

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

LETTERS TO SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL

(Translated from the Gujarati and edited by V. G. Desai)

These are some of the important letters which Gandhiji wrote to Sardar Patel between 8-7-21 and 29-12-47.

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LETTERS
to
MANIBAHEN PATEL

M. K. GANDHI

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LETTERS TO MANIBAHEN PATEL

M. K. GANDHI

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL GUJARATI AND EDITED
by
VALJI GOVINDJI DESAI



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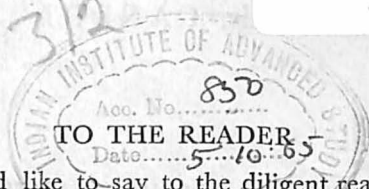
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I would like to say to the diligent reader of my writings and to others who are interested in them that I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. Old as I am in age, I have no feeling that I have ceased to grow inwardly or that my growth will stop at the dissolution of the flesh. What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of Truth, my God, from moment to moment, and therefore, when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject.

M. K. GANDHI

Harijan, Vol. I, No. 12, April 29, 1933, p. 2

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

It has been a pleasure as well as a privilege to translate these letters, for Manibahen has been as a sister to me ever since she did some Sanskrit with me in 1927 at the Sabarmati Ashram (Letter No. L, page 30).

The only daughter of Sardar Vallabhbhai and Shrimati Jhaverba Patel, Manibahen was born at her maternal uncle's place in the village of Gana, three miles from Karamsad in Kheda district in April 1903. She had the great misfortune to lose her mother on January 11, 1909 when she was hardly six years old. This sad event made a deep impression on her mind, and the impression was made deeper still by the subsequent experiences of a motherless child who had to live at one time or other with Shri Vithalbhai Patel in Bombay, with the Sardar's sister in Baroda and with grandmother Laadbai in Karamsad.

In Karamsad she attended a Gujarati school for some time. Later on she studied at Queen Mary's school in Bombay and at a convent school in Bandra. In June 1917 she lived with the Sardar in Ahmedabad and joined the Government Girls' High School. In the ordinary course of things she would have taken the matriculation examination of the University of Bombay in 1921, but in September 1920 she left the Government School as a non-cooperator and joined the Proprietary High School which was affiliated to Gujarat Vidyapith. She became a Snataka (B.A.) of the Vidyapith in 1924 (Letter No. XXI, p. 14). Thus her formal education came to an end. But Gandhiji had taken charge of her political education and education for life many years before her graduation, and in his very

first letter to Manibahen written early in 1921 we find Gandhiji discussing the value of spinning for Swaraj and suggesting that preparations be made for the momentous Ahmedabad session of Congress, which was held in Christmas that year. Though she was then technically a student, Manibahen was already working for the boycott of foreign cloth (Letter No. VII, p. 8).

The rest of the story right up to January 1948 is traced in the following pages.

For the rest I have the pleasure of thanking Shri Mahendra Desai for reading the translation in manuscript. But he is in no way responsible for the remaining errors.

V. G. D.

Samvat 2019, *Bhadrapad Vadi* 6
September 8, 1963

LETTERS TO MANIBAHEN PATEL

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I

Delhi
February 12, 1921

*Chi. Mani,

I was delighted to have your letter. Swaraj cannot be attained on the strength of regular daily spinning done only by you and your brother. By all means spin for four hours a day if you like. Practice will make you perfect.

Shri [Deshbandhu Chittaranjan] Das cannot go to Ahmedabad at present.

Write to me off and on and let me know what you have been reading.

Bapu's blessings

PS. I have to move about a lot these days. From here I go to Panjab, and from there to Lakhnau and Vijayavada. So I cannot say when I shall reach Ahmedabad. Ask father to make preparations for the ensuing session of the Congress.

* Stands for *Chiranjivi* meaning 'long-lived', a word placed by way of blessing before the name of a recipient younger than the writer of the letter.

II

Vijayavada

Day of silence [April 4, 1921]

It is five a.m. just now. I am waiting for the car which is to take me to Masulipattam.

At one a.m. I came here from Ellore. Look up these three places on the map. As soon as I came, I saw your letter and read it.

Dr [Balvantrai Narsinhalal] Kanuga seems to be doing excellent work. It is good that Dahyabhai [Manibahen's brother] is picketing liquor shops. Congratulate him on my behalf.

You are doing the right thing in spinning regularly for four hours a day. See that your yarn is strong and uniform, and keep an account of the quantity spun daily.

My conviction grows stronger and stronger every day that Swaraj can be attained only by spinning.

I am rather busy and constantly on the move; so I may claim the privilege of writing with a pencil. But your writing should be in ink and done with a hand-made pen.

You should attend on father and see that he is free from anxiety as regards you both.

Improve your Gujarati from day to day. Any one who reads *Navajivan* carefully every week is sure to do this.

I reach Ahmedabad on Tuesday the twelfth. Tell father that when I come I expect to hear that he has made considerable collections [for the Tilak Swaraj Fund] in the interval.

III

Bombay

Thursday [June 16, 1921]

I have your letter. I have already told Kaka [uncle, i.e. Shri Vithalbhai Jhaverbhai Patel] that I wish to meet him and have a talk with him.

You and brother [Dahyabhai] should be wholly devoted to the service of the nation. That is to say, you should master the art of spinning and carding so that no one else can beat you at it. All other activity is temporary, but believe me when I say that this is permanent, and the only source of our strength.

Bhai Mahadev [Desai] came here yesterday. He has collected a sizable amount.

Bombay has been having good rains. Ghatkopar gave us about Rs 55,000 yesterday.

I may or may not write to you, but you should keep writing to me.

IV

Monday [July 11, 1921]

I have your letter. The object of burning foreign cloth is to create a greater disgust for it in the popular mind. The idea of giving it away to the poor is born of ignorance. What does it matter whether or not they receive a couple of lakhs worth of cloth? We have deeply injured our country by importing it all these days. And I believe that it would be unprofitable to give it away in charity. It may perhaps be sent to foreign countries. But I am consulting every one I meet on this point, and will take such a course

as is approved by most of them. Do ask me if still you have any doubts.

Dahyabhai's vanarasena [lit. monkey army, i.e. boys' brigade] seems to be putting in good work. But they should bear one thing in mind. They should approach people in a courteous manner and not jeer at them at all. Drink addicts are only to be pitied.

Kakasaheb [Kalelkar] is a good teacher indeed. I am glad you all like him.

I met uncle [Shri Vithalbhai] several times. He had a good resolution adopted by the District Local Board. Some say that uncle has no faith in the spinning wheel and makes no secret of his dislike for it. I shall have a talk with him about this when we meet next. My impression of our last meeting was that his doubts about the wheel had largely been dispelled.

V

Bombay
Friday [July 15, 1921]

I would love to write a long letter in reply but have not the time for it. It will soon be 11 p.m. But I will answer one question at once. We must not expect a foreign cloth merchant to surrender his stock either for burning it or giving it away in charity.

I have not been able to read the leaflets [issued in connection with the anti-drink campaign]. But the more we are beaten up by the canteen-keepers, the more will our cause prosper.

VI

Dibrugadh [Assam]
August 25, 1921

Your last letter has been with me for a long time. It is very difficult to win uncle over. At his age it is difficult for a person to adopt a different line of work when he thinks he has made a success of a particular line [membership of legislatures]. We can only agree to differ with him and go our own way.

I hope the boycott [of foreign cloth] and khadi production over there are progressing from day to day.

Assam is altogether a new country, so to say. I have given a narrative of my tour in *Navajivan* and will not therefore deal with it here.

I have had a talk with Bhai Indulal [Yajnik]. I very much wish to meet Kumudbahen [his wife] and console her.

I imagine I shall not be able to come to Ahmedabad before October.

I trust you and Dahyabhai are helping father in his work. He bears a heavy burden, but by the grace of God he will do it justice.

I shall be in Chittagong and Barisal from the thirty-first to the third and in Calcutta from the fourth to the twelfth.

VII

Calcutta

Day of silence [September 8, 1921]

I received your letter just now. We should only ask for wearing apparel to be burnt. Some people have foreign carpets in their houses but would not like to give them away. We have therefore not asked for such things. It is enough if they do not make any fresh purchases of that kind of foreign goods. I will write a note in *Navajivan* on the subject.

It was good of you to have thought of attending Jain meeting-places. Did any ladies in the congregation give up their foreign clothes?

It may be that mill yarn is now being used in making Vijayavada *sadis*. The best policy is to leave fine cloth severely alone.

Here too there are two enthusiastic girls of your age. They wear khadi only and help Deshbandhu Das's sister at the Nari-mandir [women's institute].

VIII

Nipani

[October 1921]

Your love and work for the country fill me with astonishment. You should make big collections during Divali.

I am sure you are diligent in waiting upon father.

I told the women of Poona how their sisters in Ahmedabad had been generous in helping the national movement. And they showered upon me their gold bangles, rings and chains and drew level with their compatriots in Gujarat.

[Letters I to VIII were sent to Ahmedabad.]

IX

[Juhu]
Monday [April 1924]

Manilal Kothari informs me that you are now free from fever but still very weak and are living with Dr Kanuga. I wish you would come over here if father and the doctor permit. Here you will have both rest and peace of mind, and will soon recover your strength. And then of course I will ask you to help me with my work. You or father should have no apprehension that you will be a burden to me. For you will be a burden only to the floor, and the floor is pretty durable and capable of bearing the weight of a hundred girls like you. Then again the cook will have some more work to do. But Revashankarbhai [Jagjivan Jhaveri] has sent a stalwart cook as dependable as the floor itself. When you are here, I shall be free from anxiety on your account. For every person engaged in service to the nation and falling ill at a place that I cannot reach adds to the burden of my anxiety, and I would be carefree if he or she were under my observation.

I am sure that so long as you cannot spin on account of illness, Dahyabhai is devoting to the wheel twice as much time as usual.

X

[Juhu]

Monday [May 5, 1924]

I was eagerly expecting to receive your letter yesterday even as the *chataka* looks forward to the rains. And the first letter I read after the morning prayer today was yours.

X writes that your health at Hajira is better than it was at Juhu. If this improvement persists, we shall all bid good-bye to Juhu and join you there. I hope Hajira will suit Durga [Mahadev Desai's wife] too. Mahadev goes not to Madras but to Sabarmati.

Let me know if you need anything from Bombay. As the proverb has it, even a mother will not give you your favourite dish unless you ask for it. Others have to make a show of civility; but a mother has no time to spare for it. But she is the very image of civility. Hence my endeavour to be as a mother.

Radha [Maganlal Gandhi's daughter] and Kiki-bahen [Acharya Kripalani's sister] are all right. Maulana Shaukat Ali was here for a couple of days.

[Letters X to XVI were sent to Khimji Asar Virji Sanatorium at Hajira.]

XI

[Juhu]

[May 7, 1924]

It is a great relief to me that you write to me regularly. Cultivate patience and self-confidence. Self-confidence is far more beneficial than drugs. Prabhudas is not going to Panchgani. Giridhari [Kripalani] went to Ahmedabad yesterday.

XII

[Juhu]

[May 11, 1924]

I have your letter. This is my fourth letter to you, as I have already written one letter and two post cards. But you have acknowledged receipt of only one card.

Self-confidence is that which remains unshaken even amidst disappointment. If I have faith in truth and non-violence, I will stick to them even in adversity. Never mind if we have fever. We must keep up hope in spite of it. We should not be negligent but we must not worry either.

What do you think of *Tyagamurti**? Don't forget to write to me.

Has your sanatorium a room to spare? If it has I would like to send Vasumati [Dhimatram Pandit] there.

XIII

[Juhu]

Wednesday [May 14, 1924]

Two of your letters were received at the same time yesterday. It is not clear whether or not you get my letters. Instead of writing once a week I have written a letter to you every alternate day. You are bound to shake off your fever. You are able to take and digest food; that is a very good sign. The complaint being of an old standing, it will be some time before it disappears; that is all.

I am waiting for your comments on *Tyagamurti*.

* The Gujarati edition of *Women and Social Injustice*.

XIV

[Juhu]
Vaishakh Shudi 12 [May 15, 1924]

I have your letter. It would not be fair for you to leave the sanatorium about the 20th. You should stay there till at least the end of May. I cannot come to Hajira as I have to reach Sabarmati on the 29th.

XV

[Juhu]
[May 17, 1924]

After we meet in Ahmedabad, we shall see if it is necessary for you to take some medicine. You should not leave the sanatorium until you are quite fit. Vasumati may perhaps come to Hajira on Monday. Are there any houses there available on rent? How is Durga? Is her resolution not to write to me inflexible? Yes, there is a slight tremor in my hand.

XVI

[Juhu]
[May 20, 1924]

I got your letter and postcard. I was highly delighted to read what you say about *Tyagamurti*. Purity and restraint are virtues to be treasured. We shall discuss them when we meet. You should now get rid of what little fever is still giving you trouble. Vasumati is going to Devlali and not to Hajira. You must give up all ideas of leaving Hajira soon.

XVII

[Juhu]

Monday [May 26, 1924]

So you have managed to reach Ahmedabad before me. I strongly feel that you and Dahyabhai should live in a room of your own at the Sabarmati Ashram, and take your meals either in the students' hostel or with Ba; if that does not suit you, you may cook them yourself. And from the Ashram you may go to college.

XVIII

[Sabarmati]

[1924]

Wasn't it nice of you to have come yesterday and gone away without seeing me as I was asleep at the time? And now you send me a message! A patient has the right to change her mind as often as she pleases; she cannot be bound by any promises. So you are free not to come. And you are also free to come if you feel like it. I only want you to get well some way or other.

XIX

[Delhi]

[September 26, 1924]

Do not get nervous on account of my fast [21 days' fast for Hindu Muslim unity]. I am still maintaining my strength. I believe the twenty-one days will pass without any hitch. Doctors too hold the same view. Take proper care of your health. Get into the habit of taking long walks. Write to me.

XX

Delhi
October 24, 1924

*I cannot give you my new year blessings in person this year; hence this letter. May all your wishes for the good life be fulfilled. May you enjoy better health than before, finish your studies and become true servants of the nation. Bapu is improving and asks me to convey his good wishes to you.

With every good wish,

Ba

XXI

[Delhi]
Kartik Shudi 2 [November 10, 1924]

I have your letter. I wish you wrote to me often. What if you go back to the sanatorium at Hajira? Do you need my congratulations on your having passed the Snatak [B.A.] examination [of Gujarat Vidyapith]? If so, you have them. Never mind if Dahyabhai failed to pass in one subject. This only means that he will attain better mastery over it. It is wrong for students who fail to be downhearted. An idler or one who seeks a job may be disheartened. But for the studious failure only provides an opportunity to put forth greater effort.

* From Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi.

XXII

[Calcutta]

Vaishakh Vadi 6, Thursday [May 14, 1925]

I was delighted to have your long letter. It is hard indeed to work among womenfolk. Still you should patiently do what you can. I hope Dahyabhai has gone to Mount Abu or Navibandar for a change. I will surely bring conch-shell bangles for you. They are available in Dacca which I hope to reach soon. Is father planning to get away from Ahmedabad in summer?

XXIII

[Shantiniketan]

Jyeshtha Shudi 8 [May 31, 1925]

I got your letter. If I thought of writing a long letter, I would not be able to write it at all; I must rest content with writing a short one. I hope you received the bangles which were sent from Calcutta. I have bought another pair in Dacca and will give it to you when I return. If Dahyabhai would like to take up a gainful occupation let him do so by all means. I was glad to learn he is now in good health: Ask Yashoda [Dahyabhai's wife] to write to me. All of you should attend upon father and share his burdens to the best of your ability. I must stay in Bengal for a month longer.

XXIV

Jyeshtha Vadi 6, Friday
[June 12, 1925]

I have your letter. I am travelling by steamer today.

I had thought Dahyabhai wanted to settle down as a farmer. But if he wants to go abroad for further studies, I for one would not stand in the way. But there is one difficulty. We would have to ask some one for monetary help. The ideal is that we should not accept even when it is voluntarily offered. But if we cannot measure up to it, there is no harm in getting assistance and going. I am in Bengal till July 16. Dahyabhai may come here and have a talk with me; or else he may wait till I return to the Ashram. I am all for meeting his wishes and leading him gently. He can take up private service or work as a farmer or go to America for further studies. I would let him do what he likes. There is a fourth course open to him, namely, to serve the nation and get a modest remuneration for it. But this is not to his liking and therefore out of the question. I wonder if he would like to study medicine. If so he can attend the national medical college here or in Delhi.

I keep excellent health. I had caught a slight cold but that was nothing serious. They arrange to give me sufficient rest at each place.

You should serve father diligently. A man may lose his wife, but if God has given him pious children, they will make him forget that anything is missing. This is my own experience as the obedient son of my father. I have also seen what a rich reward is won by the children

in such a case. Every moment of my life I am enjoying the fruit of my having served my parents as divine beings. I tell you all this as father is bearing a heavy burden indeed. But I cannot do anything to lighten it. Indeed I have not the time even to write to him. So I want you to do what it is not in my power to do.

Take proper care of your health. Do not mind if your student life is prolonged a bit. Mahadev said you cannot spell English words correctly. This defect has to be remedied. Whatever we learn we must master. In case of doubt you should consult a dictionary.

XXV

[Kalighat, Calcutta]

Monday [June 29, 1925]

I got your letter. You must seek out various ways in which you can help father. As a matter of fact this search should involve no great effort on your part. However I understand what you say. It is good that Dahyabhai attends *Navajivan* office; let him work there diligently. He will get excellent training under Swami [Anand]. Even if he is asked to work as a mechanic, he should work with a will. I do wish to go to Ahmedabad if only for a couple of days, but goodness knows when I shall be able to do so. Do keep me informed about father's health. If father is weak in spelling, should you too be similarly weak? One must weave her father's virtues into her own life and not his shortcomings.

XXVI

Thursday

Shravan Vadi 2 [August 6, 1925]

Manilal [Vallabhji Kothari] sent you twelve bangles. So I suppose you do not now need any more. If these conch-shell bangles are broken, they may prove very costly in the end. Even silver would be cheaper, not to speak of cotton yarn. A yarn bangle is fairly thick and strong and can be washed daily. But more of this when we meet.

Perhaps I may come to Ahmedabad in October for a day or two.

As you have bought a cycle, you should use it in taking sufficient exercise.

We are in Murshidabad district today. Manilal is here too.

XXVII

Shravan Vadi 30, Monday
[August 19, 1925]

I do not wish that you should have no bangles at all. I would advise you to have silver bangles. Shisham wood for bangles does not appeal to me. But there is no harm in having conch-shell bangles. I only found that they were not cheap.

XXVIII

[Bankipore]

Saturday [September 26, 1925]

I enclose [Gopal Krishna] Devdhar's telegram [that you can be admitted to Sevasadan Poona in December]. I think we should wait till then; or if you like I will try to place you in Sevasadan Bombay for the time being. Or if you wish, I will arrange for you to work in the girls' school at Wardha. Jamnalaji says the Calcutta school is no good, and suggests that you work in Wardha. The language there is Marathi and you will feel as if you were at home. So Wardha is a good place to go to in the first instance. Let me know what you wish to do. Send your reply to Patna.

XXIX

[Kotada, Kachchha]

Monday [October 25, 1925]

I have heard that you sustained some burns. I hope your hand is now thoroughly healed. I am talking things over with Dahyabhai and will reach some decision before we come to Ahmedabad. I am quite clear as to what you should do, but more of that when we meet.

[Letters XVII to XXIX were sent to Ahmedabad.]

XXX

[Ashram, Sabarmati]

Monday [December 7, 1925]

I get your letters all right. I knew that you would find the atmosphere at Sevasadan quite different from what it is elsewhere. But the discipline, the methods, the enthusiasm and the honesty at Poona Sevasadan are admirable. Then again there is hardly any other institution so full of life as that. We have to adopt such of its methods as appeal to us. We must have an eye for the good points of everything, and should learn to live with tolerance among people who differ from us.

I hope you are keeping good health. Do not worry about me. I am getting stronger day by day. I am going to Bombay today. I will stay there for a day and then go to Wardha.

Keep a diary of your experiences at Poona.

Dahyabhai is going to Delhi to live with uncle [Vithalbhai Patel] for a few days, and will attend the Congress in his company.

You should stay in Poona as long as you like it and keep me informed of every one of your brain waves.

XXXI

Wardha

Friday [December 12, 1925]

After you have left Poona Sevasadan, you may stay in Bombay for some time or else come here direct. Probably they do not have a long vacation here; so you can begin to work in the girls' school straightway. At the same time we have arranged for you to teach Kamala and Madalasa, Jamnalaji's daughters. You will put up with Janakidevi [Bajaj] for the present. You will get a salary of Rs 50 a month from the day you come over. So come when you like. If you wish to attend the Congress

session, you will either accompany me from here or go to Kanpur direct. I hope to reach there on the twenty third. In any case manage to reach Wardha on January 1.

I have recovered the nine pounds which I had lost [during a seven days' fast undertaken at Sabarmati as a penance for the misconduct of some members of the Ashram] and have to make a further gain of six pounds.

XXXII

Wardha

Margashirsha Vadi 30 [December 16, 1925]

You may go to Ahmedabad if absolutely necessary. But remember that you must start to work in the girls' school here on January 1 at the latest. You must now be mature enough not to hanker after meeting people. I am fine.

[Letters XXX to XXXII were sent to Poona.]

XXXIII

[The Ashram, Sabarmati]

[January 1926]

Jamnalalji writes that you have reached Wardha. Write to me regularly. Take good care of Kamala and Madalasa as well as of the girls in your class at the school. Did you write to Devdhar a letter of thanks? If you have not still written, write one now in Marathi.

I called on Nandubahen [Kanuga] the day I came. She is very patient indeed under the shock [of suddenly losing a twelve year old son].

XXXIV

[The Ashram, Sabarmati]
Wednesday [January 6, 1926]

I enclosed a letter for you in Vinoba's envelope, but you cannot have got it as Vinoba is here. I got your letter yesterday. Teach Kamala whatever you like. Get her to read one or two Hindi books. Teach her arithmetic in which she is very weak. She understands Gujarati. Teach her any other subject she likes. Read with her a portion of Tulsidas' Ramayan. Your main aim will be to create in her a liking for study. Read and write something more in Marathi. Take a walk every day and be methodical in all your work.

XXXV

[The Ashram, Sabarmati]
Monday [January 11, 1926]

Your letters to me are full of information. The letter to Devdhar is well written. I am sure he will like it.

You may get nervous there, being new to the place, but you must not be down-hearted. See that Kamala makes such progress as is possible. She will improve gradually. Engage her in talk. See if she will accompany you on your walks. Win her over by affection.

You have no experience of writing and teaching in Marathi, but practice will make you perfect. You were aware that in Wardha you would have to do some more Marathi. As regards Hindi, master it by reading Hindi books at home; if necessary, you may ask some one to help you with it.

You should explain to others in a very gentle manner why we should use Khadi [hand-spun and hand-woven

cloth] and be satisfied with such results as you are able to achieve. That is to say, always act in a spirit of detachment. To put forth effort is in our hands but not to command success. We should rest content after we have exerted ourselves to the best of our capacity, and never acknowledge defeat. You are sure to come over for work in Sabarmati when the time comes.

Never mind if you are absent from Sabarmati at the very time that I am here, as we shall often be writing to each other.

Preserve your health, and for this be cheerful.

XXXVI

[Sabarmati]

Wednesday [February 3, 1926]

Devadas is not here; he is still convalescing at Devlali. I am in good health. There is still some weakness but it will not persist. I hope you are now well settled there and keep good health. Never worry about anything. Take daily walks; Gangubai perhaps will go with you. Come here on the occasion of Kamala's marriage if possible. Write to me regularly.

XXXVII

[The Ashram, Sabarmati]

Monday [February 15, 1926]

I have your card. If you and Jamnalalji have arrived at some joint decision, act accordingly. Otherwise we shall all meet and decide what is to be done. I cannot reach a decision here in your absence.

You may come now or with Jamnalalji later on just as it suits you in view of your work at Wardha.

[Letters XXXIII to XXXVII were sent to Wardha.]

XXXVIII

Devlali

[May 15, 1926]

Ba has agreed to go to Sabarmati and will reach it on Wednesday. Tell Surajbaben about it. I hope your wards [placed in your charge by Ba when she left the Ashram] give you satisfaction. Learn to be a good mixer. Do try to bring Nandubahen [Kanuga] to the Ashram. Krishnadas must have told you about the change in the programme.

XXXIX

[1926]

Bravo. If unmarried girls fall ill, where shall I complain about it? It is as if the sea has caught fire. We should master the art of keeping good health if only for service. You must use a mosquito net at night. For the rest see my letter to the Ashram children.

I hope this will find you fit as a fiddle.

XL

Day of silence [1926]

I have not lately heard from you. I hope you are now quite fit. Illness disappears when we cease to worry needlessly and become like little children. You should understand the implications of this ideal. It means that we never take offence or think that anybody else is in the wrong. This is a noble state of mind. Let me tell you straightway that I have not achieved it myself, in spite of my wish to do so. Indeed I am far, far away from it. It would be reached earlier by persons who have been chaste all their lives. And I have seen such people. [Dinabandhu C. F.] Andrews for instance is one such. Men who look upon him as a fool are fools themselves. This is the ideal you have to realize.

XLI

Gondia
[1926]

I am aware of your affection for me. But surely you do not expect to live with me all your life. For you can live only with my work. That means that you should prepare yourself for it. Do not waste a single minute. Be writing to me now and then. I too will write as far as possible.

XLII

Day of silence [1926]

I have your letter. Upon my making some remark, Mahadev [Desai] showed me your letter to him without waiting to get your permission. No one would expect Mahadev to keep anything from me. That is beyond his power. We acquire certain habits and then we are unable to do anything different. This is a virtue so far as good habits are concerned. One who is sincerely devoted to non-violence becomes in the end incapable of violence. And this not only in deed but also in thought. Thought is father of action. When thought goes, action automatically goes with it.

What if separation from you was and even now is as painful to me as separation from me is to you? You chose the good and so did I. Therein lies your welfare, mine and the world's. Education should enable us to find pleasure in the good. Therefore if you think that living in the Ashram is good for you, you should manage to find it pleasant too. And in this do not deceive yourself or me. For the moment you do not like to stay at Sabarmati, I am willing to let you go elsewhere. Write to me without reserve. Never mind if I fail to understand it and lecture to you in reply. Learn to bear with elders' lectures.

XLIII

Monday [1926]

Your letter. You did well to go to Ahmedabad city at the time of uncle's visit. Manu [Gandhiji's granddaughter] and Manilal will come round with patience. Ba [Kasturba Gandhi] said she would start on Sunday. She should reach Sabarmati on Wednesday at any rate.

This was written at the time of going to bed. So I will close it.

XLIV

Wardha

Monday [December 6, 1926]

I enclose a letter for the Ashram women's association. I was pained to find that you are still not acclimatized to the Ashram. I do not think any other place is better for you to live in than Sabarmati. Even here there may be something you do not like. If that is so, try to get rid of it. If you are constipated, the remedy lies in your own hands. Or if you like, you may get drinking water from Ahmedabad. A sufficient quantity for one person to drink can easily be brought from the city. If you boil the water from the river and then drink it, it will be as good as water from the city. You must make a firm resolution to be cheerful. Do come here after the 14th. Some one here is sure to help you with your Sanskrit at any rate. Do not hesitate to write to me frankly.

Tell Ramniklal [Maganlal Modi] that I am rather anxious as I have no news of Punjabhai [Hirachand]'s health. What is his address? If Ramniklal knows anything about him, ask him to write to me.

XLV

Wardha

Wednesday [December 8, 1926]

I have your card. Come by all means. The morning train will suit you better than the night train. But take any of them that you like. I am long past the marriageable age; so I have not to change my mind every moment. This is the privilege of unmarried girls and to some extent of the boys.

XLVI

[January 1, 1927]

I have your letter. Read the letter on the reverse*. I would like to send you to Karachi on this mission. Only you or Mirabahen could work there satisfactorily. A knowledge of English and Hindi would be necessary for dealing with Sindhi girls. Mirabahen is not still ready to be sent away from the Ashram. So I wish you would go. If you feel like going, let me know.

You have to stay in the Ashram, that is to say, with me as best you can. So acquaint me with your inmost thoughts and enable me to discharge a mother's duty.

May it not be that your lack of interest in things is due to the need for a mate? One of your well-wishers emphatically told me that I should give you away in marriage. This was in connection with a certain young

* It was from Shri Narayandas Anandji from Karachi asking Gandhiji to send some lady who could teach *takli* spinning to girls in municipal schools.

man who is not a Patidar by caste but is otherwise quite eligible. I said I had no fears at least so far as you were concerned; and that I did not see for the present at any rate that you would like to marry. The well-wisher then remarked that I was ignorant of your state of mind. You will see now that I am not joking. Speak out fearlessly. But bear in mind that a girl who wishes to observe *brahmacharya* for life should be brave and cheerful. Or else people will say, 'Give her away in marriage and all will be well with her.'

[Letters XXXVIII to XLVI were sent to Satyagraha Ashram, Sabarmati.]

XLVII

[Sodepur]

Monday [January 3, 1927]

I had hoped to hear from you, but so far in vain. I hope you are fit in mind as well as in body, and are making great progress in Sanskrit. Write to me in full detail. I shall be in Comilla till the sixth and in Kashi [Gandhi Ashram, Banaras Cantonment] till the ninth. Do write to father too. He seems to be anxious about you. We are all fine.

[This was sent to Wardha.]

XLVIII

(Telegram)

Gaya

January 15, 1927

Your delightful letter. Master carding ginning soon.

Bapu

XLIX

[Bihar]

Day of silence [January 17, 1927]

I got your letter. There is nothing in it which could not be disclosed to all the world. However I have not shown it to anybody else except Mahadev [Desai].

There is no question of anybody forcing you into marriage against your will. I for one would, if I could, compel girls to take a vow of lifelong chastity. On the other hand they compel me to give them away in marriage against my will. So you have nothing to fear from me at any rate. Some busybodies who were ignorant of your real feeling pestered me. So I asked you about it, and that too only after I had seen that you were not quite at ease. I do know of young girls who are not aware that their mental unrest is only due to their desire for marriage. I never thought you were one of these, but still it was my duty to warn you and to suggest that there was no harm in saying once that you did not intend to marry and then changing your mind. It would of course be different if one has taken a vow. In that case the heavens may fall but the vow must not be broken. However even I may put you the question so long as you are not still under a vow. And others may even strongly recommend marriage. You should not understand this to mean that I want you to take a vow. That you will do voluntarily when you are ready for it. From now onwards I shall never have to broach this subject again and I will even prevent others from doing it. But you must get over your mental unrest, and make of virginity something that would compel people's respect. *Brahmacharya* should be understood in a religious sense, and in order that it may bear its proper fruit, you should observe it with all its implications as explained by me in two* chapters

* Chapters VII and VIII in Part III, pp. 149ff. in 1959 edition.

of the Autobiography recently printed in *Navajivan*. Be calm, cheerful, industrious and tolerant.

Become a perfect master of the *Margopadeshika* [R. G. Bhandarkar's First Book of Sanskrit] and lay your finger on the rule applicable to every single word of the Gita.

I have wired asking you to master ginning and carding. I have sent a wire to Narayandas too at Karachi but have not still had a reply. Other places besides Karachi have asked for a spinning teacher. I am planning to send you to a number of places in that capacity. I have asked for a salary of Rs 50 and travelling allowance. You will thus gather a rich harvest of experience, and after you have had it, we will see what should be done next. Do not take up any duties there for the present. Draw Rs 30 a month. Never mind if you have saved some money at the end of the month. I will ask you for an account.

L

Saturday

I have your letter. It was a good idea to have Valjibhai [V. G. Desai] as your tutor [in Sanskrit]. You can learn from him a great deal.

I do not know why your services as a teacher have been terminated. I thought you had been told why that was done. If you were not told, you can ask them without fear. I at any rate was unperturbed, because whether you teach or do not teach at the Ashram school, you have to stay at the Ashram and draw the usual allowance. You are my responsibility. Do not get angry with the school authorities either. They have to manage the whole show and so may act as they think fit. But you have the right to know the reason why they acted as they did in your case.

But now you should get ready to learn spinning and everything else that goes with it, such as, for instance, repairing spinning-wheels, recognizing different varieties of cotton, ginning, carding, spinning, wetting the yarn in order to increase its strength, joining broken threads, tying them up and so on. You must learn how to prepare a *mal* [the string which makes the wheel and the spindle revolve] and to wrap the spindle up in a *sadi*. And wherever you go you will learn all these processes as well as other subjects including Hindi and Sanskrit. In Sanskrit you should know the meaning of every verse in the Gita along with its grammar. *Takli* spinning also should be mastered.

There is a wire from Karachi that your name has been placed before the municipal board. That is very good news indeed.

Do write to me and work enthusiastically.

From the second to the eighth I shall be in Gondia, Nagpur, Wardha, Akola and Amaravati. But send your letters to Wardha only.

LI

On the way to Akola
Sunday [February 6, 1927]

I have your letter. You should improve your handwriting. The letters should be big and distinct. It is not enough to write a good hand on special occasions. We should write it always as Mahadev does.

You may attend Hariharbhai's classes for the present. Get into the habit of talking in Hindi. You will learn it soon enough if you like it.

Become an expert in every process connected with spinning. Do not leave out any one of them. In the course of my travels I realize every moment the country's need

of a large number of spinning teachers from among women of character.

You had no right to read the letter to Manilal Kothari, but never mind if you read it. Nowadays no one is ready to believe that a young Indian woman can observe *brahmacharya*. I yearn for the day when you and other Ashram girls will have cured the people of their scepticism.

LII

Thursday [February 10, 1927]

I have your letters. You have done well to begin learning Hindi. Whatever you do, you should preserve your health, and then I shall be free from anxiety.

Do not spoil your handwriting. Never mind if you have to give more time to writing. In a short time you will be able to write a better hand with speed.

The slivers you have made and sent me are very good indeed. I wish that you take a first in every single process connected with cotton. You will be most useful to me as a spinning teacher in girls' schools, and later on as a welfare officer for poor women if health permits. There is no end to the work to be done among women, but this can be done by men only to a limited extent.

Let me know everything that is wrong with the [Ashram] kitchen, and gently draw Shankaran's attention to it. You may even demonstrate the right method of doing things for a couple of days, but not any longer. You should learn to live with others. I shall be very pleased when I can place you anywhere without hesitation as I can place Mahadev or Devadas for instance. I shall be satisfied when you do not hurt anybody else's feelings or feel hurt yourself.

LIII

On the way to Nasik
Wednesday [February 18, 1927]

I got your letter. It seems I shall reach Sabarmati on the eighth at the earliest. There is no news from Karachi.

How is it that Gangadevi falls ill every now and then? We will arrange for her to go somewhere else for a change of air if she likes. Ask her as well as Totaram [her husband]. Does she take a moderate amount of food?

I will subject you to a test in Sanskrit, carding and spinning when I come. Improve your Gujarati handwriting still more, and make further progress in Gujarati grammar.

The programme for perfecting the Ashram kitchen should now be over. Contribute your share to it.

LIV

Nipani
[March 28, 1927]

Do not waste a thought on my illness [high blood pressure]. If men will not take note of advancing age, they must suffer from illness which is its concomitant. And such illness is fatal in some cases. But as every one of us must die, where is the sense in lamentation over it?

I expect to receive a call for you any day now. Be prepared for it. How much have you done in Sanskrit? Have you now completed your course in carding and spinning?

Though this was written on the same day as the letter to the Ashram women's group, it will reach you a day later as it was posted a little later.

LV

Sunday [1927]

I have been waiting for your letter. I know you have not written any deliberately. But now there is no need for such self-restraint. What grade have you made in Sanskrit? And would you be ranked first in an examination in carding and spinning?

I am improving day by day. There is no cause for anxiety.

LVI

Friday [1927]

I have your letters. It would be good for you to take your meals at the Ashram kitchen. Read my letter to Shankaran on the subject. You have done well to take charge of Champa [Dr Pranjivandas Jagjivan Mehta's daughter-in-law].

LVII

[Nandidurg]

Day of silence, Chaitra Vadi 9
[April 25, 1927]

I have your letter. The last sentence in it is incomplete, and there is no signature or date either. This shows undue haste. Sweet are the fruits of patience, as the Gujarati proverb says. Mango trees do not grow overnight, says another. In English haste makes waste. It was very fine of you to have made a *dhoti* for father from your own *sadi*. If you continue this good work and if Dahyabhai and Yashoda too follow suit, how nice would it be?

There is no reason to think that the Karachi job will not be offered to you. But if it is not, there are other places ready to receive you. These can only be considered when I hear something definite from Karachi.

LVIII

[Nandidurg]

Day of silence [May 2, 1927]

Father writes to say that you look pulled down. Why so? Our body must be strong and full of lustre. An ideal virgin is expected to be tops in every respect.

If you have not to go to Karachi, I would like to send you to Delhi instead of Champavati. There are many girls there and lots of work. And the climate of Delhi is excellent. I expect a wire from Karachi soon.

Let me know if any of the women in the Ashram going the rounds as patrol at night are afraid of thieves.

Was Radha [Gandhi] badly hurt? Did she have a fright when the thieves came to her house? I have no time now to write to her separately.

LIX

[Nandidurg]

Vaishakh Shudi 3 [May 4, 1927]

Tell Gangadevi that she should follow the doctor's instructions and take *mug* water if she likes. I cannot suggest any treatment unless I see her. Who is this new physician? Since when has he been visiting the Ashram?

Which of the sisters have volunteered for night patrol duty?

My health is improving. Write to me regularly. Ask Vasumati also to write. How do you do?

LX

[1927]

Should people leave the Ashram when they fall ill? I do not even know where you have gone. At any rate get well soon. Remember you are free to join me if you are not at ease. Abstinence pays only to the extent that it is endurable. If it does not pay, it is no good. Every day I wait for some news of you.

You know the tour programme; don't you?

LXI

Thursday [1927]

I was sorry to hear that you had an attack of fever and had been weak since then. Do not undertake anything beyond your physical capacity. I do not know if there is still time for it, but I shall be glad to know if you are elected a delegate to the Congress.

If you see any newspaper reports about my health, be sure that they are exaggerated. There has been sometimes a rise and at other times a fall in the blood pressure during this tour.

LXII

[Nandidurg]

[1927]

Bapu has been keeping indifferent health. Doctors who visit him have asked him to take rest. He does not take any *rotli* [wheat cake] but only fruit.

All here are well except Krishtodas. Rajagopalachariji and Gangadharrao [Deshpande] are here but will leave in a few days. Give good advice to Kanti and Rasik [Gandhiji's grandsons]; I hope they will listen to it. Where is Surajbaben? Jekibaben, Dr [P. J.] Mehta's daughter, is now in the Ashram. Does she like the place?

Do you attend the women's prayer meetings? I hope Vallabhbai is all right. There was a letter from Nandubaben [Kanuga]: convey to her my *jaya shri Krishna*.

I congratulate the Ashram women's group on their enthusiastic observance of the National Week and attendance at prayer meetings.

Ba [Kasturba Gandhi]

LXIII

Nandidurg

Vaishakh Shudi 12 [May 12, 1927]

I have your letter. You did well to volunteer your services for patrolling the Ashram at night. I wish they will avail themselves of your offer to the extent of your physical capacity. Fear is a mere figment of our imagination; there is nothing real about it. It vanishes as a result of facing it often enough and the grace of God. When the thieves realize that even our paid watchman will not beat them up but will suffer beating at their hands and that the volunteers belong to a different class altogether and are ordinary householders, they will cease to trouble the Ashram folk. I am sure that some one of you will employ soul force some day and win them over by love. But there is no doubt that this is like placing one's hand in a hole inhabited by a snake. Some one will be beaten up or even killed. What man is there who is not afflicted by disease? Men, women and children, all fall a victim to it. If we put up with it, why should we not also take a beating from thieves etc. with courage? This idea may be strange for those who expect to be protected by the police but not for us at the Ashram.

I received the slivers prepared by you at the very time that I was spinning and tried them at once. The thread did not break even once, and I found that your slivers were as good as any I have used. Equally good slivers have come my way only once or twice before. I do not think anybody can make better slivers than yours. Indeed after once having tried my hand at yours, it may be difficult to spin with any others. I wish and hope that you will be first in the first class in writing a good hand and in spinning as in carding.

I had a letter from Karachi yesterday. Your appointment appears to have been delayed on account of Narayandas' absence. So they have asked for a month's time. I wrote that if they really wanted you, I would wait for a month longer, but they should do nothing merely to oblige us. I also asked for a reply by wire. I would like you to go only to a place where you are really wanted. We are not in a hurry at all. Meanwhile you have to become perfect in every department of your studies.

LXIṪ

Nandidurg
May 21, 1927

You have surely heard the song with this first line — क़री नहीं हारना, भावे साडी जान जाय। That is to say, we may lose our life but never lose heart. And where is the sense in admitting defeat as regards, for instance, spinning and writing a good hand, especially when I am by your side to encourage you? 'Stone upon stone is a dam built and drop by drop is the lake filled up', as they say in Gujarati. Nothing is impossible for industry. So do not lose heart. By regular spinning you are sure to increase your speed and you will improve your hand by constant practice in writing clear and bold letters. I know quite a number of people who have thus improved their handwriting. You have made a success of your work at the *kothar* [Ashram stores]. Now do not give it up but learn to do it perfectly. Never mind if you have not to keep accounts, but you should acquaint yourself with the general principles. If the *kothar* work takes up so much of your time that you cannot spin for two hours every day, you may spin for a shorter period but with concentration. It is better to spin for a short time with application than to spin

longer and impatiently; for you will thus spin stronger and more uniform yarn and that too faster.

Do keep me informed about Gangadevi.

[Letters XLIX to LXIV were sent to the Ashram, Sabarmati.]

LXV

Day of silence [1927]

I had your card but not the promised letter. What type of work* are you doing in Matar and who are your co-workers? Keep your peace of mind, no matter what work you do.

I write to uncle [Vithalbhai Patel] that Manibahen would come to him when he learnt to ply the *takli* while sitting in his chair. He wrote in reply to say that Manibahen was a crank. I sent a rejoinder that as she was a crank herself, she lived in company with another crank.

What is the name given to Yashoda [Mrs Dahyabhai Patel]'s baby boy?

[This and the next were sent to Matar.]

LXVI

Day of silence [1927]

Keep a record of your experiences of life in villages for future use. Never be impatient, despondent or uneasy. I shall have many questions to ask you but not now; I will ask you when we meet or when your present task is finished. Write to me regularly. Preserve your health.

* Manibahen went there in connection with flood relief measures.

I hope you met uncle* [Vithalbhai Patel]. He has come there with high hopes of being useful [in flood relief]. May these be realized.

LXVII

[Sabarmati]

Sunday [April 15, 1928]

I have not heard from you at all since you went to Bardoli. This is not right. Give me an idea of your programme and new experiences.

Read the enclosed and let me know if you would care to go to Ceylon [for khadi propaganda]. How did you celebrate the National† Week?

[This and the next were sent to Bardoli.]

LXVIII

[Sabarmati]

Day of silence [May 21, 1928]

I was delighted to learn from father when we met in Bombay that you gave a good account of yourself during the no-tax campaign in Bardoli. But that is not enough to satisfy me. I want you to cultivate virtues such as high seriousness, equanimity, contentment, courtesy, resolution, meticulous devotion to truth, earnestness, studiousness, concentration. Without these the life of a virgin dedicated to national service remains imperfect.

* He was then Speaker of the Central Legislative Council. As Gujarat was the constituency from which he had been elected, he came over to Nadiad when the province was ravaged by floods, and undertook an extensive tour of the flood-stricken areas. The Viceroy too visited Gujarat at his instance.

† See *A Gandhi Anthology*, Book I, Chapter VI.

LXIX

Swaraj Ashram,
Bardoli

Saturday [August 4, 1928]

Swami [Anand] is not here. I read your letter to him. Do not insist on coming. It is the duty of a soldier to keep fit and obey the commander with pleasure. We can improve our health soon enough if we apply our mind to it.

Father, Mahadev and Swami were in Poona and must have left it today. One cannot say just yet whether or not there will be a settlement. I feel that Government at present lacks the capacity to prolong the fight. Public opinion strongly disapproves of its policies, as it has taken a number of wrong measures.

I visited Sarbhon today. There is no rain now. Many are going to Surat today.

[This and the next were sent to Ahmedabad.]

LXX

Agra
September 18, 1929

I have your letter. It is a good thing that Yashoda is now in Ahmedabad. Her illness causes anxiety, but it is possible that she will recover, with careful nursing.

If father has arrived, tell him I expect to meet him in Lucknow on the 27th.

I enjoy good health, and live at present on milk, curds and fruit.

LXXI

[Sabarmati]
March 9, 1930

I was waiting to hear from you every day. Not a day has passed on which I did not remember you, but I quite understand your feeling that I neglect you. The fact is I am very busy, and have not the time even to raise my head to have a look at anybody. I rested content with knowing where you were and what you were about.

Father did not leave any instructions for you. He had no idea he would be arrested [in Ras]. You should live in any place where you will be happy. You can certainly go to jail when the time comes. Mahadev has written about it. I know why you do not like to live in the Ashram at Sabarmati. But I think your dislike is unjustifiable. Compulsion in such matters however is out of the question. So I will say nothing more about it. I only wish that you should be at ease, no matter where you live.

I hope to be arrested before Tuesday. Be brave and improve your health.

[This was sent to Bombay.]

LXXII

Thursday [1930]

I have your two letters. I am writing this in a moving train. Resolutely do whatever you can. If the situation referred to in your second letter arises, you go to Vileparle or to Wardha. If you come and see me, I will explain this more fully and you will be comforted. Come on Tuesday or Wednesday, so that you will be able to bring more news from that end. Do what you can with the help of even a few women as co-workers.

[This and the next two letters were sent to Nadiad.]

LXXIII

Thursday [1930]

I have your letter. Yesterday I could not after all write the note you have asked for. Now you will surely go [to Kheda District for picketing liquor shops]. I enclose the note although it is unnecessary.

See that you act in a manner worthy of yourself, of father and of me. Try to read and understand the Gita as well as some Gujarati books.

Write to me regularly. Inquire about the report of the salt in Kheda depots having been poisoned and let me know.

LXXIV

May 19, 1930

God will be your shepherd. I remember you daily. I hope you are no longer depressed.

LXXV

Yeravda Mandir [prison]

July 14, 1930

Well done. No sooner did you meet the real father [Sardar Patel] than you forgot the counterfeit [Gandhiji]. And now you are in demand as speaker at public meetings and thus all the more likely to forget me. How is your health, physical as well as mental? Did you get my letters?

How is Dahyabhai? And how is Yashoda? Has she recovered completely?

[This was sent to Ahmedabad.]

LXXVI

Yeravda Mandir
July 28, 1930

It is after many a week that you have favoured me with a letter. I know you are busy and doing good work in a field of your own choice, but I want you to write all the same.

Live long and serve the country.

[This and the two letters that follow were sent to Bombay.]

LXXVII

Yeravda Mandir
August 18, 1930

I have your letter. Father was brought here and stayed with me for four or five days. I got news of you. God will see that it is all well with you. Do write to me, and ask Dahyabhai also to write.

LXXVIII

Yeravda Mandir
August 22, 1930

You have given a good report of your experiences. I now know you met father. When in Bombay, meet Perinbahen [Captain] and Lilavati [Munshi].

LXXIX

Y. M.

September 7, 1930

I have your letter. Once again father and Jairamdas [Daulatram] were with me for a couple of days. Your letter to me was received at the same time and was read by father. He also gave me your letter to him to read.

Your sketch of mother is moving. Such indeed were most mothers of old; so I did not find anything unusual in your description. Maternal affection however is so luminous that although mixed with infatuation, it looks ever new. Do not break the rule about writing to me. It would be different if you were in prison and thus had restrictions imposed on you.

[This and the two following letters were sent to Arthur Road prison.]

LXXX

Yeravda Mandir

September 14, 1930

I write this as you wanted me to write. But goodness knows if it will reach its destination. They allowed me to send your letter to me for father to read. Write if you get the necessary permission. Make full use of the compulsory rest you have got. That too I consider a part of our service. Take good care of your health. Draw up a regular programme of work. Let me know what food you get.

LXXXI

Yeravda Mandir
September 27, 1930

You ask me to write to you every week. But will the prison authorities allow you so many letters? I also doubt whether you will be able to write to me. Preserve your health. Make a good use of every minute of time and keep a record of your work.

LXXXII

Yeravda Mandir
December 14, 1930

Now that you are out of prison, I expect to get your letter with full details of your experience. How do you do?

[This and the following letter were sent to Bombay.]

LXXXIII

Yeravda Mandir
December 21, 1930

Is it possible that I should go on writing to you even if you never drop me even a line? Have you forgotten the promise to be writing to me? But better late than never. Realize the importance of keeping our promises. Give me an account of your jail experiences. Did you keep good health? What food did you take?

LXXXIV

Yeravda Mandir
December 27, 1930

At last I have a letter from you. You have somewhat made up for previous neglect. Do build up your health at any rate. You had a great deal of work on your hands [in looking after numerous fellow prisoners, young and old]; so there was no need to read any books. You did well to put up a fight [on the question of women prisoners' right to wear bangles].

I am now all right. I had stomach ache one day; therefore I took only vegetable soup the next day. Since that day I have not taken any milk. I take only *rotlo* made of local jowari or bajri [millets] and vegetable with a few almonds. There is no reason for anxiety on my score.

[This was sent to Sabarmati prison.]

LXXXV

Yeravda Mandir
January 3, 1931

If you meet father, tell him that I envy his lot, for he is both in and out of the house of [ar-]rest and is able to visit* the doctor every day. He never received such delicate attention so long as he was a free man. And I hope that in this way he will get rid for good of the trouble in the teeth and in the nose. Will he be my neighbour this time too?

* The Sardar was then in Arthur Road prison and was taken every day for a month under police escort to Dr D. M. Desai's dental clinic in Whiteaway Laidlaw building [now occupied by Khadi Gramodyog Bhavan], Fort, Bombay.

If you meet Rajendrababu, ask him to write to me. Did he get my reply to his letter?

Dahyabhai seems to have taken an oath never to write to me.

[Letters LXXXV to LXXXIX were sent to Bombay.]

LXXXVI

Yeravda Mandir
January 10, 1931

I had guessed what you wrote about Harilal* [Gandhiji's eldest son]. I think there was no harm if the facts had been published. For then perhaps Harilal would have seen the error of his ways. However that may be, the path we have to tread is straight. Every one in the world is our kith and kin, or else every one is a stranger.

There is a welcome improvement in your handwriting. Where will you stay now?

* Harilal asked for an interview with the Sardar in Arthur Road prison, but the Sardar refused to see him, as he was drunk and as the interview asked for appeared to have been arranged by the British Government of India for propaganda purposes. All the same an account of the interview that never took place appeared in the *Evening News of India* and words were placed in the Sardar's mouth which he had never uttered. The Sardar strongly resented such procedures, and his contradiction appeared in the papers the next day.

LXXXVII

Yeravda Mandir
January 15, 1931

How long is father likely to stay on for dental treatment? Even if the Arthur Road prison is infested with mosquitoes, it is desirable that this course of treatment should be completed. I imagine you too will stay on in Bombay during that period. We* are both all right. How is Sumitra [Dr Kanuga's daughter]? Is Vithalbai staying on?

LXXXVIII

Yeravda Mandir
January 22, 1931

I have your beautiful long letter. I am sorry I am in no position to send back anything equally long. My travels are confined to the compound around our cells. There is no guard or anybody else here to quarrel with. The sky is the ceiling of my train. I may attempt a description of the stars but that would be to invite failure. And the stars I see are visible to you also. So I have nothing to write about. I too understand that you are outside prison only for a matter of days. For at present jail is our real home.

LXXXIX

Day of silence [February 16, 1931]

I did get your letters, but I have not the time to send you a reply. So you go on writing to me, whether or not I am able to write to you. We start for Delhi today. Address: c/o Dr [M. A.] Ansari, Daryaganj. The Sardar is going to Bombay.

* Gandhiji and Shri D. B. Kalelkar.

LXL

[October 26, 1931]

I continue to get your letters. Do not stop writing because I cannot send any reply. Nowadays I have simply not the time to write letters. Today I am utilizing a few minutes snatched out of the [London Round Table] Conference sessions.

I was delighted to learn that Dahyabhai has recovered. Convey my good wishes to him and Yashoda.

Ask Lakshmidas [Purushottamdas Ashar] and [Dr] Manjubahen [Mashruwala] to write to me. I think we shall be in England till at least one more mail steamer arrives.

LXLI

Yeravda Mandir
March 26, 1932

Today I received permission to write to fellow prisoners. Hence this letter. As I have got this permission, I take it that the recipients of my letters will be allowed to write me a reply. Reply to this letter at once. I do not write today to your fellow prisoners such as Lilavati [Mrs Harilal Desai], Nandubahen [Kanuga] and Mridula [Sarabhai]. So let me have news of them too. Who else is with you?

Mahadev [Desai] has arrived. We three are all right.

[This and the next two items were sent to Belgam prison.]

April 22, 1932

We were eagerly waiting for a letter from some one in Belgam prison when we received one or two of them. . . . * Meet me here when you are released. 11:30 a. m. to 1 p. m. on Tuesdays is the most convenient time when you can see me. If you come during this period, you will be able to see at least two of us [Gandhiji and the Sardar]. . . . * We** three are all right.

I see that you have really tried to improve your handwriting. Any one can do this if only he exerts himself. This goes for all other accomplishments as well.

To learn the Gita by heart implies that we also know the meaning of every verse committed to memory and pronounce it correctly. Who is your Gita teacher? Perhaps you will tell me this only when we meet. But if there is time and if the jail authorities let you do so, write your last letter before release to me. As regards your health, we will issue a certificate of merit when we meet if you are fit for it.

Yashoda and her baby boy visited us once. The boy mounted a chair and was so thoroughly pleased with himself that he left his new pair of shoes here. Fortunately for him or for Dahyabhai, some one of us noticed it and sent it to him. Yashoda's health is none too good. Indeed she has been ailing now for years. Dahyabhai comes every week and meets both of us.

[Acharya] Jivatram [Kripalani] is still out of prison and working. Devadas is in Gorakhpur [prison]. He is alone there but quite happy. He reads a good deal. Lakshmi [Devadas Gandhi's wife] is no longer an object of pity for she has nursed Papa [her sister] back to health. Rajaji is fine. Indu [Indira Nehru] has not been to see me. I do not know where she is at present. She is probably in

* Part of the letter here was scored out by the jail authorities.

** The third was Mahadev Desai.

Poona. Kamala [Nehru] is in Prayagji [Allahabad]. Kamalapati [Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru] is better but still has some slight fever.

I will write to some one in Ahmedabad about the spinning-wheel. But we here also can spare a good one for you.*

I wrote today my first letter to Ba [Kasturba Gandhi], but I do hear from her. She and her fellow prisoners are all right here. Mithubahen conducts a class of her own.

If your glasses are broken, you can get them changed even while in prison. But this is perhaps unnecessary now as your date of release is fast approaching.

Your letter was received and handed to me today. This reply was also written this very day. I suppose it will be posted tomorrow. When you will get it depends on your luck as well as mine.

LXLIII

† (Telegram)

Poona

May 2, 1932

Yashoda died yesterday. Consider this deliverance from living death.

LXLIV

Yeravda Mandir

July 2, 1932

I have your letter. I hope you received my message. As you had thought of sending me slivers, you have *ipso facto* acquired the merit of sending them. You did well not to send any, as we have here a lot of slivers, and good ones at that made by Mahadev himself. For the last two months he has been making more than I can use. He himself uses

* Part scored out by jail officials.

† This telegram was received by the jail office but not delivered. Some one told Manibahen about this. So she refused to be locked up in her cell so long as her telegram was not given. And at last the matron brought it to her.

Chhakkad-das' slivers as they are carefully prepared from first class cotton. I can never spin on the Magan wheel yarn as fine as Mahadev's. I have always held and rightly so that yarn spun as sacrifice should not be used by the spinner himself. If the spinning sacrificer is careless in spinning, he has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. For sacrificial yarn should be spun with the greatest care. And all of it should be given away. The spinner then will rest content with what good, bad or indifferent yarn he gets for himself. If he has not the heart to do this, he should spin as sacrifice for half an hour or an hour daily and give away at least 160 rounds [of four feet each].

I quite understand your preference for congregational prayer. It is simply due to the fact that you learnt to pray first only with a congregation. But one must also pray individually, if it be only for a single minute. There must be continuous prayer in the heart all day long, and this is impossible until one is in the habit of praying alone. One can pray alone while lying down, bathing, taking one's meals or pursuing any other activity whatever. So it is not felt as a burden. On the other hand it should take burdens off the mind. If it doesn't, it should be classed as artificial.

Dahyabhai's is difficult problem. But he is a wise young man and so will settle down of his own accord. In this there is no question of anybody else leading him. If he wants to remarry, no one will come in his way. If he is not so inclined himself no one will tempt him. Outsiders will pester him of course but Dahyabhai knows how to deal with them as well as you. I have had to stop meeting anybody. I feel this privation all the more when an event of this kind happens. But it is our duty to put up with such inconveniences.

The left elbow aches in a certain position; hence for the last month or so the clothes are washed by a servant. My plates are such as are issued to prisoners. I cannot keep them bright but they are certainly clean.

[This was sent to Ahmedabad, c/o Dr Kanuga.]

Yeravda Mandir
August 26, 1932

How is it that you have not written to anybody since you were sent to prison? A prisoner has surely the right to send a letter soon after she is brought to a jail. Do write a letter now if you have not written one already. Do see that you come out this time with improved health. Do not hesitate to ask for or take whatever diet is necessary.

You should arrange a regular course of studies in jail and thus master the subjects in which you are weak at present. For instance do Gujarati grammar and obtain a better command over the language. So also you should do English of which you already know something with the help of Kamaladevi [Chattopadhyaya]. Lilavatibahen [Munshi] can help you with your Sanskrit. Improve your Marathi too. You also need to know something of what specially pertains to women. But all this is merely a suggestion. If you do not like any of these items, you may substitute instead others of your own choice. I only want that you should fully utilize this precious opportunity of increasing your knowledge. Spinning if permitted by the rules, prayers, keeping a diary, — these items of course should never be missed.

We three are all right. Father is studying* Sanskrit with a zeal which would put a younger person to shame. He also spins up to 40s and makes envelopes. Mahadev spins up to 80s besides doing French and Urdu. I spin on the Magan wheel but only slowly. I am similarly slow at studies too as correspondence takes up a lot of my time. . . . †

[Letters LXLV to CXV were sent to Belgam prison.]

* See *The Diary of Mahadev Desai*, Vol. I, under August 28.

† Portion scored out by the jailer.

LXLVI

Yeravda Mandir
September 21, 1932

You surely do not need to be comforted. I will take you to task if you shed a single tear [on account of the fast undertaken as a protest against the British Government's decision to create separate electorates for Harijans]. I am in extraordinary good luck, which calls for rejoicing and not for sorrow. Fasting is not the thing for you and others. You should only discharge your present duties with diligence. I have obtained for you permission to write to me whenever you wish. So do write. I hope this letter will be given to you without undue delay.

LXLVII

Yeravda Mandir
October 8, 1932

I have your long letter, though it was not long enough for me. The fast is now a thing of the past. It was inspired by God and so it was crowned with success. I have almost regained my strength. Everyday I take two pounds of milk and lots of fruit juice from oranges, pomegranates or grapes, and marrow or tomato soup. . . . * I take a walk in our compound, and spin 200 rounds of fine yarn [45s]. I also write quite a number of letters. So you see there is no reason for anxiety. Ba [Mrs Gandhi] is permitted to be with me during the day. Devadas also is allowed to see me. He is now all right.

Your dreaming about food is a sign of indigestion. Such dreams are common when one is very hungry or has overeaten. You should find out the real cause, take appropriate action and then cease to worry. A person who keeps the observances will by and by get dreamless sleep. We must not expect excrescences of a long standing to

* Portion scored out by the jailer.

vanish all at once; they will take their own time. But that should not unnerve us, throw us into the slough of despond or make us slack in our endeavour, and we must not entertain any doubt or anxiety as regards final victory. This is the *anasakti* [detachment] of the Gita.

Fasting produces different effects in persons of different physical and mental constitutions. One who is not accustomed to fast will be upset even by a fast for twenty-four hours. But it is child's play for one who is in the habit of fasting from time to time. Similarly a person who has not much accumulated fat in his system cannot undertake a long fast. But a fat person, if he is patient, can fast for a pretty long time and physically benefit by it.

Father and Mahadev are all right. We never enjoyed such solitude before, and it has done us much good.

Tell Lilavati that I had a fine letter from Munshi. Ask her to write to me if she can. I enclose Nandubahen [Kanuga]'s letter.

LXLVIII

(Telegram)

Poona

October 28, 1932

Grandmother died peacefully Wednesday afternoon Karamsad after four hour illness. Hope letter giving details sent Friday delivered. We are all well. Love.

LXLIX

(Telegram)

Poona

October 31, 1932

Hope you are not worrying over grandmother's death which any one would envy. No letter from you long time. Love.

C
(Telegram)

Poona,
November 19, 1932

Dahyabhai suffering fever last 7 days. Now declared typhoid. No complications. Special nurses attending. No cause anxiety. Will try send daily report.

CI

Poona
November 20, 1932

I hope you received wire regarding Dahyabhai's illness. Permission has been obtained for sending you news every day as well as for you to write what you like to or about Dahyabhai. I will forward your letters to Dahyabhai. I will also write to you every day. I enclose Dr Madan's letter. There is also a letter today from Bhai Karamchand. So the reports from Bombay have been reassuring so far. Today is the fourteenth day of the fever. The temperature stays at present between 100° and 103°. It once fell as low as 99.5°. The lungs are clear. Fruit juices, barley water and sometimes thin butter-milk constitute Dahyabhai's diet. Nurses have been specially engaged to look after him. All necessary steps have been taken; there is therefore no reason for anxiety.

CII

Yeravda Mandir
[November 22, 1932]

I have wired as well as written you a letter. You can write a letter to me every day to be forwarded to Dahyabhai. Today also there is good news about his condition. Devadas has been to see him. He says no one who looks at Dahyabhai will believe that he has enteric fever, such is his courage and physical stamina.

Every good wish for your fellow prisoners.

Yeravda Mandir
November 25, 1932

I have your long letters, the first after you were informed about Dahyabhai's illness. You are worrying unnecessarily. You ought to be aware that at a time when both father and you are in prison, those who are outside would never fail to do the needful about brother. As soon as there was a diagnosis of enteric fever, Valchand [Hirachand] asked Karamchand to engage two nurses for day and night duty and to arrange for physicians to visit the patient every day. The expenses amount to 30 to 40 rupees a day and are met by him. Thus Dahyabhai is better nursed at home than he would be in a hospital. He is waited upon by Karamchand, Chhotubhai [the Sardar's nephew] and two affable nurses for whom Dahyabhai has conceived a liking. Jamnadas Bakshi and other friends too are there. It is natural for you to feel for your absence at this moment from Bombay. But God imposes the severest tests on those whom He loves. We receive daily reports from Karamchand and others. This is the third week of the fever. The temperature now does not rise above 102°, and was normal yesterday. Doctors hope Dahyabhai will be quite free from fever next Monday. You will have seen from Dr Madan's letters that doctors give Dahyabhai loving care. In enteric fever as a rule the patient suffers at first from diarrhoea. But Dahyabhai has had no such trouble. So there is no cause at all for anxiety. You do your duty with devotion and pray for Dahyabhai's speedy recovery. Grandmother's death [at the age of 90] is not at all to be mourned. Very few of us are fortunate enough to die such a death. If we feel that we missed the opportunity of nursing near and dear ones during their last days on earth, we should console ourselves with the resolution that in future we would never let go an opportunity to serve anybody else.

We are all fine and devote all our waking time to Harijan service.

CIV

Yeravda Mandir
November 26, 1932

The news about Dahyabhai today is even better than before. The temperature did not rise above 100.5° and came down to 98.5°. So the fever is definitely going. Doctors hope that tomorrow or perhaps the day after the temperature will become normal and not rise any longer. Dahyabhai is weak of course, but such weakness is only to be expected, and there is no reason for anxiety.

Therefore you need not now make inquiries by wire. And I will not send you any wire either.

Father wrote to Karamchand yesterday asking him to send you some money. We are all well. I have forwarded your letter to Dahyabhai. Why don't you say anything about your health?

CV

Yeravda Mandir
November 27, 1932

The news today is better than yesterday's. The temperature came down to 97.5°, and did not rise above 101.5°. Dahyabhai sleeps well. You do your duty with devotion.

CVI

Yeravda Mandir
November 30, 1932

I enclose Dr Kanuga's letter received today, from which you will find that there is no cause for anxiety about Dahyabhai. The fever may persist for a few days more but that does not matter.

CVII

Yeravda Mandir
December 6, 1932

Dahyabhai was expected to be free from fever on Sunday, but the expectation was not realized. The temperature becomes normal but it then rises up to 99° to 100°. So the fever may still last a week longer. But the doctors have ceased to worry. They have prescribed sanotogen as a tonic besides a pound and a half of milk, which is properly digested. Ambalal [Sarabhai], Thakkar [Bapa], Ba [Mrs Gandhi] have been to see Dahyabhai. All of them report that Dahyabhai is cheerful. No one who sees him could believe that he had been suffering from enteric fever for as long as four weeks. So do not worry.

My fast [undertaken as a protest against Appasaheb Patwardhan not being permitted to do scavenger's work in jail] is now matter only for history. I hope you read all about it in the *Times of India*. Such fasts are an essential part of my life. So looking upon them as natural phenomena, you should be engrossed in your usual tasks. I hope you are all right.

CVIII

Yeravda Mandir
December 9, 1932

I presume that you are getting regular news from Bombay and so do not write to you every day. Dahyabhai is definitely improving. There is still a slight rise in the temperature for a couple of hours every day, but he is fast regaining his strength. Devadas came here today. He said he saw Dahyabhai in Bombay and found him in very good condition. Besides milk he is also given vegetable soup and he is in high spirits.

[K.] Natarajan also writes to the same effect. So stop worrying altogether. I will send a reply to your long letter when I get some more leisure.

CIX

[Yeravda Mandir]

January 3, 1933

I have not now even a minute's leisure. I feel we should now stop writing every day. Dahyabhai is all right.

CX

[From a letter written to a fellow-prisoner in Belgam]

[Yeravda Mandir]

March 30, 1933

I discovered only here that Mani's orderliness is inherited from her father. It astonished Motilalji [Nehru] who was lodged in her room at Sabarmati and remarked such neatness was not to be seen even at Ananda Bhavan. This is something that you can learn from her. And she has a wonderful capacity for service to any one whom she chooses to serve. In courage some of you can compete with her; so I will not say anything about it.

CXI

Yeravda Mandir

April 4, 1933

I fail to understand the complaint that you do not get our letters. I am now inquiring why letters written regularly do not reach their destination. When father wrote you a letter, I did not write another myself; but even then I generally added a couple of lines of my own. You have certainly the right to complain and even be angry if you do not hear from one of us. But you ought to know that it is impossible that we would not write, and if you do not get a letter, it must be due to some accident.

We are all fine. Father has resumed his Sanskrit studies with a fair amount of success. He always tries to remember the portion he has already covered. Dahyabhai comes for an interview almost every week.

My arm is as it was, but it does not interfere with my work. Mahadev enjoys excellent health. Chhaganlal [Joshi] is also well. If you need good slivers, we can send you some, as we get lots of them. Mridula, Kamaladevi and Lilavati gave us news of you. They have all been deeply impressed by the way you conduct yourself. Ba and Mirabahen are all right. Mirabahen writes to me every week. Kakasaheb is here at present and helps with *Harijan* work. *Harijan* is being issued in Gujarati, Bengali and Hindi besides English.

Postscript by Mahadev Desai

I enter the world of mortals on the 4th proximo, the stock of my merit being about to be exhausted.

CXII

Yeravda Mandir

April 26, 1933

I got your letter only two or three days ago. Your letters, no matter how long, will never be too long for us. But you must not expect father or me to write at any such length. We are enjoying quite a number of amenities and even luxuries to which you in Belgam are perfect strangers. But we would prove ourselves unworthy servants of the nation and unworthy parents of children if these amenities were utilized for any but public purposes. One who claims to be the parent of hundreds of children cannot afford to waste his time. You may envy our good fortune as much as you like.

What is the duty of a father? Should he give each of his children what it needs? Or should he give equal shares to all and thus not only do great injustice but make himself responsible for the death of a child whose needs are greater than those of other children, only in order to earn a certificate of merit from the last? An ailing child would

have to be given *bajra* bread and buttermilk without butter. Would the same food suit another child who has always lived on butter or honey spread on wheat cakes? A father is bound to provide all that is necessary for a child's welfare. He is free to give it more in so far as it is consistent with such welfare but is not bound to do so. It should not be necessary to explain this to you after all these years. But I have to produce a lengthy letter somehow.

When you did not get our letters for some time, you ought to have had faith enough to believe that one of us must have written to you. I agree that both should write if possible. But no one would be eager to write if he found that the fate of his letters was so uncertain. One letter has been regularly sent to you and will be sent in the hope that you will get it. Father has taken it upon himself to write a reply to your letters in detail. I too would like to reply but resist the temptation.

Anandi [Puratan Buch] has had a successful operation and left for Sabarmati. . . .

The warder is just now standing before me, ready to take us at 11 a.m. to the ward where we live. After I have bathed and lunched, I shall be brought back to this Harijan service ward at 12.

[The rest of the letter was written by the Sardar.]

I am sending your list of books to Dahyabhai. He was here last week and is all right. So is the boy [the Sardar's grandson]. He has passed his examination, and has been admitted to the first standard. He is now somewhat attentive in his studies. Jitu [Dr Kanuga's son] has passed the first examination for the degree of M.B.B.S. There was a letter from Saraladevi [Sarabhai]. They must have all now left for Mussoorie. Indumati [Chimanlal] and her mother were to go with them. Nirmalabahen will join them later. Kamaladevi was here to see Bapu a couple of days ago. Devadas will be here tomorrow. Mathuradas

[Trikanji] came yesterday. Jamnalaji is not well and has gone to Almora with Janakidevi for two months in accordance with medical advice. Khurshedbahen and sisters went to Mahabaleshwar yesterday for a fortnight's stay. Two of them are sure to go to their proper place [jail] after recouping their health. Thanks to malnutrition in jail Nandubahen [Kanuga] has lost an eye. But hers is a very patient and contented soul. She is sorry she could not keep you company.

Do not worry if you get our letters late and even if you do not get them at all. Letters have been regularly sent to you from here at any rate. Every letter for you henceforth will be sent by registered post like this one.

Dadasaheb [G. V. Mavlankar] is still in Ratnagiri. He has rented a house there and his family is there with him. His health is none too good. Kamu [his daughter] goes to Proprietary High School.

Hiramami [the Sardar's maternal uncle's wife] died on the 20th. It was a release for her from living death, but for relatives of course an occasion for grief.

We are both very pleased to find that you are at ease in prison. If in performing duty we are not at peace with ourselves, it shows that we are somehow or other at fault. Regular meals and fresh air in prisons should help us to preserve our health. If there is something wrong there is time in prison for us to remedy it. When we are outside, we have not the requisite leisure. But in jail we can consult the doctor and receive proper treatment. We should also take some exercise such as walking. Never mind if you cannot do much of reading but health must be preserved at any cost. This goes for Mridula [Sarabhai] too. I am fine. Do not worry about us for we can get whatever we need.

The next letter from this end will be sent about the middle of next month, even if we have not heard from you in the interval.

CXIII

Yeravda Mandir
May 6, 1933

This time too I am permitted to send you a letter every day during the fast [for 21 days from May 8 to 29 undertaken for self-purification as a preparation for Harijan service]. You too can also write to me daily. I may be unable to write or dictate a letter daily but Mahadev is sure to write. This is for you as well as Mridula and is in Mahadev's hand.

You are brave girls, both of you. I am sure you will not be unnerved. There should be no worry on my account, for I am fitter and fresher now than I was on the occasion of the previous fast. Raja [Rajagopalachari] strove hard with me. He is calm now and going back today. But he is returning in a few days' time. Vallabhbai has borne it all with great forbearance and along with Mahadev has resolved that he will cooperate with me in silence without entering into any argument. I like this attitude of his. For a few days he carried his silence too far. Even the fountain of his humour seemed to have dried up. But it has welled up again.

The fast was absolutely necessary. And this was the time for it. I have tested my decision like the solution of a problem in mathematics and found it correct. The fast is not directed against anybody whatever. I do not even know what events precipitated it, but many things had their felt or unfelt influence on me. The point is that if Harijan workers are not 24-carats fine gold, the fault somewhere lies with me. Then again hydra-headed untouchability is worse than the ten-headed giant Ravana. It cannot be killed by any number of hostile organizations or any amount of money collected in order to fight it. It is not

enough to secure rights for Harijans. What is wanted is a change of heart among *savarna* [caste] Hindus if they and Harijans are to embrace one another like blood brothers. This great adventure of the spirit can succeed only if we invest the whole of the spiritual capital at our disposal. Fasting is an ancient discipline and a well trodden road to the city of God. The wonder is that no one took to it before.

Be calm, both of you, and contribute your share when the time comes. A fast in sympathy with me is out of the question.

CXIV

Yeravda Mandir
May 8, 1933

I wrote you a letter on Saturday. You and Mridula too can write to me every day if you wish. None of the sisters in prison should be unhappy about the fast. But every one should try to wash every impurity out of herself. Some one here will write to you daily. I am at perfect peace. We are all fine.

CXV

Parnakuti, Poona
September 15, 1933

I thought you must be getting father's letters from Nasik prison without any hitch and would not be given any more. But I now find that letters sent by me also would have been given to you. If I am outside prison when you are released, I am sure you will come and meet me wherever I am. I know you will stay in Belgam for a couple of days and then go to Nasik. I leave for Bombay today, reach Ahmedabad on the 21st and Wardha on the 23rd.

CXVI

Wardha

September 29, 1933

Stay there until you have recouped your health and then come. I have a letter from father too, from which I learnt that Chandubhai [Dr Chandulal Desai] is now with him. This is a good thing for him.

[Letters CXVI to CXXII were sent to Bombay.]

CXVII

Wardha

October 7, 1933

Meet every one whom you wish to see, and then come. But you should not take this to mean that you are to come in the next millennium. By all means bring Baba [Dahyabhai's son] with you. He is sure to enjoy his stay here. I am regaining my strength. I am here till November 7.

CXVIII

Wardha

November 4, 1933

Dahyabhai is putting up a good fight. Let him fight impurity and artificiality wherever he sees* it. Baba's visit to Wardha was an unqualified success. Ba [Kasturba Gandhi] will go to jail after me. But the preparations for it should be made beforehand.

* In the negotiations as regards the arrangements to be made for the cremation of the body of Shri Vithalbhai Patel who had died abroad.

CXIX

Wardha

November 5, 1933

Ba [Kasturba Gandhi] may start on the 13th. After doing Nagpur I have to return to Wardha. So she wants to stay here till then. In Ahmedabad she will stay with Ranchhodbhai [Ranchhodlal Amritlal] or in the red bungalow [Dr Pranjivan Jagjivan Mehta's house near the Ashram, Sabarmati]. What would you suggest? Do what you can about your leg. Do not make unnecessary haste.

CXX

Nagpur

November 9, 1933

I have your letter. You have acted wisely in writing to me frankly. In future also do the same. I expect frankness of you of all persons. I was surprised to find that Dahyabhai became a victim of misunderstanding and got angry. But that is neither here nor there. Perhaps he is not even acquainted with all the facts. I can understand why he took it ill. You try to explain everything to him. If you wish, I will write to him and put him at ease. Let him read this letter if you like.

Ba leaves Wardha on Tuesday. She will halt at Akola for a few hours and then come to Bombay. She is troubled by doubts and anxiety at present. But of her own accord she declared her resolution to go to jail. You encourage her to do so.

Take nutritious diet and make your health as robust as possible. What about your teeth?

Jawaharlal and others are coming to Wardha on Saturday.

We had a fine meeting in Nagpur. The [Harijan] tour has thus begun well. Send me news of the [Vithalbhai's] funeral.

Chanda

November 14, 1933

I have your long letter. You did well to speak your mind. You would only harm yourself if you hide your thoughts from me. We must certainly not remember a man's faults when he is dead, but remember his virtues only. But my absence [at Vithalbhai's funeral in Bombay] has nothing to do with his views on economics or politics. It is not as if I have failed to appreciate his sterling worth. I could not make the trip to Bombay because at present my place can only be in prison or among Harijans. I am out of prison only for the Harijan cause; this is my feeling at heart and not a show put up either for Government or for our own people. I cannot simply take part in any other movement whatever. The people too have grasped this point. If in Bombay I could not have tolerated the restrictions imposed by Government; I could not have had my own way or given you or Dahyabhai a lead. I therefore thought it best to keep away.

Then again there is another element in my mental constitution and it is this. Rasik [Gandhiji's grandson] was on his death-bed in Delhi and would have very much wished I were by his bedside. Yet I did not go; only Ba [Kasturba Gandhi] went. Rasik eventually died but I did not shed a single tear for him. I was at my meals when I received the wire announcing his death. I quietly finished my meal and set to work. There have been many such incidents in my life. I have formulated certain notions about death, and they are being crystallized from day to day. I do not think of death as a terrible event. Marriage can be terrible at times but death never. Have I now resolved your doubts? If I have not, ask me again.

You have given a good description of the funeral. The outburst of popular feeling should be really understood. The people feel not for any individual but for the virtues which they expect in and therefore ascribe to him. Their feeling therefore is pure, and a pointer to the popular awakening and an eye opener for the world. Nobody can have a doubt but that Vithalbhai was a lover of liberty.

Ba's resolution has weakened. She wants and also does not want to court imprisonment. Deep down in her heart she knows it is her duty to do so, but she does not like to go to prison so long as I am out of it. I do not insist on her going either and have left her to do as she wishes. My point was that you should create in her the enthusiasm to do her duty, for she loves you and believes in you. If I speak to Ba about this, it is likely to be construed as something like a peremptory direction which might crush her spirit. So I say nothing. And my silence on the point is understood by Ba to be a sure sign of my expectation that she must go to prison.

Do not make haste to court imprisonment so long as you have not completed the dental and other treatment.

CXXII

Chikhaldā

November 19, 1933

You do well to give a full expression to your own feelings as well as the feelings of your relatives in your letters. I could not bear it if either Dahyabhai or Gordhanbhai at all misunderstood my attitude.

I do not think it is necessary for me to write to the press. I cannot rush to the press every time that I find that newspapermen have not understood me or are bent on spreading misunderstanding. Even so I will write if you

and Dahyabhai wish. There is considerable truth in what he says. One can point the accusing finger at other public men, for none is blameless. But my refusal to attend the funeral has nothing to do with Vithalbhais short-comings. He was certainly entitled to the same marks of respect as has been accorded to other leaders. His self-sacrifice, diligence, ability and loyalty [to Congress] were second to none.

Your generosity is a revelation to me. But it is not peculiar to you. I have seen it in many other women. They are always ready to forgive and forget the ill-treatment they have received. This virtue is an ornament for woman-kind, but it has been abused by men. This is however a digression.

By the by may I take pride in the fine part you are playing just now?

CXXIII

Kadkha

4 a.m. before prayer
January 2, 1934

Now that you are in prison once again, I do not know if you will be allowed to write to me direct. I do get news of you from father but that is not enough for my satisfaction. Write to me if you can. Keep body and mind in good trim. I am doing well. I write a long letter to Ba every week.

Address your letters to Wardha.

[This was sent to Belgam prison.]

CXXIV

July 23, 1934

Go on writing to me regularly as at present, but do not expect any letters from me in return. Mahadev is with me now and writes some letters for me, thus giving me relief. I have not to write even to Sardar Saheb [father]. I too believe as you do that the fine climate there is the best of medicines for you.

Perhaps we shall now meet soon.

CXXV

August 25, 1934

I read the couple of lines in your hand. It is quite proper that you do not write to me for the present. Do not neglect but fully recover your health. Do write if there is anything important of which I should be informed. You need not spare me now.

CXXVI

Wardha

October 31, 1935

How is it that you fall ill now and then? Is this your idea of filial piety that when father falls ill, you should fall ill also? When his parents were unable to walk, Shraavan so strengthened his own body that with the help of a carrying pole he carried them on his own shoulders and took them on a pilgrimage of holy places. His daughter took care of her own health and served King Lear. Why should you be prematurely old and harbour one ailment after another? You should find out the cause of trouble, deal with it effectively and develop a fine constitution.

[This and the following two letters were sent to Bombay.]

CXXVII

Wardha

November 12, 1935

Read out the letter on the reverse to father. I hear that all are pleased with the manner in which Jawaharlal has conducted himself.

I hope father* is all right and making the doctors attending on him laugh at his jokes.

CXXVIII

Dera Ismailkhan

October 28, 1938

It is after a long time that you have had to write me a letter. It is pretty full of useful information. I believed in the correctness of your report that liquor was served at dinner to the trainees at the police training school Nasik and have written a note [in *Harijan*] on the subject. Talk to Kher or Munshi about this if you happen to meet them. If the officer class there is found to be indifferent as regards prohibition, the ministers should make a strong representation to the Governor.

As regards the lands [of Satyagrahi peasants confiscated and sold by the British Government during the national struggle] I had written before I heard from father. Send me a copy of the debate in the Provincial Assembly on this subject.

I never say that nothing can be done about obscene literature, but I do think so. I am afraid the people

* The Sardar had then undergone an operation for trouble in the nose.

like such dirt and hence it cannot be summarily dealt with. It will vanish only when writers themselves have a horror for it. I do believe that such writing should be stopped by legislation if possible. But remember that it is one thing to compel students to read such stuff and quite another for it to appear in newspapers.

The Satyagraha struggle in Rajkot is a remarkable movement indeed and if sustained till the end is bound to be successful in achieving its aim. Father's* attitude on Travancore is correct. Never mind if he has called Ramachandran, although my statement† was published before I received father's letter. It was quite necessary to issue that statement. There is now no question of going to Travancore for the present.

I hope to reach Wardha about the 15th. My North-West Frontier tour will be finished on the 9th.

I am aware of what is going on about Subhash Babu [Bose]. I therefore did refer to the subject at the Working Committee meeting. But father was of the opinion that we should wait till Jawaharlal was back in India. So I dropped the subject. There is bound to be difficulty this year about the election of the President [of Congress]. Ask father to consider the suggestion I have thrown out in *Harijan*. I hold that it will be fraught with danger to let thing drift.

I have kept fine health during this tour. Father should visit this province in company with Maulana [Azad].

* The Diwan invited the Sardar to visit the state. He replied that he would come if he was allowed to meet the Satyagrahis in prison.

† Referring to students' disturbances and advising adherence to non-violence in thought, word and deed and even suspension of the movement if forces of violence could not be checked.

CXXIX

Segaon [Wardha]
November 28, 1938

Your letter. I had not expected you to write while you are so busy [with the Satyagraha struggle in Rajkot]. I admire your exploits from this distance. You are in great good luck. I never doubted your courage, but you should not go to jail for that is up to the local workers.

[This and the following letter were sent to Rajkot.]

CXXX

Segaon [Wardha]
December 5, 1938

I have your fine description [of events in Rajkot]. Your work is beyond all praise. Anoint oil on the parts of the body cracked on account of cold. A soldier who fails to keep himself fit makes himself liable to punishment and that is as it should be.

If the people have learnt the lesson of non-violence and suffer assaults etc. without retaliation, they must remain ever undefeated.

Mahadev is here and all right. He deliberately writes very little [as he is suffering from hypertension]. He has written more in the current issue of *Harijan*, but I will see that that does not happen every time. It will be best if he has no responsibilities at all to shoulder.

CXXXI

Segaon [Wardha]
December 22, 1938

It is well that you and Mridula have met [in prison]. I have your two letters. Take proper rest. It is very good of you to spin. Let me know about diet, weight etc. if you are allowed to write about it. How does Mridula occupy herself?

Mahadev has gone to Calcutta for four days in order to inspect a *goshala* there, and will probably be back on the 24th. Ba has not still been permitted [by me] to go to Rajkot [for Satyagraha]. She is going to the girls' Gurukul [residential school] in Dehra Dun.

I leave for Bardoli on the first.

[This and the following three letters were sent to prisons in Rajkot State.]

CXXXII

Segaon [Wardha]
February 16, 1939

I have all your letters. The way you have conducted yourself* has filled me with joy. Nowhere have you been at fault. I see that you have properly understood the science of Satyagraha, and so am free from anxiety.

* Manibahen was kept with Kasturba for a day and then removed to Rajkot prison. There she refused to take any food so long as she or some other political prisoner who could nurse Ba in her illness was not permitted to stay with her. Ba was meanwhile taken to Tramba village. Manibahen too was taken to Tramba on the third day and broke her fast there with food served to her by Ba. Upon her arrest Mridula [Sarabhai] too was brought to Tramba. Thus there were three of them there.

CXXXIII

Segaon [Wardha]
February 18, 1939

It is a mercy that you two are there to keep Ba company. I would be better pleased if you were kept in the same place as all other prisoners. But God's will be done.

It is not for you, prisoners, to worry about Subhash Babu and all that. I will act as God guides me.

CXXXIV

Rajkot
March 5, 1939

Why are you troubled? Is it for the first time that you have had such an experience? In this matter you have made greater progress than I had expected. I have come here on my own initiative, thinking it to be my duty and under the guidance of God. Do not worry. At present I do not write any letters except one to Ba and this one to you.

CXXXV

Sevagram [Wardha]
May 4, 1940

The figures you have sent are excellent. It would be better for you to spin than to write me letters. How is father?

[This and the following letter were sent to Bombay.]

CXXXVI

Sevagram [Wardha]
June 13, 1940

Bring an alarm time-piece for Balvantsinh when you come here.

CXXXVII

Sevagram [Wardha]

May 7, 1941

Nandubahen [Kanuga] complained about you. You spoil your health by your obstinacy, and do not take proper food. This is no good sign. A Satyagrahi ought to keep herself absolutely fit. So I wish you would take proper care of your health.

My blessings to all your fellow prisoners. I do get news of your work.

Ba is in Delhi. Her health seems to have deteriorated.

[This and the following letter were sent to Yeravda prison.]

CXXXVIII

Sevagram [Wardha]

May 19, 1941

I got your letter today. I hope you will get this while you are still in jail. I sent one letter for you to Dahyabhai. I was very pleased to find you have kept good health.

After release you may stay in Bombay for a few days if you like and then make it a point to meet me here. Mridula [Sarabhai] and Gulzarilal [Nanda] are here to make a report about Ahmedabad [riots]. It is not for you or father, prisoners both, to bother about it. There is no cause for anxiety about Jamnalalji. Manu [Professor Jayashanker Pitambar Trivedi's son] is all right. Ba will leave Delhi for here in a few days; Lilavati [Ashar] is with her.

CXXXIX

Sevagram [Wardha]
May 20, 1941

I wrote you a letter which you must have received in prison. This is a reply to your letter. I got it yesterday and could read it only at night.

I am not prepared to believe as you do that the riots in Ahmedabad would not have broken out if I had been there. No one at present seems to be capable of exercising any such healthy influence. I go where God leads me and He has chosen to place me here. I know there are many villages in Gujarat where I could have lived.

Manubhai is bearing the loss of his father with great patience. All members of the family attended prayer yesterday.

Ba is at present down with pneumonia in Delhi; but I am told there is no cause for anxiety. I sent Lilavati there yesterday. Janakibahen [Bajaj] is very well indeed. I wonder how Nandubahen said that she was unwell. She takes walks as she never did before and is able to take substantial meals.

Mirabahen is in Chorvad for the summer. Durgabahen [Mrs Mahadev Desai] is improving.

I wish you came and stayed with me for a couple of days after you have put things there in good order. [This and the following three letters were sent to Bombay.]

CXL

Sevagram [Wardha]
August 11, 1941

Kishorlal [Mashruwala] replied to your last letter to me. How was Bhanumati [Dahyabhai's wife] involved in such trouble? What do doctors say in the matter? Her baby is not likely to live, and will perhaps be a weakling if it lives.

I hope father received my letters. I took special care that he got them soon.

Do not worry at all. It can never be one's duty to go to jail on all possible occasions. You are doing father's* work though you are outside prison. For you to go to jail now would only be false self-complacency. I will not stand in your way for a single moment when the time for it arrives. Those Gujaratis who are capable of work should carry on for the present.

Send me five pounds of good dried figs.

I got the grammar.

I hope Mahadev [Desai] is now there. What is the total amount of collections?

CXLI

Sevagram [Wardha]
August 31, 1941

I did not write to you intentionally. I do not want to send you to jail for the present. I will surely send you when the time comes. You are working even out of prison. The time when you must go to jail is bound to come. For the present render service with a peaceful mind and improve your health.

* Collecting subscriptions for flood relief in Gujarat.

CXLII

Sevagram [Wardha]

September 3, 1941

I have your letter. You have done well to give me full details [about father's health]. I have sent Dr Jassawala's letter yesterday. I strongly recommend that father should be under his treatment for the present. Treatment received after the time for it has passed may serve no useful purpose. I at any rate think that you should consult Dr Nathubhai [Patel] also.

CXLIII

[Mahabaleshvar]

February 27, 1945

Dahyabhai writes to say that you will be released tomorrow and that your health is none too good. Do come and see me if possible. If you cannot come, write a detailed letter. I would very much like to see you, as a long time has passed since we met last.

CXLIV

[Mahabaleshvar]

April 22, 1945

Your good letter. I am certain that father will get milk etc. [in Ahmednagar Fort prison]. So there is no cause whatever for anxiety.

You should fully recoup your health. I very much doubt if the fasts you undertake now and then are necessary. I have not discussed this point with you, but that is how I feel.

Remember that you are to come here after you have done Ahmedabad.

[This and the following letter were sent to Ahmedabad.]

Mahabaleshvar

April 27, 1945

As for fasts, I have undertaken more of them than any one else in our group. In South Africa I seized any and every occasion for the purpose. For a year and more I took only one meal a day. But I am of the opinion that moderation in eating is a severer ordeal than fasting. There may be many occasions for a fast, but the death of a relative is certainly not one of them. If fasting is in order as regards death, is it not so in the case of a birth? I fasted even thus but gave it up on maturer consideration. From this you can judge the correctness or otherwise of your fasts. The human body is the temple of God, and should be maintained as such and such only.

I appreciate your orderly neatness for which Motilalji [Nehru] ranked you first. But you should be generous to co-workers. If you are not thus generous, you fail in your duty to your neighbours. Then again you take it that it is your own fault. You may do so either to stick to the fault or to shake yourself free from it. Don't you wish to overcome your weakness? You infect others with your own neatness, and by all means keep it up. You should act as I do and keep your own part of the world clean. You should have learnt this lesson in jail. Have you not seen how generous Mahadev used to be? Why not take a tip from his life?

Do come here, but do not come simply to please me. Come only after broadening or in order thus to broaden your outlook. You cannot gain anything by coming here if you are troubled at heart. Let us magnify the molehills of our faults into mountains and reduce the mountains of others' faults to molehills. Then only can we hope to make a realistic assessment.

If you make it a rule not to keep back anything from others, make a copy of this letter and send it to me, for the lesson it inculcates is fit to be learnt by many of us.

[May 3, 1945]

As regards your fasts I suggest that you undertake them only for reasons of health. As you do so, you will make a discovery of yourself, profit by it spiritually too and be emancipated from superstition or show. It is absurd to think that we should at least fast in memory of Ba or Mahadev if we cannot do anything more. They would surely be distressed at this if they knew it. When we lose a near and dear one, we should do something difficult and at the same time dear to them. That is to say, let us cultivate a sweetness of temper like Mahadev's or simple faith like that of Ba [Kasturba]. This is only by way of illustration. If only we realize that the body is the temple of God or rather the instrument of God-realization, all will be well with us. Then there will be no such hypocrisy as now passes for religion. I take the trouble to explain this to you because you are simple in habits, have resisted many a temptation and would be much more useful if you could lift yourself still higher.

And that is why I wish you were here or at the Sevagram Ashram. Father too would like it; hence my attempt to attract you. If father was out of prison, neither he nor I would desire that even for a single moment you should be anywhere else but by his side. If you are with me, you will grow in tolerance, for then you can cultivate the spirit of detachment in spite of having to work in company with many people with different temperaments. We should observe others, assimilate their good points and bear with their weak points, for that is the best way of curing them. So come soon.

You did well to send me news of Dr Kanuga, Nandubahen and Shri [Jivanlal] Divan.

It is now morning. I am about to switch the light off and so I will close.

[This and the following three letters were sent to Bombay.]

CXLVII

Mahabaleshvar
May 5, 1945

You did well to write. I could not have received the news in your letter from any one else. The enclosed note is for Kanjibhai [Kanaiyalal Nanabhai Desai]. I will not say anything more as you are coming over here.

CXLVIII

[Sevagram]
July 25, 1945

You do not now write to me. And I should not expect you to write either.

I write this to send you on an errand. There is an unhappy girl called Pushpa in Bombay. I have asked her to see me. Meanwhile you please call on her at Manilal Popatlal Doshi's house in Navi Hanuman Galli.

CXLIX

Poona
November 27, 1945

Your two letters. I want legal opinion on a point connected with the Yeravda pact. [Mangaldas] Pakvasa should consider it and consult counsel if necessary. The ten years' limit is mentioned in the pact but has not found a place in the 1935 Act. Is it or is it not enforceable in law? My own view is clear that the law would not help. There is no doubt however that the question can be raised politically. We must of course consider whether it would be advisable to do so now. But we will discuss this when father is here.

CL

[Valmiki Mandir, New Delhi]
[Early in 1946]

I asked you to get a copy made by Kanu [Gandhi]. I pass your copy only because it is yours though it is defective. For instance we must always keep a margin. If you are in the habit of observing letters we receive, you will have seen that there always is a margin. Nothing else is to be copied now. You should bear this in mind in future.

[Written on a Monday, the day of silence.]

CLI

Sevagram
February 14, 1946

Your letter full of information. 'The glamour of legislatures' [an article with this caption in *Harijanbandhu* of February 10], though written in Gujarati, is really meant for the whole country. I return the press cutting.

I will not write more as we shall meet soon.

CLII

July 18, 1947

Have a look at the enclosed letter. Show it to father if you like. Drop the matter if he has no time. Let events take their own course.

Return Akbar [Chavda]'s letter.

CLIII

July 31, 1947
4:30 on train

Read the enclosed [regarding refugees] and do the needful. Thanks to your incomparable filial devotion you have got a magnificent opportunity to be of service to the nation. Utilize it as you wish.

Is there anything in the letter* I wrote about the Khaksars?

[This and all the following letters were sent to 1, Aurangzeb Road, New Delhi.]

CLIV

Sodepur
August 11, 1947

I think the enclosed should be signed by Dahyabhai. I know nothing about this account. Perhaps it should be signed by some one on behalf of the Ashram. Look into the matter and let me know what is to be done.

I hope the Sardar received my† letter about Kashmir. I have sent a longer statement, which is for the Sardar as well as Jawaharlal.

The situation here is full of complications, but I hope it will be adequately dealt with. From my speech delivered yesterday you will find why I had to prolong my stay here.

The Khaksars met me in Lahore. I hope you got the note I gave them. Is there any respite from work?

* See CCLXXXI on page 215 in *Letters to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel* (Navajivan).

† See CCLXXXV on page 218 in *Letters to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*.

CLV

Calcutta
August 13, 1947

I sent back the papers for signature just as they had been received as I understood that my signature was not required.

We are in for a bad time in the absence of timely rains. This independence is costing us pretty dear.

I am afraid the Sardar may suffer a breakdown on account of overwork.

Read the enclosed and ask the Sardar to read it too. It is a crime to take even a single minute of his time if it is not absolutely necessary.

CLVI

[Calcutta]
August 26, 1947

I pity you. But the pity is misplaced. You are fit to bear your burden. So keep on bearing it and lighten that of the Sardar.

It is only from you that I heard that [C. P.] Ramaswami was badly hurt. Some one wrote to me to that effect but I did not believe it. I did not write at all, but shall write now.

CLVII

[Calcutta]
August 30, 1947

Arrange to send the enclosed letters to the addressees. I hope I am not laying on you an unbearable burden. It is only thus that I can arrange for them to be delivered in time. The letter to Jawaharlalji should be read by the Sardar and then sent as soon as possible.

CLVIII

[Calcutta]

September 1, 1947

It is a good thing that you do not feel overburdened. There should be some one with the Sardar who is cent per cent fit.

Get him to read my letter when he is free.

There were some unexpected events here last night. The man who was alleged to have been stabbed was not stabbed at all. There was however a fight in which he fell to the ground. I hope to get more news soon.

I bathed and then started to write this.

CLIX

[Calcutta]

September 2, 1947

Dispose of the enclosed papers. You will quickly understand why I decided to fast. Rajaji strove hard with me, but the more he argued, the more was I confirmed in my own decision. Was the peace that prevailed for a fortnight here only a flash in the pan?

CLX

[September 8, 1947]

I start for Delhi today by the Express. Hence this short letter. Your objections will not hold water. I simply had to go to Delhi after such importunities. But when I am there the Sardar and Jawahar will decide what I am to do. Let them put me up where they like. Not that Birla House is ruled out, but I would prefer to stay at the Bhangi Colony, the possible absence of amenities there notwithstanding. And it would also be a test for the Sardar's ability to keep peace and order in the city. Never mind if no one can come to me at night.

Inform Brajkrishna.

CLXI

[Birla House, New Delhi]
September 29, 1947

I enclose Narandas Gandhi's letter. I have asked him by wire not to take action till he hears from me. But ask the Sardar and let me know what is to be done.

I also enclose [Anantrai] Pattani's wire. What should be done about it? I am under the impression that whatever Samaldas [Gandhi] does, he does with the Sardar's consent.

Send back both the enclosures.

CLXII

N[ew] D[elhi]

Sevakram the bearer is a devoted worker in Harijan service. All Harijans in Sindh should be brought to India and rehabilitated in Bombay State, Kachchha, Saurashtra, Gujarat, Udaipur, Jodhpur and other places. Let the Sardar do his best in the matter.

CLXIII

[Slip on the day of silence.]

January 13, 1948

I had a talk with the Sardar. So not now. I have to meet the visitors from Bahawalpur. I will call you later. I do not know how my misunderstanding arose. But I will correct it.

APPENDIX

Gandhiji to Shri Dahyabhai Patel

(1)

[Yeravda Mandir]
November 19, 1932

We get daily news about your health. Illness comes to us as a test. Bhai Karamchand writes that you are bearing it patiently. That is only what is to be expected of you. Don't worry about Manibahen.

God will surely be your shepherd.

[This and the following seven letters were sent to Bombay during Shri Dahyabhai's illness.]

(2)

Y. M.
November 22, 1932

Devadas gives me news of you and says that you would be happy if you heard from us every day. I have deliberately refrained from writing every day although we never cease to think kindly thoughts of you. But now I will also write every day.

(3)

Yeravda Jail
November 25, 1932

Shri Natarajan writes:

'I have every hope and pray that Dahyabhai will pull through the remaining few days without complication. His age and active habits and his naturally strong constitution are most potent assets. He is a favourite at our home, having been with us nearly all the time when he was living with his uncle. He calls Kamakoti Akka like her brothers and sister, and is always a welcome visitor without any ceremony.'

This is an extract from his reply to my letter. Karamchand's letter was received yesterday rather late, and I could not write, being engaged in a talk with visitors about Harijan work. You are gradually shaking off your fever. Provided that the body is given proper rest and rules about food and drink are duly observed, an attack of enteric fever is beneficial in the end, for it removes all poisonous stuff from the body. -

I hope you are in good spirits.

(4)

Y. M.

November 26, 1932

It is very likely that you will now have regular letters from Manibahen. That means you will have additional material for reading or for having it read to you. And as you are allowed to do more reading, the time will soon come when you will be permitted also to leave the bed. But don't be impatient for it. You are surely aware that it is possible for one to be of service to others even in bed.

(5)

Y. M.

November 27, 1932

Today's news about your health is better than usual.

As I said yesterday, a patient can be of service to others even in bed. He can utilize the time by meditating on God and by creating an atmosphere of love all around himself by curbing his own anger and impatience with those who are in attendance on him.

I know of two such ideal patients, one in France and the other in India. There was an eighteen year old girl in France who conducted herself so lovingly during her fatal illness that she has now been canonized after her death.

And near Porbandar one Ladha Maharaj was suffering from leprosy. He took up residence in a Shiva temple in Bileshvar where he would recite Ramanama [the name of God] and read the Ramayana. He was cured at last and turned out to be a powerful preacher. I had the privilege to see him and hear him preach.

A devotee of God derives benefit even from illness and is never down-hearted.

(6)

Y. M.

December 17, 1932

You are not still out of the wood, but it is not in your nature to lose heart. You should realize that to get well is something that is in the patient's own hands. He never loses hope and is never impatient. He will suffer bravely so long as it is his lot to suffer and fight on. If you try it, you will find that Ramanama is a more powerful remedy than all diets and drugs put together. Electricity is nothing before it. It will give you rest and energy. It seems as if you would like to write letters. Don't do this for the present. Your whole duty at present lies in taking perfect rest. If you wish, you can send a word of cheer to us or to friends, but you must not waste a thought on office work. I hope you will follow this piece of advice. God will surely look to your welfare.

[This was written with the left hand.]

(7)

Y. M.

December 20, 1932

I had intended to write a longish letter but now there is no time for it. Get well quick. Ba, Velanbahen [Shrimati Lakshmidas Purushottam Ashar] and Bal [Kalelkar] are seated before me.

(8)

Y. M.
December 22, 1932

The news I get about you is so good that I need not write anything. Give no thought either to your illness or to the office work. If possible, keep God alone in mind and place yourself in His hands. Don't you remember Keshavlal Bhatt's hymn beginning with the words:

* भारी नाड तभारे हाथे, हरि, संभाळजे रे.

* 'O God, place your hand on my pulse and take care of me.'

(9)

Parnakuti,
Poona
August 26, 1933

It is very strange that I have no letter from you at all. When did you go to Nasik last? Let me have all the news about the Sardar. What about Manibahen? Who are her companions in prison? How is she? Had anybody been to see her? How are you getting on? I am picking up strength day by day and there is no reason for anxiety on that score.

(10)

Chanda
November 14, 1933

I understand your feeling of disappointment [at my absence from Bombay during Shri Vithalbhai Patel's funeral ceremonies]. But I am helpless in the matter. Just as a soldier is no good without his sword, so I would be no good without the weapon of civil disobedience. Then again my life has been built on the foundation of resolutions. So for the present I can be only in jail or in Harijan service. I simply cannot attend to anything else.

Vithalbhai had the defects of his qualities, but after his death they need not be remembered. What we have now to treasure is his many qualities. You are perhaps not aware that I wrote a letter to him and he sent me a sweet reply. My personal relations with him subsisted till the end, and were never disturbed by our differences of opinion. Manibahen writes that you as well as some others have taken some little offence; hence this letter.

I am worried as father is at present in prison. If he were out, I would leave it to him to remove such misunderstanding. If you are not satisfied with my explanation, do not hesitate to write fully and frankly. Indeed in such a case it would be your duty to strive with me.

(11)

Y. M.

[November 1933]

I had your letter, but could not send a reply soon as I was rather busy. For the present at any rate you should meet Manibahen in prison every time. When you do, tell her that not a day passes when I do not think of her. But I am not anxious as I have full faith in her power of endurance and firmness.

When you meet father, tell him that I have written to him every week without fail.

I have read uncle [Shri Vithalbhai Patel]'s will. There might be difficulty in getting a probate for it in Bombay. But I am of opinion that we should not move in the matter at all and let everything that he has left pass into Subhash Bose's hands. I believe he will use it for only public purposes.

Let me have news of Baba's health. I am fine.

[Calicut]

January 13, 1934

I have your letter. That I should have received three letters almost at the same time looks like the working of telepathy.

Mahadev is undergoing a severe trial. He might get slightly ill but that is all. I had sent a long message as a reply to his letter to Jivanji. But when you next write to him, write as follows:

“Whilst I need not receive Mahadev’s letters, he must not think that I cannot have time to read them. The Gita portion was technical and I felt that there was no immediate need for me to give my opinion. And the fact is that I have so little regard for my own technical meaning of the verses. Where the meaning does not fit in with my interpretation as a whole, I should naturally have to examine it but speaking in general terms one meaning would be to me as good as any other and therefore I should readily accept Mahadev’s considered interpretation in preference to my own which after all must have been an adoption of some single author’s version. He should therefore prosecute his researches and his work of translation without waiting for my opinion. When it is all completed of course I shall have ample time, God willing, to go through it.

“I take it that Mahadev has read B. Shaw’s ‘Adventures of the Black Girl in her search for God’. I am sending him today ‘Adventures of the White Girl in her search for God’ by Maxwell. If he gets it safely, he will acknowledge it in his next letter.”*

When I reach Belgam, I will certainly try to see Mani and Mahadev.

* This letter was meant for the Sardar who was then in Nasik prison.

(13)

Karachi

July 11, 1934

Let me have detailed news about *Vallabhbhai's health by return of post. Ask *Manibahen to write to me in detail about her health. *Mahadev of course will bring all news.

I hope you are doing well.

(14)

Sevagram [Wardha]

March 9, 1941

Send or hand over the enclosed to the Sardar, if he is permitted to receive it.

Remember that I expect you and Shantikumar [Narottam Morarji] to raise twenty lakhs of rupees [for the All-India Spinners' Association].

If you meet Manibahen, tell her she should do her best to improve her health.

(15)

Sevagram [Wardha]

May 7, 1941

Dispose of the enclosed letters if possible. Send the letter to Mahadev as it is, or else send him only a copy.

Ask Baba to write to me a couple of lines.

* They were released from prison about the same time.

(16)

Sevagram
August 15, 1944

I was pressed to stay with you but I would not yield. I cannot give up Birla House, simply because some one does not like that I should be there. I would stay with you with pleasure. As it happens, I have never seen your house. But I can only do whatever is proper for me to do.

I hope to reach Bombay on Saturday, and may return the next day.

(17)

Sevagram
October 19, 1944

I have your letter. I think that if the Belgam prison authorities have said that they will search the persons of visitors, we should give up the idea of meeting friends or relations confined therein. But if they have not said so, we should go for an interview and refuse to submit to any search.

God will look after Manibahen.

This is written in great haste.

Gandhiji to Shri Dakhyabhai Patel's little son

(1)

Wardha
October 7, 1933

I have your letter. Learn to write an excellent hand. Do come here with auntie [Manibahen]. I shall be glad to meet you, and you will have the opportunity to play with other children of the same age as yourself. Do you write to grandpa?

(2)

Borsad
May 31, 1935

Manibahen tells me today is your birthday anniversary. How are you going to pass the day? Won't you do some good deed? If yes, ask Manibahen what to do. You will of course grow bigger and bigger and I hope you will also become better and better.

(3)

Segaon [Wardha]
June 3, 1938

I received your letter today. How many years old are you now? How did you forget to mention this? And if you ask for a blessing, don't you think you too should give me something in return? What will that be? What new activity will you begin in the new year?

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