

selflessly was but poor. The officials, too, were not quite satisfied with him as he said nothing to please them and not unoften said hard things like this: "Among the many misdeeds of the British rule in India, history will look upon the Act depriving whole nation of arms as the blackest. If we want to learn the use of arms, here is a golden opportunity."

The strain of the recruiting campaign told heavily upon his frail body. A slight attack of dysentery, under pressure of work lack of rest and proper nourishment, soon assumed an acute form. He did not mind it and went about with his recruiting work as if nothing was wrong with him. But even a Mahatma cannot, with impunity, disobey the laws of nature. Gandhi had to pay a heavy penalty for his delinquency; for months he was confined to bed and seemed to be at death's door. Yet, he did not take medicine or change his diet, except that under pressure from Dr. Dalal and Kasturibai, he which he regards if not the letter, of he has not yet forg



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REBELS OR REDEEMERS?

G A N D H I

BY

P. BRIJNATH SHARGA.

Vol. I

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REBELS OR REDEEMERS ?



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BY

P. BRIJNATH SHARGA

PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

In the following pages we present the life and work of Mahatma* Gandhi, the greatest Rebel and yet the greatest Redeemer the modern age has produced.

Mahatma Gandhi's personality is one which is concerned, like Mussolini or Kemal, with the uplifting of a particular nation at a particular time but embraces in its sphere of activities the entire humanity and all time (देशकालातीत्). The uniqueness and the novelty of his method of work are sometimes puzzling to an average man, specially out of India, who finds it difficult to understand, more so to appreciate, the same. Consequently we had to give him two volumes, each fatter than any of the three previous books; yet it was with difficulty that his eventful life could be compressed into them. We are confident that the readers will appreciate this departure.

* With apologies to the subject and the author.

The writer, P. Brijnath Sharga, hardly needs an introduction. He is a distinguished publicist of these provinces and has made a comparative study of the various methods of public work including that of Mahatma Gandhi and was thus quite competent to write on this subject.

This book meets a definite want, as Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth*, stops with his identification with the Indian National Congress over a decade ago ; this work brings the narrative right down to the day of publication and paints a vivid picture of the epic struggle in South Africa which the former omits.

We trust these volumes will be read with advantage as well abroad as in India.



PREFACE.

ॐ भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः । भद्रं पश्येमाक्षिभिर्यजत्राः ॥

May we, O Bright Ones, with our ears hear the pure !

May we, O Adorable Ones, with our eyes see the pure !

This is an attempt to present, within the restricted space allowed by the publishers, the material spread over numerous books and periodicals, covering more than twelve thousand pages. Consequently it is impossible to claim that this is a full and true picture of the life and thought of Gandhi who, like nature, always eludes the pen.

This book does not lack in originality either. My own contribution, writ large over these pages, is the insipid presentation of a highly interesting subject. When I say this, I stand at no ceremonies. I was fully conscious of my unworthiness to deal with the subject of these pages, but I dared not disappoint my friend, the Managing Director. Gandhi is the living interpretation of Hinduism, which, unlike all "founded" religions, does not impose a dogma, cult or ritual on an extraneous authority ; it is an independent functioning of the mind ; unique and autonomous in character ; something inward and personal which unifies all values and organises all experience. Gandhi's motives, methods and ideals in daily life are determined by his ultimate beliefs.

Religion, to him, is the reaction of his whole being to the whole reality, the search for Truth by the totality of his faculties and energies.

Before I release these pages for publication, I ought to apologise to the Indian reader for having dropped the popular appellation, *Mahatma*, from Gandhi's name. I have done so because I set a higher value to Gandhi's gratitude I have earned by omitting the prefix he dislikes, than to popular opprobrium I am likely to incur. Other appellations are too common-place to be used with Gandhi's name.

I have, throughout the book, acknowledged, so far as possible, the quotations given from other works. But if inadvertently I have omitted to acknowledge any extract I tender my apology to the author concerned. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the authors of the books and editors of the journals mentioned under the caption "Bibliography."

My thanks are also due to numerous friends who kindly lent me books and periodicals for the preparation of this narrative. Among them, I must mention Shri Narayan Swami, the chief disciple of the late Swami Ram Tirtha, Sjts. Mukat Behari Lal Bhargava, Shyam Sunder Narayan Tankha and Triloki Singh. Sjt. Bhargava was kind enough to go through the manuscript and the proofs.

LUCKNOW:
The 31. December, 1932.

} **P. Brijnath Sharga.**

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CHAPTER I

ANCESTRY AND EDUCATION (1869-1887)

Practical wisdom characterises the Bania; utility and not idealism guides his actions. The subject of these pages, though belonging to a Bania family, combines in himself idealism of a high order with uncommon practical wisdom—a rare combination indeed ! But it can be traced back, at least partly, to heredity, surroundings and early training.

The Gandhis seem to have been originally grocers; but Uttamchand alias Ota Gandhi, the grandfather of M. K. Gandhi, rose to be the Dewan of Porbandar in Kathiawar. Forced by state intrigues, he left Porbandar and sought refuge in Junagadh, where he saluted the Nawab with his left hand. Asked for an explanation for this apparent discourtesy, which must have annoyed the ruler, Ota said, "The right hand is already pledged

to Porbandar." Karamchand alias Kaba Gandhi was the fifth son of Ota Gandhi, the first by his second wife. He had no education except upto the fifth Gujrati standard. But the lack of education was more than amply made up for by his experience of practical affairs and religious culture, born of frequent visits to temples and listening to religious discourses. Kaba was successively the Dewan of Porbandar, Vankaner and Rajkot. He was, for sometime, member of the Rajasthani Court at Rajkot which settled disputes between the chiefs and their clansmen. Unique independence characterized Kaba. On one occasion he publicly rebuked a British Assistant Political Agent for speaking disparagingly of his Chief. An apology was demanded but refused. Kaba was arrested and kept in custody for some hours. When even this failed to bring an apology, he was released and English prestige had to go unrequited.

Karamchand had lost three wives, the first two having borne him a daughter each. His fourth wife, Putli Bai, was the mother of a daughter and three sons. The youngest of these

was destined to stir the seemingly dead mass of three hundred and fifty million people into new life, to shake to its very foundations, by sheer non-violence, the mightiest organization of force history has witnessed and to re-introduce into political life the strongest religious impetus lying dormant under the surging sea of rising Indian nationalism.

Both Karamchand and Putli Bai were devout Vaishnavas. Ramayana was regularly recited in the family. Putli Bai was deeply religious. She never even thought of taking her meals without her daily prayers. Visiting the Vaishnava temple was one of her daily duties. She always fasted during the four months of the rains, observed other long fasts, like Chandrayana, uninterrupted even by illness. She took hard vows and kept them unflinchingly. Her youngest son was always ready to take a vow with her. Her intelligence, strong common sense and sound knowledge of all matters of state were unequalled among the ladies of the Court. "By intelligence, gentleness and an obvious capacity to suffer," says Hall, "she dominated her children and determined their lives. If Gandhi's *penchant*

for politics came from his father, his religious conscience was an endowment from his mother."*

It was of these parents that Gandhi was born on Sunday, the 2nd October, 1869, at Porbandar, otherwise known as Sudamapuri, the city of Sudama, the great devotee and class-mate of Krishna. Porbandar "is on the sea coast jutting out into the sea and has all the infinite variety and charm of the expanse of ocean around it. Mists of extraordinary beauty constantly rise from the sea and encompass the land. The sea itself is usually a brilliant ultra-marine with liquid green where the shoals lie. The little town rises almost out of the sea and becomes a vision of glory at sunrise and sunset when the slanting rays beat upon it turning its turrets and pinnacles into gold."†

A little over a decade had passed since the first widespread but unorganised and abortive attempt to throw off the foreign yoke and regain independence when Gandhi saw the light of day. The part of the country

* Eminent Asians by Joseph Washington Hall p. 388.

† Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas by C. F. Andrews p. 14.

he was born in had just come in contact with the west, without having changed in the least its own manners and customs. When the unchanging Kathiawad had defied successfully the influence of Islam for centuries, how could it succumb to the new-comer? Gandhi, therefore, grew up in purely Hindu surroundings, which had little connection, if any at all, with the outside world.

When Gandhi was seven, his father migrated to Rajkot, where the child was put to a primary school. Till then, his mother's lap, which he seldom left even for a few hours, was his only school. From the primary school he passed on to the suburban school and thence, at the age of twelve, to the high school. He was a mediocre student doing his lessons often without his mind in them in order to avoid being taken to task; he was very shy and avoided all company. He reached the school punctually and ran back home when it closed. "I literally ran back", says he,* "because I could not bear to talk to any body. I was even afraid lest any one should poke fun at me." Even at this early

* My Experiments With Truth Vol. 1 p. 22.

age his devotion to truth and honesty was marvellous. He never told a lie to his teachers or to his school-mates. In an examination by the Inspector of Schools the teacher prompted him to take hint from his neighbour, but he ignored it and had the unique distinction of being the only boy who had mis-spelt the words given to the class.

Though he was not fond of extra reading, the Shravana Pitribhakti Natak, his father had purchased, intensely interested him and left an indelible impression upon him. The play of Harishchandra, he was permitted to see, made him ponder, "Why should not all be truthful like Harishchandra?"

He was hardly twelve when he showed in him the making of a social revolutionary and religious transcendentalist. He accidentally touched the scavenger; asked by his mother to perform the ablutions of ceremonial cleaning he washed but asked his mother why. Her explanation never satisfied him and he said, "You are entirely wrong in considering physical contact with our faithful servant Uka as sinful."

Gandhi was betrothed thrice, the third

time in his seventh year. In his thirteenth year, he was a full-fledged husband. His father and uncle were both old ; they wanted to have the last best time of their lives ; in order to curtail expenses and have greater *eclat* they decided to marry Gandhi, his elder brother and a cousin at one time. Marriage, at that age, did not mean to Mohandas "anything more than the prospect of good clothes to wear, drum-beating, marriage processions, rich dinner and a strange girl to play with."*

About the time of the marriage he read cheap pamphlets on conjugal love, thrift, child-marriages and other such subjects. "Lifelong faithfulness to the wife inculcated in these booklets as the duty of the husband remained permanently imprinted on my heart."† The idea of reciprocity in faithfulness made him a jealous husband. "Her duty was easily converted into my right to exact faithfulness from her and if it had to be exacted I should be watchfully tenacious of the right. I had absolutely no reason to

* My Experiments With Truth Vol. I. p. 29.

† Ibid

p. 34.

suspect my wife's fidelity but jealousy does not wait for reasons."* He imposed restrictions which were observed simply in the breach. His autocratic ordinances restricting the movements of his girl-wife, Kasturi Bai, made him utterly miserable and laughably ridiculous. The things came to such a pass that the two married children did not speak to each other.

Yet Gandhi was passionately fond of Kasturi Bai. Separation was unbearable. His ambition to equip illiterate Kasturi Bai mentally to the same extent as he was remained unrealised both on account of his lustful love which left him little time for tutoring and Kasturi Bai's independence which resented his efforts to remove her happy ignorance. As regards the crisis of puberty, he was passing through, he says, "If with this devouring passion there had not been in me a burning attachment to duty, I should either have fallen a prey to disease and premature death or have sunk into a burdensome existence."†

Marriage made Gandhi lose one year in

* My Experiments With Truth Vol. I. p. 35.

† Ibid

p. 37.

studies, which was made up by double promotion. Though he was never a brilliant student, his diligence secured for him some prizes and scholarships reserved for the best boys amongst those coming from the Sorath division of Kathiawar. Except for long walks, he never took any exercise or game. "I very jealously guarded my character," he says in his autobiography. "The least little blemish drew tears from my eyes. When I merited or seemed to the teacher to merit a rebuke, it was unbearable to me. I remember having once received corporal punishment. I did not so much mind the punishment as the fact that it was considered my desert. I wept piteously."* In his student days he got the notion, so common among Indian students, that good handwriting was not a necessary part of education.

While at the High School, Gandhi formed an intimate friendship with an undesirable school-fellow with a view to reform him. But as man far more readily takes in vice than virtue, Gandhi fell a prey to his friend's evil ways. This

* My Experiments With Truth p. 42-43.

“friend” convinced him that meat-eating was a panacea for various ills, it made people strong, prevented boils and tumours and drove away the fear of thieves, ghosts and serpents which haunted Gandhi, who would not dare to stir out of doors at night or sleep in the dark. Gandhi “wished to be strong and daring and wanted my countrymen also to be such so that we might defeat the English and make India free.”* Blinded by this frenzy for freedom he took meat but did not relish it. “I had a very bad night after meals,” says he, “A horrible nightmare haunted me. Every time I dropped off to sleep it would seem as though a live goat were bleating inside me and I would jump up full of remorse. But then I would remind myself that meat-eating was a duty and so became more cheerful.”† The friend began preparing meat-delicacies. Secret meat-eating lasted for about a year but not more than half a dozen feasts were enjoyed in all. The knowledge that the discovery of his perversion would deeply shock his parents was all

* My Experiments With Truth p. 57.

† Ibid p. 59.

the time gnawing at Gandhi's heart. He thought that while meat-eating was a duty, deceiving the parents was worse than abstinence from meat. He, therefore, resolved to remain a vegetarian during the life-time of his parents and to take to meat-eating openly after them.

The same friend was responsible for another and a more serious delinquency which had better be told in Gandhi's own words: 'My friend once took me to a brothel. He sent me in with the necessary instructions. It was all pre-arranged. The bill had already been paid. I went into the jaws of sin but God in His infinite mercy protected me against myself. I was almost struck blind and dumb in this den of vice. I sat near her on her bed but I was tongue-tied. She naturally lost patience with me and showed me the door with abuses and insults.'*

About the same time Gandhi and a relative took to smoking. They had no money. They began pilfering cigarette stumps thrown away by Gandhi's uncle. When the stumps did not suffice, coppers stolen from the servant's

* My Experiments With Truth p. 62.

pocket-money supplied cigarettes. Porous stalks of a certain plant also served as cigarettes. But the thought that they could not smoke in their elders' presence was smarting and in sheer disgust they decided to commit suicide. They brought *dhatura* seeds from the jungle, went to the temple, had the *darshan* and then looked for a lonely corner. But it is not so easy for one to take his life. The initial dose griped them sufficiently to cause them to abandon the plan.

At the age of about fifteen, Gandhi stole a bit of gold out of his brother's armlet in order to clear the debt of about Rs. 25, this brother had run into. The debt was cleared but the theft was unbearable to him; he resolved never to steal again and to make a clear confession before his father. He had no courage to speak for fear of causing pain to the old and bed-ridden father. He wrote out the confession and quietly handed it over to the invalid in the bed and sat opposite expecting punishment. "He read it through and pearl-drops trickled down his cheeks wetting the paper. For a moment, he closed his eyes in thought and then tore up the note.

... Those pearl-drops of love cleansed my heart and washed my sin away.”*

When Gandhi was sixteen, his father's case was declared hopeless. Indigenous systems of medicine, the nostrums of the quacks and the skill of the English surgeon all failed to cure his fistula. As the last resort an operation was recommended but abandoned. Gandhi used to nurse him. All his time was divided between the school and attending on his father, in addition to keeping a young wife in hand. Gandhi has never forgiven himself for being on the hymeneal bed when his father expired; he took this as the heaven's rebuke for his carnality. His father had never cared for riches; all he earned was spent on charity so that when he died the family was not adequately provided for. The same year Kasturi Bai bore him a child which hardly breathed for 3 or 4 days.

In 1887, Gandhi passed his Matriculation examination and joined the Samaldas College in Bhavnagar. He found himself entirely at sea and could not follow the professors' lectures, although the professors were first-

* My Experiments With Truth p. 70-71.

rate teachers. At the end of the first term Gandhi returned home sorely disappointed with himself. Mavji Dave, familiarly called Joshiji by the Gandhis, a shrewd and learned Brahman, who was an old friend and adviser of the family, visited the Gandhis about this time and insisted that in order to qualify himself for the hereditary *gaddi* of the Dewan, the young Gandhi should proceed immediately to England to be called to the Bar, as that was the speediest, cheapest and surest road to success. Young Gandhi fell in with the idea but suggested the medical line. His brother interrupted him: "Father never liked it. He had you in mind when he said that we Vaishnavas should have nothing to do with dissection of dead bodies. He intended you for the Bar."* Joshiji also opposed the suggestion, as the way to the Dewanship did not lie through the medical profession. His elder brother and mother were hesitating to send him abroad, he on account of lack of funds and she for fear of her pet losing his religion. Her apprehensions were, however, removed when she consulted

* My Experiments With Truth p. 92.

another old friend of the family, Becharji Swami, a Modh Bania like the Gandhis, before whom Gandhi took the solemn vow to abstain from wine, women and meat.

He was sent to Porbandar to get his uncle's permission and financial assistance from the State, which was then under an Administrator, Mr. Lely, who thought highly of the family. The uncle's permission was easily obtained but Mr. Lely's discourteous behaviour was a rude shock and sore disappointment. An Indian ruler would certainly not have behaved as this Administrator did. A few thousand rupees at that time would have tied young Gandhi down to the chariot-wheel of the British bureaucracy perhaps for all time to come. Once in State service, it would have been hardly possible for him to cultivate the mentality and acquire the personality that have lent a thousand tongues to India's silent suffering:

His brother found the money somehow. After a hearty send-off from his High School, Gandhi left for Bombay with his brother, leaving his wife with a babe in arms in the care of his mother. The sea was rough in

June and July and a steamer had just sunk in a gale. His brother, therefore, decided that he should sail in November, left him with a friend and returned to resume his duty at Rajkot. The money for his travelling was kept with a brother-in-law.

The news of his impending departure for England agitated the Modh Banias. A *panchayat* was held, Gandhi was summoned and advised by the headman, who was a distant relation and on good terms with his father, not to cross the sea. Coward as Gandhi then was, he suddenly mustered up courage to flout the *biradari*, with the result that he was outcasted immediately and whosoever helped him or went to the dock to see him off was declared liable to fine. His brother, however, was not influenced by this resolution.

In the meantime, Gandhi heard that Sjt. Tryambakrai Mazumdar, an elderly vakil of Junagadh, was sailing for England early in September and asked his brother's permission to accompany him. This was readily given but for fear of the caste resolution, the brother-in-law refused to hand over the money. A friend of the family was

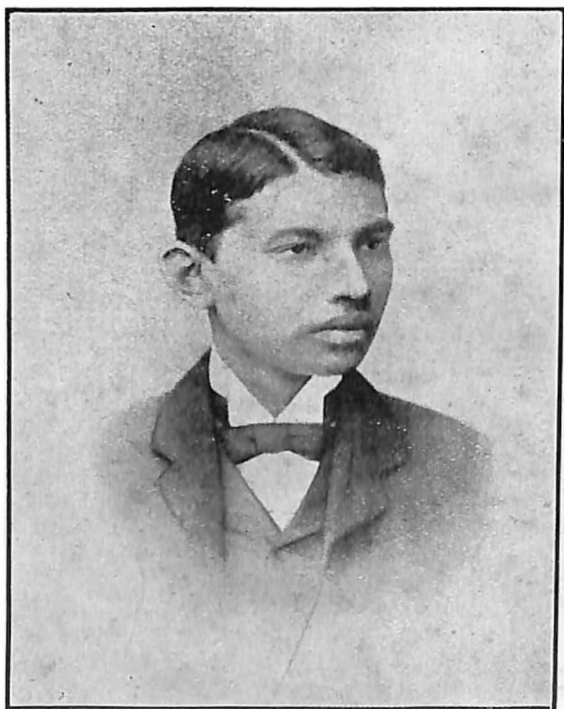
good enough to lend him money, with which Gandhi purchased the passage and equipped himself. On the 4th September, 1887, he sailed for England. Little did he then dream that over four decades later, he would have to go again to England as the sole representative of the Congress, the embodiment of the voice of thirty-five crores of his countrymen, to claim from England their birth-right of freedom.

CHAPTER II

STUDENT LIFE IN ENGLAND (1887-1891)

The voyage was uneventful, except for the fact that his natural shyness and inability to talk in English with fluency and ease, kept Gandhi constantly confined to his cabin. He never took his meals at table as he was innocent of the use of knives and forks and had not the boldness to enquire what dishes were free of meat. The only persons he spoke to were Sjt. Mazumdar and an English passenger who had succeeded in drawing him into conversation. In spite of this friend apprehending that the cold of the Bay of Biscay would force Gandhi to take meat, he did not feel the need for it.

On a Saturday, towards the end of September, Gandhi, clad in spotless white flannel, landed at Southampton and leaving his kit with an agent of Grindlay and Co.,



STUDENT.

proceeded to London and put up in Victoria Hotel. The shame of being the only person in white clothes was too much for him and the fact that his kit would not arrive on Sunday exasperated him.

Finding the hotel to be a trying affair and very expensive, he shifted on Monday to rooms rented by a friend for him and Sjt. Mazumdar. In spite of the shockingly heavy bill of the hotel, Gandhi had practically starved. He was ill at ease even in the new rooms and yearned for his mother. Ignorance of English etiquette and his vegetarian vow added to his inconvenience.

Dr. Mehta, to whom he had a note of introduction, advised him to live with a family in order to gain experience of English life and customs and removed him to a friend's rooms in Richmond. This friend initiated Gandhi into English ways and manners and accustomed him to talking English. He argued continually in favour of meat-eating. On one occasion he read to Gandhi Bentham's Theory of Utility, the language of which Gandhi found too difficult to understand. The future expounder of the subtle philosophy of

satyagraha replied, "Pray excuse me. These abstruse things are beyond me. I admit it is necessary to eat meat. But I cannot break my vow. I cannot argue about it. I am sure I cannot meet you in argument. But please give me up as foolish or obstinate. I appreciate your love for me and I know you to be my well-wisher. I also know that you are telling me again and again about this because you feel for me. But I am helpless. A vow is a vow. It cannot be broken."* The friend never argued again.

After a month, he removed to an Anglo-Indian family in West Kensington but though the land-lady, a widow, looked after him properly and knew of his vow, here, too, he had practically to starve on account of his shyness to ask for more than was placed before him. Here he made his first acquaintance with newspapers and cultivated a liking for them. Regular studies had not yet started; he spent his time mostly in reading newspapers and walking ten or twelve miles a day in search of a vegetarian restaurant. During these wanderings he hit on one in Farrington

* My Experiments With Truth Vol. I. p. 116.

Street and enjoyed his first hearty meal since his arrival in England. In this restaurant, he came across Salt's *Plea For Vegetarianism*, which he read from cover to cover, with the result that from that date he became a vegetarian by choice and blessed the day on which he had taken the vow before his mother.

One night, he was invited by his Richmond friend to dine at the Holborn Restaurant; as soon as the first course of soup was served Gandhi summoned the waiter to enquire if it was a vegetable soup. This he did in a big company of diners. The friend passionately exclaimed, "You are too clumsy for decent society. If you cannot behave yourself you had better go, feed in some other restaurant and await me outside." Gandhi was delighted but he had to go without food that night as the vegetarian restaurant had closed. He now resolved that if his vegetarianism stood in the way of his becoming an English gentleman, he would make up for it by cultivating other accomplishments.

"The clothes after the Bombay cut that I was

wearing, I thought, unsuitable for English society and I got new ones at the Army and Navy Stores. I also went in for a chimney-pot hat, costing nineteen shillings—an excessive price in those days. Not content with this, I wasted ten pounds on an evening suit made in Bond Street, the centre of fashionable life in London and got my good and noble hearted brother to send me a double watch-chain of gold. It was not correct to wear a ready-made tie and I learnt the art of tying one for myself. While in India, the mirror had been a luxury permitted on the days when the family barber gave me a shave, here I wasted ten minutes every day before a huge mirror watching myself arranging my tie and parting my hair in the correct fashion. My hair was, by no means, soft and every day it meant a regular struggle with the brush to keep it in position. Each time the hat was put on and off, the hand would automatically move towards the head to adjust the hair, not to mention the other civilised habit of the hand every now and then operating for the purpose when sitting in a polished society. As if all this were not enough to make me look the thing, I directed my attention to other details that were supposed to go towards the making of an English gentleman. **

He began taking lessons at great cost in dancing, French, elocution and violin. Bell's *Standard Elocutionist*, recommended to him as the text-book

* My Experiments With Truth Vol. I. p. 125-126.

“rang the bell of alarm in my ear and I awoke. I had not to spend a life-time in England; I said to myself, what then was the use of learning elocution. And how could dancing make a gentleman of me. The violin I could learn even in India. I was a student and ought to go on with my studies. I should qualify myself to join the Inns of Court. If my character made a gentleman of me, so much the better. Otherwise I should forego the ambition.”*

After about three months, this infatuation for gentlemanly accomplishments came to an end; but the punctiliousness in dress persisted for years.

He now took to studies. The first thing he did was to cut down his expenses, so much so that he could live in London on fifteen pence a day. A *Bania* is a relentless accountant; and true to the instinct of his caste, Gandhi never allowed a farthing to go into or out of his pocket without entering it in his account book; he never went to bed without striking a balance every evening. That habit has stayed with him ever since to his great advantage in public movements; none of the movements he has led has ever been in debt. His advice is “Let every youth

* My Experiments With Truth Vol. I, p. 127.

take a leaf out of my book and make it a point to account for everything that comes into or goes out of his pocket, and like me, he is sure to be gainer in the end." He carefully scrutinised his accounts and stopped the drain on his purse caused through a false sense of propriety, by heavy items for conveyances, for dining out and taking the landlady and her daughters for weekly outings. He rented a suite of rooms from which he could walk to the place of business. Soon after, he applied the axe again, took a single room and began cooking his own breakfast, lunching out and dining on bread and cocoa at home. The preparation for the Bar Examination did not take much time. Gandhi enquired about the University courses at Oxford and Cambridge; but finding that greater expenses and time would be spent than he had decided upon, he prepared for the London Matriculation examination and got through in the second attempt.

Gandhi was an ardent vegetarian; he interpreted strictly his vow to his mother. He says:

"Interpretation of pledges has been a fruitful

source of strife all the world over. No matter how explicit the pledge, people will turn and twist the text to suit their own purposes. They are to be met with among all classes of society ; from the rich down to the poor ; from the prince down to the peasant. Selfishness turns them blind and by a use of the ambiguous middle they deceive themselves and seek to deceive the world and God. One golden rule is to accept the interpretation honestly put on the pledge by the party administering it. Another is to accept the interpretation of the weaker party, where there are two interpretations possible. Rejection of these two rules gives rise to strife and iniquity which are rooted in untruthfulness. He who seeks truth alone easily follows the golden rule. He need not seek learned advice for interpretation.”*

With a convert's enthusiasm for his new religion, Gandhi not only practised vegetarianism but also propagated it. He started a Vegetarian Club with Dr. Oldfield, editor of *the Vegetarian*, as the President, Sir Edwin Arnold, as Vice-president and himself as the Secretary. He joined the Vegetarian Society and soon found himself on its Executive Committee ; he attended every meeting, but never opened his lips except once, when he wrote down his speech but did not find himself equal to reading it ; the President

* My Experiments With Truth, vol. I p. 143.

had it read by some one else. He retained this shyness throughout his stay in England. In another vegetarian meeting at Ventnor, when he rose to read his speech, he says, "My vision became blurred and I trembled though the speech hardly covered a sheet of foolscap." It had to be read by a friend. In his last attempt to make a humorous speech at a dinner on the eve of his departure for home, he made himself simply ridiculous.

It was in England that Gandhi, under the influence of the Theosophical Society, made his first acquaintance with what has, since then, been his constant companion, guide and solace, *the Bhagwadgita*. His aversion to Christianity, engendered by the excesses of the missionaries in India, was removed by a good Christian from Manchester who met him in a vegetarian boarding house. He began studying the Bible. The *Sermon On The Mount*, which later laid the foundation for his *satyagraha*, went straight to his heart. Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-worship* introduced to him the greatness, bravery and austere living of the Prophet. This reading created an appetite for further religious study, which

could not then be satisfied, as the reading for the examination left him scarcely any time for outside subjects.

In those days, Indian students in England, though married, affected the bachelor, with a view both to hide their shame at early marriage and to be able to go about and flirt with young girls—an innocent practice for an Englishman who has to choose a wife; but disastrous for the Indian. Gandhi also caught the contagion; but with his reserve and reticence, flirting was an impossibility. He did, no doubt, go out for walks with his landlady's daughter but they were innocent walks. An old widow, whose acquaintance he made in a Brighton hotel, was very kind to him and invited him to dine every Sunday at her London residence. "On special occasions also she would invite me, help me to conquer my bashfulness and introduce me to young ladies and draw me into conversation with them." A young lady who lived with her was particularly marked out for these conversations and was often left entirely alone with him.

"I found all this very trying at first. I could not

start a conversation nor could I indulge in any jokes. But she put me in the way. I began to learn; and in course of time looked forward to every Sunday and came to like the conversations with the young friend. The old lady went on spreading her net wider every day. She felt interested in our meetings. Possibly, she had her own plans about us. I was in a quandary. 'How I wished I had told the good lady that I was married.' I said to myself 'She would then have not thought of an engagement between us. It is, however, never too late to mend. If I declare the truth I might yet be saved more misery'."*

A letter was sent announcing that he was a married man and saying, "If on receipt of this you feel that I have been unworthy of your hospitality, I assure you I shall not take it amiss." The lady appreciated young Gandhi's frankness and not only assured him that their friendship was not in the least affected by this incident but also reiterated her standing invitation for Sundays "looking forward to hearing all about your child-marriage and to the pleasure of laughing at your expense."

In 1890 Gandhi went with an Indian friend to the Vegetarian Conference at Ports-

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. I p. 159-60.

mouth where they were lodged in a house of ill fame. The rest of the story, in Gandhi's own words, is:

"We returned from the Conference in the evening. After dinner we sat down to play a rubber of bridge, in which our landlady joined, as is customary in England even in respectable households. Every player indulges in innocent jokes as a matter of course, but here my companion and our hostess began to make indecent ones as well. I did not know that my friend was an adept in the art. It captured me and I also joined in. Just when I was about to go beyond the limit, leaving the cards and the game to themselves, God, through the good companion, uttered the blessed warning: "Whence this devil in you, my boy. Be off, quick."*

"On all occasions of trial, He has saved me. I know that the phrase 'God saved me' has a deeper meaning for me today, and still I feel that I have not yet grasped its entire meaning. Only richer experience can help me to a fuller understanding. But in all my trials—of a spiritual nature, as a lawyer, in conducting institutions, and in politics—I can say that God saved me. When every hope is gone, 'when helpers fail and comforts flee,' I experience that help arrives somehow, from I know not where. Supplication, worship, prayer, are no superstition; they are acts more real than the acts of eating, drinking, sitting or walking. It is no exaggeration to say that they alone are real, all else is

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. I p. 173.

unreal. Such worship or prayer is no flight of eloquence; it is no lip-homage. It springs from the heart. If, therefore, we achieve that purity of the heart when it is 'emptied of all but love,' if we keep all the chords in proper tune, they trembling pass in music out of sight.' Prayer needs no speech. It is, in itself, independent of any sensuous effort. I have not the slightest doubt that prayer is an unfailing means of cleansing the heart of passions. But it must be combined with the utmost humility."*

In the same year he paid a week's visit to Paris to see the great Exhibition, specially the Eiffel Tower, constructed entirely of iron and nearly 100 feet high. He was attracted not by the fashions and frivolity of Paris but by the unforgettable grandeur and peacefulness of its churches.

The meeting, in London, of Gandhi with Narayan Hemchandra, a well known Gujrati author, who had a craze of mastering languages, with his utter disregard for western civilization, his attachment to queer and clumsy Indian dress and third class travelling, probably laid the foundation of that revolution in dress and mode of life which came over Gandhi about thirty years later.

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. 1 p. 175-6.

In those days students got through their examinations for the Bar—of which there were only two, one in Roman Law and the other in Common Law—by scrambling through notes; but Gandhi read all the text books. He passed his examination from the Inner Temple. He kept his terms. To keep terms is to attend six out of twenty-four dinners in a term, of which there are four in a year. A Parsi student and Gandhi applied, in the interest of vegetarianism, for the vegetarian courses which were served only to the Benchers. This was granted and they could enjoy the dinners. Gandhi was constantly in demand to form a quarter, because two bottles of wines, supplied to each group of four, could be emptied by three. He was called to the Bar on the 10th June, 1891, enrolled in the High Court the following day and sailed for India on the 12th June, 1891. He, however, felt he was ill-equipped to practise law.

CHAPTER III

GANDHI THE LAWYER (1891-1896)

On his way home, Gandhi had to pass through storms—both outer and inner, each harmonising with the other. In June and July, the Arabian Sea is usually rough; but it was easy enough for him to cross it. Of all the passengers Gandhi, alone, was in perfect form, staying on the deck to see the stormy sea and enjoy the splash of the waves. What made him miserable was serious misgivings about his ability to earn a living by the profession. He had learnt the law but not how to practise it; he was ignorant of the Indian law and did not know how to draft a plaint.

His elder brother met him at the docks and put him up with Dr. Mehta. Gandhi was pining to meet his mother, not knowing that she had given away her life in his absence. He got the sad news and underwent the usual ablution.

Foreign travel, in those days, was considered among Hindus, a social crime, expiable according to some and inexcusable according to others. Gandhi, on his return, had to face social ostracism, but one section of his caste re-admitted him after expiation at Nasik, the other still regards him as ex-communicated. His scrupulous conduct, however, towards them has gained him their affection.

Soon after his return he was introduced by Dr. Mehta to several friends, among whom the most notable was the poet, Raychand, the son-in-law of Dr. Mehta's elder brother and partner in the jewellery firm of Revashankar Jagjiwan, another brother of Dr. Mehta. This young man of twenty-five has left a deep impression on Gandhi on account of "his wide knowledge of the scriptures, his spotless character and his burning passion for self-realisation." In the midst of his business transactions running into six figures, the centre round which his life revolved was the passion to see God face to face. This wonderful man could literally attend to a hundred things simultaneously. He repeated in the

precise order in which Gandhi gave him fairly long lists of words of all the European languages known to Gandhi. About this man Gandhi says:

“I have tried to meet the heads of various faiths, and I must say that no one else has made on me an impression that Raychandbhai did. His words went straight home to me. His intellect compelled as great a regard from me as his moral earnestness and deep down in me was the conviction that he would never willingly lead me astray and would always confide to me his innermost thoughts. In my moments of spiritual crisis, therefore, he was my refuge. And yet, in spite of this regard for him, I could not enthrone him in my heart as my *Guru*. The throne has remained vacant and my search still continues. I believe in the Hindu theory of *Guru* and his importance in spiritual realisation. I think there is a great deal of truth in the doctrine that true knowledge is impossible without a *Guru*. An imperfect teacher in mundane matters may be tolerable, but not so an imperfect one in spiritual matters. Only a perfect *Guru* deserves to be enthroned as *Guru*. There must, therefore, be ceaseless striving after perfection. For one gets the *Guru* that one deserves. Infinite striving after perfection is one's right. It is its own reward. The rest is in the hands of God.”*

Gandhi settled in Bombay with a view to

*My Experiments With Truth, Vol. I p. 210-211.

study the Indian law, gain experience of the High Court and try and get such briefs as he could. He set up a household with an incompetent, ignorant and dirty Brahman as a cook whom he treated, not as a servant, but as a member of the household. He continued his experiments in dietetics started in England. He had ample time and scope to put into practice his ideas about reform in the education of children. He taught his brother's children and his own child, who was now nearly four. He is still very fond of children, and as Andrews says, "He laughs like a child and adores children." His stay in England had not cured him of his "squeamishness and suspiciousness in respect of every little thing about his wife, which made the home-life, especially of Kasturibai, miserable."

After a few months stay he got a case, in the Court of Small Causes, on a fee of Rs. 30, for the defendant. Asked to pay a commission to the tout, he emphatically declined, although he was given the precedent of a well-known criminal lawyer who was making three to four thousand a month. The scene

in Court cannot be described better than in his own words:

“I stood up, but my heart sank into my boots. My head was reeling and I felt as though the whole court was doing likewise. I could think of no question to ask. The judge must have laughed and the vakils, no doubt, enjoyed the spectacle. But I was past seeing anything. I sat down and told the agent that I could not conduct the case, that he had better engage Patel and have the fee back from me.”*

He hurried back from the Court ashamed of himself and never appeared again until he went to South Africa. He “found the barrister’s profession a bad job—much show and little knowledge.”

His second engagement was the drafting of a memorial for a poor Mohammadan whose lands in Porbandar were confiscated. He found he could draft memorials, but it was not a paying job. He, therefore, applied for the post of a teacher, on Rs. 75, in a famous High School. He was called for an interview, but his application was rejected as he was not a graduate. After about six months stay in Bombay, where he dozed daily in the High Court, Gandhi removed to Rajkot to live with

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. I p. 223-224.

his brother who was a petty pleader and to draft such applications and memorials as his brother could get him. At Rajkot, he earned about Rs. 300 a month by drafting but at the compromise of his principle of giving no commission.

Gandhi got his first experience of official manners, rather the want thereof, when he went to the Political Agent of Kathiawad, with whom he had been fairly friendly in England, to intercede on behalf of his innocent brother who had incurred that officer's displeasure. The *sahab* would not listen to Gandhi, asked him to clear out and on his request to hear him, had him turned out by his peon. In later life, Gandhi has put up with greater insults from white officers, especially in South Africa, but at that young age, with the new consciousness of a barrister's dignity, this rudeness was too much for him. He served the officer with a notice demanding an apology and in case of refusal threatening to proceed at law. The officer's laconic reply was, "Proceed as you wish." Gandhi consulted, through a friend, Sir Phirozeshah Mehta, who had gone to Rajkot for a case; his advice was:

"Tell Gandhi, such things are the common experience of many vakils and barristers. He is still fresh from England, and hot-blooded. He does not know British officers. If he would earn something and have an easy time here, let him tear up the note and pocket the insult. He will gain nothing by proceeding against the *sahib*, and, on the contrary, will very likely ruin himself. Tell him he has yet to know life."*

Bitter as the advice was, Gandhi had to swallow it. This shock changed the course of his life.

This quarrel with the officer, in whose court most of his work would naturally lie, stood in the way of what little practice he had. The petty politics of Kathiawad, the intrigues of officers for power, the corruption rampant among official underlings and the anxiety to remain unscathed in that poisonous atmosphere thoroughly depressed him.

He had some work in the shape of getting relief in respect of the heavy land rent exacted from the *mers*, and securing more powers for the Prince of Porbandar, then under the administration of an Indian officer, who went one better in arrogance than the Political Agent. Gandhi could secure a few

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. I p. 234.

more powers for the *Rana*, but the cause of the poor *mers* was not even carefully gone into. An appeal to the Political Agent or the Governor was known to be futile. Thus, he was disappointed and felt that justice was not done to his clients and he had not the means to secure it—a feeling, which, after riper experience, led to the boycott of British Indian courts.

It was about this time that Messrs Dada Abdulla & Co. of Porbandar, who had a shop in South Africa and an action for £ 40,000 going on in the South African courts for a long time, offered to engage Gandhi for a year on a first class return fare and a sum of £ 105, all found. He was to instruct the firm's counsel in South Africa. The offer was readily accepted.

In April, 1893, Gandhi sailed for South Africa. As the Governor-General of Mozambique was sailing by the same boat, no first class berth was available, but the captain agreed to give him the extra berth he had in his own cabin, which was not usually available for passengers. At Lamu, the first port of call, Gandhi all but missed being left

behind. The captain took him for an outing at Zanzibar. This outing was the third temptation in his life from which he came out unscathed. He describes the outing thus:

“We were taken to some Negro women’s quarters by a tout. We were each shown into a room. I simply stood there dumb with shame. Heaven only knows what the poor woman must have thought of me. When the captain called me, I came out just as I had gone in. He saw my innocence.”*

He reached Durban about the end of May. Abdulla Seth, practically unlettered, but with a rich fund of experience and a long purse, received him at the port on behalf of his clients. A day or two after his arrival, his host took him to the Durban court, introduced him to several people and seated him next to his attorney. In those days, Gandhi used to put on European dress with a *pugree*. The Magistrate asked him to take off the turban, but he refused and left the court. With the patriotic advice of Abdulla Seth, Gandhi stuck to the *pugree* and in the press defended its wearing in court. This gave him unexpected advertisement and the title of an “unwelcome visitor.”

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. I p. 246.

After about a week of his arrival, Gandhi studied the case and left for Pretoria to instruct the firm's counsel. A first class seat was booked for him. At about 9 P. M., the train reached Maritzburg, the capital of Natal. A passenger came, stared at him, went back only to return with an official or two. One of the officials asked Gandhi to go to the van compartment, which he refused to do. A constable was called who pushed him out of the compartment and threw down his luggage. The train steamed off. He passed the winter night shivering in a waiting room which had no light and thinking of his duty :

“Should I fight for my rights or go back to India, or should I go on to Pretoria without minding the insults and return to India after finishing the case. It would be cowardice to run back to India without fulfilling my obligation. The hardship to which I was subjected, was superficial—only a symptom of the deep disease of color prejudice. I should try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process. Redress for wrongs I should seek only to the extent that would be necessary for the removal of the colour prejudice.”*

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. I p. 264.

The following morning Gandhi wired to the General Manager of the Railway and Abdulla Seth. The former justified the conduct of the railway authorities but instructed the Station Master to see that Gandhi was safely conveyed to his destination. The friends of the Seth comforted Gandhi by narrating their own hardships. In the evening, he proceeded by train to Charlestown, reaching there in the morning. The journey between this place and Johannesburg was by a stage-coach, for which Gandhi held a ticket, but the "leader", the white man in charge of the coach, said the ticket was cancelled. This was only an excuse to avoid seating a "coolie" with white passengers inside the coach. Gandhi was given a seat on the coach-box, usually occupied by the "leader" who sat inside on this occasion. In the afternoon, the "leader" asked Gandhi to move to the foot-board on which he had spread a dirty sack-cloth, as he himself wanted to sit near the driver. Gandhi refused and got a good beating in return. Gandhi, however, stuck to his seat and the "leader" occupied the place of a Hottentot and all the way threatened Gandhi

to show him what the "leader" would do at Standerton where the stage-coach halted for the night. Gandhi sat speechless and prayed God to help him. Nothing untoward, however, happened at Standerton where he halted for the night with Seth Isa Haji Sumar, a friend of his clients. The complaint to the agent of the Coach Company secured to him a comfortable seat for the rest of the journey to Johannesburg.

At Johannesburg, Gandhi drove to the Grand National Hotel, asked for a room and was politely told they were full up. He, then, drove to the firm of Mohammad Kasam Kamruddin whose address Dada Abdulla had given him and put up there for the night. From there, he had to travel by rail to Pretoria. His host told him that conditions in Transvaal were worse than in Natal and that first and second class tickets were never issued to Indians. Gandhi wrote to the Station Master that he was a barrister and always travelled first class, that he needed to reach Pretoria as early as possible and that he would personally call for a first class ticket. Gandhi, in those days, had great

faith in faultless European dress as an indisputable evidence of gentlemanliness. He presented himself in a frock-coat and necktie at the counter of the booking office and, placing a sovereign for his fare, asked for a first class ticket, which the Station Master, a sympathetic Hollander, gave on condition that Gandhi would shift to third class, if asked by the guard and would not proceed against the Railway Company. At Germiston, the guard signalled to him with his finger to remove to a third class, his first class ticket notwithstanding. On the intercession of an English fellow-passenger, the guard allowed him to remain, exclaiming, "If you want to travel with a coolie, what do I care!"

Gandhi reached Pretoria at eight o'clock in the evening. He was disappointed to find no one on behalf of his client's attorney at the station. He waited till the station was clear of all passengers, then gave up his ticket to the ticket collector and asked if he could direct Gandhi to some small hotel. The ticket collector could not give any information, but an American negro who was standing near, offered to get him accomodation in an

American hotel. They went to Johnston's Family Hotel. Mr. Johnston agreed to give him a room, if he consented to have the dinner served there. Johnston was himself free from race-prejudice, but he was not prepared to offend his white guests, who might even go away at the sight of a colored man. This apprehension, however, proved unfounded and Gandhi got not only a room, but his dinner along with other guests in the dining room.

The following morning he called on Mr. A. W. Baker, Abdulla Seth's attorney, who found him board and lodgings at a baker's wife at 35 shillings a week. The suit he was engaged in was for £ 40,000. The defendant was Seth Tyeb Haji Khan Mohammad, a relation of Abdulla Seth. Both the parties were represented by the best attorneys and counsel. Gandhi was entrusted with the preparation of the plaintiff's case for the attorney and of the sifting of facts in its support. He took the keenest interest in the work, carefully read through all the papers pertaining to the transactions, and looked up the case-law with the result that he acquired such

a grasp of the facts of the case as perhaps even his clients did not possess. But Gandhi was disgusted with the law's delay, and the consequent steady increase of mutual ill-will. The waste of money in huge fees to lawyers, which threatened to devour all the resources of the parties, who had no time left to attend to other work, was appalling. He tried for amicable settlement and succeeded. An arbitrator was appointed, who gave an award in Abdulla Seth's favour for £ 37,000 and costs. Prompt payment would have spelt ruin to the defendant; through Gandhi's good offices, the plaintiff agreed to accept easy instalments.

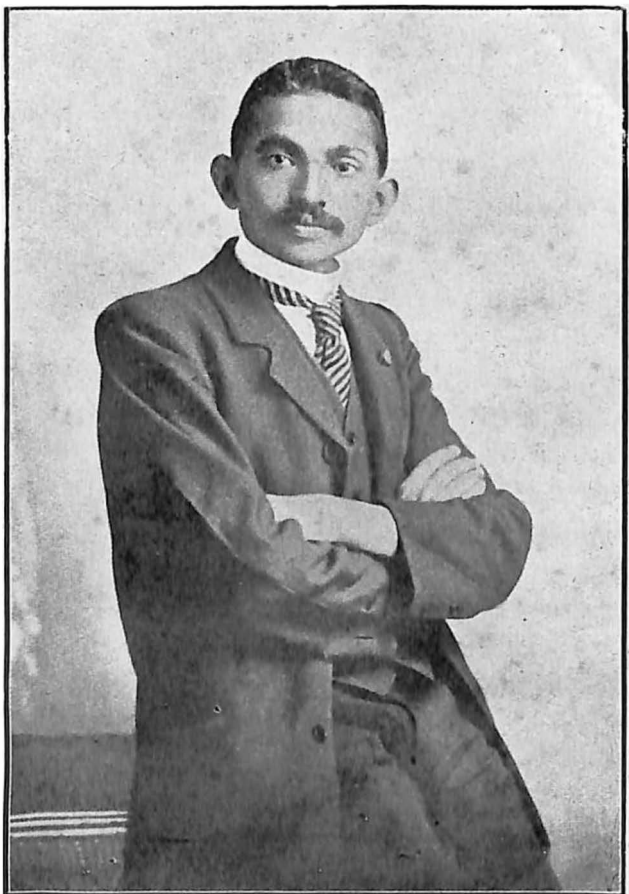
“Both were happy over the result, and both rose in the public estimation. My joy was boundless. I had learnt the true practice of law. I had learnt to find out the better side of human nature and to enter men's hearts. I realised that the true function of a lawyer was to unite parties riven asunder. The lesson was so indelibly burnt into me, that a large part of my time during the twenty years of my practice as a lawyer was occupied in bringing about private compromises of hundreds of cases. I lost nothing thereby—not even money, certainly, not my soul.”*

*My Experiments With Truth, Vol. I p. 314-15.

During the year that the case lasted, Gandhi came into intimate touch with Christianity. Mr. Baker, the attorney, was one of the Directors of the South African General Mission, and had built a church at his own expense, in which he regularly delivered sermons. He and his friends met daily at one o'clock for a few minutes to pray for peace and light. At his invitation, Gandhi began attending these prayers from the day following his first meeting with Mr. Baker. There he was introduced to Miss Harris, Miss Gabb, Mr. Coates, a Quaker, and others. The ladies gave him a standing invitation to four o'clock tea at their house every Sunday. In these weekly parties Gandhi gave his weekly religious diaries to Mr. Coates and discussed with him the impressions of his weekly religious study. One afternoon, Mr. Coates noticed the *Vaishnava* necklace of *Tulsi*-beads round Gandhi's neck and wanted his permission to break it, saying that that superstition did not become him. Gandhi regarded it as a sacred gift from his mother and did not allow it to be broken. As regards his belief in it, he said "I do not know its

mysterious significance. I do not think I should come to harm if I did not wear it. But I cannot, without sufficient reason, give up a necklace that she put round my neck out of love and in the conviction that it would be conducive to my welfare. When, with the passage of time, it wears away and breaks of its own accord I shall have no desire to get a new one. But this necklace cannot be broken."* His Christian friends were endeavouring to convert him to their faith; the Mohammadans were trying to get him to embrace Islam; but they only succeeded in creating a religious ferment. He could not accept any of the religions, including his own, to be as a perfect or the greatest religion. He expressed his religious difficulties to Raychanbhai in a letter which evoked the reply, "On a dispassionate view of the question, I am convinced that no other religion has the subtle and profound thought of Hinduism, its vision of the soul or its charity. Be patient and study Hinduism more deeply." He started correspondence with Edward Maitland, who sent him some

*My Experiments With Truth, Vol. I p. 289-90.



BAR-AT-LAW.

of his books which seemed to Gandhi to support Hinduism. Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You* was the book which left an abiding impression on him. He was simply overwhelmed with its independent thinking, profound morality and rigid truthfulness.

During his stay in Pretoria, Gandhi made a deep study of the social, economic and political condition of his countrymen in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. With the help of Seth Tyeb Haji Khan Mohammad, the defendant in his case and a very influential Indian resident of Pretoria, he called a meeting of all the Indians in Pretoria and made, what may be called, the first public speech in his life. The untold miseries of his silent countrymen had lent him an effective tongue. His advice was to be truthful in business, to give up insanitary habits, forget all distinctions of caste, creed and province and form an association to press their grievances upon the authorities. He offered his time and service, so far as they could be spared from his case, to the association. He also undertook to teach English to

his countrymen. Three pupils placed themselves under his tutelage on condition that he went to their places to teach them. In about eight months, two of them made fairly good progress and were able to keep accounts and write ordinary business letters in English. The third acquired just enough English to deal with his customers. Such meetings were held regularly. Gandhi secured from Mr. Jacobius de Wet, the British Agent in Pretoria, a promise of help to the Indians' cause and, from the railway authorities, the right of his countrymen, if properly dressed, to purchase first and second class tickets. Mr. de Wet and Tyeb Seth supplied him papers on Indian affairs from which he learnt how cruelly his countrymen were hounded out from the Orange Free State. In the Transvaal, a poll tax of £ 3 was levied on all Indians seeking entry into the country ; they could own no land ; had no franchise ; could not walk on footpaths and move out of doors after 9 P. M. without a permit. Mr. Coates took Gandhi to the State Attorney, Dr. Krause who happened to be a Barrister of the same Inn as Gandhi ; he gave Gandhi

a letter of authority to be out of doors at all times. Once, while taking his usual walk through the President Street, the sentry on duty at President Kruger's house, without asking him to leave the footpath, kicked him into the street. Mr. Coates saw it and asked Gandhi to proceed against the man, but Gandhi refused. He never again walked through that street.

After the case was over, Gandhi returned to Durban and began making preparations for his return. Abdulla Seth gave him a farewell party at Sydenham. Gandhi read there in a newspaper that the House of Legislature had, before it, a bill to deprive the Indians of the right to elect members to the Natal Legislative Assembly. Gandhi advised Abdulla Seth to agitate against the measure. The latter replied that businessmen knew nothing about these matters and that Indian Christians being under "foreign" influence did not help them. The guests attending the party realised that the bill was the first nail in the coffin of the rights of the Indians in Natal and requested Gandhi to stay for a month and direct the fight. They promised to meet all the expenses and

pay his fee, but the latter he refused to accept. A mass meeting of Indians was soon held at Abdulla Seth's house, under the presidentship of Seth Haji Mohammad, where it was resolved to offer opposition to the Franchise Bill. Merchants, clerks, Indian Christians, Hindus, Muslims and Parsis, all attended the meeting and enrolled as volunteers. These heterogenous elements of the Indian population of Natal were welded into one as if by the magic wand of Gandhi. A telegram was sent to the Speaker requesting him to put off further discussion. He postponed it for two days. Another telegram was sent to the Premier and a third one to the Attorney, Mr. Escombe, who had secured a seat on the legislature with the help of Indian votes. Gandhi drew up the petition to be presented to the Assembly and, in the course of a night, volunteers went out and obtained hundreds of signatures. The petition did not fail to create an impression on the Assembly, but the bill was passed. The agitation had, however, infused new life into the community and given them a new consciousness of their political rights. In the course of a fortnight a monster petition

under ten thousand signatures from the whole of the Natal province, was despatched to Lord Ripon, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. To obtain such a large number of signatures so promptly from villages scattered at long distances, especially by persons new to the work, was the first triumph of Gandhi's capacity to organise and fire with enthusiasm a seemingly lifeless mass of humanity.

It was, now, impossible for Gandhi to leave Natal, but he could not stay at public expense and the setting up of a household required at least £ 300 a year. The Indian community was prepared to pay him this amount, but he would not charge for public work. He wanted legal work to that extent to be guaranteed by the community. " Even that may be hard for you. For one thing, I am not a white barrister. How can I be sure that the court will respond to me! Nor can I be sure how I shall fare as a lawyer. So even in giving me retainers you may be running some risk. I should regard even the fact of your giving them to me as the reward of my public work."

About twenty merchants gave him

retainers for legal work for one year and in lieu of the purse he intended to present Gandhi on his departure, Abdulla Seth purchased him the necessary furniture. Gandhi applied through Mr. Escombe, the Attorney-General, for enrolment as an advocate of the Supreme Court. The application was granted, in spite of the vehement opposition of Law Society of Natal, on the ground of Gandhi being a colored man. As soon as Gandhi was sworn in, he took off his turban, when asked by the Chief Justice to do so and to conform to the rules regarding the dress of practising barristers. This was regarded as a weakness by Abdulla Seth and other friends, but not so by Gandhi. The opposition of the Law Society gave him another advertisement.

Gandhi's primary occupation was public work, law taking only a secondary place. He now intended to set up a permanent organisation to protect the rights of Indians. On the 22nd May, 1894, the Natal Indian Congress was formed, with a simple constitution but a heavy subscription, the minimum being five shillings a month; well-to-do

members paid a pound or two per month. Collection of monthly subscription was, by no means, easy; it was, therefore, decided to charge £3 per year in advance. The Congress has never been in debt as Gandhi "had learnt at the very outset not to carry on public work with borrowed money. One could rely on people's promises in most matters except in respect of money."* He also adhered to "the principle of never having more money at one's disposal than necessary."† Strict economy was observed in expenses and every pie was clearly accounted for, since "without properly-kept accounts it is impossible to maintain truth in its pristine purity."‡ Convassing for membership went on with extra-ordinary enthusiasm even in distant places. On one occasion, Gandhi and his co-workers expected their host to pay £6, he would not contribute more than £3 to accept which would have spoiled the collection in that locality. The whole night was spent without food in persuading him to

* My Experiments With Truth Vol. I. p. 351.

† Ibid p. 553.

‡ Ibid p. 355.

double his contribution. As the day was breaking, the host yielded, paid down £ 6 and feasted them. People who had never addressed a public meeting soon acquired the habit of thinking and speaking publicly about matters of public interest. The Colonial-born Indian Educational Association was founded under the auspices of the Congress with a nominal subscription ; it had a library and a debating society. The Association brought the hitherto isolated Indian Christian youths into touch with Indian merchants, stimulated them to serve the Indian community and ventilate their needs and grievances. The propaganda of the Congress, by means of lectures and leaflets won the Natal Indian cause numerous friends in South Africa and England and the sympathy of all parties in India.

Every single section of the Indian community, except indentured labour, was represented on the Congress. The indentured labourer was too poor to afford to pay the high subscription of the Congress ; his attachment could only be won by serving him. Providence lavishes opportunities of service on Gandhi; new connections are unexpectedly

formed which consolidate his hold on the people and widen the scope of his benevolent activity. He had hardly put in three months' practice when Balsundaram, an indentured labourer, mercilessly beaten by his master, stood trembling and weeping before Gandhi; he was profusely bleeding and had two front teeth broken; his tattered clothes betrayed his abject poverty. Gandhi obtained a medical certificate, took the injured man to the magistrate and submitted his affidavit. The employer was summoned. Gandhi did not desire to retaliate. He wanted Balsundaram's release from his indenture--an English euphemism for slavery. This could be done either by his employer releasing him or by the Protector of Indentured Labourers cancelling his indenture or transferring him to another European--an indentured labourer was the exclusive property of Europeans. Gandhi succeeded in the last of these methods of release. This case won him the affection of indentured labourers who poured into his office in a regular stream and looked upon him, and through him upon the Congress, as their redeemer.

The Natal Government proposed, in 1894, to impose an annual tax of £ 25 per head on the indentured Indians. The genesis of this tax is a sad commentary on the sense of justice of the "civilised" White in Natal. About 1860, the white settlers in Natal found that with Zulu labour they could not develop sugar-cane cultivation for which there was considerable scope; their government approached the British Indian Government for permission to recruit Indian labour. The permission was, of course, given. The inducements given were that after five years labour, guaranteed by an indenture, the labourer was at liberty to settle in Natal and have full rights of ownership in land. The Indian labourer, with the sweat of his brow, not only developed sugar-cane cultivation, but also introduced mango and varieties of Indian vegetables; he made the local varieties grow cheaper; he entered trade and became owner of land and houses. Indian merchants followed in his wake. With their simple mode of living and contentment with small gains, the Indian traders were more than a match for the white traders who consequently

began forging instruments for putting down Indian competition. A deputation was sent to India to get the Government agree to the following terms, *viz*,

(1) On the expiry of his indenture, a labourer should return to India, or

(2) he should sign a fresh indenture every two years on increased wages, or

(3) he should pay a tax of £ 25 per year.

The self-constituted trustees for the welfare of India were then headed by Lord Elgin as Viceroy. He saw nothing objectionable in these terms and readily agreed to them, reducing the tax to £ 3 per head, probably under the pressure of the vigorous campaign carried on by the Natal Indian Congress. It is, indeed, fair to levy a tax of £ 12 a year on a family consisting of a husband, a wife, a male child over 16, and a female child over 13, when the annual income of the husband is only £ 8/8 a year! That is how the Government discharged its self-imposed trust. The tax was imposed and continued for twenty years.

Even among his multifarious public activities and distractions of a growing practice,

Gandhi could find time for the comparative study of religions. Life to him was nothing but a quest for God Who, he felt, could be realised through service. The beauties of Hinduism grew upon him during these studies. His house-hold, though rather expensive and in keeping with his position as an Indian barrister, was a happy family consisting of himself, his clerks, a cook and a friend who was his companion and helper and had great hold on him. Gandhi has not unoften been deceived in his friends; this man was no exception. He was instrumental in getting an honest clerk dismissed. A temporary cook who was a notorious scamp proved a godsend and delivered Gandhi of this friend whose misdeeds would some day have brought disgrace upon him.

CHAPTER IV

PREPARATION FOR THE STRUGGLE (1896-1906)

The fairly good practice he had built up in three years and the constant demands of public work, especially in connection with the £ 3 tax, Gandhi found, required his long stay in Natal. About the middle of 1896, he, therefore, came to India to fetch his wife and family and settle in Natal. In his absence the secretaryship of the Congress devolved on Adamji Miyakhan. The twenty-four days it took him to reach Calcutta were devoted, with some profit, to the study of Urdu, Tamil and religion.

On his way from Calcutta to Bombay, the train stopped for 45 minutes at Allahabad. Gandhi went out for a drive. When he returned the train had left, although the Station Master had detained it for one minute for him. Gandhi's earnestness did

not permit him to waste his time in idleness ; he drove straight to the *Pioneer* office, and secured a promise from the editor to notice in his paper whatever Gandhi might write on the South African question. Having lost a day at Prayag, he went straight to Rajkot without a halt at Bombay as he had originally intended. He prepared a pamphlet which, on account of the color of its cover, came to be known as the green pamphlet. It was an enlarged edition of " An Open Letter " he had published before leaving Natal, drawing a subdued, yet clear and strong picture of the condition of Indians in South Africa. Ten thousand copies were printed and sent to all the papers and the leaders of all the parties in the country. The *Pioneer* was the first to notice it editorially ; others followed suit. A highly coloured summary of this pamphlet was cabled to England by Reuter whose London office cabled to Natal a three line summary on September 14, to the effect that " the Indians in Natal are robbed and assaulted and treated like beasts and are unable to obtain redress," a message, which ultimately led to Gandhi being lynched in Natal. These

pamphlets were very cheaply despatched in an ingenious way. Gandhi gathered all the children in the locality who volunteered two to three hours labour of a morning when they had no school. Of this first band of children volunteers, two are his co-workers today. This pamphlet was mostly written while he was nursing his sick brother-in-law who for fear of the caste, had, on Gandhi's departure for London, refused to hand him over the money his brother had left with him.

About this time plague broke out in Bombay; Rajkot was also threatened. Gandhi offered his services to the state which were readily accepted. He was placed on the committee appointed to take preventive measures. At his suggestion, the Committee decided to inspect latrines in every street and take steps for keeping them perfectly clean. The poor willingly carried out the improvements suggested but the well-to-do classes who stood most in need of sanitary improvements, not unoften refused to the members even admission into their latrines. The untouchables' quarter was visited by Gandhi. They were delighted to take him

round. Their houses were models of cleanliness required by the *Shastras*.

Preparations for the celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee were in progress when Gandhi landed in India. Rajkot offered him a seat on the committee appointed for the purpose; it was gladly accepted. Gandhi says:

"Hardly ever have I known any body to cherish such loyalty as I did to the British Constitution. I can see now, that my love of truth was at the root of this loyalty. It has never been possible for me to simulate loyalty, or for that matter, any other virtue. The National Anthem used to be sung at every meeting that I attended in Natal. I then felt that I must also join in the singing. Not that I was unaware of the defects in the British rule but I thought that it was, on the whole, acceptable. In those days I believed that the British rule was, on the whole, beneficial to the ruled."*

As a matter of fact, Gandhi was so devotedly loyal that he carefully and with perseverance learnt the tune of the British National Anthem, taught it to the children of his family and to the students of the local Training College. As *ahimsa* matured, the lines

* My Experiments With Truth, vol. I p. 400.

“ Scatter her enemies,
 And make them fall;
 Confound their politics,
 Frustrate their knavish tricks.”

jarred upon his sentiment. His friend, Dr. Booth, also felt like him and composed a new anthem.

On the day following his brother-in-law's death he left for Bombay to address the meeting on the condition of Indians in South Africa. The meeting was a great success. His speech which, on account of his nervousness, had to be read by Wacha, was applauded by the audience and liked by Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, the Lion of Bombay. He addressed similar meetings in Poona, convened with the help of Tilak, Gokhale and Bhandarkar and in Madras, called with the active support of Sjt. G. Parmeshvaram Pillay, editor of the *Madras Standard*, Sjt. G. Subrahmaniam, of the *Hindu* and Dr. Subrahmaniam Iyer. Madras was wild with enthusiasm.

From Madras he went to Calcutta, where he knew nobody and stayed in a hotel. He became acquainted with Mr. Ellerthorpe, of

the *Daily Telegraph*, who invited him to his rooms in the Bengal Club. The local Englishmen had such a great prejudice against the people whose hospitality they and their countrymen in India were enjoying, that Gandhi was not allowed to be taken to the drawing room of the club—a matter of which Mr. Ellerthorpe, being fresh from England, was ignorant and for which he apologised to Gandhi. At Calcutta, he found difficulties hemming him in. Surendra Nath Banerji referred him to Sir Piyari Mohan Mukerji and Maharaja Prodyot Kumar Tagore and these two back to Surendra Nath Banerji. The editors of the *Bangbasi* and the *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, taking him to be a wandering Jew, refused to listen to him. The *Englishman* and the *Statesman*, however, realised the importance of the question and published fairly long interviews with Gandhi. Mr. Sanders of the *Englishman*, placed his office and paper at Gandhi's disposal and had his editorial on the subject carefully revised by Gandhi. Gandhi's freedom from exaggeration, his devotion to truth and impartial statement of the white colonial's

case appealed to these Anglo-Indian papers, who seldom gave support to the Indian cause, how so-ever just. "My experience," he says, "has shown me that we win justice quickest by rendering justice to the other party."* With Mr. Sanders' unexpected help, the hope for holding a public meeting was becoming sanguine; but he had to leave Calcutta abruptly, as he got a cable from Durban saying, "Parliament opens January. Return soon."

Dada Abdulla had just then purchased S. S. the *Courland* and insisted on Gandhi's travelling with his family on it, offering a free passage. Gandhi with his wife and two sons and the only son of his recently widowed sister, gratefully availed himself of this offer. S. S. the *Naderi* sailed for Durban at the same time. The two boats carried about four hundred passengers for the Transvaal.

Those were the days when Gandhi was infatuated with European dress, and manners, which in his eyes were signs of civilization. On the voyage he obliged his wife and children to give up their usual dress; they

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. I, p. 425.

were loath to put on the dress that to them seemed indecent; as a compromise Parsi fashion was adopted, but socks and shoes were inseparable and to them intolerable, companions. Even knives and forks were forced upon them. In these changes, Gandhi took undue advantage of the feeling, of a Hindu wife, of absolute self-surrender to her husband.

When they were only four days from Natal a violent and prolonged gale caught them. In December, the summer monsoon is active in the southern seas and gales are quite common. To many of the passengers, the rocking and rolling of the ship, and the crashing of the waves forboded a watery grave; the Captain and Gandhi alone were unmoved, the former on account of the experience of worse storms and the strength of his well-built ship, and the latter on account of his faith in the Steerer of the Boat of Life. Common danger effaced all differences of caste and creed and all prayed jointly to their common Father Whose name alone was on every lip. The danger over, His name disappeared and the passengers sank back again into the flippancy of life.

Now, the misleading cablegram about the green pamphlet had created in Natal great resentment against Gandhi; he was condemned everywhere. The following denunciation expressed in a large gathering by a prominent Doctor and published in the *Natal Advertiser* is a fair example:

“Mr. Gandhi had accused the colonists of Natal of having dealt unfairly with Indians, and of having abused and robbed and swindled them (a voice: “You can’t swindle a coolie.”) He (the Doctor) quite agreed with that. Mr. Gandhi had returned to India and dragged them in the gutter, and painted them as black and filthy as his own skin (applause)”.*

To add fuel to fire, a rumour got afloat that Gandhi was bringing two shiploads of Indians to swamp the whites. The result was that when the two ships cast anchor at Durban on the 18th December, 1896, they were at once quarantined and detained by the Health Officer far beyond the usual time-limit, although there was no disease on board and no reason was assigned for the delay. In the meantime, a Commissioned Officer of the Queen convened a meeting on the 4th January,

* J. J. Doke, p. 44.

1897, to arrange a demonstration to proceed to the Point and protest against the landing of the Asiatics. This was followed by other meetings. Even the Government was with the anti-Indian movement, but was hampered by legal difficulties. Preparations were made to lead a large body of volunteers to the harbour to shoot at the ship; some persons offered one month's pay for each shot. Other threats and inducements were held out to the passengers not to land, but they were futile. The Indians, feeling their country's honour at stake, were determined to a man to land at all costs. On the 12th January, 1897, the ship-owners served the Government with a notice demanding £150 per diem as damages for the period of unlawful detention and threatening to disembark the following day.

The day arrived, and with it the Government reply, fixing 12 o'clock for crossing the bar, as also a huge crowd of over 3,300 whites bent upon forcible prevention of the landing of Indians, but the passengers were unperturbed; for the honour of their country, they were ready to sacrifice themselves gladly at the altar of the fury of the

“civilized” white. That was *satyagraha*, traditionally planted in every Indian heart, shooting out. Before the might of Truth, the brute force of the colonists melted away; the passengers landed safely; only Gandhi was detained with his family under the advice of the Government, which promised to supply police escort for him in the evening. Scarcely half an hour had passed, when Mr. Laughton, the fearless Advocate of Dada Abdulla and Co., arrived and offered to take Gandhi with him, feeling convinced that he ought not to enter the city stealthily. Mrs. Gandhi and the boys were sent away on a carriage to Rustomji’s place and Gandhi and Mr. Laughton proceeded on foot.

As soon as they landed, some youngsters, recognised Gandhi and shouted out his name. A crowd collected and joined in the shouting. Mr. Laughton hailed a rickshaw, but the crowd did not allow Gandhi to get into it and scared away the rickshaw boy. The two friends had to walk; the crowd swelled, separated Mr. Laughton and began to beat Gandhi mercilessly. Gandhi, almost unconscious,

held on to the railings of a house; the beating continued till Mrs. Alexander, the wife of the Police Superintendent, came to his rescue and stood between innocent Gandhi and the angry crowd with an open parasol to ward off the missiles. Meanwhile, an Indian boy brought the police, who safely escorted Gandhi to Rustomji's house, Gandhi declining to take refuge in the Police Station. An infuriated mob surrounded the house and demanded Gandhi's surrender. As serious injury was apprehended to the life and property of his friend, Gandhi accepted the advice of the Police Superintendent and escaped from the house, disguised as an Indian constable, with a metal saucer under his turban to serve as a helmet, and accompanied by detectives also in disguise. Whilst Gandhi was being removed, the Superintendent, kept the crowd in humour by singing

" Hang old Gandhi
On the sour apple tree."

As soon as the news of Gandhi's safe arrival at the Police Station reached him, he informed the crowd and asked it to disperse.

He offered to take two of their representatives inside the house and to surrender Gandhi if he was found there. The representatives searched the house, returned disappointed and the crowd broke up.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies asked the Natal Government to prosecute Gandhi's assailants. The Government asked Gandhi if he could identify them. But Gandhi refused to prosecute the poor misguided assailants who, he felt sure, would be sorry for the conduct when the truth was known. The publication in the *Natal Advertiser* of an interview with Gandhi, repudiating the charges levelled against him and the news of his magnanimous refusal to prosecute his assailants created profound impression and enhanced, not only his own prestige, but also that of the Indian community. It also fanned the flame of prejudice against the Indians, for manliness in the Indian was regarded as a danger to the state.

Two bills were introduced in the Natal Legislative Assembly, calculated to destroy Indian trade and restrict Indian immigration. Agitation against them considerably increased Gandhi's public work.

The bills were passed into law, but the awakening in the Indian community secured large membership and heavy funds for the Natal Indian Congress. At Gandhi's suggestion, the fund raised, £ 5,000, was invested in property, which was leased out and its rent was enough to meet the current expenses. That was Gandhi's first experience of managing a public institution. In those days, like other public workers, he stood for a permanent fund, but now he holds :

“It is not good to run public institutions on permanent funds. A permanent fund carries in itself the seed of the moral fall of the institution. A public institution means an institution conducted with the approval of, and from the funds of the public. When such an institution ceases to have public support, it forfeits its right to exist. Institutions maintained on permanent funds are often found to ignore public opinion, and are frequently responsible for acts contrary to it. In our country we experience this at every step. Some of the so-called religious trusts have ceased to render any accounts. The trustees have become the owners and are responsible to none. I have no doubt that the ideal is for public institutions to live, like nature, from day to day.”*

* My Experiments With Truth Vol. I, pp. 459.460.

The life of ease and comfort Gandhi had started did not last long. His passion for self-help and economy soon asserted itself, and circumstances, too, were in his favour. He found the laundry bill very heavy and on account of the washerman's unpunctuality even two to three dozen shirts and collars proved insufficient. Gandhi bought a book on washing, and he and his wife both learnt the art. He began doing his own washing. The first collar he washed provided fun to his barrister friends; but to ridicule, he was, as he still is, impervious. In no time, however, he became an expert washerman. When Gokhale went to South Africa, Gandhi offered to iron the scarf Ranade had presented him in order to remove the creases, but Gokhale replied that he could trust to Gandhi's capacity as a lawyer, but not as a washerman. Gandhi, the washerman, insisted, got the job and won Gokhale's certificate. The contemptuous refusal of an English hair-cutter in Pretoria made him purchase a pair of clippers and cut his own hair.

Service is Gandhi's religion. Even in those days of infatuation with modern

civilization, his flourishing practice and ever-growing public work could not prevent him from looking after a leper and dressing his wounds, acting as a nurse for two hours a day in the charitable hospital started by Rustomji under Dr. Booth, and attending twice to labour cases in his own family.

Gandhi's loyalty to the British rule was unbounded ; he not only demanded rights as a British citizen, but also regarded it as his duty to serve the Empire in times of need. In the South African War, which broke out in October, 1899, although his personal sympathies were with the Boers, Gandhi offered the services of his countrymen to the Government in whatever capacity it liked, but the offer was rejected, as the help of the Indians, said the Government, was not needed. An interview with Mr. Jameson, member of the legislature, brought the reply, "You, Indians, know nothing of the war. You would only be a drag on the army. You would have to be taken care of instead of being help to us."* Mr. Laughton was sympathetic but the Government was obdurate. Disappointed but

* J. J. Doke p. 54.

not discouraged, this little man of infinite patience persisted in the offer and under the pressure of events the Government had to accept it. "It is not unoften that men persist so doggedly in pressing their help upon unwilling people, when help means, to those who offer, danger, suffering, perhaps death."* The Indian Ambulance Corps was nearly 1,100 strong with about 40 leaders ; of these about 300 were free Indians and the rest indentured. Though their work was to be outside the firing line, at the General's request, they gladly served within the firing line at critical moments. Marches of 20 to 25 miles a day with the wounded on stretchers, through heat and dust, sometimes without food or water, were involved in the work.

Lord Robert's son and General Woodgate were among those carried by the corps. In one of such marches, every one was thirsting for water ; there was a tiny brook on the way ; the relations between the Tommies and the Indians were so sweet that each desired the other to drink first—a competition which went on for some time. Six weeks' hard and devoted

* J. J. Doke, p. 56.

service by the Indians won them mention in official despatches and laudatory references in the press. Their leaders were awarded the War Medals and they were applauded as "Sons of the Empire." A massive monument stands to this day as the evidence of South African Government's appreciation of the sacrifice of the Indian community. But the war over, 'the Sons of the Empire' were treated as 'Helots of the Empire.' Better organisation, greater awakening, closer touch with the indentured and greater solidarity as children of the same motherland were, to the Indians, the permanent benefits of their participation in the war.

On his relief from war-duty Gandhi decided to return home, as he felt that the work in South Africa could be carried on by his co-workers and he himself should be of more service in India, where friends demanded his early return. He was allowed to go back, heavily laden with costly gifts for him, his wife and children on condition, that he would return to South Africa if within one year the community needed him. The condition was readily accepted, but the gifts made him

pass a sleepless night. He persuaded his wife and children to forego the gifts and the following morning created a trust of them in favour of the community.

After reaching the motherland, Gandhi spent some time in going about the country. In December, 1901, he attended the Calcutta Congress, travelling in the same train as Sir Pherozezshah Mehta to whom he spoke about the conditions in South Africa. He obtained a promise to permit him to move a resolution on the subject. Gandhi put up in the Ripon College where he made the acquaintance of Tilak and Motilal Ghose. In the College, finding the latrines very dirty, Gandhi pointed them out to a volunteer, who replied point-blank that it was not his but the scavenger's work. Gandhi obtained a broom and himself cleaned them. Gandhi offered his services to the secretaries of the Reception Committee and got the job of a confidential clerk at which he was delighted. To this he himself added the work of a bearer.

The Congress over, Gandhi moved to the Indian Club, where he met some Rajas and Maharajas in comfortable and graceful Bengali

dress. One day, he was pained to see them in trousers "befitting khansamas and shining boots" and enquired of one of them the reason. He replied that they had to attend Lord Curzon's Durbar, and added:

"Do you see any difference between *khansamas* and us? They are our *khansamas*, we are Lord Curzon's *khansamas*. If I were to absent myself from the levee, I should have to suffer the consequences. If I were to attend it in my usual dress, it would be an offence. And do you think I am to get any opportunity there of talking to Lord Curzon? Not a bit of it."*

Similarly, was Gandhi distressed to see Maharajas bedecked like women when Lord Hardinge laid the foundation stone of the Hindu University. Their silk *pyjamas* and *achkans*, pearl necklaces and bracelets, pearl and diamond tassels on their turbans and swords with gold hilts, put on under compulsion, were "insignia not of their royalty but of their slavery."

Mr. Gokhale removed Gandhi to his own Calcutta residence where he stayed for a month, making the acquaintance of leading Bengalis and enlisting their sympathies for

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. I p. 534.

the South African Indian community, and visiting and studying the public religious institutions of the city. He paid a flying visit to Burma, during which he saw "that just as Bombay was not India, Rangoon was not Burma, and that just as we in India have become commission agents of English merchants, even so in Burma have we combined with the English merchants, in making the Burmese people our commission agents."* From Calcutta he went to Rajkot breaking journey at Benares to see Mrs. Besant. Now he travelled third class in order to acquaint himself with the hardships of third class passengers. For the first time in his life, Gandhi's equipment consisted of a long coat of coarse woolen fabric, a dhoti, a towel, a shirt, a blanket, a water jug, a metal tiffin box and a canvass bag worth twelve annas.

Gandhi set up as a Barrister at Rajkot. He made a very good beginning and created an impression on the litigants and the lawyers. During this period he experienced "the inconsiderateness and ignorance of English officials," and arrived at this conclusion :

My Experiments With Truth, Vol. I, p. 552-3.

“How was he to understand the needs, habits, idiosyncrasies and customs of the people? How was one, accustomed to measure things in gold sovereigns, all at once to make calculations in tiny bits of copper? As the elephant is powerless to think in the terms of an ant, in spite of the best intentions in the world, even so is the Englishman with the needs of an elephant, powerless to think in the terms of, or legislate for, the Indian, with the needs of an ant.”*

He did not stay long at Rajkot. His local friends as well as Gokhale did not like him to vegetate there; he removed to Bombay. No sooner had he moved into his new house than his second son, Manilal, started an attack of typhoid with pneumonia; he was delirious at night. The doctor thought that in a case like that medicines would have little effect, and recommended eggs and chicken broth, adding that without this nourishment there was grave risk of life. Gandhi replied, “Religion, as I understand it, does not permit me to use meat or eggs for me or mine even on occasions like this, and I must therefore take the risk that you say is likely.” † Gandhi had faith in hydropathy,

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. I p. 569.

† Ibid

p. 573.

not in allopathy. The child, for Manilal was then only ten, refused to take eggs and chicken broth and asked his father to try his water-cure. Treatment seemed to be of little avail; temperature persisted going upto 104°. One night Gandhi gave Manilal a wet sheet pack and leaving him in charge of his mother went out for a walk. During the walk he prayed God to save his honour in that hour of trial; *Rama Nama*, taught to him by his nurse, Rambha, was on his lips. "*Rama Nama*," says Gandhi, "is an infallible remedy for me." When Gandhi returned, Manilal was perspiring. Fever got under control and after forty days Manilal recovered, none the worse for his water-treatment and milk and fruit-juice diet.

Gandhi had a good start in his practice in Bombay. He was expecting to get work in the High Court and Gokhale was making his own plans about Gandhi, when he received a cable from South Africa saying, "Chamberlain expected here. Return immediately." Gandhi cabled for funds; they came promptly. He left the chambers he had taken, kept the bungalow in charge of his wife and sailed for

South Africa where, he thought, he would be busy for about a year. Gandhi says :

“The separation from wife and children, the breaking of a settled establishment, and the going from the certain to the uncertain—all this was for a moment painful, but I had inured myself to an uncertain life. I think it is wrong to expect certainties in this world, where all else but God, that is Truth, is an uncertainty. All that appears and happens about and around is uncertain, transient. But there is a Supreme Being hidden therein as a Certainty, and one would be blessed if one could catch a glimpse of that Certainty and hitch one's waggon to it. The quest for that Truth is the *summum bonum* of life.” *

The Natal Indian deputation led by Gandhi waited on Chamberlain, but received a cold shoulder from him ; he had come to South Africa to win the hearts of the English and the Boers and to get a gift of 35 million pounds from them, and not to do justice to the Indian community. As a matter of fact, English state policy is based, not on truth and justice, but on diplomacy and expediency, which cannot always afford to take notice of the former. Chamberlain's reply to the deputation, though disappointing, was frank

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. I p. 582.

and brought home to the Indians the hard fact that might was right. From Natal, Mr. Chamberlain hastened to the Transvaal. Gandhi had to prepare and submit to Mr. Chamberlain the case for the Transvaal Indian as well; but a permit to enter Transvaal was not easily obtainable. The Asiatic Department had been created, more with a view to provide for the military officers who had come from India and Ceylon during the war, than to safeguard the interests of the Asiatics. The department wanted work and its men, money; both could be had with ease by authorising the department to issue permits to Asiatics. A permit would sometimes take weeks to come and cost a hundred pounds. Gandhi could ill afford to waste as much time and money. He, therefore, saw his friend, Mr. Alexander, the Superintendent of Police, secured immediately a permit through him and within an hour left for Pretoria, reaching there on the 1st. January, 1903. His entry into the Transvaal without the intervention of the Asiatic Department and his selection as the representative of the community made the department furious. In spite of colour

prejudice evidenced everywhere, the South African officer, like his brother in every democratic self-governing country, had a certain courtesy and humility about him ; but the officers imported from Asia brought with them autocracy, pure and simple, and dirt and underhand dealing, natural in the officers of a foreign power governing a nation held in bondage. Thus, the Indians had found in the new department, not their protector, but their oppressor. The department removed Gandhi's name from the deputation which was to wait on Mr. Chamberlain. The Chief of the office summoned Gandhi through a local Indian merchant, behaved discourteously, censured him for trying to protect Indian interests, which were the special concern of the department, and unceremoniously sent him away; he also gave a sound scolding to the local Indian leaders and advised them to send Gandhi away. It was thus clear that a prolonged and sustained fight was necessary for the protection of Indian rights. Gandhi, therefore, decided to settle in the Transvaal and direct the fight. He got enrolled in the Transvaal Supreme

Court and set up as an attorney in Johannesburg in April, 1903.

Gandhi now entered upon a new life. The spirit of self-sacrifice put down the desire to lay by something for the future. Feeling that the insurance policy for Rs. 10,000 he had taken out in Bombay betrayed lack of faith in God, Who was the real Protector of all, and robbed his wife and children of their self-reliance, he allowed the policy to lapse. Under the influence of the Theosophical Society, he studied Hindu religious books, memorised the *Gita* which became for him "an infallible guide of conduct. It became my dictionary of daily reference; just as I turned to the English dictionary for English words that I did not understand, I turned to this dictionary of conduct for a ready solution of all my troubles and trials."* Non-possession (*aparigraha*) and equability (*samabhava*) possessed him and he wrote to his brother that his savings, so far offered to him for the family, would henceforward go for the benefit of the community. Snell's *Equity* read in the light of the *Gita* revealed to him that jurisprudence

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. II p. 27.

was religion. His passion for vegetarianism as a mission grew so strong that he advanced without sufficient security a thousand pounds of a client, Badri, with his permission, for a vegetarian restaurant; the money never came back; Gandhi made good the loss to Badri; but it made him realise "that even a man's reforming zeal ought not to make him exceed his limit." It was about this time that he gave up, with benefit to his health, one out of the three meals he took and under the influence of Just's *Return to Nature* gave up drugging and began with success his experiments in earth and water treatment. He holds that

"999 cases out of a thousand can be brought round by means of a well-regulated diet, water and earth treatment and similar household remedies. He, who runs to the doctor, vaidya or hakim for every little ailment, and swallows all kinds of vegetable and mineral drugs, not only curtails his life, but by becoming the slave of his body instead of remaining its master, loses self control, and ceases to be a man." *

Gandhi was not long left in peace to continue his religious and philosophical studies and ethical, dietetic and therapeutic

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. II p. 40.

experiments. The oppression of the people by the Asiatic Department, which was increasing day by day, attracted his attention and he began collecting evidence, on the basis of which the Police Commissioner issued warrants against two officers, one of whom absconded, but was extradited. The trial ended, as was expected, in acquittal, for no white jury could convict a white criminal against coloured men. Gandhi "got disgusted with the legal profession. The very intellect became an abomination to me in as much as it could be prostituted for screening crime."* Their crime, however, was so patent that the Government got rid of them. When they were starving, Gandhi got them employed in the Johannesburg municipality ; he held, as he still does, that "man and his deeds are two distinct things. Whereas a good deed should call forth approbation and a wicked deed disapprobation, the doer of the deed, whether good or wicked, always deserves respect or pity as the case may be."†

Madanjit, the proprietor of a printing

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. II p. 51.

† Ibid

p. 53.

press, approached Gandhi with the proposal to start a weekly to ventilate the grievances of the Indians. Gandhi approved of the proposal and the *Indian Opinion* made its first appearance in 1904, with Mansukhlal Nazar, as the editor. The journal was not a financial success and for a long time Gandhi had to remit £ 75 a month to keep it going. Gandhi wrote regularly for it. His contributions bore, as they still do, the stamp of the consciousness

“ that the sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper press is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole country side and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within.”*

Indians, the coloured untouchables of a white empire, were relegated in Johannesburg to a special quarter known as the “coolie location,” where they had acquired plots on 99 years’ lease. Thanks to the criminal negligence of the municipality and the ignorance of the people, mostly ex-indentured

† My Experiments With Truth, Vol. II p. 77-78.

settlers, the location was thoroughly insanitary. The municipality decided to acquire the location and expropriate the Indians. A special land acquisition tribunal was set up to hear appeals from the award of the municipality. Gandhi appeared for the Indians, and won 69 out of 70 cases. He did not want to make money out of the plight of his countrymen. He agreed to work on the costs awarded by the tribunal in successful cases and a fee of £ 10 per case, irrespective of the result ; even out of this he proposed to set apart half for a hospital or other similar institution for the poor. The *Indian Opinion* alone devoured £ 1,600 out of the fee. This made Gandhi still more popular and influential. Indians looked upon him as their friend and addressed him, not as *Mahatma* (high-souled), an appellation he dislikes, but as *Bhai* (brother), a title he is proud of.

Before the Indians could be evacuated from the location, black plague suddenly broke out in a gold mine near Johannesburg and on the 18. March, 1904, twenty-three Indians working in that mine came back to their lodgings in the location with an acute attack

of plague. Sjt. Madanjit, who happened to be there, broke open the lock of a vacant house, put the patients there and sent for Gandhi. Gandhi at once cycled to the location, and informed the Town Clerk how the house was procured. Dr. Godfrey, an Indian medical practitioner of Johannesburg, soon joined them. They all looked after the patients. Gandhi was joined by his four Indian clerks, who were ready to take risks with their master. Mr. Ritch, an English friend, who had given up his job with an English firm of attorneys and articulated to Gandhi, also did not lag behind ; but as he had a large family, Gandhi allotted him work outside the danger zone. Their devoted nursing pulled all the patients through that night. The next day, the Town Council placed a dirty godown at Gandhi's disposal, without undertaking to clean it and lent the services of a nurse—a kindly lady whom Gandhi rarely allowed to touch the patients lest she should catch the infection. This devoted band at once converted the godown into a temporary hospital with funds provided by charitable Indians. Twenty-one

patients were put on brandy, and three, who would not take it, were put under Gandhi's earth and water treatment; two of the latter were saved; the rest died in the godown. In the meantime, the municipality made arrangements for plague patients at a distance of seven miles from the city and Gandhi and his colleagues were relieved of the charge of patients. With the help of Gandhi and his co-workers, the municipality succeeded in inducing the Indians to vacate the location and live under canvass for three weeks at a place thirteen miles away from Johannesburg. Gandhi had to cheer up the population in camp by his constant presence. He acted as their banker; no less than sixty thousand pounds were entrusted to him by those people. He disinfected the money and deposited it in bank. The location was put to the flames the day following its evacuation.

While at Durban, Gandhi had English friends living with him as members of the family, much to the chagrin of his wife. But she did not count at all in those days; Gandhi once showed her the door because she was not cheerfully removing the chamber-pot of a

Christian inmate, who was a *panchama* (untouchable). These European guests, among whom were Mr. Kitchen, a theosophist, Miss Dick, his Scotch steno-typist, Miss Schlesin, who succeeded her, proved very helpful to him in his struggles with the Government. In Johannesburg these contacts developed further. His letter to the press, condemning the municipality for its negligence of the sanitation of the Indian quarter, secured him Mr. Henry Polak and through him, Rev. Joseph, J. Doke. Mr. Albert West also became intimate during the plague days and readily took charge of the *Indian Opinion* at Durban, at a great personal sacrifice, relieving Madanjit for nursing the plague-stricken. Mr. West found that the paper was running at a loss and informed Gandhi, who started for Durban. Mr. Polak saw him off at the station and gave him Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, a book that brought about an instantaneous and practical transformation in Gandhi's life. He discovered reflected in that great book some of his deepest convictions. Its teachings he summarises thus :

1. The good of the individual is contained in the good of all.
2. A lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.
3. A life of labour, *i.e.*, the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman, is the life worth living.

Gandhi is not the man to let grass grow under his feet. The journey over, he described to Mr. West the lessons he had learnt from *Unto This Last* and how he proposed to put them into practice.

Mr. West fell in with his scheme ; so did his cousins, Chaganlal and Maganlal Gandhi. Within a week he acquired for a thousand pounds a hundred acres of land in Phoenix with a nice little spring, fruit trees and a dilapidated cottage. In less than a month a shed for the press, 75' x 50', was erected and the *Indian Opinion* was removed to the new settlement at Phoenix without the interruption of a single issue. The first issue of the paper from its new quarters was issued under almost unsurmountable difficulties,

which Gandhi's enthusiasm alone could get over. It was their first night at the settlement; the paper had to be issued the following day. The oil engine set up to work the press refused to work, in spite of the best efforts of the engineer, Mr. West and his men. Mr. West in tears broke the news to Gandhi late at night. Gandhi proposed to work the hand press, but West's men were too few and tired to work it. Gandhi woke up the carpenters and worked at the wheel with them the whole night to the tune of a hymn. At 7 a.m. the engine was again tried and it worked as though it had never gone wrong. The paper was out in time and the people at the settlement had learnt the lesson of self-reliance. The publication of the *Indian Opinion* from the settlement required hard manual labour from all the residents, young and old, who had to work often till midnight. The settlement had two classes of residents—those who like Gandhi worked for Ruskin's ideals and those who worked on salary or wages. The latter were engaged on the usual terms. For the former there was a uniform rule, without distinction of colour or nationality. Each settler

was given 3 acres of land to make his living by manual labour and an allowance of £ 3 a month. The settlers built their houses of corrugated iron sheets on their plots and lived simple lives. But to his great regret Gandhi could stay there only for brief intervals. "Man makes his plans to be often upset by God, but I have also found that where the ultimate goal is the search of truth, no matter how a man's plans are frustrated, the issue is never injurious and is often better than anticipated." *

Gandhi now sent for his wife and children from India. His third son, Ramdas, landed with a broken arm in a sling. Holding as Gandhi does, that he who would go in for novel experiments must begin with himself, he put this child of eight on earth and water treatment and in about a month the boy was cured, proving to Gandhi that God always protects the honest experimenter. Himself a married man and his ideas about *brahmacharya* not having fully matured, he interested himself in getting his bachelor friends married. The first was Polak, who had left

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. II p. 119-120.

his place on the staff of the *Critic* to join the Phoenix settlement and thence moved to Johannesburg and articulated himself to Gandhi. Mr. West was the next. Their wives were new and helpful additions to the Gandhi family.

Ruskin's teaching did not leave Gandhi's household at Johannesburg unaffected. Simplicity, already begun at Durban, now forged ahead. Unleavened whole-meal bread made at home took the place of baker's bread, and flour ground by Polak, Gandhi and the children, that of the common mill flour. They personally attended to the cleaning of the closet, which proved a good training for the children, who did not develop aversion for the scavenger's work and got a good grounding in general sanitation. The language of the household now was Gujrati; Gandhi never used English when talking to his children. Says Gandhi,

"It has always been my conviction, that Indian parents, who train their children to think and talk in English from their infancy, betray their children and their country. They deprive them of the spiritual and social heritage of the nation, and render them to that extent unfit for the service of the country." *

* M. K. Gandhi by J. J. Doke p. 74.

In 1906, when Gandhi was leading a settled life, he had to break up his household again. The Natal Government had imposed a new tax on the Zulus, whose land was now the preserve of the whites. A Zulu chief advised his people not to pay the tax and "assegaied" a sergeant who had gone to collect the tax. This was magnified into the Zulu rebellion, and an expedition was sent against the Zulus. Gandhi's belief that the British Empire existed for the good of the world obliged him to stand by the British, without considering the righteousness or unrighteousness of their action. His offer to form an Indian Ambulance Corps was readily accepted. His wife and children went and settled at Phoenix; Polak with his wife moved to a small house and Gandhi went to Durban, formed a corps twenty-four strong, of which he was appointed Sergeant Major, and proceeded to the affected area. He saw the Zulus offered no resistance. A section of them had been arrested as suspects in connection with the non-payment of the new tax, and under the orders of the white General, mercilessly flogged causing them

severe sores which, unattended to, were festering. The white people, claiming to be followers of Jesus, were not willing to nurse them, and even dissuaded the Indians from attending to their wounds. Gandhi's corps was a godsend to the suffering Zulu, who was now tenderly nursed. Gandhi also compounded and dispensed prescriptions for the white soldiers, who imbibed from him something of Christian charity. For nearly six weeks Gandhi and his party passed through the trial of hearing every morning reports of British rifles exploding like crackers in innocent hamlets and shooting down unoffending Zulus. Their only consolation was that but for them the Zulu, the victim of this mad man-hunt, would have been left uncared for. "Mr. Gandhi," says Doke, "speaks with great reserve of this experience. What he saw he will never divulge. I imagine it was not always creditable to British humanity."*

Amidst these scenes of fire and death Gandhi fell into deep thought. He realised that he "could not live both after the flesh and the spirit." In order to serve the

* M. K. Gandhi, by J. J. Doke, p. 74.

community—which to him was the image of God—he felt *brahmacharya* was essential; for self-realisation it was indispensable. “The brute by nature knows no self-restraint. Man is man because he is capable of, and only in so far as he exercises, self-restraint.”* *Brahmacharya* begins with bodily restraint, but it does not end till even undesirable thoughts are completely locked out. It is attained by strenuous efforts and grace of God, for which “seekers after God have left us *mantras*, such as *Rama Nama*, hallowed by their own austerities and charged with their purity.” † On his return to Phoenix, Gandhi and some of his co-workers took the vow of *brahmacharya* about the middle of 1906.

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. II p. 149-150.

† Ibid

p. 151.



CHAPTER V

THE BROWN MAN'S WAIL (1906-1914)

The fateful September of 1906, marked the inauguration of "an epic struggle between spirit on one side and governmental power and brute force on the other" *—a struggle characterised by inexhaustible patience, immense sacrifice and infinite love, even when the struggle was at its bitterest, on the one side and ruthless repression, blind self-interest and remorseless hatred on the other. Peaceful and constitutional agitation had for thirteen long years, failed to redress Indian grievances in South Africa. The acknowledged loyalty of the Indian to the Empire was rewarded only by new shackles, forged by an all-white legislature in South Africa and finally sealed with approval in

* Rolland p. 15.

England by the living symbol of the unity of the Empire.

It was an irony of fate that while on the declaration of the Boer War Lord Lansdowne, Lord Selborne and other British statesmen had declared that one of the causes which led to it, was the scandalous treatment accorded by the Boer Government to the Indians, on its conclusion the British Government of South Africa treated Indians more scandalously. On the report of a special committee, all old laws placing restrictions on the liberty of the subject or opposed to the British constitution were repealed by a stroke of the pen, but the anti-Indian Acts, collected by the same committee, were published in the form of a book, which served as a handy manual for the Asiatic Department. The Boer administration, being lax, never strictly enforced their drastic legislation. Old and stereotyped as the British constitution was, officers under it had to work like machines, their liberty of action being restricted by a system of progressive checks; the result was that the Indians felt the maximum weight of the

heavy hand of the oppressive and niggardly policy of the Government. All loop-holes were closed. Mr. Lionel Curtis, the father of dyarchy in India, who was in the Asiatic Department, suggested that the first step for stopping Indian immigration was the effective registration of all Indian residents. In order to establish that they did not desire to smuggle their countrymen into South Africa, the Indians readily got themselves registered. But this could not satisfy Mr. Curtis, who claimed to do every thing according to scientific methods. He wanted to have the force of law behind these registration certificates, and drafted an Asiatic Ordinance, which met with the Government's ready acceptance.

The draft Ordinance required every Indian, man, woman or child, to get registered with the Registrar of Asiatics, on penalty of a fine, imprisonment or even deportation. The Registrar was to note the marks of identification and take the finger and thumb impressions of those he registered. An Indian was to produce his certificate whenever required to do so, whether walking on a

public thoroughfare or attending a court or revenue office. Failure to produce it immediately rendered him liable to almost the same penalties as non-registration. Police officers could enter private dwellings to inspect the certificates. This Ordinance was more drastic than even the Indian law relating to criminal tribes. In order to justify this Ordinance, hypocrisy had called political theory to its aid. It was urged that South Africa represented the western civilization, and its free contact with eastern culture would sweep it off like sand. The fact, however, was that the Ordinance betrayed bitter hatred against the Indian, with whom the white trader could not compete.

On 23rd August, 1906, the leading Transvaal Indians met and were shocked to read the Ordinance. One of them said in a burst of passion, that if any one came forward to demand a certificaté from his wife, he would shoot him on the spot and take the consequences. Gandhi pleaded for a calm atmosphere and said, "It will be wrong to be hasty, impatient or angry. That cannot save us from the onslaught. But God will come to

our help if only we calmly carry out in time measures of resistance, presenting a united front and bearing the hardships, which such moral resistance is certain to bring in its train." It was decided to hold a public meeting to consider the Ordinance.

On September 11, 1906, three thousand Indians, representing all parts of Transvaal, met in the old Empire Theatre at Johannesburg, and passed, among others, the famous fourth resolution never to submit to the new Ordinance, but to suffer all penalties, if it became law. Seth Haji Habib solemnly declared, in the name of God, never to submit and advised all present to do the same. After Gandhi and other leaders had explained the consequences of such a pledge, every single Indian present took the vow of passive resistance.

The story of the birth and evolution of passive Resistance in Gandhi's own words is full of interest. He says:

“ I remember how one verse of a Gujrati poem, which, as a child, I learnt at school, clung to me. In substance it was this :—

‘If a man gives you a drink of water and you give him a drink in return, that is no thing:

Real beauty consists in doing good against evil.'

" As a child this verse had a powerful influence over me, and I tried to carry it into practice. Then came the Sermon on the Mount.....Of course, I knew the *Bhagwad Gita* in Sanskrit tolerably well, but I had not made its teaching in that particular a study. It was the New Testament which really awakened me to the rightness and value of Passive Resistance. When I read in the Sermon on the Mount such passages as 'Resist not him that is evil but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also', and 'Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven,' I was simply overjoyed, and found my own opinion confirmed where I least expected it. The *Bhagwad Gita* deepened the impression, and Tolstoi's, *The Kingdom of God is Within You* gave it permanent form."

Gandhi's passive resistance is not the passive resistance of the west. Gandhi found very early in a meeting of Europeans "that the term passive resistance was too narrowly construed and that it was supposed to be a weapon of the weak, that it could be characterised by hatred and that it could finally manifest itself as violence."†

* M. K. Gandhi by J. J. Doke, p. 87-88.

† My Experiments With Truth, Vol. II p. 153-154.

“ I do not like the term passive resistance. It describes a method but gives no hint of the system of which it is only part. Real beauty, and that is my aim, is in doing good against evil.”* He offered a prize for the best name suggested ; it was won by Maganlal Gandhi’s *sadagraha* (*sat-truth, agraha-firmness*). In order to make it clearer, Gandhi changed it to *satyagraha* (truthgrip or adherence to truth).

That the Indian community of South Africa took to *satyagraha* as fish takes to water is incomprehensible to those who do not know that as a means of opposing evil it is inherent in Indian philosophy ; it is a part of Indian life ; India’s sacred literature is replete with instances of people gladly suffering and even giving up their lives in *satyagraha*—relying on the justice of their cause and the mercy of God, Who always appeared to crown, with His own hands, *satyagraha* with success. It appeals to the spiritual side of man and Indians are essentially a spiritual people.

Henceforth Gandhi’s life-story is the story

* M. K. Gandhi by J. J. Doke p. 89.

of *satyagraha* in South Africa. Before entering into its details it is necessary to understand what *satyagraha* is.

Satyagraha is based on the recognition that man is higher and nobler than the brute; and that there is a force which strives for the union of human souls and of these souls with God; this force is love. The use of physical force is evil, because it divides man from man. It is to be resisted not by physical force, which accentuates the division, but by soul-force, which brings about re-union. *Satyagraha* involves penance and not punishment, penance for the aggrieved and not punishment for the wrong-doer. The silent suffering of the aggrieved ultimately appeals to the innermost self of the wrong-doer, howsoever much stifled it may be and awakens his sympathy. Penance by the aggrieved is the recognition of the fact that in the presence of a just and righteous God, no one can wantonly injure another; injury is inflicted only where and when it is deserved; penance is the atonement for this evil dessert and the control of the force of hatred against the wrong-doer created by his wrong-doing.

Satyagraha is, therefore, a spiritual weapon.

“ It blesses him who uses it and also him against whom it is used, without drawing a drop of blood....In politics its use is based upon the immutable maxim that Government of the people is possible only so long as they consent either consciously or unconsciously to be governed.....The methods adopted in order to secure relief are equally pure and simple. Violence, in any shape or form, is entirely eschewed. Self-suffering is the only true and effective means of securing lasting reforms. The Passive Resisters endeavour to meet and conquer hatred by love. They oppose the brute or physical force by Soul-force. They hold that loyalty to an earthly sovereign or an earthly constitution is subordinate to loyalty to God and His constitution. In interpreting God's constitution through their conscience, they admit that they may possibly be wrong. If they are wrong, they alone suffer and the established order of things continues.” *

It will thus be seen that *satyagraha* is the weapon of the morally and the spiritually strong. The weak cannot use it. In as much as moral or spiritual strength is far superior to and subdues brute force, the result of *satyagraha* is sure success, the exercise of the purest soul-force in its perfect form brings about instantaneous relief. If

* Gandhi's Ideas p. 198.

relief is delayed, it is a proof that *satyagraha* is not of the most complete type; it may be, that those who practise it, do not understand its full value or do not refrain from violence from soul-conviction. The use of *satyagraha* requires, as a condition precedent, and further develops, unshakeable faith in God, supreme self-control, inexhaustible patience, and unadulterated love, even for the wrongdoer. The justice of the cause is a necessary condition of success. It "can only be carried to a successful conclusion if the cause be just. The acceptance of suffering, instead of the infliction of it, requires such moral power in those who adopt this policy that no community could successfully use it in an unjust cause."* *Satyagraha* is the herald of peace and "can destroy the evergrowing militarism under which the nations of the west are groaning and are being almost crushed to death, and which promises to overwhelm even the nations of the east." † Its universal use is the harbinger of a brighter day, when the sword will be turned into the ploughshare, and the

* M. K. Gandhi by J. J. Doke, p. 90.

† Gandhi's Ideas p. 199.

spear, into the pruning hook and the despot, into the real democrat, realising the brotherhood of man and acting upon it. It will stop the growing insane luxury of the rich and the misery of the poor.

“This is the beauty of *satyagraha*. It comes up to us; we have not to go out in search for it. There is a virtue inherent in the principle itself. A *Dharma-yuddha* (war of righteousness) in which there are no secrets to be guarded, no scope for cunning, and no place for untruth, comes unsought; and a man of religion is ever ready for it. A struggle which has to be previously planned is not a righteous struggle. In a righteous struggle God Himself plans the campaigns and conducts the battles. A war of righteousness can be waged only in the name of God; and it is only when the *satyagrahi* feels quite helpless, when he is apparently on his last legs, and finds utter darkness all around him, that God comes to the rescue. God helps us when we feel ourselves humbler than the very dust under our feet. Only to the weak and helpless is divine succour vouchsafed.” *

Soon after the great meeting of the 11th September 1906, enthusiasm for passive resistance spread like wild fire throughout the Transvaal, pledges being signed in hundreds at every place. A deputation waited on Mr.

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. II p. 225-226.

Duncan, the Colonial Secretary. Haji Habib warned him that he would, then and there, kill the officer who would proceed to take his wife's finger-prints. The minister was taken aback. He assured the deputation that women would be exempted, but added that, in other respects, the Ordinance would remain, as the Government considered it essential for the very existence of the Europeans. Protests and petitions bore no fruit and the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance, 1906, was passed. Before starting direct action, Gandhi wanted to exhaust all constitutional methods. At his suggestion, a deputation was sent to England to agitate for the withholding of the royal assent to the Ordinance. The community had proposed to send Gandhi alone but he did not agree; H. O. Ali was, therefore, sent with him.

The deputation spent six weeks in England. Lord Elgin, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and Mr. John Morley, Secretary of State for India, were both sympathetic. Other English statesmen and public workers also saw the righteousness of the Indian cause and helped it. In keeping with the barbarous

English custom of inaugurating movements at dinners, the South African British Indian Committee was formed at a dinner, with Mr. L. W. Ritch as Secretary. Indian young men in England rendered all possible help, but Symonds, an English young man of parts, put all the other volunteers to shade by his self-sacrifice.

On their way back, the deputation received a cable at Madeira to the effect that Lord Elgin was not prepared to advise the King to signify his assent to the Ordinance. But, as a matter of fact, Lord Elgin had the Ordinance vetoed with the promise to the South African Agent that it would receive the royal assent, if passed again after the grant of responsible government on the 1. January, 1907. Disallowance was, thus, only in name. British Ministers' sympathy was nothing but crooked diplomacy. This deception made the Indian opposition more determined and enthusiastic.

The Asiatic Registration Act was the second measure passed by the new parliament after responsible government was established, the first being the budget. It

was rushed through all its stages on the 21. March, 1907 and was to take effect from the 1. July, 1907. It was a verbatim copy of the Ordinance. The Indians took new pledges and formed the Passive Resistance Association for carrying on the struggle. On 30. June, 1907, a mass meeting of the Transvaal Indians was held in Pretoria where Mr. Hoskin brought a message from General Botha appealing to the Indians to resign themselves to the inevitable. The reply of the meeting was the very short speech of Sheth Kachhalia :

“Every Indian knows what the Black Act is and what it implies. I have heard Mr. Hoskin attentively and so have you. His speech has only confirmed me in my own resolution. We know how powerful the Transvaal Government is. But it cannot do anything more than enact such an unjust law. It may cast us into prison, confiscate our property, deport us, or hang us. All this we shall bear cheerfully, but we simply cannot put up with this law.”*

He swore, as did the whole audience, in the name of God, that even though hanged they would never submit to the Act.

* Mahatma Gandhi At Work, p. 173.

The first of July saw the opening of Registration Offices by the Government and of their being picketed by the Indian people. The picketing was so effective that even weaklings could not go to these offices and sought to get themselves registered secretly at night in private houses. But the volunteers were so vigilant that they picketed even these places. In spite of all their exertions, the Asiatic Department could not get more than five hundred Indians willing to register. They now thought of arresting a leader or two. Pandit Ram Sundara of Germiston was their first victim. His conviction made the community more determined and the Department more disappointed. After his conviction, not a single registration took place in Germiston. As time went on, the Government realised that the spirit of the community was rising higher and higher. In order to break the spirit, the leaders were summoned for the 10th. December, 1907, to show cause why they should not be deported. Among them were Gandhi, Thambi Naidoo and Leung Quinn, the leader of the Chinese. They were ordered to get registered or leave Transvaal

and in case of failure, to attend Court on the 10th. January, 1908, to hear the sentence. Gandhi was sentenced to two months' simple imprisonment, though he pleaded for more. The number of *satyagrahi* prisoners was increasing day by day; through them Gandhi obtained news of the progress of the movement. He was in prison hardly for a fortnight when the Government proposed a compromise. The community said it could accept no compromise without Gandhi's advice. So Mr. Cartwright, editor of the *Leader*, took General Smuts' draft compromise to Gandhi. Gandhi consulted his fellow-prisoners, made some alterations in the draft and signed it. The compromise was that the Indian community should get registered, not under the Black Act, but voluntarily, with such particulars as the Government would decide in consultation with the community, and on the majority of the Indians getting registered, the Government would repeal the Act. On 30. January, 1908, the Superintendent of Police took Gandhi to Pretoria to meet Smuts who congratulated him on the Indian community remaining firm even on Gandhi's

imprisonment, and assured him of his and General Botha's *bona fides* about the compromise. After the conversation Gandhi was free, the other prisoners were released the following morning. Gandhi immediately entrained for Johannesburg. Reaching Johannesburg at 9 P. M., he, at once, proceeded to the house of Seth Essop Mia, the Chairman, and asked him to arrange for a meeting immediately. By midnight, the courtyard of the mosque near Seth Essop's house was filled with a thousand Indians. But for the opposition of two Pathans, the settlement was unanimously accepted. One of these Pathans accused Gandhi of betraying the community and selling it to Smuts for £ 15,000. On the following morning, Gandhi went to the jail with the leaders and escorted back home all the *satyagrahis* in prison.

On February 10, 1908, the leaders got ready to take out registration certificates. The new form of registration was decided in consultation with the *satyagrahis*. This morning when Gandhi reached his office, he found Mir Alam, a Pathan client, in a sullen mood standing outside. As Gandhi, Essop

Mia and other friends set out for the Registration Office, Mir Alam followed them with his companions. When Gandhi was outside Arnot and Gibsons premises, not more than three minutes' walk from the Registration Office, Mir Alam suddenly asked him where he was going. Gandhi replied, "I am going to take out a registration certificate and I am going to give my ten finger-prints. If you will come with me, I will first get a certificate for you also with an impression only of the two thumbs. Then I will take one out for myself, giving the finger-prints." Scarcely was the last sentence finished when, from behind, a heavy cudgel descended on Gandhi's head and he fainted. The Pathan and his companions gave him blows and kicks which Essop Mia and other friends tried to avert, with the result that they also received attention from the Pathans. Some European passers-by arrested Mir Alam and his companions. Gandhi was carried into Gibson's office unconscious. When he regained consciousness, Doke was bending over him. Gandhi's first question was about Mir Alam and on learning of his arrest, he said he must

be released. At Doke's request, Gandhi agreed to be taken to the residence of the Dokes. Mr. Chamney, the Registrar of Asiatics, was the first to arrive at the Doke's to see Gandhi. Though his head was broken, face badly cut and the whole body bruised and aching, Gandhi asked the Registrar eagerly not to allow any one to register before him and insisted that the papers be brought there. Mr. Chamney went away to get the papers. Dr. Thwaites arrived, stitched up the wounds in the cheek and the upper lips, dressed other injuries, and enjoined perfect silence till the removal of the stitches. Gandhi sent a telegram to the Attorney-General for Mir Alam's release, wrote out a short note for his country-men and sent it through Seth Essop. It ran as follows :—

“ Dear friends, I am well and am now in the brotherly and sisterly hands of Mr. and Mrs. Doke. I hope to take up my duties again shortly.

“ Those who have committed the act did not know what they were doing. They thought that I was committing a crime. They had their redress in the only manner they knew. I, therefore, request that no steps be taken against them.

"Seeing that the assault was committed by a Musalman or Musalmans, the Hindus might feel hurt. But if this happens, they will put themselves in the wrong before the world and their Maker. Rather let the blood spilt to-day cement the two religious communities indissolubly together—such is my heartfelt prayer. May God grant it!

"Assault or no assault, my advice remains the same. The majority of Asiatics ought to give their finger-prints. Those who have conscientious scruples will be exempted by the Government. To ask for more would be to show ourselves acting as children.

"The spirit of *satyagraha*, rightly understood, makes the people fear no one except God. No cowardly fear, therefore, should deter the vast majority of sober-minded Indians from doing their duty. The promise to repeal the Act having been given to us, it is the sacred duty of every good Indian to help the Government and the Colony to the uttermost."

Mr. Chamney came back with the registration papers. As Gandhi gave him his finger-prints with pain, Mr. Chamney, against whom he had written bitterly, was in tears. Mir Alam was released at Gandhi's request, but the Europeans agitated for his trial; he was re-arrested, convicted and sentenced to three months' hard labour but Gandhi was not called to the witness-box.

Gandhi spent ten days with the Dokes during which the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Doke were all attention and their little daughter, Olive, sang Gandhi to sleep with his favourite English hymn, "Lead kindly light." Rev. Doke was a true servant of Jesus and always took delight in sharing and lightening the burden of those who were weary and heavy-laden, without fear of consequences. He espoused the Indian cause and had to pay the penalty for it and for harbouring Gandhi.

During the early days of his convalescence, Gandhi developed the power, which he afterwards retained, of being able to fall asleep while at work just where he sat, and after a few moments to wake up refreshed and without any break in the continuity of thought. Mrs. Polak writes:—

I have sat in the room while he has been dictating to his secretary, who had come up from the office for this purpose, and quite suddenly the voice ceased and the eyes closed. The secretary and I would sit still, then equally suddenly Mr. Gandhi's eyes would open again and voice would continue dictating from the very point that it had stopped.*

* Gandhi the Man p. 93.

The Natal Indians had misunderstood the settlement. Gandhi had to go to Durban to remove the prevailing misunderstanding. A public meeting was called to hear him ; some friends apprehended an attack on him and advised him not to attend the meeting or take steps to defend himself. But Gandhi held that

“neither of these two courses was open to me. If a servant, when called by his master, fail to respond through fear, he forfeits the title of servant. Nor does he deserve the name, if he is afraid of his master's punishment. Service of the public for service's sake is like walking on the sword's edge. If a servant is ready enough for praise, he may not flee in the face of blame.”*

He attended the meeting, explained how the settlement had been arrived at and answered a volley of questions. When the meeting was nearly over, a Pathan rushed to the platform with a big stick and the lights were, at the same time, put out. Gandhi's friends had come prepared; they surrounded him; one of them, who had a revolver in his pocket, fired a blank shot. Meanwhile, Rustomji brought the police, which made a passage through the

* Gandhi At Work p. 249-250.

crowd and took Gandhi safely to Rustomji's house. The next day Rustomji collected all the Pathans and asked them to put their doubts before Gandhi. But Gandhi failed to conciliate them. They had a preconceived notion that Gandhi had betrayed the Indians and the canker of suspicion cannot be cured by arguments or explanations. Gandhi left the same day for Phoenix, accompanied by a body of his countrymen who had taken upon themselves the task of guarding their leader. While at Phoenix, Gandhi succeeded through the *Indian Opinion* in removing misunderstandings about the compromise. The result was that there were hardly any Indians who did not register themselves voluntarily. The Indians had fulfilled their part of the settlement; and the Government admitted it. But General Smuts backed out. He retained the Black Act and introduced into the legislature a new measure to validate voluntary registration already effected. Thus, the voluntarily registered were exempted from the operation of the Black Act. Gandhi called a meeting of the Satyagraha Committee which decided

to put up a fight again. Certificates were collected in order to be burnt on the day the new Act was passed. An intimation to this effect was sent to the Government. The Bill was passed on the 16. August, 1908, General Smuts remarking, "The people who have offered such a threat to the Government have no idea of its power. I am sorry that some agitators are trying to inflame poor Indians who will be ruined if they succumb to their blandishments."* The Indians, in their thousands, met the same evening, received with cheers the Government telegram regretting their determination and announcing the Government's inability to change their line of action. The Chairman and Gandhi put the audience on their guard. Gandhi asked the waverers to take back their certificates and the opposers, if any, to come forward. Mir Alam apologised for having assaulted Gandhi and to the great joy of the audience handed in his certificate (obtained under a war measure before the passing of the Black Act) to be burnt. Not a single certificate was taken

* Gandhi At Work p. 277.

back. Over two thousand certificates were placed in the largest cauldron available in the market, saturated with paraffin and set ablaze by Seth Essop. Some more certificates were then thrown into the cauldron and the whole audience rose to its feet and made the whole place resound with lusty cheers.

Along with the Black Act was passed the Transvaal Immigrants Registration Act, 1907, which prohibited the entry of even those Asiatics who passed the education test but were ineligible for registration. The Satyagraha Committee had included this Act also in its programme. Gandhi set his face against the suggestions that the whole mass of Anti-Indian legislation be included and *satyagraha* be offered not only in the Transvaal, but also in Natal, Cape Colony and the Orange Free State. Gandhi held that it would be dishonest to take up a position which was not in view when the struggle started and it must close when the demands for which *satyagraha* was originally started were accepted. He was confident

“ that if he had not adhered to this principle, then, instead of winning we should not only have lost all

along the line, but also have forfeited the sympathy which had been enlisted in our favour. On the other hand, if the adversary himself creates new difficulties for us while the struggle is in progress, these become automatically included in the struggle itself. A *satyagrahi*, without being false to his faith, cannot disregard new difficulties which confront him while he is pursuing his course. The adversary is not bound by any limit of maximum or minimum. He can try, if he wishes, to frighten the *satyagrahi* by raising novel issues. But the latter has renounced all fear; he confronts by *satyagraha* the latter difficulty as well as the former, and trusts that it will help him to hold his own against all odds. Therefore when the struggle is prolonged by the adversary, it is the adversary who stands to lose from his own standpoint, and it is the *satyagrahi* who stands to gain." *

Single-mindedness, he thinks, is needed to a greater extent by a *satyagrahi* than by a rope-dancer. Further, says he:

"My experience has taught me that a law of progression applies to every righteous struggle. But in the case of *satyagraha* the law amounts to an axiom. As the Ganges advances, other streams flow into it, and hence, at the mouth, it grows so wide that neither bank is to be seen and a person sailing upon the surface of the river cannot make out where the river ends and the sea

* Gandhi At Work p. 276.

begins. So also, as a *satyagraha* struggle flows on-wards, many other elements help to swell its current. There is a constant growth in the result to which it leads. This is really inevitable, and is bound up with its first principles. For, in *satyagraha* the minimum is also the maximum, and as it is the irreducible minimum, there is no question of retreat. The only movement possible is an advance. In other struggles, even when they are righteous, the demand is first pitched a little higher so as to admit of future reduction. Hence the law of progression does not apply to all of them without exception.”*

In order to offer *satyagraha* to the Immigrants Restriction Act, Gandhi selected Sorabji, a Parsi, who had a working knowledge of English but was not eligible for registration. He crossed the border after giving previous notice to the government. The Immigrants Restriction Officer did not arrest him and he reached Johannesburg. This inactivity or set design of the government Gandhi explains in these words :

“Very often it so happens that we take steps deliberately and fearlessly as *satyagrahis*, the Administration at first is not ready to oppose us. The reason for this lies in the very nature of the Government itself. An

* Gandhi At Work p. 277.

official does not ordinarily make his department so much his own as to arrange his ideas on every subject beforehand and make preparations accordingly. Again, the officer has not one but many things to attend to, and his mind is divided between them. Thirdly, the official suffers from the intoxication of power, is thus apt to be careless and believes that it is child's play for the authorities to deal with any movement whatever. On the other hand, the public worker knows his ideal as well as the means of achieving his end. Therefore, if he has definite plans, he is perfectly ready on the spot to carry them out, and his work is the only subject of his thoughts night and day. If, therefore, he takes the right steps with decision, he is always in advance of the Government." *

Sorabji was summoned to stand his trial on the 9. July, 1908 ; Gandhi got him off on the contention that the summons was defective. He was, again, summoned on the following day and ordered to leave the country within seven days. He informed the police that he was not prepared to obey the order. On the 20. July, he was arrested and sentenced to a month's hard labour for the disobedience of the Magistrate's order.

This conviction was followed by the government's supreme indifference, in the

* Gandhi At Work p. 281-82.

hope that this would tire out the *satyagrahis* and cool down their ardour. But a *satyagrahi* is never tired out so long as he has the capacity to suffer. The Indians now sent out a contingent under Daud Sheth to violate the law. They were arrested and deported without trial. They entered again, were ordered to leave within seven days, disobeyed the order and were sentenced to a fine of fifty pounds each or three months' hard labour. They chose the latter. The local Indians now followed their guests to jail by trading without licence and entering the Transvaal from Natal without showing their registration certificates. Fresh "invaders" from Natal also poured in. Even *Imams* and Barristers became hawkers in order to enjoy the Government's hospitality. In the jail, they were harassed in every possible way but, for the honour of their country, with *Allah* or *Rama* on their lips, they gladly broke stones, dug tanks, did the scavenger's work and performed pick-axe work in hard rocky ground. Gandhi was also in His Majesty's hotel, but this time in a solitary cell reserved for dangerous prisoners. The government was

now in a state of utter perplexity and found it hard to feed the Indians even with the starvation diet allowed them. They now deported a large batch direct to India, thinking that this would crush the spirit. Many of the deportees had their families, business and property in South Africa and had cut off all connection with India. As the boat was about to sail, Gandhi asked his co-worker, P. K. Naidu, who had never been to India before, to accompany the deportees, look after them and, in India, follow G. A. Natesan's instructions. Naidu, at once, joined the deportees. Deportation to India was illegal, but

“Government often deliberately violates its own laws. In face of an emergency there is no time to pass fresh legislation. Governments, therefore, often break laws and do what they please. Afterwards, they either enact new laws or else make the people forget their breach of the old laws.” *

An agitation was started against this lawlessness and legal steps were successfully taken to challenge it, with the result that the government had to stop deportation to India. In jail, the Indians were harassed, put to

* Gandhi At Work p. 293.

severe tasks and exposed to the inclemencies of the weather. A young man of eighteen contracted double pneumonia and succumbed to it. But the Indian community stood unmoved and the fight went on unabated. The government grew more violent; they placed the Indians in Diepkloof convict prison, meant for dangerous criminals whom the government wanted to bend. The Indians did the work given them, but the harsh jailer still insulted them. They went on hunger-strike, declaring solemnly that they would touch no food until the removal of the jailer or their own transfer. They secured the latter within a week.

While imprisonments and deportations were going on, the movement for the formation of the Union of South Africa was gaining strength. The whites of the four colonies sent a deputation to England to present their case before the British Cabinet and the Crown. The Indians, apprehending a darker future under the proposed Union, also sent Gandhi and Sheth Haji Habib to England, although they knew that Indians' small voice would be drowned amid the loud roar of the British and

the African lions. The Indian deputation interviewed Lords Crewe and Morley and a large number of the members of Parliament, journalists and others. Lord Ampthill rendered them invaluable service. At last, General Botha sent, through Lord Ampthill, an offer to grant the minor demands of the Indians without repealing the two obnoxious Acts and removing the colour bar. The Haji accepted the offer on behalf of the rich and Gandhi rejected it on behalf of the poor who were fighting not only for practical relief but also for a principle. Lord Ampthill appreciated Gandhi's answer and promised him his continued help.

The Indian deputation returned in November, 1909, disappointed. What else could have been the fate of those who are helots in their own country? In England, Gandhi met a number of Indian anarchists and talked to them. He wanted to give a smashing answer to terrorism. This he did on his voyage back to South Africa in the shape of *Hind Swaraj*, a booklet which appeared, on his return, in the *Indian Opinion*. It demonstrates the sublimity of *satyagraha*

and is a true measure of Gandhi's faith in its efficacy. On landing, Gandhi did not mind the numerical strength of the party which, he expected, would continue *satyagraha*, but he was not free from anxiety on the score of finance. Providence always comes to his help; just as he set his foot in Cape Town, he received a cable that Ratanji Tata had given Rs. 25,000 to the *satyagraha* fund.

The struggle, it appeared now, was going to be protracted and some arrangement was necessary for providing maintenance for the families of the *satyagrahis*. On the 30. May 1910, Mr. Kallenbach placed at Gandhi's disposal his newly purchased farm of 1,100 acres, with nearly one thousand fruit-trees, a small house, two wells and a spring. It was 21 miles from Johannesburg and one mile from Lawley, the nearest railway station. It was here that Gandhi founded the Tolstoy Farm where the families of the *satyagrahis* were invited to settle. Very soon, the voluntary labour of *satyagrahis* built two separate blocks of houses—one for men and the other for women—a house for Mr. Kallenbach, a school house and a workshop for carpentry

and shoe-making. The Farm soon became a busy hive. The rules of the Tolstoy Farm were harder than those of the Phoenix settlement; yet the Farmers accepted them cheerfully. To give but one instance, the 21 miles' journey to Johannesburg was to be performed on foot, except when one went on public business, in which case, he could travel third class by rail; one must be back the same day, must carry his own provisions on the journey and must not spend a pie on refreshments in the city. In cleanliness, the Farm was the last word.

“ In spite of the large number of settlers living in one place, refuse and night-soil were not to be found anywhere on the Farm. All rubbish was buried in trenches dug for the purpose. No waste water was permitted to be thrown on the roads. This was collected in buckets and used to water the trees. Scraps of food and vegetable refuse were also utilized as manure. A square pit, one foot and a half deep, was dug out to receive the night-soil which was afterwards fully covered with the excavated earth and therefore did not give out any smell. There were no flies, and no one would imagine that night-soil had been buried there. We were thus not only spared a nuisance, but what might have been a possible annoyance was

converted into valuable manure for the Farm. If night-soil were properly utilized in India we could get manure worth lakhs of rupees and also secure immunity from a number of diseases. But, by our bad habits, we spoil our sacred river banks and furnish breeding grounds for flies. Owing to our criminal negligence these settle down upon uncovered night-soil and then settle upon us. Thus they defile our bodies after we have bathed. Such acts of gross neglect are a sin against God as well as man. They betray a sad want of public spirit and consideration for others." *

There never was a case of illness on the Farm. Neighbours used to come to Gandhi for cure and he always treated them with success with earth, water, exercise or food. Snakes, in which the place abounded, were not killed, yet there was no case of snake-bite.

Gandhi's *ahimsa* is catching. A European of the hunting, flesh-eating type joined the Phoenix settlement. One day, when he went to his small shed to fetch his bicycle, he saw two green mambas coiled up quite near it. He said to himself: "Love overcometh all things, and man should fear nothing that God has created." † He went to the door and

* Gandhi At Work p. 318-19

† Gandhi, The Man p. 60.

stood quietly without any sense of fear or dislike. The reptiles glided close to him almost touching him and passed out of doors. Gandhi himself had calmly allowed a deadly snake to crawl over his legs on its way to safety. As a child, Gandhi had seen a deadly scorpion crawl over his mother's bare feet, and the mother pick it up and drop it out of the window. The same European gentleman allowed two horrible poisonous spiders to build their home near the head of his bed and slept comfortably and undisturbed.

The dress and food of the Farmers was of the simplest. They themselves did all the work, from cooking down to scavenging; no servant or hired labourer was employed. They made their own leather sandals, as the use of shoes in hot climate Gandhi considered harmful. Gandhi and Kallenbach acted as school-masters for the ill-assorted group of children on the Farm; religious teaching was given to the child in his own religion. Gandhi's experiments in co-education were of the boldest type, but they always succeeded. Every one took vegetarian food; non-Hindus fasted with the Hindus on *Ekadashi* and in

Chaturmasya; non-Muslims kept company with the Muslims in observing the *Ramzan*. There was an ebb and flow of *satyagrahis* on the Farm. Courts had such confidence in *satyagrahis* that bail was never demanded from them. One day, two *satyagrahis*, who had been let out on personal recognizance, came to the Farm; they had to attend the Court the following day to receive sentence. They were so engrossed in talk that the time for the last train was almost up. They ran to the station for all they were worth, but they were still on the way as the train whistled in; they had just reached the station precincts when it steamed out; the station-master seeing them running stopped the train for them. This incident illustrates the *satyagrahi's* eagerness to keep his promise and to seek jail and the happy relations *satyagrahis* cultivate even with their opponents. Even in jails, the treatment of the prisoners changed for the better as the movement advanced. Gandhi continued, at the Farm, his experiments in dietetics. About this time, he read of the horrible treatment accorded to cows in Calcutta in order to extract the last drop of milk

from them. Thereupon he and Kallenbach gave up milk and restricted their diet to fresh and dried fruit, eschewing all cooked food.

Gandhi had been requesting Gokhale and other Indian leaders to visit South Africa and acquire first-hand knowledge about the condition of Indian settlers. In 1911, Gokhale was in England; early in the previous year, his resolution in favour of the prohibition of indentured labour for South Africa had been accepted by the government. In England, Gokhale informed the Secretary of State for India of his intention to go to South Africa; the Minister approved of it and Gokhale asked Gandhi to arrange a six weeks' programme of tour. Before leaving England, Gokhale had a foretaste of what South Africa was like. On account of his delicate health he wanted to reserve a good cabin but the Steamship Company stated that there was no such cabin; the Company, however, had to provide one, when ordered by the Secretary of State.

Gokhale landed at Cape Town on the 22. October, 1912. He was accorded a reception which even princes might well envy.

The government offered him their hospitality and placed at his disposal the State Railway saloon. He passed a night at the Tolstoy Farm and was highly impressed with the life people led there. The Farmers slept on the ground, but Gandhi had borrowed a cot for Gokhale. Gokhale removed it when he saw Gandhi and Kallenbach sleeping on the floor. He caught chill and Gandhi spent the whole night in repentance. Gokhale's interview with the Minister lasted for two hours and on his return he told Gandhi, "You must return to India in a year. Every thing has been settled. The Black Act will be repealed. The racial bar will be removed from the immigrant law. The £ 3 tax will be abolished." Though an optimist himself, Gandhi was doubtful if the Ministers would keep their word ; but Gokhale re-assured and insisted that Gandhi must return to India within twelve months, adding "I will not have any of your lame excuses." Gokhale left on November 17, 1912, Kallenbach and Gandhi accompanying him upto Zanzibar.

As Gandhi expected, promises made to Gokhale were repudiated after his departure.

The *satyagrahis* now included the £ 3 tax also in their programme. This gave the indentured Indians, who had so far been kept out of the fray, an opportunity to participate in the fight. Gandhi informed Gokhale that now it was impossible for him to return to India in a year.

While preparations were being made for resuming *satyagraha*, Mr. Justice Searle, of the Cape Supreme Court, gave a judgment on the 14. March, 1913, holding that all marriages, not celebrated according to Christian rites and registered with the Registrar of marriages, were illegal. This terrible judgment degraded all Hindu, Mohammadan and Zoroastrian wives to the rank of concubines and deprived their offspring of the right of inheritance to their parents' property. This enraged the women. Gandhi's request to the Government to appeal against the judgment, if it was not considered to be in accordance with law or to legalise, by legislation, all Indian marriages, if the judgment was considered to be correct, remained unheeded. Women now insisted on offering *satyagraha*. Gandhi had so far prevented them; but in view of the

unspeakable insult offered to them, he could no more stand in their way. Women, even with babies in arms, enthusiastically joined the peaceful "army." One near to child-birth, too, did not lag behind. They entered the Transvaal without permits but were not arrested. Hawking without licence, too, failed to get them arrested.

"It is easy to get into prison by committing a crime, but it is difficult to get in inspite of one's innocence. As the criminal seeks to escape arrest, the police pursue and arrest him. But they lay their hands upon the innocent man who courts arrest of his own free will only when they cannot help it.' *

Gandhi now took the step which he had reserved till the last. He went to Phœnix with the idea of sacrificing all the settlers as his final offering to the God of Truth. The settlers, men and women, all readily fell in with his proposal. But he did not broach the subject to his wife, lest merely out of affection for him, and not of her free will, she should say yes. Kasturibai over-heard his conversation with the other ladies and offered herself for jail. Gandhi explained to her his fears which prevented him from asking

* Gandhi, His Own Story p. 196.

her to court jail. But she replied, " You may have nothing to do with me, if being unable to stand jail, I secure my release by an apology. If you can endure hardships, and so can my boys, why cannot I? I am bound to join the struggle. "

The whole Phœnix party, except a few who were left to conduct the *Indian Opinion*, entered the Transvaal without permits, were arrested and on the 23. September, 1913 sentenced to three months' hard labour. The women who had failed to get arrested in the Transvaal, now crossed over to Natal, but were again disappointed. They, then, proceeded to New-Castle, as previously planned by Gandhi, and successfully persuaded the Indian labourers to go on strike. Mine after mine closed down. Gandhi received the news by wire, and at once proceeded to New-Castle. The labourers had no houses of their own; they lived in houses built by mine-owners who also supplied them with water and set up lights upon their roads. As soon as they struck work, the mine-owners cut off the lights and water-supply, threw their belongings out of the

quarters and not unoften thrashed them. The miners took these complaints to Gandhi. A Pathan who was thrashed mercilessly on the back, went to Gandhi and said, "Look here, how severely they have thrashed me. I have let the rascals go for your sake, since such are your orders. I am a Pathan, and Pathans never take, but always give a beating," Gandhi replied, "Well done, brother. I look upon such conduct alone as bravery. We will win if we have people of your type." Gandhi thought to himself that it was impossible to continue the strike if the miners lived in their masters' quarters. He decided to lead this army of thousands into the Transvaal and see them safely lodged in jail. New Castle was thirty-six miles from the border of the Transvaal. Gandhi laid his scheme before the labourers, suggesting that they should all march on foot and enter the Transvaal in two days. He also declared that the waverers, if any, should return to the mines. Not a single miner desired to go back. The famous march of this non-violent army of four to five thousand men,

women and children, with small bundles of their pitifully small belongings on their heads, and tattered clothes on their bodies, under the command of Gandhi, began on the 28. October, 1913. The weather was bad; almost unbearable hardships had to be endured. Scanty food-supply doled out by the Indian barrister, Albert Christopher, who was in charge of the commissariat organisation, was shared by all, including Gandhi. All, except the sick and the infirm, slept out on the bare veldt. But the heroism of the soldiers, especially of women, was marvellous. A mother, whose little child died of exposure, said, "We must not pine for the dead, but work for the living." She was unlettered, uncouth and uncultured, but her devotion to the cause put courage into many a weak heart. Women like her were the leaders in many a heroic endeavour. Another mother, whose little babe fell from her arms while crossing a spruit and was drowned, said, "The dead will not come back to us for all our pining. It is the living for whom we must work," and gladly marched on, through the portals of jail, to victory.

Before starting the march, Gandhi saw the mine-owners in Durban. He found that they were somewhat impressed with the strike, but he did not expect anything big to come out of the conference.

“The humility of a *satyagrahi*, however, knows no bounds. He does not let slip a single opportunity for settlement, and he does not mind if any one looks upon him as timid. The man, who has faith and the strength which flows from faith, does not care if he is looked down upon by others. He relies solely upon his internal strength. He is, therefore, courteous to all, and thus cultivates and enlists world-opinion in favour of his own cause.” *

The interview did not bear any fruit. On his way back, Gandhi was surrounded by railway guards and other officers, making sympathetic enquiries about the strikers and wishing Gandhi every success. They were highly impressed with the splendid display of endurance made by the poor illiterate and ignorant labourers.

On his return, Gandhi again described to his army the hardships of jail, the risks of the future and the threats of their masters and told them that they were free to return

* Gandhi At Work p. 208.

to work. But they replied that hardships had lost their sting for them; and that whatever the future brought forth, they considered their salvation to be in unflinching devotion to Gandhi. Thereupon the rules to be observed on the march were read out. They were to get a pound and a half of bread with an ounce of sugar each per day. They were not to keep with them more clothes than necessary. None was to touch any one's property on the way. Abuse and floggings by Europeans, official or non-official, were to be borne patiently. And they were to allow themselves to be arrested. Gandhi then announced the names of those who should successively lead the army in his place, if he was arrested first. These preliminaries over, the caravan set forth.

Charlestown and Volksrust are the border villages in Natal and the Transvaal respectively. At Charlestown, the Indian traders rendered great help, placed their houses at the disposal of women and children in the "army" and permitted them to cook food in the mosque grounds. The Health Officer was alarmed at this phenomenal increase in

the population. He gave to Gandhi necessary directions for preventing nuisance. Gandhi says :

“ It was very difficult to have our people observe these rules, but the pilgrims and co-workers lightened my task. It has been my constant experience that much can be done if the servant actually serves and does not dictate to the people. If the servant puts in bodily labour himself, others will follow in his wake. And such was my experience on the present occasion. My co workers and I never hesitated to do sweeping, scavenging and similar work, with the result that others also took it up enthusiastically. When I think of the patience and endurance of the men, I am overpowered by a sense of the greatness of God. Amongst the cooks I was the leader. Sometimes there was too much water in the dhal, and at other times it was insufficiently cooked. The vegetable and even the rice was sometimes ill-cooked. I have not seen many in the world who would cheerfully gulp down such food.” *

But the devoted “ army ” took it with relish. Respectable Indian ladies left their luxuriously furnished homes in Durban, to share the fate of their poorer sisters, pilgrims to His Majesty’s jails in Transvaal. A mother and a daughter with a seven year old child

* Gandhi At Work p. 211.

sought arrest, the ladies with success, but the Government declined to arrest the child.

From Charlestown, Gandhi wrote to the Government that his army of peace was entering the Transvaal not with a view to domicile, but as an effective protest against the Government's breach of pledge, and assured the Government that the repeal of the £ 3 tax would end the strike, for the labourers would not be asked to join the general struggle against other grievances. Soon after this, as no reply was received, they started for Volksrust, with the intention, if not arrested on the way, to march twenty-four miles a day for eight days together to reach Tolstoy Farm, stop there till the struggle was over and maintain themselves by working the Farm.

At Palmford, at night when every one was asleep and Gandhi was preparing to retire, a European officer came to arrest him. Gandhi roused P. K. Naidu, gave him necessary instructions and left with the officer. Gandhi was taken by train to Volksrust and produced in court. The public prosecutor took a remand until the

14. November, 1913, as he was not ready with evidence. Gandhi was released on a bail of fifty pounds. Mr. Kallenbach, who was ready with a car, at once drove him to rejoin the "invaders," who received him with enthusiasm and were transported with joy on his return. The march was continued. The Government could not afford to leave Gandhi to continue the march; he was again arrested on the 8. November, 1913, at Standerton by the Magistrate himself. On the following day, three long trains were drawn up at a siding on the railway and the whole "army" was asked to entrain in order to be taken back and imprisoned in Natal. Polak, Kallenbach and other leaders were also arrested later.

Gandhi was convicted and sentenced to one year's hard labour. He received the sentence with joy, for it meant a year's rest and study for which he had been yearning for about twenty years. He was separated from other Indian prisoners and sent to Bloemfontein. At Bloemfontein, there were hardly fifty Indian residents, all serving as waiters in hotels. So, there was no risk of

Indians seeing Gandhi and carrying his message outside. There were many discomforts in the jail, but Gandhi bore them all with pleasure. He was then purely a fruitarian. The jail doctor became his friend and got fruit in plenty for him. The cell in which Gandhi was confined was not sufficiently ventilated; the doctor ordered the doors to be kept open, but the jailer threatened to resign if that was done. The other leaders were also sent each to a separate jail.

The strikers were taken to Natal, prosecuted and sentenced. The government did not want to incur additional expenditure for feeding them; they were kept without food on their way to Natal and after they were sentenced, they were sent back to the mines which were proclaimed as outstations to certain jails and the European servants of the mine-owners were appointed as warders. This arrangement forced the miners underground against their will and set the mines a-going. But, thanks to their contact with Gandhi, the labourers had now become brave and flatly declined to work in the

mines. The result was that they were brutally whipped and outraged in various other ways. They bore it all patiently. Daily cablegrams conveyed the news of these outrages to Gokhale on his sick-bed, who broad-casted them and the whole of India was deeply stirred. Lord Hardinge took up the cause of these unfortunate Indians and in his famous Madras speech severely criticised the Union Government. This earned the Viceroy the gratitude of India and adverse comments in South Africa and England; but he remained firm and bravely led Indian public opinion on the South African question. When the Viceroy, thus, went out of his way to publicly criticise another member of the Empire, the result was obvious. Either he should be recalled and India set ablaze or the wrong be righted. England and South Africa elected the latter course.

The total number of Indian labourers in South Africa was about sixty-thousand. Gandhi had advised his co-workers not to let the whole lot go on strike, as it was considered difficult to lead and maintain them and prevent a breach of the peace. But now that

flood-gates had opened, there was no checking the deluge. They spontaneously came out and some of them sold their household goods in order to maintain themselves during, what they believed to be, a long drawn-out struggle. Volunteers posted themselves at various places to look after them. The government tried to put them down by brute force, using rifles freely, killing and wounding quite a large number of innocent people. The leaders who were left outside to run the Phœnix settlement and the *Indian Opinion*, were arrested illegally and sent to jail. Modern governments, although claiming to enforce the rule of law, throw the law to the winds, when any one's freedom jars upon their nerves. Gokhale now sent out able men, like Andrews and Pearson, from India to take the place of these leaders.

The Government could hold out no longer. Brute force can never cope with soul-force. The Viceroy went on striking and striking hard. The Union Government wanted to wriggle out of the position it had adopted. It appointed a Commission of three white members to enquire and make recommendations.

But the Indians pledged themselves to shun the Commission, unless all the *satyagrahi* prisoners were released and at least one Indian was appointed to represent them. The Commission recommended the unconditional release of Gandhi, Kallenbach and Polak "with a view to enabling the enquiry to be made as thorough as possible." These three and West were released before the arrival of Andrews and Pearson. On the 13th December, 1913, Gandhi addressed a letter to General Smuts, saying :

"We welcome the appointment of the Commission, but we strongly object to the inclusion on it of Messrs Esselen and Wylie. We have nothing against them personally. They are well-known and able citizens; but as both of them have often expressed their dislike for Indians, there is likelihood of their doing injustice without being conscious of it. Man cannot change his temperament all at once. It is against the laws of nature to suppose that these gentlemen will suddenly become different from what they are. However, we do not ask for their removal from the Commission. We only suggest that some impartial men be appointed in addition to them, and in this connection we would mention Sir James Rose Innes and the Hon. Mr. W.P. Schreiner, both of them men well-known for the sense of justice.

Secondly, we request that all the *satyagraha* prisoners should be released. If this is not done, it would be difficult for us to remain outside jail. There is no reason now for keeping the *satyagrahis* in jail any longer. Thirdly, if we tender evidence before the Commission, we should be allowed to go to the mines and factories where the indentured labourers are at work. If these requests are not complied with, we are sorry that we shall have to explore fresh avenues for going to jail."*

When Gokhale heard that a fresh march was in contemplation, he cabled to Gandhi to desist so as not to place Lord Hardinge and Gokhale in an awkward position. Gandhi cabled back that pledges could not be broken. Gokhale and Hardinge continued their priceless aid, in spite of this disappointment. About this time, European employees of the Union Railways had gone on strike to obtain redress for their own grievances and invited Gandhi to start his march. The Government was in an extremely delicate position. Gandhi was not out to harass the Government; he declined the invitation out of chivalry. Lord Amptill congratulated Gandhi and the Europeans in South Africa were favourably

* Gandhi At Work p. 422-52.

impressed. One of the secretaries of Smuts remarked :

“ I do not like your people, and do not care to assist them at all. But what am I to do? You help us in our days of need. How can we lay hands upon you ? I often wish you took to violence like the English strikers, and then we would know at once how to dispose of you. But you will not injure even the enemy. You desire victory by self-suffering alone, and never transgress your self-imposed limits of courtesy and chivalry. And that is what reduced us to sheer helplessness.” *

General Smuts also gave expression to similar sentiments. Thus, the atmosphere was getting favourable for settlement. At Smuts' invitation Gandhi proceeded to Pretoria for an interview. The interview resulted in a provisional agreement on the 21. January, 1914 and *satyagraha* was suspended for the last time. The English welcomed it and promised to help in the final settlement, but the Indians were disappointed. General Smuts had once played them false and, if he did so again, it would be difficult to create the same enthusiasm in the Indian community as

*Gandhi At Work, p. 227.

fired them now. Gandhi was prepared for this. He felt

“No matter how often a *satyagrahi* is betrayed, he will repose his trust in the adversary so long as there are not cogent grounds for distrust. Pain to a *satyagrahi* is as pleasure. He will not, therefore, be misled, by the mere fear of suffering, into groundless distrust. On the other hand, relying as he does upon his own strength, he will not mind being betrayed by the adversary. He will continue to trust in spite of frequent betrayals, and will believe that he thereby strengthens the forces of truth and brings victory nearer.” *

He addressed meetings at various places and brought the Indians round to his viewpoint.

“The author of the Sanskrit saying, ‘Forgiveness is an ornament to the brave,’ drew upon his rich experience of *satyagrahis* never giving anyone the least opportunity of finding fault with them. Distrust is a sign of weakness, and *satyagraha* implies the banishment of all weakness and, therefore, of distrust, which is clearly out of place when the adversary is not to be destroyed but to be won over.” *

Sir Benjamin Robertson, sent in a special steamer by Lord Hardinge to watch the Indian case before the Commission, now

*Gandhi At Work p. 229.

arrived with a letter of recommendation from Gokhale. Gandhi's first meeting with him did not create a good impression of this popular official. But Gandhi could not be bullied. "Officials are apt to bully those who will tamely submit to them, and will be correct with those who will not be cowed down."

The Commission set to work. Sir Benjamin tried to induce the Indians to tender evidence, but only those, very few in number, who were opposed to *satyagraha*, came forward. The recommendations of the Commission were favourable to the Indians, as Smuts had predicted. Soon after its report, the Indians Relief Bill was published in the official Gazette, removing the ban on Indian marriages, abolishing the £ 3 tax and declaring the domicile certificates to be conclusive evidence of the right of entry in the Union. The Bill was passed after a long but pleasant debate in the Union Parliament.

Administrative matters, not covered by the Bill, were settled by correspondence between Gandhi and Smuts on June 30, 1914. Thus, the right of educated Indians to enter the Cape Colony, the status of educated Indians

who had entered South Africa within the preceding three years and the right of existing plural wives to join their husbands in the colony were also secured and after, eight years, the great *satyagraha* struggle closed with success.

During the South African struggle Gandhi gave up legal practice and took the vow of poverty and non-possession. When he retired from the profession, his income was about £ 2,000, per year, in spite of the facts that he accepted professional engagements only when public service, his primary work, permitted him to do so and that a large part of his legal practice was in the interest of public work, for which he charged nothing beyond out-of-pocket expenses.

He never resorted to untruth in his profession. He says:

“As a student I had heard that the lawyer’s profession was a liar’s profession. But this did not influence me, as I had no intention of earning either position or money by lying....I warned every new client at the outset that he should not expect me to take up a false case or to coach the witnesses, with the result that I built up such a reputation that no false cases used to

come to me. Indeed some of my clients would keep their clean cases for me, and take the doubtful ones elsewhere" *

Gandhi remembers only one case, in which, after having won it, he suspected he had been deceived. He never made his fee conditional on his winning the case and never expected or stipulated for additional payment on success.

"A man charged with theft applied to Gandhi to defend him. On being closely interrogated by Gandhi, he confessed the guilt. Gandhi asked "But why did you do it? You knew you were stealing, and you knew the penalty?" The poor fellow replied he had to live. "You had to live? Why?" echoed Gandhi and gave up the case" †

His scrupulous adherence to truth was put to a severe test in a case of highly complicated accounts. After a protracted trial through several courts, the book-keeping part of the case was referred for arbitration to some qualified accountants. The award was in favour of Gandhi's client, but the

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. I p. 260.

† Gandhi, the Man p. 78.

arbitrators had inadvertently committed a small but serious error in taking a debit entry on the credit side. The other party objected to the award on other grounds. Gandhi was a junior counsel in the case. His senior was not prepared to admit the error, as he held that "no counsel was bound to admit anything that went against his client's interest" * Gandhi insisted on admitting the error. The senior counsel thought that there was every likelihood of the court cancelling the whole award, a risk no sane counsel would like to take. At any rate, he was not prepared to imperil his client's case. But Gandhi felt

"that both our client and we ought to run the risk. Where is the certainty of the court upholding a wrong award, simply because we do not admit the error? And supposing the admission were to bring the client to grief, what harm is there?"

The senior counsel was not prepared to argue the case on Gandhi's terms. To this Gandhi replied, "If you will not argue, then I am prepared to do so, if our client so desires. I shall have nothing to do with the case, if the error is not admitted." †

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. II p. 260.

† Ibid. p. 262.

The client was present. Gandhi looked at him; he was a little embarrassed, but said, "Well, then, you will argue the case and admit the error. We will lose, if that is to be our lot. God defends the right."

Gandhi argued the case before a bench of the Supreme Court. When he referred to the error, one of the judges remarked, "Is not this sharp practice, Mr. Gandhi?" Gandhi boiled within and said to himself "With a judge prejudiced from the start like this, there is little chance of success in this difficult case," but he composed his thoughts and answered, "I am surprised that Your Lordship should suspect sharp practice without hearing me out." "No question of a charge," said the judge, "It is a mere suggestion." "The suggestion here seems to me to amount to a charge. I would ask Your Lordship to hear me out and then arraign me, if there is any occasion for it." "I am sorry to have interrupted you," replied the judge, "Pray do go on with your explanation of the discrepancy."* Gandhi succeeded in satisfying the Court that the error was accidental

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. II p. 264.

and could be rectified. The opposing counsel felt sure that after Gandhi's admission, his own work was lightened, but the Court was reluctant to set aside the award. The judge who had charged Gandhi with sharp practice asked the opposing counsel what he would have done, if Gandhi had not admitted the error. He replied that his clients could not have secured the services of a more competent and honest accountant than the one appointed by them. The judge continued, "The court must presume that you know your case best. If you cannot point out anything beyond the slip which any expert accountant is liable to commit, the court will be loath to compel the parties to go in for fresh litigation and fresh expenses, because of a patent mistake. We may not order a fresh hearing when such an error can be easily corrected."* The objections were over-ruled, and the award confirmed. Gandhi, his client and the senior counsel were delighted. Gandhi says, "I was confirmed in my conviction that it was not impossible to practice law without compromising truth;" and adds, "Let the

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. II p. 265.

reader, however, remember that even truthfulness in the practice of the profession cannot cure it of the fundamental defect that vitiates it."*

Gandhi's object in practising in South Africa was service of the community. In order to come in direct contact with Indians, he got himself enrolled as an attorney in the Transvaal. Attorneys could appear before magistrates. Gandhi was conducting a case before a magistrate in Johannesburg. His client completely broke down in cross-examination and Gandhi discovered that the case was false. To the astonishment of the opposing counsel, Gandhi asked the magistrate to dismiss the case and rebuked the client for having taken a false case to him. The client admitted his mistake. Gandhi's practice suffered no set back from this incident; his reputation was enhanced and his work became easier.

Gandhi never disguised his ignorance from his clients and colleagues. When he felt at sea, he advised his client to consult some other counsel, or let him do so. This frankness

*My Experiments With Truth, Vol. II p. 266.

earned him their unbounded affection and trust, which stood him in good stead both in his professional and public career.

Parsi Rustomji was a trusted co-worker and client of Gandhi. He imported large consignments of goods from India and not unoften resorted to smuggling, either because the customs officer trusted him or connived at his smuggling; but theft, like quick-silver, won't be suppressed, and Rustomji was caught. He ran to Gandhi with tears rolling down his cheeks, apprised him of the predicament Rustomji was in, confessed his guilt, and asked Gandhi to save him. Gandhi soothed him and said :

“To save or not to save you is in His hands. As to me, you know my way; I can but try to save you by means of confession.”

Rustomji :

“But is not my confession before you enough ? ”

Gandhi :

“You have wronged not me but Government. How will the confession made before me avail you ? ”

Rustomji :

“Of course I will do just as you advise, but will you not consult with my old counsel Mr.—? He is a friend too.” *

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. II, p. 273.

They consulted the old counsel. He studied the papers and said, "The case will be tried by jury, and a Natal jury will be the last to acquit an Indian. But I will not give up hope." Rustomji interrupted, "I thank you, but I should like to be guided by Mr. Gandhi's advice in this case. He knows me intimately. Of course, you will advise him whenever necessary."*

Gandhi and his client returned to the latter's shop. Gandhi said to him :

"I don't think this case should be taken to court at all. It rests with the Customs Officer to prosecute you or to let you go, and he in turn will have to be guided by the Attorney-General. I am prepared to meet both. I propose that you should offer to pay the penalty they fix, and the odds are that they will be agreeable. But if they are not, you must be prepared to go to jail. I am of opinion that the shame lies not so much in going to jail as in committing the offence. The deed of shame has already been done. Imprisonment you should regard as a penance. The real penance lies in resolving never to smuggle again." †

Rustomji left himself entirely in Gandhi's hands. Gandhi met the Customs Officer,

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. II p. 273-274.

† Ibid 274.

and got him to promise not to drag the old Parsi into court. He called on the Attorney-General and persuaded him to compound the case. Gandhi's persistence and frankness extorted from him the remark, "I see you will never take a no for an answer." The case against Rustomji was compromised on his paying a penalty of double the amount he had confessed to have smuggled. Rustomji got the story of the case hung up in a glass frame in his office to serve as a perpetual reminder to his heirs and fellow-merchants.

One evening, as Gandhi came out of a huge meeting with Mrs. Polak, he noticed a man standing in the shadow of the outer door of the hall, went up to him and began saying something to him in a quite earnest voice. The man, for a moment, hesitated, then went with Gandhi to the other side of the street. They walked the whole length of the street; at the end the man handed something over to Gandhi and disappeared. When Gandhi rejoined Mrs. Polak, she asked, "What did the man want—anything special?" "Yes, he wanted

to kill me," said Gandhi. Mrs. Polak exclaimed, "To kill you? To kill you? How horrible? Is he mad?" Gandhi calmly replied, "No, he thinks I am acting traitorously towards our people; that I am intriguing with the government against them, and yet pretending to be their friend and leader." "But that is all wicked and dreadful," said Mrs. Polak, "such a man is not safe; he ought to be arrested. Why did you let him go like that? He must be mad." Gandhi replied, "No, he is not mad, only mistaken; and you saw, after I had talked to him, he handed over to me the knife he had intended to use on me." "He would have stabbed you in the dark. I...", Mrs. Polak was proceeding, when Gandhi interrupted her, saying. "Do not disturb yourself so much about it. He thought he wanted to kill me; but he really had not the courage to do so. If I were as he had thought I was, I should deserve to die. Now we will not worry any more about it. It is finished. I do not think that man will attempt to injure me again. Had I had him arrested I should have made an enemy

of him. As it is, he will now be my friend."*

Gandhi keeps his principles even at the risk of death. Once, when *satyagraha* was going on or was about to commence, Kasturibai underwent a serious operation. She was so weak that chloroform could not be given. She was with a doctor at Durban, who was all attention. When she improved Gandhi came back to Johannesburg. Her weakness became alarming and the doctor telephoned to Gandhi for permission to give her beef-tea. Gandhi refused his permission but added that if she was in a condition to express her wish, Kasturibai was free to do as she liked. The doctor refused to consult the patient's wishes and told Gandhi that if he was not left free to prescribe whatever diet he liked, he could not hold himself responsible for Kasturibai's life. Gandhi at once left for Durban. The doctor told him that he had already given beef-tea to Mrs. Gandhi when he telephoned. Gandhi called it a fraud. But to the doctor there was no question of fraud in prescribing

* Gandhi, *The Man* p. 102.

medicine or diet for a patient. In fact doctors consider it a virtue to deceive patients or their relatives, if thereby they can save their patients. Gandhi did not like these medical morals and said to the doctor that he would never allow her to be given meat or beef, even if it meant her death, unless, of course, she desired to take it. The doctor replied, that Gandhi was welcome to his philosophy; but so long as she was under his treatment, he must have the option to give her anything he wished. If Gandhi did not like that, the doctor must regretfully ask him to remove her. He could not see her die under his roof. Gandhi consulted his wife, though she was really too weak to be consulted. She was adamant and resolutely refused to allow her body to be polluted with such abominations. He removed her to Phoenix at a very great risk to her life. There she was placed under hydropathic treatment and slowly regained her strength. Her treatment required her to give up salt and pulse, Gandhi entreated her to do so, but she challenged him saying that even he could not give up these articles. Gandhi at once

declared that he gave them up for one year. Mrs. Gandhi was rudely shocked, asked his forgiveness, promised to abstain from those articles and entreated him to take back his vow. But he could not retract it and said, "It is sure to benefit me, for all restraint, whatever prompts it, is wholesome for man." She now improved quickly and her recovery added to Gandhi's reputation as a quack. Gandhi counts this incident as an instance of domestic *satyagraha* and "as one of the sweetest recollections of my life."

One of the children would keep asking for more and more of the dish he liked most and would be sulky or rebellious when checked. Gandhi's reasoning failed to appeal to the child's appetite. One evening Gandhi told him that he would get as much as he wished to eat and that no one should check him. The child was happy and ate and ate till he fell asleep upon the table. The table was not cleared even though the meal was over. As the child awoke, Gandhi asked him if he wanted anything more. The child wanted more of his favourite dish and had it. He went on eating till he could swallow no more

and commenced to cry. The child was uncomfortable, Gandhi tenderly took him in his arms and carried him to his bed. Most of the night the child was unwell, but he never again asked for things to eat, he was refused. This is another instance of domestic *satyagraha*.

When acting as a school-master at Tolstoy Farm, Gandhi struck with a ruler, a boy who was wild, unruly, quarrelsome and given to lying. He trembled as he used the ruler. This incident set Gandhi a-thinking and taught him a better method of correcting students. On another occasion, when he heard of the moral fall of two inmates of the settlement at Phœnix, he felt "that the guardian or teacher was responsible, to some extent, at least, for the lapse of his ward or pupil;" and "that the only way the guilty parties could be made to realise my distress, and the depth of their own fall, would be for me to do some penance." So he imposed upon himself a week's total fast and the abstinence from one meal for four months and a half thereafter. This penance cleared the atmosphere and every one realised what

a terrible thing it was to be sinful. Another similar incident drove him a little while after into a fast of fourteen days. During the fasts, he regularly listened to readings from the Ramayana and other sacred books.

Gandhi holds the view that the teacher must be an eternal object-lesson for his pupils. He does not find it necessary to load the boys with quantities of books, for he feels that "the true text-book for the pupil is his teacher;" and that "children take in much more and with less labour through their ears than through their eyes." To him the training of the spirit, a thing by itself, is of more importance than intellectual training. Gandhi is of opinion that

"To develop the spirit, is to build character and to enable one to work towards a knowledge of God and self-realisation. And I held that this was an essential part of the training of the young, and that all training without culture of the spirit was of no use, and might be even harmful. I am familiar with the superstition that self-realisation is possible only in the fourth stage of life, *i. e.* *sannyasa* (renunciation). But it is a matter of common knowledge, that those, who defer preparation for this invaluable experience until the last stage of life, attain not self-realisation but old age amounting to a

second and pitiable childhood, living as a burden on this earth."

Closer contact with boys made Gandhi realise

"That it was not through books that one could impart training of the spirit. Just as physical training was to be imparted through physical exercise, and intellectual through intellectual exercise, even so the training of the spirit was possible only through the exercise of the spirit. And the exercise of the spirit entirely depended on the life and character of the teacher. The teacher had always to be mindful of his p's and q's, whether he was in the midst of his boys or not."

Gandhi believes in teaching good and bad children together; the former lose nothing and the latter are the gainers, under the watchful care of the teacher. He adds

"It does not necessarily follow that children wrapped up in cotton-wool are proof against all temptation or contamination. It is true, however, that when boys and girls of all kinds of up-bringing are kept and taught together, the parents and the teachers are put to the severest test. They have constantly to be on the alert."

At Gokhale's bidding, Gandhi left for India, *via* London, with his wife and Kallenbach, at

the conclusion of the *satyagraha* struggle in 1914, travelling, as was now his wont, third class. He reached London on the 6th August, two days after the breaking out of the war. On the way, he threw into the sea Mr. Kallenbach's binoculars worth £ 7, as they felt that such possessions were not in keeping with the ideal of simplicity they aspired to reach. This was, perhaps, the precursor of the burning of foreign cloth which came later. In both these cases attainment of simplicity, and not hatred, was the guiding motive. On reaching London, Gandhi found that Gokhale had been stranded in Paris where he had gone for reasons of health. Gandhi convened a meeting of the Indian resident in Great Britain and Ireland and advised them to volunteer to serve England in the war which, Gandhi was then convinced, was to end wars. In spite of the opposition of many friends on the ground that the duty of a slave seeking to be free was to make the master's need his opportunity, Gandhi adhered to his advice and got about eighty volunteers enrolled who represented all the provinces and all the

religions of India. The services of these volunteers were gratefully, though with some hesitation, accepted by Lord Crewe. After going through a six weeks' course of first aid to the wounded under Dr. Cantlie, they were placed under Col. Baker for military drill and other training. The Indian Ambulance Corps expected that, as Chairman of the Volunteers Crops, Gandhi would be their real leader, they would elect their own section leaders and the Colonel would be the head only in technical matters, but they were sorely disappointed. Their experience of the colonel and the Oxford youths he had appointed section leaders was of a piece with the experience Indians daily had of British administrators in India. Gandhi's intervention proved futile and matters reached such a head that the corps held a meeting and resolved that, unless the appointments of corporals already made were recalled and members allowed to elect their own corporals, they would abstain from further drilling and week-end camping. Even this proved infructuous; the letter to Lord Crewe, too, brought no satisfactory reply. In the meantime Gandhi got an attack of pleurisy

and was confined to bed. The threats and adriotness of Col. Baker created a division in the corps, some members of which went back upon the resolution they had voted for and proceeded to the Netley Hospital to nurse a contingent of wounded soldiers. The others accepted the compromise arrived at between Gandhi and Mr. Roberts, Assistant Secretary of State for India, who paid many visits for this purpose to Gandhi. Gandhi's self-imposed restrictions regarding diet, which he did not relax even on Gokhale's request, prevented ellopathic treatment of his pleurisy. Other treatments proved of little avail. Accepting the advice of the Assistant Secretary of State for India, Gandhi left for India with his wife.



CHAPTER VI

THE CALL OF THE MOTHERLAND (1915-17)

The beginning of 1915 saw Gandhi back home with the prestige of a successful leader after an exile of ten years. He had ardent hopes of resigning himself into Gokhale's hand and thereby feeling free, but Providence had willed otherwise. Little did Gandhi then realise that his place would be in the warm hearts of his grateful country-men and in the jail of his love, the British Government, whom he had faithfully served in times of need, even at the sacrifice, as his friends protested, of his principles.

Gandhi's home-coming was a triumphal march and a round of feasts. Before proceeding to Poona to spend some time with Gokhale, he called on the Governor, Lord Willingdon, (now Viceroy) who was desirous of seeing him. After the usual

enquiries, Lord Willingdon asked one thing of Gandhi, to see him whenever he proposed to take any steps concerning the Government. Gandhi replied :

“I can very easily give the promise, inasmuch as it is my rule, as a *satyagrahi*, to understand the view-point of the party I propose to deal with, and to try to agree with him as far as may be possible. I strictly observed the rule in South Africa and I mean to do the same here.”

The Governor assured Gandhi that his government would not wilfully do anything wrong, and said that Gandhi could see him whenever he liked. Had Lord Willingdon, the Viceroy, not forgotten in 1932 what Lord Willingdon, the Governor, had said in 1915, the history of India would have taken a different course. But Lord Willingdon of 1915 was different from the Lord Willingdon of 1932, who refused to see Gandhi, when he wanted to keep the promise made in 1915. In 1915, Lord Willingdon stood in need of Gandhi's help for winning the war; in 1932, he was representing an all-powerful British government whose might had crushed Germany and her allies and which

was now out to put the Indian National Congress down.

At Poona, Gandhi was Gokhale's guest. Both Gokhale and Gandhi were very keen that the latter should join the Servants of India Society, but on account of the great difference between his ideals and methods of work and their own the members were not in favour of it. It was ultimately decided that he should found an Ashram in Gujrat and settle down there with the Phœnix family, which had arrived in India before Gandhi and was staying for sometime in Gurukula and for sometime in Shantiniketan. Gokhale undertook to meet the expenses of the Ashram, which, he said, he would regard as his own. An account was immediately opened in his name in the Society's books.

From Poona, Gandhi proceeded to Rajkot and Porbandar to meet his relations. At Wadhwan, he made the acquaintance of Motilal, tailor, who earned only Rs. 15/- a month working an hour a day and devoted the rest of his time to public work. He brought to Gandhi's notice the hardships caused to passengers by the Viramgam

customs cordon. Gandhi started correspondence with the authorities, but the cordon was not removed till Gandhi met Lord Chelmsford after about two years. About this time happened an event which Gandhi regards "as the advent of *satyagraha* in India." During an interview with the Bombay government the Secretary disapproved of a reference to *satyagraha* in Gandhi's Bagasara speech and characterised it as a threat, to which a powerful government could not yield.

Gandhi was anxious to meet the Phoenix party which was at Shanti-niketan; he, therefore, went from Rajkot to Bolpur. There Gandhi preached the gospel of self-help to the boys and the teachers and advised them to cook their own food. Tagore said to the boys, "The experiment contains the key to Swaraj." Pearson threw himself with zest into this experiment, which, however, was dropped after some time.

Gandhi's stay at Shanti-niketan was cut short by the sudden death of Gokhale. On his way to Poona, Andrews, who accompanied him upto Burdwan, asked Gandhi if there

would be *satyagraha* in India and if so when. Gandhi replied, "It is difficult to say. For one year I am to do nothing. For Gokhale took from me a promise that I should travel in India for gaining experience and express no opinion on public questions until I have finished the period of probation. Even after the year is over, I will be in no hurry to speak and pronounce opinions. And so I do not suppose there will be any occasion for *satyagraha* for five years or so." Gokhale had extracted this promise from Gandhi, for he was of opinion that a year's study of Indian affairs would correct the "fantastic" ideas Gandhi had expressed in his "*Hind Swaraj*." On this journey Gandhi fared no better at the hands of the railway authorities than other poor ignorant third class Indian passengers did. On arrival in Poona, the questions as to whether Gandhi should or should not join the Society, again came up; the members were divided; and after discussion, the decision was put off for a later date. Gandhi, however, withdrew his application for membership, in view of the sharp division among the members on his admission.

Hardwar *Kumbh* fell in 1915. A big volunteer corps under P. Hridayanath Kunzru went to serve the pilgrims and was joined by the Phoenix party under Maganlal Gandhi. Gandhi travelled all the way from Rangoon to Hardwar to join this band, performing a part of the journey in an open cattle truck with the blazing midday sun overhead and the scorching iron floor beneath. The Phoenix party undertook to do the scavenger's work. Gandhi deplores the fate that awaited him at Hardwar. The process of his deification had, silently and without his knowledge, made such a headway that *darashan*-seekers left him not a minute which he could call his own. He was not left alone even while bathing or taking his food. He says :

"This was no enviable position to be in. I felt as though I was between the devil and the deep sea. Where no one recognised me, I had to put up with the hardships that fall to the lot of the millions in this land, e.g. in railway travelling. Where I was surrounded by people, who had heard of me I was the victim of their craze for *darshan*. Which of the two conditions was more pitiable, I have often been at a loss to determine. This at least I know, that the *darshanwala's*

blind love has often made me angry, and more often sore at heart. Whereas travelling, though often trying, has been uplifting and has hardly ever roused me to anger."

Gandhi was shocked to see hypocrisy and slovenliness prevailing in Hardwar, and as an atonement for it, he took a vow on the sacred *Kumbha* day never, whilst in India, to take more than five articles in twenty-four hours and never to eat after dark.

On 25th May, 1915, Gandhi founded, with 25 inmates, the *Satyagraha Ashram*, at Ahmedabad, which he preferred to other places suggested to him." He says :

"I had a predilection for Ahmedabad. Being a Gujrati I thought I should be able to render the greatest service to the country through the Gujrati language. And then, as Ahmedabad was an ancient centre of handloom weaving, it was likely to be the most favourable field for the revival of the cottage industry of hand-spinning. There was also the hope, that the city being the capital of Gujrat, monetary help from its wealthy citizens would be more available here than elsewhere."

A code of rules and observances was drawn up for the conduct of the Ashram. One seeking membership had to take the

vows of truth, *ahimsa*, celibacy, control of the palate, non-thieving (not taking anything not needed for immediate use) non-possession, *swadeshi*, fearlessness, removal of untouchability, education through the vernaculars and of *khaddar* ;* having conformed to these vows, one was free to come to the religious use of politics, for "politics divorced from religion, has absolutely no meaning." Sir Gurudas Banerji suggested the addition of humility, as he believed that the younger generation sadly lacked that virtue. The suggestion was not accepted, because, says Gandhi:—

"Though I had noticed this fault, I feared humility would cease to be humility the moment it became a matter of vow. The true connotation of humility is self-effacement. Self-effacement is *moksha* (salvation), and whilst it cannot, by itself, be an observance, there may be other observances necessary for its attainment. If the acts of an aspirant after *moksha* or a servant have no humility or selflessness about them, there is no longing for *moksha* or service. Service without humility is selfishness and egoism."

The Ashram was barely a few months

*The whole statement containing these vows is well worth perusal. See Gandhi's Ideas Ch. V.

old, when an untouchable family sought admission agreeing to abide by the Ashram rules. They were readily admitted. Their admission was the signal of a furious storm. The well was partly controlled by the owner of the premises and his man in charge of the water-lift abused and molested the inmates of the Ashram in the use of the well. But their forbearance made him ashamed of himself and he ceased to bother them. All monetary help was immediately stopped and social boycott was threatened. This band of sincere *satyagrahis* was unmoved and decided, if necessary, to remove to untouchables' quarters and live on the earnings of their manual labour. When the funds were exhausted and they actually were preparing to move to untouchables' quarters, an unknown *seth* came and quietly placing Rs. 13,000 in Gandhi's hand slipped away. And the Ashram was quite safe at least for a year.

In March 1916, Malaviyaji moved a resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council for the abolition of indentured labour. Lord Hardinge announced that he had obtained

from His Majesty's Government the promise of the abolition "in due course" of what Sir W. W. Hunter described as "semi-slavery." "Due course" was soon explained as "within such reasonable time as will allow of alternative arrangements being made." But the country was not prepared to wait indefinitely. So in February 1917, Malaviyaji asked leave to introduce a bill for the immediate abolition of the system, but Lord Chelmsford refused to give leave. It has been the singular misfortune of the British government in India never to realise and sympathise with the peoples' view-point until it is too late. In the matter of the abolition of indentured labour, the government seemed to have greater regard for the profits of the white colonials than for the honour of India. An all-India agitation was, therefore, decided upon, but before starting it, Gandhi called on the Viceroy, who, as usual with officials, without being definite promised to be helpful. This was hardly satisfactory. The agitation began from Bombay where a huge public meeting adopted a resolution fixing the 31st July, 1917, as the last

date for the abolition of the system—a resolution the leaders of the Imperial Citizenship Association had drafted after mature deliberation. Similar resolutions were passed from innumerable platforms throughout the length and breadth of the country. Mrs. Jaiji Petit, Lady Tata and Dilshad Begam took a ladies deputation to the Viceroy, whose reply now was encouraging. Before the 31st July, the Government announced the abolition of the system, which was a disgrace to India and a greater disgrace to England, which perpetuated slavery in the garb of indentured labour, for the benefit of its children.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHAMPION OF THE POOR (1917-1918)

Champaran, known in the *Puranas* as Champaranya, had the privilege of bringing up Dhruva in its lap, of giving shelter to Sita in her exile, of being the birth-place of Lava and Kusha and the field of battle between them and Ramchandra, and of proving a safe refuge for the Pandavas with its King, Virat. About twenty-five centuries ago, it had seen the great Lichchavi republic. But all its past greatness sank into oblivion and its fair face bore the stain of indigo. More than half the district had passed into the hands of European lessees, who from 1850 carried on intensive indigo cultivation. One of the methods adopted was to force each tenant to grow indigo on three-twentieth of his holding, the plots being selected by the planter. The tenant got little compensation

for indigo and if he failed to grow it, he had to pay heavy damages. In Bengal, great agitation against indigo planters began in 1860, when the government appointed a Commission of Enquiry, which found that contracts for indigo-growing were entered into by tenants under coercion; planters forced advances on tenants for growing indigo and took up their best lands for the purpose, even destroying standing crop; the tenants had to give their valuable time, money and energies to indigo, without being able to repay the forced advances; they could earn more by cultivating other crops; the factory underlings oppressed them and even owners and managers treated them worse than cattle. The plight of the tenants was well painted by Mr. Tower, Magistrate, before the Commission in the following words:

“ I wish to state that considerable odium has been thrown on the Missionaries for saying that ‘ Not a chest of indigo reached England without being stained with human blood.’ That has been stated to be an anecdote. That expression is mine, and I adopt it in the fullest and broadest sense of its meaning as the result of my experience as Magistrate in the Faridpur District. I

have seen several ryots sent in to me as a Magistrate who have been speared through the body. I have had ryots before me who have been shot down by Mr. Forde (a planter). I have put on record, how others have been first speared and then kidnapped; and such a system of carrying on indigo cultivation I consider to be a system of blood-shed."*

The result of the Commission's Report was that indigo plantations, which could not thrive except on oppression, soon disappeared from Bengal. The Behari tenant whose lot was no better, also clamoured for relief but he had to wait for over half a century till Gandhi took up his cause in 1917.

Champanan did not sit quiet. The first recorded indigo disturbance took place in 1867 about which the District Gazetteer says :—

“The disputes between the ryots and the planters had at one time threatened to become very serious. The local officers almost unanimously reported that the cultivation of indigo had become very unpopular, and that there was not a ryot who would abandon the cultivation if he could; and this state of things was ascribed as much to the insufficiency of remuneration which the ryots received as to the exactions, oppressions

* Satyagraha in Champanan p. 23.

and annoyance to which they were exposed at the hands of the factory servants.”*

Other disturbances followed, but the government did not move till 1877, when Sir Asheby Eden, the Lieutenant-Governor, who had personal knowledge of indigo plantations, adopted a stiff attitude, which forced the planters to enhance the price payable to the tenants. They also formed the Behar Planters' Association in order to present a united front to the government. Discontent went on smouldering. There was further trouble between 1907 and 1909, as the floods of 1906 had left the tenants penniless; but the demands of the planters were as insistent as ever. The government had only one specific—repression—which was freely used. This was followed by a departmental enquiry which reiterated the old grievances. In 1909-10 the planters under the Lieutenant-Governor's pressure promised some concessions and the convicted tenants were released. In 1911-12 when Their Majesties went to Nepal, 15,000 tenants assembled at Narkatiaganj railway station to lay their grievances,

* Satyagraha in Champaran p. 29-30.

but their shouts were not correctly interpreted to their Majesties. The memorial they submitted to the King-Emperor was forwarded to the Government of India which returned it with the stereotyped reply, 'not submitted through proper channel.' In the following years, several memorials submitted to the government evoked no response; in some cases they were forwarded to the very planters against whom they were directed. The head of the province, in a speech in reply to the planters' address, congratulated them on their happy relations with their tenants.

About this time, the planters realised that German synthetic dyes had so reduced the price of indigo that even with forced labour they could make no profits. By various devices, they threw the whole loss on the shoulders of the poor tenants; one of the devices was to obtain, by force or fraud, from tenants, agreements of excessive enhancement in rent, ranging between 50 and 75 per cent, for the registration of which an obliging government provided the planters with a contingent of special Registrars. In 1912-14 no less than 30710 such contracts were

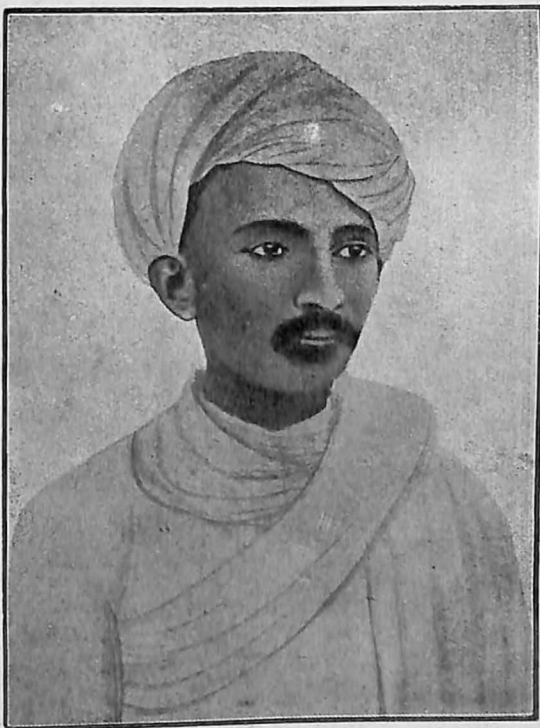
registered in seventeen special registration offices in Champaran alone. The tenantry now felt that the government and the planters were interchangeable terms and that no protection could be expected from either. A petition sent by 700 tenants to the Commissioner against this new oppression resulted only in the prosecution and conviction of their leaders for defamation. They were, however, acquitted by the District Judge, who found that the agreements were obtained by the stoppage of cultivation, by forcing women to register agreements, when their husbands had run away to avoid registration and by criminal prosecutions; consequently the epithets used in the petition were not unreasonable. Agitation in the press and the council only earned for the planters glowing panegyrics from the highest officer in the country, the august representative of His Majesty. The resolution in the council for the appointment of an enquiry committee did not find favour with the government. Thus, dark disappointment stared the tenant in the face.

The Lucknow Congress of 1916 was memorable in more ways than one. It was

here that, for the first time in the history of the Congress, a tenant placed the grievances of the tenantry of Behar before the national assembly. A resolution demanding a committee of enquiry was adopted. Raj Kumar Shukla, who had himself been the victim of the planters' highhandedness, prevailed upon Gandhi to visit Champaran and help the tenants.

On the 10th April, 1917, Gandhiji reached Patna and with the advice of Mr. Mazherul Haque at once left for Muzaffarpur. On the following day he saw the Secretary of the Planters' Association who plainly told him that he was an outsider and had no business to come between the planters and their tenants; but he could send his representation in writing. The Commissioner bullied Gandhi and advised him to leave Tirhut at once. The anxiety of the planters and the local officers to see Gandhi off made his suspicions strong and apprehending his early arrest or deportation, he decided to proceed to work at once. A band of lawyers offered to work as his clerks and on the 15th April, 1917, he started for Motihari, having previously seen and heard the large

crowds of tenants who flocked to him. As he was going to a village on the following morning he was served with a notice under section 144 Cr. P. C., issued by the District Magistrate under the Commissioner's order, asking Gandhi "to leave by the next available train," on the ground that his "presence in any part of the district will endanger the public peace and may lead to serious disturbance, which may be accompanied by loss of life." Gandhi, while repudiating the allegations, wrote, "Out of a sense of public responsibility, I feel it to be my duty to say that I am unable to leave the district but, if it so pleases the authorities, I shall submit to the order by suffering the penalty of disobedience." Gandhi awaited the summons upto the evening and then informed the District Magistrate of his intention to visit a village the following morning and added that, as he did not intend doing anything secretly, it would be better if a police officer accompanied him. The reply was that he would be prosecuted for disobedience and in order to ensure service of summons he should not leave Motihari. This was followed by



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the long-looked-for summons fixing the 18th April, 1917, for trial. Gandhi kept awake the whole night writing letters and giving necessary instructions for carrying on the work in his absence. This night secured him offers of *satyagraha* from his lawyer colleagues and he felt quite contented and happy and said, "Now I know we shall succeed."

The month of April is an ominous month for British India. It was in April that General Dyer perpetrated the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. It was in April that British bullets laid low innocent demonstrators in Delhi and it was on the 18th of April 1917 that Gandhi's trial for *satyagraha* began in Champaran. Although he was anxious not to make the indigo question a political question and had no information of his trial sent to the villages, thousands of villagers from distant places assembled in the Court to witness the trial of their saviour. About two thousand entered the Court room with him. The Magistrate asked Gandhi to wait in the Mokhtar's library while he got armed police to control the crowd. Gandhi's volunteers were very helpful in keeping the crowd away.

The government pleader had spent the whole previous night in looking up the law reports, yet in view of the weakness of his case he was pressing the magistrate to grant him an adjournment. Gandhi interposed and read a brief statement:

“showing why I have taken a very serious step of seemingly disobeying the order made under section 144 of Cr. P. C. In my humble opinion it is a question of difference of opinion between the local administration and myself. I have entered the country with motives of rendering humanitarian and national service. I have done so in response to a pressing invitation to come and help the ryots, who urge they are not being fairly treated by the indigo planters. I could not render any help without studying the problem. I have, therefore, come to study it with the assistance, if possible, of the administration and the planters. I have no other motive and cannot believe that my coming can, in any way, disturb public peace and cause loss of life. I claim to have considerable experience in such matters. The administration, however, have thought differently. I fully appreciate their difficulty and I admit, too, that they can only proceed upon information they receive. As a law abiding citizen my first instinct would be, as it was, to obey the order served upon me. But I could not do so without doing violence to my sense of duty to those

for whom I came. I feel that I could just now serve them only by remaining in their midst. I could not, therefore, voluntarily retire. Amidst this conflict of duty I could only throw the responsibility of removing me from them on the administration. I am fully conscious of the fact that a person, holding in the public life of India a position such as I do has to be most careful in setting examples. It is my firm belief that in the complex constitution under which we are living the only safe and honourable course for a self-respecting man is, in the circumstances such as face me, to do what I have decided to do, that is, to submit without protest to the penalty of disobedience.

I venture to make this statement not in any way in extenuation of the penalty to be awarded against me but to show that I have disregarded the order served upon me not for want of respect for lawful authority but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience."

Every one expected Gandhi to put up a defence, but the dramatic suddenness with which his statement brought the trial to a close came as a surprise both to the Court and the government pleader. The magistrate repeatedly asked Gandhi if he pleaded guilty. His reply was, "I have said whatever I have to say in my statement." The magistrate said that it did not contain a clear plea of

guilty. Gandhi thereupon said, "I do not wish to waste the time of the court and I plead guilty." This put out the magistrate still further. He said to Gandhi, "If you leave the district now and promise not to return, the case against you would be withdrawn." Gandhi replied, "That cannot be. Not to speak of this time alone, I shall make Champaran my home even after my return from jail." The magistrate was dumb-founded and said that he would consider the matter and pass orders in the afternoon. When Gandhi appeared for orders, the magistrate fixed 21st April and released him on a bail of Rs 100 but Gandhi said he would offer no bail. The magistrate was again in a difficulty, but found the way out by offering to release him on his personal recognisance. Gandhi returned to his residence, wired full details to the Viceroy, Malaviyaji and other friends.

The trial gave such an advertisement to Gandhi's mission that from the following morning, tenants began to pour in continuous streams to his residence. The recording of statements went on from 6-30 a. m. to

6-30 p. m., yet the day's work was not finished. Before the date fixed for judgment, the Collector wrote to Gandhi saying the government had withdrawn the case against him and offering him official help in the enquiry.

Gandhi now toured in the interior of the district and saw the tenants, the planters and the officials. He issued occasional reports to the press and avoided press reporters. The Planters' and the European Associations moved the government of India to stop Gandhi's enquiry. At the government's invitation Gandhi went to Patna to meet the Hon. Mr. W. Maude on the 10 May, 1917. Now, having failed to get rid of Gandhi, the planters and their friends tried to cripple him by removing his co-workers and poisoned Mr. Maude's ears against them; but Gandhi was not the man to give away his juniors without being personally satisfied of their guilt. Gandhi, however, agreed to send the government a report of his enquiry, which he did two days after, giving the conclusions he had arrived at on the evidence before him. About the methods adopted by the planters, the report says:

“To bend the ryots to their will the planters have impounded the ryot's cattle, posted peons on their houses, withdrawn from them barbers', dhobis', carpenters' and smiths' services, have prevented the use of village wells and pasture lands by ploughing up the pathway and the lands just in front of or behind their home-steads, have brought or promoted civil suits or criminal complaints against them and resorted to actual physical force and wrongful confinements. The planters have successfully used the institutions of the country to enforce their will against the ryots and have not hesitated to supplement them by taking the law in their own hands. The result has been that the ryots have shown an abject helplessness, such as I have not witnessed in any part of India where I have travelled.”*

The tenants had now become so bold and fearless that they complained against the planters and officials often to their faces and always in the presence of police officers who watched Gandhi's enquiry. In the meantime a factory was burnt and blame cast on the tenants, but Mr. Rajendra Prasad holds the confession of the man employed to burn it. “The plan according to him was to burn the factory at midnight, to rush to the authorities, get large band of armed police immediately

* Satyagraha in Champaran p. 177.

and, if possible, to have the whole village looted. The plan failed because the man who was entrusted with the cipher message could not deliver it in time.”*

Renewed efforts were now made by the planters and their supporters among the officers and outside, to get rid of Gandhi and his friends, but without success. On the 20th May, 1917, Gandhi wrote to the District Magistrate that :

“ Nothing but physical force from the Government or an absolute guarantee that the admitted or provable wrongs of the ryots are to stop for ever, can possibly remove us from the district. What I have seen of the condition of the ryots is sufficient to convince me that if we withdraw at this stage, we would stand condemned before man and God and, what is more important of all, we would never be able to forgive ourselves.”

At the same time he made it clear that the Government could not secure freedom

in cases like this without such assistance as is afforded to them by my mission. The Government machinery is designedly slow. It moves, must move, along the line of least resistance. Reformers like myself who have no other axe to grind but that of the reform they are handling for the time being specialise and

* Satyagraha in Champaran p. 191. footnote.

create a force which the Government must reckon with. Reformers may go wrong by being over-zealous, indiscreet or indolent and ignorant. The Government may go wrong by being impatient of them or over-confident of their ability to do without them."

The Anglo-Indian press, under the inspiration from the planters, now agitated for the appointment of an enquiry committee—a proposal opposed in the council by the planters' representative in 1915 and not accepted by the Government.

Gandhi was invited for an interview with the Lieutenant-Governor on the 4th June, 1917. The interview lasted for three days and resulted in the appointment of a Committee of Enquiry with Gandhi on it. On the 12th June, Gandhi stopped his enquiry, broke up his party and left for Bombay on the 16th June, 1917 and returned, on 23th June, to participate in the proceedings of the Enquiry Committee on 15th July. The Committee signed a unanimous report on the 3rd October, 1917. The Government accepted the recommendations and translated them in November into the Champaran Agrarian Bill, which was passed into law early in March, 1918.

Gandhi did not confine himself to the enquiry. On his way to Champaran he happened to visit a village; on seeing the condition of the people he exclaimed, "We can get *swaraj* only when we improve the lot of these people. As soon as he entered Champaran, he began educational work. He opened primary schools in six villages, the villagers providing board and lodgings for the teachers and the other expenses being borne by Gandhi and his colleagues. The teachers were all volunteers from Bombay and Poona, ladies and gentlemen of education and position, like Mrs. Avantikabai Gokhale, Mr. Despande, Mr. and Mrs. Desai, and others. These teachers also distributed medicines provided them for ordinary prevalent diseases, improved the sanitation of their circles and taught the rustics to stand on their own legs. But before rural education and sanitation and cow-protection started in Champaran by Gandhi could be placed on a permanent footing, he was called away to Ahmedabad.

While at Champaran, Gandhi paid flying visits to his Ashram, which then was in a

hired building in a small village near Ahmedabad. The outbreak of plague in the village was God's notice to Gandhi to quit. Sjt. Punjabhai Hirachand hit upon the present site on the Sabarmati river, in the vicinity of the central jail, which for Gandhi had a special attraction, as he understood jail-going to be the *satyagrahi's* normal lot. Within a week the forty inmates removed to it, lived under canvass and provided a tin-shed for the kitchen. The place was infested, like Phoenix and Tolstoy Farm, with snakes, but the rule of not killing even venomous reptiles was strictly adhered to without any loss of life. Gandhi sees

“with the eye of faith in this circumstance the hand of the God of Mercy. Let no one cavil at this, saying that God can never be partial, and that He has no time to meddle with the humdrum affairs of men. I have no other language to express the fact of the matter, to describe this uniform experience of mine. Human language can but imperfectly describe God's ways. I am sensible of the fact that they are indescribable and inscrutable. But if mortal man will dare to describe them, he had no better medium than his own inarticulate speech. Even if it be a superstition to believe that complete immunity from harm for twenty-five years, in

spite of a fairly regular practice of non-killing, is not a fortuitous incident but a grace of God, I should still hug that superstition."

In the midst of his humanitarian activities at Champaran, Gandhi received calls for help, from Kheda and Ahmedabad. At Kheda the crops had failed and the peasants were unable to pay the assessment. At Ahmedabad the mill labour was ill-paid and over-worked. While the Kheda question was under discussion, Gandhi took up the mill-hands' case. This was a fight between Shrimati Anasuyabai, the labour leader and her brother, Sjt. Ambalal Sarabhai, the leader of the mill-owners. Gandhi's efforts for arbitration failed and he advised the labourers to go on strike. The strikers took the pledge, "never to resort to violence, never to molest blacklegs, never to depend upon alms, and to remain firm, no matter how long the strike continued and to earn bread, during the strike by any other honest labour."* Gandhi used to meet the strikers every evening and remind them of their pledge which they kept for two weeks. In the

*My Experiments With Truth Vol. II p. 412.

third week their attitude towards the black-legs was menacing; Gandhi feared rowdyism on their part, and the strikers began to totter. Gandhi felt he was responsible for the weakness of the strikers and one morning at their meeting, unbidden and all by themselves, the words came to his lips: "Unless the strikers rally and continue the strike till a settlement is reached, or till they leave the mills altogether I will not touch any food." Anasuyaben was in tears and the strikers insisted that they and not he should fast, but in vain. Vallabhbai Patel found work for some of the strikers in the municipality and the others led by Ansuayaben with a basket of sand on her head, filled the foundation of the weaving school in the new Ashram. The number of labourers was so large that it became difficult to cope with the task of paying out wages to them.

Gandhi assured the mill-owners that they need not be affected by his fast, but signs of anguish were visible on the face of their leader and his wife, Saraladevi, who had for Gandhi the affection of a blood-sister. After three days' fast, Sjt. Anandshanker

Dhruva was appointed arbitrator and the occasion was celebrated by the mill-owners by distributing sweets among the labourers. The strike came to an end in an atmosphere of good-will after twenty-one days.

Ahmedabad strike was hardly over when Gandhi had to plunge into the Kheda *satyagraha* struggle. On account of the failure of crop, the peasantry was unable to meet the rental demand and was, according to the popular leaders, entitled under the law to suspension of realization till the ensuing year, but the government held otherwise. Deputations, petitions, agitation in the Bombay Legislative Council proved futile and "the conduct of the officials on this occasion was so ridiculous and undignified as now to appear almost incredible."* Government did not agree even to arbitration, the demand for which it regarded as *lese majeste*. At last, *satyagraha* was started, the peasants pledging themselves not to pay of their own accord the full or the remaining revenue for the year till the suspension was granted by the government. It was agreed that on the

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. II p. 429.

grant of suspension, those who were able to pay would pay up their dues, which were withheld so that the poorer ryots might not "in a panic sell their chattels or incur debts to pay their dues, and thereby bring suffering upon themselves".* Money poured in plenty from all sides to finance the campaign, but money is the thing which *satyagraha* least needs.

As usual, in the initial stages, the government ignored the movement but as it gained strength and showed no signs of slackening, the government came out with its mailed fist, which unnerved some of the peasants. The tenants of Sjt. Shankerlal Parekh paid up the assessment in respect of his land, creating a sensation. Sjt. Parekh made up for the tenants' weakness by giving away the land for charitable purposes.

In order to instil courage into the waverers Gandhi advised the removal of the crop of an onion field wrongly attached. A party of seven or eight, led by Sjt. Mohanlal Pandya, removed the crop, was arrested and sentenced to a brief term of imprisonment. The conviction was wrong, but no appeal was filed as

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. II p. 432.

the policy was to avoid the law courts. The court-house was besieged by thousands of tenants, who in a procession escorted the "onion thieves" to jail. This "added to the people's enthusiasm. When the fear of jail disappears, repression puts heart into the people."*

The end of the struggle came suddenly and unexpectedly. The *mamlatdar* of a taluqa sent word to Gandhi that if those who could afford paid, suspension would be granted to the poorer ones. Gandhi asked for a written undertaking and got it. He enquired from the Collector if the undertaking held good for the whole district and the reply was that suspension order in the terms of the undertaking had already been issued. This is all that *satyagrahis* wanted. The Kheda *satyagraha* placed a new weapon in the hands of the tenants and compelled the educated public to establish contact with the actual life of the peasants.

About this time the Viceroy invited Gandhi to the War Conference at Delhi. This Conference of Indian leaders was called

* My Experiments With Truth, Vol. II p. 237.

to secure their hearty co-operation to get over the crisis in the European War; but leaders like Tilak, Dr. Besant and the Ali brothers were not invited because of their unpalatable views. Gandhi went to Delhi but had objections to participate in the Conference on various grounds, the principal being the news conveyed to him by Andrews that England had entered into secret treaties with Italy. This he communicated to the Viceroy, who granted him an interview and succeeded in persuading Gandhi, as a citizen of the Empire, to help the Empire in its hour of need. At the Viceroy's request Gandhi seconded in the Conference the resolution on recruiting, in a one sentence speech in Hindustani to this effect: "With a full sense of responsibility, I beg to support the resolution." This was the first instance, within living memory, of a Hindustani speech at a meeting presided over by the Viceroy.

After the Conference, Gandhi sent a letter to the Viceroy through Rev. Ireland. It began by saying that it was a grave blunder not to have invited Tilak, Besant and the Ali brothers to the Conference, for

“ No government can afford to disregard the leaders, who represent the large masses of people as these do, even though they may hold views fundamentally different.”

Explaining the people's minimum political demand Gandhi said, in this letter:

“ I recognise that in the hour of its danger we must give, as we have decided to give, ungrudging and unequivocal support to the Empire of which we aspire in the near future to be partners in the same sense as the Dominions overseas. But it is the simple truth that our response is due to the expectation that our goal will be reached all the more speedily. On that account, even as performance of duty automatically confers a corresponding right, people are entitled to believe that the imminent reforms alluded to in your speech will embody the main general principles of the Congress-League Scheme, and I am sure that it is this faith which has enabled many members of the Conference to tender to the Government their full-hearted co-operation. If I could make my countrymen retrace their steps, I would make them withdraw all the Congress resolutions, and not whisper “ Home Rule ” or “ Responsible Government ” during the pendency of the War. I would make India offer all her able-bodied sons as a sacrifice to the Empire at its critical moment, and I know that India, by this very act, would become the most favoured partner in the Empire, and racial distinctions would become a thing of the past. But

practically the whole of educated India has decided to take a less effective course, and it is no longer possible to say that educated India does not exercise any influence on the masses. I have been coming into most intimate touch with the ryots ever since my return from South Africa to India, and I wish to assure you that the desire for Home Rule has widely penetrated them."

With regard to the Viceroy's appeal to sink domestic differences, Gandhi wrote :

"If the appeal involves the toleration of tyranny and wrong-doing on the part of officials, I am powerless to respond. I shall resist organised tyranny to the uttermost. The appeal must be to the officials that they do not ill-treat a single soul, and that they consult and respect popular opinion as never before. In Champaran by resisting an age-long tyranny I have shown the ultimate sovereignty of British Justice. In Kheda, a population that was cursing the Government now feels, that it, and not the Government, is the power when it is prepared to suffer for the truth it represents. It is, therefore, losing its bitterness and is saying to itself, that the Government must be a Government of the people, for it tolerates orderly and respectful disobedience where injustice is felt. Thus Champaran and Kheda affairs are my direct, definite and special contribution to the War. Ask me to suspend my activities in that direction and you ask me to suspend my life. If I could popularise the use of soul-force, which is but another name for love-force, in place of brute force. I

know that I could present you with an India that could defy the whole world to do its worst. In season and out of season, therefore, I shall discipline myself to express in my life this eternal law of suffering, and present it for acceptance to those who care, and if I take part in any other activity, the motive is to show the matchless superiority of that law....Lastly, I would like you to ask His Majesty's Ministers to give definite assurance about Mohammedan States. I am sure you know that every Mohammedan is deeply interested in them. As a Hindu, I cannot be indifferent to their cause. Their sorrows must be our sorrows. In the most scrupulous regard for the rights of those States and for the Muslim sentiment as to their places of worship, and your just and timely treatment of India's claim to Home Rule lies the safety of the Empire. I write this, because I love the English nation, and I wish to evoke in every Indian the loyalty of Englishmen."

Returning from Delhi, Gandhi started his recruiting campaign in Kheda, but the estrangement between the people and the government, even in 1918, had reached such a pitch that Gandhi was refused even carts and food. He and his recruiting colleagues had to trudge about 20 miles a day, carrying their food in their satchels. His optimism received a rude shock. The response to his appeal in the district for which he had recently worked