will notice has remarked that there is no reciprocity being observed. Look at the arrest of Mr. Patvardhan, Mr. Ranka, and a host of others. They could not have made antiwar speeches, for they are satyagrahis and they could not do so without Gandhiji's instructions.

L : I have no knowledge of these cases. In fact the files have not yet come to us.

I : Just one or two more things before I go. We were talking of the fast and Gandhiji's activity helping Hitler. Let me tell you that among the things that would compel Gandhiji to go on an endless fast would be people's demoralisation and inability to fight Hitler non-violently, if Hitler came.

L : That is interesting.

I : And the other thing was about the *Harijan*.

L : Oh yes, I have to reply to the question about *Harijan*. Well Mr. Gandhi has to make up his own mind. Only let him or you not preach any breach of the law.

I : Perhaps you know that that is why instead of defying the Notification—as we did in 1930 and made a gift of our Young India Press—he preferred to stop the paper. Not that we could not have done so. We have our own press. But he

does not want to carry defiance to that extent, again in pursuit of non-embarrassment.

L : How I wish he pursued that policy with regard to preaching non-participation in the war.

I : That is why we are asking you to abrogate or amend the law.

L : The trouble is the very limited embarrassment you will do affects our war-effort and our survival.

I : No more than it affects our self-existence. But I will not pursue the point any more. I have done. I would still ask you to bear in mind what I have said and to give thought to it. You can summon me whenever you like. I shall be at your disposal.

L : Thank you. I note what you say. But you know the frightful preparations you are making will make things more and more difficult as the days pass.

I : What is a few thousand prisoners to you? You can accommodate them all in a prison like Naini jail with a capacity for 3500. But let me say that not all our propaganda will have the effect that those imprisonments will have on your effort. I want to suggest with all the earnestness at my command that if you accord us the liberty we want perhaps you can carry on your war effort better than you are doing. It is purely a question of living and letting live. But if things are allowed to go on as they are, it will add to the crop of bitterness on both sides which in the end cannot be good for you, cannot be good for us. And before I go, let me leave one thought with you. You talk of the Empire, and India being an integral part of the Empire and so on. Neither you nor I can say what will be condition of things at the end of the war. But I would say with all the earnestness at my command that you would be better advised in making Gandhiji's friendship or profession of friendship to put it at the lowest—an integral part of your plans. You may understand him better some day. Today you do not understand much of what he says and does. But I want to suggest that the balance of advantage arising out of his great influence for restraint is greater than the disadvantages arising out of his opposition. I have nothing more to say.

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ON WAY TO AHMEDABAD,  
November 15, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Did you show the draft to Sir Maurice? I gathered from Bhulabhai's talk on the phone that you did, and that it gave him a scare. I did not expect anything better. But pursue<sup>e</sup> it. Bapu has gone through the exhaustive notes of my talks. (I have to send you the last instalment yet, as I wrote it on the train). He was altogether satisfied that I had represented him well as his ambassador!

Urmiladevi is making frantic attempts to get Dhiren released. She has got him released on parole for 15 days in order to get into touch with us, and is inclined to give these undertakings: (1) That D. would shift to the Factory Bungalow as soon as it is ready; (2) That he would undertake to carry out all orders served on him by Government and so on. That is really paying too great a price for liberty and at Bapu's instance I wired her to give no such undertaking. I have told her that Nalinibabu and Deviprasad have promised to help and that you will see the Governor. If these efforts fail she must be content to let him be in jail. Is that not right?

Yours affectionately,  
Mahadev

131

SEVAGRAM,  
November 15, 1940

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASBHAI,

As desired by Bapu, I am writing this to you.

Bapu says you had given a certain amount of money for the *Ramayana-cum-Commentary*. If this publication is available in Calcutta Bapu would like to have 50 copies of it. But he does not want to purchase these copies by spending more money. If

these cannot be had otherwise, let the matter rest. Presumably this publication has by now become out of print.

I hope you are quite well. Bapu also is in fine shape, though there is no end to work. When Mahadevbhai reaches there to-day, then only some news may be available. I have not given up hope altogether. Everything is in the lap of God Almighty and Bapu is his devotee. Everything will be all right.

*Pranams from  
Your sister,  
Amrit Kaur*

## 132

EN ROUTE FROM AHMEDABAD TO WARDHA (IN TRAIN),  
November 18, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Manubhai Trivedi is a promising member of the Medical profession. He has had his earlier training in Vienna and Germany, but since foreign degrees are not recognised in our province he is experiencing much difficulty in setting up his practice there. He has specialised in children's diseases and child health. He can be useful in one of our mills or in one of Padampatji's mills. Bapu knows him well enough; his father is one of his old chums and has been useful in many of his religious activities. Narharibhai, Thakkar Bapa—all of them are fully acquainted with him. Please find out if he can be absorbed anywhere under your aegis and, if possible, please do make use of him. I believe foreign degrees are recognised in U. P. and Bengal.

I came to Ahmedabad for a few hours and after seeing Devdas off, am now returning to Wardha.

*Yours sincerely,  
Mahadev*

133

November 21, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I am expecting from you the last instalment of your notes about the interview with Laithwaite.

I had shown the draft to Sir Maurice. He did not make any comment but he took away the draft from me for any such use that he may desire to make of the same. Therefore please send me a copy of that draft also.

I am not coming to Sevagram just now because we have only very recently met each other. But after going to Calcutta and after seeing Laithwaite again, if I feel like coming to Sevagram I will do so. I fear the disease is going to take its own course, as far as could be gathered just now.

I am glad to hear from you that Moore has gone back impressed. I will also suggest that Bapu should keep in touch with the Viceroy. It is going to be a novel fight. There will be a fight and yet there will be personal contact and cordiality. This itself will create a real atmosphere of non-violence.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

134

November 25, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I returned from Ahmedabad yesterday. We had there a meeting of the trustees of the Sabarmati Ashram as also a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Harijan Sevak Sangh.

I want to write to you specially about the Ashram, I carefully studied all the activities that are being carried on at the

Ashram premises. Except the Khadi Institute and the goshala I fear the other activities are of little importance. In a way, therefore, this Ashram is not serving the purpose for which it was handed over to the Harijan Sevak Sangh.

There are various difficulties that have to be solved. One of the difficulties with regard to the Girls School is that the girls are not forthcoming to join the School or the Hostel because our curriculum does not conform to the University syllabus. I am under the impression that as far as the Harijan education is concerned, Bapu does not insist that we should have nothing to do with the University Syllabus.

But apart from this, the workers are terribly afraid of undertaking any financial responsibility because men like Narharibhai had a bitter experience at Dakshinamurti.

I put forward a scheme which, I find, has appealed to all the workers. The scheme is this, like the Delhi Udyog Mandir we should have an Udyog Mandir at the Ashram, but purely for girls. Mrs. Nehru wanted such a Mandir to be started in Delhi. But I rejected the idea because I was not quite satisfied about our ability to conduct such an institution. But I have found that Gujarat is *the* place for starting such an institution. Lady workers could be secured for the purpose and Narharibhai is quite confident about its success, provided we do not burden him with any financial responsibility.

You know Madhav's money is already there and I have promised Narharibhai that we would be able to give him 8,000 rupees from the Centre. For an institution of 100 girls residing on the spot, the total expenses would be something like 18,000 rupees including boarding, lodging, clothing and education of the girls. The income would be 8,000 rupees from the Centre and a similar sum could be got as grant from the Municipality or from Government. So, the question of collection does hardly arise.

I am rather optimistic about this scheme and it has also appealed to Narharibhai and others. Thakkar Bapa agrees with me. So, if we could have Bapu's permission, then we would go ahead with the proposal. I am visualising that eventually we will have an institution of 1000 boys in Delhi and another institution of 1000 girls in Gujarat, that is, Sabarmati. If we can achieve this, it will be a tremendous thing and I am quite hope-



ful about its future. So, please read this letter to Bapu and let me have his sanction.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBIHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

135

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA,  
November 27, 1940

DEAR MR. LAITHWAITE,

I would like to place this before His Excellency and the contents to be telegraphed, if possible, to the Secretary of State for India or to be brought to his notice in such manner as H. E. may wish.

The Secretary of State is reported by the Press as follows:

“The Congress under Mr. Gandhi’s leadership has decided to express its dissatisfaction by a campaign of defiance of law by instalments. What they, (my colleagues) have demanded is the right to urge Indians not to recruit, not to work in munition factories or to contribute voluntary contributions to the War Committee.”

While it is not possible in theory to deny the truth of the statement, Mr. Amery should have known that he was giving his unformed audience a view which was not warranted by the following from my Press statement of 14-10-1940. “I know that India has not one mind. There is a part of India that is war minded and will learn the art of war through helping the British. The Congress has no desire therefore to surround ammunition factories or barracks and prevent people from doing what they like.” And add to the above the following slogan which I have standardised and on the strength of which civil resisters are being imprisoned. “It is wrong to help the British

war effort with either men or money. The only worthy effort is to resist all war by non-violent resistance.”

It is wholly wrong to say that we have demanded the right to urge voluntary contributors not to pay voluntary contributions. The truth is that undue pressure and even force is being used on behalf of the British Government to extract money from unwilling parties who in several cases are even too poor to pay.

Then I take the following from the Secretary of State's speech about Pandit Nehru:

“Vinoba Bhave was to have been followed by Pandit Nehru who, however, outstripped Mr. Gandhi both in time and I believe in the character of the speeches he made. These speeches were violent and deliberately provocative and were deliberately aimed at hampering the war effort and did so in effect as well as in intention. . . . In any case Pandit Nehru's sentence was a matter not for the Executive but for the law. If the sentence is judged by him to be excessive he has the right to appeal.”

I regard this as a cruel libel uttered against a man who has been put behind prison bars. There is nothing in his speeches having the slightest odour of violence. I must deny that Pandit Nehru outstripped me. Indeed the Provincial Government outstripped me. They knew that he had come to fix up when, where and how he was to offer civil disobedience. In my letter of 30-10-1940. I had informed H. E. that the Pandit was the next to offer civil disobedience and that as soon as the date and place were finally fixed I would inform him. And yet, before he could arrange affairs, his journey was interrupted and he was taken to Gorakhpur for trial. It is worse than a cruel mockery to suggest against the charge of a vindictive sentence that Pandit Nehru could have appealed against the sentence, if he had so chosen. The Rt. Hon. The Secretary of State surely knew that Pandit Nehru would not appeal against the sentence.

I write this because I feel grieved that one who has the charge of the affairs of a sub-continent should have dealt with friendly opponents in a manner ill befitting his charge. British statesmen seem to go out of their way to court the doubtful friendship of powers who have no friendly feeling for Britain and to lose no opportunity of estranging those who would

gladly befriend them.

I have written all this in sorrow, not in anger, certainly not for publication.

*Yours sincerely,*  
M. K. Gandhi

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NEW DELHI,  
November 30, 1940

DEAR MR GANDHI,

His Excellency asks me to acknowledge with many thanks your letter of 27th November, and to say that he is at once communicating it to the Secretary of State.

*Yours sincerely,*  
J. G. Laithwaite

M. K. GANDHI, ESQ.

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SEGAON,  
WARDHA,  
November 30, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

Here is Nazimuddin's belated reply to Bapu's telegram reminding him about my letter:

REGRET DELAY IN REPLYING TO YOUR WIRL AND MR. DESAI'S LETTER. QUESTION IS STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION AND INVESTIGATION. WILL WRITE TO YOU IN FEW DAYS' TIME.

I suppose you had better pursue the matter now, send a copy of my letter to the Governor with a covering letter and ask for an interview after your return to Calcutta, i.e., to say if nothing is done until then.

Here is a disconsolate letter from Ramnaresh Tripathi. He fears that both the investigators were prejudiced—especially Mahavirprasadji about whom he wrote a very long letter explaining why Mahavirprasadji was prejudiced against him. I will not presume to judge the merits of the case, but I had hoped you might be able to do something for him. However more about him when we meet.

Bapu liked your letter about Sabarmati immediately. He was happy that your penetrating and business like insight helped you to place your finger on the right spot and your solution appeals to him very much. Please go ahead and turn the Sabarmati girls' ashram into a busy hive.

Bapu is well, but feels completely washed out. How I wish we could hide away somewhere for a week or fortnight's complete rest! But that seems to be impossible, and he cannot have such rest here, in spite of the best will in the world.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

*PS. 50 Copies of Ramayana have arrived. Thanks.*

## 138

SEGAON,  
WARDHA,  
December 1, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Herewith please find a report of 2nd meeting with Laithwaite.

Our letter to Laithwaite has expressed surprise that he should have chosen to send a misleading account of our meeting to his people home who are already misinformed enough about the situation obtaining here. He should have sent a truthful report. Thereafter a couple of quotations were given from our letters and a request made that a cable be sent to Amery to that effect.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA,

December 2, 1940

DEAR SIR REGINALD,

Mahadev Desai gave me your kind message which he has embodied in the full notes he prepared for me of his doings in Delhi. The portion of the notes containing the message reads as follows:

“Well, well, I should have thought that the correct position for a man like Mr. Gandhi to take would have been to address a manifesto to the people of India stating his own position as he did in his appeal to every Briton and then be quiet. Give this message from me to Mr. Gandhi.”

I have been fagged out and for some days cutting down the daily work to the minimum. Hence the delay in reply. Even so, I enter into a discussion of your message for the sake of elucidating truth. I know how busy you are and careworn. But the only way satyagraha works is by a continuous discovery of truth and action based in it. In the progress towards full discovery the satyagrahi has to show that he is ever ready and even eager to learn and appreciate the opponent's side. It is in that spirit that I approach your message.

You would be wholly right in the advice you have sent me if I was a preacher. But I have never adopted that role. I am essentially a man of action and reformer carrying on an experiment never before tried on the political field. Hence at the risk of me making mistakes even big I must continue to try the chosen path so long as I have no sense of mistake or distrust of my action. My desire is to cause the least embarrassment to the Government consistently with the prosecution of my mission. If it is successful, it cannot fail to benefit the British side by side with India and ultimately the world. If it fails, the Government cannot be hurt. I cannot carry the argument any further. Perhaps what I have said is no argument but a bare recital of the motive behind my action and its interpretation in the light of the motive. The rest must be left to time.

Mahadev Desai told me about your dear ones being in the thick of the fight. I am conscious of the fact that what applies

to you applies to almost all the known British families. How I wish I could have stood side by side with them. But duty has enjoined upon me a seemingly opposite course. I take comfort in the fact that though seeming to be in the opposite camp, I work for the same end as is declared by the British Government, only with the certain conviction that their method can never defeat Hitlerism and mine also can, if any at all.

*Yours sincerely,*  
M. K. Gandhi

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December 2, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I will pursue the matter further about Dhiren when I go to Calcutta. This will be about the middle of December.

I am glad to know from you that Bapu has given me permission to go ahead with the plan of Sabarmati. Now I will go ahead.

About Bapu's health, now that his programme for the time being is over and perhaps he would wait to see the reaction until he takes the next step, can't he take complete rest for a fortnight or so? At any rate, you should press him for this.

Now about Ramnareshji's letter. He has written a similar letter to me also. But can't you persuade him to believe that neither Poddarji nor Martand is prejudiced against him? I think he is doing injustice to both of them. You know what a suckling dove Martand is. And as regards Mahabirprasadji, he is a fairminded man. But the real opinion that has guided me is, not only of these two men, but of Hariji and Parasnathji, who are both above all prejudice. Ramnareshji, as a matter of fact, is so much attached to his own views—and I sympathise with him—that he cannot see the truth which, I am told, is this that we cannot help him unless we are prepared to suffer losses. Shrigopal Nevatia, who is one of Ramnareshji's pupils, is also of the same opinion. I am sure Ramnareshji's talents could be used in many useful ways and they should be used. But he

should give up the idea that there is only one method to help him and that is by taking his books. Please write to him at least for his consolation that what has been done so without any prejudice.

I have returned from Bhusawal. I had an idea to go to Ajanta and Ellora, but I had no enthusiasm for sight seeing now that people are going to jails. But we had a good function and I was agreeably surprised to find that in Bhusawal, Jalgaon and other places surrounding this area it is mostly the Marwari businessmen—educated and uneducated both—who are the backbone of most of these social works. Perhaps Dastane might have written to you. I had to deliver a speech and Bajrang has sent a summary of it in English to the *Hindustan Times*. You will be interested to read this. A copy is enclosed.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

*PS.* You cannot imagine the amount of enthusiasm which Bapu's consent to my Sabarmati plan has put in me.

## 141

NLW DGLII,  
December 7, 1940

DIAR MR. GANDHI,

Thank you for the courtesy of your reply to my message and the trouble you have taken to let me know your thoughts. I am most grateful for your frankness. I am glad to know that you are only seemingly in the opposite camp and that your end is the same as ours. Although I regret that there should be difference about the method of attaining it I see that I must leave you to work things out in your own way.

*Yours sincerely,*  
R. Maxwell

142

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
December 8, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Your telegram duly arrived here. Lakshmidasbhai is no more, but Nārharibhai is still with us. He is busy preparing some kind of a plan, but Bapu would like you to be here no matter whether Lakshmidasbhai is here or away! Let the date be according to your own convenience. It would be better if you come here after finishing your work in Bombay.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

143

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA,  
December 10, 1940

DEAR MR. LAITHWAITE,

The time has arrived for informing H.E. of the development that is going on within me and the outward expression it is to find.

In every step I am taking I bear in mind the difficulties through which the brave of the British Isles are passing. Hence I am moving slowly and with the greatest deliberation. It is my deep conviction that in all I am doing I am serving the British, in spite of themselves, equally, with my own people. This I can do only if I keep the movement completely non-violent or as much as is possible for a popular movement to be. I know that notwithstanding great care, I am sometimes deceived. But I know too that in the aggregate the balance is in favour of honesty. To ensure this and to set the tone, I began with my best representative who cannot be called a politician in the accepted sense. I refer to Shri Vinoba Bhave. Then I tool up



politicians, pure and simple. But I cannot be sure of the probity of large numbers of people with whom I have no personal contact. I have perforce to rely upon certificates of political associates. I believe that in the majority of cases the selections have been well made. But since I am myself not offering civil disobedience, I feel that I must send more men like Shri Vinoba Bhave for I am anxious to show that the movement is not purely political. It is much more. And so Pyarelal Nayar has gone today. He and Mahadev have been my constant companions all these many years. Satyagraha is a movement of self-purification and self-sacrifice. I must continue to part with the best I have. And so Mahadev will follow Pyarelal in due course. There are many who have no political ambition and yet who have a passionate love for freedom and still greater for the famishing millions. Many of these have still to be sent. They and the elected members in the Congress organisation who fulfil my conditions as to the charkha, untouchability and communal harmony will be offered. I propose to offer them from the beginning of the New Year.

I must continue to offer such sacrifice until I carry conviction to the ruling power that the satyagrahis represent a definite opinion in the country and that they represent millions! There is a mission of peace to vindicate which they are prepared to sacrifice their all. It is no less to them a matter of principle and life and death than to the British power against whom they are seemingly at war. They are as much opposed to Hitlerism and Fascism as the latter. Only they fight with the weapon of non-violence whereas the latter vainly expect to kill Hitlerism by excelling Hitler and Mussolini in the manufacture and use of weapons that these two dictators use. I hope this argument will not jar on H.E. I bring it forward to claim for our movement the same reality and strength that are claimed on behalf of the British. They are none the less because they do not apply to the whole of India. It was therefore wrong for Mr. Amery to characterise the movement as artificial. Do the hundreds who have gone to jail love prison life? Oh, for an ounce of imagination to realise that a human being wearing a brown or black skin can have equal susceptibility with the wearers of the white skin!

The notes that Mahadev prepared for me put these words in

your mouth: "I have to reply to your question about *Harijan* well, Mr. Gandhi has to make up his own mind. Only let him or you not preach any breach of the law."

If Mahadev has correctly reported you, may I say that the warning was unnecessary. How can an unlawful movement be conducted lawfully by a newspaper guided by the author of the movement? But many things remain lawful so long as the Government, wish them to remain so. I am quite sure that you can prosecute me or Mahadev for many things we have written. *Harijan* therefore can be restarted during the pendency of the movement, only if the Government desire it and believe that it was an organ which was serving both the nations, indeed the whole of humanity.

*Yours sincerely,*  
M.K. Gandhi

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VICEROY'S CAMP,  
(EN ROUTE TO CALCUTTA),  
December 14, 1940

DEAR MR. GANDHI,

Thank you very much for your letter of the 10th December, which has just reached me. I write at once to acknowledge it and to say that it has been laid before His Excellency who has asked me to thank you for putting him in possession of your mind and intentions.

*Yours sincerely,*  
J.G. Laithwaite

M.K. GANDHI, ESQ.

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SEGAON,  
WARDHA,  
December 16, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

What you say is quite correct but I have a handy excuse. If big men like you continue to change their addresses ever so often, what is a small-size man like me, already overloaded with work, to do? But you did the right thing. I promptly made use of that Adison anecdote in my letter to Pyarelal.

You were due here tomorrow. How that you are reaching here the day after, let me make use of the occasion. It seems Bapu will now send me out, though I have been pleading against it. I shall explain to you Bapu's reasoning, as also my own. At present half of his work is being done by me.

Please ask Bajrang to bring along with him the books a list of which is going with this letter. In case I go to jail, I propose to write a series of articles to be published in book form with *Non-violence in Literature* as its title. This material will be of great help in my contemplated undertaking.

Yours sincerely,  
Mahadev

146

Notes of Talks with Gandhiji

SEVAGRAM,  
2 p.m., December 18, 1940

1. They can't go beyond this representative government. Real power.
2. Freedom of speech. Civil population should not be warmined.

3. Six weeks. Yes, if they want it. Let the Viceroy write.
4. (1) Maharajsingh  
(2) P.T.  
(3) Kunjru.  
(4) Nalini.  
(5) Vijayaraghavachariar.  
(6) Aney.  
(7) Mirza.  
(8) Sulatan Ahmad.

147

SIVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA,  
December 21, 1940

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

The enclosed letter will flatter you, though I know that you cannot be flattered! Diwakar is a good Kannada scholar, knows and appreciates Bapu's philosophy and knows Hindi well. I have given him the permission.

Bapu had a few minutes' talk with me today. He said: "Did Ghanshyamdasji tell you that he appreciated the spiritual argument? I advanced in favour of your going. That is the only argument that weighs with me." He wants me to go on the 7th!! This is just to inform you. I wrote to you to Bombay a letter in which I asked Bajrang to send me a few books. Let him add *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to the list. I intend to write a series of articles or a book on *Non-violence in Literature* if I get the time. Jamnalalji was arrested this morning and he marched to jail with great eclat. He got 9 months and Rs. 500 fine, and he is thoroughly satisfied with himself.

*Yours,*  
Mahadev

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CALCUTTA,  
December 23, 1940

MY DIAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Your letter to me addressed to Bombay was redirected to this place and I have already given the list of books to Bajrang. He is sending you some of the books today. Others will follow. I am glad that you want to write something. I note that you also want *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Perhaps you want this book for reference, otherwise this book must have been read by you long long ago.

I had already given you the gist of my talk with Bapu after you came from Nagpur.

Poor Jamnalalji! He would not mind 12 months, but the fine is too cruel a thing for him to bear! !

I am glad that you have sent the permission to Diwakar for translating *Bapu* into Kannada. I find that the book is getting more popular than I had expected it to be. But it is getting popular because of the subject.

I am returning Diwakar's letter to you.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

149

WARDHA,  
December 24, 1940

**Mahatma Gandhi's Open Letter to Herr Hitler**

“DEAR FRIEND,

That I address you as a friend is no formality. I own no foes. My business in life has been for the past 33 years to enlist the

friendship of the whole of humanity by befriending mankind, irrespective of face, colour or creed.

“I hope you will have the time and desire to know how a good portion of humanity who have been living under the influence of that doctrine of universal friendship view your action. We have no doubt about your bravery or devotion to your Fatherland, nor do we believe that you are the monster described by your opponents. But your own writings and pronouncements and those of your friends and admirers leave no room for doubt that many of your acts are monstrous and unbecoming of human dignity, especially in the estimation of men like me who believe in universal friendliness. Such are your humiliation of Czechoslovakia, the rape of Poland and the swallowing of Denmark. I am aware that your view of life regards such spoliations as virtuous acts. But we have been taught from childhood to regard them as acts degrading humanity. Hence we cannot possibly wish success to your arms.

“But ours is a unique position. We resist British Imperialism no less than Nazism. If there is a difference, it is in degree. One-fifth of the human race has been brought under the British heel by means that will not bear scrutiny. Our resistance to it does not mean harm to the British people. We seek to convert them, not to defeat them on the battlefield. Ours is an unarmed revolt against the British rule. But whether we convert them or not, we are determined to make their rule impossible by non-violent non-co-operation. It is a method in its nature indefensible. It is based on the knowledge that no spoliator can compass his end without a certain degree of co-operation, willing or compulsory, of the victim. Our rulers may have our land and bodies but not our souls. They can have the former only by complete destruction of every Indian man, woman and child. That all may not rise to that degree of heroism and that a fair amount of frightfulness can bend the back of revolt is true but the argument would be beside the point. For, if a fair number of men and women be found in India who would be prepared without any ill will against the spoliators to lay down their lives rather than bend the knee to them, they would have shown the way to freedom from the tyranny of violence. I ask you to believe me when I say that you will find an unexpected number of such men and women in India. They have been having that training

for the past 20 years.

“We have been trying for the past half a century to throw off the British rule. The movement of independence has been never so strong as now. The most powerful political organisation, I mean the Indian National Congress, is trying to achieve this end. We have attained a very fair measure of success through non-violent effort, we were groping for the right means to combat the most organised violence in the world which the British power represents. You have challenged it. It remains to be seen which is the better organised, the German or the British. We know what the British heel means for us and the non-European races of the world. But we would never wish to end the British rule with German aid. We have found in non-violence a force which, if organised, can without doubt match itself against a combination of all the most violent forces in the world. In non-violent technique as I have said there is no such thing as defeat. It is all ‘Do or die’ without killing or hurting. It can be used practically without money and obviously without the aid of science of destruction which you have brought such perfection. It is a marvel to me that you do not see that it is nobody’s monopoly. If not the British, some other power will certainly improve upon your method and beat you with your own weapon. You are leaving no legacy to your people of which they would feel proud. They cannot take pride in a recital of cruel deed, however skilfully planned. I, therefore, appeal to you in the name of humanity to stop the war. You will lose nothing by referring all the matters of dispute between you and Great Britain to an international tribunal of your joint choice. If you attain success in the war, it will not prove that you were in the right. It will only prove that your power of destruction was greater. Whereas, award by an impartial tribunal will show as far as it is humanly possible which party was in the right.

“You know that not long ago I made an appeal to every Briton to accept my method of non-violent resistance. I did it because the British know me as a friend though a rebel. I am a stranger to you and your people. I have not the courage to make you the appeal I made to every Briton. Not that it would not apply to you with the same force as to the British. But my present proposal is much simpler because much more practical and familiar.

“During this season when the hearts of the peoples of Europe yearn for peace, we have suspended even our own peaceful struggle. Is it too much to ask you to make an effort for peace during a time which may mean nothing to you personally but which must mean much to the millions of Europeans whose dumb cry for peace I hear for my ears are attuned to hearing the dumb millions? I had intended to address a joint appeal to you and Signor Mussolini whom I had the privilege of meeting when I was in Rome during my visit to England as a delegate to the Round Table Conference. I hope that he will take this as addressed to him also with the necessary changes.

*“I am,  
yours sincere friend,  
M.K. Gandhi”*

## 150

### Notes of Discussion with Gandhiji

December 25, 1940

I was with Gandhiji at Wardha for two days, that is, on the 18th and the 19th December. His health generally is good.

He has to attend a large volume of correspondence from persons seeking his permission to offer satyagraha. He scrutinises the applications carefully and then in suitable cases grants permission. I gathered an impression that he definitely wants to minimise any embarrassment that may be caused by his movement. He is no less considerate for the convenience of the officials. For this reason, he has instructed to suspend satyagraha during Xmas, on all Sundays and at any time before 9 a.m.

He seems to be completely sanguine of convincing Government in the end that it is not his desire to embarrass them. He never fails to disclose his mind to H.E. the Viceroy or to the Home Member whenever he gets an opportunity to write. There



is not only no trace of bitterness in him but, on the contrary, there is a definite cordiality towards H.E. and his other British friends.

He was sad to hear of Lord Lothian's death.

I asked him what was his next plan. He has already informed the Viceroy of it. The next stage will continue for another three months. During that period nearly 10,000 persons will be in. All names will be properly scrutinised. "What after that?", I asked. "There is to be no stage after that. It will continue indefinitely and I will send in as many as I can. Sometimes I get a little worried about the mentality of our young men. I know they are impatient. They might do something stupid. Communism appeals to youth, unfortunately." I replied that in the past whenever satyagraha was in the field, communism disappeared for the time being only to reappear after its suppression. He agreed, after making this remark. I wondered what would be the position just now if Gandhiji had not started satyagraha? Would extremists in the Congress and Communists combine to create greater trouble? Was satyagraha not a blessing in disguise? Was Gandhiji, by starting restricted satyagraha saving Government from greater embarrassment and at the same time registering his own protest? Who knows? The issue for satyagraha is again confined to narrow issue, viz., freedom of speech and not the constitutional issue. This again seems to be a wise move since it is a point comparatively easier of solution. I know from the past experience that Gandhiji's move is always full of more than one implication.

He is anxious to send Mahadev in. I tried to persuade him not to send Mahadev as he very strongly feels that his absence may be harmful for Gandhiji's health. Pyarelal is already in. Therefore Mahadev thinks he must be kept out. But Gandhiji disagrees. "It is a movement of self-purification, not for embarrassing any one. As such, I must sacrifice my best. I needed Mahadev out for various other noble missions. This has enhanced his value further. But all the more reason, therefore, for sending him in since the sacrifice will be still greater." I saw his point. But all this is a outlook, altogether different. Paradoxical it sounds, yet it is a fact that he honestly and strongly believes that he is fighting Hitler better than Englishmen. He is seriously thinking of writing to Hitler and perhaps any day he will send an epistle

to H.E. requesting him for its being forwarded to its destination. One not knowing him may think that he has no proper sense of values. But this could only be said by one who does not know him. His mind was never more alert.

I then related to him how I was told in Bombay that Sardar Patel and others in Yeravda were quite cheerful and comfortable. I told him that there was too much restriction about interviews about which I had spoken to the Governor of Bombay. He was glad to hear that they were all comfortable.

Devdas at this stage pointed out that things in Madras were different. Rajaji was locked up at night. Interviews were not allowed to last more than 20 minutes. And the C.I.D. remained present at the time of interviews. I said I would bring this matter to the notice of H.E. But Gandhiji said there was not much to complain against. After all, jail was jail and one could not expect much while in. If all kinds of freedom was allowed, then there would no imprisonment in a sense. All said, he thought, Government was fighting in a gentlemanly way. I was glad to hear this tribute to Government. Good relation is a great thing and its value can never be over-estimated.

I gave my impression of the Viceroy's speech. Devdas at this stage read H.E.'s Calcutta speech to Gandhiji who had not yet read it fully. He listened to it very carefully. After Devdas finished the reading, I asked Gandhiji what his reaction to it was. Gandhiji said it was very cordial, but no advance. He related some of his old talks with the Viceroy and then remarked: "But the Viceroy believes very strongly in his own views. I could never dislodge him from his own position." I then told him what I had suggested to Sir Roger Lumley. Here is the gist:

Referring to failure of an agreement, I said I felt that to a great extent the failure might be attributed to mutual misunderstanding. At the beginning, once Gandhiji had remarked to me: "Why don't they trust us as they would Australia and South Africa?" I knew I could not give any satisfactory answer to this. Both sides undoubtedly suffered from mutual suspicion. In a way, it was natural. It is unfortunate that the rulers and politicians know little of each other as men. I had been in close contact with the Viceroys and Governors during the last twenty years. Some of them have been exceedingly kind and

nice to me. But every time I met a Viceroy or a Governor we only discussed politics. Consequently, I never got an opportunity to know any Viceroy or any Governor as the man, distinct from the ruler. Perhaps it was due to this reason that Gandhiji had to write to Lord Irwin when he went to negotiate a pact with Him: "I want to see Irwin the man." It is a great disadvantage that we rarely know the rulers as men. Consequently, the mist of mutual distrust remains unbroken and mutual hesitation to respond continues. This was a very important psychological point the importance of which could never be minimised. This again perhaps led to hesitation to negotiate. After the Irwin-Gandhi Pact, the policy had been to consult but not to negotiate.

With reference to the offer of Dominion Status, I have always been enthusiast about it. But Mr. Amery's speech on the Viceroy's statement has created an impression that since so many conditions were attached to the offer, it was impossible of achievement. "Muslims have been given a veto", that was another criticism. Non-Congressmen too lost the enthusiasm thereafter. One could even reconcile to Separation, but it was difficult to reconcile to a position which implies no advance until Muslims gave their consent. But this apart, I asked myself: supposing there was a settlement between Jinnah and Gandhiji and they established a good substitute of a National Government at the Centre, would they never arrest anyone for preaching certain doctrines so long as they did not exceed the limits of decency? The answer is obvious. Should it not then be possible for the present Executive to tolerate the present anti-war slogans as pure and simple realists? What did hinder war efforts more? Incarceration of prominent people or a few slogans by them?

Discussing the solution for ending the present impasse, I suggested immediate expansion of the Viceroy's Council by taking in men who were neither Congressmen nor Leaguemen but who would command respect. "Who would be such men?" I was asked. I gave a few names and said could give more.

I told Gandhiji that in my opinion such an expansion would be useful in more than one way. It would definitely end the deadlock. I argued that even if we got National Government, Congress would not associate itself with war efforts unless it

was prepared again to give up Gandhiji's leadership. But giving up Gandhiji's leadership once more may not now be possible for the Congress. Therefore, for all practical purposes, Congress may be ruled out even for a National Government. On different grounds, perhaps the League also could be ruled out. But why wait only for these two parties? If Government, as is suggested, were really anxious about their efforts to lead India towards her goal, then why not begin? I admitted that the success of this scheme depended on the selection of really good men, who though might not command the confidence of Congress or the League but who at least command respect not only of these two political parties but of the country at large. In the second place, all the important portfolios, like Law and Order, Commerce, Finance, War Supplies, Defence, Railways, etc., were transferred to these men. Gandhiji's reaction was not unsatisfactory. He said he would appreciate this provided Government at the Centre was made virtually a representative government. It may not be responsible but the men so chosen should at least be of a representative character. He realised the difficulty of getting independent men from outside the two parties, but I gave him a few names and he thought they may not be a bad selection.

He agreed that in view of the war exigencies H.M.G. would not be able at this stage to go beyond this and he would not quarrel if they did not go beyond this. I, of course, was assuming that no Executive Council composed of such men could afford to keep political leaders in jail, nor could they afford to shut their mouth. Smuts could not shut the mouth of Hertzog and yet war effort of South Africa continued. Similarly, war efforts in India could continue with greater force under my plan. They would definitely be accelerated. Freedom of speech will be there, but once the freedom is given I am sure it will not be abused.

Devdas was not prepared for Gandhiji's good reaction. For clarification, he intervened: "What of the war effort? It will continue. And will the Congress tolerate it? Gandhiji said: "Yes, they will. Even today they do. It will all be voluntary. There will be no coercion. And freedom of speech will have been allowed. After all, the main idea of the Congress is not to allow the civil population to become war-minded. It is not

desired that Government should be embarrassed. Besides, even today the whole country is not anti-war-minded. There are people who sincerely believe in waging war. The mission of the Congress is only to educate people. If Congress could at any time make the whole nation un-war-minded, who could force them to fight? But today it is not so. Therefore why should we grudge war-minded people associating with war?"

I pointed out that such a Cabinet may also be able to build a bridge between Hindus and Muslims and also could do the spade work for setting the stage for constitution making after the war. "Yes, perhaps", he said.

I asked him if there was no danger that the freedom of speech granted by a representative government may be abused. He did not think so. But at the same time he said that the law was there to punish any such violation. Congress would not tolerate any abuse on the part of its people.

The question of provinces would still remain unsettled but perhaps the lull would give us a breathing ground for the next step.

I suggested why not cry a halt for six weeks before taking the next step? "But the next step is already taken. It could, of course, be stopped, if so desired by Government."

Ghanshyamdas

## 151

SELVAGRAM,  
WARDHA (C. P.),  
December 27, 1940

MY DIAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I am in receipt of your letter of the 3rd instant. The books I have sent for were read by me years ago, but since I am going to make use of them as references, I must have them before me. Some other books will also be needed, but these I already have.

There have been more talks about my going with the pregnant phrase 'Mahadev will follow in due course' playing a special role and 'due course' being variously interpreted.

I, too, have heard a great deal about *Bapu*. Sitaramji (Seksaria) was telling me that all the copies of the book were sold out like hot cakes.

And here is something bitter to swallow. The day before yesterday Shri Ram Sharma of *Vishal Bharat* was here. He began rather tauntingly, "Yes, I have read your foreword," and then clammed up. I said, "So what?" Then he opened up, "So all that is that book is his own writing, eh? He must be a genius." And all this in a bantering tone. Then he went on, addressing Gandhiji as an aside, "You say his non-attachment is complete. Can a man who speculates and who is busy acquiring control of one paper after another be a model of non-attachment?" I said, "I have proofs which neither you nor the rest of the world have." He retorted, "I am not here to join you in a wordly duel." I only wanted to place my own misgivings before you." I remarked, "I will ask you just one question. Supposing a multi-millionaire renounces all his worldly possessions and starts living in this hut would you call him a model of non-attachment?" He promptly replied, "Yes, yes, certainly." Then I rejoined, "I believe him quite capable of doing just that. I have proofs, but I am not bound to produce them for your satisfaction." Then he started saying "Birla is conducting *Matribhumi* just in order to crush *Anand Bazar Patrika*, whose circulation exceeds that of any other daily in whole of India. "Was that a proper thing to do?" I confined myself to the remark courteously, "How should I know?"

He struck me as an impudent fellow.

Bapu has also sent that article about Hitler to the Press besides despatching a telegram to His Excellency that the same be sent to the West as well. That was three days and no response has come through as yet. I rang up Associated Press. They had no knowledge of it till then. They said, "Held up." Towards the evening they said over the phone that it was held up by the highest quarters. What am I to tell them. And we have been told that the Press Adviser in Delhi had not cleared Gandhi's Open Letter to Hitler.

What is all this? I did not like it. In fact, I disliked it completely. That Bapu did not dislike it is a blessing in disguise.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

CALCUTTA,  
December 29, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Immediately on coming here I wrote to Laithwaite asking him to get me an appointment from the Viceroy and added that I would also like to see him. After I had met H. E. came back the reply. He was afraid there was no hope to see the Viceroy but that he would be very glad to see me. I suspected that there has been a departure in the old policy but I refused to believe this until I had seen Laithwaite.

Next day S. C. Mitra was going to see the Viceroy. The Viceroy only a week before had told him that he was keeping in touch with Gandhiji through myself whom he called "my friend, Mr Birla." Naturally therefore Mitra wanted to know if he could place any proposal before the Viceroy. I told him that you had given Laithwaite a formula and that Mitra should press the same on the Viceroy. Mitra, after seeing the Viceroy, came straight to Birla Park. He told me that the Viceroy could not remember anything about the formula. But when Mitra told him that he might discuss it again with me, the Viceroy said: "Mr. Birla is a friend of mine, but he is these days financing the movement. Although he has every right to do so, since it is his own money, yet the fact that he is financing the movement deters me from meeting him just now." When I heard this, my suspicion was confirmed. The policy had changed. All the same, I went to see Laithwaite.

On meeting, I told Laithwaite that although I had gone to discuss something constructive about the present impasse, I, however, felt that I should tell him first of all how rudely shocked I was to hear what the Viceroy told Mitra about me. But Laithwaite replied: "But is it not the common talk here?" I said, "I do not care what the common talk is, but do you believe it?" "No." "You do." And I added that since I had discovered that I was distrusted by the Viceroy, I did not want to pursue the matter further. Laithwaite said, "But aren't you a Congressman?" I replied, "No, I am not a Congressman. But I *am* a Gandhiman. To me Gandhiji is more like a father. I am deeply interested in all the philanthropic objects like khadi and Harijans.

Gandhiji has never asked me to join the political war. The Viceroy should have, by this time, known that no man among Indians has worked harder to help him or stood more loyally by him than myself. And this is how the Viceroy has reciprocated. If the Viceroy feels that on the one hand I come to him as a friend and on the other I am secretly acting against him, then I have no desire to waste his time any more. The Viceroy has wronged me by suspecting my honesty and I have no desire to allow myself to be snubbed any more."

Laithwaite felt a little non-plussed. He said, "But what's wrong with having political affiliations of one's own liking?" I said certainly there would be nothing wrong. But it would be absolutely wrong if a man pretended to be something while he was quite different. I had done my best to make myself personally known to the Viceroy and Laithwaite. But evidently even after five years they had failed to establish human contact with me. They were suspecting my honesty. And so I had no desire to continue this sort of relation any more.

Laithwaite tried to soothe me and wanted to know what exactly was the constructive proposal that I wanted to give him. But I said I had lost all self-confidence to discuss any constructive proposal. He said: "What difference does it make whether you come as a friend or as an opponent?" I said, "It does. If I come as an opponent, then I don't cut much ice. I can cut ice only if I come as a friend. And now that I am not recognised as a friend, I have no desire to talk further." On being pressed further, half-heartedly I told him what I wanted to talk. He again tried to soothe me.

He came to see me off up to the outer precincts of his office and showed all courtesy. But I was not in a mood to be soothed. This ends the matter. He said, "We could always meet and discuss things." But I told him that after this snub by the Viceroy I was not going to the Viceroy's House again and that this was the last chapter of my talk with him.

Before I left Laithwaite, he told me about Bapu's letter to Hitler. I was surprised that, instead of sending it to the Viceroy, Bapu should have sent it to the Press. I think it was not a correct procedure. But Bapu knows better. Laithwaite was going to write to you the same day about Bapu's letter to Hitler.

You know how I have defended the Viceroy before Bapu and



how I have acted as if I was the Viceroy's representative. And this is the way he has reciprocated. Is it not stupidity? But let not Bapu misjudge the Viceroy. Who knows if he may not himself be victim of the circumstances?

In any case, this brings the end of my relations with the Viceroy. What a wooden mind these men have got! I pity them.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DLSAI  
SEVAGRAM

153

CALCUTTA,  
December 30, 1940

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

It is a news to me that I have anything to do with *Matribhumi*. Whether it is conducted to compete with *Anand Bazar Patrika* or to oppose Subhas, I do not know. But perhaps the latter is the object. However, I need not bother about what Shriram Sharma said. Perhaps you remember I sent you a cutting from *Vishal Bharat*. In which Shriram Sharma by insinuation attacked me by commenting on one of Bapu's articles. But I have never seen the man's face and I do not know who he is.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI  
SEVAGRAM

## Letters without Date

154

MY DEAR LAITHWAITE,

I enclose advance copy of Gandhiji's article in the next *Harijan* for H.E.'s and your perusal.

I had a long talk with Shri Ghanshyamdas Birla on the phone today. He said he got an impression from you that H.E. was far from happy over what had happened, that H.E. felt that Gandhiji was in a very great hurry to get back to Wardha, and so on..

So far as I could see from my talk with Gandhiji I gathered that Gandhiji had assured H.E. that he could conveniently stay in Delhi until the 11th or even the 13th if H.E. wanted him to stay. And I do not think there can be any question of impatience on Gandhiji's part, either to assume that the negotiations have broken down for good and all or to feel that civil resistance should be launched. The enclosed should make it abundantly clear.

Yours,  
Mahadev

155

DEAR LORD LINLITHGOW,

Since writing to you on the 14th inst. I have had reports of the interviews you gave to Sarvashree Bh. Desai, Munshi and Kher. These reports convey an impression different from the one made by a study of your speech. If they are a correct reflection of your mind a settlement may be more difficult than

your speech has led me to believe, and perhaps the time has not yet arrived for our meeting. But of this you shall be the sole judge. I do not want to put you in a false position by your inviting me to meet you because of my letter of the 14th instant. Somehow or other I feel that when we meet we should do so to come to a final settlement. But I must not anticipate.

*I am,*  
*Yours sincerely,*  
M.K. Gandhi



**1941**



January 5, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I have just received your letter and am glad to hear that you would like me to be in Wardhá on the 17th. After reading the other letter, which also goes out by today's post, if Bapu prefers 17th to the 25th. please drop me another letter; and I shall reach there on the fixed date.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
BARDOLI

SEVAGRAM,  
January 20, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

You have promised an annual grant of Rs. 5,000 for Kamala Nehru Hospital. Kindly send this year's instalment.

Ansuya's nuptials should have been celebrated without any hitch. Her Rs. 601 have arrived. As desired by her, the amount will be utilised in Harijan work.

I have seen the *Times*, comment on Spender's letter. This shows they are not going to relent. There has been a persistent rumour afloat here for the last two or three days that Bapu's arrest is imminent. It is being openly suggested that every Collector has been sounded, if the Mahatma's arrest would lead to waning of the movement. But the *Times* counsels the arrest of his followers, not his own. Let us see what happens. Bapu's correspondence, however, continues.

I may have to go to Delhi on the 26th or 27th in connection with the Hindi journalists & function.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

3

CALCUTTA,  
January 22, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I am surprised to learn that Dr. Jivaraj Mehta says that I had promised 6,000 rupees per annum for Kamala Nehru Hospital. If I *had* promised, he could have directly demanded the money from me. But I fear there is some misunderstanding somewhere. Rameshwarji is here and thinking that Dr. Mehta may be confusing me with him, I enquired of him also. But Rameshwarji also denies having made any promise. At the beginning, I had paid some lump sum to the Kamala Memorial Fund. I do not remember how much. Subsequently, Dr. Mehta got something also from Rameshwarji. About a year back, he came to see me in Delhi and asked for donation. I told him that I would speak to Rameshwarji since Mehta and Rameshwarji both belonged to Bombay. And I did speak to Rameshwarji but I found that he too had been approached by Mehta and that he had also paid 2,500 rupees. Consequently, I told Dr. Mehta what the position was. In view of this, I do not know how he wrote to you that I had promised 6,000 rupees per year. My memory could not play such a serious trick on me, but if it has, then I must say that there is something seriously wrong with it!

I note that you are going to Delhi. Will you stay at Birla House? In that case, you should send a wire to Devdas to keep everything ready for you. As no one is there just now, Devdas will have to act as your host even at Birla House.



What else? Let us pray God for the best, as you are already doing in the Ashram.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

4

CALCUTTA,  
January 24, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Friends tell me that seventy-five per cent of the new satyagrahis are undesirable persons. Long before the commencement of the satyagraha, Bapu had laid down very strict conditions. They were repeated time and again. Even now Bapu is never tired of emphasizing the necessity of maintaining the purity of the movement. About a year ago Bapu wrote in the *Harijan* that during the movement of 1930-32 he did not keep strict vigilance necessary for maintaining the purity and he promised that in any future movement he would be extra-careful. And yet it looks, if all what is said by people who know is true, that a good deal of undesirable element is enlisting itself as satyagrahis.

Bapu may say that anyone giving certain assurance must be taken at his word until proved to be otherwise. But this would not alter the facts. How could Binobaji to be bracketed with men of very inferior type? The first batch had certain status but the second batch, I am told, has neither status nor character. To give the certificate of a satyagrahi to a man of doubtful character is a dangerous thing to do. Undesirable persons would get importance and credit on the strength of which they will continue to exploit the society. In fact, by jail going many people are simply obtaining passes for further exploitation.

I am sure many other persons must have written to Bapu on this point. And although I am not well acquainted with all the

facts, but when I heard good people criticising the character of the so-called satyagrahis, I thought it my duty to lay down my own doubts before Bapu.

At one stage Bapu had planned that only two men in jail, that is Vinobaji and Pt. Jawaharlal, would be sufficient. At times he says that even one true satyagrahi, would be enough.

He emphasizes the virtues of quality vis-a-vis the efficacy of quantity, and yet quantity has just now assumed more importance than the quality. When I felt distressed, I could no longer resist the inclination to write.

Mr. Amery's speech contains nothing new, but the interpretation seems to be more liberal than the previous statements. It is undoubtedly a challenge to our capacity to settle our differences. Government, at any rate the official world, are exploiting our differences and yet the fact remains that there are differences which we have not been able to settle. And whatever be the reason, so long as the differences remain, we cannot have any political advance even if England today handed over the whole administration of India to us. This fact is crystal clear.

I feel, as I said at Wardha, that perhaps the time had come to make renewed efforts with Muslims. I had a talk here with Sir Nazimuddin who is a very reasonable man, though a staunch Muslim. And I was going to arrange a meeting between him and Maulana Azad. But before they could meet, the Maulana was taken away. I still feel that a lot of common ground may be found between Congress leaders and many Muslim League leaders except Mr. Jinnah.

Perhaps Government too desire an interim settlement. There are disadvantages of an interim settlement, but perhaps inaction will not be a wise thing at this stage. And I feel also that it should be possible to get England very near the Poona demand.

Although Bapu's position is quite different and to him non-war-mindedness is more important than the Poona demand, if Government conceded Poona demand, it would undoubtedly satisfy most of the Congressmen. I dare say Bapu does realise the gap between his position and the position of his Maulana, Rajaji and others. Will it be wise then to ignore this gap? And if we do not ignore it, then one may ask whether it is possible to get the Poona demand conceded by Government through negotiation and further clarification of Amery's statement. I feel that it

should be possible. But only if Bapu makes up his own mind about it. If Amery means what he says, then should Bapu lead those Congressmen into wilderness who really don't believe in non-warmindedness but who, because they failed to get a settlement from Government, have decided to speak untruth? Should Bapu encourage this hypocrisy?

I have placed all my doubts before you to be conveyed to Bapu.

Yours,  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADLVBHAI DESAI

5

SEVAGRAM,  
January 25, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Bapu is rather surprised that you do not recollect having promised a grant for the Kamala Nehru Hospital. He says you either told him or wrote to Nargisben Captain that you would make an annual donation of Rs. 5,000 (not Rs. 6,000). I am also enquiring from Nargisben in order to ascertain who is at fault. I myself remember nothing as I was not present on that occasion.

I did not leave for Delhi today, but the Standing Committee meeting has been fixed for February 6. I never go to attend it but Bapu says it is an important meeting and I must attend it.

F. E. James called here yesterday and was closetted with Bapu for nearly an hour. Many an important issue came up for discussion. His motives appeared to be quite praiseworthy. He sincerely desires to be helpful, which was why he requested me to be near at hand when he reaches Delhi. He will be there from the 2nd to the 7th of February and is planning to see the Viceroy as well as some other big guns. He told me in Bapu's

presence that it would be worthwhile my being available during that period. Only God knows what is behind all this. I should not be surprised if he has been sent by somebody. Therefore, I have decided to go.

*Yours,*  
Mahadev

6

January 27, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Regarding the Kamala Nehru Memorial Hospital, immediately I read the name of Nargisben, my memory came back! Should I blame myself or you for this loss of memory? Undoubtedly, I myself am to blame, but you gave me an impression that I had made a promise to Dr. Mehta. And however I tried to remember, I failed to recollect my promise to Nargisben. I think perhaps it was at Sevagram that she approached me when I had gone to see Bapu. I do not know what I promised, but I am sure I *did* promise something. And since Bapu recollects the figure, it must be correct.

Was it only for one year or for every year? Please write to me after enquiring of Bapu. Am I getting old? I think not. But you created a new background for me and hence I made an ass of myself!

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

7

CALCUTTA,  
February 7, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I am enclosing a copy of a letter that I received from Kanti. In response to this I have promised to send him 50 rupees per month, and I have already sent him 150 rupees for the first three months. After sending the money to Kanti, it struck me that I should inform you about it and so I am doing it.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DSAI  
SEVAGRAM

8

SEVAGRAM,  
February 10, 1941

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

Kanti's letter is quite simple and direct, but it is against the code of moral conduct, which was why I didn't like it. But how can I remain silent?

I felt you must know. That is why I am writing this to you.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA (C. P.),  
February 16, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Your letter. There is nothing important just now to justify putting you to the inconvenience of a visit to this place.

About Kanti Bapu says that what he did in writing to you for money was a breach of the code of moral conduct but that there was nothing wrong about your response to it. However, he says that had he been consulted before the letter was written to you, he would have counselled against sending the money. Besides, Bapu does not carry his code of conduct to the extent of preventing you from parting with your own money.

A translation of *Bapu* will appear soon enough. It should be ready by now. Its Hindi version is going through its 2nd edition now. Martand has been to me for its foreward. I made no changes except to modify a single sentence since what had appeared in the first edition was contrary to what I had intended to convey.

A nice letter has been sent to Moore. But the man is stolid. His own son is in the thick of the fray and this has warped his angle of vision. I was much annoyed at the phrase "Co-operation with Hitler". I have written an article in response to it. It is going to appear the day after tomorrow when you yourself will see how I have dealt with the subject.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* I was hugely tickled to glance over Shanti's marriage card. The hosts are all men and no women. Poor things! What have they done to deserve this? Or was it a case of men embracing women?

That confusion about your supposedly promised donation is clearing up. Today I got Gosiben's letter. It was written on the 29th of January but reached here only today. It contains a fairly good account of the talks with you and should be accepted as an accurate version of what had actually taken place. M. D.

10

February 17, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

The donation of Five thousand rupees for the Kamala Nehru Memorial Hospital is being sent to Dr. Jivaraj Mehta.

The letter from Gibson is returned herewith.

Yours,  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

11

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA (C. P.),  
February 18, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I enclose herewith papers regarding Shri Madhusudan Doctor, the late Dr. P. J. Mehta's grandson. He and his brother were educated in England for some years. The brother is a pilot in the Tata Company drawing a handsome salary of Rs. 750. This young man is still unemployed. As he is both an electrical and mechanical engineer and possesses a certificate from one of the well-known London colleges, Bapu thought that you might be able to make some use of him. Please let me know if you can accommodate him.

There is another but quite different case that I have to recommend to you. Chhotubhai Desai works, with Swami Anand in the Thana Gandhi Ashram. He gives his whole time to serving the aborigines in the Thana District and also a few Bhangis and other Harijans in the neighbourhood. As the bulk of the work is for the aborigines, I cannot ask him to serve under the Harijan Sevak Sangh. For several years he has been doing this work and Swami Anand has somehow helped him to make both

ends meet, but he is now at the end of his tether and the work cannot be put on a stable basis until a regular allowance is made for this full-time worker. Incidentally I may tell you that he is a cousin of mine. He resigned his station master's job some 15 years ago and worked under Manilal Kothari as secretary of the railway employees' association. He has no means of his own, has a wife, two daughters and a son. He has a certain amount of debt also. If he is paid an allowance of Rs. 75 per month plus Rs. 25 for travelling and contingent expenses, Swami Anand says it will do. I had discussed the question some time ago with Bapu and he then said that the allowance could be given him from Bapu's ear-marked fund with the Harijan Sevak Sangh. But I have indicated the technical difficulty. Chhotubhai is a man of not much education but of very great courage and resourcefulness. He has given the last ten or more years of his life to the service of 'down and outs'. I wonder if you can find his expenses.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

## 12

SEVAGRAM,  
February 20, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

So I am back from Delhi. Nothing doing, nothing tangible at any rate. But I breathed a sigh of relief that at last it was all over, for the time being at least. I had a lengthy talk with Desmond Young. He pressed me to resume publication of *Harijan*, said Bapu's appeals would be exempt from censure so long as he himself refrained from uttering anti-war slogans and addressing anti-war meetings. And since he himself did not contemplate offering civil resistance what was there to prevent him from restarting *Harijan*? This is the sum and substance of what he told me. When I told him about my old draft he said nobody should be squeamish about accepting it. He said, "Had you



told me earlier, I would have been among the first to accept it. Laithwaite is a queer bird; it is quite possible he did not show it to H. E. at all. Nor does he ever show such like things to him." I had a second draft ready; this the Editor of the *Hindu* had personally handed over to H. E. When I told Young about this 2nd draft he was pleased. He was due to leave for Bombay the day following and he said he would show it to the Governor of Bombay and do whatever it was possible to do. Only God knows just how much the poor man can manage to do.

J. was not helpful at all. He suggested my seeing Thorne and Laithwaite. I said it would be better if he asks them to see me, told about my disinclination to see them any more; have had my fill of them. I told him in effect. He was due to see the Viceroy on Friday but H. E. had chosen just this moment to fall sick and all of his engagements stand cancelled. So I took my leave.

Narayan has been doing *A Few Pages from the Diary* into Marathi. I shall go through his rendering from cover and this will give him some practical education. This year he has been busy mastering Hindi and has sat for the Hindi Kovid examination. He has done his papers well.

I showed Kanti's letter to Bapu. Today being Monday. His day of silence, he made his notation on the body of the letter itself. This I am now sending with this letter for your making note of it.

Yours sincerely,  
Mahadev

### 13

February 26, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

With reference to Chhotubhai Desai, yes, if it is a deserving case, he may be employed for the aborigines' cause and I will find out the expenses.

With reference to Madhusudan Doctor, I am handing over his papers to Madhav, in case we need a man of his qualifications.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM.

**14**

March 3, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADFBHAI,

This is what Padampatji writes. I believe what he says. He is not a person who would go back on his promise. But I find from the Press that he has donated 15,000 rupces to the Hospital. That is excellent.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DLSAI  
SEVAGRAM

**15**

**Formula Prepared by Shri Mahadevbhai Desai**

NEW DELHI,  
March 6, 1941

Gandhiji cannot be satisfied with anything less than unfettered freedom of expression of opinion both in the Press and on

the platform. He would have little interest in life if obstacle were placed in the way of his bearing witness to a faith for which he has lived and for which he would lay down his life.

Essentially his movement is not a movement for the prevention of war effort but for the hastening of peace, and he regards it a matter of conscience to be able to fight non-violently whatever he regards as a means of prolonging the war.

If this liberty is accorded to him within the limits he has imposed on himself, his quarrel with Government would cease. In fact the moment they accord this liberty to India they are in a position to announce to the world that whilst their domestic quarrel remains, they have the Congress with them in the common object of fighting Nazism; that whilst there is a war-minded India co-operating with them militarily, there is a non-violence minded India also co-operating with them for the same purpose in a non-violent way. Gandhiji can be trusted to devise a suitable formula.

As regards the constitutional question, there is no doubt that Gandhiji can have no interest in the formation of a Cabinet to carry on the war.

Government can themselves declare that they cannot obviously expect the Congress with its policy of non-violence to join a Cabinet formed to prosecute the war militarily and that therefore they must choose representatives even from other parties who have not the conscientious objection that the Congressmen have. Either the present Council can announce the grant of unfettered freedom of expression—which would be more graceful—or the new Cabinet to be formed can make the announcement.

## 16

### A Note on the Repressive Policy of Government

March 8, 1941

The *New Statesman*, one of the most influential papers of England, has summed up the situation in India in one sentence

—“India is in moral revolt.” The position of Government may be summed up in a similar sentence: “Government are using immoral means to crush the moral revolt.” The significance of this would be seen from the fact that in South Africa the party that is against South Africa’s participation in the war is not only carrying on a verbal campaign against it, but is preaching violence, raising of an armed rebellion, organising of storm-troopers and is even conjuring up the vision of a Nazi Victory. This armed revolt is tolerated there. But a moral revolt which the Hon. Home Member would perhaps describe as a symbolic revolt and which, as Mr. Amery has said, has had no effect on the Government’s war effort, is being sought to be crushed by means of a policy of indiscriminate imprisonments, detention and so on. Six ex-premiers and nearly three score ministers are in prison.

### **Imprisonments of the Innocents**

And what is their crime? The demand for the freedom of conscience. In most cases the imprisonments are effected even before the demand is made or the speech in protest against the war policy and war effort is actually made. In the vast majority of cases heavy sentences have been given just for the offence of repeating an innocent slogan which is nothing more than the expression of an opinion—“It is wrong to help the Government war effort with men and money. The only worthy effort is to resist war by non-violent resistance.”

I have been told that a lawyer of renown has said that if Mahatmaji were to allow him to defend the satyagrahis, he would see that every one of the sentences was wrong in law and was set aside. In the case of Pandit Jawaharlal if he had cared to defend himself, no court could have dared to impose the savage sentence of four years. He would have been acquitted, for he had committed no offence.

### **Treatment of the Innocents**

For what are called symbolic offences or I should call technical offences they are being given varying sentences of four months to four years and fined 200 rupees to 6,000 rupees. The seriousness of the revolt may be judged from the fact that an advocate of C.P., Mr. Jakatdar and an M.L.A., aged 65 years

has offered satyagraha six times in spite of having been sentenced to a fine aggregating over five thousand rupees and he has now been sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

There is no uniformity of punishment and certainly no uniformity of treatment though the offence in all cases is the same, whereas there is uniformity of treatment for the German and Italian prisoners. The arbitrary classification of prisoners adds insult to the injury. There is no classification for war prisoners. In some provinces many of those who repeat anti-war slogans and have made anti-war speeches have not been arrested at all, while in other provinces people have been imprisoned without having done any overt act. In some provinces prisoners are marched to railway stations through public streets in handcuffs and bar fetters. In the Punjab a man of the position of Mian Saheb Ifukharuddin who pays several thousands of rupees as income-tax was transferred from one prison to another in handcuffs, and all the C-class prisoners are subjected to the humiliation of bar fetters.

Food in many jails is unclean, full of grit, and of an inferior quality. Prisoners who are allowed to supplement their diet may not have cooked food from outside; in the Madras Presidency, even Rajagopalachari, the Madras Premier, is no exception to this rule, and even pickles and eatables of that kind come under the description of cooked food. In the Ajmer prison Shri Krishna Garg, who is in no way very strongly built, was given *chukki*-task for some days with the result that he fainted.

### **Non-Congress Detenus**

I need not say anything more about the non-Congress detenus, anything more than this that they are in prison without even the semblance of a trial, and behind their back the Home Member made a most irresponsible and unworthy attack on their character and labelled them as traitors, dishonest, worthless and so on.

That subject has already been discussed on the floor of the house by my Honourable friends who supported Mr. Joshi's motion the other day and I need not add anything more than a word of my strong protest against undignified and unworthy speech by the Home Member.

**Mahadevbhai Desai**

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA (C.P.),  
March 13, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I am writing this on the train taking me to Bombay where I am going to clear up the mess in the Harijan accounts and also to make arrangements about the restarting of it. Bapu has decided, after full consideration, to restart it, and let us hope and pray we may not have to come to grief.

Srinivasan had a brief talk. Bapu's reply to him was emphatic and clear that on the basis of co-operation in the war effort there was absolutely no chance of settlement. Shiva Rao is going to interview Bapu again after the Conference. Bapu's reaction to the actual resolution would be worth knowing. But he is definitely of opinion that the Conference can do nothing. Sapru wrote that after the Conference they might write to Bapu and Jinnah to come together for a joint conference with the representatives of the Conference. Bapu said it would be no use either, but he also said that if he was dragged into it, he would go.

Now about business.

1 I enclose herewith reports of Chhotubhai Desai's work since the beginning of January last. The allowance to be given him (Rs. 75 + Rs. 25 for contingent expenses) may be remitted every quarter to Swami Anand, Gandhi Ashram, Agra Road, Thanna (G.I.P.). The first quarterly instalment from January to end of March may be sent on receipt of this.

2. The Executive Board meeting of the Sangh is fixed for 24th of this month. Do you want me to attend this meeting? Thakkar Bapa is seeing Bapu on the 16th and he will have discussed with him matters worth discussing. If the *Harijan* is revived from the 22nd—as we oppose to do—it may be very difficult for me to come—especially as Rajkumari is also not there.

3. I told you that Dr. Sushila might need a car to go to the Harijan Colony to give injections to a Sevagram patient who is there. In my hurry I forgot to tell Bajranglal that she needs the car on Tuesday and Saturday at 6.30 p.m. at her hospital. She

will need it only during this month and for the first week of April, i.e., for the time the patient is there.

I am so sorry to bother you with these details, but what else is life but a botheration with details. He makes the best of it who refuses to be bothered by them, i.e., attends to them in a detached way! And I know that you have found the secret and also know how to act up to it.

*Bapu* is getting more and more popular. Luck seems to follow you in every sphere. A woman of letters from Tamilnadu wrote to me in high praise of the book (as also, I do not blush to confess, of my introduction!). A good Marathi scholar has now asked for permission to translate it in Marathi. I am giving the permission.

There are three young men—all sister's and cousin's sons – (a Second Class Hons. B.Sc. with Physics & Chemistry and two LL.B's) bothering me for the last six months to find them job. Is there any place where you can make use of them? The unemployment problem is greater than any other that we can think of!

Bapu is keeping very well—thank god.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

## 18

### **The Report of Work Done by Shri Chhotubhai Desai from 1-1-41 to 28-2-41**

#### **Harijan Work**

(1) Sixteen Sweepers of Thana Municipality were fined rupee one each by the chief-officer for failing to resume work in time after midday meal. The facts of the case were that the sweepers in question were waiting after the midday meals for their Muccadam to arrive and distribute them their implements without which they could not resume work. The chief officer in the mean while happened to pass that way and the sweepers in

their confusion appeared to slink away. The union represented the sweepers' case and the fines were remitted.

(2) There are three colonies of Harijans in Kalyan town, one called Bhangiwada is situated on the banks of the central tank, another called Maharwadi on the southwest and the third called Kalsewadi beyond the Railway Station yard. In this last locality which has 105 huts and population of about 500, no kind of municipal amenities exist for the Harijan population although municipal taxes to the extent of rupees 375 are levied and collected by way of general taxes. There is no access to reach it from the town save by crossing at least half a dozen railway lines and signal wires. No road, no lighting, no water facility, no conservancy arrangements, not even a burning-ground is provided. Night-soil was dumped within 10 yards of the inhabited houses, carcasses of dead animals lay undisposed here and there for days. The Harijan had to pay rupee one for each dead body to burn or bury in a private land in the neighbourhood. These grievances are being tackled for over 10 months now and a road, lights, latrines are being provided.

At Maharwadi the Harijans the bulk of whom are Municipal employees have built their huts after purchasing land of their own. The Municipality charges them the house tax at the usual rate, i.e., 8% of the rental value.

At the third colony called Bhangiwada on the outskirts of the tank the Harijans who are mostly municipal sweepers have no water to drink. A well was built for them on the bank of the tank but its water has been found to be foul and undrinkable. This is probably because round about the well much of the rubbish collected from the town is emptied by municipal carts which the Municipality would not stop on the plea of replaining land for building a vegetable market. The matter was taken up by the Union last year and the Municipality resolved to consider the advisability of building another well for the sweepers "when the lands on which their huts stand become their own property" and in the mean while "to engage a person of *touchable caste* to dole out water to the Bhangis". This and a number of other grievances of the sweepers are being represented and fought for by the Union and the authorities have condescended to attend to our representations to a certain extent of late. This is largely due to the fact that the municipal



administration have come in such disrepute during recent years due probably to local rivalries among various members of the vested interests that Government had to threaten the Municipality with suspension. The present President is facing a criminal prosecution on a charge of breach of trust brought by a retired peon and is retaining his chair by cajoling the Congress, the League, and the Democratic Swaraj Party members on the Board simultaneously.

### **Kurla Municipal Staff Union**

Most of the municipal sweepers are members. The union is to be registered. An elevated committee of 7 members has been entrusted with this work. The president who is a rare social worker belonging to the Harijan community has gone to prison by offering satyagraha under the Bombay Suburban District Satyagraha Committee. Efforts are being made to educate sweepers to apply for full benefits of the Provident Fund scheme which at present is optional for low-paid employees.

A section of the sweepers recently built a temple and there were some quarrels among the various sub-sections and sub-castes of these Harijans over using the temple. After prolonged efforts and reasoning coupled with persuasion these differences have been composed amicably.

### **Adivasi Work**

Repeated representations were made personally and in writing to the district collector and other officials in the highly complicated cases of Katkaris belonging to villages of Ambernath and Jambhool (Kalyan Taluka). These Katkaris were dispossessed of their lands by local landlords who appeared to have influenced even the subordinate officials. Orders of second-class magistrate, Kalyan calling upon the Katkaris to dismantle their huts and give peaceful possession of their lands were set aside by the Collector as the district revenue head and also ordered to make sufficient cultivable and grass lands available to these Katkaris in the locality. This can only be in April after the expiry of the terms of the present lessee. The preliminary operations of making rab (baking of the land for seed planting) etc. would suffer in the mean while. The special

permission for these was therefore obtained from the Maulatdar Kalyan for the purpose.

In Jambhool 18 Katkaris were dispossessed of their woodland plots held by them for over 10 years on the plea that these plots were de-forested. The Government orders on the subject were to the effect that such de-forested plots should be made available for the Adivasis and given to them with occupancy rights under the New Tenure on their paying as value three times the current assessment. Similar deprivation of Adivasis has occurred at the hands of senseless or corrupt Government officials in direct contravention of the spirit of Government resolutions on the subject in the villages of Shahi Varivali, Kurgam, Budlapur, Sunoli and Bhisal of Kalyan Taluka. In the villages of Shahi Varivali and Kurgam besides Jambhool the orders to restore woodland plots with occupancy right have been obtained and in the rest of the villages the cases are being represented.

#### **War Collections and Wheel Tax from Adivasis**

In the Taluka of Daharu 28 villages were visited. It was found that a new "tax" was collected by the officials of the Government Forest Department on about 2000 ploughs of Adivasis at 0-8-0 and annas four per plough in different localities and annas 0-4-0 and 0-2-0 from Adivasi labourers having no land. Receipts have been issued for these as donations for the "war gift fund". About 300 such receipts have been collected. About 200 statements have been taken.

Adivasi cartmen who ply their carts on hire for transporting Timber to coastal ports were made to pay rupees three each by way of rupees two for Registration fee of their carts and rupee one by way of their voluntary contribution to the war gifts fund. Much harassment was caused to these Adivasis whose daily net earnings hardly exceed three annas a day. Everyone had to borrow from the Sowcar. The receipts passed were only for rupees two as registration and license fee for the cart and the driver. No receipt was passed for the additional rupee taken. Under the Public Conveyance Act the *bona-fide* agriculturist is exempted from registration and licence, though he may ply his cart during off season in order to supplement his income. The registration is obligatory for those only who ply

their carts for hire as their principal source of livelihood.

These cases have been represented to the police headquarters Thana and Poona as also to the district collector as a result of which the levy appears to have stopped for the time being throughout the district. The question of a refund is pending decision by the Government. This matter has been submitted to Mahatmaji in detail.

### Relief

The forest village of Sirola near Kasara Ghat (Shahpur Taluka) with about 120 huts belonging to Harijans, Adivasis and Mussalmans, was burnt down at 3 a. m. by fire on 3-2-41. 50 miles were rendered homeless. The approximate loss was about 10,000. After personally visiting the village money and cloths were collected in Bombay and suburbs and about 200 pieces of cloths were distributed. Forty rupees were given for buying utensils. Authorities were also moved and grains, cloth and free timber from forest was distributed.

—President, Municipal Staff Unions—Thana & Kalyan & Hony. Secretary, Adivasi Seva Mandal, Gandhi Ashram, Thana.

## 19

March 16, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Thanks for your letter of the 13th.

I am glad to hear that *Harijan* is to be restarted. My mind is on tip-toe, awaiting eagerly for the spiritual food which we all so badly need.

Yes, if Sapru invites Bapu, he must go. But I agree with him that not much is going to come out of it. In a way, however, I am glad that what I conveyed to the Viceroy in December is now independently suggested by the liberals. I think there is no other solution just now, but I doubt whether it will appeal to the authorities at this stage—Let us, however, hope for the best.

Now about what you call 'business'.

With reference to the report of Chhotubhai Desai's work among the Harijans and aborigines, I am directing to send him 300 rupees for January, February and March and then 100 rupees every month.

With reference to the Executive Committee meeting of Harijan Sevak Sangh, you need not attend.

For car to Sushilaben, I am asking Bajrang to arrange.

You are correct that one who refuses to be affected by them makes the best of the botherations; that is, one who attends to them in a detached way. But I have yet to know how to act up to it, although you are quite correct in saying that intellectually I have found the secret.

With reference to the Marathi translation of *Bapu*, I understand Barve is already doing it.

With reference to the three young men, B.Sc.'s and LL.B's, please send me a full report about them. The matter is really difficult, but I will enquire from all the mills whether we can absorb some of them.

Hoping to get the new *Harijan* soon,

Yours,  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

20

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA,  
March 22, 1941

DEAR MR. YOUNG,

On return to Wardha I have had some talk with Gandhiji over our correspondence about there starting of the *Harijan*. Shri Srinivasan was also here, especially to urge Gandhiji to restart it. And it is after some deliberation that I am writing this.

While there is in the correspondence little to encourage us

to revive the *Harijan*, there is no doubt that there was enough in our informal talks—both between you and me, and between Sir Richard Tottenham and Shri Srinivasan—which could help a favourable decision. Above all there is the urgent desire of Shri Srinivasan and many of the members of the Standing Committee, as also of the general reading public, which Gandhiji cannot possibly ignore. He has therefore come to the conclusion that it would now be discourteous, if not improper not to comply with the wish so generally expressed. We propose to bring out the first issue on the 29th March.

But before we do so, I owe it to you to tell you again that both Gandhiji and I are completely identified with the satyagraha movement, and our editing of the *Harijan* cannot but bear the colour and impress of that identification, though it will be solely with a view to keeping the spirit of non-violence alive in a world of strife and bloodshed. If you feel therefore that we had better not restart the paper, you have but to send me a wire. I will not misunderstand it and say nothing in the public about it, for the simple reason that I have not yet announced the decision to restart the paper.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev Desai

## 21

March 23, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

This is a letter from one of the workers of my mill in Delhi. As far as I know, he is a troublesome man and he now seems to be in charge of the satyagrahis. I cannot believe that he himself can be a satyagrahi. However, it is for you to decide. I have sent him a message that I cannot make any arrangement for

accommodation of the Charkha Club. But perhaps you can deal better with such men.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

Encl. 1

22

SEVAGRAM,  
March 23, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I wonder if you will still be in Delhi. There was a telegram from Agatha asking for Babu's reaction to the Bombay resolution. Babu has cabled the following reply: "Bombay suggestions not likely receive Congress countenance. Am remaining silent."

I have come across a very good book *Social Philosophies in Conflict* by Joseph Leighton (D. Appleton-Century Co., New York) and I want you to read it. Please get two copies one for me and one for you. I borrowed it from the Delhi Assembly Library through Ane. I have had to return it unfinished as Ane leaves on the 26th and the rules now prevent members from taking a book out of Delhi. I do not know that the book is available in Delhi or Calcutta or Bombay, but if not, it may be worthwhile getting from N. Y.

Smt. Sharadabai—Rameshwarbhai's wife—is here. She fed with Babu yesterday and with me today. Gopa also has come with her. But it is boiling hot and I do not think they like being here. They are returning this evening to Bombay.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

23

March 26, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I will try to get the book suggested by you and will also send you a copy.

Your cheque of 1,000 rupees for the Harijan Sevak Sangh was most welcome.

I don't think it was very necessary that you should have come for the first meeting. But for the second meeting I hope you will make it a point to attend, unless this time you can send us another cheque of 5,000 rupees! But perhaps your attendance will be even more valuable than the cheque.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

24

HOML DEPARTMENT,  
NEW DELHI,  
March 27, 1941

*Confidential*

DEAR MR MAHADEV DESAI,

Mr. Desmond Young has shown me the correspondence which he has had with you about the publication of the *Harijan*, and it will, I think, be convenient if I make the position of the Government of India clear. In the first place, there is no question of Government's advising against publication. The decision whether or not to resume publication of the *Harijan* must of course be entirely a matter for Mr. Gandhi himself, and is one which the Government are not concerned to influence in any way. In the second place, you are of course aware of the limits

imposed by the Defence of India Rules on the publication of news or comment which may fall within their mischief and you will not, I am certain, misunderstand me if I add, in the most friendly way, that these Rules must necessarily be of general application. I am however glad to infer from your correspondence that should Mr. Gandhi in fact decide to resume publication it will be in the hope of assisting rather than of causing embarrassment to Government.

*Yours sincerely,*  
R. Tottenham

## 25

SFVAGRAM,  
March 28, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

Man proposes God disposes. I made the announcement yesterday that *Harijan* would be restarted on the 5th April, but like a bolt from the blue came a letter from Tottenham today which decided Bapu against republication. He said: "Under the circumstances we cannot restart. And even if we did so, I am sure we should come to grief in a month or so." I enclose the whole correspondence, i.e., the recent one. The Delhi Correspondence you had seen. Well, everything augurs for good, and though the first shock has been great. I do not regret the decision. Perhaps *Harijan* cannot now be restarted until after the war—or after a settlement of which I see no hope whatsoever.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev



26

**Copy of the Telegram Sent to Sir Richard Tottenham,  
Home Department**

March 29, 1941

THANKS YOUR LETTER IN MY LETTER TO MR YOUNG DATED TWENTYSECOND, I HAD SAID 'IF YOU FEEL THEREFOR THAT WE HAD BETTER NOT RESTART THE PAPER YOU HAVT BUT TO SEND ME A WIRE.' NOT HAVING HEARD FROM HIM I ANNOUNCED RESUMPTION YESTERDAY. BUT IN VIEW YOUR LETTER GANDHIJI DISINCLINED RESUME PUBLICATION MAKING ANNOUNCEMENT ACCORDINGLY

MAHADEV DESAI

27

March 31, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I do not see much difference between the letter from Mr. Young and the letter from Sir Richard Tottenham Perhaps Bapu by intuition thought that the wisest course was not to restart the *Harijan* Well, whatever happens, happens for the good, although some people do not believe in this philosophy

*Yours,*

Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SRVAGRAM

CALCUTTA,  
April 17, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

The writer of this letter is in my employment. He wants that I should forward his letter to Bapu with my recommendation. Ram Agarwal has been in my employment for the last many years. He is an honest man, and, though not very brilliant he is full of goodness and also *shraddha*.

I cannot say how far it would be possible for Bapu to accommodate him at Sevagram. But if he is allowed, I am sure he would not be a burden. If there is accommodation, I think you may allow him to stay there for a few days since it will do him a lot of good.

If you kindly send the reply to me, I will forward the same to Ram. By the way, Ram's wife offered Satyagraha about a month back at Okara (Punjab) and was sentenced to 9 months' imprisonment.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

SEVAGRAM,  
April 20, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Your letter about Ram Agarwal. I know him. He has been writing to us for some years and occasionally sends small contributions. He may come in the middle of May. Let him write to me a week before he arrives.

My surmise about the genesis of the *Hindu* article is correct. It seems our friends were told that the Bombay resolution can-

not be considered until Congress gives up its fight for free speech, and some of the leading people of the Bombay Conference have actually approached some Congressmen who are outside with that proposal. You will, before this reaches you, have seen Bapu's reply to *The Times of India*. That will give a quietus to all the efforts in this direction. They have gone about the business in a very stupid way and they should blame no one if they come to grief.

Durga is slowly progressing. They will take weeks if not months before she completely recovers. The world is so full of sorrows, and everyone must have his share of it.

Yours affectionately,  
Mahadev

30

SLVAGRAM,  
May 3, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

This is in brief the history of Durga's illness:

On the 4th of April, she had fever with extreme pain in the joints which was soon followed by Oedema of the legs. In about two days she was crippled and she could move none of her limbs even in bed. She passed through excruciating agony for fifteen days. The fever went beyond 101°. It came down to normal on the fifteenth day. For thirteen days she was on a complete fast and also without medicine. Then Salicylates were given her and are still being given. Steam baths and saline purgatives were being given every day. The only nourishment allowed has been about 12 to 16 ounces of Orange juice or grape juice. For the last two days she is being given boiled *bhaji*.

The pain in almost all the parts has disappeared but extreme muscular pain in whole of the right limb has persisted all these days. She can sit in bed for some time, but cannot stand. There is no fever, the pulse which used to be up to 88 until yesterday

is 74 today. She gets plenty of sleep.

A Bombay doctor who came to see another patient says the rheumatic fever is due to bad teeth which must be attended to and may have to be removed. But they are all strong and none is shaky. His advice was that Salicylates must be continued for at least three weeks after the fever and disappeared and so we are continuing that treatment.

Could you kindly show this to Bidhan Babu and if he feels like giving any advice I should be greatly obliged.

We are applying *Bettulol* on the affected thigh and giving her gentle *malish* before the steam bath.

There was a very good article in the *Hindu* of the 2nd on the Iraqi-British rupture. Do read it.

Yours,  
Mahadev

### 31

CALCUTTA,  
May 3, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I wonder whether you read my article. I should like to know what reaction it left on your mind.

Yours sincerely,  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SIVAGRAM

सेवाग्राम  
वर्धा सी.पी.

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA, C.P.

سیواگرام  
وردہ - سی - پی

4-4-87

भाई धन इंद्रानंद,  
हिं की आर्थिक स्थिति  
बढ़ने में तुम्हारे सहयोग  
में ही आगे बढ़ना पड़ेगा।  
बहुत ही धन्यवाद।  
आपका आभार पूर्वक  
लिखते हैं कि आपकी  
आवृत्त में आगे बढ़ने  
में आपकी सहायता  
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ਖਾੜ੍ਹੇ ਦੇ ਕਪੜੇ ਲੁਕਾਏ  
ਮੇਰੇ ਕੋਲ ਆਏ ਕੋ  
ਨਹੀਂ ਦਰਦ ਕਰਾਏ

ਬਾਝੂ  
ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ



32

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA (C.P.),  
May 5, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have just finished reading your article dealing with the economic condition of India and I like it very much indeed. Earnest efforts should be made to secure justice and fair play for our country. There is a pressing need for many more of such writings.

If ever I feel any necessity for touring Bihar, you will find me ready to undertake the journey.

I have gone through Schuster's plea once again. There is no occasion for my sending any intimation from here. Let us first put our own house in order, and keep it clean, Time is working for us. We shall have to step forward. We must have an effective control of everything. Let them at least restore to us the liberty to speak out our mind by word of mouth as well as through the medium of the Press. Let them also release all the prisoners. They cannot keep even the Communists without trial.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

33

SIVAGRAM,  
May 20, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Along with this letter goes one from Ramnaresh Tripathi. I had asked Martand and Viyogi Hariji to prepare an estimate of the value of the press and the stock of books. He wants everything to go along with the printing press. Now they seem to have returned after inspecting the press and the books. And have got ready an estimate of the value of both. If we could take posses-

sion of the printing press it should be possible to render him some help. Now, how do you feel about it? My own feeling is that this wholly impractical Brahmin does deserve some sort of succour. It would be a nice thing to do so.

There seems no basis for the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* Correspondent's gossip. No such letter has reached here.

I am afraid I shall have to go to Ahmedabad once again. It is quite possible you may not find me here on your arrival. On the 30th I am scheduled to attend the Press Committee meeting at Simla. I may be back on the 3rd or 4th. Why not come then?

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

34

CALCUTTA,  
May 22, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Viyogi Harji and Martand have already submitted their report. They think that purely from the business point of view they could not pay more than 10,000 rupees, whereas Ramnareshji is expecting 25,000. I agree with you that something may be done to help him and therefore I have already written to Ramnareshji that I would ask him to come to me in the near future when I propose to invite Viyogiji and Martand also and then I will try to see what could be done.

Rameshwarji informed me this morning that you have gone to Bombay. I hope the treatment in Bombay will cure Durgaben. As a matter of fact, you should have taken her there long before. But perhaps you were trying Dr. Das's treatment.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
BOMBAY

35

CALCUTTA,  
May 30, 1941

PUJYA BAPU,

Kindly go through the accompanying letter. It was received by the owner of Shrinivas Cotton Mills of Bombay and was written by his brother. The owner of Shrinivas Mills, Shri Gajadhar Somani, mostly lives in Bombay. At present he is here in connection with his business. This letter was written to him by his brother who also lives in Bombay. Please ignore the language part of his English and concentrate on what he seeks to convey. If what he says is true, there is something frightening about it. And there is no reason to question the veracity of his statement. Shri Gajadhar Somani and his brother are businessmen, pure and simple and have no involvement with politics of any variety or with the Hindu Maha Sabha either. Therefore, I am not prepared to assume that all this is mere concoction. Something of this sort has already found its way into the Press. But the nature of what has appeared will be clear to you after you have gone through that particular issue of *Janmabhumi*.

Now please advise us as to what we should do. These people do not relish the idea of their names figuring in the papers. But they told these things to those who are known to them and, as is apparent from the letter. Some kind of rumour is already afloat in Bombay.

That the Muslims should conspire and think up such things is terrible enough, but can the police commissioner concern himself with such like things? I am reluctant to believe this could be possible, and at least Lumli is not capable of such tactics.

Humbly,  
Ghanshyamdas

*P.S.* It is possible to suggest that the organiser of this conspiracy is not a Muslim but some bad character of a Hindu, and the object of circulating this sensation rumour over the phone was to implicate Ismail. Or it may be that, after all, there was some such conspiracy

and by using the police-commissioner's name it was intended to reassure the hooligans. Whatever be the case, I was deeply pained, though I don't believe anybody could bring about our ruination. We have unflinching faith in God's mercy and we are sure of his protection.

G.D.

**Enclosure**

THE SHREE NIWAS COTTON MILLS LTD.,  
DELISLE ROAD, POST NO. 14,  
BOMBAY,  
May 27, 1941

MY DEAR BHAJI,

I had already given you one detailed letter which I hope you must have received in time. We got your second letter yesterday but we were expecting one detailed today which we have not got. We hope to get the same tomorrow.

The communal riot is going on in the city and the situation cannot be called satisfactory upto now. Either the situation has not been controlled or rather it seems more probable that the authorities do not want to wipe out the trouble completely. The casualties are more on both sides than what is reported in the Press but Hindus have suffered more than the other party. Stray assaults are going on in the affected localities. I am also sending you one copy of *Janmabhumi* from which you will find a peculiar story narrated. This incident has happened last night with us. Somehow or other we got a telephone which was received by Basudeo. This was wrongly connected to us as the man wanted to speak with some Ismail Khan. The talk was in Vernacular (Hindi) language. Basudeo went on saying, 'yes', 'yes'. The man related his whole story to him and suspicious in the talks he always went on asking in the middle of the talks—'Are you Ismail?'. He told that they were all (about 300-400)

collected in the mosque and would attack simultaneously in the morning at about 8.30-9. He asked, "You come before that and join us. We shall cut all the Hindus in Sindhi Gali."

The most astonishing thing in the talk was that the man spoke that he had talked over the matter with police commissioner. How far the thing was correct, we did not believe in the beginning. But later on when we referred the Telephone Directory, we found the telephone number of Ismail Khan was 41979. Then taking the serious view of the talk we immediately decided to inform all possible responsible persons who can take proper precautions in the matter. We first rang to Raja Narainlalji at about 11.45 p.m. He was awakened and informed all about that.

Then we phoned to some of our Multan merchants and other persons. Of course, in the course of talks with others we found that the particular locality was near Mohamedali Road. Of course immediately the matter was reported to Hindu Mahasabha and Arya Samaj who took immediate steps in the matter which was reported to police ultimately. Police immediately got it confirmed from us and I think all these informations frustrated the attempts of the goondas who might have taken a large number of lives had the proper precautions not been taken by the Hindu institutions. The whole story was automatically circulated like electric waves. Anyhow panic is prevailing in the city. And it seems quite clear that the mischief is being done by some organised goondas and who are also backed by strong inner force. This incident we wanted to write to Mahatma Gandhi but we have postponed the same for taking your advice in the matter. Can you not take up this matter with Baboo G.D. Birlaji and I think he can move up this matter with the highest authorities in India. How such organised plots are being allowed by police and why they are not detected and checked by them is something very peculiar which nobody can understand. Only accidentally we have come to know all about that.

Can you not also move Bangurji to pay liberally for the protection of Hindus? Private funds are necessary in such cases. In any case, we are all quite safe and you need not be much anxious about us. We are taking all necessary precautions for

our safety. One Gurkha is kept at Pedit and one sepoy is kept at our bungalow.

More in my next letter. Hope to hear from you regularly.

*Yours affectionately,*

B. Somani

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SEVAGRAM,

WARDHA,

May 31, 1941

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

I have gone through your letter and also through the other letter. We need not bother about such things. I, for one, would not like to do anything about this matter. Yes, whatever happens ultimately must happen since God organises it. So why worry? all the same, we must take necessary precautions while keeping ourselves free of any feeling or fear. I do not feel satisfied by keeping Gurkhas and taking similar measures. These may be posted but we ourselves must not feel frightened, and we should learn to protect ourselves, non-violently or violently. If we entrust our safety to others, we shall perish. Only those who are cowardly allow themselves to get frightened. And the world is teeming with those who flourish on others fears. My own advice to you in the present context is to fear nothing and to tell the others to do likewise. Acts of hooliganism will continue unless the Hindus use their own guts. This is not possible in a day or two. If we grasp the underlying causes of such outbreaks and prepare ourselves to cope with them, then alone can we feel secure. Our people neglect their moral obligations. This pains me. How can a weak-kneed policy yield wholesome fruit?

Mahadev is reaching Delhi.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

CALCUTTA,  
June 2, 1941

PUJYA BAPU,

I am in receipt of your letter. The letter I had sent you hinted at a Muslim conspiracy and the Police officers' nonchalance about it. It was a shock to me and I was writing in pain. Have Government officers fallen so low? I had also taken it for granted that you would take up the matter and write about it. If what was stated in that letter was true was I to remain content with the consolation of doubtful value that mankind was drifting down the slope? But it seems that what was revealed in that letter and what I stated in my forwarding note failed to influence you. Is it because you consider it a waste of time and energy to deal with anything that does not spur you to give a clarion call to do our duty in respect of our higher obligations?

The Khaksars have been parading the streets here, duly armed with spades. This they are doing in board daylight with nobody to say anything to them, though the law forbidding such activity is equally applicable to both Hindus and Muslims. The Government, however, seems to be taking it easy and has turned indifferent to it. But since you have made a specific mention of something I feel called upon to make it quite clear that the Hindus, the Marwaris included, are far from feeling scared. Nor does anybody run away in panic when there is an outbreak of communal violence. All of us are on our guard and quite confident of giving a good account of ourselves. If you are labouring under the impression that we feel frightened please drive away the notion from your mind altogether. Of course, God is always here in our midst to extend His hand of protection to all of us. But the communal riots in Bombay have had their repercussions far and wide and people have been apprehensive of a repetition of those ugly scenes here as well. The police commissioner acted firmly and the goondas are in a chastened mood. But of panic there is not a trace and people are keeping a watchful eye. I did not write to you about it earlier. This time I wrote to you just to give you a feeling of comfort that we are not unready. God willing, if the worst come to the worst, the

residents of Burra Bazar, while not found wanting in courage enough to protect themselves adequately, will do nothing contrary to their moral obligations. This is my hope and belief. The rest falls within God's domain.

*Humbly yours,*  
Ghanshyamdas

38

SELVAGRAM,  
June 4, 1941

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

The reason why I remained unimpressed was that there was nothing in that letter of which I had had no experience before. Had I written on this subject without any occasion for it, that would have furnished them with a fresh excuse for fabricating a new falsehood without any corresponding gain. Our own guiding principle should always be to stick firmly to what we consider our duty without allowing ourselves to be swayed by any extraneous consideration. Any undue distinction in observance of this principle was uncalled for.

It gives me a feeling of elation that the prevailing climate in Calcutta is wholly emptied of any feeling of scare. If this feeling of fearlessness is adequately supported by measures to face any untoward situation while keeping within the bounds of moral conduct that should be considered an ideal state of achievement. As time spins out hooliganism will be on the increase and if the parties involved assiduously refrain from indulging in anything unbecoming of their moral conduct it would be a highly commendable thing indeed. Otherwise there is no bright future for anybody. The mild breeze now being wafted across the country is a wholesome sign.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu



SEVAGRAM,  
June 6, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

What can I usefully add to what Bapu has already written about your article? Whatever emerges from your pen has the imprint of your personal experience. The article should also appear in Hindi. I am writing to the Editor of *Sarvodaya* to do the needful in this regard.

About the other two things, I am sending what Bapu himself has given in writing. Though I understood Bapu to say that nothing need be sent to the auditor, the concluding para of what he has written implies some sort of direction. I understand you should send a telegram to the following effect

BEFORE ANYTHING CAN BE DONE TO END IMPASSE GOVERNMENT SHOULD UNDERTAKE BOLD STEP RELASING ALL SATYAGRAHIS AND SECURITY PRISONERS AND DECLARING LIBERTY OF FREE SPEECH, FOR NO SOLUTION WILL HAVE GANDHIJI'S GOODWILL UNTIL THIS ELEMENTARY DONL GANDHI MAY BE TRUSTED NOT TO ABUSE LIBERTY

What harm can this much do? Let us then wait for the reaction.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

PS. I shall be at Ahmedabad from 7th to 10th, in case you feel like giving me a ring you can use Ambalal's line.

M.D.

CALCUTTA,  
June 28, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Sir Bertram Stevenus is the representative of the Australian Government acting on the Eastern Group Supply Council. He was Prime Minister of one of the State of Australia for nearly 8 years and was Finance Minister for some more years. I came in contact with him twice in Calcutta and he impressed me as an outspoken man with liberal ideas in many respects.

However, the point is that Sir Bertram expressed a desire to meet Bapu. He will write to me when he would like to go to Wardha. Meanwhile, I write this to say that when I send you his definite dates for Wardha, you will be good enough to fix up a time for him with Bapu. Besides, where would you accommodate him? Jamnalalji's place is hardly a good place for his accommodation. The best place is either at Sevagram or the Circuit House. But you know better.

I myself will come to Wardha after Krishna's marriage which is taking place on the 3rd of July.

I dare say you will be coming to Delhi to attend the Executive Committee meeting of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. But since you are a very busy man, I would not press it too much. Please do what suits your convenience.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI

SEVAGRAM,  
July 22, 1941

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

*Bapu* still retains a couple of factual inaccuracies. This distorts the intended message. I have marked the relevant portions.

You may advance the argument you have actually done in regard to the calf episode, but it suffers from basic impression. What I did to the calf was just to relieve it from its suffering; it had nothing to do with the fate meted out of Ravana and the other figures of Hindu mythology. There was a basic interest in the Killing of Ravana and the others inasmuch as the world had to be got of the nightmare of their evil deeds. God personified had to undertake the job. In the case of the calf the destroyer was not an incarnation, real or imaginary I maintain that anybody placed in a situation like mine is much qualified to do similar things. Ambalal destroyed 40 rabid dogs under my inspiration or encouragement. There was no moral justification for what he did, but there is all the difference between the destruction of Ravana and the other evil-minded of mythology and what I or Ambalal did. My interpretation of their killing is something distinct from the general belief. This particular issue had deserved a more elaborate treatment in your book. This may yet be done on some future occasion. The language is sweet, the style easy-flowing. Here and there one comes across a repetition of the same argument. This shortcoming could easily have been removed during proof-reading. Without affecting the style. But this defect will escape detection from the readers.

I hope you are doing well.

*Blessings from  
Bapu*

## 42

July 27, 1941

MY DLAR MAHADEVBHAI,

It is a waste of time, yet I cannot help asking you to read these letters. I am prepared to pay 7,000 rupees and can even give a loan to the Sasta Sahitya Mandal if they are in need of finance. But it is difficult for me to make any comments on the various other details of the transactions. Martand and Hariji both dislike the terms given by Tripathi.

Devdas also is there. You should settle up the matter as you like and give the final instructions to Martand through Devdas and send me a copy of the same. There is a proverb in Marwari: कोयले की दलाली में हाथ काना. It appears that Ramnaresh's transaction is no less a transaction of coal and so the black dust is soiling everybody's hands, and even mind. It appears that Tripathi has created a very bad impression on all with whom he came in contact.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI

43

July 29, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Please make immediate decision about Ramnaresh Tripathi's transaction and let me know what is to be done. I think perhaps the best course may be that I should pay him 7,000 straight and leave him to manage with the Mandal and *The Hindustan Times* for the remaining 13,000 as best as he can.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
BOMBAY

44

August 1, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

This letter speaks for itself. Frankly I do not like it. For the last two years, I have been getting a little suspicious about

Babaji. There was absolutely no reason for this, but I had practically stopped helping him towards any of his activities because I was not quite sure about the usefulness of his work. This is, however, something more than I had expected.

I have written back to Hanumanprasad that I do not want to do anything until I know full details. And after all, he should have known that I could have done little. What influence have I on any important official in U.P. ? However, there seems to be something fishy about it.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADLVBHAI DESAI  
BOMBAY

45

August 9, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADLVBHAI,

This is the second letter from Hanumanprasad Poddar. This makes the position clear. But I do not see what could be done. Please place both the letters before Bapu and let me know what advice should I give to Hanumanprasad Poddar and others.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADLVBHAI DESAI  
BOMBAY

AMRIT NIWAS,  
MUSSOORIE,  
September 12, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I do not know where you are just now, but thinking that you might have returned to Wardha, I am sending this letter to your Wardha address.

I have come here for a change. My cough had very nearly disappeared in Delhi, but I was feeling rather weak. So, I have come here. The Mussoorie climate has done me some good.

Please let me know what am I to do about the Ramnaresh Tripathi chapter? Anything more to be done? Martand has sent me a gist of your message to him. But I should like to know, as far as I am concerned, what more is to be done.

Will you kindly send me the copy of *Bapu* that was read by Bapu and underlined by him?

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
September 12, 1941

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

I got your letter the day before yesterday through Mahadev.

This is a tragic story. It is my firm opinion that only by making a candid admission of all his mistakes can Raghavdasji

remove his shortcoming. Without such self-cleansing he can only be a source of harm to others. The very fact that he is by nature a good man has the greater potentiality of harm from him if he fails to make such an admission. It is the hall-mark of gentlemanliness that one should make a clean breast of one's mistakes before the whole world. There is no alternative for a genuine satyagrahi. Therefore our first duty should be to depute some good man to meet him for this purpose.\*

I duly got the cutting sent by you.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

48

September 22, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have yours of the 12th redirected to me here. I have already written to Tripathi and Martand—asking the former to accept Martand's second letter and informing the latter of having done so. I do hope Tripathi will now close the chapter. If he does not, he does it at his peril, and I have told him so. If he regards the terms as inequitable, he should reject them, and then cease to blame me. I am due to go to Alwar on the 1st October. I shall therefore be in Delhi on the 30th.

Rameshwardasji told me that he would be going to Pilani about the same time. I should like to have his and your programme on and after the 30th. I am reaching Sevagram on the 27th morning and leaving it for Delhi on the 29th.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

PS. I do hope Rameshwardasji and you are both well.

MUSSOORIE,  
September 23, 1941

PUJYA BAPU,

I feel that it should be possible to give a greater spurt to the Harijan work. When we took this work in hand there was a network of committees—the central committee, the district committees, the tehsil committees, and so on. These committees were spread all over the country, but the amount of actual work done was not much. By far the greater part of it was confined to paper work. Now something substantial is emerging day by day. The inactive ones among the committees have become extinct by now. Increasing attention is being paid to solid work. This without the incentive of scholarships and without much of propaganda either in addition to the work in Delhi, Sabarmati and Kodambakam it seems that the work under the supervision of Dastane at Bhusawal Radoji at Nasik and Sitaram Shastri at Guntur is likely to increase in volume in the near future. At Jaipur Hiralal Shastri is thinking of setting up a boarding house. Still the cart is moving at a slow pace there.

Once I had the ambition to have 1000 students in Delhi at some future date. But now I have come to the conclusion that Delhi is not the ideal place for this kind of activity; nor will the clustering of as many as 1000 students at one place be convenient for the rest of India. Therefore, I am thinking of setting up 6 Ashrams at different places, provided the idea receives your blessing. Such Ashrams should provide accommodation for 200 in each of them. Along with training in crafts there should be provision for education up to the matriculation standard. The sites for such Ashrams should be far removed from the cities, somewhere in the woods, and on the banks of one river or another.

In my view such ideal sites should be available in the northern part of the U. P. in the vicinity of Hardwar, another near Allahabad, the third one near Patna, the 4th on the banks of the river Yamuna near Muttra, the 5th on the banks of the river Narmada, near Jabbalpur, and the 6th in the Chitrakut area on the banks of the river Mandakini. All these places are ideal from the point of health. In selecting the sites, particular



attention should be paid to ensure that these places are free from the danger of an outbreak of malaria and other seasonal maladies.

The Delhi Ashram, with its chronic paucity of water, looks like a desert, presenting a desolate spectacle. We can neither maintain a dairy, nor grow vegetables, nor have flowerbeds.

In my view, more than half of the students for these contemplated Ashram should be caste-Hindu boys and should be required to pay full tuition and boarding charges. The Harijan boys should be admitted, educated and maintained free of charge. The boys, at least the Harijan boys, should be encouraged to enrol themselves from the early stages of their educational career in the Ashrams. This will make it easier for them to imbibe the Ashram's atmosphere. I think that if provision is made for the accommodation of 200 boys in each Ashram, it will cost Rs. 40,000 to have a boarding house, another 30,000 will be needed for houses for the teaching staff, Rs. 25,000 will be required for the school building, and another 10,000 for the industrial training centre, Rs. 10,000 will be needed for the purchase of the land, Rs. 10,000 for school furniture and implements for the industrial centre and Rs. 5,000 for digging the wells. Thus each of these Ashrams will have cost Rs. 1,25,000 on the building, etc., but in my view only 75,000 will be needed in the 1st year, the following year Rs. 25,000 and in the 3rd year also Rs. 25,000.

Each student will cost Rs. 13 per month, tuition fee, boarding, lodging and clothing, all inclusive. If the caste-Hindu students pay their full charges, even something more over and above that, I do not think the Harijan boys will cost more than Rs. 11 per head. This means that the running expenses of each such Ashram will be to the tune of Rs. 1,100 per month, not more than that. Some Government grant may also be available. Ultimately the total expenditure will come down to Rs. 500 or 600 per month for each Ashram. In course of time the public may start making donations and this will further reduce the financial burden.

But in the 1st year we may not have as many students, so the expenditure and the losses will be on a lower key. In my view in the first year we should be needing Rs. 45,000 for the building, and Rs. 30,000 for the boys' education. In the 2nd

year Rs. 1,50,000 will be required for the buildings and slightly more than what we should be requiring for the education in the 1st year.

This scheme appears quite beneficial to me. In the first place the caste-Hindu students will receive good education, and will be away from the cities and in Hygenic surroundings. Their intermingling with the Harijan boys will powerfully contribute to the growth of a healthy outlook, something equally salutary for the Harijan boys as well. All the boys will maintain good health. Great attention will be paid to character building. Physical culture will also come in for adequate attention. And along with their training in the various crafts the boys will also be taught painting, drawing and music. Religious education will form part of their curriculum. Both the caste-Hindu boys and the Harijan boys will derive equal advantage from all this. And if we could manage to send out 400 such well-trained boys the benefit to the nation will be substantial. To me the scheme appears to be quite attractive from every point of view. With your co-passion and your help raising the funds should not be a problem. An appeal by you will, of course, be needed.

In this context Harijan has made a different suggestion, a suggestion not acceptable to me at all. He says the boys need not bother about qualifying themselves for the matriculation examination. Why should we not conduct these Ashrams on the lines similar to those we have adopted in running the Delhi Industrial Centre, i.e., by laying stress on the boys mastering one of the crafts while at the same time giving them the needed book knowledge, says Hariji. Another friend is of the opinion that by encouraging the Harijan boys to prepare for and pass the matriculation examination we should only be instrumental in swelling the ranks of the unemployed. This argument also failed to impress me. Unemployment as the result of the spread of education is a wide spread phenomenon. How can the Harijan boys escape it? Besides, without offering the students facilities for education up to the matriculation standard we should not be able to attract a large number of them. In the Sabarmati Ashram we were having a syllabus of our own quite independently of the University syllabus, with the result that we reached a stage when it began to be difficult for us to get an adequate number of girl students. Now, as the result of our vigorous

please, the University syllabus has been adopted instead. When we have the reins of government of the country in our own hands it will be necessary to make the needed changes in the University syllabus. But if before that comes to pass we confine ourselves to educating the Harijan boys on a syllabus of our own choosing, we should be compelling them to knock at other doors to get school education.

Hariji is also of the opinion that along with school education it is more or less impossible to give sufficient training in the crafts. There is substance in this argument, but in answer to that I would suggest that in order to help our boys keep abreast of University-sanctioned education we could easily take one more year to prepare them for the matriculation examination. You yourself are quite familiar with the arguments advanced for or against university type education and independent education; therefore it is unnecessary to dilate on this subject in greater detail.

After going through this letter kindly write to me to tell how you feel about the scheme adumbrated above. After I get your opinion I propose to place this matter before the next meeting of the Harijan Sangh, due for October 12, next.

To be brief, it is a question of expenditure in the next three years, of Rs. 7,50,000 on the six Ashrams, each with the capacity to accommodate 200 students, and Rs. 50,000 on their education ultimately. As for the syllabus, the matter requires careful consideration. The sites chosen for the Ashrams should be on the banks of some river, and all the Ashrams to be set up in the northern and central belt of the country. The sites to be chosen should be neat, clean, away from the urban areas with all their din and dirt. The clean breeze coming from the rivers will contribute much to keeping the boys' bodies and minds clean. That is how I envision these contemplated Ashrams.

*Yours humbly,*  
Ghanshyamdas

50

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
September 26, 1941

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

Your letter. Until you have fully recouped your health, don't stir from that place.

You have taken the remarks made in my letter as applying to yourself. This is just as well. My own life-long experience tells me that we gain enormously by admitting our mistakes. This prompts clean conduct in the game of chess. We can make a fresh move only after we have retraced the false move. This is equally true in our moral conduct which is nothing but a move in the game of chess which our lives are.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

51

SEGAON,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
September 25, 1941

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

I clean forgot all about Nalini Ranjan Sarkar. I sent you a wire which you might have received by now. I am convinced that we should be losing by calling him. And the affection he has for them will retain its intensity. The public will not grasp the underlying significance of the motive behind his acceptance of public office. Therefore it is always desirable to do things which do not lower one in the public estimation. It is good that we consult others in matters which are exclusively our own concern, but we should always be guided by our own reasonings.

I hope you are now feeling better.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

PS. I shall have to take to touring in order to raise funds for the Deen Bandhu Andrews Memorial. Shall we begin with Delhi and Pilani?

52

WARDHAGANJ,  
September 25, 1941

GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
AMRITNIWAS  
MUSSOORIE

BAPU APPROVED YOUR SUGGESTION.

MAHADEV

53

WARDHAGANJ,  
September 25, 1941

BIRLA  
AMRITNIWAS  
MUSSOORIE

FEEL INADVISABLE INVITE SIRCAR.

BAPU

54

MUSSOORIE,  
September 25, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

None of us will be in Delhi on the 30th. Rameshwardasji is here and is feeling better in this climate, but in his chief trouble, there is no change. As far as I am concerned, I have got rid of the cough and am feeling quite active. I had lost some weight but that is not recovered, nor does it seem possible to recover the lost weight in Mussoorie. However, that is only a minor point.

We are having a meeting of the Harijan Sevak Sangh on the 14th and we would expect you to attend that meeting. So, unless you have already changed your Alwar programme, you will have to come twice towards Delhi side.

I hope you will bring with you or send me the copy of *Bapu* underlined by Bapu.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

55

SEAGON,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
September 26, 1941

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

I am in receipt of your letter. Your scheme has my approval. If there are six such institutions the result is bound to be beneficial. I also concede that for the present we cannot do without the matriculation examination. Along with this it should also be our endeavour that those of the students who do not care for education beyond the High School standard are so thoroughly

versed in one of the crafts they have taken up in the Ashrams that they can earn their living through service or by starting their own business. The main thing is that I like your scheme very much indeed, and therefore it should be taken in hand.

*Blessings from  
Bapu*

*PS.* Now about your health? You should take physical exercise within the limit of your endurance. Don't tire yourself.

56

CONGRESS HOUSE,  
BHADRA,  
AHMEDABAD,  
September 27, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I arrived this morning and am leaving for Vanasthali and Jaipur and Alwar tomorrow. I am in Delhi for an hour on the evening of the 29th hence to go to Jaipur, thence to Alwar where I am for two days—1st and 2nd—returning to Delhi on the 3rd. Let me have your programme at any of these places. I may go to Dehra to see Jawahar in which case I would come and see you if you are still there. I shall make enquiries at Delhi about your whereabouts and I suppose someone will be able to tell me.

In haste,

*Yours,  
Mahade*

*PS.* Devdas's case has become a cause celebre and will go down in history. I am glad he fought it out and everyone writes in high praise of Devdas's conduct throughout the case.

MUSSOORIE,  
September 27, 1941

PUJYA BAPU,

I am in receipt of your letter.

I am glad to note that you are undertaking a tour in order to raise funds for the Deenbandhu Memorial. But are you physically strong enough to endure the hardships of a long journey? It certainly is not a thing to be proud of for all of us to see you wandering about in search of money. In fact, I am quite sure of your capability to collect all the money that is needed without stirring out of Sevagram. But the tour itself has its own peculiar advantages. I was doubly happy to note that your visit to Pilani will satisfy the long-felt urge of the people there to have you in their midst.

You have fixed the middle of October for your visit to Pilani. That date, I am afraid, will be too close for the people there. The Shekhawati area has for so long been free from any kind of public activity, therefore it is rather difficult to surmise how much money could be collected there. But the very news of your visit is sure to attract a very large number of people to hear your voice, see you in person, and imbibe your exhortation. The crowd may be 50,000 strong. Even a larger number may turn up. Those who will come will use the camel-back as their means of transport. Will these remaining 15 days suffice me to make adequate arrangements for water and ablution for this multitude? I am rather sceptical. Of course, if we refrain from bruiting it about in the papers and your visit is kept confined to a quiet inspection of the institutions there, this could be managed. But is it at all possible to keep your visit a closely guarded secret? Therefore, if you plan to pay an open visit, more time will be needed to cope with the problems attendant on it. In that case you should also visit Jaipur and the other cities of Sekhawati. In case your visit remains unadvertised you can visit Pilani with ease and then return to Delhi. But this will leave the public and Jamnalalji only partially satisfied. Therefore, it would be advisable to decide, in consultation with Jamnalalji whether your visit should be a quiet affair or an open tour. My humble suggestion is that in case your visit is to



be an open tour you should enter Rajputana from the south and return to Delhi from the north, visiting the places falling on the way. This would mean that you will start from Bombay, cover Surat, Baroda and Ahmedabad, traverse Ajmer and Jaipur and then reach Pilani and Shekhawati, ending your tour in Delhi. In case you intend to visit Pilani quietly, you should start from Delhi, reach Pilani, stay there for a day or two, then return to Delhi. In case you would want to visit Jaipur as well, His Highness and the Dewan will also have to be sounded about an interview. They may meet, or, again, they may not. The Resident is Herbert. Mahadevbhai has seen him and he is reported to be well-behaved.

Kindly inform me of your intended visit after finally deciding about the details. In case you reach Delhi after touring Rajputana or Jaipur openly the crowd at Pilani may not be so thick, since the people will already have had their fill of your *darshan* at Jaipur, Sikar, Fatehpur and Nawalgarh. In case you would prefer to confine your visit to Pilani alone, but openly, then also more time will be needed to make necessary arrangements, say, 5 weeks.

Kindly send your reply on the Delhi address as I am coming down in a day or two.

*Humbly yours,*  
Ghanshyamdas

58

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
October 2, 1941

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

Jamnalal leaves everything to you. He admits that I would be taken to other places as well. I am not inclined to go to Ahmedabad. If I go there at all, it will be only by invitation. You should take me to the places where money can be collected.

Jamnalal says that at this time of year moneyed people stay at home. I do not at all insist that the tour must begin from the middle of this month. Or whatever is deemed proper in Pilani and Delhi, may be done. Since you are going to meet Mahadev, a programme may be chalked out in consultation with him.

*Blessings from  
Bapu*

59

MUSSOORIE,  
October 5, 1941

PUJYA BAPU,

I am in receipt of your letter.

It has been decided in consultation with Mahadevbhai that first we ourselves should try and thereafter take you to suitable places. I feel that first we ourselves should try to do our best. We are quite optimistic about the results. I am not in favour of taking you round places just for the sake of a modest amount.

My suggestion is that you pay a visit to Pilani entirely for its own sake. Or you can pay a visit to Pilani to take you on a tour just in order to raise funds. This is something we ourselves should try to manage without your help.

*Humbly yours,  
Ghanshyamdas*

**All-India Council of Indian Christians,**  
2 DELHI-SERAMPUR ROAD,  
CALCUTTA,  
October 8, 1941

MAHATMA GANDHI  
SEVAGRAM  
WARDHA (C. P.)

MY DEAR SIR,

I was looking forward to a few days at Sevagram on my way back from Bombay side but my wife was feeling unwell and as I had been away from home for nearly three months and moreover as we have no children, I had to hurry back in order that she might not free too much.

When we saw you on the 18th July last, you were good enough to ask me whether I had any questions to ask to which my reply was that I had many things to tell you and that to do so would take up too much of your time.

Today I am writing this letter to place one of these matters before you for your consideration.

I understand that under the present constitution, only Hindus can join the Harijan Sevak Sangh and the justification for the exclusion of non-Hindus is that untouchability is a sin of the Hindu community which must be removed by Hindus themselves.

I do not agree to this view for I have seen untouchability among Muslims and Christian Indians. I can quote chapter and verse and personally know instances of this in various parts of India. The most recent instance which came under my notice was in Gujarat which I visited towards the end of September.

I maintain that I have the right to help my Hindu brethren to fight untouchability both in their as well as in my own community. The denial of this right may be interpreted wrongly of course, as proof that the Christian Indian is regarded as an untouchable by the Hindu.

It seems to me that one of the methods of establishing unity between the different communities is to allow each community to serve every other community. We find this exemplified in the

case of dispensaries, hospitals, educational institutions of various types as well as in the case of khaddar and village industries. Why should I be denied the right of serving my untouchable Hindu brothers through the Harijan Sevak Sangh?

I am writing this as one of my best friends and one of the best men of our community Mr. C. C. Paul of Secunderabad could not be taken into the Harijan Sevak Sangh in spite of the good work he is doing in his own town simply because he is a Christian. He does not mind it but I do. He is a very high officer in the service of the Nizam and the work he is doing for prohibition, for our fallen sisters, for lepers and for the disabled is known to everyone who has visited Hyderabad. I admit that he has been made a correspondent but this does not meet the situation for his is an exceptional case.

I would most respectfully suggest that you give this matter your prayerful consideration and do what you consider your duty. If I have put his matter before you, it is only because I feel it my duty to do so.

May God give you His Wisdom and His strength to do the work to which I believe He has called you.

*Yours respectfully,*  
H. C. Mookerjee

## 61

SEVAGRAM,  
October 13, 1941

DEAR DR. MOOKERJEE,

I thank you for your letter.

Supposing Christians as such wanted to get rid of some social abuse and established an association for dealing with it, I should think they would restrict admission to fellow Christians only. If you admit this, you will appreciate the restriction in Harijan Sevak Sangh. Hindus have sinned and they must purge themselves. The others can extend their sympathy but

cannot do repentance. Of course, there is untouchability among Christians and Muslims, thanks to the high infectious disease in the Hindu boy. Hindus can only help the latter by completely curing themselves of the disease, but the rest has to be dealt with by respective communities.

The obvious is being missed because of the political results. But the root of the evil is in the corruption of religion. If this is not clear, you should pursue the subject, till at least we agree as to the results.

I hope your wife is well. Of course, you will come when you can.

*Yours sincerely,*  
M. K. Gandhi

62

BIRLA HEALTH CLINIC,  
NASIK ROAD,  
October 18, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

We reached here yesterday. This is a beautiful place, capable of giving one the feel of peace in an ideal setting. All this notwithstanding, the pain persists. Formerly, Homeopathic medicines had done some good. This time these have proved ineffective, or nearly so. Doctor Chuga has already paid a visit, he will come again tomorrow. From today a vaidya has begun his treatment. The Vaidya is quite capable and is full of the spirit of service. He is a local man and has been attracted to his place as a suitable opening for satisfying urge to do some public good. The medicines he has prescribed are quite familiar. Let us see how much good they do.

He is not much in favour of getting himself examined by Bidhan, but how can he say 'no' to your request? So he would like him to be at Wardha on the 26th, but much depends on the work schedule fixed for Wardha as also on the trend of dis-

cussions to be held with pujya Bapuji. Therefore I shall send you a telegram the day after tomorrow when we are reaching there, as the programme already chalked out stands at present. I hope it will be quite in order if you get my wire by the 24th or 25th, won't it?

Please show this to Rameshwarbhaiji and tell him about the idyllic surroundings of this bungalow and also ask him whether he would like its replica at Sevagram as well. If that be so, the builder who designed this one will have to be drafted for Wardha. The climate here seems even better than at Mussoorie. Poor Sir Purshottamdas, as soon as he returned to Bombay, he fell sick.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

63

WARDHA,  
October 22, 1941

MAHADEV DESAI  
SEVAGRAM  
WARDHA

PLEASE INFORM PROGRAMME RAJAJI AND SARDARJI. MY DIWALI GREETINGS TO BAPU RAJAJI SARDARJI YOU DUVAS AND ALL.

GHANSHYAMDAS

64

WARDHAGANJ,  
October 22, 1941

GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
PILANI

HEARTY DIWALI GREETINGS TO ALL FROM US ALL. SARDAR BEING  
DITAINED HERE BY BAPU FOR SOME TIME. RAJAJI'S PROGRAMME  
UNCERTAIN BUT HOPE TO BE DELHI END MONTH.

MAHADEV

65

October 23, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADIVBHAI,

In the Birla Education Trust we had originally more trustees  
but since Shri Jamnalalji and Shri Krishna Das Jaju have  
resigned we are only three., i.e., Rameshwar Dasji, myself and  
Shri Prabaudhyal Himmatsingha. We, therefore, now want to  
take two more.

Although I don't like to put any burden on you, it will be a  
moral help to us. So far as the active work is concerned I don't  
think you will have to do much except giving general guidance.

I am also inviting Shri Radha Krishnan to fill up the second  
vacancy.

*Your sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdass

MR. DESAI  
SEVAGRAM  
WARDHA

66

SEVAGRAM,  
October 24, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

You were telling me about the honey available at Ranchi. Bapu would like you to send a quantity of it from the stock as soon as possible.

Here talks are going on without yielding any results. Rajaji sticks to his stand and says that all of us are acting under some kind of superstition.

Now, how about your own health?

I am leaving for Gwalior on the 7th, reaching there the following day.

Kindly give the accompanying letter to Masterji.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

PS. "Profit by my experience". Already doing just that. But I have only the June-September issues of *Reader's Digest*. Kindly send the July and August issues as well. It seems they had not introduced this feature till June last.

M.D.

67

October 26, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I have received your letter of the 22nd instant.

I wish to leave this place in a few days and by the middle of November I hope to be in Calcutta. Before you come to Calcutta you ought to have a talk with Bapu about the Deen-bandhu fund. Sapru and others have organised Tagore Memorial Fund, What attitude are we to take about this memorial. All



these questions should be discussed with Bapu, and you will please let me know what his attitude is.

I am glad to know that Sardar is now under Bapu's treatment. If Bapu wants Bidhan he can certainly come to Sevagram. But I don't see how he would come uninvited. This will be like imposing his own treatment on Sardar over the head of other doctors. When I suggested that Sardar may come to Delhi, it was not for mere examination, but I had thought that perhaps the climate effect also at Delhi would be better than at Nasik. However, if Bapu or Sardar need Bidhan I am sure he can be asked to come without any hesitation.

I note what you write about the conversation between Bapu and Rajaji. What you write is rather disappointing. I suppose, however, that it was not a surprise to Bapu. In a way it is better that Rajaji so strongly sticks to his own views.

I hope Everyone is all right.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEV DI SAI  
SEVAGRAM  
WARDHA

*PS.* You are going to Gwalior to participate in the Praja Mandal function. Good men like Pustake left it. Those left behind are not desirable persons, this is what I heard. But you might have made your own enquiries and reassure yourself of the moral character of such people.

BASANI NIWAS,  
SULTANPUR,  
October 26, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Yours of the 23rd to hand. Martandji's complaint is based on the misleading report given him by his Sasta Sahitya

Mandal's Allahabad man. Out of the 89 poets described in *Kavita Kaumudi* only 7 or 8 have been chosen by Nagpur University for inclusion in the B.A. and M.A. course. There was a demand for *Kavita Kaumudi* but its stock is exhausted and the publication is out of print. Therefore, it may be excluded from the syllabus. I had permitted Ram Narain Lal, a big bookseller of Allahabad, to publish an edition containing those 7 or 8 poets only. Since talks of selling Hindi Mandir were continuing I did not like to undertake the publication of such an edition myself. It should be a tiny publication priced at Rs. 8 and would sell only 50-60 copies in a year. It was by no means a concise edition of *Kavita Kaumudi*. Still, I have written to Ram Narain Lal to give the Royalty money on that edition to Sasta Sahitya Mandal. Martandji had made his complaint without caring to acquaint himself with the facts. *I have explained the position to him in detail and he has admitted his mistake.* I had given that permission in July or August, last.

Please also write to Ghanshyamdasji that, being fully appreciative of his warm-hearted attitude towards me, I feel wholly disinclined to make this matter a subject for haggling. Whatever he would like me to do, let him convey his wish to me through you, or let him write to me direct. I shall try to give him my very best. In return he may pay me whatever he likes and his satisfaction will be my satisfaction. I shall make necessary corrections and read proofs, etc., i.e., do everything that needs doing.

In case Birlaji feels inclined to undertake publication of selected stories from our mythology calculated to toughen up our moral stamina, I shall gladly compile such stories. And I would always seek his co-operation in my choice in this respect.

I hope you and Master Narayan are doing well. I am sorry I shall no longer be in a position to send him books. Hindi Mandir is no longer his now.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ram Naresh Tripathi

69

October 28, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I have wired to Ranchi to send my own farm's honey to Bapu. I have asked for 20 lbs. I am also instructing to send you *Reader's Digest* for July, August and September 1941.

I hope to leave this place tomorrow for Delhi where I shall stay for a fortnight and then I go to Calcutta.

Hope you are well.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEV DESAI  
SEVAGRAM  
WARDHA

70

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA,  
October 29, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Your letter of the 23rd reached here only today. We have all been waiting for some news from you for quite some time.

If you wish to include me among the Birla Education Trustees, what earthly objection can I possibly have? It only shows your soft corner for me. But I do not know anything about what the Trustees are supposed to do.

Herewith a letter from Ram Narsh Tripathi. It is for you to decide what use you can make of him.

How long do you propose to stay on there? You will have come across a lengthy appeal in the Press. Rajaji feels disappointed. In the letter I wrote to Rameshwarbhaji I have made a mention of Sardar.

Bapu is maintaining tolerably good health. For the last few days his blood-pressure has tended to go up. The cause of this, of course, was the logic-chopping debate with the leaders.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

71

November 3, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I am glad that you have accepted the trusteeship of the Birla Education Trust.

I note that you are going to Gwalior. Bhulabhai, Rajaji and Satyamurti are all here. They are not feeling quite happy about the situation and there seems to be a fundamental difference between their outlook.

It appears that more satyagrahis now be released and perhaps it will end by the release of Jawaharlalji. But what next? We need not, however, bother our heads just over the future. Destinies are being shaped just now by hidden hands and all calculations are mere waste of time.

I saw Bapu's statement in Pilani when I was just leaving the place and so I am going to read it more carefully again. I suppose you are not coming to Delhi when you come to Gwalior although it is a few hours' run. Meanwhile we have not settled our programme for Calcutta.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEV DLSAI  
SEVAGRAM  
WARDHA

BIRLA HOUSE,  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD,  
NEW DELHI,  
November 4, 1941

PUJYA BAPU<sup>1</sup>,

This I am writing in order to discuss certain practical issues. It would have been better if I could come down myself to talk things over personally, but I feel that after a month or so the situation will become clarified and then my coming there might prove productive of some concrete results.

I have gone through your lengthy statement. I am favourably impressed by it. This may partly be due to the fact that in reading your statement I am overpoweringly guided by my unshakable faith in you. This, however, does not mean that I do not exercise my own powers of reasoning. Still, a stage is ultimately reached when the intellect ceases to function and faith takes over. When I exercise my faith and my powers of reasoning simultaneously, I feel that the path chosen by you was the only one and the best that could have been taken during the early stages of the struggle. I was sceptical as to the value of the path you had taken. I gave expression to my doubts in your presence eloquently enough. Now I feel convinced that there was no alternative to the course we have adopted. This because the British have betrayed no anxiety to give us anything substantial and if after the Poona resolution had we made a volte face and started co-operating in a war-effort all our claims to symbolize the lofty principles of non-violence would have vanished into thin air and we would sunk low morally. Now we have amply demonstrated that although our soldiers are taking part in the fighting, India as a nation has rebelled against participation in this massive act of violence. This conflict will end in universal destruction; there will be no victor at the end of it and even he who wins is sure to invite self-destruction. If in this situation we remain uninvolved in this conflict we would thereby

<sup>1</sup>This letter was written on 4-11-41, but as there was a detailed talk with Mahadev over the phone the same day, it was not posted.—G.D.B.  
6-11-1941

be rendering service to mankind. Bertrand Russell and Toad lost their capacity to wax eloquent in praise of non-violence. We alone have retained our capacity to champion the cause of non-violence. This is our treasure-trove from which world thought will enrich itself. Even from the exclusively materialistic point of view we have by no means been the losers by maintaining a posture of neutrality, and by refraining from embarrassing the British we have established our bona fides as a mentally honest people. The present-generation British may not admit this much, but a time will come when the validity of our claim will shine forth from the pages of history and will draw its mead of applause from the British nation.

Paradoxically enough, however, while I am dismissing scepticism from my mind as against my own earlier doubts, those of us whose misgivings had earlier been allayed are now being assailed by a new series of doubts. This may, perhaps, be due to the fact that while men like me could afford to dilate on the virtue of non-violence from a distance, those others have actually suffered during this struggle. And while I am singularly free from any responsibility in this affair, these others are conscious of their own responsibility. I fear that your statement has failed to make any impact on these people. These people first tasted the fruits of this tree, then the fruits of the other tree, and now they feel equally disappointed in this experience. People of his mentality may at times even feel bored by your statements. Success attracts a horde of followers. Now that these people find failure starting them in the face from all sides, their patience seems exhausted.

They have no plan of their own to present to the nation, but this has not discouraged them from opposing your own plan. It would be rather difficult to assess the number of such people, but lately they seem adding to their strength. Public mind is proverbially fickle, nor is the general run of people inordinately enamoured of self-suffering and self-abnegation. Their ideals also are cast in the Western mould where the people achieved their freedom through recourse to violence. Conjointly, all these factors have ushered in a wave of discontent. But there be no doubt about that. And ever since the leaders have come out of jail the intensity of this discontent has acquired a sharper edge. This' mentality will be apparent to anybody who will care to

make a note of how a powerful section of members of the Central Assembly and the provincial Assemblies who have recently come out of jail express themselves. Rajaji and Bhulabhai seem particularly disconsolate. In Bhulabhai especially one can detect symptoms of proven bitterness. Presumably, Maulana also is treading the same path. Barring Sardar, Rajendra Babu, Jawaharlal and Kripalani, many others who cannot be ignored seem fallen prey to similar dissatisfaction and bitterness. This trend is sure to increase inasmuch as provincial midget-size big shots, too, are overflowing with discontent and bitterness.

It can be said in defence of Rajaji that he is, after all, a learned man. He is self-sacrificing and quite free from the taint of personal ambition. He has been consistent in his line of reasoning. He is also a thinker. Therefore, we cannot afford to dismiss his feelings of disappointment and mental anguish with a shrug of the shoulders. There is one observation of his which has a grain of truth about it. He says that the Congress, i.e., a majority of the Congressmen, not only did not closely identify themselves with Bapu's brand of non-violence and truth, but, to make matters worse, proceeded forthwith to deceive the world like so many wolves in sheep's clothing. Once Sir Maurice Gwyer made the quip that it was puzzling how the very persons who till the passing of the Poona Resolution had failed to detect anything wrong about adopting a policy of violence, had metamorphosed themselves into staunch votaries of non-violence overnight. An appropriate antidote to his bewilderment would have been furnished by the Government's acceptance of the Poona Resolution. Had that happened, things would have taken a different shape. Now that the Resolution remains ignored, all of them have turned non-violent. Rajaji maintains and has presumably placed his contention before you that by dressing up those who have no faith in non-violence as its champions and thereby encouraging an untruthful conduct, we are not creating a healthy impression on our opponents. This observation has much substance in it. At the same time we cannot overlook the stark reality of dissensions in our ranks and the danger they pose to our strength. But when strength is conspicuous by its absence what is the use of hiding our weakness? This, to my mind does not augur well for our cause. We have not to undo

the tangled knots instead of denying their very existence. For this there are only two alternative courses for us to adopt. Either let Rajaji and the others imitate Munshi who cut himself loose from the Congress soon after coming out of jail. Or you yourself should retire after handing over the reins to them. I do not at all approve of Rajaji's contention that the civil disobedience movement should be suspended. Rajaji will certainly oppose any idea of your cutting yourself away from the Congress, but to the others the idea may not prove so repugnant after all.

*Yours Humbly,*  
Ghanshyamdas

73

*Private*

November 6, 1941

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I gave the gist of your talk to Bapu this morning. He was silent. This is what he wrote down in Gujarati:

“Why not go there for a couple of days? Tell Bhulabhai and the others quite forcefully that if they wish to see me they can come here. I myself cannot stir out of this place. I have heard two or three persons making such noise. Let them at least write to me.”

So I have decided to come to Delhi—unless of course everyone has left Delhi by the time I can get there. You will please give me a ring at Gwalior, or rather I shall try to have a talk with you from Gwalior.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev



74

DELHI,  
November 8, 1941

DURGAPRASAD  
CARE BIRLA  
GWALIOR

PLEASE INFORM MAHADEVBHAI ALL•HERE. COME.

GHANSHYAMDAS

75

November 14, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

If you are responsible for the present state of affairs of the writer of this letter, then I fear it is you who have to meet the marriage expenses of the motherless child of this gentleman.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SIIRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM  
WARDHA (C.P.)

76

CALCUTTA,  
December 12, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

In the December issue of the *Sarvodaya* I was reading Bapu's speech in which he has discussed the good points of co-operative

system. In this connection I wonder whether you have read Moore's articles which are daily appearing in the *Statesman*. In one of the articles he has at length discussed the co-operative system of England, which he has very strongly recommended for India. If you have not got all the copies of the articles, I may send the same to you. Some of the articles are really very fine. On the other hand some of them are very dull. But in any case they are worth reading.

I am also sending you a copy of the magazine of Art Society. You will find in it an article on Agricultural Fertilizer and its effect on nourishment value of the products. When I read it I thought Bapu will be interested in this article. Of course he has no time to read all these things, but if he feels inclined to read in his bath-room, please place the same before him. I have marked the article in question.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
BARDOLI ASHRAM  
BARDOLI

77

SWARAJYA ASHRAM,  
BARDOLI,  
December 23, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

The W. C. is meeting today. C. R. thinks that some kind of attempt will be made to evolve an agreed formula and to prevent a rupture between the two sections, but I do not know. I personally would prefer Bapu getting out of this bother and take up his own pristine pacifist attitude. It is no use getting mixed up with all kinds of political formulae. However, we are going to Benares on the 21st January. Would you not come to meet Bapu? Not that he suggests your coming, but you have not met him for such a long time and it may be well to meet.

See if you can come. The programme there is not heavy. There is the University meeting—that's all, and Bapu wants to pay a visit to Sarnath. You may inform Bada Bhaiji of this. Perhaps he will be interested to know that Bapu is visiting Sarnath. I should love to have Bhaiji's views on the Japanese action! I do hope the terrible panic there is now on the wane. In a sense it is good that the city is relieved of part of its congestion.

Will you kindly look into the enclosed? You know the man. In fact you introduced him to Bapu. Why should he approach Bapu, I wonder.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

78

CALCUTTA,  
December 27, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I was very pleased to receive a letter from you. It is after weeks that you have written to me. I myself did not write to you because I knew that you were roaming about.

I am not coming to Benares when Bapu goes there; and I don't think Benares is a proper place to meet Bapu. He may have a very light programme and yet he will be surrounded by all sorts of people. I, therefore, want to come to him in Wardha; and my programme is to come there in the near future, if you think that he will be comparatively free then. Perhaps immediately after coming from Bardoli, but before the A.I.C.C. meeting he might be a little free.

Would you mind sending me a telegram on receipt of this letter, giving me a rough idea about Bapu's programme? Perhaps, Bhaiji would be at Benares. He was delighted to hear that Bapu is going to Sarnath.

There has been some amount of panic in Calcutta; but please do not believe all the stories that you might read in the papers. After all, it is natural for people to send away their children and

womenfolk. There was, of course, a great rush for a few days, but now it has cooled down.

My original programme was to leave this place during Christmas, on tour; but deliberately I changed it. None of the youngsters or the ladies in the family has left Calcutta deliberately. They wanted to stick to this place, and that is for the good. Had I or someone of us left even for a short holiday or on a business tour, there would have been greater panic in the community. But now things are getting settled down and, if all goes well, and if I can conveniently leave, I should like to come to Wardha immediately after Bapu's arrival there from Bardoli. So, please write to me about his programme.

About Kedar Nath, I am making enquiries; but I know that the fellow is not a truthful man. It is not correct that he had to spend so much on his education in Bombay. As a matter of fact, he was more or less regularly helped by Rameshwar Das during the period of his education, and I think it is not he alone, but his wife as well, who is employed as a Drawing Trustee in the Girls' School. So, all that he writes cannot be correct. I never found him to be a straightforward and truthful man.

The other fellow; who drew Bapu's sketches in Delhi, is not only a better artist but also a more straightforward and honest chap. I will, however, make more enquiries about him and, if I find that he deserves any help, I will certainly see what I can do.

By the way, I don't keep a file of the *Harijan*. Would you kindly, therefore, send me a copy of the *Harijan* which contains Bapu's points about constructive work.

I hope you are keeping well.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEV DESAI  
BARDOLI

BIRLA HOUSE,  
BOMBAY,  
December 28, 1941

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I forgot to tell you that there may not be much of an atmosphere for a quiet talk even in Wardha—for it is quite likely that the W.C. crowd might begin to collect from the 10th, for the W.C. meeting is on the 13th—and you may not have any time with Bapu—apart also from the difficulty of your accommodation at Jamnalalji's place as the W.C. people will also be there. But I shall have a talk with Bapu and will finally advise you on getting back to Bardoli on the 31st. It may be that this time you may stay at Sevagram in which case you can snatch bits of time with Bapu whenever he is available. But I thought I had better warn you of the possibilities.

Benares would from that point of view be a quieter place. On the other hand there is the thing also to be considered. The W.C. and A.I.C.C. may be finished on the 16th. If you come on the 16th, you can have three days with Bapu—17th, 18th, 19th. We have to leave for Benares on the 19th. However you will weigh all pros and cons and also let me have your reaction to the whole thing.

Were the Delhi gods propitious this time? Or I suppose you made no attempt to approach them

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

CALCUTTA,  
December 30, 1941

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I enclose herewith a leaflet which has been sent to me by Deshpande from Rajputana.

Propaganda is a good thing, but is it right that Bapu's casual letters should be printed in facsimile without any important reason and money wasted like this when it should be so easy to produce more khadi and sell it ? Mill-cloth is now so dear that khadi can easily compete. It looks as if our people are more adept in propaganda than in construction. I fear this malady of publicity is disgustingly on the increase among our workers and thus it is retarding real work.

But perhaps, being a businessman, I do not fully appreciate the good points of publicity and hence this prejudice.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
C/o MAHATMA GANDHI  
BARDOLI

## Letters without Date

81

PUJYA BAPU,

We are thinking of establishing a few residential schools mainly for educating Harijan boys, though not exclusively for Harijans. So far, whenever we have talked of Harijan hostels or schools, we have thereby meant cheap schools or cheap hostels conducted by ill-educated and ill-paid teachers and wardens with boys half-starved. Education for Harijans or for the poor must be cheap—that seems to be the notion, perhaps unconsciously adopted, on which we have been working so far. I think this is an utterly wrong principle to act on. So long as we educate Harijans or children of poor parents in these cheap institutions, the boys will never succeed in shedding the inferiority complex from which they often suffer. And what will they learn from these unqualified and ill-paid teachers? The boys of poor classes will not get the opportunity to mix with boys of middle or upper classes or of *savarnas* in these cheap institutions. The loss of this lack of contact between the poor and the rich and between Harijans and *savarnas* is mutual. I therefore propose that we should have residential schools established in picturesque environments. They should be of a standard that would compare favourably in every respect with a first rate public schools and where even a prince would not hesitate to send his son for education. We should start one such school, first of all, as a trial.

The schools should be of Matriculation standard and affiliated to the University course. They should, of course, be residential. Personal attention on students should be the speciality. Education should be imparted through the medium of the mother-tongue.

English should be taught as a language. During the period of his education, the boy should be taught to use his hands freely. He should be taught self-help and should be taught to discard the feeling of high and low.

But we should take two years extra than the time needed for Matriculation Examination. These two years should be utilised in giving extra training to the boys besides what they learn through the Matriculation Course. The extra course will cover teaching of crafts and imparting general knowledge.

We propose to have three crafts, one of which will be taken up by every boy at his option. These will be :

- Either (1) Carding, Spinning, Weaving, Dyeing & Bleaching.
- or (2) Carpentry and Smithy.
- or (3) Paper-making, Book-binding and ordinary composing.

It is intended that we should employ a superior staff, well-paid and highly qualified in their respective subjects so that the boys may learn the best in each subject and may not ordinarily need to go to the college unless a student wants to take up higher studies. Their examination, it is intended, should be complete for a good foundation with a proficient knowledge in one craft. Such a boy, it is hoped, should not find it difficult to earn his livelihood after his education period expires.

Besides the University course and craft and paying special attention towards increasing his general knowledge, special attention should also be paid to his physique. Games, exercise, sports, riding, swimming, etc. should be taught. Music too should be taught. Religious training should not be neglected. Toleration of other's religion should be taught. And side by side, the student should be taught to admire and respect our own culture.

Money should not be spared in obtaining the services of most skilful teachers.

The diet of the students should be healthy, scientific and well-balanced. It may not be luxurious but must include fruits, dairy products and vegetables liberally.

Half the number of the students should be Harijans. They should have free education and free boarding and lodging. The other half of the students, that is, *savarnas*, should be charged fees unless one is exempted on ground of poverty.

This is a very rough and brief outline of my idea of a good High School.



Now there is difference amongst us about this outline. Some says : why should we have the Matriculation course? Others say : we should not undertake costly education as this will be a bad example to set. It is argued that we may employ most qualified men but only if they come to make sacrifice, and therefore we should not pay them higher salaries. In other words, in their opinion, in this school, there would be no room for teachers other than those who want to lead a simple life of sacrifice. Some go to the extent of saying that we should rather have no school than start one which is not manned by highly self-sacrificing staff.

I consider all this unpractical. I need not give my arguments. They are obvious. I do not think the question of education of a vast number of villagers could be solved in this manner. Saints and sages cannot be had for the asking. How could it be possible to have a Sevagram for every village?

Will you express your views on this?

*Yours affectionately,*  
Ghanshyamdas

82

SIVI GRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Your letter of the 26th to hand. Bapu himself had decided about Gwalior, and that at the earnest request of Haribhau. Even if there is nobody else, at least Haribhau is still there. Let us see what happens. I am only to inaugurate the Usha Mandal function, not to preside over it.

The Sapru people have set up an ample committee for Tagore Memorial and are still busy with it. Rajendrababu and Jawaharlalji have also been approached. Sardar also has received a letter. Rajendrababu has written to ask about the aims and objects of the Memorial and about the sources from which the needed money would come. If these people are going to manage

the entire show by themselves, where do we come into the picture? Let us see what reply Rajendrababu is going to get. Then I shall write to you.

There seems no need to call Bidhan. Sardar is already feeling slightly better. Bapu is determined. Sardar is going to leave this place only when he has fully recovered.

Bapu's blood-pressure has recorded a slight increase, but is more or less normal.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* The accompanying material may be of interest to you. You are found of gardening. Now please see how the flowers are arranged. This one is cutting from a South Africa magazine.

M.D.

**1942**



# 1

January 1, 1942

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

With reference to my coming to Wardha, as I am coming there after a long time, I would like to have a quiet time with Bapu for a few days. If you, by any chance find, that before going to Benares he would not be free, then I would rather come after he returns from Benares.

What has happened at Bardoli is, in my opinion, quite satisfactory on the whole. But more when we meet.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
BARDOLI

# 2

SWARAJYA ASHRAM,  
BARDOLI,  
January 2, 1942

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I had a talk with Bapu on return from Bombay. He says it would be best for you to be in Wardha on the 17th and with us until the 19th when we leave for Benares. You may then decide whether to accompany us to Benares or not. The W. C. people are not likely to be in Wardha after the morning of the 17th—as the A. I. C. C. will not go on for more than two days.

Bapu was very happy to hear that you resolutely stayed on in Calcutta and thus stayed to a certain extent the rising tide of panic.

Rameshwardasji was to have arrived here today, but he has not come. He was feeling rather seedy on the evening I left and

had a cold. But I expect he will arrive tomorrow. The place is less crowded now and we hope to give him some peace.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

3

January 5, 1942

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

A Committee meeting of the federation of the Indian Chambers of Commerce is to be held in Delhi on the 1st of February. I should, therefore, like to go to Delhi *via* Wardha. I can reach Wardha on the 25th evening, if Bapu will be there about that-time. But who knows that Bapu may not have to go to Delhi for some reason or other? If Bapu is free on the 25th, provisionally you may fix up this time for me.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
BARDOLI

4

January 7, 1942

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I recently read in the *Sarvodaya* that Bapu was writing a series of article on the constructive programme. Please let me know if it has already appeared, or it is likely to appear; and if so, in which paper ?

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
BARDOLI

5

January 8, 1942

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Mahavir Prasadji has, at last, been released. This is good.

I have seen Bapu's article in the *Sarvodaya* about constructive programme. It is very interesting, and although I have read it only partly, I want to read it twice or thrice and then have further discussion with Bapu. Meanwhile, I should like to add that the translation in Hindi has been extremely poor, and if you happen to meet Kaka Sahib, tell him that a paper edited by him and Dada Dharmadhikari should have given a much better translation of Bapu's article.

It is heartening now to find that the *Harijan* is reappearing very soon.

More when we meet.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SIIRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
BARDOLI

6

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA,  
January 11, 1942

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Pray excuse a postcard. Bapu is sure to be back by the 25th and that time will suit him admirably. 17th and 18th may be crowded, and 25th will suit him as much as you.

Basant Kumar reminds me of a letter he wrote to me some time ago and to which he has had no reply. Will you *please* ask him to write to me again—for I never had that letter?

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

January 15, 1942

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

With Mahabirprasadji Poddar, I am sending two presents on behalf of two friends. One is a parcel of ornaments, a list of which has been handed over to Mahabirprasadji. These ornaments belong to the late wife of Shri Naraindasji Bajoria. It is the desire of Naraindasji that this money should be spent for any philanthropic object in which Bapu is interested. I have told him that perhaps Bapu will utilise this money for khadi or Harijan work. Naraindasji, in his letter to me, has made some suggestion which Bapu might consider although I do not think it to be a very good suggestion. I am enclosing Naraindasji Bajoria's letter in original. Please send me Bapu's message and receipt of the ornaments.

The other present is a draft of Rs. 5,000 from a friend. The friend desires that this money should be spent at Bapu's discretion for any philanthropic object. It has become a fashion these days among some of my friends that whenever somebody falls ill, they make a *sankalp* of charity and send the money to Bapu. This 5,000 is a *sankalp* of that nature. The patient who made this *sankalp* is now quite well.

Yours sincerely,  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

Enclosure: the list<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>It enlisted 23 items of jewellery kept in a box costing Rs. 251 As. 8, 9 items made of pearls worth Rs. 103 As. 2, 11 items kept in a small container plus 12 other items. —G. D. B.



8

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA,  
February 27, 1942

RESPECTED BIRLAJI,  
My Pranams.

Your letter. Father is being given complete rest. He is dieting and has grown weak as the result last evening when he was having a talk with Kishorelalbai he felt giddy again. His blood-pressure is 112/88. This was erratic for some time.

Father is not much in favour of leaving Wardha and puja Bapu also feels that way. Bapu says if there was any need for a change he would send him somewhere some time in April next.

Banmalaben has been allowed some solid food since yesterday. She sends you her pranams.

*Yours humbly,*  
Narayan<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Mahadev Desai's son

9

NASIK ROAD,  
February 28, 1942

PUJYA BAPU,

Yesterday I received a letter from Purshottamdas. I enclose it for your perusal. I have sent my reply to which also a copy is going with this letter.

I also feel that we should make some exertion in resolving the communal deadlock. But I at least cannot think of anything except to encourage Rajaji to have a dialogue with Jinnah. But if you feel optimistic and think it proper, then alone you should write to him to this effect: "The situation is critical and in the interest of peace it is essential that we two should meet." It

should also be made clear to him that you would like to meet him not as a Hindu leader but as a Congress leader. What possible objection can he have to that proposal? And in case he appears agreeable my humble suggestion is that you should meet him. There is no occasion to assume that some such meeting is sure to yield any dividends, but at the same time it will do no harm. But this should be done only if you feel self-confident enough. Of course, a meeting between Rajendra Babu and Jinnah in ordinary course of things is well worth having. If Jinnah declines to meet you, so much the worse for him; it will only please him in the wrong. But how far such a meeting is desirable, I am not sure. In any case kindly let me have your reaction to my suggestion. And kindly also send your answer to Purshottamdas's letter, and let that answer be a detailed one. A condensed answer it will be beyond his interested capacity to grasp the import of.

*Humbly,*  
Ghanshyamdas

## 10

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA (C. P.),  
March 1, 1942

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

I have your letter. My going there will not only prove unproductive of any results, but may even prove harmful into the bargain. Harmful in the sense that a negative result of the meeting may sour our relations still further. Ordinarily also I feel it beyond my capacity to hold a meaningful dialogue with the Qaid-e-Azam. But I have encouraged Rajaji to exert his utmost and this he is going to do. Let us wait and see what result such a meeting will yield. What I mean is that there is little chance of a settlement. Outside the prospect of a settlement through talks we should certainly do what we can. By creating a general impression of success of such talks for resolving the communal

deadlock we should only be contributing to a feeling of frustration if such talks ultimately fail. What I mean is that it is possible to make a successful assault on the problem from the outside.

I learn that your experiment is continuing and has so far proved successful.

*Blessings from  
Bapu*

## 11

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
March 1, 1942

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

Don't you worry about Mahadev? He must be given complete rest. What he sorely needs just now is mental rest. For the present I do not feel inclined to send him out for a change.

I do hope your own experimentation is proving encouraging. How about your weight? And do you feel weaker?

I had written to you something about Jamnalalji. How about that ?

*Blessings from  
Bapu*

## 12

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
March 5, 1942

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

Today we bade farewell to the vaidya. I had retained him for so long at the earnest request of Ba. Now she, too, was

agreeable to his departure. I hope his presence here did not result in a dislocation of the normal functioning of the dispensary here. It seems purposeless to write this after having kept him here for such a long time. But in fact this is not so, as one becomes more cautious in future. I should have made sure in the very beginning. I had made an enquiry from you about this but it was only casually. Anyway, what is done is done. Narayandas is a good man.

The external heat had given the impression that there was heat inside as well. The intake of butter was consequently reduced. The quantity of butter to be taken during summer should always be less. In order to counter the internal as well as the external heat boiled vegetables, lettuce leaves and onion constitute an ideal diet.

*Blessings from  
Bapu*

### 13

SŖVAGRAM,  
March 6, 1942

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have not yet been able to work out how and why I fell sick this time. I was not over-exerting myself, not at least as much as I used to formerly. It was just as well that I did not accompany you because making arrangements for the mud-packs and massage could not have been possible in your company. And would have put you to a lot of inconvenience, even without these. I recalled after a couple of days that I had sustained a bruise in the head during my journey back from Calcutta. I collided with the upper bunk twice in the train. I felt nothing untoward at the time as presently I had gone to sleep. Just as I was getting down at the Wardha station I felt giddy. I had similar experience when on my way to Nasik. All this could be the after effect of that head injury. I have been taking complete

rest all these days. The injured spot gave excruciating pain for 3-4 days. All this has disappeared but there is aching pain in the eyes. The mud-pack may prove effective, but in case it doesn't I am thinking of going there. Dr. Shroff may examine me. Dr. Joshi may also be consulted. I had not sounded Bapu about this matter as I will retain my faith in the curative value of the mud-pack. I had not resumed spinning till yesterday when I spun for full half hour. Nor did I write any letters till yesterday when I wrote my first one to Rajaji, and today I am writing to you. I cannot of course, do without some reading, so I do some amount of reading, but even that sparingly.

Once you were telling me about different kinds of clouds—or, perhaps, several synonyms for the clouds in Marwari, one of these being Bithri. Tennyson has a small poem—The Beggar Maid—small but packed with beauty in which the poet compares a beggar maid's rags with the clouds shrouding the moon:

As shines the moon in clouds,  
She in her poor attire was seen.  
How natural, how sublime !

The place looked so deserted after you left. I felt particularly lonesome. This may perhaps be due to the fact that I had nothing to do but laze in bed.

This is writing just for writing sake.

Do you find any activity in the climate prevailing there? Jankiben has been here since yesterday and proposes to stay on.

Yours,  
Mahadev

14

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
March 10, 1942

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASBHAI,

Your letter reached yesterday. I showed it to puja Bapuji. He says that what you say is correct but that he cannot increase

the quantity of milk and bread as that would upset his stomach. He has started taking an ounce of almond paste. He was weighed yesterday and the machine recorded an increase of one lb.

Mahadevbhai is quite well now and has started doing a modest amount of work. Dr. Jivraj and Dr. Gilder arrived here today and gave Mahadevbhai and Ba a thorough check-up. Ba is suffering from chronic bronchitis. Mahadevbhai has been allowed to do some work but at the same time he has been advised an eye-test. He has to put in a lot of work and has to put up with a crowd of visitors. He cannot escape either.

Yesterday Rameshwarbhai had sent a letter through a messenger. A committee has been formed and an amount of money has been requisitioned. Bapu has inserted a small note in *Harijan*.

The Working Committee is scheduled to meet on the 17th of July. They must pester Bapu.

You are kind to our college. Without your co-operation we would have faced hard times.

My pain has not left me completely. I also feel somewhat weak.

I hope this finds you in good health.

*Yours,*  
Amrit Kaur

## 15

SFVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C P.),  
March 12, 1942

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASBHAI,

This telegram has arrived today. Bapu says it must be forwarded to you. I was going to tear it up.

Last evening we heard news of Cripps' arrival. Today Bapu was also in receipt of Churchill's declaration. The Press people are clamouring for a statement from Bapu, but he says no; he would rather act on Churchill's advice to keep mum. Let us

see what transpires. These people are too ill-equipped to cope with the war, or, perhaps, they have not been able to do anything. If this state of things persists, we too, are fated to go down along with them. The only way out is to follow in the footsteps of Bapu with courage in both hands.

Mahadevbhai is well. He may have to leave for Bombay for his eyes. But this has not been decided finally.

Bapu is quite well, but Ba is not responding to the treatment sufficiently.

My sciatica is much better now.

I hope you are doing well. Is your experimentation with dieting still continuing?

Yours,  
Amrit Kaur

## 16

March 14, 1942

MY DEAR RAJKUMARIJI,

There has been a strike in my mills in Delhi for the last 7 days. We have not invited any police help although nowadays it is illegal to go on strike without giving due notice. The result is that everything is peaceful and calm. We have closed down the mills until the time the strikers realise their mistake and return to the work unconditionally. In order to give the correct idea of the situation, I am enclosing herewith exchange of correspondence that I had with Asaf Ali.

I am writing that, in case Bapu is approached about the matter by someone, he should know how the matter stands.

Yours sincerely,  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRIMATI RAJKUMARI AMRIT KAUR  
SEVAGRAM

STRIKE COMMITTEE,  
BIRLA LINES,  
DELHI,  
March 11, 1942

MAHATMA GANDHI  
WARDHAGANJ

STAY IN STRIKE IN BIRLA MILLS SINCE 8. YOUR ADVICE AND INTER-  
FERENCE NECESSARY.

RAMCHANDRA TYAGI

17

SEVAGRAM.  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
March 14, 1942

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASBHAI,

Your secretary's letter and the R. R. for the almonds have arrived. Babu says we should soon be having a regular mart of almonds here.

I have been saying for days on that Babu should write something on scorched earth. It is good that you have also emphasized its urgency. Now he will write.

Physically Babu is in fine shape, though he does get tired. At present the talks go on throughout the day without respite. Maulana has been here since yesterday and today Jawaharlalji may also have arrived. The round of talk begins from 2 p. m.

Mahadevbhai is in normal health, but he has not yet been permitted to do his chores. Still, he does some work in a sitting posture.

I feel better now. Ba also is in a better condition. Acharya Narendra Dev has been here since the day before yesterday. He is so harried by asthmatic spasms! Babu has to look after so many invalids at the same time. This considerably adds to his load of work.

In haste,

*Yours,*  
Amrit Kaur



SEVAGRAM,  
March 14, 1942

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I am in receipt of your letter. What you say is quite correct. My dietary needs radical changes. Some have already been made. The work schedule will also be placed on a regular footing. For the present I spend most of the time resting.

I have seen your letter to Bapu. Sir Purshottamdas has sent a letter oozing with sympathy for my illness. (He must have written it on information from you). I have written to him saying that what he has done with regard to scorched earth policy was fit and proper. I have also suggested his sending small notes dealing with this subject. The note that has come through is quite good. Bapu will write something. Bapu is opposed to a scorched earth policy even from the point of view of non-violence. The illustration you have given about the distinction between action and motion is just splendid. In action there is thoughtfulness and reason, whereas motion denotes an absence of both. Action stands for selfless activity. Whole motion is plain do-nothing passivity, inertia. Masterji was at his best in dealing with motion. Now I can understand why you keep Masterji with you.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* Let Cripps come, if he likes. What does he hope to get from Bapu. He should rather get busy placating Jawaharlal and Rajaji.

19

SEGAON,  
WARDHA (C. P.),  
March 15, 1942

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

Your letter. The vaid laboured hard but Ba failed to respond to his treatment. Now a naturopath has arrived. His knowledge of his science is not free from blemish, but he does know something. Today is the 4th day of his treatment. Ba is feeling better. Ba was made to vomit with the help of *ankra-milk*. She brought out a copious quantity of accumulated sputum.

I shall write to you later about scorched earth policy?

Can I send somebody to the Nasik Sanatorium? Have they got sufficient accommodation? In case it remains overcrowded I would not relish the idea of special facilities.

I would not like Bhaiji to be put to the trouble of coming here. If he so desires, however, he is welcome.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

20

March 17, 1942

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Today I am leaving for Calcutta. On my way I shall drop at Benares for a couple of days. Let us see for how long I shall have to stay in Calcutta. But it appears Bapu will have to come here in response to Cripps' invitation; therefore, I, too, may have to return soon enough. And you will surely accompany Bapu when he comes here.

By separate post I am sending a life-sketch of Jamnalalji written by me. Please show it to Bapu and write to me on my Calcutta address about what to do with it.

There is a strike going on in our mills here, Before the

सेवाग्राम  
वर्धा सा.पी.

SEVAGRAM,  
WARDHA, C.P.

سیواگرام  
وردہ - سی - پی

१५ ३ ४२

माई धन इला मदाक,

उ हारा खत लिखा.

वैद्यने महानतने बहुत  
की लक्षण बाको पहिने  
सा उतरा म न ही दुमा  
आफ एक नैरागिक  
उपचारक आ माई दु  
उरुमं काफी होष दु लक्षण  
कुछ जान ली है आम पाये  
दिन है बाको कच्छा लुग  
रहा है बाको लीन दिन तक  
आकडको दुध म कं कच्चाई  
उरुमं क उ म निकली करे

कृष्ण २॥१७ ३३

सुभास कृष्ण की नीतिके

बादों में । सुभास ।

नीतिके लक्ष्ये चारों पक्षों  
को ध्यान में रखकर सुभास  
क्या? अर्थात् । नीतिके लक्ष्ये  
में सुभास रहती है । मर  
रहना है । सुभास का मर  
में नहीं चाहता । सुभास को  
रक्षा के लक्ष्ये की आवश्यकता  
नहीं है

सुभास का मरने का लक्ष्ये  
रक्षा के लक्ष्ये । सुभास  
नहीं चाहता है । सुभास  
का लक्ष्ये मरने का लक्ष्ये ।  
सुभास का लक्ष्ये

workers struck work and even after that they were advised to place their grievances before the Manager. But in a huff they went on strike. Now they seem cooled down because we did not seek police aid and took it in our stride. They have failed to comply with the terms of the agreement they had submitted in your presence. When the local Congress people offered their good offices we politely declined, myself telling them, "Nobody listens to you. The workers will choose for acceptance only those terms which suit their narrow interest, giving a wide berth to those which do not. Therefore, so long as you do not wield any influence on the workers, I would prefer not to consult you." Asaf Ali was rather peeved at my attitude, but there seems no alternative. Now the workers are threatening us with hunger-strike. I have told them plainly that such tactics won't be effective, that they should first organise themselves and speak with one voice and stick to their demands. Short of that they would impress nobody. So the strike continues, but the atmosphere is free from any tension since we, too, are non-co-operating peacefully.

Bapu has written to ask if the Nasik Sanatorium will have a couple of rooms vacant. A couple of residential chambers are always vacant to provide accommodation whenever there is an occasion to use them. Before you send anyone there, however you should write to Rameshwarbhai. Just to inform him.

All of us are quite well. I hope you are also quite well.

*Yours,*  
Ghanshyamdas

21

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHIA (C.P.),  
March 21, 1942

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASBHAI,

Your letter and the papers connected with the strike have arrived. I have showed them to Bapu. I do hope that by now

the situation has returned to normal. I am in complete agreement with you.

The Working Committee meeting is over. All the members have left for home today. Maulana Saheb has been invited to be in Delhi on about the 25th. Let us see what takes place.

Mahadevbhai has left for Bombay in company with Sardar. His health is more or less satisfactory but he soon appears quite tired to me. And his eyes also have started giving him trouble. He is due to return in four days.

Bapu is quite well. His weight has increased by 1½ lbs. Ba, too, is feeling better than before. Acharya Narendra Dev is still here. He has had quite an ugly fit of asthma—perhaps the worst in course of a year. He is now recovering. Dr. Krishna Verma has accompanied him.

I hope you are quite well.

Yours,  
Amrit Kaur

## 22

CALCUTTA,  
March 25, 1942

DEAR RAJKUMARIJI,

I am in receipt of your letter.

About the strike the position is that when Maulana Saheb arrived, the workers went to see him. I understand Maulana Saheb upbraided them for going on strike and advised them to return to work unconditionally. The strike leaders told all this to the workers who thereafter turned on them and asked, "If that is so, why did you advise us to go on strike?" The strike leaders thereupon submitted their resignations. Just now the strike is in doldrums. None of the workers went on hunger strike. Since we do not seek police aid the situation is free from any kind of tension. There have been no meetings, no distributing of leaflets. Everything is quiet.

It is believed the strikers will report for duty in course of a

couple of days or so. I have conveyed to the workers that those among the who were guilty of misdemeanour would on no account be taken back. This much about the strike.

I have had a telephonic talk with Mahadevbhai. He told me he was feeling better.

Was the increase in Bapu's weight the result of the almond paste? How is he feeling otherwise?

I had sent a Hindi life-sketch of Jamnalalji. Has Bapu read it? What am I to do with it now? Let me have Bapu's directions in this respect, please

*Yours,*  
Ghanshyamdas

23

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
April 8, 1942

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

I have replied to your telegram. Your essay is quite good, but you have introduced a host of political issues in it. This has made it rather controversial. I was looking forward to a discussion of some eternal varieties from your pen. The political aspect of J's<sup>1</sup> activities does not represent the spiritual side of his life. You might have noticed that when speaking at the Mitra Mandal function I did not as much as touch the political side of his life's work.

Your essay should have had no place for a criticism of the British. What has intrigued me is the fact that this did not strike Kaka Kalelkar as something odd. We shall talk about it, when we meet.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

<sup>1</sup>Jamnalal Baji

PS. I hope that you are now feeling better and that the un-wholesome effect of butter has been remedied by now.

24

BIRLA HOUSE,  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD,  
NEW DELHI,  
April 15, 1942

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

Is there anybody fit enough to be a trustee? This was what somebody wanted to know from Bapu and Bapu replied that Jamnalal had almost done the grade, and as for Wadia, Tata and Birla and the others they were not within miles of that state. Both Bapu and his interlocutor had sought to hunt for trustees among the rich alone, as if only the rich can qualify to be trustees, and not those belonging to the middle rung of social ladder.

I had a mill manager, a man of high moral character and integrity. His wife had died while he was still young, but he never remarried. His faith in naturopathy had become an obsession with him. Whatever his knowledge of this mode of treatment, he stuck to it with the faith of the ignorant. He was attacked with enteric fever but he confined his treatment to that system alone and persisted in it up to the last when he died. He had accumulated some 40 thousand rupees. These he dedicated to charitable purposes and made me its trustee. He had brothers and nephews but he preferred to allot this amount for philanthropic uses.

We had a servant, a Jat, Hiru by name. He began at a salary of rupee 1 which gradually rose to Rs. 2. After completing 80 years he died and to the last breath of his life he emptied his punny coffer twice or thrice, though he never had more than Rs. 500 or 700 together.

In our village we had a police Munshi. He was drawing a



salary of Rs. 5 per month. In those days when anyone was appointed it is said that he was summoned into the presence of the Dewan who gave him necessary directions as to his duties. This Munshi was similarly called and told by the Dewan what his salary was and that there were openings for additional income. The Munshi bowed low, took his departure, joined his duties and began acting accordingly. But this much can be said to his credit that if he accepted bribes he did so for doing somebody some good, not for not doing anybody any harm. When he crossed the 85th years of his life he decided to retire and spend the rest of his days at Benares. The amount of nearly twenty thousand rupees he had accumulated he dedicated to public and charitable uses, making me the trustee. He is still alive, bathes in the Ganges daily and visits the Vishwanath temple as a matter of course.

Whether this Munshi is qualified for inclusion in the list of those worthy enough for such distinction may be debatable, but about the other two, there can possibly be no doubt as to their trustworthiness.

It is difficult to find a qualified trustee among the rich. And even when you come across one he may not measure up to the high standard set for the job. Business accumen has been assigned an important place among the activities of members of the Vaishya community. But the dross that has crept into their social conduct has completely shrouded the virtues traditionally handed down to us as our proud heritage. To produce and to distribute—this is what the Vaishya community is required to ensure. But people have become oblivious of this trust, with greed taking hold of their minds and hearts. With the result that exploitation has come to be inseparably associated with their normal activities.

When Lenin inaugurated Bolshevism and destroyed the Vaishya community of Russia root and branch, he had nothing to instal in the place rendered vacant by the absence of the community's normal function. The social system became topsyturvy and willy nilly he had to introduce a new system christened NEP, short for the New Economic Policy, with those putting it into effect dubbed as Nepmen. All I intend to emphasise is that society does stand in need of the services of the Vaishya community as represented by the merchant, the

trader, the business man—call him what you like.

It is quite possible to say that the Vaishya has a narrow angle of vision, that the driving force of the Vaishya's activity is the service of self, of selfishness. This is true enough. Were he gifted with a rational angle of vision, there would have no occasion for trustees. For his own earnings? But, then, are all those who work for the nation are impelled by such lofty motives? My own view is that man is prey to a widespread malady. The leader who makes a stirring speech amidst thundering applause is also a victim of the same malady which ultimately lands him in jail. The trader forms a variant of the same malady and accumulates wealth but also parts with a portion of it. Both are suffering from some kind of vanity.

Only the one who has been able to get rid of this malady of vanity should be considered qualified to hold others' wealth in trust. He deserves unstinted praise; he deserves worship. Please show this to Bapu.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

25

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
April 16, 1942

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

Brother Shanti Kumar, Rai Bahadur Veerji Sheth and brother Dadajan are also here. In Burma there are some 8 hundred thousand men, women and children waiting to be evacuated and are in the mean time suffering from acute want. It is our duty to bring them back. There brother wants to form a committee with yourself as one of its members. Please do whatever you think proper.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

SEVAGRAM,  
April 18, 1942

DEAR BAJRANGBHAI<sup>1</sup>,

That day's journey was just about perfect. There was no difficulty during the travel. The crowd was not much. The heat was not excessive. The movement of the train also was quite normal.

Now about honey. Ghanshyamdasji had told me that he would send 20 lbs. of it to me and another 40-50 lbs for the Ashram's use. But if only 20 lbs are to be sent, then—shall surrender the entire quantity to the Ashram. Just I tell you how much the Ashram needs it? Ghanshyamdasji knows it quite well. I had arranged for a supply of 8 lbs of honey from Kashmir. It cost Rs. 12. When I reached here today I learned that the Ashram needed honey and we had to part with 4 lbs of it from our own stock. I shall now keep this fresh stock of 20 lbs intact till I get your letter.

Sardar and those who live in the vicinity of his Bombay residence have received notice that when another notice arrives they would have to vacate their houses within 24 hours. Sardar is due to leave for Bardoli in course of these 7-8 days.

I feel fit enough, but I seem to have lost the capacity to endure heat. And you know yourself how hot it is here.

Ghanshyamdasji's letter dealing with the trusteeship theory has arrived and has been placed near Bapu.

Please inform Ghanshyamdasji that Sardar has sent in his resignation from the Working Committee.

*Yours,*  
Mahadev

<sup>1</sup> Private Secretary

April 20, 1942

RESPECTED SHRI DESAIJI,

My Pranams.

I am in receipt of your kind letter of the 18th. I was glad to note that the journey was completed without hitch. The crowd was not much from the start and not many people should have got into the train on the way.

The quantity of 20 lbs of honey was meant entirely for your own use. Another quantity which is about to be despatched will be for the Ashram's use. It just slipped from Shri Ghanshyamdasji's memory that he had also promised 40-50 lbs for the Ashram. Anyway 50 lbs of honey will be on the way presently.

Your health is not up to the mark and this causes anxiety. But you do not take rest and I suppose you cannot afford to. Surely, God looks after people like you.

Shri Ghanshyamdasji has fully gone through your letter.

Please convey my greetings to Narayanbhai.

*Yours humbly,*  
Bajranglal Purohit

SHRI MAHADEV DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
April 25, 1942

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

Your letter has reached me. Your conjecture is quite correct. Jamnalalji's life-sketch is not the appropriate place for your scathing criticism of the British. There is certainly room for such criticism, but not in this life-sketch. If the Government's policy had not tempted him Jamnalalji would never have

bothered himself with politics. Animus against the British occupied just a tiny place in his mental make-up. This is what I wish to convey. From every point of view the sort of criticism you have allowed yourself to make is ill-suited for this essay and may even injure your own interest in the future.

*Blessings from  
Bapu*

29

SIVAGRAM,  
April 30, 1942

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

It was nice of you to have come here, even though for only a couple of days. I felt so happy. It was principally I myself who placed obstacles in the plan to take Bapu to Bombay. I am sorry for it, but at the present juncture I did not and do not relish the idea of his going to Bombay, or anywhere else for that matter, although I, more than anybody else, am keen to escape from the heat here. But let Sardar come when we shall think over the matter anew and ultimately your decision will be treated as final. If after considering the pros and cons of Bapu's journey to Bombay you decide in favour of such a course, I shall keep my lips sealed.

Rajaji has admitted his mistake and has resigned. But he has managed to secure permission to place a resolution before the A.I.C.C. The A.I.C.C. meeting will continue for one or two more days. Today a telephone call came from Sardar, but he could not be heard distinctly because of constant tapping. The only thing I could make out was that even after a drastic revision of Bapu's resolution, Jawahar is going to bring in his own resolution.

• Do you really wish me to be in Bombay in order to attend the Trustees' meeting? In case Sardar reaches Bombay direct, I would like to go, in order to learn everything from his own lips.

*Yours,  
Mahadev*

30

May 23, 1942

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

This cutting will interest you. The cable from London indicates that the first tide of public opinion in favour of taking bold steps in India soon subsided after some time of the fall of Singapore, and this perhaps explains the failure of the Cripps Mission. There is a saying in Marwari “बड़ा पकौड़ी बाणि को तानो लीज्यो तोड़” I suppose you understand the meaning. Cripps' visit to India was a bit too late.

The other telegram from Allahabad will give you the complete scheme of Jawaharlalji. Recently, you might have seen his interview from Lahore. He seems to be wobbling between two extremes.

I admire Rajaji who is sticking to his line in spite of the strongest opposition from all sides.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

31

SEVAGRAM,  
*Via* WARDHA,  
May 24, 1942

DEAR MADANLALJI,

I got your letter, as also the reproductions. I am sorry I put you to the trouble of getting two copies made because after I had written to you Hariram sent them the next day. Please excuse me.

Where does Ghanshyamdasji intend to go from Gwalior—Delhi, Pilani, or Calcutta? I want to write an urgent letter to

him. If you know anything about his programme, kindly let me know. I hope Sethji is quite well.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev Desai

*PS.* I hope to reach Delhi about Thursday, the 26th May.

SHRI MADANLAL KOTHARI  
JIYAJFRAO COTTON MILLS LTD.  
GWAI IOR

32

SIVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
June 11, 1942

DIAR BAJRANGJI,

Your letter. The earlier letter also had arrived. Ba knew nothing about the injections. Now the doctor who looks after Bapu says the injections had failed to arrive. What I fear is that even if the injections had reached here they might have been dumped in some obscure corner of the dispensary. Why such hectic search for them?

I have with me two books from the library there. There is no need for me to write about them. You are at Pilani at present I shall send the titles of these books to Badri. So you are going to stay on at Pilani for full one year! This means that we are not going to meet before that unless I happen to be around.

*Your brother,*  
Mahadev

SHRI BAJRANGLAL PUROHIT  
BIRLA EDUCATION TRUST  
PILANI (JAIPUR STATE)  
RAJASTHAN

33

SEVAGRAM,  
June 11, 1942

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

There are so many things I would like to write about, and yet I dare not do so. You must be reading the *Harijan* regularly in order to keep in touch with the daily working of Bapu's mind. The last *Harijan* contains some things of startling interest. He has discussed the implications of the new move and contemplated the staying on of the British and American troops under certain conditions.

There has been plenty of discussion with the Maulana and the Pandit, and I feel that the differences will ultimately vanish.

In the country there seems to be plenty of support—theoretic, I am afraid—for Bapu. What and where it will lead to, I have not the ghost of an idea. But I am more afraid of the compromise proposal that has been suggested in the last *Harijan* and is being expanded in succeeding *Harijans*. Let me have your reaction.

Bapu is keeping well in spite of the heat which is oppressive—and quite unbearable for me. But the weather has begun to improve and we may have rain any day.

*Yours affectionately,*  
Mahadev

34

June 15, 1942

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I have just returned from Pilani. Pilani just now, to an outsider, would appear like a hell! The temperature was 118 and added to it was the nuisance of dust-storm which was blowing day and night. But I had to do some work and so I stayed for some time. The work has increased so enormously that, in the interest of efficiency, I had to put Bajrang in charge of the place



although it would cause me a lot of inconvenience.

Mirza Ismail is coming to take charge of the Prime Ministership of Jaipur on the 22nd. Gyan Nath has already quitted. So, this is as far as I could see, a comfortable news. Mirza Ismail has asked me for support and guidance which he would have in plenty, although I do not know whether my guidance will be accepted. But I am sure anything would be better than Gyan Nath. And Mirza, after all, is not a reactionary. We in Jaipur are not in need of a democratic government; but what we just now want is a good government and let us hope for the best.

Dhiren's quarters were vacated under compulsion. I was very much annoyed but could not do anything. Disobeying was thought of and discarded by Dhiren. I fear it is not my dharma too at present. But who knows what will happen in the future!

We are likely to have a shower in the near future and that will improve the weather.

About my reaction to the *Harijan's* articles, from his last article I thought Bapu had slightly changed his position. But it is very difficult to follow him merely by reading his article

I hope you are well.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SYT. MAHADFBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

35

WARDHAGANJ,  
June 23, 1942

GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD  
NEW DELHI

HORACE ALEXANDER AND SYMONDS ARRIVING DELHI SATURDAY  
MORNING GRANDTRUNK. CAN YOU PUT THEM UP. WIRF.

MAHADEV

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
June 24, 1942

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

As Swami is going there, I am sending this letter through him.

I think this meeting of Go Seva Sangh was unavoidable. The land given to it is in two parts : One part of it was given by Jamnalalji. For the other part the Ashram had paid. The gift made by Jamnalalji took the form of both landed property and cash. The money paid by the Ashram was out of the monies donated by you and your brothers. This means that this money represented your gift. Now things will be arranged in keeping with your wishes. If this money is to be taken from Go Seva Sangh that would mean that your money is saved, unless you would like to make a fresh gift to Go Seva Sangh I myself cannot make a gift, nor can I claim any credit for it. I hope I have been able to make my point clear So please do what you think proper.

What I am occupied with at the present moment derives its inspiration from my inner urging which hourly grows in intensive. The regime is bent on mischief. Whatever is being said in order to oppose me, angers me beside adding to my distress, though both these are unjustified. All these are fleeting impulses which leave after a while and I am at peace with myself once again.

My mind is made up; my plans for the coming struggle are nearing completion. I am only waiting for the Working Committee meeting. I have made my preparations. More when we meet.

I hope this finds you well.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

37

BIRLA HOUSE,  
NEW DELHI,  
June 25, 1942

MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
WARDHA (C.P.)

ALL FAMILY MEMBERS HIRE. HOUSE FULL BUT WILL MAKE ANOTHER ARRANGEMENT. MY CAR WILL MEET THEM STATION.

GHANSHYAMDAS

38

SEVAGRAM,  
June 25, 1942

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Thanks to Swamiji who is coming there. I can write to you a real letter. For it is impossible to send anything nowadays by post, as you can well imagine.

Fischer—the Writer of *Men and Politics* which you are reading—was here for four or five days. He is not a shallow type of journalist. He is deeply analytical, has the capacity to go to the heart of things and he really vivisected Bapu, trying to understand every bit of his life, philosophy and performance. And I think Bapu too gave him of his best. It was in reply to him that Bapu developed the theme of foreign soldiers staying in India, and using it as a military base. He was startled—as he now expected nothing of the kind and had come with the news that Bapu might any day be arrested. This talk was put into the form of an article by Bapu, himself two weeks ago, and the whole article was wired out by Reuter. There was much else besides this part of the interview but it is not to the point and I will not labour it here. On the day Fischer left he let me see his own diary—that is just a part of it containing a gist—the Viceroy's

talk with him regarding Bapu. It was most interesting and not a little strange. "Gandhi has been very good to me all these years," he said to Fischer, "And that is to say a good deal. If he had remained the saint that he was in South Africa he would have done a tremendous lot of good to humanity. But unfortunately politics absorbed him here and made him vain and egotistical. But it is nonsense to say, as you say some civilians have told you, that he is a spent force and may be ignored. He has a tremendous influence, says the masses as no one else does, and only next to him comes Jawaharlal. The rest in the Congress are all paid for the work. It is a businessmen's organisation. They finance it and keep it going. Gandhi's present move is an enigmatic. It may be dangerous. I am watching it most closely. He is planning to instigate the people in U.P. and Bengal. He will ask the peasants not to move from their homesteads. I am not going to precipitate, but if his activities affect the war effort, I shall have to put him under control." This is as good a report of the thing as my memory can give me.

Bapu had long talks with Jawahar and Maulana. Jawahar is full of China and America. He has made to them all kinds of promises. When Bapu altered his original stand in his interview given to Fischer, Bapu had no doubt Jawahar in mind. That interview fully met with J.'s wishes who suggested that Bapu must write a letter to Chiang explaining his position and assuring him of the help of free India; also that withdrawal proposal was entirely with a view to helping China. I do not quite know why Chiang wired against publication of the letter in *Harijan*. But the letter was wired to China and America the same time and in a way it was good that it must be in Roosevelt's hand when Churchill met him.

That will explain Jawahar's Bombay interview. The Maulana is still sitting on the fence. He is obstinate but ultimately he will walk behind Jawahar. He sharply differs from Bapu on Sind and cannot at all understand what Bapu means—at least so he says. He is coming again on the 30th—perhaps on the 4th or 5th, now that the W.C. meets on the 8th—and may toe the line at the W.C. meeting. The greatest pity of it all is that no one has a particle of Bapu's idealism, and every one looks at Bapu's plans with his own prepossessions. However the W.C. is not likely to have any surprises in store for the world. For Bapu

is deliberately going slow. He will not propose any kind of mass action—only as you know he is asking people to disobey whenever they feel that they cannot carry out Government's orders. This has already had a great and visible effect in Orissa where Miraben is doing splendid work. They had issued orders to villagers in several villages for evacuation. All the orders have been stayed. But thanks to their stupidity and blindness all kinds of things are happening there. They drafted coolies from Travancore and Cochin, paid them Re. 1 a day and paid only 6 annas a day to local men for the same work. They installed a toddy shop in their midst and the "foreign" coolies of whom many were criminals released from jail looted the bazaar and burnt it! In Bengal the soldiers are free with their rifles and shoot on the slightest provocation. These tales of woe have sent an iron into Bapu's soul.

Rajaji was here for a couple of days, but at the end of two days long and very friendly talks Bapu said, "I find that the differences between him and me are deeper than I had imagined." He urged him on to see Jinnah—I think he really needed no urging—and he will see him. But that man having given that vile interview at the instigation of the *Times of India* man. Law is not committed to oppose Bapu tooth and nail, and I don't think C.R. will be able to cut much ice with him. However he is seeing him and will return to Wardha after that visit to communicate the result. But I have a fear that he will not tell even Bapu all that passes between him and Jinnah, not that he would deliberately keep anything from him, but because he is seeing everything with the spectacles of his own pet plan and anything that upsets his apple cart he would not reveal. However it is, I think, well that he is seeing Jinnah.

I think I have now given you all the news worth giving. Bapu is not at all well. He is dead tired, and at the end of the day feels quite washed out. We have to make a desperate attempt to lessen his labours, but it is the new programme of which he is thinking out, takes a lot out of him. He has lost weight, eats less, walks less, and work tires him. This is greatly to be deplored, but we cannot help him very materially. All I can do is to limit him to a couple of columns of *Harijan* and fill the rest myself which I can easily do as I can write expositions of his views without difficulty. But the thinking and

planning he has to do himself! Only God can do it for him!

Horace Alexander and Symonds have come here. They are goody goody fellows like all quakers. Horace saw Amery before he left London. A. said H. might meet Gandhi and others. But there will be no result. I am afraid as he is holding a brief for Cripps. However they are both good people. I am asking them to stay with you. I hope you will have no objection. You can educate Horace a little, I think. For he knows very little, and you can't find out something from him. He knows no one there and I thought much the best plan would be for them to stay with you. That will interfere with your plans somewhat but I hope you will not mind.

Love.

*Yours,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* If you can send Fischer's book for me, will you send it with Swamiji and also any other literature that you think will interest me?

### 39

June 27, 1942

MY DIAR MAHADFBHAI,

Your letter was full of information and I am thankful to you for sending me this mental food.

Mr. Horace and Mr. Symmonds both have reached here and I have put them both in one room. I wish I would have given them two rooms, but that was not possible. But they are quite happy. I will look after their comfort. Please don't have any worry over their stay in Delhi.

There are a number of things to talk, but I will wait until we meet. I will be there perhaps by the beginning of August.

I understand you are not well. You yourself have admitted that in the *Harijan*. Why not then come to Delhi? If you come, I promise to alter my programme and will stay here to give you

company. Or, I can take you to Pilani where nothing will disturb you. Even for the sake of work, it is necessary that you should take rest and not have these demonstrations of collapses. It must be all hateful to you that Bapu could walk a mile in gruelling heat, while you could not perform the feat. I think you definitely need rest and you ought to take it. Devdas agrees with me.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanṣhyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBIAI DISAI  
SIVAGRAM

40

SIVAGRAM,  
11a WARDHA (C. P.),  
July 29, 1942

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

It is not an easy job these days to write letters as all letters are opened and although we have nothing to hide we do not want what we write to be put to base use which is why, I do not feel like mentioning any such thing in my letters.

It was a matter of no little shame to me that while Bapu could endure the heat and continued walking I collapsed though I had been enjoying such a long spell of complete rest. I work only within the limits allowed to me. I have altogether stopped reading and writing in the evenings. The only thing I do by way of writing is doing some notes for *Harijan*. This I find quite easy to manage. Bapu feels so exhausted and so completely drained of strength that leaving his side would be adding to his burden and this is something I simply cannot do. Had these been normal times I could scratch a couple of months' complete rest. Your affection for me works like a magnet. I am fully conscious of your love for me. May I never cease to deserve it. And this thought is quite adequate to sustain me.

Rajaji has returned from Bombay this morning. Until his arrival we were not in a position to surmise about his achievements in Bombay. This morning a telephone call from Bombay told us he was returning to Sevagram overflowing with hopes, though Sardar debunked such hopes. He said, "If we could negotiate a settlement with the Government by surrendering our freedom, where is the sense of procuring a settlement with Jinnah, leaving everybody else? And he is resolutely opposed to the idea of giving any written undertaking.

*Yours,*  
Mahadev

41

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
July 3, 1942

DEAR HARIRAMJI,

Your letter and the books<sup>1</sup> sent by you have arrived. I shall return the books after having done with them.

*Yours,*  
Mahadev Desai

SHRI HARIRAM GOYAL  
BIRLA HOUSE  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD  
NEW DELHI

<sup>1</sup>*Men in Politics and Soviet Asia*



SEVAGRAM,  
July 6, 1942

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

There is little new to report, but as Brijkrishna can take this to you I am giving him a few lines. Nalini and Sardar met at Birla House in Bombay. I too was invited but I was closetted with the doctors and so I could not go. He said that he had spoken to H. E. to take no action regarding *Harijan*<sup>o</sup> without consulting his colleagues. Aney also said to him the same thing. H. E. then mentioned the matter at a Council meeting and invited the members' opinions. The Com. in Chief who spoke first said: "G. should be given as long a rope as possible. He must have full freedom of expression, unless we definitely find that he spoils the war effort." Maxwell said: "But he promotes disaffection. And how can we sit looking on?" However as Wavell had given the lead the rest agreed that G. must be given a long rope!

But this expansion of the Council worries me a lot. It looks as though it was a direct reply to Bapu. The new gangsters have been chosen simply to make Government's way easy for Bapu's arrest, and some of them we know will not be in the least sorry, if Bapu were to pan away. The whole thing reminds me strongly of what preceded the Minorities Pact in London—the figures are so familiar. C. P. and Ambedkar and Benthall—and the whole thing has been done so to say on the principle of communal representation! I wrote all this in my notes in *Harijan* this week. Bapu would not let me say it however. He said. "All this is absolutely true. But we may not say it. Let others say, if they can."

Bapu is none too well. After the W. C. if we can give him a fortnight's rest, it would be a great thing. But I do not know that he could be persuaded to take that rest. I shall try my best to persuade Jawahar and the Sardar to get him to cut himself off from all activities. But I may fail. However God will keep him if he wants him to do the work of his lifetime.

Love.

Yours,  
Mahadev

July 13, 1942

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I have seen Bapu's comments about the food shortage and people bitterly complaining against grain merchants. The complaint is only partially true. There are undoubtedly, shopkeepers who are hoarding grains in expectation of shortage. It is human nature that people should want to make profit. But these evils could be removed if there were a proper co-operation between Government and the responsible merchants. As it is, the Government controls and commands, and when they do not succeed, they arrest merchants. The Press also incites feelings against merchants, and any day they would be looted. The result would be further scare and greater scarcity. The whole machinery may thus collapse.

The price of everything, that has been controlled, has gone up and yet the Government eyes are not opened. The remedy lies in taking certain steps. First of all, fixing such prices of controlled articles that would have a reasonable relation to the price of replacement. Secondly, inviting, on behalf of the Government, help of responsible business men to organise a network of shops to sell grain without any profit motive. Thirdly, to ensure transport facilities. At present there are places where sugar and salt are not available because of the breakdown of transport.

Ramaswami Mudaliar never cared for the help of the business men. What he has done so far is to take isolated and amateurish actions and create more complications. I hope Nalini Babu, when he takes charge, may be able to improve matters. He is very anxious that there should be more co-operation between business men and the Government. He wants to get rid of the "Black Market" which can live only as long as there is no properly organised "White Market".

I have told Nalini Babu that I am prepared to undertake to cover a large area and guarantee regular distribution of food stuff at cost price provided, of course, the transport facilities are guaranteed and proper protection against looting is given. He was pleased with it. I do not know how far the Government machinery would admit of such a thing being done. But I have

no doubt that if big business men are invited to organise large areas, all this difficulty would disappear.

The main thing just now is the lack of co-operation between business men and the Government and the difficulties about transportation. Whatever organisation there existed had been more or less broken down by irrational control, arrest and transportation difficulties. Partly the difficulty is arisen by consumers hoarding large stocks than usual.

*Yours\* sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBIHAI DSAI  
SEVAGRAM

44

July 14, 1942

MY DEAR MAHADEVBIHAI,

You said Bapu had asked Rajaji to bring something in writing from Jinnah. And Bapu again asks in the *Harijan* the definition of Pakistan. Well, here I enclose something which is authoritative to some extent. It is a result of two days' talk. The interpretation does not come from Jinnah, but I believe Nawabzada too counts. Nawabzada says that Jinnah is not the only man who counts in the Muslim League. And I think he is right. Nawabzada expressed incredulity at my belief that we did not know what exactly they wanted.

You will see from this that he demands the Punjab intact. But I could gather from the talks that the Muslim League was talking with some reservation. Even in the Punjab they would accept modification. And then there is the provision of arbitration. The whole thing is: Are we prepared to accept the principle of separation? If so, then there is plenty of room for discussion. If we reject the very principle, then there is no room for negotiation. I asked what if Sikhs do not agree. To this, of course, he had no reply.

But Bapu says that the Congress and he are willing to be converted. I drew the attention of Nawabzada to this and asked him to say publicly that he is prepared to meet the Congress and convert it. To this, he replied: "Jawaharlal says he does not even want to talk of Pakistan. How could then the conversation be possible?" I think the two statements, viz., of Jawaharlal and Bapu, are contradictory to each other. If the Congress position is that it is willing to be converted, then a meeting is necessary. I have sent a copy of the enclosed draft to Nawabzada and this draft is being sent with his full approval to you as far as its contents are concerned. He, I believe, will forward it to Jinnah. If there be a desire to discuss separation, then, in my opinion, a meeting should be possible, unless, of course, Nawabzada has no authority and Jinnah is the only high and mighty.

In any case, I am here till the evening of Friday. This will reach you on Wednesday evening and if you think that you are likely to send me such a reply as would need my staying here further, then please send me a wire saying, "stay on". On the other hand, if you think that it should be thrown into the waste paper basket, then you need not reply in which case I will leave this place on Friday.

You know my views about Pakistan. I am in favour of separation and I do not think it is impracticable, or against the interest of Hindus or of India. As long as we will quarrel, there is no salvation of India. Besides, we should not forget that the Muslims—every one of them—now want it. Even the Congress Muslims are no longer exception. How could then we resist? Nawabzada says that the Congress Muslims talk one thing to us and other to him. When they are asked by Leaguers to leave Congress fold, they say by remaining in the Congress they keep a restraint over it. This is playing a double game.

About Bapu's movement, we are all making guess. But frankly, the public does not seem to be optimistic or enthusiastic. Many movements were started and had to be withdrawn or were suppressed. I do not see much enthusiasm just now for a bitter struggle although the whole country just now has become anti-British. However, I do not think I am competent to advise on this matter. I am writing this just to say what the atmosphere looks like. The last few month's politics of the Congress have

really confused people's minds And where the leadership is contradictory, it is bound to have a bad effect on the morale of the people

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

45

July 14, 1942

MY DEAR MAHADLVBHAI,

With reference to the sketch of Jamnalalji that I had written, you will remember that Bapu had taken objection to certain part of it In the light of his criticism, I have tried to revise that special portion without changing its foundation I do not know how far it will be liked by Bapu But Hariji says that it is unexceptional now Now I do not think that Bapu could have time and energy to look into this small matter and, therefore, I would not ask that he should read the re-written portion But what could be done is this that either after taking the permission of Bapu you may allow me to use my own discretion and get it published, or you can ask Kaka Saheb to read it and give his opinion to Bapu Because Hariji and some other friends strongly suggest that this may be published, I am writing this to you. Or else we might drop the whole idea without doing anything further Please let me know what Bapu orders to do.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEWAGRAM

46

WARDHAGANJ,  
July 15, 1942

GHANSHYAMDAS  
BIRLA HOUSE  
NEW DELHI

MIRABEN REACHING THURSDAY GRANDTRUNK.

MAHADEV

47

SEVAGRAM,  
July 16, 1942

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I wanted to send you a letter through Miraben, but I was too tired and had no time in the morning to send a satisfactory letter. The W.C. was this time our eye-opener. With the exception of the Khan Sahib the Muslims have no heart in the Congress programme—or rather Bapu's programme. Jawaharlal is too deeply committed to China and America to take up anything energetic immediately. My fear is that the real situation is even worse. Rameshwarbhai sends me *Life* every week. This week's issue is a frightful revelation of the things as they are. Bapu met the Generalissimo at your house in Calcutta. This *Life* contains all the photographs of the occasion. The description under the photographs could have been given by none but the Madame or someone on the Gen's staff. For there was no one there but they and myself who can give this description. And then what a mischievous description of Bapu? And how insulting and how ungrateful? I had thought gratefulness was one of the greatest virtues of the Chinese. But even that seems woefully lacking so far as this couple is concerned. If they were so keen on having nothing to do with capitalists why should they have accepted poor Laxminivas's hospitality? The

whole thing leaves a most unpleasant taste in the mouth. The visit ought not to have taken place. But it is well that Bapu was face to face with that "inscrutable" man, as he always calls me. Jawaharlal has, I am afraid, either allowed himself to be made a complete ass of, or he is participant in the game with the Generalissimo—I hope and pray not the latter. In his latest message the Generalissimo tells Bapu to do nothing precipitate, as Halifax who has gone to Britain told Chiang's representative in New York that he would move those in authority in England to bring about an understanding with India. Bapu has written to him in reply that he would take no hasty step, but neither can the step be long delayed, because the delay would defeat the very purpose of the step. I am afraid there is nothing behind the message and Halifax is either fooling Chiang, or Chiang and Halifax are both fooling us!

Now about your letter. Bapu has given it careful attention. He wonders if you have committed yourself in any manner. If you have, it is most dangerous thing. The question is not of Pakistan or separation as such, but of the real content of these conceptions. Jinnah's angry outburst in reply to Bapu is most revealing. When he clutches at Bapu's statement in *Harijan* of July 12, and exclaims "Mr. Gandhi does not need a better exposition than his own. He has himself put the Muslim demand in a nutshell." If so, there can *never* be a settlement with the Muslims. Bapu has framed a few questions, after studying Liaquat's points, to which he would like to have categorical replies. This is not a thing to be discussed in a hole and corner way. Let these issues be faced fairly and squarely and if there are satisfactory answer, there is every chance of a settlement. If not, there can be no settlement. Rajaji's besetting sin is that he goes on talking of the principle of separation without caring to know what it denotes and connotes. I am sending these questions to Rajaji in order to ascertain his views. In fact, Bapu is prepared to discuss these publicly.

Regarding your letter about Jamnalalji—book—Bapu says there is no objection whatsoever to your publishing it. He had simply warned you, and if you have made necessary changes in the light of his criticism, you had better get along with it. No need to send it to Kaka Saheb for revision.

Regarding your letter about price control Bapu says, you

must make a move—you, that is the merchants. If Nalini does something concrete and associates you with it, it would be a very good thing. Do have long talks with Miraben. She is full of spirits. I wish she was equally full of knowledge. But there is no harm, if she talks with the big three—if she gets an interview. Have a talk with me on receipt of this letter.

*Yours,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* I thought I had finished. But one very important thing has been left out. The last paragraph of your confidential letter—regarding Bapu's movement. I agree that the Congress position is confusing or has been confusing. But that is because we have talked with many voices. When action begins, there will be no such confusion. But whether there is response or not, Bapu's mind is made up, and the other side, the more he stiffens. The fact is that he is determined to throw his last throw this time. There is the concentrated essence of evil on the other side. It has to be fought with all that is good, and so he feels that he must stake everything—his most precious possession—his life. There is no arguing with him. When he said on the last day to the W.C. that he would give a notice to Government that they must not think of keeping him in prison alive, they all set silent and stunned. There was no discussion whatsoever.

If after you have discussed the thing with Liaquat, or after you have studied my letter you feel like coming here, do come. You may make a point of coming to Bombay at all events—We reach there on the 3rd, but the latest on the 4th.

M.D.



SEVAGRAM,  
July 17, 1942

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I had forgotten to mention that Raghunandan arrived here yesterday morning. He was not to blame; the Grand Trunk Train was several hours late and had he reached here it would have been 11 in the night by then.

Yesterday I trusted him with a sealed letter. The draft of the questionnaire contained a serious mistake. Kindly expunge the phrase "Unknown to History" from the 3rd line of the 2nd para, get it typed afresh, and then only give it to the Nawabzada.

Herewith Bapu's latest interview which has not appeared anywhere so far and will make its first appearance in *Harijan* of 26th. I am only sending it for your own perusal and also Miraben's. Mira has so far been unsuccessful in getting into the Agra Big House and let her do so after she has read the interview. She will feel more at ease then.

Kindly give me a telephone call when this material reaches you. Then we shall talk.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Mahadev

*PS.* Bapu's health is improving quite steadily. He feels stronger, as the result of the larger quantities of milk he is now consuming. It is now  $2\frac{1}{4}$  rattal. He seems to be a case of milk starvation. The tiredness he was prone to and his tendency to go to sleep have both disappeared.

Could you manage to spare Bajrang for a couple of months, please ?

M.D.

July 18, 1942

MY DEAR MAHADEVBHAI,

I have received both the covers. Miraben is writing to you separately. You have asked me whether I have made any commitment. How could I do such a thing? And on whose behalf? I made it very clear and, of course, there was no necessity for this, that I had not come across the one Hindu who believes in separation. My intention was to get the interpretation which I got and which, I think, is not so frightening.

The questions that you have put, if I may say so, are very academic. They can hardly be for the purpose of understanding any reality of the Muslim want. But, however, I will pursue the matter further. It is clear, of course, from your questions that Bapu is not prepared even to think of the separation.

I am glad that Bapu is taking more milk and is better. This is the most heartening news. Mira Ben tells me that somebody told you that our Nasik House is no longer in our possession. That is not correct. Why should not Bapu, before he goes to Bombay, stay for a week in Nasik to improve his health? If he decides to do this, I will myself come to be with him for a week.

You have asked whether services of Bajrang could be lent. As a matter of fact, the work in Pilani is suffering very much and everything is getting into a mess and, therefore, I have sent him there for a year to train himself up and also to put the things on their legs. If it is a typist you want, I can certainly lend you a typist. Hariram is not a bad typist; but, of course Bajrang is quite different. Please let me know what exactly is your need.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI MAHADEVBHAI DESAI  
SEVAGRAM

1944



# 1

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
January 9, 1944

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have your letter dated 4th instant This morning there was a telegram from you to which I sent the following reply

BAPU PRACTICAI LY AIL RIGHT LUNGS CLHAR, NO COUGH NO  
CAUSE GOING BOMBAY WRITING

We did suggest his going to Bombay when the cough was troublesome But he did not agree Last time when Dr Gilder came here, we put it to him that if this irregular low fever persisted, he would have to go to Bombay But fortunately the fever and cough never have both disappeared, lungs have remained clear throughout There was a small patch of dry plury at one base which has cleared up completely He is still weak, though he has his usual walk twice a day and spins for  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour every day. He is back on almost normal diet and is gradually becoming stronger There is no cause for anxiety now He has agreed to take treatment for the hook-worms and earache when we think him fit enough to take it. I am thinking of starting it after the 15th We decided the line of treatment, when Dr Gilder came here last time. I hope it will rid him of the two parasites

As for my brother's operation he had it under spinal this time That gave him a lot of trouble afterwards in the shape of retention of urine and constipation He has still not been able to regulate his bowels properly Otherwise he is well The operation has been successful However I might tell you that he had a similar operation in 1935 In some cases the trouble recurs in 8-10 years and that was the case with my brother It was partly his own fault He is so careless about his own Health.

I enclose a letter from Bapu

*Yours sincerely,*  
Sushila•

2

May 13, 1944

PYARELAL  
CARE MAHATMA GANDHI  
JUHU (BOMBAY)

FEEL BOMBAY MAY NOT BE BEST PLACE FOR RECOUPING HEALTH IF HEALTH DOES NOT SHOW MUCH IMPROVEMENT IN FEW DAYS. DON'T YOU THINK DOCTORS SHOULD BE CONSULTED FOR A CHANGE AT BETTER PLACE WITH MODERATE ATTITUDE ?

GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA

3

SUNDER BUN,  
JUHU,  
June 10, 1944

DEAR FRIEND,

I send you herewith in two volumes copies of correspondence between the Government of India or the Bombay Government and myself during my incarceration in the place of H.H. the Agha Khan in Yeravda.

The second volume is a copy of my reply to the Government of India pamphlet entitled *Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances 1942-43*. The first contains copies of correspondence arising out of the above mentioned reply and on miscellaneous matters of public importance.

I had the copies cyclostyled with the help of kind friends. For fear of censorship difficulties I did not try to have the copies printed at any printing press. But lest the Government of India may think that there is anything in the correspondence. Objectionable from military standpoint I am circulating for private use only the copies among friends who, I think, should know the nature of the correspondence that took place between the two Governments and me. You are free to show your copy

to any friends you like, subject to the precaution that applies to you.

You will confer on me a favour if you will take the trouble of letting me have your reaction upon the correspondence, especially upon the points arising from my reply to Government of India pamphlet. I have endeavoured to answer every item of importance in the Government indictment. I should like to know the points, if any, which require elucidation.

*Yours sincerely,*  
M.K. Gandhi

4

BIRLA HOUSE,  
MALABAR HILL,  
July 4, 1944

PYARELAL  
CARI MAHATMA GANDHI  
PANCHGANI

PLEASE INFORM BAPU MAY REACH PANCHGANI FRIDAY MORNING.  
WANT TO LEAVE SATURDAY NOON PLEASE WIRE IF THAT WOULD  
BE CONVENIENT.

GHANSHYAMDAS

5

PANCHGANI,  
July 4, 1944

GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
MOUNT PLEASANT ROAD  
BOMBAY

WELCOME FRIDAY.

PYARELAL

“DILKHUSHA”,  
PANCHGANI,  
July 31, 1944

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have your letter of the 27th inst. along with the enclosure. The writer is not ambitious as you seem to think, but a megalomaniac and shows clear symptoms of delusional insanity. We have had many letters of this type before.

We reach Sevagram on the 3rd of August. Sapru will be free to leave Hyderabad after the 3rd. He will meet Bapuji in Sevagram, Jayakar probably accompanying.

There promises to be a rather big house-hold party at Sevagram. Shantikumar will be there and Gilder has an invitation for a prolonged stay. How Sevagram's resources will bear the strain, remains to be seen.

Bapu asked me to arrange to get regularly some foreign periodicals. I sent the following list to Shri Shantikumar

1. *New Statesman* and *Nation* 2. *Time* (American) 3. *Reader's Digest* 4. *Manchester Guardian* (Weekly) 5. *Times* (Weekly) 6. *Unity* and 7. *Asia*.

He has written to say that he tried but has failed. Could you take upon yourself to get them for me?

Yours sincerely,  
Pyarelal

PS. Dr. S.R. Mukherjee goes to Sevagram on the 5th. K.S. Ray on the 8th. Dr. Mukherjee will be accompanied by Shri Manoranjan Chowdhury.

August 7, 1944

MY DEAR PYARELAL,

I have received your letter of the 31st. There will be no difficulty in getting the papers that you have asked for. You



will get them direct. I will cable today to my offices in London and New York to do the needful. Please let me know when you begin to get them.

If there is anything worth writing to me please keep me well posted just as Mahadevbhai used to do. You can often 'think aloud' to me in your letters.

I am not going to Bombay just now. But please tell Bapu that whenever he needs me whether in Sevagram or at any other place, I will be at his disposal. I am not writing to him because he has enough to do. So I do not want to make his post unnecessarily heavy. As regards his health I hope the hook worms have now disappeared for good.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI PYARELAL  
SEVAGRAM

## 8

SEVAGRAM,  
August 12, 1944

BHAI RAMESHWARDAS,

I have been feeling the urge to write to you but was unable to free myself from my other preoccupations. Jinnah Saheb's communication may arrive any moment. I have written to him that I should be allowed at least 3-4 days' interval. I have been under great pressure to discontinue putting up at Birla House. I have said quite plainly that I would not stop doing that without sufficient cause. The only relevant factor to merit serious consideration is that if by putting up there I should be a source of inconvenience to you, I should be told so in plain words. This question was also raised at Poona and it was decided that there could be no question of hesitation on your part. I do not remember if you were present on that occasion, but none that

the time for my departure for Bombay is drawing near I want in the interest of your own security to be cautious in this respect and that is why I consider it my sacred duty to ask you.

The question relating to yourself is also important but not so important as the question of my stay at your place when I am in Bombay. In case my arrest is imminent I would like to dispose of such matters as are still pending before I am taken away. That will give me some self-satisfaction. It is my belief that work connected with Talimi Sangh is quite praise-worthy. I want to raise funds to the tune of  $\frac{1}{2}$  lac, 1 lac, 2 lacs, or whatever is feasible.

I want to return the amount donated for Miraben. It is my moral obligation to return this money. Ordinarily the Satyagraha Ashram Fund will have to bear this burden. The Fund still has some money left, but Narayandas has retained that amount for use in constructive work. It is quite possible to draw the needed amount from that Fund, but that would seriously affect constructive work and I am reluctant to do that. I operate that Fund to the extent of Rs.  $\frac{1}{2}$  lac, 1 lac, even 2 lacs—I have not been able to find out the exact amount still owing to that Fund. The amounts drawn from different donations are recorded in the donations account. It takes time to draw monies from these different donations. To find out the exact amounts thus drawn even from meticulously kept account books is like searching for a needle in a hay-stack. All the same, I have given instructions to prepare a regular statement of accounts.

Some miscellaneous items of expenditure have got to be attended to. Something has got to be done on that score. This will absorb some 1 lac, 2 lacs half a lac of rupees. I have not worked out the exact figures.

Could you spare these amounts easily? A negative answer will also serve. All my works rely on God's grace for fulfilment when God does not wish any of these undertakings to be hampered for lack of funds. He prompts someone to send me a draft for the required amount. If I do not get the amounts now needed I will certainly not lose patience either with God or with you. I have never struck at a tree that provides me with shelter; never did that in my life, will not do that in future either.

I hope all of you are doing well. I am sending this letter

through dear Jagdish who has arrived here with Brother Munshi's letter. Nowadays it is rather difficult to decide which of the letters should be sent by post which by other means.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

9

ASHRAM,  
SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA,  
August 14, 1944

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have your letter. I had thought of writing to you before but I hesitated. I have learnt to curb enthusiasm and I do not like to obtrude. Needless to say I shall now keep in touch. It will be a pleasure and a privilege.

So, Bapu is going to Bombay on the 19th. He expects his stay there to be very brief. The scope and purpose of the forthcoming visit as he envisages it, is not to thrash out details but to arrive at a common understanding on the fundamentals. If Q.A. is satisfied with Bapu's personal attitude, then the two shall have to work together to secure conditions under which alone formal talks can be held.

The C.R.-Gandhi formula as interpreted by Bapu is not very different from the self-determination resolution of the Working Committee held at Delhi. It implies the conceding of the right of self-determination to the minorities consistent with the safety, integrity and economic progress of the country as a whole. What is ruled out is freedom to indulge in acts of mutual hostility. It is that which Bapu has called a sin. Such freedom cannot be had by 'agreement'. That would be a contradiction in terms.

In the C.R.-Gandhi formula there is a provision for the creation of a special machinery for the joint administration of matters of common concern to the two states. Only, this won't

form part of the federal constitution but will be brought into being by a treaty between the two states and be integrated with the charter for separation. Of course there can be no guarantee against bad faith. That risk is inseparable from existence under complete independence. The fabric of independence cannot be raised on fear complex.

Similarly, the formula for the solution of the political deadlock is only a re-write *mutatis mutandi* of the August resolution under the changed conditions of today. Bapu will not be party to any dilution of his demand for a national executive responsible to the elected representatives of the people. Attempts to reduce his demand to accommodate it within the framework of the present constitution therefore cannot have his sanction, approval or support.

The 9th of August was a complete success from Bapu's viewpoint. If we, even as individuals, renounce the right to civilly resist unjust executive orders or orders hurtful to one's self-respect, the lesson the country has learnt since Champaran or South Africa is obliterated, as it were, at a stroke. Bapu therefore was prepared to face all risks but not to give up the symbolical demonstration on the 9th. He even thought of confining it to women—woman according to him being the symbol of non-violence. But it was too late then for any change.

Bapu is keeping a fair level of health and fitness although he is burning the candle at both ends with an almost uncalculating recklessness. "Dangerous living" has always been a part and parcel of his existence. It is the breath of his nostrils.

Thanks for the pains you have taken about the foreign periodicals. I feel guilty for having written to you. I never wanted you to put yourself to all that botheration. It would have been enough if you had sent your copies for perusal and return after you had done with them.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,  
Pyarelal

10

8 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLACE,  
CALCUTTA,  
August 21, 1944

MY DEAR PYARELAL,

Thanks for your letter of the 14th August.

The opinion here against and for C.R. formula is divided. Perhaps it would be correct to say that the younger generation on the whole is in favour and the older generation against. Perhaps it could be said correctly that the division is half and half.

But there is another development here. I have heard many Bengalese saying that they would not mind even going to Pakistan if Bengal was kept intact. Muslims also seem to be keen to expand Pakistan. If Bengal is kept as it is, then it is not a Pakistan but separation of Bengal from the rest of India. It will be troublesome for Hindus and Muslims both. But if Hindus insist here on non-division of Bengal, even under Pakistan the Muslims perhaps would get suspicious. This is the atmosphere in which we live. The general opinion, however, among intellectual circle is that Muslims will find that Pakistan cannot work financially or otherwise, and yet if they want it, there is no other alternative.

I am glad to hear that Bapu is just maintaining a fair level of health. I hope he will not burn the candle at both ends. I could not help discovering while I was with him in Juhu and at poona that he was now getting a little old and perhaps the old age may now invade with greater rapidity. So he must conserve all his energies.

I had some business to go to Bombay about the first week of September, but now it is cancelled. So I am not going to Bombay. I had a telegram from Rajaji asking me to come, but I did not like the idea.

Everybody is feeling sincerely that Bapu may succeed in his negotiations. But I am a bit sceptical. Let us, however, hope for the best.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI PYARELAL  
SEVAGRAM

11

August 24, 1944

MY DEAR PYARFLAL,

I forgot to write to you in my last letter that for the naturopathic clinic a plot of land has been suggested a few miles away from Nasik in rural area. I have sent the details of the plot to Rameshwardas. Perhaps it is more than 200 acres. It is difficult to get a larger plot than this at once. But in course of time more land may be purchased. Rameshwardas, after making enquiries, will speak to Bapu whether he likes this plot or not.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ganshyamdas

SHRI PYARILAL  
SLVAGRAM

12

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
August 29, 1944

DLAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have both your letters of 21st and 24th instant, respectively Bapu has seen both of them.

There was a letter from Q.A. yesterday saying that he hoped to be able to receive Bapu some time in the first week of September. But as the meetings of the A.I.S.A. and the A.I.V.I.A. have already been fixed up so as to extend from the 1st September, to the 6th, Bapu will not be able to go to Bombay before the 7th or 8th.

Bapu is having a mild relapse of dysentery. It has deflated him in a couple of days more than the strenuous grind since our arrival here. Sushila has put him on Glucose to enable him to pick up.

I wonder whether you will be in Bombay when (and if?) we go there.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,  
Pyarelal

PS. Bapu has resumed Kurachi.

P.

### 13

CALCUTTA,  
September 3, 1944

MY DEAR PYARELAL,

I am sending herewith three cuttings from the *Spectator*. Two relate to a letter from Alexander and reply to Rawlinson. Alexander has misquoted and misrepresented Bapu and perhaps a reply to the Editor of *Spectator* from you or Bapu may be considered.

The third relates to the case of an alleged rape by a negro of a white woman. It appears from the note that there was no case against the negro and yet, the sentence was that the negro be hanged by the neck till dead.

Yours sincerely,  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI PYARELAL  
SIVAGRAM

BOMBAY,  
September 9, 1944

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have your letter of the 3rd September enclosing cuttings from the *Spectator*. Thanks for the same. Bapu has seen all the three cuttings. I have had Horace Alexander's book also. I shall do the needful.

You must have seen in the papers reports of the doings of the picketers at Sevagram. For some time it was pure fun so far as we were concerned though on the first day the leader had blurted out that this was only the first step and, if necessary, force would be employed to prevent Bapu from going to meet Q.A. Yesterday they gave information that they would physically prevent Gandhiji from going out of the hut and planted pickets at all the three exits leading out of the hut.

This morning I had intimation on the telephone from the D.S.P. that they meant serious mischief and, therefore, the police will be compelled to take action. Bapu had proposed to go all along in their midst and foot it out to Wardha, unless they themselves changed their mind and asked him to get into the car. The time for departure was fixed at 12 a.m. to allow for the delay. Just before the departure the D.S.P. came and said that he had arrested the picketers after giving them due notice and after all persuasion had failed. Perhaps you know that all demonstrations, processions, etc. are banned in Wardha District at present.

The leader of the picketers appeared to be very highly strung, fanatical and of a neurotic type which caused some anxiety. Search of his person after arrest revealed a full-sized dagger.

When the police officer who arrested him banteringly remarked that at any rate he had the satisfaction of becoming a martyr, quick came the reply : "No, that will be when someone assassinates Gandhiji." "Why not leave it to leaders to settle it among themselves, for instance, Savarkar might come and do the job," jocularly remarked the police officer in question. The reply was, "That will be too great an honour for Gandhiji. A Jamadar will be quite enough for the purpose."

Bapu has been having serious discussions with the Ashram



people. He has advised the dissolution of the Ashram unless it is so organised as to be able to acquit itself with credit in the hour of test. The case of the present failure in Bapu's opinion is the disturbing element of his presence. Therefore, in case of re-organisation being decided upon he would remove himself away from the Ashram and shift either to Birla House (Sevagram) or to Wardha. You must have seen also the drastic re-orientation he has recommended to the A.I.S.A. I would like you to carefully go through the gist of his remarks which I have sent to the Press. Since then however some new developments have taken place and it is difficult to predict the shape of things to come.

We are passing through very critical times and there is no end to worries. It is the latter that sucks one's lifeblood and that is the pity. Bapu is going to Bombay in hope but without expectation.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

15

BENARIS,  
September 13, 1944

PYARILAL  
BIRLA HOUSE  
MALABAR HILL  
BOMBAY

I HAD PROGRAMME TO COME TO SEVAGRAM BEGINNING NOVEMBER FOR A LEISURELY STAY THERE FOR SOME TIME. IF BAPU DESIRES EARLIER CAN COME EARLY WITHOUT ANY INCONVENIENCE. NOTHING WRONG WITH HEALTH ONLY A LITTLE TIRED. WOULD BAPU'S DEFINITE DESIRE.

GHANSHYAMDAS

16

BENARES,  
September 13, 1944

PYARELAL  
BIRLA HOUSE  
MALABARHILL  
BOMBAY

ADVICE PASSING ON TRUE FACTS ABOUT SEVAGRAM PICKETERS TO  
PRESS ESSENTIAL. PUBLIC SHOULD KNOW.

GHANSHYAMDAS

17

BENARES,  
September 13, 1944

PYARELAL  
BIRLA HOUSE  
MALABAR HILL  
BOMBAY

YOUR LETTER REACHED JUST NOW. AFTER SENDING LAST WIRE, IT  
HAS CAUSED ANXIETY. CAN COME EARLIER WHENEVER BAPU DESIRES  
AWAITING REPLY.

GHANSHYAMDAS

18

BOMBAY,  
September 16, 1944

GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
BIRLA HOUSE  
BENARES

MY DEFINITE WISH YOU SHOULD GO MUSSOORIE. YOU WILL SHORTLY  
STAY THERE IF I WANT YOU.

BAPU

BIRLA HOUSE,  
MOUNT PLEASANT ROAD,  
BOMBAY,  
September 16, 1944

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I had your wire. Bapu says that the most relevant facts in the episode—facts that matter -cannot be published at this stage as the case is technically speaking sub-judice.

I use the word “technically” advisedly as according to the D.S.P. who saw me at Wardha the idea seems to be to keep the picketers in detention till Bapu’s return to Sevagram, so that there may be no further nuisance to be tackled on his return.

The talks are running their even course. From twice a day they had to be reduced to once a day only, and that too at evening, as the mornings had to be set apart for Dr. Dinshaw who is attending on the Quaid-i-Azam.

I had both your wires. I have already explained the matter to Rameshwarji who will speak to you on the phone.

Nothing more for the present. Hoping you are well.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

SHRI G. D. BIRLA  
8 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLACE  
CALCUTTA

*PS.* Since the above was written Bapu has seen both your wires. His reply is being telegraphed to you. It is as follows :

MY DEFINITE WISH YOU SHOULD GO MUSSOORIE. YOU WILL SHORTEN STAY THERE IF I WANT YOU.

20

October 1, 1944

MAHATMA GANDHI  
SEVAGRAM  
WARDHA

MY MOST RESPECTFUL GREETINGS MAY GOD KEEP YOU FULL OF LIFE  
TILL YOUR HUNDREDDTH BIRTHDAY ALWAYS SELKING YOUR  
BISSINGS.

GHANSHYAMDAS

21

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
October 8, 1944

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

I have had talks with Sohanlalji, as also with Devdas. In my view it is not difficult to raise 1 lac of rupees for Mahadev Memorial. For this purpose it does not appear to me to be a good idea to sell Sohanlalji's publication at more than its market price. The book must be sold at market price and should find its acceptance by the reading public solely on its own merits. The question of perpetuating Mahadev's memory should be kept separate. When you are here we shall talk about this matter.

Sohanlalji has grasped the significance of my viewpoint. Devdas and Shrimannarayan have acknowledged the validity of my argument. Devdas has given me to understand that you have made some kind of moral commitment about publishing Sohanlalji's book in order to swell the fund for Mahadev Memorial. Even if that be so, it only means that the money secured from the sale of the book should go to make up the amount of Rs. 1 lac for the Memorial. That the process of the

book alone should be sufficient to make up the funds' amount is not a happy idea.

It is necessary to have your letter authorizing the appointment of Parnerkar. At present you are the sole authority. A committee was formed, it is true, and we shall have a talk about reviving it when we meet. But at present Lakhmanrao is functioning as secretary and he stands in need of authorization for such appointments. Parnerkar will get work only then, not before.

You must have seen reports of my heroics in the Press. More when we meet.

I hope your stay at Mussoorie has done you good substantially.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

22

SIVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
October 16, 1944

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

I am enclosing an appeal about Higginbottom Prof. Joshi was here; he wanted me to append my signature to it. I told him I would not do that but would write to some friends instead. I suppose you have seen his farm. If you think this is a deserving case, liberal help will have to be rendered. I was thinking of writing to Singhania as well, but then contented myself by writing to you alone.

You might have received my letter of yesterday's date.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

23

October 20, 1944

MY DEAR PYARELAL,

We are contributing Rs. 5,000 to Dr Higginbottom's Memorial at Allahabad. This is just for Bapu's information.

I hope to be in Wardha perhaps a day or two earlier at the time of meeting.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI PYARELAL  
SEVAGRAM

24

SEVAGRAM,  
October 22, 1944

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

The cutting from the *New Republic* of Brestford's article has arrived. It has already been read by Bapu.

Bapu is planning to dive deep. He had given a faint inkling of it to Rameshwardasji and had also hinted at it in his communication to you when you were at Mussoorie. Bapu's resolve to undertake a fast is now finding expression quite openly and has also been the subject of much discussion. He has not taken a final decision yet, but, if past experience is at all a pointer, this is something that cannot be averted. The object will be threefold—self-purification, self-restraint, and protest—protest against the climate of barbarity, vanity, falsehood and the arrogance of power now prevailing in India and the whole world. On the one hand there is a formidable conspiracy to keep India down and to keep the machinery of the exploitation of its famishing millions intact. On the other hand we find the spectacle of domination of brute force and constitutional anarchy after the conclusion of the conflict staring us in the

face. How to awaken the best conscience of the world is the problem confronting Bapu at the present moment. It is my feeling, too, that he is also worried about how to fulfil his responsibility as the author of the Resolution of August 8 towards the country as also towards the gentlemen of the Working Committee still clapped in Jail as the direct result of that Resolution. He says that if somebody could suggest an alternative course, or some unexpected happening brings about a radical change in the present situation thus obviating the necessity of a fast, the issue would lose its urgency. But my fears refuse to be allayed by this much assurance.

Just now only this much.

I hope you are keeping well.

*Humbly yours,*  
Pyarelal

25

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA,  
October 24, 1944

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Bapu has seen your letter of the 20th inst.

So you will be here on the 1st or 2nd prox.

I had sent you a letter through Mrs. Ramibehn Kamdar. I hope it has reached you.

Before this gets to you, you will have seen in the Press Bapu's statement giving an inkling of what is filling his mind.

With regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

SHRI G.D. BIRLA  
BIRLA HOUSE  
BOMBAY

DELHI,  
November 14, 1944

DEAR GANDHIJI,

On behalf of the workers of the Birla Cotton, Spinning and Weaving Mills, Delhi I am writing to bring the state of affairs in the mill to your notice.

The conditions for workers in this mill have been very bad particularly during the last year. The wage rates are lower than in the Delhi Cloth and General Mills even and the bonus amount is also small. On the whole the earnings of a worker in the Birla mills are much lower than in the Delhi Cloth & General Mills Ltd., which is the only other big textile mill in Delhi. Besides there is no proper arrangement for the housing of a large majority of workers in the Birla Mills Ltd. The result of all this has been that the workers have been gradually leaving the mill and the number of looms worked by the C shift had to be gradually reduced and now the management has decided to completely close down the C shift. This means that in addition to the workers who have already left the mill on account of deteriorating conditions, nearly 120 more workers will be compelled to leave the mill on account of this decision. Instead of 3 shifts now only two shifts will work.

The arrangement of shift timings was so far as follows :

First A Shift worked for  $4\frac{1}{3}$  hours,  
then B Shift worked for  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours,  
then A Shift again worked for  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours,  
then B Shift again worked for  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours and finally  
then C Shift worked for the remaining 6 hours of the 24 hours.

This arrangement was good. It was convenient to workers as A and B shift workers had to work for 9 hours,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours at a time. This gave them enough time between the two halves of their working hours for cooking meals, bath, eating and some rest. Their efficiency was more and production greater because each time they came to work fresh.

The latest decision to close the C shift has been taken by



the management due to the fact that whereas the C shift workers worked only 6 hours a day they had to be given the same dearness allowance as other workers. Now the management has not merely abolished the C shift, it has also changed the timings of A and B shifts. Now these shifts will work as follows :

A shift will work 9 hours with  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours interval and then B shift will work 9 hours with  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours interval.

This means that the workers will have no longer than  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours' interval between their working hours as they did before. Hence no cooking, rest or bath possible in 11 hours. This will impair their efficiency and therefore production of cloth will fall. The workers also fear—and their fear is based on past experience—that now they will have to work overtime (10 or 11 hours a day instead of 9 hours). For this overtime they will get additional dearness allowance which is calculated not on the basis of hours of work but on the basis of attendance days in the month. Thus the decision of the management is a step which means greater hardship for the workers although it would mean some saving of money for the owners by avoiding payment of dearness allowance to C shift workers and for overtime work of the A and B shift workers.

The management is thus responsible (1) for creating conditions which were very unfavourable for workers and led to a shortage of labour in the mill, (2) for abolishing the C shift (whatever had remained) in order to effect a saving in the dearness allowance paid thus throwing nearly 120 workers out of employment and curtailing production of cloth at a time when our country is faced with an acute cloth shortage, and (3) for changing the timings of A and B shifts, causing greater hardship to the workers and preparing the way for making them overtime without adequately compensating them for overtime work. Under the old timings overtime was not possible because A shift worked 9 hours, B shift 9 hours and C shift for the remaining 6 hours.

The workers now want that (1) old timings should remain. A and B shifts should work as before getting  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours' interval. This adds to their efficiency and is good for their health and well being.

(2) The C shift should not be abolished. It should continue working with as many workers as are there. Serious efforts should be made to recruit more workers to make the C shift complete so that all the looms may be used.

(3) In order to attract these additional workers and make conditions better for the existing ones the management should meet the just and reasonable demands of the workers which have been put before the management from time to time.

The workers look towards you to intervene in the matter and persuade the management to do the needful.

With respect,

*I remain,*  
*Yours sincerely,*  
A.C. Nanda,  
Joint Secretary,  
Textile Mazoor Sabha, Delhi

27

SEVAGRAM,  
November 27, 1944

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I am sending herewith a letter which Bapu has received. It seems to be a well-meant letter. At first Bapu thought that it might be sent to the Manager of the Delhi Textile Mills, but on second thoughts he decided in favour of its being sent to you for your information and action if necessary.

Munshi was here the other day and had an important talk with Bapu. He will probably have a discussion with you as soon as circumstances permit. Rajaji passed through Wardha last Friday. I saw him at the Railway Station. He will be coming to Sevagram on Tuesday and stay here for a few days. Munshi wanted to meet Rajaji also at the earliest.

Bapu had a slight break-down the other day. He had taken castor oil. He had already been feeling very tired. In the bath-room he fainted and sank down. It was an exact repetition of

the experience that he once had in the Agha Khan Palace and before that at Benares on the occasion of the convocation of the Hindu University. Luckily he was not hurt and recovered after some time, finished his bath and walked back to his hut as usual. Owing to dysentric condition of the bowels he has been cutting down his diet for some time. The weakness was probably due to this slow starvation.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

SHRI G.D. BIRLA  
DELHI

28

November 30, 1944

MY DEAR PYARELAL,

The letter from the Delhi Textile Mazdoor Sabha is, I fear, not based on truth. I have been receiving letters very often from this Sabha. In the beginning I tried to take notice of them. But when I found that they were not prepared to discuss anything on any reasonable basis and never stuck to truth, I gave up the attempts. Nowadays I do not reply to their letter. Bapu knows these people. If you like, I can ask the manager to give you a detailed reply to all the points.

The main grievance of the Sabha is the arrangement of the shifts. When we were running C shift, they wanted this to stop and rightly too. We were then helpless because we had not sufficient looms. Now when we have abolished it and adopted the working timing prevalent all over India including Ahmedabad, they complain against it. The discomfort suggested is there. But that is everywhere so. If we adopted the timing suggested by them, a number of looms will have to be stopped for want of yarn. I will write to you more if you want to learn everything in detail.

I am perturbed to hear about slight breakdown which<sup>1</sup> Bapu

had. This is not a good sign. But who can persuade Bapu to make drastic change in his routine ? When I was at Sevagram, I had a lot to say. But partly because he was very busy and partly because I felt that to argue with him would be hardly of use, I dropped the idea. He is now reaching the stage where he must curtail a good portion of his work and responsibilities and confine only to advising on most important points. Our ancients prescribed sanyas because of physical necessities also. As far as worldly affairs are concerned he is a sanyasi. But I don't think physically he can undertake so many responsibilities and so many worries. The truth must be realised. The Ashram must be entrusted to others. He should also change the place. If Rishis went to the Himalaya it was not for nothing. But I am writing all this unnecessarily.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI PYARELAL  
SEVAGRAM

## 29

December 3, 1944

MY DEAR PYARELAL,

I had only written to you day before yesterday and then came the news that Bapu has taken complete rest for four weeks. So he is not as obstinate as I had depicted him in my last letters. A thousand apologies though I am unrepentant of what I wrote. This resolution to rest is only an exception and not a rule. But what of my second suggestion about a change of the air? Sevagram may be quite good up to February, but after that some other place would be more congenial. If the command of the nature is to be obeyed, then why not all the commands ?

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI PYARELAL  
SEVAGRAM

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
December 6, 1944

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have both your letters.

With regard to the first I leave it to you entirely. You may refer the matter to your manager if you feel it will really serve any purpose.

So Bapu has bowed before the peremptory warnings of nature. The decision has not come a day too soon. For the present he is really relaxing, but sometimes trifling domestics get the better of his resolve and threaten to make his rest more strenuous than work. But one has to be thankful even for small mercies. He does spinning for one hour and Tunai for another half hour. For the rest he turns over the pages of any book for which he has a fancy. Now it may be Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, at another time some Urdu book or a volume of Lonigs Kudric.

He proposes one of these days to walk to Maganwadi, and then pay a visit to Karanjia, a village near Wardha where the late Chhotelalji had started work. He also proposes to pass two or three days with Shriman Narayanji and Madalsa at the latter's pressing invitation and then make a pilgrimage of Gopuri. He expects to be able to resume normal work at the end of the month. Let us hope so. But I am of opinion that there should be a radical change in the scope and nature of his activity hereafter. His work should no more be that of an engine driver but of a pointsman only. He should give forth ideas and radiate moral and spiritual influence. It is my firm faith that his guidance will be needed on some future occasion more than we can imagine today. The best is yet to be. He owes it to himself and the world to conserve himself in the best way possible.

Rajaji is leaving today. I wish there was someone like him to take his place by Bapu's side. In spite of all the detachment that Bapu has cultivated he is very human and the presence near him of someone from among his Old Guard cannot be over-estimated.

There is something frightening in his utter spiritual isolation

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In a measure it is inseparable from greatness. But surely something could be done to mitigate it.

With regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

SHRI G. D. BIRLA  
BIRLA HOUSE  
NI W DELHI

31

WARDHAGANJ,  
December 9, 1944

GHANSHYAMDASJI  
BIRLA HOUSE  
NEW DELHI

NO ARRANGEMENT NECESSARY. NO ANXIETY.

PYARELAL

32

P. O. JIJAJIRAO MILLS,  
GWALIOR,  
December 30, 1944

MY DEAR PYARFLALBHAI,

I have been directed by Shri Ghanshyamdasji to give your facts in reply to Delhi Textile Majdoor's letter dated the 14th November to Bapu. The said letter makes out three points:

1. That the wages in our mills at Delhi are lower than that of the Delhi Cloth Mills.
2. That the housing accommodation provided in the mills is not adequate.
3. That C shift should not have been closed.

I reply to these points seriatim:

1. This contention of the Majdoor Sabha is incorrect. Delhi Cloth Mills may be paying higher wages to certain categories of workers but our wages per<sup>a</sup> unit of production or per thousand spindles or per hundred looms are nowhere lower than those paid by the Delhi Cloth Mills. They may be on a slightly higher side.

In the matter of dearness allowance and bonus, we have linked ourselves with Bombay and whatever dearness allowance is paid by the Bombay mills is also paid by us to our workers. You are perhaps aware that this system was adopted by the Bombay Millowners' Association after a joint conference amongst the Millowners' representatives, the representatives of the Government of Bombay and the Labour interests. The Bombay system is supposed to be the most equitable system of dearness allowance and bonus in the country and as such though Delhi is a comparatively cheaper place we linked ourselves to Bombay just to adopt a good system.

2. Previous to the War, we had near about 450 quarters for our workmen. During the War, we have added another 125 bringing the total to 575. We employ about 3500 workmen and taking into consideration the scarcity of land in Delhi, the great shortage of building materials and various allied difficulties due to the prevalence of numerous controls, I may say that the housing accommodation provided by us to our workers is much better than provided by the majority of mills in India. Our ambition certainly is to house one day all our labour in our own buildings but this is an objective which may take time to achieve. I may also state that the rent charged by us is very low compared to the rent prevalent in the vicinity.

3. The C shift was started some time in 1937. The spinning production then was in excess of the weaving production and to consume the entire spinning output this extra shift was commenced. There was great opposition to this from the Delhi

Textile Labour Union. Our workers too objected to it. The C shift timings were from 12.30 a.m. to 6.30 a.m. and the workers complained that the time was very odd and it was a troublesome job for the C shift workers to wake up at 12.30 a.m. and go on duty. The workers were assured and C shift stopped. The workers approved of the idea. In order to accommodate this C shift with the other two shifts—A & B—the timings of the A & B shifts were also adjusted in the sense that instead of having two straight shifts of 9 hours each (with recess) two overlapping shifts of 4 hours and 5 hours each were started enabling us to work all the 24 hours in consonance with the provisions of the Factory Act. The new timings for the A & B shifts were also opposed by the workers at the instance of the Delhi Textile Labour Union the argument put forth being that the workers would be put to great inconvenience if they had to work for 5 hours in the first half and then come again for 4 hours after a lapse of 4/5 hours. As there was no other alternative to this arrangement the workers with mutual satisfactory discussion with the Management agreed to work accordingly. But the workers grievance was always in our mind and we were ever anxious to give them the desired relief.

During the last few months we have been able to put more looms into commission and have been gradually stopping the C shift and working the additional looms in A & B shifts. At this stage I would like to point out that the labour position in Delhi has been far from satisfactory during this year. It will be interesting to note that there were not sufficient weavers even to run the then existing looms, what to say of throwing workers out of employment as alleged by the Majdoor Sabha. In the usual course it is an admitted fact that in a mill of 800/1000 looms if 25 men return in all the three shifts, it is quite reasonable. It is not peculiar to our mills but such is the case with all the mills. I give below a statement showing number of workers returned on an average per day from January 1944 to November 1944 monthwise :

January	1944	...	41
February	„	...	13
March	„	...	22
April	„	...	6



May	1944	...	6
June	"	...	43
July	"	...	19
August	"	...	1
September	"	...	—
October	"	...	3
November	"	...	9

The above statement clearly shows that except in the two months of January and June there was no surplus labour. In winter months the labour position always remains steady and that is why in the month of January there were 41 returns. Just now also the labour is not surplus and sometimes we have to stop looms in the C shift which is still partly running. From this, I believe, you will agree with me that no labour has been thrown out of employment on account of stopping the C. shift, first because a part of the C shift labour has been absorbed in A & B shifts and secondly because some of the workers have either gone home or taken up some other job in the city after absencing themselves from the mills.

About the changing of the timings, I have to say that if we were to work the two overlapping shifts as before that would have meant out stocking of the spinning production for straight six hours as the Spinning department is working 24 hours while the loomshed would have worked for 18 hours. That means accumulation of stock for six consecutive hours which is not only impracticable but a source of great inconvenience and confusion both for the management and the workers. In no mills in India one would find two shifts working as overlapping shifts *and working for 18 hours*. Mills always generally work two straight shifts when running 18 hours. The aim of the Majdoor Sabha has always been to oppose whatever is being done by us for the smooth working of the mills. It is an admitted fact that if we were to change the timing of A & B shifts after a lapse of one or two years, the Majdoor Sabha would again grumble for the change of timings. Only the other day the Manager of the mills had a talk with some of the workers who were only too pleased with the stoppage of the C shift and the resumption of straight shifts—A & B. It is not the workers of the mills who grumble about this change but the so-called

Majdoor Sabha who must oppose every move of the mills to keep the Sabha going. I have been given to understand that the application that has been sent to Mahatmaji was got signed under compulsion.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Manager

SHRI PYARELALJI

PRIVATE SECRETARY TO MAHATMA GANDHI

WARDHÁ

PS. In addition to what I have said above, the transfer of C shift workers to shifts A & B have increased their basic wages by 50 per cent. In as much as they now get the opportunity to work 9 hours instead 6. In addition to this advantage to C shift workers, the wages of A and B shift workers are also slightly increased as straight shifts always give better efficiency than overlapping shifts.

I may also take this opportunity to explain to you what this Majdoor Sabha is. For a number of years Chando Bibi posed herself as the Champion of labour in Delhi and formed a body called the Delhi Textile Workers Union. Ajeetdas Gupta were ousted, their Union disbanded, and the present body known as the Majdoor Sabha came in existence led by the Communist workers under the influence of M. N. Roy and party. Baba Ramchandra Tyagi and one or two more workers, though in the pay of the Communist Party, pose themselves as Congressmen to attract workers to their fold. It may not be out of place here to mention that there is a legally constituted union known as "The Birla Mill Labour Union" of which every worker working in the mills is an ipsofacto member. The Executive Committee of this Union is elected every year and the elections are keenly contested. Almost all the permanent workers take part in the election. The Executive meets every week and the Mill Management tries to respect as many decisions of this Union as they can. I am sending you under separate registered post a copy of the constitution of this Union,

## Letter without Date

33

PYARILAI  
SEVAGRAM  
WARDHA

UNDERSTAND VAIDYARAJ SHIV SHARMA ASKED TO COME WARDHA  
FOR TREATING BAPU IF NECESSARY WITH PARPAH HI WANTS HELP  
FROM A VAID EXPERIENCED IN PARPAH TREATMENT PLEASE WITH  
WHAT IS BAPU'S INTENTION ON HEARING WITH MAKE NECESSARY  
ARRANGEMENT

GHANSHYAMDAS



**1945**



SEVAGRAM,  
January 9, 1945

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

All your letters are whether read by me or somebody reads them out to me.

I have not involved myself in any unsanctioned manner in the Ayurvedic system of treatment. Ayurveda is our national asset. Therefore it should be taken to the villages. Pandit Shiv Sharma has earned my trust and I have placed myself under his treatment. It is not possible for me to ascertain his worth. When I convinced myself of his worth I thought it better to rectify my earlier assumption which were found faulty. Therefore there is little room for any mistake in my finding. I find myself benefiting from his treatment every day. In order to disarm yourself of your misgivings you must come here. I am really deriving much benefit from his treatment. About hook worms and eczema I told the doctors that I would try their treatment. I will pay greater attention to their complaints after I get a little more strength.

I do not find any occasion for a change of climate. When I feel any necessity for it I shall go either to Bombay or to Panchgani, or, may be Poona.

The idea of going to Delhi is also good but I am hesitating. But I will not insist.

When I take to touring in connection with the Kasturba Fund, I shall go to Delhi also. I shall go wherever you would take me.

A regular legal document should be drawn up in regard to the Dinshaw matter.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

January 12, 1945

MY DEAR SUSHILABEN,

I have received your letter and also Babu's. I will reply to Babu myself separately afterwards.

I am writing just to enquire about Pyarelal. Who was the doctor who had done this operation? If he had an operation in 1935 and again the piles have recurred, I think it is the fault of the doctor. I have no doubt about it. Where good doctors have done these operations, the complaint has never recurred although nobody can guarantee. I hope he is quite all right now.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

DR. MISS SUSHILA NAYAR  
SEVAGRAM

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
January 16, 1945

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

This is a reply to your letter to Sushila dt. 12th Inst.

I was operated by Dr. T.O. Shah. The recurrence of piles, so far as I am aware, does not depend so much on the surgeon as on the nature of the operation and the patient himself. There are about eight or nine veins in the rectum. When their ends get dilated piles occur. My six piles were removed in 1935. Two have been removed this time. These had not formed on the veins that had been treated last time. If I had been more careful and had eliminated the causes that gave rise to piles the trouble would probably not have recurred. I am in favour of getting the piles removed and at the same time eliminating the root



cause. I am told that there is a radical operation known as "White Head Operation" which removes permanently the possibilities of a recurrence. But it is very painful and very few people dare to take.

Since my operation I remain constipated. Sushila who examined me yesterday said spasm of the inner sphincter inhibited evacuation. Stools are hard. Last time there was no such trouble. I do not know whether the difference is due to the spinal anaesthesia which I had this time as against sodium-evipan last time.

The inconvenience caused by the operation is not much. But one must be very careful about diet regulation after the operation for about four to five weeks. In my case for about 10 to 12 days after the operation I took care to avoid residue forming foods. That helped me. I also took liquid paraffin for a considerable time afterwards.

There is another matter about which I wanted to write to you. Some people have been writing to Bapu about a Birla mill that is proposed to be erected in Gwalior. There is dissatisfaction over the acquisition of the land. Pustakeji when he met me last time told me that something would have to be done about the scale of compensation and that would be done. I hope you will look into the matter and do the needful. The situation is being exploited by a group of local Communists.

Bhulabhai must have met you and given you an indication about the working of his mind.

Bapu is slowly regaining his lost strength. He observes silence in the day time. That proved a Godsend to him during the Talimi Sangh Conference. He has however very little reserve of strength, I therefore welcome his idea of prolonging all day silence indefinitely.

With regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

SHRI G.D. BIRLA  
NEW DELHI

January 18, 1945

MY DEAR PYARELAL,

I note what you have written to me about some Birla mills that is proposed to be erected in Gwalior State. The position is something like this. When a new mill is erected in the state the state acquire land from the cultivators under the land Acquisition Act whom they give certain compensation and lease out the land to the mills only on the condition that it will be utilised by the mills as long as the mills are constructed on it and after that it will be reverted to the state. It never becomes permanent property of the mills. The compensation that is paid to the cultivator is paid by the state itself. I did not know anything about it until I read of some agitation in the papers. On making enquiries I was told by the Manager what the position was. I have got no direct relation in this matter because the compensation is paid by the state and the land is only leased out to the mills on rental basis. Yet I think that the compensation that is being paid by the state is not adequate. I therefore, tried to persuade the state to pay better compensation. But meanwhile the Communists started such an agitation against the state and against myself that the state have got prejudiced and they are not prepared to pay better compensation. I was never approached by anyone. In fact in the beginning, before they started the agitation, had I been approached I might have been successful in persuading the state to pay more compensation. Even now I am trying. But by this agitation the situation has become a little complicated.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI PYARELAL  
SEVAGRAM

January 21, 1945

MY DEAR NARAHARIBHAI,

At the Nai Talim Conference Bapu repeated what he had said before that basic education could be self-supporting. I would hate to argue with Bapu especially when he is not well. But I think this is a statement which could not be proved by facts, and as such I wish Bapu should have been more cautious in making such a statement. I myself made a trial for nearly two years to make a basic school self-supporting, and I only failed.

Here in Harijan Ashram, Hariji is giving industrial education along with the three R's. Out of the total seven hours, four hours are devoted to industry and only three to the Three R's. The students are generally strong in craft but weak in the latter. They learn Hindi quite well but they get hardly any time to learn arithmetic, geography and such other subjects. After completing three years' course they become good craftsmen but they get very little education. While they are learning here, they produce material which is sold in the market at some profit. In spite of all this, the expenses are Rs. 20,000, out of which Rs. 8,000 is contributed through the profits of the work of the students. Thus there is a net loss of Rs. 12,000. And yet this is not basic education because except craft the education side is very poor. The teachers are low-paid, otherwise the expenditure would be much higher.

I strongly believe in education through craft, but it is impossible for me to believe and this is based on experience that this education or any other education could be self-supporting. Of course, if Government started buying the products of the students at an extremely high price, then it is granting subsidy. It could never be called a self-supporting institution. I do not think anybody just now conducting basic education in any institution believes in the self-supporting nature, if unless he wants to practice self-deception. I should like anybody to produce accounts of a school showing if one has succeeded in making any school a self-supporting one. I saw Ramachandran's article today. It is all generalisation. Nobody has given any detail of any school showing how he has succeeded in making the school self-supporting.

When Bapu says something about khadi, I can understand his theory. Khadi economically has failed if we measure it by the target that Bapu had set for it. But spiritually it has succeeded. But in talking of basic education being self-supporting, there is no question of spiritualism. I often interpret Bapu's speeches in an Adhyatmic way and satisfy myself. But I fear it is impossible for me to accept Bapu's contention that basic education or any other education can be self-supporting. Of course, I again repeat that I believe in education through craft which is a far superior method than the present method of education, but never in its being self-supporting.

If you have got anything to say on this matter please do so, not by generalising things but by producing concrete facts and figures.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI NARAHARIBHAI PAREKH  
SEVAGRAM

6

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C.P.),  
January 23, 1945

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have your letter of 18th inst.

I have shown it to Bapu. He was relieved to find that you were doing your best in the matter. The mere fact that some responsible people are exploiting the situation should not allow the just and legitimate interests of the poor to be jeopardised. If the Durbar does not pay heed to your advice it may be best to put your project in cold storage or drop it altogether if it cannot be executed without bringing unmerited hardship on the poor.

You must have received my letter of the 16th instant by now:

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

SHRI G.D. BIRLA  
NEW DELHI

7

January 23, 1945

MY DEAR PYARELAL,

I wonder whether Bapu would find time to read all these things. But he may find some recreation in both these pamphlets<sup>1</sup>.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI PYARELAL  
SEVAGRAM

<sup>1</sup>2nd Volume of *Plan and Indian Currency in Retrospect*

8

SEVAGRAM,  
January 24, 1945

CHH. GHANSHYAMDAS,

The cough disappeared long ago. What weakness remains is slowly vanishing. For the present I have confined my treatment to naturopathy. I have little enthusiasm for a change of climate. When there is a need for it I shall certainly go.

As for the fund, I certainly do not insist. I shall go wherever you take me.

As regards the proposed new system of education, I shall here your views when you are here. I have had some discussion

with some educationists. Training in the crafts should be thorough and must aim at making the pupils self-reliant.

Why wait for details about the Dinshaw scheme? From what you say in this regard I have gathered the impression that if Rs. ten thousand were found inadequate the amount would be added to by that much.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

9

SFVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
January 25, 1945

DFAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have your letter of the 23rd inst. and the two pamphlets.

A copy of the second part of the *Plan of Economic Development* had also been sent by someone else and is already in Bapu's hands. He will go through your pamphlet on Indian Currency also.

I am sending something to Devdas which I expect you will see.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

SHRI G. D. BIRLA  
NEW DELHI

10

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
January 25, 1945

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

After going through your letter I read it out to Jajuji, Asha Devi and Ramachandran. We shall gather together to discuss your plan. It is very difficult to make education self-supporting. In the circumstances obtaining now it is more or less impossible. Shri Jajuji is going to talk to Bapuji also about this matter. After we have had a detailed discussion, I shall write to you.

I hope you are keeping well.

Yours,  
Narahari

11

January 26, 1945

MY DEAR PYARFLAI,

With reference to your letter about the Nagda agriculturists, since Bapu is taking interest, I may send more details. The manager of my mills took up this matter with the Suba, Ujjain, and made the suggestion that the State should pay the following compensation to the agriculturists and that the extra payments to the agriculturists as compared with the fixed schedule of the state will be born by us:

1. To pay compensation at 40 to 50 times the annual rent for well (कुवा) irrigated lands to the permanent agriculturists (मौज्सी काश्तकार).
2. To pay at the rate of 25 times the annual rent for the cultivable land belonging to the permanent (मौज्सी) agriculturists.

3. To pay at the rate of 10 times the annual rent to the permanent (मौज्मी) owners of *parti* land.
4. To pay at only 1 to 2 times to the temporary agriculturists.

I understand that the Suba has sent these recommendations to the Revenue Minister. The Revenue Minister, however, is hesitating to adopt these suggestions—though he incurs no financial liability in its acceptance—because he does not want to create new precedence. He thinks these terms are not just but extravagant. The matter, however, I understand, will now come before the Executive Council and then it will be decided. I am trying my best to get the decision in favour of these agriculturists and I hope I will succeed.

You write that the just and legitimate interests of the poor should not be jeopardised. I agree. From the very beginning I have been taking sympathetic interest in their case. They don't know it. Their leaders, on the other hand, have been carrying malicious propaganda against me attributing dishonesty and questioning my motives. I hope I would succeed in getting the state accept my suggestion. But to them, the success will be of abuse and malice. Do much events release good or evil forces? This is a petty matter. But big matters are made of smaller ones.

I feel troubled at times about the mentality of our people. Because we have learnt to believe that to achieve something we must resort not to peaceful and persuasive methods and mutual discussion but to malice, abuse and falsehood. In day-to-day activities of our life I find destructive mindedness. Constructive mindedness is supposed to be something bad. And so we are also fighting amongst ourselves.

Muslims are abusing Hindus and Bapu the most. Hindu Sabha is abusing Congress and the League. The Congress sees nothing good in its opponents. In its own camp too there are wheels within the wheel. There are the Gandhites and the non-Gandhites, the Socialists and the Communists. Capitalists too have not escaped producing Socialists and Communists! And the hobby of each of the group and the sub-group is to abuse the other. Two leaders belonging to the same label to insinuate and backbite against each other. I wonder where all this will lead to.



The disease is growing fast I frankly see a gloomy future because of ourselves. May God help us. But are we helping ourselves? I have written all this because I feel oppressed at the situation.

You need not, however, trouble yourself about this small matter. In spite of all the abuse hurled at me I believe (this may be a false belief) that I have along been taking a right and just view. And I hope it will end satisfactorily. I hope I am not creating any impression that I too don't suffer from these diseases.

Yours sincerely,  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI PYARIAL  
SIVAGRAM

12

SIVAGRAM,  
11a WARDHA (C. P.),  
February 2 1945

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have your detailed letter of 26th January which I have shown to Bapu. He liked it and what you are doing.

What you say about the mentality of various groups is unhappily too true. We have to steer our course through tremendous difficulties. The only way to avoid the deluge is to make the best of the initiative which the owning class today possess and before it slips out of their hands. Failure to do so from whatsoever cause would be fatal. The dispossessed class is today full of rancour. There is no denying the fact that we have sinned against and as a class we have a lot to expiate for, not necessarily our sins, but of the system with which we are identified. The right approach therefore is to develop the same kind of forbearance and generosity towards the obstreperous as Bapu exemplifies in his dealings with the Harijans. And this has to be

not in a spirit of virtue but as simple discharge of a debt overdue. The one consoling feature of the present situation is that the opportunity it presents is as rare as the peril is great. ' "

So it seems we are likely to meet some time in March at Delhi. You must have seen the account of the happenings on the Independence Day at Sevagram and Bapu's comments there upon. That reflects his present temper. He is filled with the upsurge of creative, constructive work. I have a feeling that we are beginning to pull out of the morass. It is just a beginning but it is there. I am beginning to feel somewhat at ease with regard to Bapu.

The Bihar happenings are disquieting but our people certainly cannot be excused from unpardonable indiscretion. The root cause was again lack of firm faith in constructive work and its efficacy. Anugraha Babu was here. We had from him first-hand account of the proceedings of the Bihar Congress Workers' Assembly. He has gone back to Bihar and will meet the authorities there. There is some hope that he will be able to set things right. It all shows the need for extreme caution and wariness on our part.

Have you seen the Nawabzada's outburst against the Kasturba Fund? Suspicion with this type of people has become an obsession. How can one expect any understanding with that mental background? To my mind it seals the fate of Bhulabhai's *pourparlers*.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

SHRI G. D. BIRLA  
SEVAGRAM

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WASHA KH RI

WASHA KH RI

WASHA KH RI

WASHA KH RI 24 25

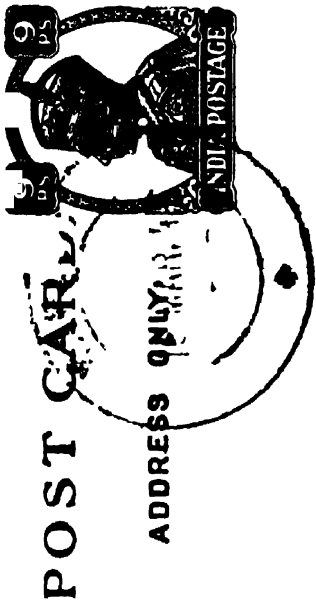
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New Delhi

Handwritten text in Hindi script, including phrases like 'महाराष्ट्र', 'मुंबई', and 'नया दिल्ली'.

13

SEVAGRAM,  
March 5, 1945

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

Dinshaw has sent Kheda De. He wants that Bhiwandiwala who had rendered him much help and who had great faith in Naturopathy, and F. Jung who was at one time Finance Minister in the Nizam's Government and who, too, is a believer in this mode of treatment, should both be included among the Trustees. I see no harm in this. I have written to Dinshaw. If you tell all this to Devdas I will do the rest through correspondence.

In case you take me to Delhi I suppose I shall have to go to Pilani, Mirai's place and Dharmadev's place as well.

Am I to stay at Harijan Niwas?

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

14

SEVAGRAM,  
via WARDHA (C. P.),  
March 15, 1945

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDAS,

Bapa told me today that you have developed a fever. This has caused me anxiety. Why should you have a temperature? In case you think it necessary to detain Rameshwardas, do so. I also shall put up at Birla House. I shall leave this place on the 30th. My programme after the meeting is uncertain. This, however, is not due to weakness.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

*PS. In case you decide to come, I shall manage as it is.*

SETH GIIANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
BIRLA HOUSE  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD  
NEW DELHI

15

NEW DELHI,  
March 18, 1945

MAHATMA GANDHI  
SEVAGRAM  
WARDHA

FEVER NORMAL SINCE YESTERDAY. COUGH PERSISTING ALSO WEAK-  
NESS BECOMING NORMAL GRADUALLY

GIIANSHYAMDAS

16

NEW DELHI,  
March 19, 1945

MAHATMA GANDHI  
SEVAGRAM  
(WARDHA)

FEVER HIT BUT COUGH STILL PERSISTING. AM TAKING TOAST  
VIGIANTLY AND MILK. NO BUTTER. WOULD YOU SUGGEST ANY  
CHANGE IN DIET.

GIIANSHYAMDAS

SHARDIPATANJ,  
March 20, 1945

GHANSHYAM DAS  
BILT II  
NEW DELHI

REPORT INCOMPLETE. IS YOUR TAPE MILK STATE VEGE-  
TABLES ANY CASE DO YOU TAKE BUTTER DIRECT FROM MILK  
WITH TOAST AND SODA WATER? DO YOU DRINK HOT WATER ONLY  
SODA PRACTICE SUGGESTED FOR TAKING ON EMPTY STOMACH.  
REPORT COMPLETE

BAPU

18

SEVAGRAM,  
March 20, 1945

MY DIAR GHANSHYAM DAS

I have sent you in Express a copy of which goes with this letter. What do you eat, how much, and when? What vegetables are you taking? Are you taking them raw or cooked? Is the water in which these vegetables are kept and boiled thrown away? Don't you think knatra will be a better substitute for toast? I hope the flour is not separated from the chaff. How much milk are you consuming? In case you have indigestion, reduce the volume of the other eatables, but not of butter. Inhale deeply. This is important. Close one nostril and inhale with the other. You can stretch the period of this exercise to half an hour. While inhaling, say Ram Nam. This breathing exercise should be taken on open air and you should be fanned with a feather-fan all the while. This exercise should be taken in the morning, but after the food is digested, the exercise should be repeated at least four times. The inhaling and exhal-

ing exercise should be done with ease. How are the bowels? Do you get good sleep? If you persevere in the exercise your cough will disappear soon enough.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

19

NEW DELHI,  
March 23, 1945

MAHATMA GANDHI  
SEVAGRAM  
WARDHA

IMPROVING SLOWLY GOING TOMORROW BOMBAY. WILL WAIT UNTIL YOUR ARRIVAL.

GHANSHYAMDAS

20

SEVAGRAM,  
Via WARDHA (C. P.),  
March 28, 1945

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

Your telegram has just arrived. This I do not like at 6 o'clock. If you wish to go to Mussoorie, then go. But you must stay there for some time. Give up the idea of going to Bombay. Let Rameshwardas also remain there. I shall manage.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

SETH GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
BIRLA HOUSE  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD  
NEW DELHI



April 9 1945

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

Can you read my handwriting? In case you find this difficult I shall get my letters written for you.

The days pass but I hardly get an opportunity to have a heart-to-heart talk with you, so I must write down what I have got to say. Then it will be quite possible for me to say all that I want to say and you can send your answer in a few words. This, of course, does not mean that I am trying to run away from my appointment. I shall not budge from this place before meeting you. But I do not like to postpone telling you until we meet.

1. Profullo Babu told me, "Krishna Kumar and Madhav Prasad have become so big that they do not care to call during my sickness. Formerly they used to come and make enquiries about my health." Is this true or just a fleeting impression? There is no question of bigness or smallness. I sought and obtained Profullo Babu's permission to tell you all this.

2. The volume of my work has increased considerably. Just now I am busy trying to make the institutions set up by me self-sufficient in order that no further monetary aid is sought from me. These institutions are the A.I. Spinners' Association, the Village Industries' Association, the Nai Talim, the campaign for the spread of Hindustani. And the three Ashrams. Expenditure on the hospital is a separate item and efforts are being made to ensure the flow of money from miscellaneous sources. I am writing from memory. The 2nd, 3rd and 4th institutions stand in need of funds. The Ashrams do not require money since Rameshwardas keeps them in funds. As for the institutions number 2, 3 and 4 of the above mentioned series, funds for these are needed. I believe Rameshwardas has sent some money. Money is also needed for the spread of Hindustani and for Nai Talimi Sangh. Could you take this burden on your shoulders? As sufferer's Fund Rameshwardas's letter makes a mention of it.

3. As for the question of relationship between the workers and my experiments, these experiments have been suspended for the sake of these co-workers. I fail to detect anything improper in this. I am the same celibate I was in 1906 when I

vowed to abstain from sexual intimacy. Originally the idea took possession of me in 1901 in a nebulous form. At present I am a better celibate than I was in 1901. My experiment has made me a confirmed *brahmchari*, the objective for which I have striven all these many years. I wished to attain to the ideal state, the perfection of the experiment and, Godwilling, I must one day reach that stage. You wanted to ask certain questions and exchange views on this subject. You can do both now. Do not hesitate. I do not like those whose money I use labouring under a false sense of modesty.

If you two brothers could manage to see me together that would be better still. This letter is meant not only for you two brothers but for the other members of your family as well.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

*PS.* This communication was intended to be brief but has become so lengthy. All the same, its main object is confined to just two things.

One other thing has escaped mention. You have donated Rs. 50,000 for the Ashram and now gifted to the *goshala*. The position is that the list sent by Chimanlal mentions an agricultural land which also contains a well. If that is so then we surrender the building as well. This cannot be. There must be some oversight. Now, the question is that if you assume that the entire land, including the well, was surrendered to the *goshala* then it will become necessary to deduct some amount from these Rs. 50,000. Please do what you deem necessary.

Bapu

## 22

MAHABALSHWAR,  
May 6, 1945

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

I hear that you have decided to come on the 12th.

Brother Dinshaw is here. He is ready to accept all the

conditions laid down by you, but wants you to concede just one point. The Trust for the Nature Cure clinic will remain operative for four years after the documents are signed, and in case efforts made after that period prove fruitless, the Trust's movable and landed property now earmarked for the Talimi Sangh will be made over to it for use.

I feel this point should be conceded.

I hope you are in good health.

Is the date of your arrival, the 12th of this month, correctly reported?

*Blessings from  
Bapu*

*PS. Reply by wire.*

## 23

*Express*

NEW DELHI,  
May 7, 1945

MAHATMA GANDHI  
MAHABALLSHWAR (SATARA)

HAVE JUST SEEN UNITED PRESS REPORT OF YOUR PRESS STATEMENT ABOUT INDUSTRIAL DELEGATION PROCEEDING TO ENGLAND. LANGUAGE APPEARS MUTILATED BUT YOU ARE REPORTED TO HAVE SUGGESTED THAT WE ARE LIKELY TO ENTER INTO "SHAMFUL" DEAL IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA. AM VERY MUCH PAINED AND REFUSE TO BELIEVE THAT YOU COULD HAVE GIVEN A PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF DISTRUST IN THE BONA FIDES OF MYSELF TATA AND KASTURBHAJI WHOM YOU HAVE SO WELL KNOWN AND THOUGHT THAT WE WERE GOING FOR ENTERING INTO ANY DEAL ON BEHALF OF INDIA SHAMFUL OR OTHERWISE WE ARE INTELLIGENT ENOUGH TO KNOW OUR LIMITATIONS AND WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE NO AUTHORITY TO ENTER EVEN INTO A GOOD DEAL TO SAY NOTHING OF

SHAMEFUL. INDUSTRIAL DELEGATION IS GOING PURELY AS A NON-OFFICIAL BODY AT ITS OWN EXPENSE WITH ITS OWN SECRETARIAT TO ENGLAND AND AMERICA WITH A VIEW TO MEETING PEOPLE AND STUDY LATEST METHODS OF PRODUCTION AND SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENT. MYSELF AM GOING AT PERSONAL INCONVENIENCE AND WOULD HAVE DROPPED IDEA ALTOGETHER BUT FOR THE FACT THAT A PROMISE ONCE MADE IF NOT WRONG IN PRINCIPLE MUST BE CARRIED OUT. YOUR STATEMENT SURE TO BE CONSTRUED AS STRONG DENUNCIATION OF OUR MOTIVES WHEREAS YOU USUALLY REFRAIN FROM EXPRESSING ANY OPINION WHEN YOU DO NOT KNOW FULL FACTS. AM LEAVING KARACHI FOURTEENTH AND COUNT ON YOUR BLESSING AND PRAYER. LEAVING TOMORROW FOR CALCUTTA.

GHANSHYAMDAS

24

MAHABALESHWAR,  
May 9, 1945

SETH GHANSHYAMDAS  
8 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLACE  
CALCUTTA

YOUR WIRE. MY STATEMENT WAS NECESSARY IT DEALS WITH HYPOTHETICAL CASE. NO HASTY OPINION. STATEMENT EXPRESSES VIEW WHICH I HAVE ALWAYS HELD. YOU HAVE NOTHING TO REGRET SINCE YOU TATA KASTURBHAI PROCEEDING WHOLLY UNOFFICIALLY. YOU HAVE MY BLESSINGS AND PRAYER IN TERMS OF FURNISHING AND NAKED INDIA. HANDING PRESS BOTH WIRLS.

BAPU

25

CALCUTTA,  
MAY 10, 1945

MAHATMA GANDHI  
MAHABALESHWAR (SATARA)

YOUR TELEGRAM HAS VERY MUCH EASED MY MIND GOING NOW  
WITH HAPPY HEART LOVE AND GREETINGS.

GHANSHYAMDAS

26

MAHABALESHWAR,  
May 10, 1945

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

I am in receipt of your letter which I read twice over.

I admire your enthusiasm, but as for its utility I have some misgivings. If you confine your projected visit to just an inspection without making any commitment, then there is no harm. You have sent me a telegram. Tata has written to me a letter. Both these stress the point that you are not going abroad in order to bind yourselves. This is just the spirit I want you to maintain while making a tour of inspection abroad.

It was absolutely necessary to give a hard-hitting retort to Noon's<sup>1</sup> sally.

I have released both your telegram and my reply to it to the Press. The sharpness of the answer provoked by my submission amply shows how dull-witted we people are. My submission is, in fact, in defence of those who are proceeding there. Since their object is not to serve the Government's purpose though the Government is quite anxious to promote such a visit and is providing all facilities to that end. We also know what object

<sup>1</sup> Sir Feoze Khan Noon

the Government has in view. And since we are aware of it, why play the Government's game by going at all? The Government has been plainly told that so long as the political prisoners continue to rot in jail, we should not be expected to place orders with British firms for capital goods. And now that this much has been made clear there is no harm in such a visit. If the visit nets some advantage it should be spurned. This should be our policy so long as the people are debarred from taking the reign of Government in their own hands and so long as they expressly do not deserve us to benefit from such advantages.

Please convince your colleagues of the inoffensive character of any submission, provided they are sincere in their protestations of injured innocence.

Take care of your health and try to improve it during your sojourn.

I had written a letter about Dinshaw. You must have received it by now. I had sent the letter to your New Delhi address. Herewith its copy. With Dinshaw it has become an obsession.

*Blessings from  
Bapu*

Encl. Copy of letter about Dinshaw.

*PS.* In case you find my statement free from any blemish, please try to pacify Tata and the others.

27

May 14, 1945

MAHATMA GANDHI  
MAHABALESHWAR (SATARA)

HAVE BEEN DETAINED BECAUSE PLANE DELAYED. LEAVING AS SOON AS PLANE AVAILABLE. MY PRANAMS TO RAJAJI.

**GHANSHYAMDAS**

KERACHI,  
May 18, 1945

PUJYA BAPU,

When I arrived here today I found your letter waiting for me. It was a happy augury for me that you released both my telegram and your answer to the Press. Your statement had made me restless. I could not have replied to it through the Press which was why I sent my wire to you. The publication of my wire and your response have served to remove a lot of misunderstanding. And yet if it has failed to discourage prejudiced criticism, I should worry.

There is no denying the fact that my impending sojourn abroad has caused much misapprehension which it is necessary for me to remove. When you were in jail a number of experts had been invited to visit India to explore the ways and means of increasing the nation's productive capacity. Along with them came the Roger Mission! I issued a public statement challenging the wisdom of resorting to such cheap tactics which, were quite costly in terms of the tax-payer's money. I said in effect that if an increase in our productive capacity was what was intended are we so bankrupt in our own capacity to devise ways to achieve that end? The Government was not extending co-operation to us, it was issuing no passports, it was not allowing us to have tickets; it was providing us with no dollars which would enable us to bring back to India our knowledge of what we would see and hear in regard to the newest technological advances and scientific know-how. I asked, why? On the one hand the Government was not permitting us to go abroad. On the other hand it was encumbering us with the exorbitant cost of foreign experts' visits which had then become a regular feature of official activity in this respect. This, I had said then, must be put a stop to.

Thereafter came the Viceroy's statement of the effect that the Government would certainly invite some distinguished people to go abroad. I was one of those thus invited and was asked if I would care to go. I said, "Yes certainly." There was some political motive, too, behind my decision to accept the invitation. But then came your release and I lost interest in any

such visit abroad. But as it was I who had originally raised the issue and since the Government had chosen to act on my suggestion it became my duty not to shirk my responsibility as I had already accepted the Government's invitation. In fact, I did try to wriggle out of my commitment but without the Viceroy's express sanction it would have appeared to be an unseemly conduct on my part to abstain from undertaking such a visit.

How did the idea of our placing any orders happen to enter your mind? I myself do not know. Would these Britishers relish the idea of our going to America as well for this purpose? Besides, it would be a superfluous effort on the part of any one of us to go all the way to England for the purpose of placing orders when the hostels here are packed to capacity with those who are here to book our orders. And those who do place orders do so even as it is. And if somebody wants to expand his productive capacity there is nothing wrong about his placing orders for capital goods inasmuch as it is in our own interest. In order to meet the challenge of the present shortages it is absolutely necessary for us to add to our existing capacity in order to produce more. But it is not at all necessary to go to foreign countries for this purpose, nor is any one of us going for this purpose alone. But if by orders you had meant orders for some public understanding(s), it should have been taken for granted that those of us who are going are not the sort of people to be taken in by anybody. It would be a matter of regret if after so much experience of these topranking businessmen you should ever entertain any such notion about us. You may not even suspect, but your statement had vitiated the atmosphere, though it also did some good. The good it has done lies in the fact that those of us who had hitherto been weak-kneed will now grow more cautious. It has also lent strength to men like me. This is a concrete gain. But the harm comes from the fact that in present-day India our internal dissensions and divisions have reached the danger-point. Of late this process of mutual dissensions has received a fresh impetus. We suspect each other's motives; we level charges against each other. This is injurious to our vital interests. First, there are divisions enough to begin with; then there are sub-divisions among classes. These divisions do not spring any sort of ideological conviction



but gather a momentum from their mutual jealousies and prejudices, from our tendency to suspect motives. This does not augur well for our national wellbeing. Even if we manage to secure Home Rule our mutual dissensions will make it impossible for us to concentrate on any constructive programme. The only liberal commentary it is possible for me to make of your non-violence is that ultimately out of these antitheses will emerge an all sweeping synthesis.

Rest assured I am going to give Tata a good dressing down since some of his utterances have earned my disapprobation and now that I am armed with your clarification. I feel still more self-confident of my ability to do so. But please believe me when I say that he is a genuine article and you cannot afford to do without him. I am sure that in discarding him it is you who will be the loser. That is why I have insisted on his coming along with me.

When we return, all of us will jointly pay our respects to you.

I have already sent you a wire about the Dinshaw matter.

May I ever enjoy your blessings that I should never be a source of mental disquiet to you.

*Humbly yours,*  
Ghanshyamdas

29

POONA,  
September 10, 1945

GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
CARE LUCKY  
CALCUTTA

WILL KNOW WHEN GHOSH COMES HERE HOPE YOU WELL.

BAPU

30

BENARES,  
October 2, 1945

MAHATMA GANDHI  
HEALTH CLINIC  
POONA

MY RESPECTFUL GREETINGS ON YOUR BIRTHDAY. MAY GOD GIVE  
YOU MANY MORE YEARS OF EXCELLENT HEALTH.

GHANSHYAMDAS

31

POONA,  
October 3, 1945

CHI GHANSHYAMDAS,

I am in receipt of your letter.

I shall be expecting you on the 11th.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

SHRI GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
BIRLA PARK  
BENARIS

32

POONA,  
October 24, 1945

SHRI GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Bapu is in receipt of your letter.

There is nothing in the rumour regarding the nature of

Bapu's stay at Poona. If a Nature Cure centre is set up there after all, what it would mean would be that Bapu's time would be equally divided between the new centre and Sevagram. There is no question of building a new house. Dr. Dinshaw has returned from Nasik. He likes the site of the school. He would like some changes made. Bapu is having talks with him. He will like to have some talks with you as well.

My brother is a little better His fever has come down after 2 weeks. He is quite weak.

I hope you are quite well.

*Pranams from*  
Sushila

SHRI GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
IMPERIAL BANK BUILDING  
BANK STREET, FORT  
BOMBAY

33

POONA,  
October 26, 1945

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

I have received Jahangir Patel's letter. He also is of the view that only the school building will prove to be of any use. Some other conveniences should also be provided there Arrangements for electricity and water should also be made. Dinshaw says the school building should be made use of only after it is equipped with these facilities. According to his calculation it should take 9 months to complete such arrangements. My suggestion is that there should be no delay in moving into the Sanatorium building and making a beginning of the work there. After the school building is equipped with the conveniences mentioned above, they can shift to it. You brothers alone will decide about this. The Sanatorium building also will need some

more pipe-fittings. Just because assurances have been given to me about Nasik, it does mean that no other suggestion is possible. Nature cure is a very important place of public service. If the work there shows satisfactory progress its scope can be enlarged to an extent not easy to visualise at the present moment. The factor of Dinshaw's place in this farmework will also have to be worked out. If before taking a final decision you deem it necessary to consult me, then you can come here for this purpose provided you have the time for it. If you think correspondence will serve the purpose adequately, then you need not bother about coming here. Granted I am deeply interested in this kind of activity, you should not be oblivious of the fact that I am supervising its final shape in a spirit of complete detachment. If I am to live for 125 years, it is absolutely necessary that I should cultivate an attitude of non-attachment, carrying it to the point when man may be considered qualified enough to reach the ideal state of mind. How far this is possible, or if it is possible at all, I cannot say because I do not know. And why should I strive to delve into God's secret? For me it is sufficient to feel content that I am doing my duty while at the same time keeping my eyes fixed on the ideal state, the ultimate in realm of perfection. But I do know that it is not easy to attain to that ideal state. But I have spent a lifetime doing the impossible.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

### 34

POONA,  
November 4, 1945

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

As the result of his talks with your brother Dinshaw has lost all enthusiasm for Nasik. Since the idea about Nasik has thus been given up the idea of the Nasik project also stands cancelled. Let the building function as at present. If his interest

in Nasik is revived I shall have renewed talks with him. If at that time the building or the land are still available, then we shall make use of him.

All of us are reaching Bombay on the 19th. I shall leave Bombay for Wardha on the following day.

*Blessings from  
Bapu*

35

BIRI A HOUSI,  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD,  
NEW DELHI,  
November 12, 1945

PUJYA BAPU,

My respectful Plinams.

After I pay a flying visit to Pilani I shall leave for Calcutta. I may meet you there

Dinshaw has had prolonged talks with me and with Rameshwardasji. He had several alternatives to offer. From these arose a number of questions. What sort of arrangements could be made for electricity and the supply of water? What kind of relationship would subsist between the Trust and the new one? I told him briefly that he would get proper answers to all his queries from you, meaning thereby that necessary changes would be made in keeping with your wishes, and as for the relationship between the two Trusts you would define its exact nature. But that failed to satisfy him and I gathered the impression that he was not keen on going to Nasik.

Herewith a letter which might interest you. Presumably you are aware that Mahavir Prasadji has been conducting a nature cure clinic of his own. What I am finding is that people have come to repose exaggerated faith in the efficacy of naturopathy. According to this gentleman whose letter goes with this, "naturopathy has humbled the pride of tuberculosis, rheumatism, leprosy and other obstinate diseases." This is interesting

talk, but tall talk all the same, not calculated to benefit anybody.

There is, however, one redeeming feature. This gentleman's expectations are quite modest. I am going to send him something. In case this letter evokes your interest in its writer you can call him and have a talk with him. To me this gentleman appears devoted to his science.

*Humbly yours,*  
Ghanshyamdas

## 36

POONA,  
November 18, 1945

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

You did all you could about the Nasik land. I have not the least doubt about that. Dinshaw is blessed with a queer nature, but as a man he is transparently good, He is catholic in his views, in his own simple-minded way. He is the only man in the whole crowd of naturopaths on whom my eyes are fixed. Whatever good qualities he possesses I shall make ample use of in order to place this mode of treatment within the reach of the poor. That is why when I found him lukewarm in his enthusiasm for Nasik I dropped the idea. I also decided to make a beginning right here in order to conduct the Centre for the benefit of the poor. Till now those who have come for this mode of treatment have been the rich, the poor trudging after them hesitatingly. From now on the process will be reversed : first the poor, then the rich will find accommodation here. The rich will enjoy exactly the same facilities as the poor. But special emphasis will be placed on keeping the place clean through strict observance of the rules and regulation. This is a rather onerous task and at the fag-end of one's life one should not develop so much attachment for things mundane. But for so long Wardha has been in a state of lethargy. Now this has given place to a new

awakening with effortless ease. How can I help it? God wishes it this way. The Centre of which you are the Trustee stands suspended for the present. If Nasik feels an urge for it it will come to life. Whatever is done should be done in a befitting manner. In case I have to go to Nasik or I need money in order to conduct the Centre here, I shall write to you as a matter of course. For the present I shall try to make do with the small counts laying scattered in various accounts because the condition of the present Trust is that its conducting will no longer be in Dinshaw's hands but will be under my charge with myself alone being responsible for its proper functioning.

I have gone through Shiv Nath Singhji's letter. I was not much impressed. He has poured out so much in such a lengthy communication. All the same I am writing to him.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

37

CALCUTTA,  
December 10, 1945

MY DEAR PYARFLAL,

I understand from Shyamlal's letter to Bapu that besides reducing his pay by Rs. 100 he proposes to reduce now another Rs. 50. I don't think we should encourage people reducing their pay in this fashion. This must lead to lower standard of living and unnecessary hardship. He is actuated by the best of motives, but I don't think he is being practical in taking such a step. In fact, this might lead to reaction on his mind after a period when he may regret what he has done. This may lead to unnecessary discontent. I, therefore, have written this to convey my views to Bapu.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas





**1946**



# 1

March 23, 1946

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

I keenly feel the urge to put up in areas inhabiting by scavengers wherever I decide to go. I shall be able to leave for Delhi only on the 3rd as दूजन is now available. Even if I am to face some inconvenience I will prefer to live in Bhangi Basti. Therefore necessary arrangements may be made in this regard. I am not writing to Hariji separately. Please have a talk with him and with Brij Kishen yourself.

I am well.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

# 2

URUJI (G.I.P.),  
March 27, 1946

DFAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

You will excuse my dictating this in English. You will understand the reason why.

Bapu sent a wire yesterday to Brij Kishen approving of the arrangements for his stay in Valmiki Mandir. I have sent you another wire today as follows :

BAPU WIRED APPROVAL AND ALSO SENT DETAILED LETTER YESTERDAY TO BRIJKISHEN.

As regards telephone and electricity Bapu says that he does not mind if they can be installed without much difficulty; but their absence won't make any difference in regard to his plans. In case electricity is installed for lighting he expects that the arrangement will be permanent. If the wires are removed the moment he goes out of the Bhangi Nivas, the whole thing will become a farce. There should be some permanent improvement

in the Bhangi Nivas as a result of his stay there. In contrast with this Bapu is very particular about plentiful supply of clean water for bath and drinking. You are to make arrangements for a bath tub for him too. So much for the present. More when we meet.

With regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

3

15 HANUMAN ROAD,  
NEW DELHI,  
May 14, 1946

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I am sorry to have to say that the arrangement which you had made for a car being at my disposal became irregular and was finally discontinued in anticipation of Bapu's arrival. I had a talk with Poddarji over the phone and sent him a couple of notes too to explain my difficulty. But the car did not turn up last evening nor today. The result was that my arrangement with Bapu for the despatch of *Harijan* matter which rested on the assumption of a car being available utterly broken down and the packet of *Harijan* matter which arrived this morning is lying on my hands.

I hate to have to bring these facts to your notice. But the cavalier way in which instructions are treated by agents the moment Bapu's or your back is turned very often leaves a bad taste in the mouth and provides excuse for a lot of obnoxious propaganda that is being made.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

SHETH G.D. BIRJA

4

May 15, 1946

MY DEAR PYARLLAL,

I was awfully sorry to read the contents of your letter dated 14th. My agents or employees do not behave generally in the manner you have experienced. Evidently this has been an exception and I am shocked. Please rest assured that unless there is some satisfactory explanation, I am going to be very hard with my men. I do not tolerate any inefficiency in my firm and I am going to say something nasty to the officer responsible. At the same time I must offer you my apology for the inconvenience. The Manager in Delhi mills is not one of the old lots and perhaps he is not as considerate as one ought to be regarding the convenience of other people. This is the first time in my life that I have received a complaint from a guest against my management. And this will help preventing any such thing for future.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI PYARLAL  
VALMIKI TEMPLE  
NEW DELHI

5

NEW DELHI,  
May 26, 1946

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Bapu wanted me to read out the enclosed to you on the telephone so that you might be able to look into the matter referred to in it and take necessary action. I, however, felt that it would be more convenient to send a copy of it to you instead. If there is anything you want me to tell Bapu, do please let me know.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

**Enclosure**

SAMBALPUR,  
March 29, 1946

PUJYA MAHATMAJI,

It is with a painful heart that I lay the following facts for your information and kind consideration.

1. That the Orient Paper Mill at Brajrajnagar on the Ib river is the cause of great nuisance to the villages that are situated on both banks of the said river. The filthy water that is discharged from the mill into the river thoroughly poisons the water thereof and is a terrible cause of ill health to the people using it. The people who are using the water are numerous and in my modest calculation, it concerns the life and health of not less than 50,000 people. The nuisance also extends to the Mahanadi and persons using the water of the same, are also affected by it.

2. There have lately been various complaints of indefinable diseases as the result of the use of the poisonous water and it is my firm belief that if some steps are not taken immediately to stop the discharge of the poisonous water into the river, a very considerable number of people will soon fall a prey to many kinds of diseases. The local medical experts also opine as I have stated and the people of this locality have also protested against the discharge of the poisonous water into the Ib. But the company has turned a deaf ear to it as the local authorities concerned are, somehow, silent over the matter.

3. It is now with the greatest hope and knowing you to be the friend of the poor I seek redress at your hands. And I do believe the people concerned deserve this little sympathy from you. Mr. B.M. Birla is the managing proprietor of the mill and a word from you to him will go a great way to relieve the poor people from the clutches of innumerable obnoxious diseases.

Hoping that you will see your way to move in the matter which is so immediate and necessary.

With great respects,

*Yours obediently,*  
Ashutosh Panda, Satyavadi Bhandar  
Brahman Bagat, Sambalpur, Orissa

6

NEW DELHI,  
May 27, 1946

SHRI GHANSHYAMDAS,

What Prabhudas has to say about the Okhala land is worth listening to. If such is the case even if it is given free it will prove dear. But give him a patient hearing all the same and, in case you feel inclined to entertain the idea, do whatever you think proper, of course in consultation with Bapa and Rameshwari Nehru.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

7

June 14, 1946

MY DEAR PYARILAL,

If you remember you had received some complaint about the discharge of effluent of the Paper Mills in Ib river. This is the reply that I have received which is self-explanatory

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI PYARILAL  
VALMIKI TEMPLE  
NEW DELHI

8

POONA,  
July 12, 1946

BHAI GHANSHYAMDAS,

As you know, you as the holding trustee had sanctioned the deposit of the Kasturba Fund amounting to between Rs 10 to 15 lacs in the Central Bank and the UCO Bank as a fixed deposit. The Central Bank allows an annual interest at the rate of 1-3/4% and the UCO Bank 2-1/4%. Since the Trust is a philanthropic body I would like the entire amount earned by the Banks from loan to the Government and other parties to be surrendered to the Trust. This would mean that the Trust would then be earning about 3% by way of interest. I am writing to Sir Homi Modi about the interest the Central Bank allows to the Trust, and this I am writing to you in your capacity as the chairman of the United Commercial Bank. If you could find your way to paying 3% interest it would be a good thing indeed.

I am leaving for Panchgani tomorrow, so please send your reply there.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

SHRI GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
8 ROYAL EXCHANGE PLACE  
CALCUTTA

9

VALMIKI MANDIR,  
READING ROAD,  
NEW DELHI,  
August 27, 1946

MY DIAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I am feeling much worried about a cousin of mine who recently went to Calcutta to join the Medical School at



Jadabpur. His sister Dr. Prakash Nayyar is also here and suggests that I might try to obtain news about him from the following address:

B. A. Singh  
Punjab National Bank Ltd.  
Dalhousie Square  
Calcutta

Since you are in telephoning connection with Calcutta, could you do the needful for me? My cousin's name is Pratap Chand Nayyar. I had sent him a wire on hearing of the riots but obviously it has remained undelivered.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

## 10

BHANGI COLONY,  
NEW DELHI,  
September 8, 1946

SHRI BIRLAJI,

I had come to pour out my tale of woe before Gandhiji. Shri Pyarelalji listened to me patiently and this I am writing to you as advised by him.

I have only one son, aged about 38 years. He was married 13 years back. He has his wife and a daughter, about 9 years old. He has been ailing ever since his marriage. My daughter-in-law and the child are staying with her parents. The boy is a victim of hallucinations and is in a bad state of mental health. He gets about Rs. 80 per month but almost the entire amount is swallowed up by the medicines. His employer are good people. He does no work, still they have been regularly paying him Rs. 80 at the end of every month. I hail from a respectable family and do not live on philanthropy, but I have not the

means to get him admitted in some mental clinic. I only want you to send him to the Agra Mental Hospital and to pay for his expenses. At present he is at Cawnpore. He shall have to be fetched to Delhi and then sent to Agra. So this will entail some additional expenditure. The Agra Asylum will cost Rs. 70 per month.

I do hope you will not let me go away disappointed.

*Yours,*  
Saraswati Devi

## 11

VALMIKI MANDIR,  
READING ROAD,  
NEW DELHI,  
September 11, 1946

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have your note. This sister wanted to see Bapu. I asked her not to take his time. She seems to be a good woman who has seen better times. Hers seems to be a genuine case of distress. I had asked her to write to you so that her case may be decided on its merits according to your usual policy in such cases.

The original letter is being returned herewith.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

SHRIMATH G. D. BIRLA  
NEW DELHI

Encl. 1

12

CARE MAHATMA GANDHI,  
CAMP KAJIRKHAL,  
TELEGRAM OFFICE : RAMGANJ,  
NOAKHALI DISTRICT,  
October 24, 1946

GHANSHYAMDAS BIRLA  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD  
NEW DELHI

MOTHER UNDER TREATMENT FOR INSULIN SHOCK IN LADY  
HARDINGE. KINDLY ENQUIRE CONDITION AND WIRE. YOUR LETTER  
RECEIVED. WRITING.

PYARELAL

13

October 29, 1946

PYARELAL  
KHADI PRATISHTHAN  
SODEPUR (BENGAL-NEAR CALCUTTA.)

SUGGEST PROLONG BAPU'S STAY IN CALCUTTA BECAUSE OF  
RENEWED DISTURBANCES ALSO DESIRABLE HE SHOULD STAY AT  
LEAST DURING DAY TIME IN TOWN TO FACILITATE MEETING AND  
TALKS WITH PEOPLE. IF SERIOUSNESS CONTINUES PROPOSE LEAVING  
TOMORROW FOR CALCUTTA. WIRE URGENT CARE LUCKY.

GHANSHYAMDAS

*Personal*

DATTAPARA,  
November 12, 1946

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Yesterday was Bapu's day of silence. All the same he visited the villages of Noakhali and Sonachak and Khilpara. At Noakhali 8 people had been murdered including a schoolboy of 15. Four skulls and charred remains of the bones were scattered all over the place. The houses had almost all been burned down. In the house where the boy was murdered his school books and freshly written exercise books were drawn over the floor. The betel nut and the cocoanut trees surrounding the house were also scorched. Everyone who remained had been converted including a deaf and dumb man who by piteous signs showed the tuft of hair in a piece of cloth which had been cut and to which he still clung. The few women that remained were all weeping and wailing in a heart breaking manner. At sonachak the places of worship had been desecrated and set fire to. Broken images lay on footpaths and in the debris inside the ruined temples. The family of Thakores—Thakore Badi—known for its orthodoxy and distinguished men of learning it had produced owned one of the temples which was several centuries old. Its 200 members had all been converted. They had all been rescued. In this village the same piteous weeping and wailing of women met Bapu.

This morning Bapu told us that he had decided to disperse the party sending each one member to one village including the ladies. Those who have not the courage or the faith to do so or those who cannot control their anger against Muslims should go back. The *Harijan* should be carried on by friends like Kakasaheb, Kishorelalbhai, Narharibhai, etc. If they cannot cope with it, it should be stopped.

His low diet continues. On top of that is the physical and mental strain of touring and seeing awful sights and hearing dreadful tales wherever he goes. As to when he will resume his normal diet would depend upon the news from Bihar. Bihar has to show genuine repentance, he says.

Yesterday we visited Gomatchi. A girl from this village was

removed and returned through the village chaukidar after 3-4 days. Even now in several places women are taken away at night and returned in the morning. In Gomatoli two weavers and one Namshudra family were mortally afraid that they would be persecuted after we had gone. They wanted to come away with us. Sucheta persuaded them to stay on and severely warned the Chaukidar with dire consequences if anything happened to them. The Muslims are afraid only of the military and the police. In many places they have told the Hindus, "You live as Hindus now. Later on when we tell you, you should revert to Islam." Their one desire is to get rid of the military as soon as possible, even though the police and military are hardly doing anything. And with that end in view they are prepared to lie low for the time being.

From Gomatoli, we were told, several people were being rescued under the care of two armed guards. The miscreants attacked them. The guard refused to fire. They said they had no orders to fire. Why on earth they were carrying arms in that case? One man escaped and ran to Dattapara. He fell on the military officers' feet and begged of him to send his men to rescue the party. They were attacked near Dattapara. But the officer said he could not send anyone till the next morning. So fifteen men were done to death.

The whole affair is sickening. Amtussalaam is working at Dasgharia. She said the Muslims agreed with her that these things were against Islam. But those very men later attacked Hindus with arms. They openly say they would do what the League leaders tell them to do but would otherwise give no guarantee whatever. They were not prepared to listen to Gandhiji. They had nothing to do with him. They did not know him.

On the other hand Bapu is determined not to leave East Bengal till there is peace between Hindus and Muslims. He would stay in the midst of the Muslims and eat what they give him, and so on.

The Hindus say they were given assurances of safety by the Muslims who had constituted themselves into peace committees and who induced them to stay on. Later they were given assurances of safety if they gave money. They did so, still they were attacked, murdered forcibly converted and dishonoured. How

could they rely on the word of these men now and return to live in their midst. The miscreants—those who had organised these diabolical crimes in broad day-light—are still at large. They are not being rounded up. In a meeting held on the day before yesterday I was told by one of the Government officials that there were at least a thousand miscreants who could have been identified on the spot. But they had been promised safe conduct at Bapu's prayer gathering. How can there be security till these miscreants are rounded up?

There are suggestions that there should be big settlements of Hindus in East Bengal. Bapu does not like the idea. That cannot offer safety against thousands. If they must leave East Bengal they should go to a Hindu majority area—West Bengal, Assam or Bihar. But it is more easily said than done. The trouble is not communal. It is political and the solution can only be found by the political leaders of both the communities.

*Yours sincerely*  
Pyarelal

## 15

CAMP : DUTTAPARA,  
November 13, 1946

SHRI GHANSHYAMDASJI,

The accompanying is from my brother and is meant for Sardar. He wants you to go through it and then to arrange to send it to him. Who knows how long it will take the censure to clear it.

What you may have read in the papers is nothing compared to what has been actually happening here. And on top of all this is Bapu's grim resolve to stay out. How all this is going to end only God knows. Maybe Champaran is being re-enacted here, maybe East Bengal is going to be the graveyard of us all.

It is amazing how Bapu manages to carry on in spite of so much strain, and with half-starvation diet.

I hope this finds you well.

Pranams from  
Sushila

November 14, 1946

PS. The original plan was to send this letter and its enclosure through Tulsiramji. But he said he would be dropping at Cawnpore. So it was entrusted to the care of Kripalaniji instead. Now it will reach Sardar direct. Herewith its copy.

Bapu has also given up glucose. Still, he is copying with the strain admirably well.

Today only this much.

S.

### Enclosure

November 13, 1946

The following is respectfully submitted for Sardar's attention:

The accompanying papers will give you the full details of the happenings here. Bapu has expressed his desire to disband the party and to station each one of us in different villages. Nowhere will three members of the party be allowed to stay together. No one among the refugees seems willing to return to his or her village. The safety of these people will be Bapu's exclusive concern. The female members of the party will also be required to take their position in Muslim villages. Those who do not care for such places or are unable to keep their feeling of anger against the Muslims under restraint will be allowed the liberty to return.

• About *Harijan* Bapu wants Kishorilal and Narhari to manage as best they can and, if that seems difficult, to keep it suspended as it now already is.

Had I been allowed to remain by Bapu's side I would have managed things better. But it is unlikely that he will agree to that. Had Sushila or myself been allowed to stay with him, we

would have been in a better position to keep the big ones informed of what is passing in his mind. Please consider this aspect of the situation and in case you deem it is quite possible that if the proposal of keeping me or somebody else by his side come from you he may relent, if to please you.

As it is, the situation here is pretty bad. The people around here are still apprehensive of their womenfolk being lifted during the night and returned the next morning. When people are labouring under this stark fear how can we console them to return to the scenes of their earlier horrors? Bapu wants one good Muslim and one good Hindu to work jointly in every such village selflessly. But Bagchi, the special Relief Officer stationed in this area told Bapu that the very persons found indulging in talks of peace and communal amity were killing and maiming the Hindus till recently. Quite a large number of Muslims have taken part in looting people here. They are waiting for the next chance to repeat their performance. How could such persons be able to restore a feeling of confidence among those who have actually suffered at their hands. For the time being such persons are confining their activity to asking the Hindus to pay them under one pretext or another, promising protection in return. After squeezing as much as they can from those who are still in a position to give, they will finish them off and set their houses on fire. There are scores of such villages whose inhabitants are now refugees. They told us how they were subjected to this process of extortion, how when they parted with all they had, they were betrayed, maimed, raped and some of them just managed to escape with bare skin. How could they be trusted again, they asked. To me, too, it seems an impossible undertaking to effectively persuade these sufferers to repose confidence in their tormentors. These persons are at present moving about freely, talking glibly of taking part in peace committee and Red Cross activities. When approached, the police officers complained of paucity of staff to meet the situation. Those who have suffered are quite definite about one thing: they would feel secure only when there is police and military around. How long would Gandhiji stay on there? They would be prey to the same old horrors the moment he turns his back. That is how they feel. The Muslims have set up cells; they declare openly that they



would not allow a single Hindu to remain in this area.

We visited a village where a Hindu women had been forced into Islam some time ago. Then she died. Her body was not allowed to be cremated and ultimately to be buried. This two-fold tragedy had its repercussion far and wide and in some twelve villages around this one Ram Nam was taboo. Some of these sufferers came to us to tell of their experience. The Muslims came to know of their visit to us and told them that if they did it again their womenfolk would again be abducted in the evening and returned the next morning. Formerly when this was done none had the courage to open his mouth, much less to put up any kind of resistance. The day before yesterday some of these sufferers told their own folk of what had been done to them. The latter told us, when we visited the scene of the outrage. Hindus themselves denied that anything untoward had happened to them. They had been brainwashed overnight under threat of more serious consequences. We suggested that the culprits could be persuaded to apologize to them for their unseemly conduct. They retorted that this would mean as much as their life was worth: they would be butchered in broad daylight soon thereafter. None of them is now inclined to come to tell him of their experiences. Samsuddin Saheb has been to Calcutta to attend a meeting and has now returned with his orders and his flag. Currently, the police is rounding up the innocent.

Thus the situation is becoming increasingly complicated. That foreign lady visitor, Miss Block, has created havoc in Calcutta. What the Bengal Government can do to cope with this abnormal situation remains to be seen. Bapu does not relish the idea of India dealing with the East Bengal situation. Assam can opt for West Bengal, but Bapu has taken a vow to do or die and is determined not to let the country split into two nations—India and Pakistan. And, of course, he will not stir out of this place so long as peace does not return to East Bengal. His threat to launch a fast is hanging like Democle's sword on our devoted heads. So long as he himself does not feel satisfied his threat to launch a fast remains. Honey, luke-warm water, oranges and cocoanut water remain the main items of his diet.

My feeling is that the committee which was formed to deal

with the twin situation of Behar and Bengal and which did exert itself in respect of Bihar should now get busy doing something about Bengal as well. My humble suggestion is that Babu should be told of this personally. At present I am writing this while I am with Babu, but if the present ugly situation worsens, it will be difficult to make for the affected villages.

Babu is thinking of raising funds for the relief of the families of the culprits rounded up so far. One Adidin, a colony officer, was here till the 10th. His personal diary records the names of 400 such culprits. Then the rumour went round that he has orders from above to be easy on names. Maulana has been here to ensure a modification. If only we could manage to get a copy of that personal diary, it would be of some substantial advantage to us.

Pyarelal

(From Gujarati original)

## 16

CALCUTTA,  
November 18, 1946

MY DEAR PYARELAL,

I had your letter and also the copy of the letter to Sardarji. I had also a letter from Sushilaben. I had many letters from Thakkar Bapa. They all, more or less, tell the same story. It is all a very sorrowful reading. Against this I enclose herewith a cutting from the *Morning News* of the statement made by Mafizuddin Ahmed, Parliamentary Secretary, which sings a different tune. Different versions on the same topic by two parties show that even on facts we cannot agree. What have we come to ?

Bihar is definitely quite now. But I dare say the same problem that faces us in Noakhali is faced by Muslims in Bihar, with only this difference that while we are energetic and determined to restore normal conditions in Bihar, perhaps the Government of Bengal is not so energetic. Either they don't

mean business or are inefficient or are half-hearted.

A Press note from Delhi says that Suhrawardy's activities in meeting Bapu and trying to befriend him are looked upon by the League High Command with stern disfavour. I do not know the truth. But one thing is now quite clear. The question is no more mere communal one. It is now a full fledged political question which can only be settled at the highest level. Whether the time is yet ripe, I do not know. But that this cannot be settled piecemeal is perfectly true.

I also enclose herewith a cutting about the tour of the Viceroy in South Waziristan. The kind of utterances made by the Jirgas only show that either they were tutored, or if they were genuine speeches, then the rot has already gone too deep. Added to this I also send a cutting of the statement of Ambedkar. All this is frightening because this indicated a centrifugal tendency in full force.

Bapu's idea to disperse his party to settle down in a few villages is very good. But I fear we should not, at the same time, ignore the importance of the Constituent Assembly. There are problems which may require Bapu's presence in Delhi. I do not know whether this appeals to Bapu or not. I personally feel that Constituent Assembly too is a very important affair in our history.

I am rather frightened about Bapu's health. Please keep me well informed.

Bapu had asked for blankets, etc. which are being sent. If there is anything for relief that is needed, please write to me.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI PYARLLAL

## 17

### **Bapu's Appeal to Biharis**

Bihar of my dreams has belied my dreams! I am not depending on such statements as issued maliciously or with exaggeration.

ration. The very fact that the Central Premier and his colleagues had to stay there for long proves the reality of the unfortunate happenings in Bihar. It is rather simple to say that Bengal is also the scene of similar incidents under the administration of Muslim League, or that the plight of Bengal is worse than that of Bihar even. Or it can well be said that whatever is happening in Bihar is the after effect of happenings in Bengal. The evil deeds of a party cannot justify those of other party, especially when it may be proud of its political achievements. I have to confess it that I could not get the entire picture of Bengal's sad incidents. Bihar is calling me but I cannot disturb my tour of Noakhali. Besides this, is the communalism that the Congressmen are labelling against the Muslim League is proved to be so simply on the basis of statistics? Is it a natural state to crush with brutality the 14 per cent of Muslim population in Bihar? I need not be told that I should not condemn entire Bihar for the sin committed by a few Biharis! Does Bihar not feel proud to possess single Brijkishore Babu or single Rajendra Prasad? I fear if this state of affairs prevails in Bihar, the whole world would cast aspersions on the entire Hindu community. This is the way the world behaves in and we cannot call it bad. The misdeeds of the Hindus of Bihar will support Quaide Azam Jinnah's charge that barring a few Muslims, Sikhs, Christians or Parsis, the Congress as a whole is a Hindu organization. This is expected from the Hindus of Bihar that they should provide the same protection to the Muslims in minority as is available to Hindus who are in majority. They should regard them as their brethren. Bihar's contribution to Congress reaching its heights is immense; it should now not act otherwise.

I am not at all ashamed of my non-violence I have come to Bengal to see its worth at the right moment. But I am not going to tell you about non-violence in this letter. The only fact which I want to bring to your notice is that whatever you have done cannot be listed among your brave deeds. Thousands of persons killing a few hundred men and women shows their cowardness, even worse than that! It is unbecoming of any religion in the world! Nobody would have blamed you if you could satisfy yourselves by fighting a equal game. But you have

thrown yourselves into the hell, thus defaming the entire country!

You should tell Jawaharlal, Nishtar Saheb and Rajendra Prasad to call back their armies and pay attention to other problems facing the country. This they can do only when you repent for your misdeeds and assure them that the Muslims deserve as much the protection from you as your own brethren. You should not take respite till all the refugees are able to return to their abodes. You should help them build their houses and ask your ministers to co-operate with you in this big task. Perhaps you are not aware of the things which I have been told by the critics of your ministers.

I always count myself as one among you. The love that you have bestowed upon me has made me concerned about yourselves. What the duty of the Bihar Hindus is—is a thing which I know in a much better way than yourself. That is why I shall not feel at home till I atone for it sufficiently. Since I have come to Calcutta I am taking in the minimum possible food in order to keep the trust of my body. Since the day I have known the Bihar happenings, my atonement is continuing in this form. If the Biharis treading on the wrong path are not prepared to turn a new leaf in the history, this atonement may take form of complete fast.

That Bihar will take my act of pure atonement otherwise, I never doubt.

No friend should rush to help me or to sympathise with me. I am at present surrounded by many good friends. Nor should anybody imitate what I am doing. No fast in sympathy or any other form is desirable at all. This will rather undo the whole thing. My atonement does not aim at invoking the souls of these who know me well. Nobody should worry about me as I am under the protection of God in the same way as others are. Till God's will prevails, I shall be able to serve the people through this temporary edifice of body and nothing can harm me.

*Yours servant,*  
Mohandas Gandhi

18

November 20, 1946

PYARELAL  
NOAKHALI RESCUE REHABILITATION COMMITTEE  
CHAUMAHANI (NOAKHALI)

BIHAR COMPLETELY QUIET NOW. HOPE BAPU WILL START TAKING  
INCREASED DIET. NO CAUSE FOR ANXIETY

GHANSHYAMDAS

19

C/O KHADI PRATISHTHAN,  
SODEPUR,  
KAJIRKHAL,  
November 23, 1946

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

Today all of us are leaving for the villages allotted to each one of us. This is just to trouble you about something. Sushila has grown very weak and I am rather anxious about her health. It may become necessary to make some arrangements for creature comforts from Calcutta. May I trouble you about that?

For the present, if you could arrange to send the following articles, will you kindly send these to Khadi Pratishthan, College Square for onward transmission to her.

1. Easten Syrup 1 bottle
2. Ghee of any brand, if it is unadulterated, 2 or 3 tins.
3. Dates, 2 or 3 tins.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

I am sending my typewriter for repairs. Kindly arrange to send it to Khadi Pratishthan after the necessary repairs have been carried out.

KAJIRKHL,  
November 24, 1946

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I had your letter with the cuttings. Bapu, I understand, is going to reply it. By now, probably the reply has reached you.

Things here are showing some improvement. One cannot say that there has been a change of heart. But a distinct change in policy is in evidence. A visit to the various refugee camps and devastated villages has proved an eye-opener even to the minister Shamsuddin is too hard boiled a politician to allow sentiment to get the better of him but the Parliamentary Secretary Hamid-Uddin Ahmed was visibly shaken by what he saw and at the public meeting at Chandipur the other day let himself go so frankly and vigorously that if his speech is fully reported in the Press it might cost his job.

There was a conference of the representatives of both Hindus and Muslims the other day at Ramganj. The Minister (Sh. Din) and a number of parliamentary secretaries were present. Manoranjan Choudhary put forth a long string of demands as a condition precedent for the formation of the peace committee. So far as one could see they were met with a fervent spirit of reasonableness and accommodation by the representatives of the Government. Bapu however pleaded for trust and confidence and persuaded him to draft the 'condition precedent' and his 'suggestion' was adopted and the nucleus of a peace committee was formed there and then. The formula is to have committees for the village and the union and Ghat respectively with equal number of Hindus and Mussalmans and an official as the chairman. The Government will implement whatever recommendation it may make. There will be a vertical reference in case of disagreement, the district magistrate being the final arbitrator with full powers. As regards the rounding up of culprits, (I detest the word 'hooligans' and they are not 'hooligans' but normal standard specimens if miscalled Pakistan M's) the restoration of abducted women, and forcibly converted victims to their original faith, rebuilding of devastated houses, protection of the sopari and paddy crops of the absentee refugees, and compensation for loss. The Government have promised to do

the utmost they can. At Chandipur public meeting, Babu while pleading for mutual trust and confidence committed himself to going on a fast if the ministers played false.

Sarat Babu saw Babu yesterday and discussed with him 'the situation', and they say there was nothing special about it.

Babu had a vomit and diarrhic motions while going to Chandipur yesterday owing to an error in diet. He is now all right.

There is a noticeable improvement in the general atmosphere since the ministerial tours and pronouncements. Hindus and Muslims once more are seen to move together and wish each other. Yesterday I did a tramp of about 15 miles. Everywhere the M's did "Adab Araz to you" and reinforced it with "Saheb, Adab Araz Karte Hain" in case the greeting went unnoticed, Babu's grim resolve to bury himself all alone, with the back to the wall in Shirainpur seems to have done the trick.

While returning from my tramp yesterday I developed temperature. On reaching here the thermometer recorded 101.8°. There was some delirium at night. But I took quinine before retiring and I hoped it would be all right. At 1.30 a.m. there was no more sleep to be had. And so I can scribble this out.

I shall be going to my centre at Shahpur-Bhatialpur today. Yesterday owing to the weekly fair, boatmen demanded Rs 20 and Rs. 30 as against Rs. 3-4, the normal charge. All other members of the party are snugly ensconced in their respective centres.

With best regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

## 21

AS AT KAJIRKHEL,  
P. O. RAMGANJ,  
November 26, 1946

*Personal*

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

In a previous letter I asked you to manage to send some extra rations. On second thoughts (and ampler knowledge) I



must ask you not to trouble yourself about it. It would be contrary to the 'Do or Die' spirit which is the rock on which Bapu is building. Bricks cannot have a different lot from the builder.

I am sorry to have troubled you unnecessarily and feel ashamed that it did not occur to me earlier. Thanks are due perhaps to one day's fever which provided some leisure for calm thinking.

I am all right now.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

22

SHRIRAMPUR,  
November 26, 1946

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

You know I am all alone here. Of course, Prof. Nirmal Chandra and Parashuram are with me, too. The members of the family with whom I am putting up here are gentlefolk. This is the only Hindu family left in this village. The rest are all Muslims. All of them are scattered far and wide. In this area there are scores of such spots where inter-communication by bullock-cart is rare after the rain water dries up. The result is that only hooligans or good people who are physically fit can manage to carry on normally. I am likely to spend some time in this village or the other villages similarly situated. I intend to prolong my stay till the Hindus and the Muslims resume their normal brotherly relation. God alone can lend stability to the mind. As it is, I am cut off from Delhi, cut off from Sevagram, cut off from Uruli and Panchgani. I am determined to do or die. This is only a test case for my non-violence. I am determined to emerge victorious from this ordeal. If you feel like seeing me, you will have to come here, though I see no need for it. If you wish to send somebody to me, do, or if you want to send letters, send them through a messenger.

No, I am not going to take part in the Constituent Assembly

proceedings. Nor is there much necessity for it. Jawaharlal, Sardar, Rajendra Babu, Rajaji, Maulana—all of them singly or together may come here, or, maybe Kripalani.

Please convey the following message to them: if the Constituent Assembly can meet only with the help of the military, then it is better not to hold it at all. In case it is possible to hold it in an atmosphere of peace, laws may be framed for the provinces which actually participate in its sittings. What part the military and the police will play in the future will also have to be decided. What will the Muslim provinces do? What will happen to the provinces where the Muslims are in a minority? This question also deserves thorough examination. And what will be the role of the British Government? Also, how will the princes deport themselves? All these are matters that require detailed analysis. In my opinion the state paper of April 16 will have to be recast. This is a complicated job. Let all of them exercise their independent judgment. I have only given vent to my own feeling.

Let my friends also bear in mind that what I am doing here is not being done in the name of the Congress, nor have I ever entertained any such idea. This is the outcome of my own non-violent outlook. Anybody is at liberty to criticize my work quite openly. Everybody has the right to do so; it may even be his religious obligation. If, therefore, anybody wishes to say or do anything in his individual capacity, he should do so earnestly. If I am to be given a warning, that also must come openly.

Please copy it out and forward it to Sardar who will circulate it among the others. Or, better still, take out five copies and send one each to the five friends.

If you wish to tell me something, do so. If you feel inclined to write, send your communication to me direct, as Pyarelal Sushila and the others are scattered in different villages. Pyarelal has been unwell since yesterday.

I hope you are keeping quite fit.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

23

KHADI PRATISHTHAN,  
SODI PUR, 24 PARGANAS,  
SODEPUR,  
December 1, 1946

DEAR BIRLAJI,

Gandhiji sends the accompanying letter to you with a request that it be forwarded to Sri Rajagopalachariar at New Delhi and delivered to him through a messenger.

The letter in question has been received at Sodepur last night from Gandhiji's Shrirampur Camp (Noakhali) also through a messenger.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Kshitish Chandra Das Gupta

SHRI G. D. BIRLA  
BIRLA PARK  
19 STORE ROAD  
BALLYGUNGI

24

November 29, 1946

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

Your letter. Yesterday I had sent you a letter meant for Rajaji. Please arrange to send it through some messenger. On going through it yourself you will know why.

What I am doing I do not know myself. If there is non-violence in me, I could not have behaved differently. Let us wait for God to unfold His purpose.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

CAMP: KAJIRKIL,  
P.O. RAMGANJ,  
November 30, 1946

DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have your note for which thanks. Hereafter in case of need, I shall do as directed.

Here things are still limping. There was a provision about the composition of the Peace Committees that the Muslim members should be approved of by the Hindus. The difficulty, however, seems to be to find such Muslims. In the Shahpur area one might say that almost every man is a culprit and a miscreant directly or indirectly. I was horrified to find that even little children are not exempt. They have been indoctrinated as thoroughly as young Nazis were said to have been. They tell lies by vote—all on a uniform pattern. What sort of citizens will they make when they grow up. With burnt down bazars, stripped and gutted houses, desecrated temples and human blood scarcely washed off their hands, respectable educated people tell you that nothing has happened here, that Ghulam Sarvar kept the peace and to bring him back and set him at liberty alone will restore security and confidence! One almost despairs of human nature in this clime.

In spite of all these life is slowly coming back to the terror stricken. In Karpara women dared not venture out with bangles and *sindoor*. Now they hold prayers and *kirtan* in crowds of sixty and more in a ruined temple. They are going to revive their weekly bazar and the children's school. The difficulty with regard to the latter is of a teacher. Last night as I was returning from my tramp from Karpara and Shahpur, I could hear the music of *kirtan* to the accompaniment of *pokhawaj* from Das Ghorias—one mile off. It was half past nine and the change was a welcome, soothing symbol of the difference in the situation between now and a fortnight ago when they dared not 'take Ram Nam even in their houses.

These are mere straws in the breeze. The basic issue as you say must be solved on the highest political frame. But without

the foundation which Bapu is trying to lay, all the rest will be a house of cards.

With regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

26

December 1 1946

CHH. GHANSHYAMDAS,

I have drawn up a miscellaneous submission in regard to the Constituent Assembly. Profullo Babu will hand it over to you. Please go through it and acquaint Sardar with your own view of it.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

27

December 4, 1946

MY DEAR PYARELAL,

Please write to me from time to time so that I may keep myself well informed.

I am glad to hear that the atmosphere is improving. It is bound to do so. But nobody knows when it may again flare up. Jinnah is keeping the atmosphere fully electrified and whenever there is a sign of calm, he again says something to excite the people.

We shall know more about the position after a few days. But I personally feel that while Jinnah will join the Constituent Assembly, he will continue to cause troubles. We are not yet out

of wood. In fact, we have only started our journey towards swarajya or may be towards anarchy. Meanwhile the economic conditions are deteriorating fast. While every other country is increasing its production, India's production partly due to other circumstances and partly due to communal riots, is going down. This year we are going to import food to the extent of 90 crores worth of rupees! ! Obviously, we cannot find this sum every year to the foreign countries. But no effective step has been taken so far to increase the food production. This applies also to all other consumer goods. Unfortunately, even the new Government is more after politics than economics. In fact, it does not even think about the economic problem.

Everybody is anxious about Bapu's health. Please, therefore, write to me from time to time.

I hope you have now fully recovered from the fever.

If there is anything. I will write to you.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI PYARLAL

28

CHANGERGAON,  
December 5, 1946

RESPECTED GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have just finished reading your *Bapu*. Many, many years ago Mahadevbhai had asked you to give me a copy of it. At that time I was so taken up with my studies that the only thing I did with it was to find a place for it in my book-shelf at home. Then the two years I spent in jail. This time the book attracted my attention and I casually picked it up. I was laid up with malaria and this forced confinement gave me plenty of time to browse through it, if only to kill time.

Please forgive me. I was not aware that your study of Bapu was so minute, so thorough. I do not know just how popular

this publication is at the present moment. But I feel that this book should be a 'must' for everybody interested in adding to his knowledge of Bapu the man. If it still remains untranslated in the other Indian languages, this should be done now. And why of course, it should be done into English as well. This work is a superlative on Bapu.

Bapu is three miles away from here. Before I had developed the fever I had been to him 33 or 44 times. He has grown visibly weaker. He is also much inconvenienced on account of the absence of the other members of his party. But this fiery ordeal of his has a lot for the others to learn from. This they are already doing, though at a snail's pace. I have tried to tell the others the meaning of his suffering, though in keeping with my limited capacity to convey its implied message.

For the last two days I have had no fever, therefore I am intending to go to pay my respects to Bapu today. Parashuramji has been trying to make himself useful to him as best he can. Also Nirmal Babu.

The situation here remains a problem, as ever.  
I hope this finds you well.

*Pranams from*  
Sushila

## 29

December 6, 1946

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

Your letter of the 2nd of December reached me only today.

What you say is quite correct but my impression is that in what you say there is a lack of genuine feeling of resentment of improper conduct. I have only this much to say in this regard that one should not match barbarity with counter barbarity defeating the forces of evil. That will only serve to make the situation still worse. Let there be counter-violence in order to defeat violence, but even that can carry the stamp of enlightenment about it. What took place in Behar was sheer savagery. There were similar happenings at the Garh Mukteshwar Fair. In

such cases stories from the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* can only tempt one to take the wrong path. Our public conduct should be characterized by self-restraint; it should also find sanction in our age-old tradition. I am entirely working in that direction. The result is in the hands of God. Please stop worrying about my health. I am quite careful about it myself.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

30

December 13, 1946

MY DEAR PYARILAL,

Your letters give me lot of information which Bapu's letters don't give. Please, therefore, write to me occasionally.

The things are changing fast here and you will know earlier through papers of the position than you could know from my letters.

I still believe that the question is soluble. But we have not yet made businesslike efforts so far. Jinnah is not a man who understands high ideologies. He is a hard bargainer, not very intelligent but good intriguer. I am not unhopeful. Perhaps something will happen. But when, I do not know. In any case, we have to solve the problem at a higher level. Bapu's efforts will bring, no doubt, good long-term. He is making big contribution which would be appreciated after a long time.

I hope you are now better.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI PYARILAL



31

AS AT CAMP KAJIRKHL,  
P.O. RAMGANJ,  
(NOAKHALI DISTT.),  
BHIALIALPUR (VEPARI BAD),  
December 25, 1946

MY DEAR GHANSHIYAMDASJI,

I had your letter of 13th December only yesterday evening. I read it out to Babu and Sushila's letter I have sent to her.

I returned here last night; after making my (do now) daily round of Kajirkhil, Shrirampur and Ghangirgaon, at past 11. On my way I strained one of my toes. This letter is the result of forced immobilization. At evening I have called a meeting of people from Baliarpur, Shahpur and Soshaliya and at 2.30 a.m. I have again to set out on round of Shrirampur. So I must set my toe all right before night. I have applied a cold compress to it.

Things here are moving at a snail's pace. Babu's original proposal of making one good Hindu and one good Muslim—guaranteed by the league—stand surety for the safety of the life, property, honour and religion of the returned refugees in each village could not or did not have proven men with the required qualification. As an alternative the ministry presented its plan of Union and Tana Peace Committees of equal number of Hindus and Muslims—the latter to be of the Hindu's choice. The committee was given "authority" to make proposal, for rehabilitation, relief, and restoration of a feeling of security and goodwill among the communities to enable the refugees to return. It was to submit agreed lists of miscreants who deserved to be rounded up, and the authority "undertook" to implement its recommendations. Shamsuddin Sahib with Hamid-Uddin, Parliamentary Secretary, and several other colleagues himself announced the plan and formed the first Peace Committee at Ramganj. Babu was present at the meeting. Later, he announced in public at Chandipur that if the ministers broke their plighted word he would not be living witness to it. The Minister of Agriculture was to have returned within four days to implement the plan about the Peace Committees and in the mean time Hamid-Uddin—Parliamentary Secretary—was to stay on here

for the same purpose. But both left on the next day and have not yet returned. Nor is there any sign of their returning. The latest letter from Suhrawardy practically takes away any remaining hope.

Stray incidents even now continue to happen, though we cannot say they are communal in character. But the fact that the miscreants are still at large and know that the policy of the Government is not to proceed with the arrests has emboldened them and filled honest folk with a feeling of insecurity.

I began this on the 25th December and am able to resume it only today because I have to wait for the leader of one of the gangs who has promised to return the unspent balance of the black-mail league "subscription" collected during the riots. The moment I am free I must start for Jagatpur to contact Bapu in order to discuss with him some local problems.

Here I have been hammering day and night for the last month and a half, trying to set up Gram Shanti Samities. So far I have succeeded only a Bhalalpur—my own village Mominpur adopted my resolution but has not complimented it. Pursottampur people have promised to give me their reply (in the affirmative) today when a signed document will be placed in my hands. They have agreed too to return the unspent balance of the backmail league subscription collected during the riots and also to restore some of the looted property. Last night I sent for representative from another nest of troubles Court Khil. I am again to meet them in a general meeting tomorrow at 8 a.m. But everywhere there is complaint and nothing can be done till the known bad characters are rounded up. But so far the authorities have done almost nothing. Peace work is being sabotaged at every step by well known lieutenants of the planners of the riots who are still at large and look forward to the early release of their leader Ghulam Sarvar. At Shahpur bazar they have completely upset all my efforts.

Under the circumstances I cannot envisage how Bapu's mission can end but successfully terminated. I am afraid he is being driven, unknown to himself into another fit—the final resort of non-violence against hatred and unreason. Unless there is move from above, I see grave danger ahead. The business must be pulled through before the rainy season commences or else it might mean a disaster. Even in places where some Hindu

families have returned they are coerced to penalty and destitution. They are boycotted, can't get labour to till their fields and their business is at a standstill owing to the general atmosphere of insecurity. A sufferer told me, "My last son used to earn 300-400 Rs. per month. Today he cannot manage to live even from hand to mouth." Something has got to be done from above but of chips one sees no sign. One can only pray with Henry Newman :

The night is dark and I'm far from home, Lead thou me on!

With love and regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

## Letter without Date

32

### Discussion with Gandhiji Regarding Assam

Two Assam friends Shri Bojovchandra Bhagvati and Shri Mahendra Mohan Choudhury saw Gandhiji on the morning of 13-12-46 on behalf of Shri Bardoloi. They asked him what Assam was to do with regard to the question of grouping. It was a question of life and death for Assa. They did not wish to be grouped with Bengal. Some people told them that they would be helping the league if they stay out. Assam could not be allowed to stand on the way of the progress of the rest of India and so on. They have asked the Working Committee. There did not seem to be any clear guidance from them. So they have come to him for advice. In reply Gandhiji said : "I do not need a single moment to come to a decision for on this I have a mind. I am a Congressman to the very narrow as I am mainly the framer of the constitution of the Congress as it stands today. I told Bardoloi that if there is no clear guidance from the Congress Working Committee, Assam should not go into the section. It would lodge its protest and retire from the Constituent Assembly. It will be a kind of satyagraha against the Congress for the good of the Congress.

Rightly or wrongly the Congress has come to the decision that it will stand by the judgment of the Federal Court. The dice are heavily loaded. The decision of the Federal Court will go against the Congress interpretation of grouping as far as I can make out for the simple reason that the Cabinet has got legal advice which uphold their decision. The Federal Court is the creation of the British. It is a packed Court. To be consistent, the Congress must abide by it, whatever it may be. If Assam keeps quiet, it is finished. No one can force Assam to do what it does not want to do. It must stand independently as an autonomous unit. It is autonomous to a large extent today. It must become fully autonomous and independent. Whether you

have that courage, grit or the gumption, I do not know. You alone can say that. But if you can make that declaration it will be a fine thing. As soon as the time comes for the Constituent Assembly to go into sections you will say 'Gentleman Assam retires.' For the independence of India it is the only condition. Each unit must be able to decide and act for itself. I am hoping that in this, Assam will lead the way. I have the same advice for the Sikhs. But your position is much happier than that of the Sikhs. You are a whole province, they are a community inside a province. But I feel every individual has the right to act for himself, just as I have.

Q. But we are told that the framing of Constitution for the whole of the India cannot be held up for the sake of Assam. Assam cannot be allowed to block the way.

A. There is no need to do that. That is why I say that I am in utter darkness. Why are not these simple truths evident to all after so many years? If Assam retires it does not block but leads the way to India's independence.

Q. The League has said that the Constitution framed by the Constituent Assembly cannot be imposed on unwilling units. So if some parts do not accept it, the British Parliament won't accept it.

Gandhiji flared up at this question. "Who is the British Government? If we think independence is going to descend on our heads from England or somewhere, we are greatly mistaken. It won't be independence. We will be crushed to atoms. We are fluctuating between independence and helpless dependence. The Cabinet Mission's plan lies in between. If we react rightly, there will be the full blown flower of independence. If we react wrongly the blossom wither away. Mind you, the League standpoint is quite correct. If they stand out the Constituent Assembly cannot impose its Constitution on unwilling party. The British Government has no say in the matter one way or the other.

The British cannot interfere with the working of the Constituent Assembly. Supposing the vast majority including the Muslims and others forms a Constitution, you can defy the British Parliament if it seeks to interfere. Power is in your hands. Some such thing happened in Ireland only recently. And Dr. Valera is no non-violent fighter. The position of India is far better than that of Ireland. If we have not the penetration we

will lose advantage we have as it is apparently being lost today.

If Assam takes care of itself the rest of India will be able to look after itself. What have you got to do with the Constitution of the Union Government? You should form your own Constitution. That is enough. You have the basis of a Constitution all right even now.

I have never despised the 1935 Constitution. It is based on Provincial autonomy. It has the capacity for fullest growth provided the people are with it. The Hill people are with you. Many Muslims are also with you. The remainder can be toom if you act on the square.

You will have to forget petty jealousies and rivalries and overcome your weaknesses. Assam has many weaknesses as it is, has much strength, for I know my Assam.

“With your blessings we can even go outside the Congress and fight,” the friends put in.

Gandhiji replied that in 1939 when there was the question of giving up the ministry “Subhas Babu opposed it as he thought Assam’s was a special case. I told Bardoloi that there was much in what Subhas Babu has said and although I was the author of that scheme of boycott I said Assam should not come out, if it did not feel like. If but Assam did come out, it was wrong.”

The friend said, “Maulana Saheb had then said that exception could not be made in the case of Assam.”

Gandhiji said: “Here there is no question of exception. Assam rebelled and that civilly. But we have that slavish mentality. We look to the Congress and then feel that if we do not follow it slavishly something will go wrong with it. I have said that not only a province but even an individual can rebel against the Congress and by doing so save it assuming that he is on the right. I have done so myself. Congress has not attained the present stature without such travail. I remember in 1918 I think there was the Provincial Conference of the Congress workers of Gujarat at Ahmedabad. The late Abbas Tyabjee Saheb was in the chair. All the old guards were there. Ali brothers had not yet joined hands with me fully then as they did later on. The late Shri Patel was there I moved the non-co-operation resolution. I was a non-entity then. A constitutional question arose. Could a provincial conference anticipate the decision of the Congress? I said, “Yes.” A provincial conference and even a

single individual could anticipate the Congress for its own benefit. In spite of opposition of old hands, the resolution was carried. That saved the way for the Congress to pass a similar resolution at Calcutta. India was dumbfounded at the audacity of a provincial conference passing the revolutionary resolution.

We had formed a Satyagraha Sabha outside the Congress. It was joined by Horniman, Sarojini Devi, Sankerlal, Umar Sobhani, Vallabhbai—the mischief making Sardar. I was ill. The Rowlatt Act was passed. I shook with rage. I said to the Sardar I could do nothing unless he helped me. Sardar was willing. And the rest you know. It was rebellion but a healthy one. We celebrate the 6th of April to the 13th. You have all these historical instances before you.

“I have given you all this time to steel your hearts, to give you courage. If you do not act correctly and now, Assam will be finished. Tell Bardoloi, I do not feel the least uneasiness. My mind is made up. Assam must not lose its soul. It must uphold it against the whole world. Else I will say that Assam had only manikins and no men. It is an impertinent suggestion that Bengal should dominate Assam in any way.”

The friends asked if they could tell the people that they have rebelled against the Congress with Gandhi's blessings.

“Talk of God's blessings,” said Gandhiji, “They are much richer. Tell the people even if Gandhi tries to dissuade us, we won't listen.”

### *Confidential*

Copy forwarded to Shri G.D. Birla for favour of perusal in reference to our conversation on the luncheon table on the 16th December, 1946.

Gopinath Bardoloi





**1947**



January 18, 1947

MY DEAR PYARLAL,

Your letter of the 25th December has reached only today. I cannot say when it was posted because evidently you started writing your letter on the 25th but I don't know when you ended it

We have all the news of Bapu's tour from the Press. Hariram, Bapu's personal attendant, and a cook whom I had sent and who has been sent back by Bapu told me that Bapu was looking weak and that since he did not shave regularly his hair and beard had grown much longer. I was also told that many Muslim friends come to him, but it could not be said whether all go back to their home with changed heart.

I have now begun to take rather unhopeful view of the peace mission. The world is what it is and while Bapu may perform his own *tapashcharva*, whether it could have immediate result is extremely doubtful. The long term result, of course, could not be ignored. I again reiterate what I wrote to Bapu once, that the Hindu-Muslim unity can come, if it can come at all, in the Constituent Assembly. I am told that Jinnah will come and join the Assembly after some time. But whether he will take a reasonable attitude is a doubtful factor

But whether Jinnah comes or not, everybody has to do his duty. The Government must be carried on impartially and in the best interest of the country. But I fear with the best intentions, no visible change has taken place in Government machinery.

The food ration has been cut down now to 6 chhatanks a day, of which one chhatank is bad quality maize and 1 chhatank jwar. The whole country is on a starvation diet. Rajendra Babu recently delivered a speech unfolding his future plan. But this all sounds platitude. We are accustomed to such speeches for the last five years and Rajendra Babu's is no better than the previous members. What we want now is action. There is no real effort towards increasing food or other production or for more education, better health and better house.

Sardar is doing very well. He promptly suppressed the communal riots in Delhi. Everything is peaceful.

But the man in the street fails to appreciate Maulana as an Education Minister of Asaf Ali as an Ambassador in United States. I fear if we take impartial view, it is no better than the nepotism practised by the previous Governments in the past.

There are strikes everywhere. About a lac of workers are on strike in Cawnpore where we had firing. Collieries have been given notice and a big strike is expected to take place in a few days. There is coal shortage and many factories are likely to close down. Expenditure is growing up. The pay of the Government employees will have to be increased very shortly which will incur an expenditure of nearly 20 to 30 crores. Teachers in Delhi are on strike. Everybody wants higher wages and less work. On the other hand, the administration which was top heavy during war is still heavier now. I am told that in place of 5000 clerks in the Delhi secretariat before the war, the number has gone up now to nearly 50,000. Nobody dare retrench the expenditure because this will mean unpopularity.

Meanwhile, the Press is full of speeches and interviews and articles by the leaders. But all this does not produce an ounce of more food or an inch of more cloth. The whole economic structure seems to be collapsing. But perhaps I am taking a more alarmist view because I see the things ahead. They are not all rosy.

But I am sure of one thing. All our statesmen and politicians are giving greater weight to politics than to economics. And I feel that economics will be the real test of the efficiency of our own Government. The country needs freedom, no doubt but along with it, it also need more education, more cloth, more food, better sanitation, better health and better houses. Except talk and paper plan nothing is happening in this direction. So one cannot help being a bit pessimistic.

Hope you are quite well. If you happen to meet Bapu, please convey my respectful pranams to him.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

AS AT CAMP KAJIRKHI,  
January 25, 1947

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have your letter of 12th January. You are right. The letter in question was commenced on the 25th of December and taken up again and finished quite a number of days afterwards. Bapu has seen your last letter. In fact it was sent straight to him from Camp Kajirki and was passed on by him to me yesterday with his remarks.

What you say about the general situation is probably all true. Things could hardly be worse. Regarded intellectually, we seem to be heading for the abyss by some relentless power and there seems to be hardly any means of escape. As Bapu wrote the other day to a friend, if one were to rely on outward signs there is hardly a ground for the hope that he would come out alive out of the test. But he has faith that if what he has undertaken in Noakhali, is God's work and taken up at His bidding, its successful termination cannot fail to provide a key to all the other difficult problems confronting us. Success at one point must inevitably make for success at all points. With him it is an application of "Yatha pinde tatha brahmande". He is worn out—'tired in body, mind and soul', as he put it, almost 'sucked dry'. But he is determined to go through the full test of fire and resents any attempt to baulk him of it. One can, under the circumstances, only trust to God in His providence to clothe His servant with the armour of His protection. As standards go, he is keeping extraordinarily fit for the strain he is undergoing. I take it as a sign that he is fully under God's care and we need not worry. It is enough if all of us can pull our weight.

Successful termination of Amtussalaam's fast to me is another reassuring sign. In my mind I had made it a test and criterion of the ultimate end of Bapu's *sadhana*, as I had made Bhanjali's fast on the eve of Bapu's capacity fast in the Agha Khan Palace. While we were writing under the shadow of the sword of Damocles, my sister one day asked me as to what boon I would ask on that particular day, if I had a choice. She thought that I would probably ask for Bapu's fast being averted. She was, however, agreeably surprised when I asked

for the news of successful termination of Bhansali's fast. And lo! and behold there was that very news in the day's paper! From that moment I was sure that it would be all right even with Bapu's fast. And I was right.

I must stop here. The postman must not be kept waiting. Would you kindly instruct your office to renew subscription for the *Reader's Digest* and the overseas edition of the *American Times Magazine*? I have ceased to receive them for a considerable time. In fact you can get the last half a dozen issues too of both sent to me.

More in my next. Do write to me whenever there is anything worth sending and news about yourself in any case.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,  
Pyarelal

### 3

C/O GANDHIJI'S CAMP,  
KAJIR KHIL,  
NOAKHALI,  
January 26, 1947

RESPECTED GHANSHYAMDASJI,

All the books sent by you have arrived. Many thanks. Pandit Jawaharlalji also has sent his *Discovery of India*. Thus we now have sufficient material to keep us busy wading through it. Panditji has sent a handsome message inscribed in the book itself. Your books came direct from the shop unaccompanied by any message from you.

Just now I am reading *A Few Pages from Diary* as also *Scattered Thoughts*. The pages I have gone through so far lack the lustre shining through *Bapu*. It is possible I may have to change my opinion about them. Bal also has gone through some pages of the *Diary*. He was full of praises.

Bal was sent for by Bapu. He has been keeping an indifferent health. After the work he has been entrusted with I am the

main reason for summoning him here. You told me once when I was in Calcutta, "If you continue postponing the thing I can tell you from my experience that you will live to regret it." That was true, but at that time I had wondered if that would ever come to pass. Bapu has conceded his demand that the nuptials would be celebrated soon after our return from here. But who knows when we are going to return?

I have seen your letter to my brother. You are quite right. Ultimately Bapu's perseverance is going to bear fruit. For the present, however, it seems to be utterly unproductive of results. Bapu aims at effecting a complete change in the mode of living and way of thinking and thus to generate a feeling of national unity among the people. Only constructive work can convey this message. But even after 24 years' patient labour India has failed to identify herself with it. Just as genuine home rule is feasible only through village uplift but has so far proved difficult of realization, similarly it is quite practicable to create a feeling of national purpose by bringing about a metamorphosis of the social outlook but has so far remained just an objective still to be achieved. Bapu has made this a test case of the effectiveness of his method, but is now feeling sick at heart as well as physically. Every letter of his complains of pressure of work and though all of us are so near to him we do not know how to share his enormous burden. He does what he can in course of his tour of the villages but what he is doing is like shaking a single leaf of a huge banyan tree. To people of ordinary intelligence his venture into wilderness makes no sense, but this only betrays a lack of faith. God acts the path-finder for those whose faith in the ultimate result of such efforts remains unshaken.

In the village allotted to me life is normal. This particular village had witnessed much devastation but in my village the Hindus constitute a majority while the village which fell to the share of my brother is inhabited by the Muslims mostly and the situation there is still far from normal.

The Indian Medical Association has set up a hospital here. They are seeking my help. For the present I render what help I can to the people here without any aid from them. I do my daily rounds and do what is needed.

Bapu has been picking up Bengali as an item of daily

routine and writes names and addresses on the envelopes of letters in the Bengali script.

‘ I hope you are keeping good health.

*Pranams from*  
Sushila

4

AS AT CAMP KAJIRKIL,  
P. O. RAMGANJ,  
February 11, 1947

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have not of late been writing to friends at all. We are all engulfed in this luckless place. The waters of stagnation show not the least sign of stirring. Babu's present tour will end by the end of March. The question is "What next?" Babu seems to have made up his mind to continue the dispersal and self-isolation till the absolute success of his mission. This may mean marooning during the coming rainy season in our respective rat holes. Even if Babu has to go out of Bengal, we are going to be where we are, I understand.

When I first came here this was a fiercely hostile place. Now they are friendly at least on the surface. But underneath one hears ugly rumblings—Yesterday my dak runner who brings post for Kajirkhil was on the way surrounded by a crowd of Muslim youngsters and nearly manhandled. On 9th there was a procession of about 200 youngsters from Shahpur Bazar, shouting 'Pakistan Lar—Ke—Lenge' slogans. I overtook the procession at Shahpur and they said it was in response to a directive of the Provincial Muslim League as published in the Papers—the object being variously stated, among other things, as the release on bail of Ghulam Sarvar and his gang. It created a panic among the returning refugees at Karatkhal where I was at that time.



Here I must stop. There is a call.

With regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

*PS.* For some time, nearly two months, I have been getting no reply to my communications addressed to Seth Ram Krishna Birla, 8 Royal Exchange Place, Calcutta. I wonder what the reason is.

5

CAMP. NOAKHALI,  
February 15, 1947

CIII. GHANSHYAMDAS,

I have already sent you a letter through Sushila, but the letter I have received from Sardar has made me uneasy. Devdas's letter is still ringing in my ears. I do not remember what I wrote in my letter to you, and I have not preserved its copy. The only thing I stressed in that letter was that you should give up your attitude of detachment. Sardar is clear in his mind that this has got to be written to you. I have great faith in Sardar's robust common sense. Not that I have no faith in Devdas's common sense, but he will ever remain a child to me in spite of the fact that he is now a man. This cannot be said about Sardar. Kishorelal and Narhari, too, are grown-ups but I experience great difficulty in grasping the significance of their criticism. I am pure; I am free from blemishes, my life is dedicated to the fulfilment of a religious purpose : such like assumptions on your part are proving a stumbling block in our understanding of one another. If these assumptions go, everything else goes along with them. That is why I want you to throw yourself in this work wholeheartedly, albeit indirectly, since I would certainly not like your business to suffer on account of your diversion. If I ever act in violation of my religious vows it becomes the sacred duty of all

my friends to criticize me. A civil resister is likely to degenerate into an uncivil one. The only thing to distinguish between the two would then be the civil resister's assumption of an untruth to be the cardinal truth. I am not made that way. But this is only my assumption. However, that is not material to the point at issue. I am not God. I am just a mortal being as much prone to commit mistakes as any one else. In fact I did commit quite a number of them in the past! I may be guilty of some grave mistake at the fag end of my life. If that be so, all my well-wishers must continue to protest unitedly in order to make me open my eyes. If they failed do so I should be departing this life without the consolation of correcting myself. What I have been doing here forms part of what I regard as my religious duty. I would do nothing deliberately that should fall short of that function. Even my rest is dedicated to the attainment of that ideal state.

As I dictate this letter there is a mud plaster on my stomach, and another on my eyes. After a little while I am to go to attend the evening prayers. The Manu episode is taking up a lot of my time and in my mental arrangement of things I have assigned to her a part in the attainment of that ideal state. I cannot explain in so many words how she came to play a part or any part in the attainment of that ideal state. But does that matter at all? What my well-wishers have to decide is whether I take Manu in my lap as a Simon Pure father or as a degenerate one. And what I am doing now is by no means a novel experience for me. In my thinking processes during the last 50 years, and in practice for quite a number of them I have been doing this more or less consistently. If that makes you forsake me I would like you to stick to your own concept of religious duty just as I insist on sticking to mine.

Now I am going to broach another subject. There are quite a number of weavers around here, known as Tantis. They are in distress. Their spinning-wheels have been set on fire in large number. Their homes have also been reduced to ashes. If they are not kept in supply of yarn they will either sit idle or turn labourers. An officer told me the Government here cannot procure the needed yarn, that this could be made possible only if the Central Government comes to their aid. I told him that if he could pay the price I might be able to get the yarn. He agreed. Now are you in a position to arrange for the supply of yarn,

and if so, in what quantities, and at what rate? And would the interim Government's permission be needed for this? Please let me have full information.

*Blessings from*  
Bapu

6.

February 17, 1947

MY DEAR PYARELAL,

I have received your letter of the 11th February. It appears even from the Press that the things are not normal. Recently Fazlul Haque has started campaign against Bapu., This may give a setback to the atmosphere.

I was puzzled to hear from you that you have been getting no reply to your communication addressed to Seth Ramkrishna Birla, 8, Royal Exchange Place, Calcutta. You could not have received any reply since there is no person of the above name. I fear your letters must be lying in Dead Letter Office. Evidently, you mean Krishnakumar Birla.

I hope you are keeping well.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI PYARELAL.  
KAJIRKHI

AS AT GANDHI CAMP,  
KAZIRKHALI,  
P. O. RAMGANJ,  
DIST. NOAKHALI,  
July 30, 1947

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

It seems quite an age since I wrote to you or heard from you. The reason for my not writing you know—I think, Bapu explained it to you—or was it to Sardar—in one of his letters from Shrirampur. He regarded it as a distraction and a diversion for the *yajna* on which he wanted exclusive concentration.

It has been by no means an uneventful period for us. But our crowded events, I fancy, present little interest to the wider world outside. But if you feel interested I shall send you a sheaf of papers which will tell the tale at this end.

Personally, I do not feel happy over the birth of “Two Dominions”. My mind is full of uneasy foreboding. One can only hope and pray that the worst fears will not come true, I feel too very concerned about Bapu’s health. Incipient general oedema and mental oppression—bordering almost upon depression are alarming symptoms.

I had all my requirements met from Calcutta. Your standing instructions were there. I have never had any difficulty.

I have not been receiving *Time* since December and the *Reader’s Digest* since January. I got an intimation from the latter asking for renewal of subscription. Would you kindly get the needful done in regard to both these journals and get the back issues from January onwards of the same sent to me from your record? Also could you instruct your Record Keeper to send me *Life Magazine*—a week or two after its receipt when everybody has done with it, beginning from the first week of December last? I shall carefully preserve them after perusal and send them to Calcutta from time to time. One feels the need to keep abreast of the time in this lonely outpost, if only to keep off the “marooned” feeling.

With best wishes,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

PS. I had come to Kazirkihil this morning. I found a letter addressed to Satis Babu from the Inspector of Police which gives a foretaste of things to come after the 15th of August. It suggests in effect withdrawal of all camps of "outsiders" from this area. Another letter from S. I. Ramganj has come just now ordering immediate withdrawal from Gopiribay of my colleague and co-worker, Bishwaranjan Sen, the mildest and gentlest person I have ever known—a personification of ahimsa though a master of arts. I am getting Kanu sent in his place. I suppose I shall be the next target.

Pyarelal

8

August 6, 1947

MY DEAR PYARELAL,

I was delighted to receive your letter after a long time. Babu was talking to me about you. I note that the things are just now somewhat disquietening but I personally do not take a pessimistic view. Things must settle down in course of time.

The economic factors, however, are acting against us. There is no rain in a large belt in North and Western India and famine conditions have already started prevailing. Let us, however, hope for the best.

With reference to the magazines, you should have written to me that your subscription has expired. I am sending to you a few magazines and at the same time I will arrange to get you *Time* and *Reader's Digest* regularly.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI PYARELAL NAYAR  
GANDHI CAMP  
KAZIRKIHIL  
P. O. RAMGANJ  
NOAKHALI DIST.

**In Calcutta**

: 1 :

CALCUTTA,

September 4, 1947

After a period, nearly of six months I had the privilege of seeing once again the old, familiar face, of hearing the sound of his old familiar voice when with my friend and colleague Shri Charubhuman Chowdhury I came down to Calcutta to apprise Gandhi of the situation that was developing in Noakhali and to seek his advice. Although Calcutta was apparently in an ecstasy of communal amity his mind, uncannily sensitive to the hidden lie in the soul, was anything but restful. After some hesitation he decided to go to Noakhali in spite of the alarming news which continued to pour in from the Punjab. "Shall I start tomorrow or on the day after tomorrow", he asked those around him and the latter day was fixed for departure. That evening he, who keeps watch when humanity's vision fails, gave the warning signal. "My resolve to go to Noakhali has collapsed after this evening's happenings," he told me when I saw him that night. "I cannot go to Noakhali or for that matter anywhere when Calcutta is in flames. Today's incident to me is a sign and a warning from God. You have for the time being, therefore, to return to Noakhali without me. You can tell the people of Noakhali that if my colleagues for any reason cannot be there, they will find me, surely, in their midst."

And then casually he hinted that if the conflagration spread, he would have no alternative but to fast. "Have I not often said that there is yet another fast in store for me?" The next day was his day of silence. Ugly news continued to pour. Several deputations awaited on him in the course of the day to consult him as to what they should do to quench the fire. "Go in the midst of the rioters and prevent them from indulging in madness or get killed in the attempt. But do not come back alive to report failure. The situation calls for sacrifice on the part of top rankers. So far the unknown, nameless rank and file alone have been the victims of the holocaust with the one

exception of the late Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi. That is not enough.”

Even as he uttered these words, he was cogitating within himself, as to where he came into the picture which he was presenting to them. For he added, “Of course, I cannot do today what I have told them to. I will not be permitted to. I saw that yesterday. Everybody will protect me from harm if I went in the midst of the mad crowd. I may drop down from sheer physical exhaustion that is nothing. It won't do for a soldier to be exhausted in the midst of battle. “But inaction in a crisis is not in Gandhiji's nature. When a dear old friend saw him at night his mind was already made up. “You don't expect me to approve of your proposed step,” remarked the friend with his usual affectionate banter as he perused Gandhiji's statement setting forth his reasons for going on a fast. Together they took stock of the situation, thrashing out the question in the minutest detail.

“Can you fast against goondas”, argued the friend.

“The conflagration has been caused not by goondas but by those who have become goondas. It is we who make goondas. Without our sympathy and passive support, the goondas would have no legs to stand upon. I want to touch the hearts of those who are behind the goondas.”

“But must you launch your fast at this stage?”, finally argued the friend. “Why not wait and watch a little?”

To this Gandhiji's reply was that the fast had to be then or never. It would be too late afterwards. “The minority Muslims cannot be left in a perilous state My fast has to be preventive if it is to be ably good

“I know I shall be able to tackle the Punjab too if I can control Calcutta,” he continued. “But if I falter now, the conflagration may spread and soon, I can see clearly, two or three powers will be upon us and thus will end our shortlived dream of independence.”

“But supposing you die, the conflagration would be worse,” argued the friend.

“At last I won't be there to witness it. I shall have done my bit. More is not given a man to do,” replied Gandhiji.

The friend capitulated.

“But why add sour lemon juice to water, if you are to put

yourself entirely in God's hands"—he (the friend) permitted himself to think aloud as he read that part of the statement where Gandhiji had allowed himself that latitude.

"You are right," quickly replied Gandhiji. "I allowed it out of weakness. It jarred on me even as I wrote it. A satyagrahi must hope to survive his 'conditional fast only by a timely fulfilment of the condition."

And so the addition of sour lime juice to the water to be taken during the fast went by the board and the unadulterated venture of faith commenced.

This was on Monday night. Two days later an important official of the Calcutta Muslim League waited on him to plead with him to give up the fast. "Your very presence in our midst is an asset to us. It is the guarantee of our safety. Do not deprive us of it."

"My presence did not check the rowdies, the other day, my word seemed to have lost all efficacy so far as they were concerned. My fast will now be broken only when the conflagration ends and the pristine peace of the last fifteen days returns. If the Muslims really love me and regard me as an asset they can demonstrate their faith by refusing to give way to the instinct of revenge and retaliation even if the whole of Calcutta goes mad. In the mean time my ordeal must continue."

The friend retired with a heavy heart. Added Gandhiji after he had left, "Let the evil doers desist from evil, not to save my life, but as a result of true heart change. Let all understand that a make-believe peace cannot satisfy me. I do not want a temporary lull to be followed by a worse conflagration. In that event, I shall have to go on an *unconditional* fast unto death."

Pyarelal

: 2 :

DACCA,

September 6, 1947

Then, the miracle happened. As the fasting was on and drop by drop strength ebbed out of the frail little man on the fasting



bed, it caused a deep churning up in the hearts of all concerned, bringing the hidden leas to the surface. People came to Gandhiji and confessed to him what they would not have uttered to any living ear. Hindus and Muslims combined in an all out effort to save the precious life that was being offered as ransom for disrupted peace between brother and brother. Mixed processions, consisting of all communities, issued forth and paraded through the affected parts of the city to restore communal harmony. A group of about fifty people including the leaders and active spirits behind the "resistance groups" that had grown up during the August disturbances last year and who were believed to have the power to control the turbulent elements in the city, saw Gandhi on the 4th instant and gave an undertaking that they would immediately bring the trouble makers under check. They told Gandhiji that they had already traced and put under restraint the ringleaders who had organised the rowdiness in his camp of Sunday last including the person who had hurled the stick that had narrowly missed hitting him. They would all surrender themselves to him and take whatever punishment might be meted out to them. Would not Gandhiji on the strength of that assurance now break his fast so that they might be able to go to work unburdened by the oppression of the fast, they asked? If not what was his condition for breaking the fast? In reply Gandhiji told them that he would break his fast only when they could assure him that there would never again be recrudescence of communal madness in the city even though the whole of West Bengal and for that matter India might go ablaze and the Muslims themselves would come and tell him that they now felt safe and secure and therefore he need not further prolong his fast. He did not think himself, he proceeded to explain, to be able to control all the goondas in the city, though he would love to as he had not the requisite degree of purity, detachment and steadfastness of mind. But if he could not take them purge themselves of the communal virus he would feel that life was not worth living and he would not care to prolong his life. They had referred to the oppression of his fast. He could not understand that. Why should they have a feeling of oppression if what they had told him came right from their hearts?

"If a single step is taken under pressure of the fasts, not

from conviction, it would cause oppression, but there should be no oppression if there is complete co-operation between the head and the heart. The function of my fast is to purify, to release our energies by overcoming our inertia and mental sluggishness not to paralyse us or to render us inactive!"

"My fast isolates the forces of evil." The moment they are isolated they die, for evil by itself has no legs to stand upon." "I expect you therefore," he concluded, "to work with even greater vigour under the instigation of my fast, not to feel its oppression."

The deputation went back realising that it was not fair to ask him to give up his fast unless they could deliver the goods. Later in the afternoon a number of these who had led the disturbances in his camp on Sunday night, came to him and made their surrender with what to all intent appeared to be genuine contrition.

That evening, another deputation of prominent citizens of Calcutta representing all communities, including Shaheed Saheb, Shri N.C. Chatterjee and Sardar Niranjan Singh Talib, waited on him. They told him that they had been to all the affected parts of the city and there was quiet everywhere, they had every reason to hope that there would be no recrudescence of trouble which was not communal really but the work of goondas. They requested him to break his fast. Gandhiji mildly rebuked them for the habit of taking refuge behind moral alibis by blaming it all on the goondas. It was a dangerous expedient. He showed by citing personal experiences of the days of his boyhood how it is the cowardice or passive sympathy of the average citizen or the "man with a stake" that gives the so-called goondas the power to do mischief. "My fast should make you more vigilant, more truthful more careful and precise in your speech," he remarked.

Taking up next their request to break his fast, he asked them two straight questions. Could they in all sincerity assure him that there would never be any more recrudescence of communal madness in Calcutta? Could they say that there was a genuine change of heart among the citizens of Calcutta so that they would no longer foster or tolerate communal frenzy? They should let him continue his fast if they could not give him that guarantee for in the event of the present communal

outbreak being followed by another, he would undertake an irrevocable fast unto death. "But supposing there is another communal outbreak in spite of your assurances, since you are not a party to it," he resumed, "would you give your word of honour that you would in that event suffer to the uttermost before a hair of the minority community is injured, that you would die in the attempt to put out the conflagration but return alive to report failure? And I want this from you in writing." If they could give that guarantee he would break his fast. "But mind you," he added, "My blood will be upon your head if you say one thing and mean another, rather than thoughtlessly hurry let me prolong my fast a little longer. It would not hurt me. When a man fasts, it is not the gallons of water he drinks that sustains him, but God." He spoke with deep passion. A pin drop silence followed. Shaheed Saheb broke the ice. Gandhiji had said he would break the fast when Calcutta would return to sanity. That condition had been fulfilled. Was he not imposing fresh conditions by asking them to sign that declaration? To this "legal argument", Gandhiji replied that there was no fresh condition imposed. All that was there implied in the original terms of the fast. "What I have spoken now is only a home truth to make you know what is what. If there is complete accord between your conviction and feeling there should be no difficulty in signing that declaration. It is the acid test of your sincerity and courage of conviction. If however, you sign it merely to keep me alive, you will be encompassing my death."

Everybody realised the solemnity of the warning. Rajaji and Acharya Kripalani, who had arrived during the latter part of the discussion, proposed they might leave Gandhiji alone a little while and retire to the adjoining room to confer together. Shaheed Saheb endorsed the suggestion. They were about to retire when an appeal signed by about 40 representatives of the Hindu and Muslim residents of Narkeldanga, Sitlatal, Maniktola and Kankurgachi areas was brought in. In that appeal, the signatories swore that they would not allow any untoward event or incident in that locality which was the worst affected during the previous riots and earnestly prayed to Gandhiji to break his fast. "It may also be reported," continued the signatories, "that no incident occurred in this

mixed area since 14th of August 1947.” “So our effort has not been in vain,” remarked Shaheed Sahib, as he read out the appeal. “Yes, the heaven is at work,” Gandhiji added.

Shaheed Sahib resumed, “Now that even the Muslims have joined in appeal, won’t you break your fast ? This shows that they have fully accepted your peace mission although they are the aggrieved party in the present riots. It is all the more strange because at one time they looked upon you as their arch enemy. But their hearts have been so touched by the service you have rendered them that today they acclaim you as their friend and are behaving nicely and are working with greater enthusiasm even than, if I may say so, Quaid-e-Azam.”

It was a graceful thing, gracefully said Rajaji, not to be beaten in a tournament of chivalry; quickly added, “If I may vary the language, I would say that he is safer today in the hands of the Muslims than in those of Hindus.”

Gandhiji followed with interest this contest of chivalry and picked out for his comments only the portion of Shaheed Sahib’s remarks in which he had referred to the Muslims as the aggrieved party. He did not like the term “aggrieved party”. “Do not think of the Muslims as the aggrieved party”. He remarked. “The essence of our present peace mission is that we are to forget the past. I do not want the Muslims to feel that in West Bengal they are the under-dog. Unless we can do that, we will not have done solid work.”

They then all retired to the next room and Gandhiji who had an attack of weakness and nausea during the latter part of the talk was left alone to rest.

In the deliberations that took place in the adjoining room Shaheed Sahib was cautious and circumspect, which only showed his sincerity and sense of responsibility. Acharya Kripalani, cynical and sardonic; Rajaji tactful and persuasive and full of practical wisdom, concealing his emotion under a mask of ratiocination. The discussion was brief but unhurried. Rajaji dictated the draft of the pledge which was signed by Shri N.C. Chatterjee first, then by Shri Deven Mukerjee followed by Shaheed Sahib Suhrawardy, Shri R.K. Jaidka and Sardar Niranjani Singh Talib. A car load of hand grenades and arms had in the mean time arrived to be surrendered to Gandhiji as a token of repentance on the part of those who had taken part

in the savagery of reprisals and counter reprisals. Without any loss of time the signatories then returned to Gandhiji with the document.

“But Sir, is it any good my signing this document,” remarked Shaheed Sahib to Gandhiji, “I may any time be called to Pakistan and then what happens to my pledge?”

“You must in that event have confidence that those whom you leave behind will deliver the good,” replied Gandhiji. “Moreover, you can come back,” he added.

“I have no desire to hoodwink you and I never will do so deliberately”, remarked Shaheed Sahib, explaining his extreme cautiousness, which Gandhiji greatly appreciated.

“Well, I will break the fast now,” said Gandhiji at last, “and leave for the Punjab tomorrow. I shall now go there with far greater strength and confidence than I could have three days back.”

Shaheed Sahib interposed, “You cannot leave tomorrow. Your presence is necessary here at least for a couple of days yet to consolidate the peace.” Others supported him. They did not tell him what was uppermost in their minds besides that they were deeply concerned at his undertaking a railway journey in his present state of health. The unruly crowds in Behar and all along the line would tear him to pieces in their blind adoration.

So, Saturday was provisionally fixed for his departure.

Dr. Dinesh Mehta had in the mean time hurried away to get orange juice ready. Before breaking the fast Gandhiji, according to his usual practice had prayer recited. But neither I nor my friend Shri Charubhusan Chowdhury could stay on to witness the final happy scene. We had our assignment with which Gandhiji has charged us to fulfil at Dacca. “We shall be blown sky high if we miss our train,” I whispered to my friend who was still tempted to linger on. And so we hurried to the car that was waiting to take us to the Sealdah station as the singing of the Poet’s song:

When life is dry and parched up,  
Descend thou in a shower of mercy. ...

Followed by Ram Dhun filled the air.

AS AT GANDHI CAMP,  
KAZIRKHALI,  
P. O. RAMGANJ,  
NOAKHALI,  
September 7, 1947

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I wrote you a long letter from Calcutta, which must have been redirected to you from New Delhi. I know you must be anxious to learn all about Babu's fast. I am, therefore, sending you herewith advance copy of an account of the fast which I wrote for *Harijan* at Babu's instance.

I had to hurry back to Dacca where I had to meet the Prime Minister of East Bengal with a note which Babu had addressed to him. I found him to be full of good intentions so far as the protection of the minority community was concerned but his notices about the content thereof seem to be very different from ours and that disturbed me. I am afraid the commitments with regard to the relief grants promised to the riot affected people will go into thin air. It is also a question how far the present ministry will be able to overcome the prejudice and the tradition of inefficiency and corruption in the administrative machine. There are about a hundred members in the Assembly here and as many as 25 out of these are candidates for a seat in the cabinet. Each one holds three to five votes, so no matter which ministry is in office it will always be at the mercy of the grunted combine. You must have noticed that Fazlul Haq, the patron of Ghulam Sarwar and Kasem Ali—has already started agitation against the Nazimuddin cabinet.

Babu's health was fairly good and the fast came easy to him this time. He must have left for Punjab today to face God alone knows what. He has a date with Noakhali but no one knows when the visit will actually come.

With regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

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AS AT GANDHI CAMP,  
KAZIRKHLI,  
P. O. RAMGANJ,  
DISTRICT NOAKHALI,  
October 9, 1947

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I wrote you a long letter more than three weeks ago to your Bombay address. I wonder if it has reached you for I have had no acknowledgment for the same. In that letter among other things, I had mentioned that I had not begun to receive *Reader's Digest* and *Time* (air mail edition) about which I had written to you nor had the back issues of the same and *Life* as from January last, reached me as requested. That remains so even now.

I am enclosing herewith the outline of an experiment which I had conducted with considerable success. It has since been published in *Harian* by Bapu with a foot-note commending it. The Bengal Central Relief Committee sanctioned about a month back an amount of Rs. 5,000 for it. But I had to suspend the scheme in the mean time owing to lifting of control over coconut oil which brought down the price of coconut oil in East Bengal. At the same time the price of coconut has rocketed up as it always does in this season, and it will be two or three months before it again comes down to economical level. In the mean time acute food crisis has arisen here and my little flock of about five hundred families spread over six or seven villages in which I am operating, who have weathered many a storm with me and are determined to do or die rather than play the coward or flee, are faced with starvation unless I can resume coconut oil production as a famine relief measure. Three things are necessary for this, (1) rice at control price (2) subsidy to the maximum tune of Re. 1 per seer of oil produced during the deficit mentioned above, (3) help, purely as labour of love, of a distributing agency for disposing of the stock of oil without adulteration. As regards (1) the D. M. of Noakhali has promised fifty maunds of rice and I have requested Shri Bardoloi for two wagons of the same. With regard to (2) Nripen Babu has promised to shoulder the burden but I wonder

how far his limited resources will allow it. Could you help? As regards (3) Shri Bardoloi has asked Messrs Chandmal Saragi and Messrs Himmatsinghka whether they cannot take it up. You have a net-work of agencies in East Bengal as well as elsewhere in India. Could they not also do the same? My total production, when it gets into full swing, would amount to about 10 to 15 maunds per week. What I would like is to make delivery of oil to the distributing agencies against cash payment and there my job should end. Distributing agencies must look to the rest. My only condition is that they must guarantee that no adulteration of the product will be allowed to take place. I am jealous about the quality of our product. The District Magistrate of Noakhali has promised to get me facility over East Bengal Railways for booking oil by passenger train and the Assam Government will most probably do the same. The price of Rs. 4 mentioned by me is as per ex-co-operative society's godown at Bhatialpur.

The market price of imported, heavily adulterated copra oil is from Rs. 3 to 3-8-0 per seer in East Bengal. Ours will be guaranteed to be pure and fresh—each tin bearing on it the date of filling. In the fresh state it is a fragrant delicacy and can be used with advantage in the place of bazar *ghee* or *Daldu*. It will not keep fresh for more than three months. For that it must be processed, i.e., made inert by the precipitation of natural proteins along with other vital elements, which would be nothing short of desecration of sacred human labour which has produced it.

With regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

SHRI G. D. Birla  
BIRLA HOUSE  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD  
NEW DELHI



12

October 14, 1947

MY DEAR PYARELAL,

I have been receiving your letters and if I did not reply, it was because no reply was necessary. I very much enjoy your letters. Please continue to write to me.

Nowadays there are difficulties about the American magazines. But I will try to send you my own.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas

SHRI PYARLLAL  
GANDHI CAMP  
KAZIRKHHI  
P. O. RAMGANJ  
DI. NOAKHALI

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AS AT GANDHI CAMP,  
KAZIRKHHIL,  
P. O. RAMGANJ,  
DISTRICT NOAKHALI,  
October 23, 1947

MY DEAR GHANSHYAMDASJI,

I have your letter of 14th inst Yesterday. I am awfully sorry to find that I had asked you to send American magazines which are difficult to obtain nowadays. Please, don't worry to send for them, or if you send your own you can have my assurance that they will be punctiliously returned after use.

Please, refer to my letter of 9th October. A careful perusal will show that it is all for reply. In item No. 2 and 3 your help is solicited. I am mentioning it again as in hurried reading the points in question might have escaped you.

Pujā here has so far passed off without an incident. On the whole there is an upsurge of goodwill towards the minority community throughout the district—a reflex of the firm, official attitude. In this village the celebrations are, on all reckonings, on a par with pre-riot celebrations almost if not absolutely. This is not to say that 'God's in his heaven and all's right with the world' in Eastern Pakistan. It only shows that "Peace at any price" policy promulgated by the Pakistan High Command is paying a good dividend at least in this God-forsaken corner. A very small mercy, true, but even a tiny light shines far in a dark world.

With regards,

*Yours sincerely,*  
Pyarelal

SHRI G. D. BIRLA  
BIRLA HOUSE  
ALBUQUERQUE ROAD  
NEW DELHI

## 14

October 30, 1947

MY DEAR PYARELAL,

I did not reply to the points raised in your letter of the 9th October because I wanted to have a discussion with some of my Calcutta friends. Subsequently, I happened to have a talk with them and they told me that to think of a subsidy of Rs. 40 per maund could never be a practical proposition. The price of oil itself would be anything like 50 to 60 per maund and to give subsidy of Rs 40 per md. means that your cost of production should be abnormally high. With such high cost, I don't think you can carry on this business for long. This is what I have been told.

I find from your letter that your production would be about 15 maunds per week. A subsidy at the rate of 40 per maund means a loss of 2500 per maund and 30,000 in a year. You will

see, therefore, that basically there is something wrong with this proposition which requires nearly 79 per cent subsidy on the products.

I have not got any agency in East Bengal now. We have, more or less stopped business in Pakistan area. Even when we used to purchase jute, it was only at two or three places.

Bapu is all right. Sushila has gone to Sevagram.

*Yours sincerely,*  
Ghanshyamdas



**1955**

**Enclosure**

**Discussion**

Ghanshyamdasji remarked in a lighter vein that as he was leaving for Bombay should not Bapu grant him boon in the same way as Savitri secured a boon for a son from Yamraj who had come to take her husband's life. The boon should be that he would give up the fast.

BAPU : Only God is faultless. Whenever I took to fasting I always looked forward to its termination. This happened in Calcutta as well. I am incapable of self-deception, so whenever I saw someone approaching me he appeared to me to be the harbinger of happy tidings, that would enable me to end the fast. That feeling of anticipation is absent this time. There is no expectation of good news, therefore none of jubilation at the prospect of a happy termination of the fast. Here comes Ghanshyamdas. Presumably he comes with a request to terminate my fast. Isn't that so? Muridula wants to know what she should do in Panjab. I said she cannot want anything more than that at this juncture. Then there is Iftikhar who wants to know if he can come to him for guidance. I said he was welcome I told Muridula, "Go and tell the Punjabis to put a stop to this madness. If the result is wholesome it will prove contagious everywhere. If I gave up the fast the good work now in the process of fruition would come to an abrupt end. Delhi needs a lot of cleansing. If Sardar is freed from his preoccupation in Delhi his task will be easier than he will be able to go wherever his presence is needed. At present the nation's work stands paralysed. There is no limit to my patience. I am also doing quite a sizable amount of work. I dictate material for *Harijan*.

G.D. : I have had a letter from Randhawe. He said the atmosphere in Delhi has improved considerably.

BAPU : Tell Randhawe he claims too much. People have a suspicion as to his impartiality. But nobody says he is worthless.

G.D. : It is rather difficult to declare anybody free from that blemish. I, too, have felt pangs of deep pain. What Pakistan has done made me lose confidence in the Muslims. My conscience stirs into action when it is awakened. When there is pent-up rage in one's heart it is not possible to rise above prejudices.

BAPU : Does not mean that what is happening in Pakistan is not the result of prejudice, as they claim it? I also worked for the Pakistan when in Noakhali.

G.D. : Quarban Ali's attitude is free from prejudice. Only when one is prepared to regard prejudice self-serving can one be considered above prejudice. This feeling cannot be developed when one is angry.

BAPU : That is quite all right. You may declare fasting to be unsupportable. But if I end my fast the flow of happy results which has just begun will suddenly come to stop.

G.D. : I act accordingly to my own feeling. This state of mind looks like a temporary symptom of a diseased mind. If he continues on this path we are heading for self-destruction. It is for you to purify the atmosphere.

BAPU : That also is possible only after that. Much self-cleansing is called for.

G.D. : But this cleansing can be possible only when you preserve your physical being.

BAPU : I, too, feel that this body is going to survive. I have not given up the will to live. In such cases God strengthens that will. From the doctors' point of view uremia and tendency to sleep much are not healthy symptoms. And if I do not sleep at all that also would not be good. But I have such faith in God that if I feel myself to be in good health the kidney function also improves.

G.D. : My heart is here. Yesterday when Shyamaprasad urged me to go I felt like going. Sardar's face, that iron man's face, wears a forlorn look. He said if I felt like going I was at liberty to do so. My heart was full of anguish. Why should this fast be prolonged? I told Sardar it looked as if the fast would not be protracted. Still I would like to stay on.

BAPU : But Why? Brijmohan is here. Things will go on normally?

G.D. : There is God's hand to guide us in everything we do.  
But man says he alone is responsible for what he is doing.

BAPU : Wherever I go this cleansing process must continue.  
Otherwise it would have been different.

BAPU : That was the only thing that could be exploited. By doing this (i.e., by paying Pakistan the amount of Rs. 55 crores) the Union has added inches to its stature. If they feel like fighting we, too, have those 55 crores. Our soldiers will also feel they are fighting with our money very well; fight on. For how long will you continue to fight.





It is the hall-mark of gentlemanliness that one should make a clean breast of one's mistakes before the whole world. There is no alternative for a genuine gentleman.

*September 1945*

You have my blessings and prayer in terms of famishing and naked India.

*May 9, 1945*

If I am to live for 125 years, it is absolutely necessary that I should cultivate an attitude of non-attachment, carrying it to the point when man may be considered qualified enough to reach the ideal state of mind. How far this is possible, or if it is possible at all, I cannot say because I do not know. And why should I strive to penetrate into God's secret? For me it is sufficient to feel content that I am doing my duty while at the same time keeping my eyes fixed on the ideal state, the ultimate in realm of perfection. But I do know that it is not easy to attain to that ideal state. But I have spent a lifetime doing the impossible.

*October 26, 1945*