

SRI AUROBINDO

THE DOCTRINE  
OF  
PASSIVE RESISTANCE

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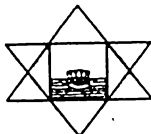
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PASSIVE RESISTANCE

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM  
PONDICHERRY

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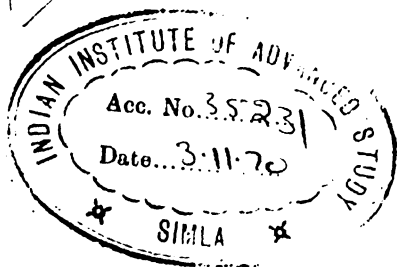
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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The series of articles on 'Passive Resistance' was first published in the *Bande Mataram* from April 9 to April 23, 1907. It describes an instrument of political action that has helped India more than any other to reach her goal.

The last article on 'Boycott' was intended for the *Bande Mataram* but could not be published. It was seized by the Police and made an exhibit in the Alipore Conspiracy Case (May, 1908).

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## INTRODUCTION

IN a series of articles, published in this paper soon after the Calcutta session of the Congress, we sought to indicate our view both of the ideal which the Congress had adopted, the ideal of Swaraj or Self-Government as it exists in the United Kingdom or the Colonies, and of the possible lines of policy by which that ideal might be attained. There are, we pointed out, only three possible policies : petitioning, an unprecedented way of attempting a nation's liberty, which cannot possibly succeed except under conditions which have not yet existed among human beings; self-development and self-help; and the old orthodox historical method of organised resistance to the existing form of Government. We acknowledge that the policy of self-development which the New Party had forced to the front, was itself a novel departure under the circumstances of modern India. Self-development of an independent nation is one thing; self-development from a state of servitude under an alien and despotic rule without the forcible or peaceful removal of that rule as an indispensable preliminary, is quite another. No national self-development is possible without the support of *Rajasakti*, organized political strength, commanding, and whenever necessary compelling general allegiance and obedience. A caste may develop, a particular community may develop, by its own efforts supported by a strong social organization; a nation

cannot. Industrially, socially, educationally, there can be no genuine progress carrying the whole nation forward, unless there is a central force representing either the best thought and energy of the country or else the majority of its citizens and able to enforce the views and decisions of the nation on all its constituent members. Because Japan had such a central authority, she was able in thirty years to face Europe as an equal; because we in India neither had such an authority nor tried to develop it, but supported each tottering step by clinging to the stepmotherly apron-strings of a foreign Government, our record of more than seventy years has not been equal to one year of Japan. We have fumbled through the nineteenth century, prattling of enlightenment and national regeneration; and the result has been not national progress, but national confusion and weakness. Individuals here and there might emancipate themselves and come to greatness; particular communities might show a partial and one-sided development, for a time only; but the nation instead of progressing, sank into a very slough of weakness, helplessness and despondency. Political freedom is the life-breath of a nation; to attempt social reform, educational reform, industrial expansion, the moral improvement of the race without aiming first and foremost at political freedom, is the very height of ignorance and futility. Such attempts are foredoomed to disappointment and failure; yet when the disappointment and failure come, we choose to attribute them to some radical defect in the national character; as if

the nation were at fault and not its wise men who would not or could not understand the first elementary conditions of success. The primary requisite for national progress, national reform, is the free habit of free and healthy national thought and action which is impossible in a state of servitude. The second is the organization of the national will in a strong central authority.

How impossible it is to carry out efficiently any large national object in the absence of this authority was shown by the fate of the Boycott in Bengal. It is idle to disguise from ourselves that the Boycott is not yet effective except spasmodically and in patches. Yet to carry through the Boycott was a solemn national decision which has not been reversed but rather repeatedly confirmed. Never indeed has the national will been so generally and unmistakably declared; but for the want of a central authority to work for the necessary conditions, to support by its ubiquitous presence the weak and irresolute and to coerce the refractory, it has not been properly carried out. For the same reason national education languishes. For the same reason every attempt at large national action has failed. It is idle to talk of self-development unless we first evolve a suitable central authority or Government which all will or must accept. The Japanese perceived this at a very early stage and leaving aside all other matters, devoted their first energies to the creation of such an authority in the person of the Mikado and his Government, holding it cheaply purchased even at the price of temporary internal discord and civil

slaughter. We also must develop a central authority, which shall be a popular Government in fact though not in name. But Japan was independent; we have to establish a popular authority which will exist side by side and in rivalry with a despotic foreign bureaucracy—no ordinary rough-riding despotism, but quiet, pervasive and subtle,—one that has fastened its grip on every detail of our national life and will not easily be persuaded to let go, even in the least degree, its octopus-like hold. This popular authority will have to dispute every part of our national life and activity, one by one, step by step, with the intruding force to the extreme point of entire emancipation from alien control. This and no less than this is the task before us. A Moderate critic characterised it at the time as an unheroic programme; but to us it seems so heroic that we frankly acknowledge its novelty and audacity and the uncertainty of success. For success depends on the presence of several very rare conditions. It demands in the first place a country for its field of action in which the people are more powerfully swayed by the fear of social excommunication and the general censure of their fellows than by the written law. It demands a country where the capacity for extreme self-denial is part of the national character or for centuries has taken a prominent place in the national discipline. These conditions exist in India. But it requires also an iron endurance, tenacity, doggedness, far above anything that is needed for the more usual military revolt or sanguinary revolution. These qualities we have not as yet

developed at least in Bengal; but they are easily generated by suffering and necessity and hardened into permanence by a prolonged struggle with superior power. There is nothing like a strong pressure from above to harden and concentrate what lies below—always provided that the superior pressure is not such as to crush the substance on which it is acting. The last requisite therefore for the success of the policy of self-development against the pressure of foreign rule is that the bureaucracy will so far respect its former traditions and professions as not to interfere finally with any course of action of the popular authority which does not itself try violently to subvert the connection of the British Empire with India. It is extremely doubtful whether this last condition will be satisfied. It is easy to see how the bureaucracy might put a summary end to National Education or an effective check on industrial expansion or do away arbitrarily with popular arbitration Courts. It is easy to see how the temptation to resort to Russian methods on a much larger and effective scale than that of mere Fullarism might prove too strong for a privileged class which felt power slipping from its hold. We therefore said in our previous articles that we must carry on the attempt at self-development as long as we were permitted. What would be our next resource if it were no longer permitted, it is too early to discuss.

The attempt at self-development by self-help is absolutely necessary for our national salvation, whether we can carry it peacefully to the end or not. In no other

way can we get rid of the fatal dependence, passivity and helplessness in which a century of all-pervasive British control has confirmed us. To recover the habit of independent motion and independent action is the first necessity. It was for this reason that after extreme provocation and full conviction of the hopelessness otherwise of inducing any change of policy in the older politicians, the leaders of the New School decided to form an independent party and place their views as an independent programme before the country. Their action, though much blamed at the time, has been thoroughly justified by results. The National Congress has not indeed broken with the old petitioning traditions, but it has admitted the new policy as an essential part of the national programme. Swadeshi and National Education have been recognized, and, in all probability, Arbitration will be given its proper prominence at the next session; Boycott has been admitted as permissible in principle to all parts of India though the recommendation to extend it in practice as an integral part of the national policy was not pressed. It only remained to develop the central authority which will execute the national policy and evolve with time into a popular Government. It was for this object that the New Party determined not to be satisfied with any further evasion of the constitution question, though they did not press for the adoption of their own particular scheme. It is for this object that a Central National Committee has been formed; that Conferences are being held in various districts and sub-

divisions and committees created; that the Provincial Conferences are expected to appoint a Provincial Committee for all Bengal. The mere creation of these Committees will not provide us with our central authority, nor will they be really effective for the purpose until the new spirit and the new views are paramount in the whole country. But it is the first step which costs and the first step has been taken.

So far, well; but the opposition of the bureaucracy to the national self-development must be taken into account. Opposition, not necessarily final and violent, will undoubtedly be offered; and we have not as yet considered the organization of any means by which it can be effectually met. Obviously, we shall have to fall back on the third policy of organized resistance, and have only to decide what form the resistance should take, passive or active, defensive or aggressive. It is well known that the New Party long ago formulated and all Bengal has in theory accepted, the doctrine of passive, or, as it might be more comprehensively termed, defensive resistance. We have therefore not only to organize a central authority, not only to take up all branches of our national life into our hands, but, in order to meet bureaucratic opposition and to compel the alien control to remove its hold on us, if not at once, then tentacle by tentacle, we must organize defensive resistance.

## ITS OBJECT

ORGANIZED resistance to an existing form of government may be undertaken either for the vindication of national liberty, or in order to substitute one form of government for another, or to remove particular objectionable features in the existing system without any entire or radical alteration of the whole, or simply for the redress of particular grievances. Our political agitation in the nineteenth century was entirely confined to the smaller and narrower objects. To replace an oppressive land revenue system by the security of a Permanent Settlement, to mitigate executive tyranny by the separation of judicial from executive functions, to diminish the drain on the country naturally resulting from foreign rule by more liberal employment of Indians in the services—to these half-way houses our wise men and political seers directed our steps,—with this limited ideal they confined the rising hopes and imaginations of a mighty people re-awakening after a great downfall. Their political inexperience prevented them from realising that these measures on which we have mis-spent half a century of unavailing effort, were not only paltry and partial in their scope but in their nature ineffective. A Permanent Settlement can always be evaded by a spendthrift Government bent on increasing its resources and unchecked by any system of popular control; there is no limit to the possible number of cesses and local taxes by which the Settle-



ment could be practically violated without any direct infringement of its provisions. The mere deprivation of judicial functions will not disarm executive tyranny so long as both executive and judiciary are mainly white and subservient to a central authority irresponsible, alien and bureaucratic; for the central authority can always tighten its grip on the judiciary of which it is the controller and paymaster and habituate it to a consistent support of executive action. Nor will Simultaneous Examinations and the liberal appointment of Indians mend the matter; for an Englishman serves the Government as a member of the same ruling race and can afford to be occasionally independent; but the Indian civilian is a serf masquerading as a heaven-born and can only deserve favour and promotion by his zeal in fastening the yoke heavier upon his fellow-countrymen. As a rule the foreign Government can rely on the "native" civilian to be more zealously oppressive than even the average Anglo-Indian official. Neither would the panacea of Simultaneous Examinations really put an end to the burden of the drain. The Congress insistence on the Home Charges for a long time obscured the real accusation against British rule; for it substituted a particular grievance for a radical and congenital evil implied in the very existence of British control. The huge price India has to pay England for the inestimable privilege of being ruled by Englishmen is a small thing compared with the murderous drain by which we purchase the more exquisite privilege of being exploited by British capital. The diminution of Home

Charges will not prevent the gradual death by bleeding of which exploitation is the true and abiding cause. Thus, even for the partial objects they were intended to secure, the measures for which we petitioned and clamoured in the last century were hopelessly ineffective. So was it with all the Congress nostrums; they were palliatives which could not even be counted upon to palliate; the radical evil, uncured, would only be driven from one seat in the body politic to take refuge in others where it would soon declare its presence by equally troublesome symptoms. The only true cure for a bad and oppressive financial system is to give the control over taxation to the people whose money pays for the needs of Government. The only effective way of putting an end to executive tyranny is to make the people and not an irresponsible Government the controller and paymaster of both executive and judiciary. The only possible method of stopping the drain is to establish a popular government which may be relied on to foster and protect Indian commerce and Indian industry conducted by Indian capital and employing Indian labour. This is the object which the new politics, the politics of the twentieth century, places before the people of India in their resistance to the present system of Government,—not tinkering and palliatives but the substitution for the autocratic bureaucracy, which at present misgoverns us, of a free constitutional and democratic system of Government and the entire removal of foreign control in order to make way for perfect national liberty.

The redress of particular grievances and the reformation of particular objectionable features in a system of Government are sufficient objects for organized resistance only when the Government is indigenous and all classes have a recognized place in the political scheme of the State. They are not and cannot be a sufficient object in countries like Russia and India where the laws are made and administered by a handful of men, and a vast population, educated and uneducated alike, have no political right or duty except the duty of obedience and the right to assist in confirming their own servitude. They are still less a sufficient object when the despotic oligarchy is alien by race and has not even a permanent home in the country, for in that case the Government cannot be relied on to look after the general interest of the country, as in nations ruled by indigenous despotism; on the contrary, they are bound to place the interests of their own country and their own race first and foremost. Organized resistance in subject nations which mean to live and not to die, can have no less an object than an entire and radical change of the system of Government; only by becoming responsible to the people and drawn from the people can the Government be turned into a protector instead of an oppressor. But if the subject nation desires not a provincial existence and a maimed development but the full, vigorous and noble realisation of its national existence, even a change in the system of Government will not be enough; it must aim not only at a national Government responsible to the people but a free

national Government unhampered even in the least degree by foreign control.

It is not surprising that our politicians of the nineteenth century could not realize these elementary truths of modern politics. They had no national experience behind them of politics under modern conditions; they had no teachers except English books and English liberal "sympathisers" and "friends of India". Schooled by British patrons, trained to the fixed idea of English superiority and Indian inferiority, their imaginations could not embrace the idea of national liberty, and perhaps they did not even desire it at heart, preferring the comfortable ease which at that time still seemed possible in a servitude under British protection, to the struggles and sacrifices of a hard and difficult independence. Taught to take their political lessons solely from the example of England and ignoring or not valuing the historical experience of the rest of the world, they could not even conceive of a truly popular and democratic Government in India except as the slow result of the development of centuries, progress broadening down from precedent to precedent. They could not then understand that the experience of an independent nation is not valid to guide a subject nation, unless and until the subject nation throws off the yoke and itself becomes independent. They could not realize that the slow, painful and ultra-cautious development, necessary in mediaeval and semi-mediaeval conditions when no experience of a stable popular Government had been gained, need not be

repeated in the days of the steamship, railway and telegraph, when stable democratic systems are part of the world's secured and permanent heritage. The instructive spectacle of Asiatic nations demanding and receiving constitutional and parliamentary government as the price of a few years' struggle and civil turmoil, had not then been offered to the world. But even if the idea of such happenings had occurred to the more sanguine spirits, they would have been prevented from putting it into words by their inability to discover any means towards its fulfilment. Their whole political outlook was bounded by the lessons of English history, and in English history they found only two methods of politics,—the slow method of agitation and the swift decisive method of open struggle and revolt. Unaccustomed to independent political thinking, they did not notice the significant fact that the method of agitation only became effective in England when the people had already gained powerful voice in the Government. In order to secure that voice they had been compelled to resort no less than three several times to the method of open struggle and revolt. Blind to the significance of this fact, our nineteenth century politicians clung to the method of agitation, obstinately hoping against all experience and reason that it would somehow serve their purpose. From any idea of open struggle with the bureaucracy they shrank with terror and a sense of paralysis. Dominated by the idea of the overwhelming might of Britain and the abject weakness of India, their want of courage and faith in the nation, their rooted

distrust of the national character, disbelief in Indian patriotism and blindness to the possibility of true political strength and virtue in the people, precluded them from discovering the rough and narrow way to salvation. Herein lies the superiority of the new school that they have an indomitable courage and faith in the nation and the people. By the strength of that courage and faith they have not only been able to enforce on the mind of the country a higher ideal but perceived an effective means to the realization of that ideal. By the strength of that courage and faith they have made such immense strides in the course of a few months. By the strength of that courage and faith they will dominate the future.

The new methods were first tried in the great Swadeshi outburst of the last two years,—blindly, crudely, without leading and organization, but still with amazing results. The moving cause was a particular grievance, the Partition of Bengal; and to the removal of that grievance, pettiest and narrowest of all political objects, our old leaders strove hard to confine the use of this new and mighty weapon. But the popular instinct was true to itself and would have none of it. At a bound we passed therefore from mere particular grievances, however serious and intolerable, to the use of passive resistance as a means of cure for the basest and vilest feature of the present system,—the bleeding to death of a country by foreign exploitation. And from that stage we are steadily advancing, under the guidance of such able political thinking as modern

India has not before seen and with the rising tide of popular opinion at our back, to the one true object of all resistance, passive or active, aggressive or defensive, —the creation of a free popular Government and the vindication of Indian liberty.

## ITS NECESSITY

WE have defined, so far, the occasion and the ultimate object of the passive resistance we preach. It is the only effective means, except actual armed revolt, by which the organized strength of the nation, gathering to a powerful central authority and guided by the principle of self-development and self-help, can wrest the control of our national life from the grip of an alien bureaucracy, and thus, developing into a free popular Government, naturally replace the bureaucracy it extrudes until the process culminates into a self-governed India, liberated from foreign control. The mere effort at self-development unaided by some kind of resistance, will not materially help us towards our goal. Merely by developing national schools and colleges we shall not induce or force the bureaucracy to give up to us the control of education. Merely by attempting to expand some of our trades and industries, we shall not drive out the British exploiter or take from the British Government its sovereign power of regulating, checking or killing the growth of Swadeshi industries by the imposition of judicious taxes and duties and other methods always open to the controller of a country's finance and legislation. Still less shall we be able by that harmless means to get for ourselves the control of taxation and expenditure. Nor shall we, merely by establishing our own arbitration courts, oblige the alien control to give up the elaborate and



lucrative system of Civil and Criminal Judicature which at once emasculates the nation and makes it pay heavily for its own emasculation. In none of these matters is the bureaucracy likely to budge an inch from its secure position unless it is forcibly persuaded. The control of the young mind in its most impressionable period is of vital importance to the continuance of the hypnotic spell by which alone the foreign domination manages to subsist; the exploitation of the country is the chief reason for its existence; the control of the judiciary is one of its chief instruments of repression. None of these things can it yield up without bringing itself nearer to its doom. It is only by organized national resistance, passive or aggressive, that we can make our self-development effectual. For if the self-help movement only succeeds in bringing about some modification of educational methods, some readjustment of the balance of trade, some alleviation of the course of litigation, then, whatever else it may have succeeded in doing, it will have failed of its main object. The new school at least have not advocated the policy of self-development merely out of a disinterested ardour for moral improvement or under the spur of an inoffensive philanthropic patriotism. This attitude they leave to saints and philosophers,—saints like the editor of the *Indian Mirror* or philosophers like the ardent Indian Liberals who sit at the feet of Mr. John Morley. They for their part speak and write frankly as politicians aiming at a definite and urgent political object by a way which shall be reasonably rapid and yet permanent

in its results. We may have our own educational theories; but we advocate national education not as an educational experiment or to subserve any theory, but as the only way to secure truly national and patriotic control and discipline for the mind of the country in its malleable youth. We desire industrial expansion, but Swadeshi without boycott,—non-political Swadeshi,—Lord Minto's "honest" Swadeshi—has no attractions for us; since we know that it can bring no safe and permanent national gain;—that can only be secured by the industrial and fiscal independence of the Indian nation. Our immediate problem as a nation is not how to be intellectual and well-informed or how to be rich and industrious, but how to stave off imminent national death, how to put an end to the white peril, how to assert ourselves and live. It is for this reason that whatever minor differences there may be between different exponents of the new spirit, they are all agreed on the immediate necessity of an organized national resistance to the state of things which is crushing us out of existence as a nation and on the one goal of that resistance,—freedom.

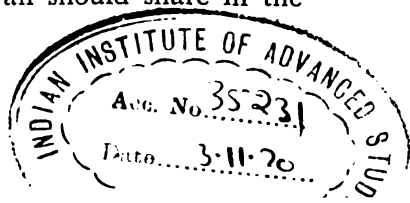
Organized national resistance to existing conditions, whether directed against the system of Government as such or against some particular feature of it, has three courses open to it. It may attempt to make administration under existing conditions impossible by an organized passive resistance. This was the policy initiated by the genius of Parnell when by the plan of campaign he prevented the payment of rents in Ireland

and by persistent obstruction hampered the transaction of any but Irish business in Westminster. It may attempt to make administration under existing conditions impossible by an organized aggressive resistance in the shape of an untiring and implacable campaign of assassination and a confused welter of riots, strikes and agrarian risings all over the country. This is the spectacle we have all watched with such eager interest in Russia. We have seen the most absolute autocrat and the most powerful and ruthless bureaucracy in the world still in unimpaired possession of all the most effective means of repression, yet beaten to the knees by the determined resistance of an unarmed nation. It has mistakenly been said that the summoning of the Duma was a triumph for passive resistance. But the series of strikes on a gigantic scale which figured so largely in the final stages of the struggle was only one feature of that widespread, desperate and unappeasable anarchy which led to the first triumph of Russian liberty. Against such an anarchy the mightiest and best-organized Government must necessarily feel helpless; its repression would demand a systematic and prolonged course of massacre on a colossal scale the prospect of which would have paralysed the vigour of the most ruthless and energetic despotism even of mediaeval times. Only by concessions and compromises could such a resistance be overcome. The third course open to an oppressed nation is that of armed revolt, which instead of bringing existing conditions to an end by making their continuance impossible sweeps them

bodily out of existence. This is the old time-honoured method which the oppressed or enslaved have always adopted by preference in the past, and will adopt in the future if they see any chance of success; for it is the readiest and swiftest, the most thorough in its results, and demands the least powers of endurance and suffering and the smallest and briefest sacrifices.

The choice by a subject nation of the means it will use for vindicating its liberty, is best determined by the circumstances of its servitude. The present circumstances in India seem to point to passive resistance as our most natural and suitable weapon. We would not for a moment be understood to base this conclusion upon any condemnation of other methods as in all circumstances criminal and unjustifiable. It is the common habit of established Governments and especially those which are themselves oppressors, to brand all violent methods in subject peoples and communities as criminal and wicked. When you have disarmed your slaves and legalised the infliction of bonds, stripes and death on any one of them, man, woman or child, who may dare to speak or to act against you, it is natural and convenient to try and lay a moral as well as a legal ban on any attempt to answer violence by violence, the knout by the revolver, the prison by riot or agrarian rising, the gallows by the dynamite bomb. But no nation yet has listened to the cant of the oppressor when itself put to the test, and the general conscience of humanity approves the refusal. Under certain circumstances a civil struggle becomes in reality a battle

and the morality of war is different from the morality of peace. To shrink from bloodshed and violence under such circumstances is a weakness deserving as severe a rebuke as Sri Krishna addressed to Arjuna when he shrank from the colossal civil slaughter on the field of Kurukshetra. Liberty is the life-breath of a nation; and when the life is attacked, when it is sought to suppress all chance of breathing by violent pressure, any and every means of self-preservation becomes right and justifiable,—just as it is lawful for a man who is being strangled to rid himself of the pressure on his throat by any means in his power. It is the nature of the pressure which determines the nature of the resistance. Where, as in Russia, the denial of liberty is enforced by legalised murder and outrage, or, as in Ireland formerly, by brutal coercion, the answer of violence to violence is justified and inevitable. Where the need for immediate liberty is urgent and it is a present question of national life or death on the instant, revolt is the only course. But where the oppression is legal and subtle in its methods and respects life, liberty and property and there is still breathing time, the circumstances demand that we should make the experiment of a method of resolute but peaceful resistance which, while less bold and aggressive than other methods, calls for perhaps as much heroism of a kind and certainly more universal endurance and suffering. In other methods, a daring minority purchases with their blood the freedom of the millions; but for passive resistance it is necessary that all should share in the



struggle and the privation.

This peculiar character of passive resistance is one reason why it has found favour with the thinkers of the New Party. There are certain moral qualities necessary to self-government which have become atrophied by long disuse in our people and can only be restored either by the healthy air of a free national life in which alone they can permanently thrive or by their vigorous exercise in the intensity of a national struggle for freedom. If by any possibility the nation can start its career of freedom with a fully developed unity and strength, it will certainly have a better chance of immediate greatness hereafter. Passive resistance affords the best possible training for these qualities. Something also is due to our friends, the enemy. We have ourselves made them reactionary and oppressive and deserved the Government we possess. The reason why even a radical opportunist like Mr. Morley refuses us self-government is not that he does not believe in India's fitness for self-government, but that he does not believe in India's determination to be free; on the contrary, the whole experience of the past shows that we have not been in earnest in our demand for self-government. We should put our determination beyond a doubt and thereby give England a chance of redeeming her ancient promises, made when her rule was still precarious and unstable. For the rest, circumstances still favour the case of passive resistance. In spite of occasional Fullerism, the bureaucracy has not yet made up its mind to a Russian system of repression.

It is true that for India also it is now a question of national life or death. Morally and materially she has been brought to the verge of exhaustion and decay by the bureaucratic rule and any farther acquiescence in servitude will result in that death-sleep of centuries from which a nation, if it ever awakes at all, awakes emaciated, feeble and unable to resume its true rank in the list of the peoples. But there is still time to try the effect of an united and unflinching pressure of passive resistance. The resistance, if it is to be of any use, must be united and unflinching. If from any timidity or selfishness or any mistaken ideas of caution and moderation, our Moderate patriots succeed in breaking the unity and weakening the force of the resistance, the movement will fail and India will sink into those last depths of degradation when only desperate remedies will be of any utility. The advocates of self-development and defensive resistance are no extremists but are trying to give the country its last chance of escaping the necessity of extremism. Defensive resistance is the sole alternative to that ordeal of sanguinary violence on both sides through which all other countries, not excepting the Moderates' exemplar England have been compelled to pass, only at last "embracing Liberty over a heap of corpses."

## ITS METHODS

THE essential difference between passive or defensive and active or aggressive resistance is this, that while the method of the aggressive resister is to do something by which he can bring about positive harm to the Government, the method of the passive resister is to abstain from doing something by which he would be helping the Government. The object in both cases is the same,—to force the hands of the Government; the line of attack is different. The passive method is especially suitable to countries where the Government depends mainly for the continuance of its administration on the voluntary help and acquiescence of the subject people. The first principle of passive resistance, therefore, which the new school have placed in the forefront of their programme, is to make administration under present conditions impossible by an organized refusal to do anything which shall help either British commerce in the exploitation of the country or British officialdom in the administration of it,—unless and until the conditions are changed in the manner and to the extent demanded by the people. This attitude is summed up in the one word, Boycott. If we consider the various departments of the administration one by one, we can easily see how administration in each can be rendered impossible by successfully organized refusal of assistance. We are dissatisfied with the fiscal and economical conditions of British rule in India, with the



foreign exploitation of the country, the continual bleeding of its resources, the chronic famine and rapid impoverishment which result, the refusal of the Government to protect the people and their industries. Accordingly, we refuse to help the process of exploitation and impoverishment in our capacity as consumers, we refuse henceforth to purchase foreign and especially British goods or to condone their purchase by others. By an organized and relentless boycott of British goods, we propose to render the further exploitation of the country impossible. We are dissatisfied also with the conditions under which education is imparted in this country, its calculated poverty and insufficiency, its anti-national character, its subordination to the Government and the use made of that subordination for the discouragement of patriotism and the inculcation of loyalty. Accordingly we refuse to send our boys to Government schools or to schools aided and controlled by the Government; if this educational boycott is general and well-organized, the educational administration of the country will be rendered impossible and the control of its youthful minds pass out of the hands of the foreigner. We are dissatisfied with the administration of justice, the ruinous costliness of the civil side, the brutal rigour of its criminal penalties and procedure, its partiality, its frequent subordination to political objects. We refuse accordingly to have any resort to the alien courts of justice, and by an organized judicial boycott propose to make the bureaucratic administration of justice impossible while these condi-

tions continue. Finally, we disapprove of the executive administration, its arbitrariness, its meddling and inquisitorial character, its thoroughness of repression, its misuse of the police for the repression instead of the protection of the people. We refuse, accordingly, to go to the executive for help or advice or protection or to tolerate any paternal interference in our public activities, and by an organized boycott of the executive propose to reduce executive control and interference to a mere skeleton of its former self. The bureaucracy depends for the success of its administration on the help of the few and the acquiescence of the many. If the few refused to help, if Indians no longer consented to teach in Government schools or work in the Government offices, or serve the alien as police, the administration could not continue for a day. We will suppose the bureaucracy able to fill their places by Eurasians, aliens or traitors; even then the refusal of the many to acquiesce, by the simple process of no longer resorting to Government schools, courts of justice or magistrates' katcheries, would put an end to administration.

Such is the nature of passive resistance as preached by the new school in India. It is at once clear that self-development and such a scheme of passive resistance are supplementary and necessary to each other. If we refuse to supply our needs from foreign sources, we must obviously supply them ourselves; we cannot have the industrial boycott without Swadeshi and the expansion of indigenous industries. If we decline to enter

the alien courts of justice, we must have arbitration courts of our own to settle our disputes and differences. If we do not send our boys to schools owned or controlled by the Government, we must have schools of our own in which they may receive a thorough and national education. If we do not go for protection to the executive, we must have a system of self-protection and mutual protection of our own. Just as Swadeshi is the natural accompaniment of an industrial boycott, so also arbitration stands in the same relation to a judicial boycott, national education to an educational boycott, a league of mutual defence to an executive boycott. From this close union of self-help with passive resistance it also follows that the new politics do not contemplate the organization of passive resistance as a temporary measure for partial ends. It is not to be dropped as soon as the Government undertakes the protection of indigenous industries, reforms its system of education, improves its courts of justice and moderates its executive rigour and ubiquity, but only when the control of all these functions is vested in a free, constitutional and popular Government. We have learned by bitter experience that an alien and irresponsible bureaucracy cannot be relied upon to abstain from rescinding its reforms when convenient or to manage even a reformed administration in the interest of the people.

The possibilities of passive resistance are not exhausted by the refusal of assistance to the administration. In Europe its more usual weapon is the refusal

to pay taxes. The strenuous political instinct of European races teaches them to aim a direct blow at the most vital part of the administration rather than to undermine it by slower and more gradual means. The payment of taxes is the most direct assistance given by the community to the administration and the most visible symbol of acquiescence and approval. To refuse payment is at once the most emphatic protest possible short of taking up arms, and the sort of attack which the administration will feel immediately and keenly and must therefore parry at once either by conciliation or by methods of repression which will give greater vitality and intensity to the opposition. The refusal to pay taxes is a natural and logical result of the attitude of passive resistance. A boycott of Government schools, for example, may be successful and national schools substituted; but the administration continues to exact from the people a certain amount of revenue for the purposes of education, and is not likely to relinquish its claims; the people will therefore have doubly to tax themselves in order to maintain national education and also to maintain the Government system by which they no longer profit. Under such circumstances the refusal to pay for an education of which they entirely disapprove, comes as a natural consequence. This was the form of resistance offered by the Dissenters in England to the Education Act of the last Conservative Government. The refusal to pay rents was the backbone of the Irish Plan of Campaign. The refusal to pay taxes levied by an Imperial

Government in which they had no voice or share, was the last form of resistance offered by the American colonists previous to taking up arms. Ultimately, in case of the persistent refusal of the administration to listen to reason, the refusal to pay taxes is the strongest and final form of passive resistance.

This stronger sort of passive resistance has not been included by the new party in its immediate programme, and for valid reasons. In the first place, all the precedents for this form of resistance were accompanied by certain conditions which do not as yet obtain in India. In the Irish instance, the refusal was not to pay Government taxes but to pay rents to a landlord class who represented an unjust and impoverishing land system maintained in force by a foreign power against the wishes of the people; but in India the foreign bureaucracy has usurped the functions of the landlord, except in Bengal where a refusal to pay rents would injure not a landlord-class supported by the alien but a section of our own countrymen who have been intolerably harassed, depressed and burdened by bureaucratic policy and bureaucratic exactions and fully sympathise, for the most part, with the national movement. In all other parts of India the refusal to pay rents would be a refusal to pay a Government tax. This, as we have said, is the strongest, the final form of passive resistance, and differs from the method of political boycott which involves no breach of legal obligation or direct defiance of administrative authority. No man can be legally punished for using

none but Swadeshi articles or persuading others to follow his example or for sending his boys to a National in preference to a Government school, or for settling his differences with others out of court, or for defending his person and property or helping to defend the person and property of his neighbours against criminal attack. If the administration interferes with the people in the exercise of these legitimate rights, it invites and compels defiance of its authority and for what may follow, the rulers and not the people are responsible. But the refusal to pay taxes is a breach of legal obligation and a direct defiance of administrative authority precisely of that kind which the administration can least afford to neglect and must either conciliate or crush. In a free country, the attempt at repression would probably go no farther than the forcible collection of the payments refused by legal distraint; but in a subject country the bureaucracy, feeling itself vitally threatened, would naturally supplement this legal process by determined prosecution and persecution of the advocates of the policy and its adherents, and, in all probability, by extreme military and police violence. The refusal to pay taxes would, therefore, inevitably bring about the last desperate struggle between the forces of national aspiration and alien repression. It would be in the nature of an ultimatum from the people to the Government.

The case of the English Dissenters, although it was a refusal to pay taxes, differed materially from ours. The object of their passive resistance was not to bring

the Government to its knees, but to generate so strong a feeling in the country that the Conservative Government would be ignominiously brushed out of office at the next elections. They had the all-powerful weapon of the vote and could meet and overthrow injustice at the polling-station. In India we are very differently circumstanced. The resistance of the American colonists offers a nearer parallel. Like ourselves the Americans met oppression with the weapon of boycott. They were not wholly dependent on England and had their own legislatures in local affairs; so they had no occasion to extend the boycott to all departments of national life nor to attempt a general policy of national self-development. Their boycott was limited to British goods. They had however to go beyond the boycott and refuse to pay the taxes imposed on them against their will; but when they offered the ultimatum to the mother country, they were prepared to follow it up, if necessary, and did finally follow it up by a declaration of independence, supported by armed revolt. Here again there is a material difference from Indian conditions. An ultimatum should never be presented unless one is prepared to follow it up to its last consequences. Moreover, in a vast country like India, any such general conflict with dominant authority as is involved in a no-taxes policy, needs for its success a close organization linking province to province and district to district and a powerful central authority representing the single will of the whole nation which could alone fight on equal terms the

final struggle of defensive resistance with bureaucratic repression. Such an organization and authority has not yet been developed. The new politics, therefore, confines itself for the time to the policy of lawful abstention from any kind of co-operation with the Government,—the policy of boycott which is capable of gradual extension, leaving to the bureaucracy the onus of forcing on a more direct, sudden and dangerous struggle. Its principle at present is not “no representation, no taxation,” but “no control, no assistance”.



## ITS OBLIGATIONS

IN the early days of the new movement it was declared, in a very catching phrase, by a politician who has now turned his back on the doctrine which made him famous, that a subject nation has no politics. And it was commonly said that we as a subject nation should altogether ignore the Government and turn our attention to emancipation by self-help and self-development. This was the self-development principle carried to its extreme conclusions, and it is not surprising that phrases so trenchant and absolute should have given rise to some misunderstanding. It was even charged against us by Sir Pherozshah Mehta and other robust exponents of the opposition-cum-co-operation theory that we were advocating non-resistance and submission to political wrong and injustice ! Much water has flowed under the bridges since then, and now we are being charged, in deputations to the Viceroy and elsewhere, with the opposite offence of inflaming and fomenting disturbance and rebellion. Yet our policy remains essentially the same,—not to ignore such a patent and very troublesome fact as the alien bureaucracy, for that was never our policy,—but to have nothing to do with it, in the way either of assistance or acquiescence. Far from preaching non-resistance, it has now become abundantly clear that our determination not to submit to political wrong and injustice was far deeper and sterner than that of our critics. The

method of opposition differed, of course. The Moderate method of resistance was verbal only—prayer, petition and protest; the method we proposed was practical,—boycott. But, as we have pointed out, our new method, though more concrete, was in itself quite as legal and peaceful as the old. It is no offence by law to abstain from Government schools or Government courts of justice or the help and protection of the fatherly executive or the use of British goods; nor is it illegal to persuade others to join in our abstention.

At the same time this legality is neither in itself an essential condition of passive resistance generally, nor can we count upon its continuance as an actual condition of passive resistance as it is to be understood and practised in India. The passive resister in other countries has always been prepared to break an unjust and oppressive law whenever necessary and to take the legal consequences, as the non-Conformists in England did when they refused to pay the education rate, or as Hampden did when he refused to pay ship-money. Even under present conditions in India there is at least one direction in which, it appears, many of us are already breaking what Anglo-Indian courts have determined to be the law. The law relating to sedition and the law relating to the offence of causing racial enmity are so admirably vague in their terms that there is nothing which can escape from their capacious embrace. It appears from the *Punjabee* case that it is a crime under bureaucratic rule to say that Europeans hold Indian life cheaply, although this is a fact which

case after case has proved, and although British justice has confirmed this cheap valuation of our lives by the leniency of its sentences on European murderers; nay, it is a crime to impute such feelings to British justice or to say even that departmental enquiries into "accidents" of this kind cannot be trusted, although this is a conviction in which, as everyone is aware, the whole country is practically unanimous as the result of repeated experiences. All this is not crime indeed when we do it in order to draw the attention of the bureaucracy in the vain hope of getting the grievance redressed. But if our motive is to draw the attention of the people and enlighten them on the actual and inevitable results of irresponsible rule by aliens and the dominance of a single community, we are criminals, we are guilty of breaking the law of the alien. Yet to break the law in this respect is the duty of every self-respecting publicist who is of our way of thinking. It is our duty to drive home to the public mind the congenital and incurable evils of the present system of Government, so that they may insist on its being swept away in order to make room for a more healthy and natural state of things. It is our duty also to press upon the people the hopelessness of appealing to the bureaucracy to reform itself and the uselessness of any partial measures. No publicist of the new school holding such views ought to mar his reputation for candour and honesty by the pretence of drawing the attention of the Government with a view to redress the grievance. If the alien laws have declared it illegal

for him to do his duty, unless he lowers himself by covering it with a futile and obvious lie, he must still do his duty, however illegal, in the strength of his manhood; and if the bureaucracy decide to send him to prison for the breach of law, to prison he must willingly and, if he is worth his salt, rejoicingly go. The new spirit will not suffer any individual aspiring to speak or act on behalf of the people to palter with the obligation of high truthfulness and unflinching courage without which no one has a claim to lead or instruct his fellow-countrymen.

If this penalty of sedition is at present the chief danger which the adherent or the exponent of passive resistance runs under the law, yet there is no surety that it will continue to be unaccompanied by similar or more serious perils. The making of the laws is at present in the hands of our political adversaries and there is nothing to prevent them from using this power in any way they like, however iniquitous or tyrannical,—nothing except their fear of public reprobation outside and national resistance within India. At present they hope by the seductive allurements of Morleyism to smother the infant strength of the national spirit in its cradle; but as that hope is dissipated and the doctrine of passive resistance takes more and more concrete and organized form, the temptation to use the enormously powerful weapon which the unhampered facility of legislation puts in their hands, will become irresistible. The passive resister must therefore take up his creed with the certainty of having to suffer for it. If, for

instance, the bureaucracy should make abstention from Government schools or teaching without Government license a penal offence, he must continue to abstain or teach and take the legal consequences. Or if they forbid the action of arbitration courts other than those sanctioned by Government, he must yet continue to act on such courts or have recourse to them without considering the peril to which he exposes himself. And so throughout the whole range of action covered by the new politics. A law imposed by a people on itself has a binding force which cannot be ignored except under extreme necessity : a law imposed from outside has no such moral sanction; its claim to obedience must rest on coercive force or on its own equitable and beneficial character and not on the source from which it proceeds. If it is unjust and oppressive, it may become a duty to disobey it and quietly endure the punishment which the law has provided for its violation. For passive resistance aims at making a law unworkable by general and organized disobedience and so procuring its recall; it does not try, like aggressive resistance, to destroy the law by destroying the power which made and supports the law. It is therefore the first canon of passive resistance that to break an unjust coercive law is not only justifiable but, under given circumstances, a duty.

Legislation, however, is not the only weapon in the hands of the bureaucracy. They may try, without legislation, by executive action, to bring opposition under the terms of the law and the lash of its penalties. This may be done either by twisting a perfectly legal

act into a criminal offence or misdemeanour with the aid of the ready perjuries of the police or by executive ukase making illegal an action which had previously been allowed. We had plenty of experience of both these contrivances during the course of the Swadeshi movement. To persuade an intending purchaser not to buy British cloth is no offence; but if, between a police employed to put down Swadeshi and a shopkeeper injured by it, enough evidence can be concocted to twist persuasion into compulsion, the boycotter can easily be punished without having committed any offence. Executive orders are an even more easily-handled weapon. The issuing of an ukase asks for no more trouble than the penning of a few lines by a clerk and the more or less illegible signature of a District Magistrate; and *hey presto!* that brief magical abracadabra of despotism had turned an action, which five minutes ago was legitimate and inoffensive into a crime or misdemeanour punishable in property or person. Whether it is the simple utterance of 'Bande Mataram' in the streets or an august assemblage of all that is most distinguished, able and respected in the country, one stroke of a mere District Magistrate's omnipotent pen is enough to make them illegalities and turn the elect of the nation into disorderly and riotous *budmashes* to be dispersed by police cudgels. To hope for any legal redress is futile; for the power of the executive to issue ukases is perfectly vague and therefore practically illimitable, and wherever there is a doubt, it can be brought within the one all-sufficient

formula,—“It was done by the Magistrate in exercise of the discretion given him for preserving the peace.” The formula can cover any ukase or any action, however arbitrary; and what British Judge can refuse his support to a British Magistrate in that preservation of peace which is as necessary to the authority and safety of the Judge as to that of the Magistrate ! But equally is it impossible for the representatives of popular aspirations to submit to such paralysing exercise of an irresponsible and unlimited authority. This has been universally recognised in Bengal. Executive authority was defied by all Bengal when its representatives, with Babu Surendra Nath Banerji at their head, escorted their President through the streets of Barishal with the forbidden cry of ‘Bande Mataram’. If the dispersal of the Conference was not resisted, it was not from respect for executive authority but purely for reasons of political strategy. Immediately afterwards the right of public meeting was asserted in defiance of executive ukase by the Moderate leaders near Barishal itself and by prominent politicians of the new school in East Bengal. The second canon of the doctrine of passive resistance has therefore been accepted by politicians of both schools—that to resist an unjust coercive order or interference is not only justifiable but, under given circumstances, a duty.

Finally, we must be prepared for opposition not only from our natural but from unnatural adversaries,—not only from bureaucrat and Anglo-Indian, but from the more self-seeking and treacherous of our own

countrymen. In a rebellion such treachery is of small importance, since in the end it is the superior fate or the superior force that triumphs; but in a campaign of passive resistance the evil example, if unpunished, may be disastrous and eat fatally into the enthusiastic passion and serried unity indispensable to such a movement. It is therefore necessary to mete out the heaviest penalty open to us in such cases—the penalty of social excommunication. We are not in favour of this weapon being lightly used; but its employment, where the national will in a vital matter is deliberately disregarded, becomes essential. Such disregard amounts to siding in matters of life and death against your own country and people and helping in their destruction or enslavement,—which in Free States is punished with the extreme penalty due to treason. When, for instance, all Bengal staked its future upon the Boycott and specified three foreign articles,—salt, sugar and cloth,—as to be religiously avoided, anyone purchasing foreign salt or foreign sugar or foreign cloth became guilty of treason to the nation and laid himself open to the penalty of social boycott. Wherever passive resistance has been accepted, the necessity of the social boycott has been recognized as its natural concomitant. “Boycott foreign goods and boycott those who use foreign goods,”—the advice of Mr. Subramaniya Aiyar to the countrymen in Madras,—must be accepted by all who are in earnest. For without this boycott of persons the boycott of things cannot be effective; without the social boycott no national authority depending purely on



moral pressure can have its decrees effectively executed; and without effective boycott enforced by a strong national authority the new policy cannot succeed. But the only possible alternatives to the new policy are either despotism tempered by petitions or aggressive resistance. We must therefore admit a third canon of the doctrine of passive resistance, that social boycott is legitimate and indispensable as against persons guilty of treason to the nation.

## ITS LIMITS

THE three canons of the doctrine of passive resistance are in reality three necessities which must, whether we like it or not, be accepted in theory and executed in practice, if passive resistance is to have any chance of success. Passive resisters, both as individuals and in the mass, must always be prepared to break an unjust coercive law and take the legal consequences; for if they shrink from this obligation, the bureaucracy can at once make passive resistance impossible simply by adding a few more enactments to their book of statutes. A resistance which can so easily be snuffed out of being is not worth making. For the same reason they must be prepared to disobey an unjust and coercive executive order whether general or particular; for nothing would be simpler than to put down by a few months' coercion a resistance too weak to face the consequences of refusing submission to Government by ukase. They must be prepared to boycott persons guilty of deliberate disobedience to the national will in vital matters because, if they do not, the example of unpunished treason will tend to be repeated and destroy by a kind of dry rot the enthusiastic unity and universality which we have seen to be necessary to the success of passive resistance of the kind we have inaugurated in India. Men in the mass are strong and capable of wonder-working enthusiasms and irresistible movements; but the individual average man is apt to be weak or selfish and,

unless he sees that the mass are in deadly earnest and will not tolerate individual treachery, he will usually, after the first enthusiasm, indulge his weakness or selfishness to the detriment of the community. We have seen this happening almost everywhere where the boycott of foreign goods was not enforced by the boycott of persons buying foreign goods. This is one important reason why the boycott which has maintained itself in East Bengal, is in the West becoming more and more of a failure.

The moment these three unavoidable obligations are put into force, the passive resistance movement will lose its character of inoffensive legality and we shall be in the thick of a struggle which may lead us anywhere. Passive resistance, when it is confined—as at present—to lawful abstention from actions which it lies within our choice as subjects to do or not to do, is of the nature of the strategical movements and large manœuvres previous to the meeting of armies in the field; but the enforcement of our three canons brings us to the actual shock of battle. Nevertheless our resistance still retains an essential character of passivity. If the right of public meeting is suspended by Magisterial ukase, we confine ourselves to the practical assertion of the right in defiance of the ukase and, so long as the executive also confines itself to the dispersal of the meeting by the arrest of its conveners and other peaceful and legal measures, we offer no active resistance. We submit to the arrest, though not necessarily to the dispersal, and quietly take the legal consequences.

Similarly, if the law forbids us to speak or write the truth as we conceive it our duty to speak it, we persist in doing our duty and submit quietly to whatever punishment the law of sedition or any other law coercive ingenuity may devise, can find to inflict on us. In a peaceful way we act against the law or the executive, but we passively accept the legal consequences.

There is a limit, however, to passive resistance. So long as the action of the executive is peaceful and within the rules of the fight, the passive resister scrupulously maintains his attitude of passivity, but he is not bound to do so a moment beyond. To submit to illegal or violent methods of coercion, to accept outrage and hooliganism as part of the legal procedure of the country is to be guilty of cowardice, and, by dwarfing national manhood, to sin against the divinity within ourselves and the divinity in our motherland. The moment coercion of this kind is attempted, passive resistance ceases and active resistance becomes a duty. If the instruments of the executive choose to disperse our meeting by breaking the heads of those present, the right of self-defence entitles us not merely to defend our heads but to retaliate on those of the head-breaker. For the myrmidons of the law have ceased then to be guardians of the peace and become breakers of the peace, rioters and not instruments of authority, and their uniform is no longer a bar to the right of self-defence. Nor does it make any difference if the instruments of coercion happen to be the recognized and usual instruments or are unofficial hooligans in alliance

or sympathy with the forces of coercion. In both cases active resistance becomes a duty and passive resistance is, for that occasion, suspended. But though no longer passive, it is still a defensive resistance. Nor does resistance pass into the aggressive stage so long as it resists coercive violence in its own kind and confines itself to repelling attack. Even if it takes the offensive, it does not by that mere fact become aggressive resistance, unless the amount of aggression exceeds what is necessary to make defence effective. The students of Mymensingh, charged by the police while picketing, kept well within the right of self-defence when they drove the rioters off the field of operations; the gentlemen of Comilla kept well within the rights of self-defence if they attacked either rioters or inciters of riot who either offered, or threatened, or tried to provoke assault. Even the famous shot which woke the authorities from their waking dreams, need not have been an act of aggression if it was fired to save life or a woman's honour or under circumstances of desperation when no other means of defence would have been effective. With the doubtful exception of this shot, supposing it to have been fired unnecessarily, and that other revolver shot which killed Mr. Rand, there has been no instance of aggressive resistance in modern Indian politics.

The new politics, therefore, while it favours passive resistance, does not include meek submission to illegal outrage under that term; it has no intention of overstressing the passivity at the expense of the resistance. Nor is it inclined to be hysterical over a few dozen of

broken heads or exalt so simple a matter as a bloody coxcomb into the crown of martyrdom. This sort of hysterical exaggeration was too common in the early days of the movement when everyone who got his crown cracked in a street affray with the police was encouraged to lift up his broken head before the world and cry out, "This is the head of a martyr." The new politics is a serious doctrine and not, like the old, a thing of shows and political theatricals; it demands real sufferings from its adherents,—imprisonment, worldly ruin, death itself, before it can allow him to assume the rank of a martyr for his country. Passive resistance cannot build up a strong and great nation unless it is masculine, bold and ardent in its spirit and ready at any moment and at the slightest notice to supplement itself with active resistance. We do not want to develop a nation of women who know only how to suffer and not how to strike.

Moreover, the new politics must recognize the fact that beyond a certain point passive resistance puts a strain on human endurance which our natures cannot endure. This may come in particular instances where an outrage is too great or the stress of tyranny too unendurable for anyone to stand purely on the defensive; to hit back, to assail and crush the assailant, to vindicate one's manhood becomes an imperious necessity to outraged humanity. Or it may come in the mass when the strain of oppression a whole nation has to meet in its unarmed struggle for liberty, overpasses its powers of endurance. It then becomes the sole choice either to

break under the strain and go under or to throw it off with violence. The Spartan soldiers at Plataea endured for some time the missiles of the enemy and saw their comrades falling at their side without any reply because their general had not yet declared it to be the auspicious time for attack; but if the demand on their passive endurance had been too long continued, they must either have broken in disastrous defeat or flung themselves on the enemy in disregard of their leaders' orders. The school of politics which we advocate is not based upon abstractions, formulas and dogmas, but on practical necessities and the teaching of political experience, commonsense and the world's history. We have not the slightest wish to put forward passive resistance as an inelastic dogma. We preach defensive resistance mainly passive in its methods at present, but active whenever active resistance is needed; but defensive resistance within the limits imposed by human nature and by the demands of self-respect and the militant spirit of true manhood. If at any time the laws obtaining in India or the executive action of the bureaucracy were to become so oppressive as to render a struggle for liberty on the lines we have indicated, impossible; if after a fair trial given to this method, the object with which we undertook it, proved to be as far off as ever; or if passive resistance should turn out either not feasible or necessarily ineffectual under the conditions of this country, we should be the first to recognize that everything must be reconsidered and that the time for new men and new methods had arrived. We recognize no

political object of worship except the divinity in our Motherland, no present object of political endeavour except liberty, and no method or action as politically good or evil except as it truly helps or hinders our progress towards national emancipation.



## CONCLUSIONS

To sum up the conclusions at which we have arrived. The object of all our political movements and therefore the sole object with which we advocate passive resistance is Swaraj or national freedom. The latest and most venerable of the older politicians who have sat in the Presidential Chair of the Congress, pronounced from that seat of authority Swaraj as the one object of our political endeavour,—Swaraj as the only remedy for all our ills,—Swaraj as the one demand nothing short of which will satisfy the people of India. Complete self-government as it exists in the United Kingdom or the Colonies,—such was his definition of Swaraj. The Congress has contented itself with demanding self-government as it exists in the Colonies. We of the new school would not pitch our ideal one inch lower than absolute Swaraj,—self-government as it exists in the United Kingdom. We believe that no smaller ideal can inspire national revival or nerve the people of India for the fierce, stubborn and formidable struggle by which alone they can again become a nation. We believe that this newly awakened people, when it has gathered its strength together, neither can nor ought to consent to any relations with England less than that of equals in a confederacy. To be content with the relations of master and dependent or superior and subordinate, would be a mean and pitiful aspiration unworthy of manhood; to strive for anything

less than a strong and glorious freedom would be to insult the greatness of our past and the magnificent possibilities of our future.

To the ideal we have at heart there are three paths, possible or impossible. Petitioning, which we have so long followed, we reject as impossible,—the dream of a timid inexperience, the teaching of false friends who hope to keep us in perpetual subjection, foolish to reason, false to experience. Self-development by self-help which we now purpose to follow, is a possible though uncertain path, never yet attempted under such difficulties, but one which must be attempted, if for nothing else yet to get free of the habit of dependence and helplessness, and re-awaken and exercise our half-atrophied powers of self-government. Parallel to this attempt and to be practised simultaneously, the policy of organized resistance to the present system of government forms the old traditional way of nations which we also must tread. It is a vain dream to suppose that what other nations have won by struggle and battle, by suffering and tears of blood, we shall be allowed to accomplish easily, without terrible sacrifices, merely by spending the ink of the journalist and petition-framer and the breath of the orator. Petitioning will not bring us one yard nearer to freedom; self-development will not easily be suffered to advance to its goal. For self-development spells the doom of the ruling bureaucratic despotism, which must therefore oppose our progress with all the art and force of which it is the master; without organized resistance we could not take more

than a few faltering steps towards self-emancipation. But resistance may be of many kinds,—armed revolt, or aggressive resistance short of armed revolt, or defensive resistance whether passive or active; the circumstances of the country and the nature of the despotism from which it seeks to escape must determine what form of resistance is best justified and most likely to be effective at the time or finally successful.

The Congress has not formally abandoned the petitioning policy; but it is beginning to fall into discredit and gradual disuse, and time will accelerate its inevitable death by atrophy; for it can no longer even carry the little weight it had, since it has no longer the support of an undivided public opinion at its back. The alternative policy of self-development has received a partial recognition; it has been made an integral part of our political activities, but not in its entirety and purity. Self-help has been accepted as supplementary to the help of the very bureaucracy which it is our declared object to undermine and supplant,—self-development as supplementary to development of the nation by its foreign rulers. Passive resistance has not been accepted as a national policy, but in the form of Boycott it has been declared legitimate under circumstances which apply to all India.

This is a compromise good enough for the moment but in which the new school does not mean to allow the country to rest permanently. We desire to put an end to petitioning until such a strength is created in the country that a petition will only be a courteous

form of demand. We wish to kill utterly the pernicious delusion that a foreign and adverse interest can be trusted to develop us to its own detriment, and entirely to do away with the foolish and ignoble hankering after help from our natural adversaries. Our attitude to bureaucratic concession is that of Laocoon: "We fear the Greeks even when they bring us gifts." Our policy is self-development and defensive resistance. But we would extend the policy of self-development to every department of national life; not only Swadeshi and National Education, but national defence, national arbitration courts, sanitation, insurance against famine or relief of famine,—whatever our hands find to do or urgently needs doing, we must attempt ourselves and no longer look to the alien to do it for us. And we would universalize and extend the policy of defensive resistance until it ran parallel on every line with our self-development. We would not only buy our own goods, but boycott British goods; not only have our own schools, but boycott Government institutions; not only erect our own Arbitration Courts, but boycott bureaucratic justice; not only organize our league of defence, but have nothing to do with the bureaucratic Executive except when we cannot avoid it. At present even in Bengal where Boycott is universally accepted, it is confined to the boycott of British goods and is aimed at the British merchant and only indirectly at the British bureaucrat. We would aim it directly both at the British merchant and at the British bureaucrat who stands behind and makes possible exploitation

by the merchant.

The double policy we propose has three objects before it;—to develop ourselves into a self-governing nation; to protect ourselves against and repel attack and opposition during the work of development; and to press in upon and extrude the foreign agency in each field of activity and so ultimately supplant it. Our defensive resistance must therefore be mainly passive in the beginning, although with a perpetual readiness to supplement it with active resistance whenever compelled. It must be confined for the present to Boycott, and we must avoid giving battle on the crucial question of taxation for the sole reason that a No-Taxes campaign demands a perfect organization and an ultimate preparedness from which we are yet far off. We will attack the resources of the bureaucracy whenever we can do so by simple abstention, as in the case of its immoral *abkari* revenue; but we do not propose at present to follow European precedents and refuse the payment of taxes legally demanded from us. We desire to keep our resistance within the bounds of law, so long as law does not seek directly to interfere with us and render impossible our progress and the conscientious discharge of our duty to our fellow-countrymen. But if, at any time, laws should be passed with the object of summarily checking our self-development or unduly limiting our rights as men, we must be prepared to break the law and endure the penalty imposed for the breach with the object of making it unworkable as has been done in other countries. We must equally be ready to

challenge by our action arbitrary executive coercion, if we do not wish to see our resistance snuffed out by very cheap official extinguishers. Nor must we shrink from boycotting persons as well as things; we must make full though discriminating use of the social boycott against those of our countrymen who seek to baffle the will of the nation in a matter vital to its emancipation, for this is a crime of *lèse nation* which is far more heinous than the legal offense of *lèse majesté* and deserves the severest penalty with which the nation can visit traitors.

We advocate, finally, the creation of a strong central authority to carry out the will of the nation, supported by a close and active organization of village, town, district and province. We desire to build up this organization from the constitution the necessity of which the Congress has recognized and for which it has provided a meagre and imperfect beginning; but if, owing to Moderate obstruction, this constitution cannot develop or is not allowed to perform its true functions, the organization and the authority must be built up otherwise by the people itself and, if necessary, outside the Congress.

The double policy of self-development and defensive resistance is the common standing-ground of the new spirit all over India. Some may not wish to go beyond its limits, others may look outside it; but so far all are agreed. For ourselves we avow that we advocate passive resistance without wishing to make a dogma of it. In a subject nationality, to win liberty for one's country

is the first duty of all, by whatever means, at whatever sacrifice; and this duty must override all other considerations. The work of national emancipation is a great and holy *yajña* of which Boycott, Swadeshi, National Education and every other activity, great and small, are only major or minor parts. Liberty is the fruit we seek from the sacrifice and the Motherland the goddess to whom we offer it; into the seven leaping tongues of the fire of the *yajña* we must offer all that we are and all that we have, feeding the fire even with our blood and lives and happiness of our nearest and dearest; for the Motherland is a goddess who loves not a maimed and imperfect sacrifice, and freedom was never won from the gods by a grudging giver. But every great *yajña* has its Rakshasas who strive to baffle the sacrifice, to bespatter it with their own dirt or by guile or violence put out the flame. Passive resistance is an attempt to meet such disturbers by peaceful and self-contained *Brahmatej*; but even the greatest Rishis of old could not, when the Rakshasas were fierce and determined, keep up the sacrifice without calling in the bow of the Kshatriya. We should have the bow of the Kshatriya ready for use, though in the background. Politics is especially the business of the Kshatriya, and without Kshatriya strength at its back, all political struggle is unavailing.

Vedantism accepts no distinction of true or false religions, but considers only what will lead more or less surely, more or less quickly to *mokṣa*, spiritual emancipation and the realization of the Divinity within. Our attitude is a political Vedantism. India, free, one and

indivisible, is the divine realization to which we move, emancipation our aim; to that end each nation must practise the political creed which is the most suited to its temperament and circumstances; for that is the best for it which leads most surely and completely to national liberty and national self-realization. But whatever leads only to continued subjection must be spewed out as mere vileness and impurity. Passive resistance may be the final method of salvation in our case or it may be only the preparation for the final *sādhanā*. In either case, the sooner we put it into full and perfect practice, the nearer we shall be to national liberty.



## THE MORALITY OF BOYCOTT

AGES ago there was a priest of Baal who thought himself commissioned by the god to kill all who did not bow the knee to him. All men, terrified by the power and ferocity of the priest, bowed down before the idol and pretended to be his servants; and the few who refused had to take refuge in hills and deserts. At last, a deliverer came and slew the priest and the world had rest. The slayer was blamed by those who placed religion in quietude and put passivity forward as the ideal ethics, but the world looked on him as an incarnation of God.

A certain class of mind shrinks from aggressiveness as if it were a sin. Their temperament forbids them to feel the delight of battle and they look on what they cannot understand as something monstrous and sinful. 'Heal hate by love,' 'drive out injustice by justice,' 'slay sin by righteousness' is their cry. Love is a sacred name, but it is easier to speak of love than to love. The love which drives out hate is a divine quality of which only one man in a thousand is capable. A saint full of love for all mankind possesses it, a philanthropist consumed with a desire to heal the miseries of the race possesses it, but the mass of mankind does not and cannot rise to the height. Politics is concerned with masses of mankind and not with individuals. To ask masses of mankind to act as saints, to rise to the height of divine love and practise it in relation to their adversaries or oppressors is to ignore human nature. It is to set a

premium on injustice and violence by paralysing the hand of the deliverer when raised to strike. The Gita is the best answer to those who shrink from battle as a sin, and aggression as a lowering of morality.

A poet of sweetness and love, who has done much to awaken Bengal, has written deprecating the boycott as an act of hate. The saintliness of spirit which he would see brought into politics is the reflex of his own personality colouring the political ideals of a sattvic race. But in reality the boycott is not an act of hate. It is an act of self-defence, of aggression for the sake of self-preservation. To call it an act of hate is to say that a man who is being slowly murdered, is not justified in striking at his murderer. To tell that man that he must desist from using the first effective weapon that comes to his hand, because the blow would be an act of hate, is precisely on a par with this depreciation of boycott. Doubtless the self-defender is not precisely actuated by a feeling of holy sweetness towards his assailant; but to expect so much from human nature is impracticable. Certain religions demand it, but they have never been practised to the letter by their followers.

Hinduism recognizes human nature and makes no such impossible demand. It sets one ideal for the saint, another for the man of action, a third for the trader, a fourth for the serf. To prescribe the same ideal for all is to bring about *varṇasaṅkara*, the confusion of duties, and destroy society and race. If we are content to be serfs, then indeed, boycott is a sin for us, not because

it is a violation of love, but because it is a violation of the Sudra's duty of obedience and contentment. Politics is the ideal of the Kshatriya, and the morality of the Kshatriya ought to govern our political actions. To impose in politics the Brahmanical duty of saintly sufferance is to preach *varṇasaṅkara*.

Love has a place in politics, but it is the love of one's country, for one's countrymen, for the glory, greatness and happiness of the race, the divine *ānanda* of self-immolation for one's fellows, the ecstasy of relieving their sufferings, the joy of seeing one's blood flow for country and freedom, the bliss of union in death with the fathers of the race. The feeling of almost physical delight in the touch of the mother-soil, of the winds that blow from Indian seas, of the rivers that stream from Indian hills, in the hearing of Indian speech, music, poetry, in the familiar sights, sounds, habits, dress, manners of our Indian life, this is the physical root of that love. The pride in our past, the pain of our present, the passion for the future are its trunk and branches. Self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness, great service, high endurance for the country are its fruit. And the sap which keeps it alive is the realization of the Motherhood of God in the country, the vision of the Mother, the knowledge of the Mother, the perpetual contemplation, adoration and service of the Mother.

Other love than this is foreign to the motives of political action. Between nation and nation there is justice, partiality, chivalry, duty, but not love. All love is either individual or for the self in the race or

for the self in the mankind. It may exist between individuals of different races, but the love of one race for another is a thing foreign to Nature. When therefore the boycott, as declared by the Indian race against the British, is stigmatised for want of love, the charge is bad psychology as well as bad morality. It is interest warring against interest, and hatred is directed not really against the race, but against the adverse interest. If the British exploitation were to cease tomorrow, the hatred against the British race would disappear in a moment. A partial *adhyāropa* makes the ignorant for the moment see in the exploiters and not in the exploitation the receptacle of the hostile feeling. But like all *māyā*, it is an unreal feeling and sentiment and is not shared by those who think. Not hatred against foreigners, but antipathy to the evils of foreign exploitation is the true root of boycott.

If hatred is demoralising, it is also stimulating. The web of life has been made a mingled strain of good and evil and God works His ends through the evil as well as through the good. Let us discharge our minds of hate, but let us not deprecate a great and necessary movement because, in the inevitable course of human nature, it has engendered feelings of hostility and hatred. If hatred came, it was necessary that it should come as a stimulus, as a means of awakening.

When *tamas*, inertia, torpor have benumbed a nation, the strongest forms of *rajas* are necessary to break the spell; there is no form of *rajas* so strong as hatred. Through *rajas* we rise to *sattwa* and for the Indian tem-

perament the transition does not take long. Already the element of hatred is giving place to the clear conception of love for the Mother as the spring of our political actions.

Another question is the use of violence in the furtherance of boycott. This is, in our view, purely a matter of policy and expediency. An act of violence brings us into conflict and may be inexpedient for a race circumstanced like ours. But the moral question does not arise. The argument that to use violence is to interfere with personal liberty involves a singular misunderstanding of the very nature of politics. The whole of politics is an interference with personal liberty. Law is such an interference; protection is such an interference; the rule which makes the will of the majority prevail is such an interference. The right to prevent such use of personal liberty as will injure the interests of the race, is the fundamental law of society. From this point of view the nation is only using its primary rights when it restrains the individual from buying or selling foreign goods.

It may be argued that peaceful compulsion is one thing, and violent compulsion, another. Social boycott may be justifiable, but not the burning or drowning of British goods. The latter method, we reply, is illegal and therefore may be inexpedient, but it is not morally unjustifiable. The morality of the Kshatriya justifies violence in times of war, and boycott is a war. Nobody blames the Americans for throwing British tea into Boston harbour, nor can anybody blame similar action

in India on moral ground. It is reprehensible from the point of view of law, of social peace and order, not of political morality. It has been eschewed by us because it is unwise and because it carried the battle on to a ground where we are comparatively weak, from a ground where we are strong.

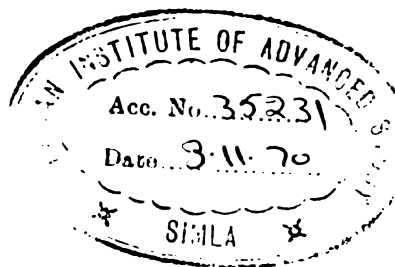
Under other circumstances we might have followed the American precedent, and if we had done so, historians and moralists would have applauded, not censured.


Justice and righteousness are the atmosphere of political morality, but the justice and righteousness of a fighter, not of the priest. Aggression is unjust only when unprovoked; violence, unrighteous when used wantonly or for unrighteous ends. It is a barren philosophy which applies a mechanical rule to all actions, or takes a word and tries to fit all human life into it.

The sword of the warrior is as necessary to the fulfilment of justice and righteousness as the holiness of the saint. Ramdas is not complete without Shivaji. To maintain justice and prevent the strong from despoiling, and the weak from being oppressed, is the function for which the Kshatriya was created. "Therefore" says Sri Krishna in the *Mahabharata*, "God created battle and armour, the sword, the bow and the dagger."

Man is of a less terrestrial mould than some would have him to be. He has an element of the divine which the politician ignores. The practical politician looks

to the position at the moment and imagines that he has taken everything into consideration. He has, indeed, studied the surface and the immediate surroundings, but he has missed what lies beyond material vision. He has left out of account the divine, the incalculable in man, that element which upsets the calculations of the schemer and disconcerts the wisdom of the diplomat.



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