

MY NON-VIOLENCE

BY
M. K. GANDHI

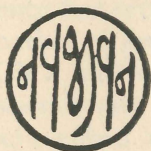


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MY PATH

I am conscious of the fact that the truth for which I stand has not yet been fully accepted by India. It has not yet been fully vindicated. My work in India is still in the experimental stage. In such circumstances any foreign adventure on my part would be altogether premature. I should be fully satisfied if the experiment demonstrably succeeds in India.

My path is clear. Any attempt to use me for violent purposes is bound to fail. I have no secret methods. I know no diplomacy save that of Truth. I have no weapon but non-violence. I may be unconsciously led astray for a while but not for all time. I have therefore well-defined limitations, within which alone I may be used. Attempts have been made before now to use me unlawfully more than once. They have failed each time so far as I am aware.

I am yet ignorant of what exactly Bolshevism is. I have not been able to study it. I do not know whether it is for the good of Russia in the long run. But I do know that in so far as it is based on violence and denial of God, it repels me. I do not believe in short — violent — cuts to success. Those Bolshevik friends who are bestowing their attention on me should realize that, however much I may sympathize with and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes. There is, therefore, really no meeting ground between the school of violence and myself. But my creed of non-violence not only does not preclude me but compels me even to associate with anarchists and all those who believe in violence. But that association is always with the sole object of weaning them from what appears to me to be their error. For experience convinces me that permanent good can never be the outcome of untruth and violence. Even if my belief is a fond delusion, it will be admitted that it is a fascinating delusion.

Young India, 11-12-1924

made of university corps for purposes antagonistic to the national interest, but whilst the Government retain its anti-national character there is every likelihood of these corps being used against the nation on due occasions. What, for instance, could prevent a future Dyer from using these university men for enacting another Jalianwalla Bagh? May not young men themselves offer their services for an expedition against the innocent Chinese or the equally innocent Tibetans when their subjection is felt necessary in the interest of imperial commerce? Some of the young volunteers who served during the war justified their action by saying that thereby they gained experience in the art of war—just the reason which consciously or unconsciously prompted some of the Frontier expeditions. Those who run empires successfully have an instinctive knowledge of human nature. It is not deliberately bad or wicked. It acts excellently under a high impulse. And thousands of young men, who, before they join any corps, must take the oath of allegiance and must on scores of occasions salute the Union Jack, will naturally want to give a good account of their loyalty and willingly shoot down their fellowmen upon receiving from their superiors orders to fire. Whilst, therefore, even as an out-and-out believer in Ahimsa I can understand and appreciate military training for those who believe in the necessity of the use of arms on given occasions, I am unable to advocate the military training of the youth of the country under the Government so long as it remains utterly irresponsible to the needs of the people; and I should be against compulsory military training in every case and even under a national Government. Those who do not wish to take the military training should not be debarred from joining public universities. Physical culture stands on a different basis altogether. It can be and should be part of any sound educational scheme even as many other subjects are.

Young India, 24-9-1925

in the imagined case would quietly allow herself to be violated. In the first instance, such a woman would stand in no danger of violence; and in the second, if she did, without doing violence to the ruffian she would be able completely to defend her honour.

But I must not enter into details. Even women who can defend themselves with violence are not many. Happily, however, cases of indecent assaults are not also very many. Be that as it may, I believe implicitly in the proposition that perfect purity is its own defence. The veriest ruffian becomes for the time being tame in the presence of resplendent purity.

The writer is not correctly informed about my attitude in regard to General Dyer. He would be pleased to know that not only did I not recommend any punishment of General Dyer, but even my colleagues, largely out of their generous regard for me, waived the demands for punishment. What, however, I did ask for, and I do press for even now, is the stopping of the pension to General Dyer. It is no part of the plan of non-violence to pay the wrong-doer for the wrong he does, which practically would be the case if I became a willing party to the continuation of the pension to General Dyer. But let not me be misunderstood. I am quite capable of recommending even punishment to wrong-doers under conceivable circumstances; for instance, I would not hesitate under the present state of society to confine thieves and robbers, which is in itself a kind of punishment. But I would also admit that it is not Satyagraha, and that it is a fall from the pure doctrine. That would be an admission, not of the weakness of the doctrine but the weakness of myself. I have no other remedy to suggest in such cases in the present state of society. I am therefore satisfied with advocating the use of prisons more as reformatories than as places of punishment.

But I would draw the distinction between killing and detention or even corporal punishment. I think that there is a difference not merely in quantity but also in quality. I can recall the punishment of detention. I can make reparation to the man upon whom I inflict corporal punishment. But once a man is killed, the punishment

is beyond recall or reparation. God alone can take life, because He alone gives it.

I hope there is no confusion in the writer's mind when he couples the self-immolation of a Satyagrahi with the punishment imposed from without. But in order to avoid even a possibility of it, let me make it clear that the doctrine of violence has reference only to the doing of injury by one to another. Suffering injury in one's own person is, on the contrary, of the essence of non-violence and is the chosen substitute for violence to others. It is not because I value life low that I can countenance with joy thousands voluntarily losing their lives for Satyagraha, but because I know that it results in the long run in the least loss of life, and, what is more, it ennobles those who lose their lives and morally enriches the world for their sacrifice. I think that the writer is correct in saying that non-co-operation is not merely an ideal but also "a safe and quick way to freedom for India". I do suggest that the doctrine holds good also as between States and States. I know that I am treading on delicate ground if I refer to the late war. But I fear that I must, in order to make the position clear. It was a war of aggrandizement, as I have understood, on either part. It was a war for dividing the spoils of the exploitation of weaker races — otherwise euphemistically called the world commerce. If Germany today changed her policy and made a determination to use her freedom, not for dividing the commerce of the world but for protecting, through her moral superiority, the weaker races of the earth, she could certainly do that without armament. It would be found that before general disarmament in Europe commences, as it must some day unless Europe is to commit suicide, some nation will have to dare to disarm herself and take large risks. The level of non-violence in that nation, if that event happily comes to pass, will naturally have risen so high as to command universal respect. Her judgments will be unerring, her decisions will be firm, her capacity for heroic self-sacrifice will be great, and she will want to live as much for other nations as for herself. I may not push this delicate subject any further. I know that I am writing in a theoretical way upon

a practical question without knowing all its bearings. My only excuse is, if I understand it correctly, that that is what the writer has wanted me to do.

I do justify entire non-violence, and consider it possible in relation between man and man and nations and nations; but it is not "a resignation from all real fighting against wickedness". On the contrary, the non-violence of my conception is a more active and more real fighting against wickedness than retaliation whose very nature is to increase wickedness. I contemplate a mental, and therefore a moral, opposition to immoralities. I seek entirely to blunt the edge of the tyrant's sword, not by putting up against it a sharper-edged weapon, but by disappointing his expectation that I would be offering physical resistance. The resistance of the soul that I should offer instead would elude him. It would at first dazzle him, and at last compel recognition from him, which recognition would not humiliate him but would uplift him. It may be urged that this again is an ideal state. And so it is. The propositions from which I have drawn my arguments are as true as Euclid's definitions, which are none the less true, because in practice we are unable even to draw Euclid's line on a blackboard. But even a geometrician finds it impossible to get on without bearing in mind Euclid's definitions. Nor may we, the German friend, his colleagues and myself, dispense with the fundamental propositions on which the doctrine of Satyagraha is based.

There remains for me now only one ticklish question to answer. In a most ingenious manner the writer has compared the English arrogation of the right of becoming tutors to the whole world to my views on relations between married people. But the comparison does not hold good. The marriage bond involves seeing each other only by mutual agreement. But surely abstention requires no consent. Married life would be intolerable, as it does become, when one partner breaks through all bonds of restraint. Marriage confirms the right of union between two partners to the exclusion of all the others when in their joint opinion they consider such union to be desirable. But it confers no right upon one partner to demand obedience of the other

to one's wish for union. What should be done when one partner on moral or other grounds cannot conform to the wishes of the other is a separate question. Personally, if divorce was the only alternative, I should not hesitate to accept it, rather than interrupt my moral progress — assuming that I want to restrain myself on purely moral grounds.

Young India, 8-10-1925

12

WAR OR PEACE ?

The way of peace is the way of truth. Truthfulness is even more important than peacefulness. Indeed, lying is the mother of violence. A truthful man cannot long remain violent. He will perceive in the course of his search that he has no need to be violent, and he will further discover that so long as there is the slightest trace of violence in him, he will fail to find the truth he is searching.

There is no half way between truth and non-violence on the one hand, and untruth and violence on the other. We may never be strong enough to be entirely non-violent in thought, word and deed. But we must keep non-violence as our goal and make steady progress towards it. The attainment of freedom, whether for a man, a nation or the world, must be in exact proportion to the attainment of non-violence by each. Let those, therefore, who believe in non-violence as the only method of achieving real freedom keep the lamp of non-violence burning bright in the midst of the present impenetrable gloom. The truth of a few will count; the untruth of millions will vanish even like chaff before whiff of wind.

Young India, 20-5-1926

I do not know whether the statements made by the correspondent about the misdeeds of the Justice Party men are true. Perhaps there is another side to the story. But, assuming the truth of the statements, I can only congratulate those who were spat upon, or assaulted, or had night-soil thrown upon them. No injury has happened to them, if they had the courage to suffer the insult without even mental retaliation. But it was wholly wrong on their part to suffer it, if they felt irritated but refrained out of expedience from retaliating. A sense of self-respect disdains all expedience. But I wonder what kind of punishment could be meted out by distinguished Congressmen who, as the correspondent states, were too numerous for the few hooligans of the Justice Party. Were they to return night-soil with night-soil, spitting with spitting, and abuse with abuse? Or would the self-respect of this numerous party be better consulted by ignoring the few hooligans? When non-co-operation was the fashion, I know what was done to hooligans who tried to disturb meetings. They were held down by volunteers who caused them no hurt, but, if they continued to howl, their howling was ignored. I know that even in those days in several cases the law of non-violence was broken, and any man who dared to disturb the meetings or put in a word of opposition was howled down by the violent majority or sometimes even roughly handled to the discredit of the majority and the movement which they so thoughtlessly betrayed and misrepresented. I suggest also to this Congressman and to those whom he may represent that, if the object is to win over the Justice Party or any other Party to the Congress, then they should be treated gently even though they may act harshly. If it is to suppress all opponents, then double retaliation or Dyerism is the chosen remedy. Whether that can bring us any nearer Swaraj is of course another question.

But all my advice is useless where conviction is wanting. Let every Congressman, therefore, weigh all the pros and cons, then make his definite choice and act accordingly, irrespective of consequences. He will then have acted truly even though it may be mistakenly. A thousand mistakes unconsciously made are better than the most

scrupulously correct conduct without conviction behind to back it. It is like a whited sepulchre. Above all we must be true to ourselves, if we will be true to the country and lead it to its chosen goal. Let there be no cant about non-violence. It is not like a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our very being.

Young India, 12-8-1926

14

MY ATTITUDE TOWARDS WAR

Rev. B. de Ligt has written in a French journal called *Evolution* a long open letter to me. He has favoured me with a translation of it. The open letter strongly criticizes my participation in the Boer War and then the Great War of 1914, and invites me to explain my conduct in the light of Ahimsa. Other friends too have put the same question. I have attempted to give the explanation more than once in these columns.

There is no defence for my conduct weighed only in the scales of Ahimsa. I draw no distinction between those who wield the weapons of destruction and those who do red cross work. Both participate in war and advance its cause. Both are guilty of the crime of war. But even after introspection during all these years, I feel that, in the circumstances in which I found myself, I was bound to adopt the course I did both during the Boer War and the Great European War and for that matter the so-called Zulu 'Rebellion' of Natal in 1906.

Life is governed by a multitude of forces. It would be smooth sailing, if one could determine the course of one's actions only by one general principle whose application at a given moment was too obvious to need even a moment's reflection. But I cannot recall a single act which could be so easily determined.

Being a confirmed war resister I have never given myself training in the use of destructive weapons in spite of opportunities to take such training. It was perhaps

thus that I escaped direct destruction of human life. But so long as I lived under a system of government based on force and voluntarily partook of the many facilities and privileges it created for me, I was bound to help that government to the extent of my ability when it was engaged in a war, unless I non-co-operated with that government and renounced to the utmost of my capacity the privileges it offered me.

Let me take an illustration. I am a member of an institution which holds a few acres of land whose crops are in imminent peril from monkeys. I believe in the sacredness of all life, and hence I regard it as breach of Ahimsa to inflict any injury on the monkeys. But I do not hesitate to instigate and direct an attack on the monkeys in order to save the crops. I would like to avoid this evil. I can avoid it by leaving or breaking up the institution. I do not do so because I do not expect to be able to find a society where there will be no agriculture and therefore no destruction of some life. In fear and trembling, in humility and penance, I therefore participate in the injury inflicted on the monkeys, hoping some day to find a way out.

Even so did I participate in the three acts of war. I could not, it would be madness for me to, sever my connection with the society to which I belong. And on those three occasions I had no thought of non-co-operating with the British Government. My position regarding that Government is totally different today, and hence I should not voluntarily participate in its war, and I should risk imprisonment and even the gallows, if I was forced to take up arms or otherwise take part in its military operations.

But that still does not solve the riddle. If there was a national Government, whilst I should not take any direct part in any war, I can conceive occasions when it would be my duty to vote for the military training of those who wish to take it. For I know that all its members do not believe in non-violence to the extent I do. It is not possible to make a person or a society non-violent by compulsion.

Non-violence works in a most mysterious manner. Often a man's actions defy analysis in terms of non-violence;

equally often his actions may wear the appearance of violence when he is absolutely non-violent in the highest sense of the term and is subsequently found so to be. All I can then claim for my conduct is that it was, in the instances cited, actuated in the interests of non-violence. There was no thought of sordid national or other interest. I do not believe in the promotion of national or any other interest at the sacrifice of some other interest.

I may not carry my argument any further. Language at best is but a poor vehicle for expressing one's thoughts in full. For me non-violence is not a mere philosophical principle. It is the rule and the breath of my life. I know I fail often, sometimes consciously, more often unconsciously. It is a matter not of the intellect but of the heart. True guidance comes by constant waiting upon God, by utmost humility, self-abnegation, by being ever ready to sacrifice one's self. Its practice requires fearlessness and courage of the highest order. I am painfully aware of my failings.

But the Light within me is steady and clear. There is no escape for any of us save through truth and non-violence. I know that war is wrong, is an unmitigated evil. I know too that it has got to go. I firmly believe that freedom won through bloodshed or fraud is no freedom. Would that all the acts alleged against me were found to be wholly indefensible rather than that by any act of mine non-violence was held to be compromised or that I was ever thought to be in favour of violence or untruth in any shape or form. Not violence, not untruth, but non-violence, Truth is the law of our being.

Young India, 13-9-1928

through the agony, retrace our steps? Or do we want to strike out an original path, or rather retain what to me is our own predominantly peaceful path and therethrough win and assert our freedom?

[We are restrained from violence through our weakness. What is wanted is a deliberate giving up of violence out of strength. To be able to do this requires imagination coupled with a penetrating study of the world drift. Today the superficial glamour of the West dazzles us, and we mistake for progress the giddy dance which engages us from day to day. We refuse to see that it is surely leading us to death. Above all we must recognize that to compete with the Western nations on their terms is to court suicide. Whereas if we realize that notwithstanding the seeming supremacy of violence, it is the moral force that governs the universe, we should train for non-violence with the fullest faith in its limitless possibilities. If we are to be saved and are to make a substantial contribution to the world's progress, ours must emphatically and predominantly be the way of peace.]

Young India, 22-8-1929

18

MILITARY PROGRAMME

George Joseph has been one of my dearest comrades. When I was having rest in Yeravda, he was editor of *Young India*. Before that at my instance he was editor of the now defunct *Independent*. He had sacrificed a lucrative practice for the sake of the country. He went to gaol for the same cause. He is an earnest and honest worker. He is therefore entitled to a respectful hearing, the more so when such a man differs from you, and, rejecting the old, recommends with the fervour of a convert the adoption of a new policy.

He condemns Khadi, he is "quite satisfied that the removal of untouchability is not primarily a problem of statesmanship." His programme in one simple sentence is: 'Militarize India'. Here is an extract from the speech:

"We cannot all become soldiers. There is enough room for us. But it should be possible for us to set about the idea of training

about 5,000 men every year in this presidency in urban units. The men will go to drill two or three times a week, go out to camp three weeks in the year. Such training should be made available not only for the students who are at college, but also for men of sufficient social and educational status, the educational standard being the membership of the School Leaving class. If you see in every street such people going about in khaki, there will be a new element in our life. This kind of training would make people to stand straight, to think straight, and to speak straight. It will be a great enrichment of our life."

My experience teaches me differently. I have known men in khaki rolling in gutters instead of standing straight. I have seen a Dyer thinking crooked and speaking not straight but nonsense. I have known a commander-in-chief being unable to think at all, let alone thinking straight. Let those who are enamoured of military training have it by all means; but to suggest it 'as a new constructive programme' betrays impatience and hasty thinking. There is not much danger of 'the new programme' taking root in the Indian soil. Moreover, it is against the new order of things that is coming into being even in the West which has grown weary of the war-god. The military spirit in the West bids fair to kill the very humanity in men and reduce him to the level of the beast. What is wanted and what India has, thank God, learnt in a measure undreamt of before is the spirit of unarmed resistance before which the bayonet runs to rust and gunpowder turns to dust.

The vision that Joseph puts before us of an armed government bending a minority to its will by a clatter of arms is a negation of the democratic spirit and progress. If that is the promise of the new programme, we have the armed coercion even now, not indeed of a mere minority but of an overwhelming majority. What we want, I hope, is a government not based on coercion even of a minority, but on its conversion. If it is a change from white military rule to a known one, we hardly need make any fuss. At any rate the masses then do not count. They will be subject to the same spoliation as now if not even worse. When George Joseph has lived down his impatience, I know him to be too honest not to retrace his steps and become the

and you cannot be satisfied with the old hard way. You see how Japan had risen to power by adopting the new way and even China is awakening. India alone seems not to realize the importance of the new ways of the world. How is it that you, her great leader, do not preach progress to your people?"

This letter betrays two superstitions. One of them is that India is unfit to govern herself because she cannot defend herself and is torn with internal dissensions. The writer gratuitously assumes that, if Britain withdraws, Russia is ready to pounce upon India. This is an insult to Russia. Is Russia's one business to rule over those peoples who are not ruled by Britain? And if Russia has such nefarious designs upon India, does not the writer see that the same power that will oust the British from domination is bound to prevent any other domination?

Personally, I should rely more upon the capacity of the nation to offer civil resistance to any aggressor as it did last year with partial success in the case of the British occupier. Complete success awaits complete assimilation of non-violence in thought, word and deed by the nation. An ocular demonstration of the success of nation-wide Satyagraha must be a prelude to its world-wide acceptance and hence as a natural corollary to the admission of the futility of armament. The only antidote to armament, which is the visible symbol of violence is Satyagraha, the visible symbol of non-violence. But the writer is oppressed also by the fear of our dissensions. In the first place, they are grossly exaggerated in transmission to the West. In the second place, they are hardened during foreign control. Imperial rule means *divide et impera*. They must, therefore, melt with the withdrawal of the frigid foreign rule and the introduction of the warmth-giving sunshine of real freedom.

Lastly, I do not subscribe to the belief that everything old is bad. Truth is old and difficult. Untruth has many attractions. But I would gladly go back to the very old Golden Age of Truth. Good old brown bread is any day superior to the pasty white bread which has lost much of its nutritive value in going through the various processes of refinement. The list of old and yet good things

can be endlessly multiplied. The spinning wheel is one such thing, at any rate for India.

When India becomes self-supporting, self-reliant, and proof against temptations and exploitation, she will cease to be the object of greedy attraction for any power in the West or the East and will then feel secure without having to carry the burden of expensive armament. Her internal economy will be India's strongest bulwark against aggression.

Young India, 2-7-1931

20

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF NON-VIOLENCE

The bulk of the questions asked at these meetings centred naturally round non-violence, and I (M. D.) summarize them here, including therein some of the questions and answers at the Paris meeting.

By way of introduction I shall give his (Gandhiji's) distinction between the methods of violence and non-violence: "In the method we are adopting in India, fraud, lying, deceit, and all the ugly brood of violence and untruth have absolutely no room. Everything is done openly and above board, for Truth hates secrecy. The more open you are the more truthful you are likely to be. There is no such things as defeat or despair in the dictionary of a man who bases his life on Truth and Non-violence. And yet the method of non-violence is not in any shape or form a passive or inactive method. It is essentially an active movement, much more active than the one involving the use of sanguinary weapons. Truth and Non-violence are perhaps the activist forces you have in the world. A man who wields sanguinary weapons and is intent upon destroying those whom he considers his enemies, does at least require some rest, and has to lay down his arms for a while in every twenty-four hours. He is, therefore, essentially inactive, for a certain part of the day. Not so the votary of Truth and Non-violence, for the simple reason that they are not external weapons. They reside in the human

breast, and they are actively working their way whether you are awake or whether you are asleep, whether you are walking leisurely or playing an active game. The panoplied warrior of Truth and Non-violence is ever and incessantly active."

How then can one be effectively non-violent? By simply refusing to take up arms? Einstein had made the call to the people not to take part in war. Was that enough? Questions which were raised again and again at various meetings and answered in a language inspired by the audience and the occasion.

About Einstein's call he said with a humour which no one could have mistaken: "My answer can be only one that, if Europe can take up the method enthusiastically, nothing could be better. Indeed, if I may say so about a great man, I would say that Einstein has stolen the method from me. But, if you want me to elaborate the thing, I would say that merely to refuse military service is not enough. To refuse to render military service when the particular time arrives is to do the thing after all the time for combating the evil is practically gone. Military service is only a symptom of the disease which is deeper. I suggest to you that those who are not on the register of military service are equally participating in the crime if they support the State otherwise. He or she who supports a State organized in the military way — whether directly or indirectly — participates in the sin. Each man, old or young, takes part in the sin by contributing to the maintenance of the State by paying the taxes. That is why I said to myself during the war that, so long as I ate wheat supported by the army whilst I was doing everything short of being a soldier, it was best for me to enlist in the army and be shot; otherwise I should retire to mountains and eat food grown by nature. Therefore all those who want to stop military service can do so by withdrawing all co-operation. Refusal of military service is much more superficial than non-co-operation with the whole system which supports the State. But then one's opposition becomes so swift and so effective that you run the risk of not only being marched to jail, but of being thrown into the streets."

may, if you wish, refuse to believe in such courage on the part of the masses of men and women, but then you would have to admit that non-violence is made of sterner stuff. It was never conceived as a weapon of the weak, but of the stoutest hearts.

Q. Is it open to a soldier to fire in the air and avoid violence?

A. A soldier, who having enlisted himself flattered himself that he was avoiding violence by shooting in the air, did no credit to his courage or to his creed of non-violence. In my scheme of things such a man would be held to be guilty of untruth and cowardice both—cowardice in that in order to escape punishment he enlisted, and untruth in that he enlisted to serve as soldier and did not fire as expected. Such a thing discredits the cause of waging war against war. The war-resisters have to be like Caesar's wife—above suspicion. Their strength lies in absolute adherence to the morality of the question.

Young India, 31-12-1931

M. D.

21

THE GREATEST FORCE

Three concrete questions were, the other day, incidentally asked by friends:

1. What could ill-armed Abyssinia do against well-armed Italy, if she were non-violent?

2. What could England, the greatest and the most powerful member of the League, do against determined Italy, if she (England) were non-violent in your sense of the term?

3. What could India do, if she suddenly became non-violent in your sense of the term?

Before I answer the questions let me lay down five simple axioms of non-violence as I know it:

(a) Non-violence implies as complete self-purification as is humanly possible.

(b) Man for man the strength of non-violence is in exact proportion to the ability, not the will, of the non-violent person to inflict violence.

(c) Non-violence is without exception superior to violence, i. e. the power at the disposal of a non-violent person is always greater than he would have if he was violent.

(d) There is no such thing as defeat in non-violence. The end of violence is surest defeat.

(e) The ultimate end of non-violence is surest victory — if such a term may be used of non-violence. In reality, where there is no sense of defeat, there is no sense of victory.

The foregoing questions may be answered in the light of these axioms.

1. If Abyssinia were non-violent, she would have no arms, would want none. She would make no appeal to the League or any other power for armed intervention. She would never give any cause for complaint. And Italy would find nothing to conquer if Abyssinians would not offer armed resistance, nor would they give co-operation, willing or forced. Italian occupation in that case would mean that of the land without its people. That, however, is not Italy's exact object. She seeks submission of the people of that beautiful land.

2. If Englishmen were as a nation to become non-violent at heart, they would shed imperialism, they would give up the use of arms. The moral force generated by such an act of renunciation would stagger Italy into willing surrender of her designs. England would then be a living embodiment of the axioms I have laid down. The effect of such conversion would mean the greatest miracle of all ages. And yet if non-violence is not an idle dream, some such thing has some day to come to pass somewhere. I live in that faith.

3. The last question may be answered thus. As I have said India as a nation is not non-violent in the full sense of the term. Neither has she any capacity for offering violence, not because she has no arms. Physical possession of arms is the least necessity of the brave. Her non-violence is that of the weak; she betrays her weakness in many of her daily acts. She appears before the world today as a decaying nation. I mean here not in the mere political sense but essentially in the non-violent, moral sense. She lacks

the ability to offer physical resistance. She has no consciousness of strength. She is conscious only of her weakness. If she were otherwise, there would be no communal problems, nor political. If she were non-violent in the consciousness of her strength, Englishmen would lose their role of distrustful conquerors.

Harijan, 12-10-1935

22

A TALK ON NON-VIOLENCE

Now the talk centred on a discussion which was the main thing that had drawn the distinguished members to Gandhiji.

"Is non-violence from your point of view a form of direct action?" inquired Dr. Thurman. "It is not one form, it is the only form," said Gandhiji. "I do not of course confine the words 'direct action' to their technical meaning. But without a direct active expression of it, non-violence to my mind is meaningless. It is the greatest and the activist force in the world. One cannot be passively non-violent. Ahimsa means 'love' in the Pauline sense, and yet some thing more than the 'love' defined by St. Paul, although I know St. Paul's beautiful definition is good enough for all practical purposes. Ahimsa includes the whole creation, and not only human. One person who can express Ahimsa in life exercises a force superior to all the forces of brutality.

Q. And is it possible for any individual to achieve this?

Gandhiji: Certainly. If there was any exclusiveness about it, I should reject it at once.

Q. Is any idea of possession foreign to it?

Gandhiji: Yes. It possesses nothing, therefore it possesses everything.

Q. Is it possible for a single human being to resist the persistent invasion of the quality successfully?

Gandhiji: It is possible. Perhaps your question is more universal than you mean. Isn't it possible, you mean

to ask, for one single Indian, for instance, to resist the exploitation of 300 million Indians? Or do you mean the onslaught of the whole world against a single individual personally?

Dr. Thurman: Yes, that is one half of the question. I wanted to know if one man can hold the whole violence at bay.

Gandhiji: If he cannot, you must take it that he is not a true representative of Ahimsa. Supposing I cannot produce a single instance in life of a man who truly converted his adversary, I would then say that it is because no one had yet been found to express Ahimsa in its fulness.

Q. Then it overrides all other forces?

Gandhiji: Yes, it is the only true force in life.

"Forgive now the weakness of this question," said Dr. Thurman, who was absolutely absorbed in the discussion. "Forgive the weakness, but may I ask how are we to train individuals or communities in this difficult art?"

Gandhiji: There is no royal road, except through living the creed in your life which must be a living sermon. Of course, the expression in one's own life presupposes great study, tremendous perseverance, and thorough cleaning of one's self of all the impurities. If for mastering of the physical sciences you have to devote a whole lifetime, how many lifetimes may be needed for mastering the greatest spiritual force that mankind has known? But why worry even if it means several lifetimes? For, if this is the only permanent thing in life, if this is the only thing that counts, then whatever effort you bestow on mastering it is well spent. Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and everything else shall be added unto you. The Kingdom of Heaven is Ahimsa.

Mrs. Thurman had restrained herself until now. But she could not go away without asking the question with which, she knew, she would be confronted any day. "How am I to act, supposing my own brother was lynched before my very eyes?"

"There is such a thing as self-immolation," said Gandhiji. "Supposing I was a Negro, and my sister was ravished by a White or lynched by a whole community, what would be my duty? — I ask myself. And the answer

not for the moment visible. Hitler and Mussolini on the one hand and Stalin on the other are able to show the immediate effectiveness of violence. But it will be as transitory as that of Chenghis' slaughter. But the effects of Buddha's non-violent action persist and are likely to grow with age. And the more it is practised, the more effective and inexhaustible it becomes, and ultimately the whole world stands agape and exclaims, 'a miracle has happened.' All miracles are due to the silent and effective working of invisible forces. Non-violence is the most invisible and the most effective."

Can Masses be Trained?

"I have no doubt in my mind about the superiority of non-violence," said Prof. Mays. "But the thing that bothers me is about its exercise on a large scale, the difficulty of so disciplining the mass mind on the point of love. It is easier to discipline individuals. What should be the strategy when they break out? Do we retreat or do we go on?"

"I have had that experience," said Gandhiji, "in the course of our movement here. People do not gain the training by preaching. Non-violence cannot be preached. It has to be practised. The practice of violence can be taught to people by outward symbols. You shoot at boards, then at targets, then at beasts. Then you are passed as an expert in the art of destruction. The non-violent man has no outward weapon and, therefore, not only his speech but his action also seems ineffective. I may say all kinds of sweet words to you without meaning them. On the other hand I may have real love in me and yet my outward expression may be forbidding. Then outwardly my action in both cases may be the same and yet the effect may be different. For the effect of our action is often more potent when it is not patently known. Thus the unconscious effect you are making on me I may never know. It is, nevertheless, infinitely greater than the conscious effect. In violence there is nothing invisible. Non-violence, on the other hand, is three-fourths invisible, and so the effect is in the inverse ratio to its invisibility. Non-violence, when

it becomes active, travels with extraordinary velocity, and then it becomes a miracle. So the mass mind is affected first unconsciously, then consciously. When it becomes consciously affected there is demonstrable victory. In my own experience, when people seemed to be weakening there was no consciousness of defeat in me. Thus I was fuller of hope in the efficacy of non-violence after the renunciation of civil disobedience in 1922, and today I continue to be in the same hopeful mood. It is not a mere emotional thing. Supposing I saw no signs of dawn coming, I should not lose faith. Everything has to come in its proper time.

"I have discussions here with my co-workers about the scavenging work we are doing. 'Why can't we do it after Swaraj?' they say. 'We may do it better after Swaraj.' I say to them, 'No. The reform has to come today, it must not wait for Swaraj; in fact the right type of Swaraj will come only out of such work.' Now I cannot show you, as perhaps I cannot show some of my co-workers, the connection between Swaraj and scavenging. If I have to win Swaraj non-violently, I must discipline my people. The maimed and the blind and the leprous cannot join the army of violence. There is also an age-limit for serving in the army. For a non-violent struggle there is no age-limit; the blind and the maimed and the bed-ridden may serve, and not only men but women also. When the spirit of non-violence pervades the people and actually begins to work, its effect is visible to all.

"But now comes your poser. There are people, you say, who do not believe in non-violence as you do. Are you to sit quiet? The friends ask: 'If not now, when will you act?' I say in reply: 'I may not succeed in my lifetime, but my faith that victory can only come through non-violence is stronger than ever. When I spoke on the cult of the spinning wheel at Faizpur, a newspaper correspondent imputed astuteness to me. Nothing could be farther from my mind. When I came to Sevagram I was told the people might not co-operate and might even boycott me. I said: 'That may be. But this is the way non-violence works. If I go to a village which is still farther off, the experiment may work better. This thing has come in

my search after the technique of non-violence. And each day that passes makes my faith brighter. I have come here to bring that faith to fruition and to die in the process if that is God's will. Non-violence to be worth anything has to work in the face of hostile forces. But there may be action in inaction. And action may be worse than inaction."

Violence in a Spirit of Love?

"Is it ever possible to administer violence in a spirit of love?"

"No. Never. I shall give you an illustration from my own experiment. A calf was lame and had developed terrible sores; he could not eat and breathed with difficulty. After three days' argument with myself and my co-workers I put an end to its life. Now that action was non-violent because it was wholly unselfish, inasmuch as the sole purpose was to achieve the calf's relief from pain. Some people have called this an act of violence. I have called it a surgical operation. I should do exactly the same thing with my child, if he were in the same predicament. My point is that non-violence as the supreme law of our being ceases to be such the moment you talk of exceptions."

"How is a minority to act against an overwhelming majority?" asked Prof. Mays.

"I would say that a minority can do much more in the way of non-violence than a majority. I had an English friend called Symonds. He used to say: 'I am with you so long as you are in a minority. After you are in a majority we are quits.' I had less diffidence in handling my minority in South Africa than I had here in handling a majority. But it would be wholly wrong for that reason to say that non-violence is a weapon of the weak. . . . The use of non-violence requires greater bravery than that of violence. When Daniel defied the laws of the Meads and Persians, his action was non-violent."

Consequences to the Enemy

"Should the thought of consequences that might accrue to the enemy as a result of your non-violence at all constrain you?"

"Certainly. You may have to suspend your movement as I did in South Africa when the Government was faced with the revolt of European labour. The latter asked me to make common cause with them. I said 'no'."

"And non-violence will never rebound on you, where-as violence will be self-destroyed?" interposed the Professor.

"Yes. Violence must beget violence. But let me tell you that here too my argument has been countered by a great man who said: 'Look at the history of non-violence. Jesus dies on the cross, but his followers shed blood.' This proves nothing. We have no data before us to pass judgment. We do not know the whole of the life of Jesus. The followers perhaps had not imbibed fully the message of non-violence. But I must warn you against carrying the impression with you that mine is the final word on non-violence. I know my own limitations. I am but a humble seeker after truth. And all I claim is that every experiment of mine has deepened my faith in non-violence as the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. Its use is not restricted to individuals merely, but it can be practised on a mass scale."

Harijan, 20-3-1937

M. D.

24

OUR FAILURE

It is my conviction that the phenomenal growth of Congress is due to its acceptance and enforcement, however imperfect, of the policy of non-violence. Time has arrived to consider the nature of Congress non-violence. Is it non-violence of the weak and the helpless, or of the strong and the powerful? If it is the former, it will never take us to our goal and, if long practised, may even render us for ever unfit for self-government. The weak and helpless are non-violent in action because they must be. But in reality they harbour violence in their breasts and simply await opportunity for its display. It is necessary for Congressmen individually and collectively to examine the quality of their non-violence. If it does not come out of real strength,

like the Working Committee, to ask themselves why we have failed, if they think with me that we have.

Harijan, 26-3-1938

25

QUALIFICATIONS OF A PEACE BRIGADE

Some time ago I suggested the formation of a peace brigade whose members would risk their lives in dealing with riots, especially communal. The idea was that this brigade should substitute the police and even the military. This reads ambitious. The achievement may prove impossible. Yet, if the Congress is to succeed in its non-violent struggle, it must develop the power to deal peacefully with such situations.

Let us, therefore, see what qualifications a member of the contemplated peace brigade should possess.

1. He or she must have a living faith in non-violence. This is impossible without a living faith in God. A non-violent man can do nothing save by the power and grace of God. Without it he won't have the courage to die without anger, without fear and without retaliation. Such courage comes from the belief that God sits in the hearts of all, and that there should be no fear in the presence of God. The knowledge of the omnipresence of God also means respect for the lives of even those who may be called opponents or goondas. This contemplated intervention is a process of stilling the fury of man when the brute in him gets the mastery over him.

2. This messenger of peace must have equal regard for all the principal religions of the earth. Thus, if he is a Hindu, he will respect the other faiths current in India. He must, therefore, possess a knowledge of the general principles of the different faiths professed in the country.

3. Generally speaking this work of peace can only be done by local men in their own localities.

4. The work can be done singly or in groups. Therefore no one need wait for companions. Nevertheless one

would naturally seek companions in one's own locality and form a local brigade.

5. This messenger of peace will cultivate, through personal service, contacts with the people in his locality or chosen circle, so that when he appears to deal with ugly situations, he does not descend upon the members of a riotous assembly as an utter stranger liable to be looked upon as a suspect or an unwelcome visitor.

6. Needless to say, a peace-bringer must have a character beyond reproach and must be known for his strict impartiality.

7. Generally there are previous warnings of coming storms. If these are known, the peace brigade will not wait till the conflagration breaks out, but will try to handle the situation in anticipation.

8. Whilst, if the movement spreads, it might be well if there are some whole-time workers, it is not absolutely necessary that there should be. The idea is to have as many good and true men and women as possible. These can be had only if volunteers are drawn from those who are engaged in various walks of life but have leisure enough to cultivate friendly relations with the people living in their circle and otherwise possess the qualifications required of a member of the peace brigade.

9. There should be a distinctive dress worn by the members of the contemplated brigade so that in course of time they will be recognized without the slightest difficulty.

These are but general suggestions. Each centre can work out its own constitution on the basis here suggested.

Harijan, 18-6-1938

But the honour of the nation was saved. New history was written by the South African Satyagraha.

A more apposite instance, perhaps, is that of Khansaheb Abdul Gaffar Khan, the servant of God as he calls himself, the pride of Afghan as the Pathans delight to call him. He is sitting in front of me as I pen these lines. He has made several thousands of his people throw down their arms. He thinks he has imbibed the lesson of non-violence. He is not sure of his people. I have come to the Frontier Province, or rather he has brought me, to see with my own eyes what his men here are doing. I can say in advance and at once that these men know very little of non-violence. All the treasure they have on earth is their faith in their leader. I do not cite these soldiers of peace as at all a finished illustration. I cite them as an honest attempt being made by a soldier to convert fellow soldiers to the ways of peace. I can testify that it is an honest attempt, and whether in the end it succeeds or fails, it will have its lessons for Satyagrahis of the future. My purpose will be fulfilled, if I succeed in reaching these men's hearts and making them see that, if their non-violence does not make them feel much braver than the possession of arms and the ability to use them, they must give up their non-violence, which is another name for cowardice, and resume their arms which there is nothing but their own will to prevent them from taking back.

I present Dr. Benes with a weapon not of the weak but of the brave. There is no bravery greater than a resolute refusal to bend the knee to an earthly power, no matter how great, and that without bitterness of spirit in the fullness of faith that the spirit alone lives, nothing else does.

Peshawar, 6-10-'38

Harijan, 15-10-1938

THE JEWS

Several letters have been received by me asking me to declare my views about the Arab-Jew question in Palestine and the persecution of the Jews in Germany. It is not without hesitation that I venture to offer my views on this very difficult question.

My sympathies are all with the Jews. I have known them intimately in South Africa. Some of them became lifelong companions. Through these friends I came to learn much of their age-long persecution. They have been the untouchables of Christianity. The parallel between their treatment by Christians and the treatment of untouchables by Hindus is very close. Religious sanction has been invoked in both cases for the justification of the inhuman treatment meted out to them. Apart from the friendships, therefore, there is the more common universal reason for my sympathy for the Jews.

But my sympathy does not blind me to the requirements of justice. The cry for the national home for the Jews does not make much appeal to me. The sanction for it is sought in the Bible and the tenacity with which the Jews have hankered after return to Palestine. Why should they not, like other peoples of the earth, make that country their home where they are born and where they earn their livelihood?

Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French. It is wrong and inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs. What is going on in Palestine today cannot be justified by any moral code of conduct. The mandates have no sanction but that of the last war. Surely it would be a crime against humanity to reduce the proud Arabs so that Palestine can be restored to the Jews partly or wholly as their national home.

The nobler course would be to insist on a just treatment of the Jews wherever they are born and bred. The

NON-VIOLENCE AND WORLD CRISIS

The Question of Motive

Going to the very rock-bottom, one of the questioners asked Gandhiji what his motive in life was, "the thing that leads us to do what we do", whether it was religious, or social or political.

"Purely religious," replied Gandhiji. "This was the question asked me by the late Mr. Montagu when I accompanied a deputation which was purely political. 'How have you, a social reformer,' he exclaimed, 'found your way into this crowd?' My reply was that it was only an extension of my social activity. I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind, and that I could not do unless I took part in politics. The whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole. You cannot divide social, economic, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments. I do not know any religion apart from human activity. It provides a moral basis to all other activities which they would otherwise lack, reducing life to a maze of 'sound and fury signifying nothing'."

"Seeing the influence you wield over the people," he was next asked, "may we inquire whether it is the love of the cause or the love of the people that moves you?"

"Love of the people," was Gandhiji's unhesitating reply. "Cause without the people is a dead thing. Love of the people brought the problem of untouchability early into my life. My mother said, 'You must not touch this boy, he is an untouchable.' 'Why not?' I questioned back, and from that day my revolt began."

No Exclusion of Politics

"You would expect us Christians to copy your example. Should we allow our religious motive to plunge us into politics?"

was born to rule over her, and in the end she became my teacher in non-violence. And what I did in South Africa was but an extension of the rule of Satyagraha which she unwillingly practised in her own person."

What about Dictatorships ?

But one of the visitors objected: "You do not know Hitler and Mussolini. They are incapable of any kind of moral response. They have no conscience, and they have made themselves impervious to world opinion. Would it not be playing into the hands of these dictators if, for instance, the Czechs, following your advice, confronted them with non-violence? Seeing that dictatorships are unmoral by definition, would the law of moral conversion hold good in their case?"

"Your argument," replied Gandhiji, "presupposes that the dictators like Mussolini or Hitler are beyond redemption. But belief in non-violence is based on the assumption that human nature in its essence is one and therefore unfailingly responds to the advances of love. It should be remembered that they have up to now always found ready response to the violence that they have used. Within their experience, they have not come across organized non-violent resistance on an appreciable scale, if at all. Therefore it is not only highly likely, but I hold it to be inevitable, that they would recognize the superiority of non-violent resistance over any display of violence that they may be capable of putting forth. Moreover the non-violent technique that I have presented to the Czechs does not depend for its success on the goodwill of the dictators, for, a non-violent resister depends upon the unfailing assistance of God which sustains him throughout difficulties which would otherwise be considered insurmountable. His faith makes him indomitable."

The visitor retorted that these dictators wisely refrain from using force, but simply take possession of what they want. In the circumstances what can non-violent resisters do?

"Suppose," replied Gandhiji, "they come and occupy mines, factories and all sources of natural wealth belonging to the Czechs, then the following results can

take place: (1) The Czechs may be annihilated for disobedience to orders. That would be a glorious victory for the Czechs and the beginning of the fall of Germany. (2) The Czechs might become demoralized in the presence of overwhelming force. This is a result common in all struggles. But if demoralization does take place, it would not be on account of non-violence, but it would be due to absence or inadequacy of non-violence. (3) The third thing that can take place is that Germany might use her new possessions for occupation by her surplus population. This, again, could not be avoided by offering violent resistance, for we have assumed that violent resistance is out of the question. Thus non-violent resistance is the best method under all conceivable circumstances.

"I do not think that Hitler and Mussolini are after all so very indifferent to the appeal of world opinion. But today these dictators feel satisfaction in defying world opinion because none of the so-called Great Powers can come to them with clean hands, and they have a rankling sense of injustice done to their people by the Great Powers in the past. Only the other day an esteemed English friend owned to me that Nazi Germany was England's sin, and that it was the treaty of Versailles that made Hitler."

Visitor: "What can I as a Christian do to contribute to international peace? How can international anarchy be broken down and non-violence made effective for establishing peace? Subject nations apart, how can nations at the top be made to disarm themselves?"

Gandhiji: "You as a Christian can make an effective contribution by non-violent action even though it may cost you your all. Peace will never come until the Great Powers courageously decide to disarm themselves. It seems to me that recent events must force that belief on the Great Powers. I have an implicit faith — a faith that today burns brighter than ever, after half a century's experience of unbroken practice of non-violence — that mankind can only be saved through non-violence, which is the central teaching of the Bible as I have understood the Bible."

Sevagram, 12-12-'38

PYARELAL

Harijan, 24-12-1938

melt before sufficiency of the heat of non-violence. And there is no limit to the capacity of non-violence to generate heat.

Every action is a resultant of a multitude of forces even of a contrary nature. There is no waste of energy. So we learn in the books on mechanics. This is equally true of human actions. The difference is that in the one case we generally know the forces at work, and when we do, we can mathematically foretell the resultant. In the case of human actions, they result from a concurrence of forces, of most of which we have no knowledge. But our ignorance must not be made to serve the cause of disbelief in the power of these forces. Rather is our ignorance a cause for greater faith. And non-violence being the mightiest force in the world and also the most elusive in its working, it demands the greatest exercise of faith. Even as we believe in God in faith, so have we to believe in non-violence in faith.

Herr Hitler is but one man enjoying no more than the average span of life. He would be a spent force, if he had not the backing of his people. I do not despair of his responding to human suffering even though caused by him. But I must refuse to believe that the Germans as a nation have no heart or markedly less than the other nations of the earth. They will some day or other rebel against their own adored hero, if he does not wake up be-times. And when he or they do, we shall find that the sufferings of the Pastor and his fellow-workers had not a little to do with the awakening. (add date 1939.)

An armed conflict may bring disaster to German arms; it cannot change the German heart even as the last defeat did not. It produced a Hitler vowed to wreak vengeance on the victors. And what a vengeance it is! My answer, therefore, must be the answer that Stephenson gave to his fellow-workers who had despaired of ever filling the deep pit that made the first railway possible. He asked his co-workers of little faith to have more faith and go on filling the pit. It was not bottomless, it must be filled. Even so I do not despair because Herr Hitler's or the German heart has not yet melted. On the contrary I plead for more

suffering and still more till the melting has become visible to the naked eye. And even as the Pastor has covered himself with glory, a single Jew bravely standing up and refusing to bow to Hitler's decree will cover himself with glory and lead the way to the deliverance of the fellow-Jews.

I hold that non-violence is not merely a personal virtue. It is also social virtue to be cultivated like the other virtues. Surely society is largely regulated by the expression of non-violence in its mutual dealings. What I ask for is an extension of it on a larger, national and international scale.

I was unprepared to find the view expressed by *The Statesman* writer that the example of Christ proved once and for all that in a worldly and temporal sense it can fail hopelessly!! Though I cannot claim to be a Christian in the sectarian sense, the example of Jesus's suffering is a factor in the composition of my undying faith in non-violence which rules all my actions worldly and temporal. And I know that there are hundreds of Christians who believe likewise. Jesus lived and died in vain, if he did not teach us to regulate the whole of life by the eternal Law of Love.

On the train to Bardoli, 2-1-'39

Harijan, 7-1-1939

31

CHINA AND JAPAN

Gandhiji went straight to the question on which he wanted to hear first hand from Dr. Kagawa. "What is the feeling of people in Japan about the war?"

"I am rather a heretic in Japan," said Dr. Kagawa. "Rather than I express my views, I would like to learn from you what you would do if you were in my position."

"It would be presumptuous for me to express my views."

"No, I would like very much to know what you would do."

"I would declare my heresies and be shot. I would put the co-operatives and all your work in one scale, and put the honour of your nation in the other, and if you found

that the honour was being sold, I should ask to declare your views against Japan and in so doing make Japan live through your death. But, for this, inner conviction is necessary. I do not know that I should be able to do all that I have said if I were in your position, but I must give you my opinion since you have asked for it."

"The conviction is there. But friends have been asking me to desist."

"Well, don't listen to friends when the Friend inside you says, 'Do this.' And friends, however good, can sometimes well deceive us. They cannot argue otherwise. They would ask you to *live* and do your work. The same appeal was made to me when I took the decision to go to jail. But I did not listen to friends, with the result that I found the glow of freedom when I was confined within the four solid walls of prison. I was inside a dark cell, but I felt that I could see everything from within those walls, and nothing from outside." *add. To Kagawa, 1939.*

Harijan, 21-1-1939

M. D.

A WORLD IN AGONY—I

Cultural Destruction ?

(Rev. Lew, the distinguished visitor from China, said:)

"We are not afraid of material destruction, distressing though it is, but of cultural destruction. The first bomb in Shanghai hit a library. Colleges have been wiped out. Professors have been killed. New education has been disorganized and forced to migrate into the interior."

"Even worse is the moral injury they have done us," he continued. And he gave a lurid description of how a systematic attempt is being made to force the drug evil upon China, which they had been, for the last twenty years, trying to fight tooth and nail. "When they occupied Peking they opened 50 new brothels there, filling them with Korean girls. The army of occupation rapes women everywhere, the figure for Peking alone being anything between 8,000 to 20,000 according to various estimates.

not to answer back or refute criticism directed against me. After seven years I gave a report of my experience to my students. I cannot say that in practice my method has always answered. So I say to myself, 'Patience, I must try again.'

"It would be a delusion to think otherwise," replied Gandhiji. "If one does not practise non-violence in one's personal relations with others and hopes to use it in bigger affairs, one is vastly mistaken. Non-violence like charity must begin at home. But if it is necessary for the individual to be trained in non-violence, it is even more necessary for the nation to be trained likewise. One cannot be non-violent in one's own circle and violent outside it. Or else, one is not truly non-violent even in one's own circle; often the non-violence is only in appearance. It is only when you meet with resistance, as for instance, when a thief or a murderer appears, that your non-violence is put on its trial. You either try or should try to oppose the thief with his own weapons, or you try to disarm him by love. Living among decent people, your conduct may not be described as non-violent. Mutual forbearance is not non-violence. Immediately, therefore, you get the conviction that non-violence is the law of life, you have to practise it towards those who act violently towards you; and the law must apply to nations as to individuals. Training is no doubt necessary. And beginnings are always small. But if the conviction is there, the rest will follow."

Another question was: "In the practice of non-violence, is there not danger of developing a 'martyrdom complex' or pride creeping in?"

Gandhiji: "If one has that pride and egoism, there is no non-violence. Non-violence is impossible without humility. My own experience is that whenever I have acted non-violently I have been led to it and sustained in it by the higher promptings of an unseen power. Through my own will I should have miserably failed. When I first went to jail, I quailed at the prospect. I had heard terrible things about jail life. But I had faith in God's protection. Our experience was that those who went to jail in a prayerful spirit came out victorious, those who had gone in their own

strength failed. There is no room for self-pitying in it either, when you say God is giving you the strength. Self-pity comes when you do a thing for which you expect recognition from others. But here there is no question of recognition."

To Fight or not to Fight

Another friend thus placed his dilemma: "I am a firm believer in non-violence. Eight years ago I read your *Experiments with Truth* and immediately became converted to the way of life you have there advocated. Shortly after that I translated the book into Chinese. And then came the Japanese invasion. My faith in non-violence was put to a severe test and I was caught in a dilemma. On the one hand I felt I could not preach non-violence to my people who were never militaristic but who now believed that resistance with force was the only way out. It was the best thing they knew, and I believe with you that 'I would rather risk the use of force a thousand times than let my people lose their manhood.' But on the other hand, when I try to take a sympathetic attitude and try to do something helpful in such a situation, I find I am giving moral and material support directly and indirectly to something which is against the highest that I know. There seems to be no way out of this dilemma because I cannot live in a vacuum and anything I do will work one way or the other. While I can believe without reserve in non-violence in personal relationships, even though I fall far short of it, I cannot feel in the same way when I am faced with a national situation in which the great majority of the people have not even heard of the way of non-violence."

The Non-violent Equivalent

"Yours is a difficult situation," replied Gandhiji. "Such difficulties have confronted me more than once. I took part on the British side in the Boer War by forming an ambulance corps. I did likewise at the time of what has been described as the Zulu Revolt. The third time was during the Great War. I believed in non-violence then. My motive was wholly non-violent. That seemingly inconsistent conduct gave me strength. My example cannot be used as a precedent for others to follow. Looking back upon

Can Non-violence Be Organized ?

The last to place before Gandhiji his problem was Mr. P. C. Hsu. "Our difficulty is this," he commented, "while sincerely believing in non-violence, we have not found a way of making it effective."

"Should that present a difficulty?" exclaimed Gandhiji. "A person who realizes a particular evil of his time and finds that it overwhelms him, dives deep in his own heart for inspiration, and when he gets it, he presents it to others. Meetings and group organizations are all right. They are of some help, but very little. They are like the scaffolding that an architect erects — a temporary and makeshift expedient. The thing that really matters is an invincible faith that cannot be quenched."

"Faith can be developed. Only, the way it can be developed and in which it works differs from that in the case of violence. You cannot develop violence through prayer. Faith, on the other hand, cannot be developed except through prayer."

"Non-violence succeeds only when we have a living faith in God. Buddha, Jesus, Mahomed — they were all warriors of peace in their own style. We have to enrich the heritage left by these world teachers. God has His own wonderful way of executing His plans and choosing His instrument. The Prophet and Abu Bakr trapped in a cave were saved from their persecutors by a spider which had woven its web across the mouth of that cave. All the world teachers you should know, began with a zero!!"

Bardoli, 15-1-'39

PYARELAL

Harijan, 28-1-1939

replied Gandhiji. "You will be pooling together not strength but weakness. You will best help one another by each standing on his own legs. The two cases are different. The Indians are a microscopic minority. They can never be a 'menace' to the white population. You, on the other hand, are the sons of the soil who are being robbed of your inheritance. You are bound to resist that. Yours is a far bigger issue. It ought not to be mixed up with that of the Indians. This does not preclude the establishment of the friendliest relations between the two races. The Indians can co-operate with you in a number of ways. They can help you by always acting on the square towards you. They may not put themselves in opposition to your legitimate aspirations, or run you down as 'savages' while exalting themselves as 'cultured' people, in order to secure concessions for themselves at your expense."

Rev. Tema: "What sort of relations would you favour between these two races?"

Gandhiji: "The closest possible. But while I have abolished all distinction between an African and an Indian, that does not mean that I do not recognize the difference between them. The different races of mankind are like different branches of a tree — once we recognize the common parent stock from which we are sprung, we realize the basic unity of the human family, and there is no room left for enmities and unhealthy competition."

Rev. Tema: "Should we adopt violence or non-violence as a means for our deliverance?"

Gandhiji: "Certainly, non-violence under all circumstances. But you must have a living faith in it. Even when there is impenetrable darkness surrounding you, you must not abandon hope. A person who believes in non-violence believes in a living God. He cannot accept defeat. Therefore, my advice is non-violence all the time, but non-violence of the brave, not of the coward."

"Your example," continued Rev. Tema, "has shed so much influence upon us that we are thinking whether it would not be possible for one or two of our young men, who, we are hoping, will become leaders, to come to you for training."

"It is quite a good and sound idea," replied Gandhiji.

Rev. Tema: "Do you think Christianity can bring salvation to Africa?"

Gandhiji: "Christianity, as it is known and practised today, cannot bring salvation to your people. It is my conviction that those who today call themselves Christians do not know the true message of Jesus. I witnessed some of the horrors that were perpetrated on the Zulus during the Zulu Rebellion. Because one man, Bambatta, their chief, had refused to pay his tax, the whole race was made to suffer. I was in charge of an ambulance corps. I shall never forget the lacerated backs of Zulus who had received stripes and were brought to us for nursing because no white nurse was prepared to look after them. And yet those who perpetrated all those cruelties called themselves Christians. They were 'educated', better dressed than the Zulus, but not their moral superiors."

Rev. Tema had one more question to ask. "Whenever a leader comes up in our midst, he flops down after a while. He either becomes ambitious after money or succumbs to the drink habit or some other vice and is lost to us. How shall we remedy this?"

"The problem is not peculiar to you," replied Gandhiji. "Your leadership has proved ineffectual because it was not sprung from the common people. If you belong to the common people, live like them and think like them, they will make common cause with you. If I were in your place, I would not ask a single African to alter his costume and make himself peculiar. It does not add a single inch to his moral stature."

Bardoli, 6-2-'39

PYARELAL

Harijan, 18-2-1939

CONUNDRUMS

Thus asks a well-known Congressman:

"1. What is your personal attitude towards this war consistent with non-violence?

2. Is it the same as, or different from your attitude during the last war?

3. How could you with your non-violence actively associate with and help the Congress whose policy is based on violence in the present crisis?

4. What is your concrete plan based on non-violence to oppose or prevent this war?"

These questions conclude a long friendly complaint about my seeming inconsistencies or my inscrutability. Both are old complaints, perfectly justified from the standpoint of the complainants, wholly unjustified from my own. Therefore my complainants and I must agree to differ. Only this let me say. At the time of writing I never think of what I have said before. My aim is not to be consistent with my previous statements on a given question, but to be consistent with truth as it may present itself to me at a given moment. The result has been that I have grown from truth to truth; I have saved my memory an undue strain; and what is more, whenever I have been obliged to compare my writing even of fifty years ago with the latest, I have discovered no inconsistency between the two. But friends who observe inconsistency will do well to take the meaning that my latest writing may yield unless, of course, they prefer the old. But before making the choice they should try to see if there is not an underlying and abiding consistency between the two seeming inconsistencies.

So far as my inscrutability is concerned, friends should take my assurance that there is never any attempt on my part to suppress my thought when it is relevant. Sometimes it arises from my desire to be brief. And sometimes it

is an appendage of Britain. Free India can have no enemy. And if her people have learnt the art of saying resolutely 'no' and acting up to it, I dare say, no one would want to invade her. Our economy would be so modelled as to prove no temptation for the exploiter.

But some Congressmen will say: "Apart from the British, India has so many martial races within her border that they will want to put up a fight for the country which is as much theirs as ours." This is perfectly true. I am therefore talking, for the moment, only of Congressmen. How would they act in the event of an invasion? We shall never convert the whole of India to our creed unless we are prepared to die for it.

My position is, therefore, confined to myself alone. I have to find out whether I have any fellow-traveller along the lonely path. If I am in the minority of one I must try to make converts. Whether one or many, I must declare my faith that it is better for India to discard violence altogether even for defending her borders. For India to enter into the race for armaments is to court suicide. With the loss of India to non-violence the last hope of the world will be gone. I must live up to the creed I have professed for the last half a century, and hope to the last breath that India will make non-violence her creed, preserve man's dignity, and prevent him from reverting to the type from which he is supposed to have raised himself.

Sevagram, 10-10-'39

Harijan, 14-10-1939

assistance will lift the Allied cause to a high moral plane, and the Congress influence will be effectively used in the cause of peace. What is more it will be the special business of the Congress to see that, if the war is fought to a finish, no humiliation is heaped upon the vanquished. That is the role I have conceived for the Congress. The declaration of independence has become a necessity. The question having been raised, the Congress cannot help Britain, if Britain is secretly fighting for imperialism while it declares to the world that the fight is for saving democracies. For Britain to be in the right, a clear declaration of her war aim is a necessity, irrespective of the Congress policy.

Sevagram, 16-10-'39

Harijan, 21-10-1939

39

THE HOUR OF TRIAL

(With the members of the Gandhi Seva Sangh)

"Non-violence is not a cloistered virtue, confined only to the Rishi and the cave-dweller. It is capable of being practised by the millions, not with full knowledge of its implications, but because it is the law of our species. It distinguishes man from the brute. But man has not shed the brute in him. He has to strive to do so. This striving applies to the practice of non-violence, not to the belief in it. I cannot strive to believe in a principle: I either believe in it or I do not. And if I believe in it, I must bravely strive to practise it. Ahimsa is an attribute of the brave. Cowardice and Ahimsa do not go together any more than water and fire. It is that Ahimsa that every member of the Gandhi Seva Sangh has to make a conscious effort to develop in himself.

"We have often thought about this question, but the hour of our trial has arrived today, as much with reference to war as with the struggle for Swaraj and equally with reference to Hindu-Muslim unity. Remember also that your non-violence cannot operate effectively unless you have faith in the spinning wheel. I would ask you to read

Hind Swaraj with my eyes and see therein the chapter on how to make India non-violent. You cannot build non-violence on a factory civilization, but it can be built on self-contained villages. Even if Hitler was so minded, he could not devastate seven hundred thousand non-violent villages. He would himself become non-violent in the process. Rural economy, as I have conceived it, eschews exploitation altogether, and exploitation is the essence of violence. You have, therefore, to be rural-minded before you can be non-violent, and to be rural-minded you have to have faith in the spinning wheel."

Posers

The members slept over this discourse and met Gandhiji again the next day. Numerous questions were troubling them, as they should everyone who is a votary of Ahimsa. But out of regard for Gandhiji's time they limited themselves to a few.

"How can a believer in the non-violence of your conception be a minister?"

"I fear he cannot in the present state of things," said Gandhiji. "We have seen that our ministers have had to resort to violence even as the British Government in the pre-autonomy days. It was inevitable perhaps. Had Congressmen been truly non-violent, there would have been no resort to force. But the Congress majorities were not based on unadulterated non-violence. A minister said the other day that, although he had not given up an iota of non-violence, he could not do without resorting to the minimum of firing. He had resorted to it only to the extent that it was unavoidable. He may have said it then; he may not say it again if I can help it. For, if he goes in again, he will have made his position clear, and he will represent a House that is predominantly non-violent. In other words, he will take office, if he is sure that the people would let him carry on the government on a non-violent basis."

"But may it not be that whereas a non-violent minister will confine violence to the lowest minimum, one who does not believe in non-violence would observe no such restraint?"

common area of action, such as the one now existing in India between the Indian nationalists and the British government, is established? Or should the Satyagrahis withhold their action until after the opponent has taken over the country?"

The questions are admittedly theoretical. They are also premature for the reason that I have not mastered the whole technique of non-violence. The experiment is still in the making. It is not even in its advanced stage. The nature of the experiment requires one to be satisfied with one step at a time. The distant scene is not for him to see. Therefore my answers can only be speculative.

In truth, as I have said before, now we are not having unadulterated non-violence even in our struggle to win independence.

As to the first question, I fear that the chances of non-violence being accepted as a principle of State policy are very slight, so far as I can see at present. If India does not accept non-violence as her policy after winning independence, the second question becomes superfluous.

But I may state my own individual view of the potency of non-violence. I believe that a State can be administered on a non-violent basis, if the vast majority of the people are non-violent. So far as I know, India is the only country which has a possibility of being such a State. I am conducting my experiment in that faith. Supposing, therefore, that India attained independence through pure non-violence, India could retain it too by the same means. A non-violent man or society does not anticipate or provide for attacks from without. On the contrary, such a person or society firmly believes that nobody is going to disturb them. If the worst happens, there are two ways open to non-violence. To yield possession, but non-co-operate with the aggressor. Thus supposing that a modern edition of Nero descended upon India, the representatives of the State will let him in, but tell him that he will get no assistance from the people. They will prefer death to submission. The second way would be non-violent resistance by the people who have been trained in the non-violent way. They would offer themselves unarmed as fodder for the aggressor's cannons. The underlying belief in either

case is that even a Nero is not devoid of a heart. The unexpected spectacle of endless rows upon rows of men and women simply dying rather than surrender to the will of an aggressor must ultimately melt him and his soldiery. Practically speaking, there will be probably no greater loss in men than if forcible resistance was offered; there will be no expenditure in armaments and fortifications. The non-violent training received by the people will add inconceivably to their height. Such men and women will have shown personal bravery of a type far superior to that shown in armed warfare. In each case the bravery consists in dying, not in killing. Lastly, there is no such thing as defeat in non-violent resistance. That such a thing has not happened before is no answer to my speculation. I have drawn no impossible picture. History is replete with instances of individual non-violence of the type I have mentioned. There is no warrant for saying or thinking that a group of men and women cannot by sufficient training act non-violently as a group or nation. Indeed the sum total of the experience of mankind is that men somehow or other live on, from which fact I infer that it is the law of love that rules mankind. Had violence, i.e. hate, ruled us, we should have become extinct long ago. And yet the tragedy of it is that the so-called civilized men and nations conduct themselves as if the basis of society was violence. It gives me ineffable joy to make experiments proving that love is the supreme and only law of life. Much evidence to the contrary cannot shake my faith. Even the mixed non-violence of India has supported it. But if it is not enough to convince an unbeliever, it is enough to incline a friendly critic to view it with favour.

Sevagram, 8-4-'40

Harijan, 13-4-1940

DEMOCRACY AND NON-VIOLENCE

Q. Why do you say, "Democracy can only be saved through non-violence"? (The questioner is an American friend.)

A. Because democracy, so long as it is sustained by violence, cannot provide for or protect the weak. My notion of democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest. That can never happen except through non-violence. No country in the world today shows any but patronizing regard for the weak. The weakest, you say, go to the wall. Take your own case. *America* Your land is owned by a few capitalist owners. The same is true of South Africa. These large holdings cannot be sustained except by violence, veiled if not open. Western democracy, as it functions today, is diluted Nazim or Fascism. At best it is merely a cloak to hide the Nazi and the Fascist tendencies of imperialism. Why is there the war today, if it is not for the satisfaction of the desire to share the spoils? It was not through democratic methods that Britain bagged India. What is the meaning of South African democracy? Its very constitution has been drawn to protect the white man against the coloured man, the natural occupant. Your own history is perhaps blacker still, in spite of what the Northern States did for the abolition of slavery. The way you have treated the Negro presents a discreditable record. And it is to save such democracies that the war is being fought. There is something very hypocritical about it. I am thinking just now in terms of non-violence and trying to expose violence in its nakedness.

India is trying to evolve true democracy, i.e. without violence. Our weapons are those of Satyagraha expressed through the Charkha, the village industries, primary education through handicrafts, removal of untouchability, communal harmony, prohibition, and non-violent organization of labour as in Ahmedabad. These mean mass

was depicted and appeared to be irresistible was successfully resisted by the immovable force of Satyagraha—call it suffering without retaliation.

What became true then can be equally true now. Hitlerism will never be defeated by counter-Hitlerism. It can only breed superior Hitlerism raised to *n*th degree. What is going on before our eyes is a demonstration of the futility of violence as also of Hitlerism.

Let me explain what I mean by failure of Hitlerism. It has robbed the small nations of their liberty. It has compelled France to sue for peace. Probably by the time this is in print Britain will have decided upon her course. The fall of France is enough for my argument. I think French statesmen have shown rare courage in bowing to the inevitable and refusing to be party to senseless mutual slaughter. There can be no sense in France coming out victorious if the stake is in truth lost. The cause of liberty becomes a mockery, if the price to be paid is wholesale destruction of those who are to enjoy liberty. It then becomes an inglorious satiation of ambition. The bravery of the French soldier is world-known. But let the world know also the greater bravery of the French statesmen in suing for peace. I have assumed that the French statesmen have taken the step in a perfectly honourable manner as behoves true soldiers. Let me hope that Herr Hitler will impose no humiliating terms but show that, though he can fight without mercy, he can at least conclude peace not without mercy.

But to resume the thread of the argument. What will Hitler do with his victory? Can he digest so much power? Personally he will go as empty-handed as his not very remote predecessor Alexander. For the Germans he will have left not the pleasure of owning a mighty empire but the burden of sustaining its crushing weight. For they will not be able to hold all the conquered nations in perpetual subjection. And I doubt if the Germans of future generations will entertain unadulterated pride in the deeds for which Hitlerism will be deemed responsible. They will honour Herr Hitler as a genius, as a brave man, a matchless organizer, and much more. But I should hope that the