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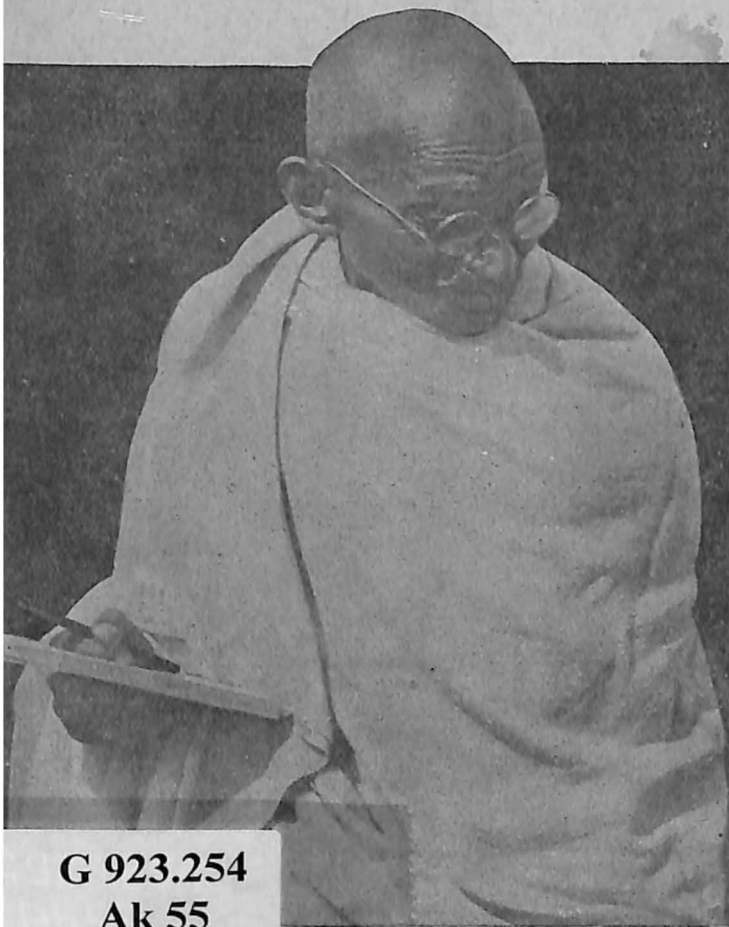
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MAHATMA GANDHI



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A SHORT LIFE OF GANDHIJI

MAHATMA GANDHI

(A Short Life of Gandhiji)

by

B. J. AKKAD B. A.



VORA & CO., PUBLISHERS LTD.

3, Round Building, Bombay 2.

CATALOGUED

A WORD

I have attempted to put before the public a brief outline of the life of Mahatma Gandhi, and in doing so I have addressed myself more to the narration of the principal events in his life, than to be critical of his actions or teachings.

Vile Parle,
31st May, 1946.

B. J. AKKAD.

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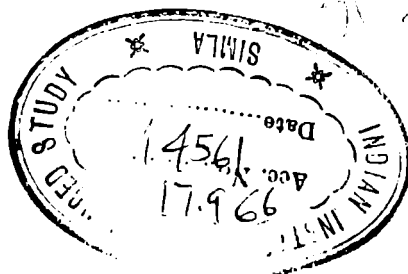
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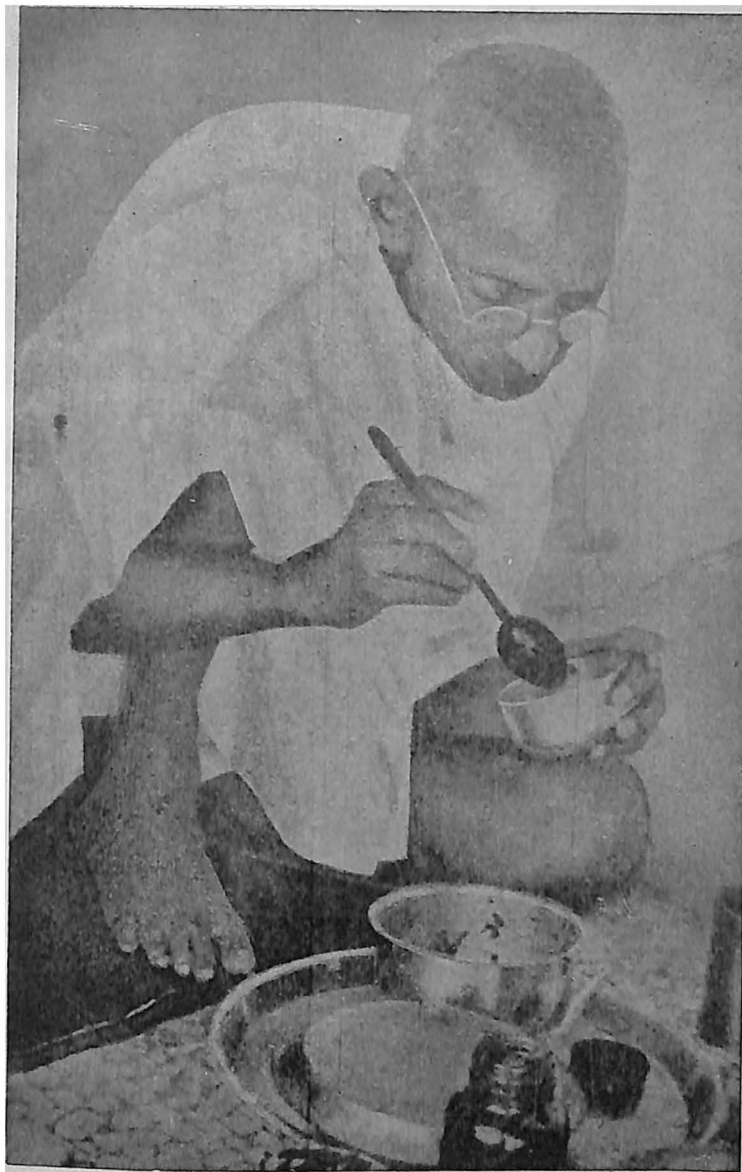
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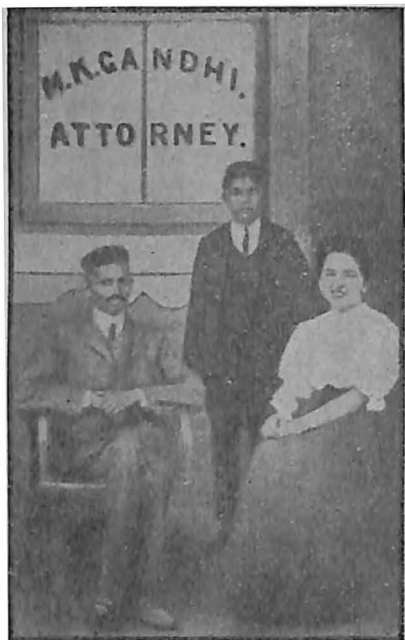
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TAKING HIS MORNING MEAL



IN AFRICA

PART I

1. Childhood And School.

Gandhiji was born on 2nd October 1869 of poor but respectable parents. His father Kaba Gandhi had received very little of modern education. He may have read upto fifth Gujarati Standard. However, he was a man who had wide and varied experience, which helped him to rise to the position of a Prime Minister in the state of Rajkot. He was well known for his devotion and loyalty to the State. He did not receive religious training. However, frequent visits to religious temples had made a deep impression upon him.

Gandhiji's mother was a very saintly woman. She was deeply religious. She would not take her meals without reciting her daily prayers. 'Going to Haveli—the Vaishnav temple—was one of her daily duties'. She was known for her vows. She would take the hardest vows and keep them. To fast for three or four days was a child's play to her.

Gandhiji was born at Porbunder, more popularly known as Sudamapuri. When he was about seven, his father left Porbunder for Rajkot. Gandhiji continued his studies at Rajkot. There is nothing particular to note about his studies there. By nature Gandhiji was very shy and avoided all company. His only companions were his books. In his autobio-

graphy, he relates an incident which occurred at an Examination in the High School :—

‘ Mr. Giles, the Educational Inspector, had come on a visit of Inspection. He had set up five words to write as a spelling exercise. One of the words was “kettle”. I had mis-spelt it. The teacher tried to prompt me with the point of his boot, but I would not be prompted. It was beyond me to see that he wanted me to copy the spelling from my neighbour’s slate, for I thought that the teacher was there to supervise us against copying. The result was that all the boys, except myself, were found to have spelt each word correctly. Only I had been stupid. The teacher tried to bring this stupidity home to me, but without effect. I never could learn the art of “copying” .

While at school, he happened to read a play about Shrivana and another about Harischandra. These books greatly influenced him. Even though he knew that they were not historical characters, they were for him living realities. He says “and I am sure I should be touched as before if I were to read again those plays to-day.”

He used to receive good certificates from his teachers. Twice he succeeded in getting scholarships also. He had once received corporal punishment. He could not bear this and wept pitiously. He had no special liking for Physical Training. But as Gymnastics and Cricket were made compulsory he could not help attending to these. Gandhiji neglected hand-writing. He realized the importance of good hand-

writing, only when he grew up, but then it was too late.

The medium of instruction in most subjects was English from Std. IV upwards. This proved a great handicap to him as it has to a majority of us. He could follow the teacher in subjects like Geometry and others, with great difficulty. It is a good sign of the times that Educational authorities have seen their mistakes and are now imparting instruction through the mother tongue.

He was married at the early age of thirteen. He is sorry that it should have so happened. Early marriages are bad for all and should be stopped. Marriage is a responsibility and should be undertaken only when one is fit for it.

2. Evil Company.

It is unfortunate that Gandhiji should have fallen in evil company, while young. One of his bad companions was his elder brother's friend. His mother and wife had warned him against this, but Gandhiji pleaded that he knew his weakness and would guard himself against that.

However he had calculated wrongly. At this time a wave of 'reform' swept over Rajkot and his friend argued that there was nothing wrong in taking meat and wine. He informed Gandhiji that many of the teachers were secretly taking meat and wine. This pained Gandhiji who asked his friend why it was necessary to do so. His friend gave a very strange explanation. "We are a weak people, because we do

not eat meat. The English are able to rule over us because they are meat-eaters". Gandhiji's elder brother had already yielded to the temptation, and he supported his friend. Gandhiji was therefore led to believe that meat eating was good, and so he also tried the experiment, but failed. He fell ill and left it for ever.

Another failing of Gandhiji was the habit of smoking. His uncle used to smoke and he wanted to imitate him but as he had no money, he stole away the stumps of 'bidis' thrown away by his uncle. The stumps, however, could not give much smoke. So he began to steal copper from the servant's pocket. But how far can he continue this? Again smoking can be done in private only. This also he could not bear. He smarted under the want of independence. He was greatly agitated over this and in sheer disgust attempted to commit suicide!

He had also committed thefts. He stole gold from his brother's pocket. However, he repented for the same. He made up his mind to make a clean confession of all this to his father. He wrote out his confession, handed over the paper to his father and requested him to pardon him for the same, which he willingly did. The confession brought tears in his eyes. Gandhiji gives a glowing description of the same: —

"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. He had

set up to read it. He lay down. I wept with him. I could see my father's agony. If I were a painter, I could draw a picture of the whole scene to-day ; it is still so vivid in my mind."

3. A Barrister.

Gandhiji matriculated in 1887 and joined the Samaldas College, Bhavnagar. In the mean time one Mr. Mavji Dave who was an old friend and adviser of the family advised Gandhiji's mother to send him to England, for becoming a Barrister. Gandhiji himself welcomed the proposal. But his mother, holding orthodox views, was rather reluctant. There were various reports about people who went to England. Some said that such people took to meat ; others that they could not live there without liquor ; others again that young people were likely to go astray. The old mother was therefore greatly agitated. Gandhiji pleaded with her and said that he would not touch either meat or liquor and closed with an earnest appeal "Will you not trust me? I shall not lie to you." The mother said 'I can trust you here in your natural surroundings. But how can I trust you in a distant land? I am dazed and know not what to do. I will ask Becharji Swami'. Becharji Swami was a Jain monk and was a family adviser like Joshiji. He said, "I shall get the boy solemnly to take the three vows, and then he can be allowed to go". This satisfied Gandhiji's mother. Gandhiji took a vow not to touch wine, women and meat. His mother gave him permission and he sailed from Bombay on 4th September, 1888.

He did not feel sea-sick. However, as days passed, he became nervous. He was not accustomed to talking English and almost all the passengers were Englishmen. The only exception was one Mr. Mazmudar, who was a great help to Gandhiji. He could speak English well and moved freely among the passengers. He advised Gandhiji to talk English and not to mind the mistakes that may be made. A kind hearted English passenger drew Gandhiji into conversation, and was surprised at Gandhiji's resolve not to take meat, and said, "It is all very well so far but you will have to revise your decision in the Bay of Biscay. And it is so cold in England, that one cannot possibly live there without meat". He therefore advised Gandhiji to take meat. Gandhiji thanked him for his advice but remained firm said that as he had taken a vow, he would do without meat.

He was received at Southampton by Dr. P. J. Mehta. Mr. Mazmudar and he put up at the Victoria Hotel in London. However, the Hotel did not suit Gandhiji who vacated it and shifted to the rooms rented by a Sindhi friend. 'I was very uneasy even in the new rooms. I would continually think of my home and my country. My mother's love always haunted me.' Thus Gandhiji was greatly agitated over his foreign surroundings and almost thought of returning. However, that would bring him disgrace, so he finally decided to stay there and finish his studies.

Dr. Mehta did not approve of the place selected by Gandhiji and advised him to live with a family. "We come to England not so much for the purpose of

bookish studies as for gaining experience of English life and customs", argued Dr. Mehta. Gandhiji accepted Dr. Mehta's suggestion and removed to a friend's rooms. 'The friend was all kindness and attention.' However, Gandhiji's food became a problem. The friend reasoned with him to eat meat. But Gandhiji remained firm and he gave up the attempt.

Gandhiji made up for this by cultivating other accomplishments which would fit him for a polite society. The old clothes after the Bombay cut were found unsuitable for English Society, so he got new ones prepared. He also went in for a silk hat. Again a ready made tie was not considered fashionable, so he learnt the art of tying it for himself. As if this was not sufficient, he took lessons in Dancing, French and Elocution. Music was a part of accomplishments required of one moving in an English Society. So he invested £3/- in a violin. Gandhiji was now fast becoming a polite English Gentleman. But he soon realized that he would have to pay heavily for this. Again he was not to spend a life-time in England. So he gave up dancing, etc. and became a student.

It was during this period that he read the Bhagvad Gita for the first time. He happened to read the Bible also. The Sermon on the Mount captured him. 'I compared it with the Gita. The Verses "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also", delighted me beyond measure and put me in mind of the line from the Gujarati poet Shamalbhatt 'For a bowl of water, give a goodly meal.' After nine months'

intensive study he was called to the Bar on 10th June, 1891, and he sailed for India on the 12th.

4. Goes to South Africa.

Gandhiji's elder brother came to receive him at the dock. The sad news of his mother's death was given to him only now. His brother desired to spare 'him the blow in a foreign land'. The news, however, was a great shock to him. He stayed for some time in Rajkot and then shifted to Bombay to gain experience of the High Court. However, his income there was not sufficient for his expenses, so he returned to Rajkot, established himself there and began to earn about Rs. 300/- a month.

In the mean time a Memon firm from Porbunder offered him work in South Africa. He readily accepted the offer and left for South Africa in April, 1893. Abdulla Sheth of the firm of Dada Abdulla & Co. received him at the port of Natal. As he watched the people coming on board to meet their friends, he was pained to notice that Indians were held in scant respect by Europeans. He was taken to the firms' quarters and shown into the room set apart for him.

Two or three days after he went to the Court. Abdulla Sheth introduced him to several people and seated him next to his attorney. It was here that a remarkable incident happened. Gandhiji was there with his turban on. Now there was a practice in the Durban Court that Indians wearing the Mussalman Costume might keep the turbans on, but the other Indians had to take off their turbans, on entering the



KASTURBA



GANDHIJI AS A BARRISTER

court. So the magistrate asked Gandhiji to take off his turban which he refused to do and left the court. This incident attracted public attention and served as a sort of advertisement for Gandhiji.

Another event which brought him into light was an incident in a Railway Compartment. While going to Durban a First Class seat was booked for him. At Maritzbury, a white passenger entered the compartment : and wanted Gandhiji to vacate it for him. When Gandhiji refused to do so, the white man sought the help of the police and got him removed. The following morning Gandhiji sent a long telegram to the General Manager of the Railway. Abdulla Sheth also saw the Manager, but he justified the conduct of the Railway authorities.

5. Struggle in South Africa.

The case which had taken him to South Africa was satisfactorily settled and he was preparing himself for returning to India. A farewell function was also arranged. But just then some one put a copy of the 'Natal Mercury' in his hands. It revealed to him that the Natal Government was contemplating introducing a bill to disfranchise Indians. Immediately he dropped the idea of returning to India and drew up a petition to the Natal Legislative Assembly. The petition was presented to the South African Legislature. Meetings were held, funds were collected, and there was a stir in the political atmosphere never before witnessed in the continent. Though this agitation failed to defeat the bill, it created a profound impression.

Gandhiji saw that if the grievances of the people were to be redressed, a permanent organisation was necessary. The Indians there accepted his suggestion and the Natal Indian Congress was formed in 1894. 'And God laid the foundation of my life in South Africa and sowed the seed of the fight for National self-respect'. The new organisation worked under the guidance and supervision of Gandhiji. It focussed the grievances of Indians there and put a new life into them.

It was nearly three years that Gandhiji was there. He knew the people and they knew him. He had established a fairly good practice and could see that the people would require his services. He therefore returned to India to fetch his wife and children to settle in South Africa.

6. Second Visit to South Africa.

In less than three months, Gandhiji received a cable from Natal asking him to return. Gandhiji immediately got himself ready and started with his wife and children.

However, there was a great opposition to his re-entry in South Africa. So the Captain was advised by a member from Government that he should so arrange that Gandhiji and his family may land in the evening. The Government also offered the services of Mr. Tatum, the Post Superintendent, who would escort them home. But immediately after this, Mr. Laughton, a well known advocate came on board and suggested Gandhiji should go with him and that his wife and

children should drive to Mr. Rustomji's house. Gandhiji fell in with this suggestion and it was arranged accordingly.

The Government was right. The storm was brewing and as soon as Mr. Laughton and Gandhiji landed, some European youngsters recognised him and shouted 'Gandhi! Gandhi!' Mr. Laughton hired a 'rikshaw' but the youngsters frightened the rikshaw-boy and he ran away. What followed may well be put in Gandhiji's own words:—'As we walked on, the crowd continued to swell, until it became impossible to proceed further. They first caught hold of Mr. Laughton and separated him from me. Then they pelted me with stones, brickbats and rotten eggs. Some one snatched away my turban, whilst others began to batter and kick me. I fainted and caught hold of the front railings of a house, and stood there to get my breath. But it was impossible. They came upon me boxing and battering. The wife of the Police Superintendent who knew me happened to be passing by. The brave lady came up, opened her parasol though there was no sun there, and stood between the crowd and me. This checked the fury of the mob, as it was difficult for them to deliver blows on me without harming Mrs. Alexander.'

Thereafter with the help of the Superintendent of Police, Gandhiji managed to escape the fury of the crowd who were singing

' Hang old Gandhi
On the Sour apple tree '.

This created a stir, and the late Mr. Chamberlain cabled the Natal Government to prosecute the assailants of Gandhiji. Mr. Escombe, who represented the Natal Government sent for him, expressed regret and said that he was prepared to prosecute the assailants. Gandhiji thanked him, however he refused to accept his suggestion for prosecution. He said 'I do not want to prosecute any one. It is possible that I might be able to identify one or two of them. But what is the use of getting them punished? Besides I do not hold the assailants to blame. They were given to understand that I had made exaggerated statements in India about the Whites in Natal, and caluminated them. If they believed these reports, it is no wonder that they were enraged. The leaders, and, if you will permit me to say so, you are to blame. You could have guided the people properly but you believed Reuter, and assumed that I must have indulged in exaggeration. I do not want to bring anyone to book. I am sure, when the truth becomes known, they will be sorry for their conduct'. This came as an agreeable surprise to Mr. Escombe who was the least prepared for it.

Again when the representative of the Natal Advertiser interviewed Gandhiji, he refuted every one of the charges levelled against him. Fortunately he had kept copies of the speeches delivered by him in India. This literature was handed over to the representative of the paper who appeared satisfied.

'This interview, and my refusal to prosecute the assailants, produced such a profound impression that the Europeans of Durban were ashamed of their con-

duct. The press declared me to be innocent and condemned the mob. Thus the lynching ultimately proved to be a blessing for me, that is for the cause. It enhanced the prestige of the Indian Community in South Africa, made my work easier, and the experience prepared me for the practice of Satyagrah.'

7. The Boer War and After.

Gandhiji now settled down and began to devote more attention to details of domestic life. He wanted to live a simple life, yet he had to put on upto date dress. Collars troubled him the most. The Dhobis are well known the world over for their want of punctuality. Again the Dhobi's bill was considered very high by Gandhiji. He therefore had no alternative but to become his own Dhobi. He washed his collars, and it gave him a great pleasure to do so.

In the mean time there was the Boer War. Even though Gandhiji's sympathies were with the Boers his loyalty to the British Rule drove him to side with the British. Gandhiji was then of opinion, along with other liberal leaders, that India could get her independence only through and within the British Empire. So he collected as many men as he could and started an ambulance corps. However, even here, there was a difficulty. The average Englishman had a low opinion of the Indian. He thought the Indian was a coward, that he was selfish and that he had no foresight and imagination to enable him to look ahead. Therefore many English friends threw cold water over Gandhiji's plan. Only Dr. Booth took an active interest in the ambulance

corps, trained the workers in ambulance work, and gave all necessary help. The Corps was 1100 strong. It did good work outside. Though very often they had to work outside the firing line, sometimes they were required to work within firing line also. Once they were required to march about 25 miles a day bearing the wounded on stretchers. This they did admirably well.

One cannot resist the temptation of recording a noteworthy incident that happened at Ladysmith. When Ladsmity was besieged by the Boers, there were besides Englishmen, some Indians also. One of these Indians was Parbhutsingh. He was given the most dangerous and responsible piece of work. 'On a hill near Ladysmith the Boers had planted their pom-pom, whose operations destroyed many buildings and even occasioned some loss of life. An interval of a minute or two must pass before a shell, which had been fired from such a gun reached a distant objective. If the besieged got some previous notice, they could take cover before the shell dropped in their midst. Parbhutsingh used to sit perched up in a tree all the time that the gun was wokring, with his eyes fixed on the hill, and he rang a bell, the moment he observed the flash. On hearing the bell, the residents of Ladysmith instantly took cover and saved themselves from the deadly cannon ball whose approach was thus announced.'

What better example of bravery can we find in history? Here was an Indian who risked his life to protect the lives of foreigners in a foreign country. History, if justly and truthfully written, will not fail to afford many such illustrations, where Indians have

shone brightly and have braved serious dangers. Lord Curzon heard about the adventure of Parbhut-singh and awarded a Kashmire robe to him.

When Gandhiji was free from the war duty, he expressed a desire to return to India. His African friends allowed him to do so on condition that he should be ready to go back to South Africa, if required. A farewell function was arranged. Among the gifts received by him there were articles of gold, silver and even diamonds. Gandhiji thanked them for their kindness but expressed his inability to keep the gifts with him. The gifts were therefore thankfully returned with a suggestion that they should be held in trust for the use of the community.

While in India, Gandhiji attended the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress. Thanks to the encouragement he received from Mr. Gokhale, he had the honour of moving there a resolution on the South African situation. He had great respect for Mr. Gokhale and he spoke very highly of his work. In his own words 'To see him at work was such a joy and an education.' He had almost settled down in Bombay when he received an urgent message from South Africa. Gandhiji therefore started at once.

8. 'The Magic Spell of a Book'.

As the political situation in South Africa was going from bad to worse, Gandhiji made up his mind to stay there. He set up an office at Johanseburg and began his work. If there was any book which left a permanent mark upon Gandhiji, it was the Gita. He calls it 'the

Universal mother'. He read and reread the book and found in it a joy which it is impossible to describe. 'The Gita now became an infallible guide of conduct. It became my dictionary of reference.'

The book, however, that brought about a revolutionary change in Gandhiji's outlook was Ruskin's 'Unto this Last'. It was Mr. Polak who handed this book to Gandhiji saying, 'You will like this book.' The teachings of this book according to Gandhiji are as under :—

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

It was during this period that Gandhiji began editing a weekly called the 'Indian Opinion'. It was a vehicle through which Gandhiji expressed himself on many problems, political, social, economic and others.

9. The Phoenix Settlement.

Ruskin's 'Unto the Last' had gripped Gandhiji. He began to translate into action some of the principles propounded in that book. The very first thing was to purchase a farm where everyone should labour and draw the same wage. He accordingly purchased about

one hundred acres of land, having many fruit trees. And then he moved to this place, which was called Proenix, with his friends and relations who were willing to lead the simple life of a farm labourer. The Head Quarters of the 'Indian Opinion' which Gandhiji was editing were also shifted to Phoenix. Maganlal Gandhi, who helped Gandhiji in his ethical experiments, looked after every small detail connected with the publication of the weekly.

In the mean time, there arose the "Zulu Rebellion." As in the Boer war, so here also Gandhiji considered it his duty to help the British Empire, which he thought existed for the good of the world. His offer of an Indian Ambulance Corps was accepted and Gandhiji was made Sergeant Major. Gandhiji's heart was with the Zulus, and he was delighted when he found that his corps was entrusted with the work of nursing the wounded Zulus. The corps was on active service for about six weeks.

10 The Vow of Brahmacharya for Life.

As Gandhiji was carrying on his work in South Africa, it became increasingly clear to him that he must devote more and more time to the service of humanity. He also began to think whether he could conscientiously discharge his duties as a public worker, if he were engaged in the propagation and rearing of children. Public life, in the opinion of Gandhiji, was a heavy responsibility, and if he remained true to his ideals, he must reduce the burden of family life. He therefore came to the conclusion that he must take the vow

of Brahmacharya. For a time there was a struggle in his heart as to whether it should be a permanent vow, or for a shorter period only. Eventually Gandhiji decided that he must take the vow for life.

Like all other experiments of Gandhiji, this also was a bold experiment. He could not then realize the magnitude of the vow. However, he had an iron will and even though there were difficulties, he saw that the vow was carried out. Gandhiji says :—

“The freedom and joy that came to me after taking the vow had never been experienced before 1906. In about a month after this, the foundation of Satyagraha was laid. As though unknown to me, the Brahmacharya vow had been preparing me for it.”

11. Experiences at the Bar.

As a student Gandhiji had often heard that a lawyer's profession meant a liar's profession. However, Gandhiji was able to stick to truth and yet win success as a lawyer. He never took a false case and never resorted to the practice of coaching up witnesses. This enhanced his reputation with the result that no false case would go to him.

On one occasion when Gandhiji was conducting a case before a magistrate in Johannesburg he found that his client had deceived him. To the great surprise of the opposing counsel Gandhiji stopped arguing and requested the magistrate to dismiss the case.

On another occasion, he saved Seth Rustamji from a difficult situation. Rustamji was a large importer of goods from Bombay and Calcutta. When he was found

guilty of smuggling he approached Gandhiji for advice. What advice would Gandhiji give except that of clear confession? Rustamji acted accordingly. This made a great impression and he was let off only with a fine.

12. Satyagraha and Jail.

While Gandhiji was busy discussing his future plans, news reached him of a draft ordinance proposed by the Transval Government. "Under it, every Indian, man, woman or child of eight years or upwards, entitled to reside in Transval, had to register his or her name with the Registrar of Asiatics, and take out a certificate of registration." "The Registrar was to note down important marks of identification upon the applicant's person, and take his finger and thumb impressions." Persons who did not apply for registration would forfeit their right of residence in Transvaal.

This Ordinance came as a shock to the Indians of Transval. 'It meant ruin for Indians. It threatened their very existence in South Africa.' A small meeting of Indians was immediately held to discuss how they should meet the situation. They decided that they should offer resistance and that they should not obey in the event of the Ordinance becoming a law.

In spite of the Indians' protest, the Government passed the Ordinance. The Indians had therefore no alternative but to put their resolution into practice. This they were prepared to do. Gandhiji explained to them the gravity of the step they were taking. However, they remained firm and decided to take the

consequences of their non-submission to law. Thus the Satyagraha movement which later became so famous had its birth in South Africa.

When the Government found that not more than 500 Indians had come forward to register their names, they arrested some of them. The movement, however, was gathering strength. The 'Indian Opinion' was being regularly published. This kept the people in touch with the events as they happened from day to day. More persons were arrested. Gandhiji also had his turn. When Gandhiji's case came up before the magistrate, he made a statement in which he asked the magistrate to impose upon him the heaviest punishment permissible under the law. The magistrate sentenced him to two months' simple imprisonment. He was taken to the Johannesburg jail. Later on his co-workers also joined him there.

This was the first experience that Gandhiji had, of a jail. Various thoughts, therefore passed in his mind. There were moments of doubt, hesitation and despair. However, Gandhiji remained firm. Thanks to his co-workers outside the Jail, they did not fail him, the struggle continued, and more persons offered themselves for arrest. Fresh batches of people began to enter the jails, at intervals. This enabled Gandhiji to get fresh news almost everyday.

In the Johannesburg jail, prisoners got maize gruel in the morning. In addition, each prisoner was given some salt. At noon, they got rice, bread and vegetable. As they were not satisfied with this diet, they asked the officer for some condiments, particularly

as they were allowed these in Indian jails. But in came the stern reply :—‘ This is not India.’

In the meantime, General Smuts sent for Gandhiji, for discussion. A compromise was reached, according to which the prisoners were to be released, the Black Act was to be withdrawn and the Indians were to register voluntarily. Gandhiji accepted the compromise and the prisoners were released.

The meeting at Johannesburg almost unanimously ratified the settlement with the exception of a couple of Pathans. The Indians were therefore preparing themselves for taking out the certificate. Then occurred one of the most memorable episodes in the life of Gandhiji.

Mir Alam was one of the Pathans who did not agree to take out the certificates. He was a client of Gandhiji and consulted him in all affairs. He was angry at the step taken by Gandhiji. As Gandhiji was on his way to the Registration Office, Mir Alam struck a heavy blow on him. Gandhiji fainted. Yet Mir Alam and his friends continued to give more blows. In the meantime the police arrived and took the offenders in custody. When Gandhiji regained consciousness, he was informed that Mir Alam and his friends were arrested. Gandhiji did not want this and wrote to the Attorney General to release Mir Alam and others. Accordingly they were all released. But the Europeans of Johannesburg addressed a strong letter to the Attorney General. They argued that the offence was committed on a high road and was therefore a public offence. Upon this, Mir Alam was

rearrested and sentenced to three months' hard labour.

All this time Gandhiji was confined to bed and was attended to by his friends Mr. and Mrs. Doke. He published a statement to the press in which he asked his community to forget that he was assaulted, bear no ill will against the offenders, and willingly take out the certificates. He said, "Those who have committed the act did not know what they were doing. They thought that I was doing what was wrong. They have had their redress in the only manner they know. I therefore request that no steps be taken against them." When Gandhiji recovered from his illness, he found that he had to face a new situation.

In view of the fact that Indians had voluntarily registered themselves, it was expected that the Transvaal Government would repeal the Black Act, according to the terms of the agreement. But instead of doing so, the Government went a step further. General Smuts not only maintained the Black Act on the Statute Book but introduced another measure, which validated the voluntary registration of Asiatics. Gandhiji was simply astounded.

He wrote a letter to Smuts but there was no reply. Gandhiji therefore addressed a firm letter to the Transvaal Government saying, in effect:—"If the Asiatic Act is not repealed in terms of the settlement, and if the Government's decision to that effect is not communicated to the Indians before a specific date, the certificates collected by the Indians will be burnt and we shall humbly but firmly take the consequences."

The Government were not prepared to consider the demands made by Indians, so they declared their inability to accede to their request. The reply from Government reached Indians, when they were assembled at a meeting. They immediately made up their mind. They had, upwards of 2,000 certificates. They were all thrown into a cauldron and set ablaze. The press reporters were present. The very next day, reports regarding the burning of the certificates spread throughout South Africa. In the same year, i.e. 1907, The Transvaal Government introduced another bill restricting the immigration into Transvaal. 'This Act indirectly prevented the entry of a single Indian new comer into Transvaal.'

13 Tolstoy Farm.

The question of supporting the families of jail going persons now began to engage Gandhiji's attention. Till now monthly allowances were given. But this could not continue long. It was therefore decided that all the Satyagrahis should stay together. Mr. Kallenbach, a German friend of Gandhiji offered the use of his farm of 1,100 acres, free of charge.

Houses were built upon this farm and all the Satyagrahis began to live there. A separate arrangement was made for ladies. All were required to do work for themselves. No servant was to be provided. Johannesburg was 21 miles distant. People desiring to go there would be allowed to use carriage one way only. One way they had to walk on foot. This enabled them to save a good deal. As it was necessary

to make the farm pay, a shoe factory was established. Here the residents were taught how to make sandals and shoes. A school also was started and both Gandhiji and Kollenbach worked as teachers. Thus the Tolstoy Farm continued to work.

In 1913 Gokhale visited South Africa to bring about a settlement between the Satyagrahis and Government. It appeared that his efforts would result in the abolition of the Black Act. However, nothing happened and 1913 saw the inhabitants of Tolstoy Farm preparing to renew the fight.

So far even though women were eager to follow their husbands in jail, they were asked not to do so. However, a new danger appeared on the horizon. 'The South African Government chose this time to enforce a judgment which nullified all marriages that had not been celebrated according to Christian rights or registered by the Registrar of Marriages. Thus at a stroke all marriages celebrated according to the Hindu, Mussalman and Zoroastrian rights were made illegal and practically all the Indian women in South Africa ceased to be their husbands' legal wives. We felt justified after this in letting the women too fight in a cause that had become of such vital importance to them."

The South African situation became very serious. Self respect demanded that the Indians must put up a brave fight. It was no easy thing to allow women to take serious risks of this type. However, the women were brave and came forward to offer resistance. The sisters living on the Tolstoy Farm were the first to

enter the struggle. It was remarkable to find that a woman with six children also offered her services. Women living in the Phoenix settlement too expressed their willingness to join. The struggle began and Government imprisoned them for three months.

The women were kept in Maritzburg Jail where they had to suffer great hardships. 'Their food was of the worst and they were given heavy laundry work as their task. No food was permitted to be given to them from outside till nearly the end of the term'. Mrs. Gandhi was under a religious vow. She could take only particular diet. The discipline of the jail was rigid and her health suffered'. When she was released, she was a mere skeleton, and her life saved only by a great effort.

The women's imprisonment had a dramatic effect upon the labourers in the mines near Newcastle. They downed their tools, and brought a host of complaints to Gandhiji. One of the Pathan labourers showed his back to Gandhiji and said ;—"Look here, how severely they have thrashed me. I have let the rascals go for your sake, as such are your orders. I am a Pathan, and Pathans never take, but give, a beating."

The labourers were more than five thousand. It was a problem for Gandhiji. He thought of taking them to Transval. But the Transval border was nearly 36 miles from Newcatsle, and Gandhiji had not the money to pay the Railway fare for such a large number. He therefore decided to march on foot.

The March was to begin on 28th October 1913.

Gandhiji told them about the difficulties. However, they were all brave people and became ready. They reached Charlestown where they received great help from the traders. Charlestown was a small village of nearly 1000 souls. Women and children were lodged in houses. The rest camped in the open. The ration consisted of rice and dal. Gandhiji cooked as well as served.

14. The Great Trek.

Gandhiji and his followers were now preparing for a march to Transval. But before doing so, Gandhiji thought it advisable to write to the Government that if they repealed £3/- tax, the strike would be called off. There was no reply. Gandhiji made one more effort. He telephoned to General Smuts. But he received a curt reply. 'General Smuts will have nothing to do with you. You may do just as you please.'

There was no alternative. Therefore, on the 6th November 1913, they offered prayers and commenced the march. There were 2037 men, 127 women, and 57 children. They stopped at Pallinford where they reached at about 5 p. m. That very night, Gandhiji was arrested. He appeared before the magistrate, but the public prosecutor asked for a remand until the 14th. Accordingly the case was postponed and Gandhiji was released on bail. He joined the marchers and the march continued. After two days Gandhiji was rearrested.

He was tried and sentenced to nine months' imprisonment with hard labour. Polok and Kallenbach

were also sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

Among the prisoners was an old man named Harbatsingh. He was aged 75. When asked by Gandhiji why he was in jail, he said,—‘How could I help it, when you, your wife and even your boys went to jail for our sake?’ Even though advised by Gandhiji, he would not secure discharge. He died in jail on the 5th of January, 1914.

The marchers were taken back to Natal in special trains, and imprisoned. Subsequently the Government surrounded the mines, with fences and put the miners back to work in them. The news reached India. Gokhale mobilized public opinion and there was indignation throughout the length and breadth of India. Lord Hardinge, the then Viceroy realized the justness of the Indian case, criticized the South African Government and advised the Home Government to give a sympathetic consideration to the demands of Indians. A Commission of inquiry was appointed. Its report was favourable. Immediately the Indian's Relief Bill was passed. “It abolished £ 3|- tax and made legal in Africa all marriages that would be deemed legal in India.”

“Thus the great Satyagrah struggle closed after eight years, and it appeared that the Indian in South Africa were now at peace. On 18th July 1914 I sailed for England, to meet Gokhale, on my way back to India, with mixed feelings of pleasure and regret—pleasure because I was returning home after many years and eagerly looked forward to serving the country under Gokhale's guidance, regret because it

was a great wrench for me to leave South Africa where I had passed twenty one years of my life sharing to the full in the sweets and bitters of human experience, and where I had realised my vocation in life.'

PART II.

1. Gokhale's Message.

On his return to India, Gandhiji got a message from Gokhale that the Governor wanted to see him. Accordingly he called on the Governor. After preliminary conversations His Excellency said, 'I ask one thing of you. I would like you to come and see me whenever you propose to take any steps concerning Government.' Gandhiji replied 'I can very easily give the promise, in as much as a Satyagrahi, I try to understand the view point of the party I propose to deal with, and 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.' Lord Willingdon thanked him and said, 'You may come to me whenever you like, and you will see that my Government do not wilfully do any wrong.'

Gandhiji then left for Poona to meet Gokhale. They discussed the question of Gandhiji joining the Servants of India Society. There were differences between their viewpoints. Again Gandhiji wanted to study conditions in India. The consideration of the question was therefore postponed.

Gandhiji was anxious to have an Ashrama where he could settle down with his Phoenix family. He

would prefer a place in Gujarat. In the mean time he got a message from Shanti Niketan inviting his co-workers there. The workers were accordingly sent to Shanti Niketan, and he followed them at a later stage.

While at Shanti Niketan, he heard of Gokhale's death. This was a terrible blow for all. Every body was immersed in grief. There was a big meeting in the Ashrama temple to mourn the loss. It was a solemn function, the like of which is rare.

Gandhiji accompanied by his wife and Maganlal left for Poona. Andrews was with him upto Burdwan. He asked Gandhiji if there would be a time for Satyagraha in India. Gandhiji said that he had given a promise to Gokhale to spend one year in travelling and gaining experience. Accordingly he would not say anything before the end of the year.

On arrival in Poona, the question of Gandhiji's joining the Servants of India Society was again discussed. There was a minority that was strongly opposed to his being a member of the Society. The first meeting was adjourned. This greatly agitated Gandhiji. He did not like being admitted by a majority vote. He, therefore, withdrew and immediately wrote to Mr. Shastri not to have the adjourned meeting at all.

2. Sabarmati Ashrama.

The Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati was founded in May 1915. Ahmedabad was an ancient centre of handloom weaving and 'was likely to be the most favourable field for the revival of the cottage industry of handspinning.' To add to this, Ahmedabad

was a rich city, and Gandhiji hoped to get monetary help from the rich merchants. So Ahmedabad secured the honor of having the Ashrama. Within a very short time Gandhiji was on his trial. Thakkar Bapa requested Gandhiji to let him know whether he would admit a Harijan family in his Ashrama. Gandhiji consulted his companions. They agreed and the family was admitted. Dudabhai, his wife and daughter were the three members of the family.

"But their admission created a flutter among friends who had been helping the Ashrama. The very first difficulty was found with regard to the use of the well, which was partly controlled by the owner of the bungalow. The man in charge of the water argued that drops of water from our bucket would pollute him. So he took to swearing at us, and Dudabhai. I told every one to put up with the abuse and continue drawing water at all cost. When he saw that we did not return his abuses, the man became ashamed and ceased to bother us."

This was but the beginning. More was yet to follow. All monetary help was stopped. Again there were rumours of social boycott. One morning Maganlal Gandhi informed Gandhiji that they were short of funds and that there was no provision for the next month. Gandhiji quietly replied, "Then we shall go to the untouchables' quarters." However, Gandhiji had an unbounded faith in the goodness of God. Shortly after the warning given by Maganlal Gandhi, a Sheth came in a car to the Ashrama and said to Gandhiji, "I want to give the Ashrama some help. Will you accept it?"

‘Most certainly’ said Gandhiji. He made a plain confession that he was at the end of his resources and would greatly appreciate any kind of help, however small. To the surprise and joy of all, the next morning the Sheth handed currency notes of Rs. 13,000, to Gandhiji. Who but the ever kind Almighty Father could have rendered such timely help?

3. The Stain of Indigo.

“Champaran is the land of King Janaka. Just as it abounds in mango groves, so used it to be full of indigo plantations until the year 1917. The Champaran tenant was bound, by law, to plant three out of every twenty parts of his land with indigo for his landlord. This system was known as ‘Tinkathia’ system, as three Kathas out of twenty (which make one acre) had to be planted with indigo.”

Gandhiji happened to meet Rajkumar Shukla at Lucknow where he had been to attend the Congress of 1916. Mr. Shukla urged Gandhiji to go to Champaran, and said “Vakil babu will tell you everything about our distress.” Vakil babu was no other than Babu Vrijkishore who was a well-known public worker of Bihar. His resolution expressing sympathy for the people of Champaran, was accepted by the Congress.

Champaran is near Cawnpore. Gandhiji started for the place early in 1917. He halted at Patna and met Babu Rajendra Prasad and many public workers of Bihar. He studied the situation and discussed with them the details. He was assured by the leaders that the

people will be prepared to go to jail, if necessary. With this assurance from the leaders, Gandhiji thought of commencing his work. However, before doing so, he wanted to know what the Planters had to say. Again he would also like to meet the Commissioner of the division. The Secretary of the Planters' Association said that Gandhiji was an outsider and that he had no business to interfere. The Commissioner simply advised Gandhiji to leave the place. Gandhiji saw that the affairs might take a serious turn any moment and asked his co-workers to be ready for the same.

Within a very short time Gandhiji was served with a notice to leave the place. He accepted the notice but said that he would offer civil resistance and would not leave the place. It might be mentioned that in dealing with officials, as well as others, Gandhiji was very courteous. He had advised his companions also to cultivate this very essential virtue. This produced a marvellous impression upon the officials.

The trial began. The Government Pleader requested the Magistrate to postpone the case. But Gandhiji intervened and requested the Magistrate to proceed with the case, as he pleaded guilty to having disobeyed the order. He read out a statement explaining why it was necessary for him to disobey the order. "There was now no occasion to postpone the hearing, but as both the Magistrate and the Government Pleader had been taken by surprise, the Magistrate postponed judgment. Meanwhile I had wired full details to the Viceroy, to Patna friends as also to Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and others."

"Before I could appear before the court to receive the sentence, the Magistrate sent a written message that the Lieutenant Governor had ordered the case against me to be withdrawn, and the Collector wrote to me saying I was at liberty to conduct the proposed inquiry, and that I might count on whatever help I needed from the officials. None of us was prepared for this prompt and happy issue." The Government appointed a committee of inquiry and invited Gandhiji to be a member of the committee. Gandhiji accepted the invitation on certain conditions.

"The Committee found in favour of the ryots and recommended that the planters should refund a portion of the exactions made by the planters which the committee had found to be unlawful, and that the Tinkathia system should be abolished by Law."

The recommendations of the Committee were accepted by the Government, who introduced a bill for the same, and carried it through, inspite of great opposition from the planters. "The Tinkathia system which had been in existence for about a century was thus abolished and with it the planters' RAJ came to an end. The Ryots who had all long remained crushed now came to their own."

This was a signal victory for Gandhiji. It brought him publicity and fame and in a way prepared him for greater victories in the future. It must however be noted that not a small part of the credit for the happy ending goes to Sir Edward Gait, the Lieutenant Governor of the province. With characteristic adherence to truth, and straightforwardness Gandhiji

observes :—" Sir Edward Gait had a large share in getting the Committee to make an unanimous report and in getting the Agrarian bill passed in accordance with the Committee's recommendations. "

4. Ahmedabad And Kaira.

No sooner was Gandhiji free from his work at Champaren, than he received messages from Ahmedabad and Kaira workers, soliciting his guidance. The conditions of labour in Ahmedabad were such as required immediate attention. The wages were low and labourers had been long agitating for an increment. In Kaira the crops had failed and the peasants desired reduction in the assessment.

Gandhiji decided to take up the question of Ahmedabad labourers first and ran up to Ahmedabad accordingly. He says, 'I was in a most delicate situation. The Mill-hands' case was strong. Shrimati Anasuyabai had to battle against her own brother Sjt. Ambalal Sarabhai, who led the fray on behalf of the Millowners. My relations with them were friendly, and that made fighting with them more difficult. I held consultations with them, and requested them to refer the dispute to arbitration, but they refused to recognise the principle of arbitration."

Gandhiji had therefore no alternative but to advise the labourers to go on strike. However, before allowing them to take the step, he explained to them the seriousness of the step they were taking and asked them to be ready for the consequences. He also asked them never to resort to violence, and to molest black-

legs. The strike progressed fairly well for the first two weeks, but it appeared that the enthusiasm of the labourers would wane and that they would not be able to stick to the conditions laid down by Gandhiji. The information reached Gandhiji that the strikers had begun to totter. He was 'deeply troubled and set to thinking furiously' as to what he should do. One morning when he was at the Millhands' meeting, an idea suddenly struck him and he said . 'Unless the strikers rally and continue the strike till the settlement is reached, or till they leave the mills altogether, I will not touch my food.'

This came as a thunderbolt to the labourers. They were not prepared for this. They solicited Gandhiji to forgive their lapse and offered to fast. Gandhiji told them that it was not necessary for them to fast ; they should simply hold on. Efforts were made to find work for the strikers, but they did not meet with success. However, the strike continued. Gandhiji's fast had in the meantime created a delicate situation. The hearts of the millowners were touched and efforts for a settlement were afoot. Prof. Anandshanker Dhruva was appointed as arbitrator and the strike was called off. A settlement was reached after 21 days' strike. Before closing this part of the narration it is necessary to state that Gandhiji was not unconscious of a defect in this action of his. He says, "My fast was not free from a grave defect. For as I have already mentioned in a previous chapter, I enjoyed very close and cordial relations with the Millowners, and my fast could not but affect their decision. As a Satya-

grahi I knew that I might not fast against them, but ought to leave them free to be influenced by the Mill-hands' strike alone."

Gandhiji now turned his attention to Kaira. Efforts were made to get the revenue assessment for the year suspended as the crop was only four annas ; however, the Government remained firm. Therefore in consultation with the local workers, Gandhiji advised the Patidars to resort to Satyagraha. Messrs. Vallabhbhai Patel and Shankerlal Banker were among those who helped him at Kaira. It was decided that before the Satyagrahis launched upon this campaign, they should sign a pledge embodying the circumstances which led them not to pay the assessment and stating the conditions on which they would be prepared to pay up the whole or balance of the revenue.

The fight began. It was a novel way of fight which the Gujaratis were called upon to put up. Gandhiji had therefore to be very cautious. He laid great emphasis on the virtue of politeness and courtesy towards the officials. He knew that most of the people—particularly the illiterate Patidars were woefully lacking in this very essential virtue. As the days passed, the Government began to take a serious view of the affairs and began coercion. "The attachment officers sold people's cattle and seized whatever movables they could lay hands on. Penalty notices were served and in some cases standing crops were attached."

Gandhiji replied by advising people to remove the crop of onion from a field which was wrongly attached.

It was impossible for Government to leave them free. They were arrested. The trial was conducted and Mohanlal Pandya and his friends were sent to jail. "The campaign came to an unexpected end. It was clear that the people were exhausted, and I hesitated to let the unbending be driven to utter ruin. I was casting about some graceful way of terminating the struggle which would be acceptable to a Satyagrahi. Such a one appeared quite unexpectedly. The Mamlatdar of Nadiad Taluka sent me word that if well-to-do Patidars paid up, the poorer ones would be granted suspension. I asked for a written undertaking to that effect, which was given."

The Satyagraha was then called off. The Collector issued orders declaring suspension of revenue in case of those who were poor. However, it was the Government who were the sole judge as to who were poor. As a result only very few were benefited. Therefore even though there was moral victory for the people, there was no cause of rejoicing, in as much as the really poor got very little redress.

5. The Great War

The Great War in Europe was still going on. Events had taken a serious turn and more help was demanded from India. The Viceroy had therefore called a conference of leaders at Delhi. Gandhiji was urged to attend the same. He went to Delhi. However he had serious objections to attending the conference, the principal one being the exclusion of Ali Brothers. They were in jail at that time. Gandhiji

urged upon the Government to release them, but to no effect. Another difficulty arose when, on reaching Delhi, Mr. Andrews raised the question about the morality of his participation in the War Conference. Gandhiji therefore wrote to Lord Chelmsford telling him why he hesitated taking part in the conference. In reply the Viceroy invited him to discuss the question. After prolonged discussion Gandhiji agreed to take part in the conference. Accordingly he attended and as the Viceroy was keen on his supporting the resolution of recruiting, he did so and simply said:—"With a full sense of responsibility I beg to support the resolution".

Gandhiji's action in attending the War conference and supporting the resolution on recruitment, has been seriously criticized by various leaders in India, some of whom felt that Gandhiji should have agreed to support the resolution, only after obtaining from the Viceroy a definite assurance re further instalment of self-Government to India.

As Gandhiji had supported the resolution, he thought it was equally his duty to act up to it. Accordingly he set about his work. However, he soon realized how he was mistaken in judging the people. He observes:—"My optimism received a rude shock. Whereas during the revenue campaign, the people readily offered their carts free of charge, and two volunteers came forth when one was needed, it was difficult now to get a cart even on hire, to say nothing of volunteers." However, as usual, Gandhiji was not likely to be dismayed. He continued his work. But

people were not convinced of the necessity of volunteering their services, and it was with great difficulty that Gandhiji got a few recruits. The response on the whole was very poor.

The strenuous work which Gandhiji put up for getting recruits for War had a very disastrous effect upon his health. He suffered from acute dysentery which very nearly brought him near death's door. In the meantime news was received that Germany had been defeated. This was a great relief to him.

6 The Rowlatt Bills, The Punjab And The Khilafat

Gandhiji was progressing towards recovery when Government chose to publish those famous bills which have come to be popularly known as Black Bills. These bills aimed at the very root of even the semblance of freedom which the Indian enjoyed under the British Rule. Naturally, therefore, they created a stir in the political atmosphere. Public meetings were held in big cities to protest against the recommendations of the Rowlatt Committee. The Government, however, appeared to be firm and bent upon giving effect to the recommendations. Even the brilliance and the eloquence of Shastriji's speech in the Legislature failed to produce any effect. And the bills were put on the Statute book, in spite of and in face of popular opposition.

Gandhiji and other leaders were now considering what steps they should take to mark their protest. In the meantime it suggested itself to Gandhiji that the country should observe a general strike on one day. Rajgopalachari fell in with Gandhiji's suggestion and

it was decided to have a hartal on the 6th April 1919. There was a wonderful response from all parts of the country. There was a complete hartal everywhere.

Gandhiji then started for Punjab on the 7th of April. But at Palwad he was served with a written notice asking him not to enter Punjab. He was stopped from proceeding further and brought back to Bombay. This news spread like wild fire. As if this was not sufficient, trusted leaders like Drs. Kitchlew and Satyapal were deported. This added fuel to the fire. Then followed a reign of terror in Punjab, unparalleled in the history of any civilized country in the world.

In the words of a well known writer :—"General Dyer who was in Amritsar on the night of April 11, prohibited all public meetings on pain of death. But on the 13th a meeting was advertised to be held at Jallianwala Bag, and General Dyer proceeded to the spot with his troops and machine guns. Within thirty seconds of his arrival Dyer opened fire, which was continued, till the ammunition was exhausted. Some five to six hundred people were killed and many were wounded. No warning was given, and the place being surrounded by high walls, no one could escape. Immediately after, Martial Law was promulgated in Amritsar, Lahore, Gujarat and Lyallpur districts and many people were put under arrest. People were flogged and made to crawl on their bellies, and Bombs were thrown from aeroplanes."

The news of the tragic drama was received with

great indignation, and a public inquiry into the whole affair was demanded. The Government appointed a Commission of inquiry with Lord Hunter as President. Their report was considered by the Parliament which declared General Dyer as guilty of 'an error of judgment'. This naturally failed to satisfy Indian public opinion.

Simultaneously with the whitewashing of the Punjab tragedy by the Parliament came the news of the Treaty with Turkey. This disappointed the Muslims who had started the Khilafat agitation under the leadership of Ali Brothers. Gandhiji lent his powerful support to the Khilafat agitation as he was convinced of the justice of the Muslim demands.

7. The Birth of Khadi

Nothing touched Gandhiji more than the 'grinding poverty' of the Indian Masses. He was, therefore, in search of something that could help him in an approach to the solution of this great problem. In the meantime handlooms were already introduced in the Sabarmati Ashram. A weaving Expert from Palanpur helped the Ashramites in their experiment. The indefatigable Maganlal Gandhi applied himself to this work and within a short time a number of weavers were trained up in the Ashram. "The object that we set before ourselves was to be able to clothe ourselves entirely in cloth manufactured by our own hands. We therefore forthwith discarded the use of mill-woven cloth, and all the members of the Ashram resolved to wear hand-woven cloth made from Indian yarn only.

The adoption of this practice brought us a world of experience. It enabled us to know, from direct contact, the condition of life among the weavers, the extent of their production, the handicaps in the way of their obtaining their yarn supply, the way in which they were made victims of fraud, and lastly their ever-growing indebtedness."

Gandhiji was now in search of experts in hand-spinning. As the art was confined to women, he approached Shrimati Gangaben Majmudar whose enterprising spirit had impressed Gandhiji greatly. She undertook to do her best and set about her work with an earnestness that was simply remarkable. She wandered through remotest villages of Gujarat and herself succeeded in finding the spinning Wheel in Vrajpur, a village in Baroda territory. 'Quite a number of people there had spinning wheels in their homes, but had long since consigned them to the lofts as useless lumber.'

'While these developments were taking place in Vijapur, the Spinning Wheel gained a rapid footing in the Ashram. Maganlal Gandhi by bringing to bear all his splendid mechanical talent on the wheel, made improvements in it, and wheels and their accessories began to be manufactured at the Ashram. The first piece of Khadi manufactured in Ashram cost 17 Annas per Yard. I did not hesitate to commend this very coarse Khadi at that rate to friends, who willingly paid the price.'

Nothing would give greater joy to Gandhiji than this discovery of the Spinning Wheel. He wanted some

employment for the starving villagers. The Spinning Wheel offered the same. Gandhiji then began his campaign for the use of Khadi. He was convinced that the Spinning Wheel would go a great way towards the solution of India's economic as well as political problems. He, therefore advised the people to use Khadi and thus win Swaraj for India.

8. Non-Cooperation

We have seen how the refusal of the British Parliament to punish Dyer for his misdeeds in the Punjab had created a stir in the political atmosphere of India. Again the Musalmans were deeply grieved over the decision of the British Parliament re the Khilafat. There was thus a splendid opportunity for the two sister communities.—the Hindus and the Musalmans to join hands. Gandhiji, therefore, put himself in close touch with representatives of Muslim public opinion. There was a splendid response. The Khilafat Conference passed a resolution of Non-cooperation. A similar resolution was then adopted by the Gujarat Political Conference which met shortly afterwards. This prepared the country for the special session of the Congress which was held at Calcutta in 1920, under the distinguished presidentship of Lala Lajpatrai.

The Special session was held to consider the advisability of withdrawing all kinds of cooperation to the British Administrators, which they had hitherto received from the Indian people. It was quite a novel plan that was suggested by Gandhiji, and the leaders were soon put to thinking. Gandhiji himself prepared the draft resolution for the Subjects Committee, but

was not unconscious of the difficulty of the task he had undertaken. He observes :—"None the less my plight was pitiable indeed. I was absolutely at sea as to who would support the resolution and who would oppose it. Nor had I any idea as to the attitude that Lalaji would adopt. I only saw an imposing phalanx of veteran warriors assembled for the fray at Calcutta, Dr. Besant, Pandit Malaviyaji, Sjt. Vijayraghavachari, Pandit Motilalji and the Desh Bandhu being some of them."

There was a heated and prolonged discussion over Gandhiji's resolution. Pandit Motilal wanted the demand for Swaraj being included. Gandhiji accepted his suggestion and the resolution was eventually adopted by the Congress. The main features of the resolution are (a) surrender of titles and honorary offices, (b) gradual withdrawal from Schools and Colleges owned or controlled by Government, and in place of such Schools and Colleges, establishment of National Schools and Colleges in the different provinces, (c) gradual Boycott of British Courts by lawyers and litigants and establishment of private arbitration courts, and (4) withdrawal by candidates of their candidature for election to the Reformed Councils and refusal on the part of the voters to vote for any candidate.

The Annual session of the Congress met at Nagpur in December 1920. There was unusual enthusiasm on account of the Non-Cooperation Resolution. The number of delegates was 14,000. The Congress unanimously adopted Gandhiji's resolution, about non-violent non-cooperation.

9. Truth And Ahimsa

Truth and Ahimsa are the cardinal points on which Gandhiji has based the whole structure. Be it religions, politics or education, everywhere these two are the beacon lights for him. He is convinced beyond doubt that a strict adherence to Truth and Ahimsa alone would enable them to solve the problems that are agitating the human mind. He goes a step further and says that God and Truth are the same. Gandhiji puts this very clearly at the end of his autobiography, when he says:—"My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth. And if every page of these chapters does not proclaim to the reader, that the only means for the realization of Truth is Ahimsa, I shall deem all my pains in writing these chapters to have been in vain. And even though my efforts in this behalf prove fruitless, let the readers know that the vehicle, not the great principle is at fault". Gandhiji has no doubt that this weapon of non-violence will convert the bitterest enemy. All his movements in South Africa and India are based on Non-violence. With him, it is a creed; one may as well say that non-violence is the very breath of his life. His non-co-operation with the Government is to be absolutely non-violent. He advised people to remain non-violent even under great provocation. His non-violence is not the non-violence of the coward or the weak but that of the brave and the strong. He insisted on non-violence under all circumstances. He will be remembered as a great apostle of Ahimsa and Truth.

PART III

Gandhiji's Imprisonment.

There was a good response from the people to the call for Non-Cooperation. Lawyers left law-courts and students left their schools and Colleges. National Schools and Colleges were started in many places to provide for students who left the aided and Government institutions. Educationists like Rt. Hon. Srinivas Shastri, and Pandit Malaviya doubted the wisdom of involving Educational Institutions in the political struggle. They were of opinion that the schools at any rate should not be touched. The boycott of foreign cloth also continued. At some places there were bonfires of foreign cloth. The Non-Cooperation movement was in full swing. It was unfortunate that the Parliament should have chosen this time for the visit of the Prince. The Congress had already resolved upon the boycott of all celebrations connected with the Prince's visit, with the result that the people decided that they will have nothing to do with the Prince's visit. There were public demonstrations at Bombay, Calcutta and other places. These were followed by arrest of leaders, like Mr. Das and others. Nearly thirty thousand people were in jail.

The next stage was the launching of mass Civil Disobedience. Bardoli was selected for this. But before taking the final step Gandhiji wrote to Lord Reading on the 1st of February 1922 requesting him to satisfy

the demands of the people. There was no reply from the Viceroy and the struggle continued.

In the mean time there was the fateful Chauri Chaura tragedy. When a Congress procession was going on at Chauri Chaura near Gorukhpur in U.P., some constables were rushed by the mob into a police station and the station and the police constables were set fire to. They all perished. The news of this tragedy reached Gandhiji and he was dumbstruck. The scenes of the disturbances of Bombay were fresh before his eyes. He thought that it was a divine warning and decided that mass Civil Disobedience should stop. Accordingly the Working Committee, at its meeting on the 27th February, at Bardoli, decided to suspend Civil Disobedience. There were critics who disapproved of this decision, and severely criticized Gandhiji for taking this step. Dr. Moonje went to the length of moving a vote of censure at the All India Congress Committee meeting, but it was lost by an overwhelming majority. However there were reactions to the resolution of the suspension of Civil Disobedience. Gandhiji's popularity waned and Government seized the opportunity. He was arrested on charge of sedition. The Great Trial began on the 18th of March at Ahmedabad. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu gives a graphic description of the respect shown to Gandhiji when he entered the Court :

“A convict and criminal in the eye of the Law; nevertheless the entire Court rose in an act of spontaneous homage when Mahatma Gandhi entered, a frail, serene, indomitable figure in a coarse and scanty

loin-cloth, accompanied by his devoted disciple and fellow-prisoner, Shankerlal Banker."

Gandhiji made a long statement explaining why from being a loyal supporter of British Raj he had now chosen to Non-Cooperate with the British Administrators. He reviewed history, and showed how he had loyally supported the South African Government whenever they were in difficulty. But he found that there was no change of heart with the British Administrators. He therefore reluctantly came to the conclusion that he should withdraw all cooperation from them. He pleaded guilty to the charge of promiting disaffection towards the Government established by law in India, and requested the judge to give him the highest punishment. He said:—"I am here, therefore, to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen."

The judge sentenced Gandhiji to six years' simple imprisonment, on the analogy of Lokmanya Tilak who had been similarly sentenced. Gandhiji made a short reply thanking the judge for the great courtesy shown to him and said that he considered it a great honour to have his name associated with a great patriot like Lokmanya Tilak.

2. Illness, Operation, Release.

Gandhiji fell ill in the jail. This news spread a gloom over the whole of India in 1924. He was ill with appendicitis. He was soon removed to Sassoon Hospital where he was operated upon by Colonel Maddock.

The operation was successful and Gandhiji was recovering. The Government promptly passed orders for his unconditional release on the 5th of February. The news was received with great joy by the people.

Gandhiji then spent some time in Juhu—a seaside resort near Bombay. He had conversations with the two great leaders Pandit Nehru and C. R. Das on the political situation. It was well-known that these two leaders advocated suspension of Civil Disobedience and entry into Councils.

This was followed by the communal disturbances at Gulbarga, Lucknow, Allahabad etc. Gandhiji immediately resorted to a fast of 21 days, as a penance for the communal tension. The fast was commenced in Maulana Mohamad Ali's house.

Gandhiji resorts to fasts because he thinks it is necessary to purify himself. He must have undertaken not less than a dozen fasts during his life of 75 years. The last fast was in February 1943. It was a fast for 20 days. People were naturally anxious about his health, particularly as he was advanced in age. But he had great faith in God and advised people not to worry and pray to God. Fortunately for India he survived the ordeal.

Gandhiji presided at the session of the Congress in 1924, when he advised the people to suspend Civil Disobedience and capture the legislatures.

3. Calcutta Congress, 1928.

The year 1928 marks a new epoch in the History of India. It was in this year that the Simon Commis-

sion boycotted by all sections of public opinion visited India. Again it was in 1928 that the peasants of Bardoli under the able leadership of Mr. Vallabhai Patel came out triumphant in their struggle for non-payment of taxes. Politicians of other provinces ridiculed Gujaratis when the Bardoli Satyagraha was called off by Gandhiji in 1922. They had a poor opinion of the easygoing Gujarati. However, by their heroic suffering the people of Gujarat showed that the brave peasants were made of sterner stuff.

By far the most important event of the year was the Congress at Calcutta. Pandit Motilal Nehru was elected President. He was the moving spirit of the All Parties Conference which had accepted the Nehru Report defining the goal of India, as Dominion Status. On the other hand there was the youthful Jawahar who wanted the Congress to declare that Independence was the goal of India. The son was pitched against the father. However, Gandhiji came to their rescue and saved both the father and the son from an awkward situation. He brought about a compromise and moved the main resolution of the Session according to which it was declared that India would be satisfied with Dominion Status if the same were granted before the year 1929 was over. If not, the Congress would declare its goal to be Complete Independence.

4. Viceroy's Announcement and After

The Calcutta resolution was significant of the forces that were working in India. It left no doubt in the mind of Lord Irwin that a further step was necessary

to conciliate public opinion. So, in consultation with the labour Government at Home, he made an announcement on the 31st October 1929, wherein he stated that His Majesty's Government would meet representatives both of British India and of the States 'for the purpose of seeking the greatest possible measure of agreement'. He concluded by saying:—

“The goal of British Policy was stated in the Declaration of August 1917 to be that of providing for ‘the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of Responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire’. As I recently pointed out, my own instrument of instructions from the King Emperor expressly states that it is His Majesty's will and pleasure that the plans laid by Parliament in 1919 should be the means by which British India may attain its due place among his Dominions. Ministers of the Crown, moreover, have more than once publicly declared that it is the desire of the British Government that India should, in the fulness of time, take her place in the Empire in equal partnership with the Dominions. But in view of the doubts that have been expressed both in Great Britain and India regarding the interpretation to be placed in the intentions of the British Government in enacting the statute of 1919, I am authorized on behalf of His Majesty's Government, to state clearly that in their judgment, it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as therein contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status.”

No sooner was the announcement made than the leaders met together and after mature consideration, issued a statement in which they appreciated the sincerity underlying the declaration and said :—" We hope to be able to tender our cooperation to His Majesty's Government in their effort to evolve a scheme of Dominion Constitution suitable to India's need, but we deem it necessary that certain acts should be done and that certain points should be cleared so as to inspire trust and to ensure the cooperation of the principal political organisations in the country. We consider it vital for the success of the proposed Conference that (a) A policy of general conciliation should be adopted to induce a calmer atmosphere, (b) Political prisoners should be granted an amnesty, and (c) the representation of progressive political organisations should be effectively secured and Indian National Congress, as the largest among them, should have a predominant representation."

The Labour Government was in power in England and it was expected that every possible effort would be made to placate India. English friends were sending cables to Gandhiji to reciprocate the efforts of the Labour Government, to help India. Gandhiji with characteristic sincerity and straightforwardness stated that he was 'dying for cooperation.' He issued a long statement in the course of which he observed :—"I have, therefore, responded on the very first opportunity that offered itself, but I have meant every word of the Joint Manifesto, as I have of the now famous Calcutta resolution of the Congress. The two

are in no sense contradictory. The letter of a document is nothing, if the spirit of it is preserved in effect. I can wait for a Dominion Constitution if I can get real Dominion Status in action. That is to say, if there is real change of heart, a real desire on the part of the British people to see India a free and self-respecting nation, and on the part of the officials in India a true spirit of service. But this means substitution of the steel bayonet by the goodwill of the people.'

The Indian demand was thus unequivocally stated. All the same it was felt that a personal discussion between the leaders and the Viceroy would clarify the position still further. Accordingly Pandit Motilal, Mahatma Gandhi, Mr. Jinnah, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, and Mr. Vithalbhai Patel met Lord Irwin on the 23rd of December, just on the eve of the Congress session at Lahore. They had a prolonged discussion for nearly three hours. Gandhiji wanted an assurance from the Viceroy that Dominion Status would be the basis of the discussions at the Round Table Conference. The Viceroy's answer was that the Government's position was made absolutely clear in the communique issued by him and that he was not in a position to go further than that. This reply simply meant that the Government was not prepared to promise Dominion Status. Naturally therefore, it failed to satisfy the leaders. The Conference was abortive.

It was in these exceptional circumstances that the Congress met at Lahore. The atmosphere was tense and every body was eagerly waiting for the final decision of the Congress. The failure of the Conference

had strengthened the hands of those who advocated complete Independence as the goal of India. The President of the Congress was Pandit Jawahar. The son had succeeded the father. Under his guidance the Congress adopted a resolution declaring Independence as the goal of India.

5. The Dandi March.

The beginning of 1930 found India in a state of suspense, unparalleled in the history of the country. The Congress had definitely gone a step further when it changed its goal. However, the British Government were in no mood to conciliate public opinion. Therefore there was no other way for India but to resort to the final weapon and be ready for the consequences. But Gandhiji would exhaust all possible avenues of peaceful settlement. He made one more effort and illucidated his position by declaring that he would be satisfied if the following demands were granted, irrespective of the goal of the Congress :—

1. Total Prohibition,
2. Reduction of ratio to 1s. 4d.,
3. Reduction of land revenue by at least 50%, and making it subject to Legislative Control,
4. Abolition of the Salt-Tax,
5. Reduction of Military Expenditure by at least 50% to begin with,
6. Reduction of salaries of the highest grade services by half or less, so as to suit the reduced revenue,

7. Protective tariff on foreign cloth,
8. Passage of the Coastal Traffic Reservation Bill,
9. Discharge of all political prisoners, save those condemned for murder or attempt to murder,
10. Abolition of the C.I.D. or its popular control,
11. Permission to issue licenses to use fire-arms for self-defence, subject to popular control.

Thus Gandhiji put before the British Government his minimum demands, in as clear a language as could be. But there was no response either from the Viceroy or the Secretary of State. Gandhiji therefore reluctantly decided to resort to Civil Disobedience. As is usual with him, he wrote a long letter to the Viceroy on 2nd March 1930 and got it delivered to him by a young Englishman Reginald Reynolds, to see if there was even at that late stage, some chance of an honourable settlement. In the course of his long letter he observed :—‘ I have no desire to cause you unnecessary embarrassment, or any at all, so far as I can help it. If you think that there is any substance in my letter, and if you will care to discuss matters with me, and if to that end you would like me to postpone publication of this letter, I shall gladly refrain, on receipt of a telegram to that effect soon after this reaches you. You will, however, do me the favour not to deflect me from my course, unless you can see your way to confirm to the substance of this letter’. The Viceroy gave a prompt reply. His Excellency was sorry that Mr. Gandhi

should have been 'contemplating a course of action which was clearly bound to involve violation of the Law and danger to the public peace'. Gandhiji's reply was emphatic ; but it displayed humility and courage, the two most essential qualifications of a Civil Resister. He wrote :—' On bended knees, I asked for bread, and received a stone instead. The English Nation responds only to force, and I am not surprized by the Viveregal reply. The only public peace the Nation knows is the peace of the public prison. India is a vast prison house. I repudiate this (British) Law and regard it as my sacred duty to break the mournful monopoly of compulsory peace that is choking the heart of the Nation for want of free vent.'

He announced that he would break the Salt-Law, by himself preparing salt from sea-water. He would march from Ahmedabad to a village in the Surat District and there prepare salt. He was to be accompanied by a select band of about 70 civil resisters chosen from his Ashram and Gujarat Vidyapith. They were to march on foot. The distance was nearly 200 miles.

Nothing could surpass this in originality of conception. It captured the imagination of one and all. There were some who wondered at this novel way of fighting. There were others who simply laughed at this and ridiculed Gandhiji for what they thought was a foolish plan. Any way the newness of the fight attracted public attention in a way it had never done before. Even foreign newspapers, who are ordinarily apathetic towards India began to take interest in, and study, the Indian situation.

Gandhiji left the Ashram early on the morning of the 12th of March 1930. He was accompanied by a band of 75 Volunteers, chosen from his devout followers. In the words of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramaiya "He was carrying a long stick in his hand obviously for support. The whole army was marching in a perfectly disciplined manner. The agile general in front was indeed a source of inspiration to all. The army passed all along the distance of ten miles upto Aslali between the densely packed rows of people who were standing in their places for hours together, eager for the 'darshan' of India's great General. Ahmedabad had had on the occasion one of its hugest processions during living memory. With the possible exceptions of children and decrepits, every resident of the city must have watched the great procession which was at least two miles in length. Those who could not find a standing place in the streets through which the Army marched had made use of the house tops and galleries, open walls and trees and every conceivable place they could get hold of. The whole city seemed to be en fete on this historic occasion."

The historic March continued. More and more people joined. For some time the Government simply watched the situation. May be, they did not want to give any importance to it. May be, they were unable to understand the exact implications of the step Gandhiji had taken. However, when they found Vallabhbhai delivering one of his fiery speeches asking the villagers to be ready for every kind of suffering and sacrifice, the Government reconsidered the situa-

tion, decided to act, and imprisoned Vallabhbhai for three months.

Gandhiji had warned the people on the wayside against giving the volunteers rich fare. To him the March was a pilgrimage and he desired that the sanctity of the pilgrimage should be maintained. To his great regret, however, he found that there were occasional lapses. He, therefore, thought it his duty to administer a stern rebuke to his followers. At Surat he said, "I warned them against succumbing to their pampering. We are not angels. We are very weak, easily tempted. There are many lapses to our debit. Even to-day some were discovered. One defaulter confessed his lapse himself whilst I was brooding over the lapse of the pilgrims. I discovered that my warning was given none too soon. The local workers had ordered milk from Surat to be brought in a Motor Lorry, and they had incurred other expenditure which they could not justify. I therefore spoke strongly about them."

Gandhiji reached Dandi on the morning of the 5th of April. Shrimati Sarojini Naidu had also gone there to meet him. On reaching Dandi, Gandhiji issued a statement to the press in which he complimented the Government for a policy of non-interference adopted by them throughout the march, notwithstanding the arrests of Messrs. Vallabhbhai and Sen Gupta. He thought that non-interference was due to the British Government being "sensitive to world opinion which will not tolerate repression of extreme political agitation which Civil Disobedience, undoubtedly is, so long

as disobedience remains Civil and therefore necessarily non-violent". Soon after the morning prayers Gandhiji picked up salt lying on the sea-shore and thus technically committed the offence of breaking the Salt Law.

This marked the beginning of the real struggle. The news of the breaking of the Law by Gandhiji reached far and wide, and more persons threw themselves in the struggle. The Government could not afford to remain inactive and they arrested Gandhiji on the 4th of May, 1930. Before the arrest, Gandhiji dictated a long message in the course of which he said, "After I am arrested, neither the people nor my colleagues should be daunted. The conductor of this fight is God and not I. He dwells in the heart of all. If we have faith in us, God will certainly lead us."

The Government was now bent upon crushing the movement. They therefore prepared themselves to make use of all the resources that they could command. Ordinances were passed and there was Police Raj every where. One of the places which the volunteers had attacked was the Salt Works at Dharasana. There was a storm of protest at the way in which the raiders were treated by the police. The following statement issued by the distinguished leaders like Mr. Hussain, Ex-Judge, Small Causes Court, Bombay, Mr. K. Natrajan and Mr. G. K. Devdhar, President, Servants of India Society, who were not Congressmen, will give the reader a clear idea of what happened :—

"They saw with their own eyes that after Satyagrahis were driven out of the Salt boundary, mounted

European Sawars rode at full gallop with lathis in their hands beating people between the spot where Satyagrahis had reached for raid and the village itself. They actually galloped full speed through the streets of the village and scattered men, women and children. Villagers ran into bylanes and closed themselves in houses. But, if by accident, they were unable to escape, they were beaten with lathis."

Mr. George Slocombe of the 'Daily Herald', London, who was an eye witness to some of the salt raids wrote, 'I watched the events from an observation post on one of the rocky hills which ring in Wadala. It was humiliating for an Englishman to stand among the ardent friendly but deeply moved crowd of volunteers and sympathisers and watch the representatives of the country's administration engaged in this ludicrous, embarrassing business.'

Mr. Slocombe subsequently saw the Mahatma in the jail. He had a long interview, and he was deeply moved. He wired to England saying that an honourable compromise was yet possible. He ended by saying, 'Incalculable disaster may yet be avoided by the frank recognition that the imprisoned Mahatma now incarnates the very soul of India'. But the Government would not heed to this friendly warning and the struggle continued. The boycott of foreign cloth became more and more effective. A glance at the statistical figures for imports during the interval will show that there was a remarkable fall in the imports of foreign cloth. In the meantime efforts were made by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. Jaykar who saw

Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Motilal in the Jail, to bring about a compromise, but the negotiations failed.

6. Gandhi-Irwin Agreement, 1931.

It appeared that the British Government were anxious to have a settlement of the Indian problem, so the Viceroy made a gesture and released Mahatma Gandhi and other members of the Working Committee on the 26th January 1931, to enable them to meet and exchange views on the political situation. Soon after his release, Gandhiji issued a statement, in which he said, "I have come out of jail with absolutely open mind, unfettered by enmity, unbiassed in argument, and prepared to study the whole situation from every point of view and discuss the Premier's statement with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and others on their return. I make this statement in deference to the urgent wish expressed in a cable sent to me from London by some of the delegates."

While efforts were being made for an honourable settlement of the Indian problem, the whole country was suddenly plunged in deep sorrow. The old and venerable Pandit Motilal expired on the 6th of February 1931. The loss to India was simply irreparable. Pandit Motilal was great in every respect. His sacrifice for India earned for him esteem and reverence from every true son of India. It is rare to find an aristocrat of the type of Pandit Motilal, with a flourishing practice at the Bar, giving it up for the sake of the country, and rarer still to find a person bred and brought up in all the luxuries of a princely life, saying good bye to those comforts and amenities, and

court jail life with all its inconveniences. His catholicity of culture, his lucidity of exposition, his forensic skill, and above all his unique personality made a deep impression upon the members of the Central Assembly, where he occupied an enviable position as Leader of Opposition. The last words that he uttered before his death were full of a spirit of burning patriotism. He said "Decide India's fate in the Swaraj Bhuvan, decide it in my presence; let me be a party to the final honourable settlement of the fate of my motherland. Let me die, if die I must, in the lap of a free India. Let me sleep my last sleep not in a subject country but in a free one". Thus the great patriot breathed his last. India was the poorer for it. Never was Gandhiji more pathetic than when he gave a message to 'Liberty.' "My position is worse than a widow's. By a faithful life she can appropriate the merit of her husband; I can appropriate nothing. What I have lost through Motilalji's death is a loss for ever. Rock of Ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee.'"

Just at this time the delegates who had gone to England to attend the Round Table Conference returned to India and issued a statement to the press in the course of which they said that the outlines of the Schemes of Reforms were ready and that the Congress should come forward to make a solid contribution to the completion of the scheme.

Soon after this, a conference between Lord Irwin and Gandhiji was arranged. There were prolonged discussions between the two great personalities, and

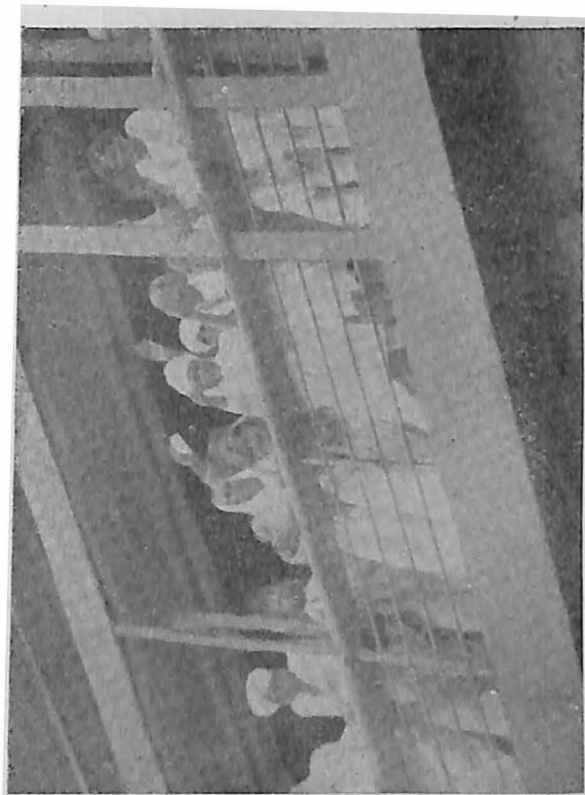
the whole atmosphere was full of suspense. Will the mighty British Government settle terms with the Indian Nation? Will they give anything to India that may even partially satisfy the Indian People? Was Mahatma Gandhi, a saint that he was, the right man to represent India, to carry on delicate negotiations, with a Government whose representatives are known for their diplomacy? These and many other questions began to exercise the public mind.

It may be mentioned that members of the Working Committee were all in Delhi at the time when Gandhiji was carrying on negotiations with the Viceroy, and that Gandhiji kept them informed of every detail of the talk that he had with Lord Irwin. There were moments when it appeared as if the negotiations would break and the country would be required to renew the struggle. However thanks to the statesmanship of Lord Irwin, and the coolness and practical wisdom of Gandhiji and other members of the Working Committee, a settlement was reached after prolonged deliberations lasting over 15 days.

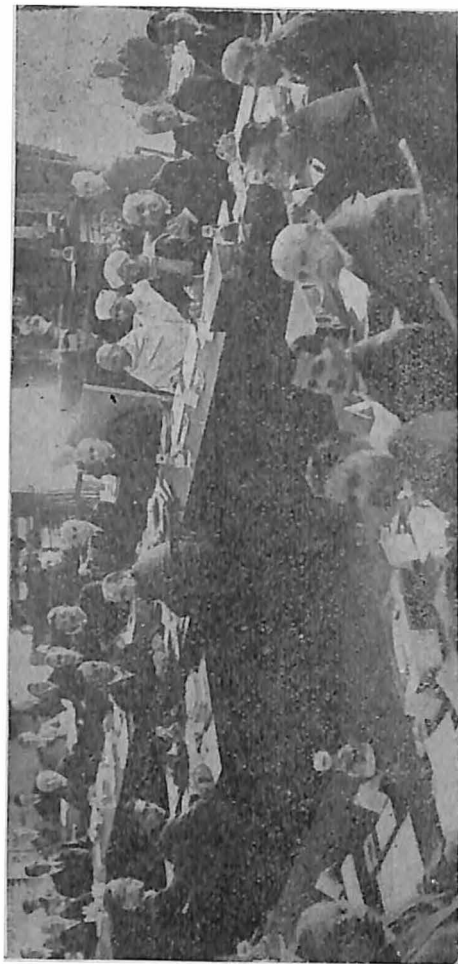
Gandhiji returned on the third night from the Viceregal Lodge at 2-30 A.M. (4-3-31) and met members of the Working Committee, who were anxiously waiting for him. He appraised his colleagues with all that had happened between him and the Viceroy and put before them a tentative settlement for acceptance or rejection. Various important questions arising out of the settlement were discussed, and there was considerable difference of opinion between the members. One of the most thorny problems was that of

'safeguards' desired by the British Government. Gandhiji had succeeded in getting it modified to 'safeguards in the interests of India' and that was a great gain for the Indian cause. Dr. Pattabhi summarizes the discussion in the following, words. "In the interest of India" was considered to be the real protection for the Congress in this part of the settlement. It was an antidote to the safeguards. The members of the Working Committee were not without doubt that this expression might not only be perversely interpreted but made positively to turn against Indian interests. It is not however, in Gandhiji's nature to take the market value of things. He takes only the face value of the words and statements of others, even as he would like his own words and statements to be taken at their face value by others. This was disarming altogether. Vallabhbhai was not satisfied on the question of land settlement. Jawaharlal was not satisfied on the Constitutional question. Nobody was satisfied with the question of prisoners. If everybody were satisfied on every question, it would not be a settlement, but a victory to the Congress." Gandhiji asked the members if he should break either on the question of prisoners or picketing or any other question, and even though the Working Committee was not completely satisfied, they decided to accept the settlement, in the wider interests of India.'

The Agreement was announced on the 5th of March, 1931. "It was the result of the full play of some of the noblest qualities in man, both in Gandhi and in Irwin," observes Dr. Pattabhi. On the very evening



EN ROUTE TO LONDON IN S. S. MALOJA



AT THE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE IN LONDON

of the 5th, Gandhiji made an important statement in the course of which he said :—" In the first place I would like to state that this settlement, such as it is, would have been impossible, without the Viceroy's inexhaustible patience and equally inexhaustible industry and unfailing courtesy.' I am aware that I must have though quite consciously, given him causes for irritation. I must have also tried his patience, but I cannot recall an occasion when he allowed himself to be betrayed into irritation or impatience. I must add that he was frank throughout these very delicate negotiations and I believe he was determined if it was at all possible, to have a settlement. I must confess that I approached the negotiations in fear and trembling. I was also filled with distrust, but at the very outset he disarmed my suspicions and put me at ease. For myself, I can say without fear of contradiction that when I wrote my letter inviting the invitation to see him, I was determined not to be outdone on the race of reaching an honourable settlement, if it could be reached at all. I am, therefore, thankful to the Almighty that the settlement was reached, and the country has been spared. at least for the time, the sufferings which in the event of a break down would have been intensified a hundredfold." "For a settlement of this character, it is not possible nor wise to say which is the victorious party. If there is any victory, I should say, it belongs to both. The Congress has never made any bid for victory."

It is needless to add that the Gandhi-Irwin Agree-

ment was subsequently ratified by the Congress at Karachi.

7. Gandhiji Attends Second Round Table Conference

The Gandhi-Irwin pact began a new era in the history of political evolution in India. It breathed a spirit of confidence in the Indian Nation which was till then suffering from all the ills incidental to foreign rule. Setting aside the question as to whether the Congress won a victory or not, it cannot but be clear to any impartial critic, that the pact recognized the Congress as the only organized body that could represent India, in all important matters.

While rejoicing at the happy termination of the first stage of the Indian struggle for Independence, one cannot help feeling pessimistic as to the way in which the pact would be carried out in actual practice. The feeling of estrangement between the police and the people, due to the Civil Disobedience movement, would not easily give place to one of friendliness and sympathy. It would therefore be not altogether surprising if we hear occasional breaches of the agreement either by the people or the officials of the Government. Once or twice there were serious breaches by the Police, and Gandhiji was compelled to write to the Viceroy, drawing his attention to the gravity of the situation. The situation suddenly took such a serious turn that Gandhiji almost declined the invitation to proceed to England. Fortunately, however, the clouds that had begun to hover over the political horizon disappeared, and Gandhiji as the sole representative of the Congress left for London on 29-8-31. He

was accompanied by Mahadev Desai, Miraben, Devdas Gandhi and Pyarelal. Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Pandit Malaviya also joined him. They were given a warm reception at Aden where Gandhiji received an address from Arabs and Indians. At Marseilles he received another welcome from Mademoiselle Madeleine Rolland, the sister of the famous French writer Romain Rolland, who could not attend on account of ill health. He received greetings from a number of French students also. In London he stayed with Muriel Lester "in the midst of noisy public houses and destitute and squalid private houses."

At the very first public reception organized in Gandhiji's honour in London, he clearly put before the London public what the Indian demand was. He said, "You have given me a most flattering and a most embarrassing welcome. Let me convey to you what the Congress, of which I have come as a representative, stands for. The Congress wants unadulterated freedom for the dumb and semi-starved millions of India". Proceeding further he said, "I wish it were possible for Englishmen and Englishwomen to realize that their budget will not honestly be balanced unless the budget between England and India is balanced."

"Broadcasting for half an hour to America from Kingsley Hall on September 13th, Mahatma Gandhi said that hitherto the nations had fought like brutes, but the Indians felt that the law governing the brute creation was not the law that should guide the human race. He would personally wait, if necessary, for ages, rather than seek to attain the freedom of India

by bloody means. The world was sick to death of blood-spilling, and he flattered himself that perhaps it would be the privilege of India to show to the world a way out. He invited all great nations of the earth to 'heartily cooperate with India in her mighty struggle.'

During Gandhiji's stay in England for about two months, he delivered public lectures, granted interviews, and issued press statements on various subjects dealing with Indian demand for Independence. He utilized his stay there in removing misunderstandings or misapprehensions that may have arisen about India. Thus the English public was put in possession of the Indian Case, in as clear a language as possible by one who was the accredited representative of the Indian Nation. .

Addressing a meeting of the Federal Structure Sub-Committee, the Mahatma said :—

"I must confess at the outset that I am not a little embarrassed in having to state before you the position of the Indian National Congress. I would like to say that I have come to London to attend this Sub-Committee, as also the Round Table Conference when the proper time comes, absolutely in the spirit of co-operation and to strive to my utmost to find points of agreement. I would like also to give this assurance to His Majesty's Government, that at no stage is it, or will it be, my desire to embarrass authority ; and I would like to give the same assurance to my colleagues here, that however much we may differ about our viewpoints, I shall not obstruct them in any shape or

form. My position, therefore, here depends entirely upon your goodwill, as also the goodwill of His Majesty's Government. If, at anytime I found that I could not be of any useful service to the Conference, I would not hesitate to withdraw myself from it. I can also say to those who are responsible for the management of this Committee and the Conference that they have only to give a sign and I have no hesitation in withdrawing."

There cannot be a more lucid exposition of the Indian case than the one placed by Gandhiji before the Conference. He said, "There was one phrase used yesterday, I forget by which delegate, but it struck me very forcibly. He said 'we do not want a merely political constitution'. I do not know that he gave that expression the same meaning that it immediately bore to me. But I immediately said to myself, this phrase has given me a good expression. It is true, the Congress will not be, and personally speaking, I myself would never be satisfied with a mere political constitution which to read would seem to give India all she can possibly politically desire, but in reality would give her nothing. If we are intent upon complete independence, it is not from any sense of arrogance; it is not because we want to parade before the universe that we have now severed all connections with the British people. Nothing of the kind. On the contrary, you find in this mandate itself that the Congress contemplates a partnership with the British people, but that connection must be such as can exist between two absolute equals. Time was when I prided myself

on being, and being called a British subject. I have ceased for many years to call myself a British subject ; I would far rather be called a rebel than a subject, but I have now aspired, I still aspire, to be a citizen not in the Empire, but in a Commonwealth, in a partnership, if possible ; if God wills it, an indissoluble partnership superimposed upon one nation by another. Hence you find here, that the Congress claims that either party should have the right to sever this connection, to dissolve this partnership. It has to be necessarily therefore, of mutual benefit.'

8. Renewal of The Struggle

Gandhiji returned from London on 28th December 1931. He was given a warm welcome and was taken in a procession. At a public meeting, he told the audience how he had placed the Indian demand before the Round Table Conference and narrated in detail what had happened in England.

He discussed the political situation with the leaders whom he met. He found that the situation in the United Provinces was very critical, that the struggle between the peasants and the landlords had taken a serious turn and that leaders like Parshottamdas Tandon and Jawaharlal Nehru were already arrested by the Government. The news from Bengal and other Provinces was equally distressing, and there were reports from all quarters regarding the breach of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Gandhiji therefore decided to meet the Viceroy and discuss the situation with him. Accordingly he wired to Lord Willingdon on the 29th December, as under :—

"I was unprepared on landing yesterday to find Frontier and U. P. Ordinances, shootings in Frontier and arrests of valued comrades in both, and on the top of it Bengal Ordinance awaiting me. I do not know if I am to regard these as indication that friendly relations between us are closed or whether you expect me still to see you and receive guidance from you as to the course I am to pursue in advising Congress. I would esteem wire in reply." In reply Gandhiji received a long telegram from the Private Secretary to the Viceroy wherein the Viceroy justified the Ordinances and said, in effect, that he was not prepared to discuss the Ordinances with him, and that the Ordinances must continue. The telegram ends thus :—"But His Excellency feels bound to emphasise that he will not be prepared to discuss with you measures which the Government of India, with the full approval of His Majesty's Government, have found it necessary to adopt in Bengal, United Provinces and North West Frontier Province. These measures must in any case be kept in force until they have served the purpose for which they were imposed namely preservation of Law and Order essential to good Government". There was a further exchange of telegrams but it appeared the Viceroy had made up his mind to go back to the old order of things. There was no alternative for the people. The Working Committee of the Congress, therefore, decided to revive Civil Disobedience.

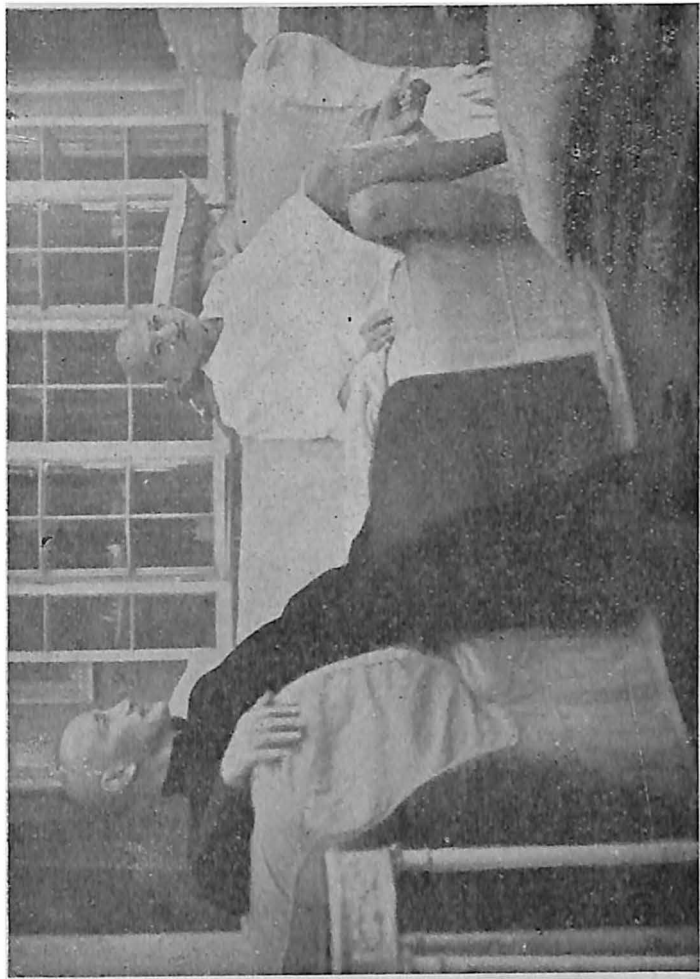
"The Government offensive commenced on the 4th of January 1932. Every Congress organization and every allied organization was banned and Congressmen, whether they did any overt act or not in defiance

of the Law or the Ordinances, which came to be spoken of as the lawless Law, were got hold of, arrested and sentenced. We had no reason to complain either" says Dr. Pattabhi. Needless to say that Gandhiji and other members of the Working Committee were all arrested and imprisoned.

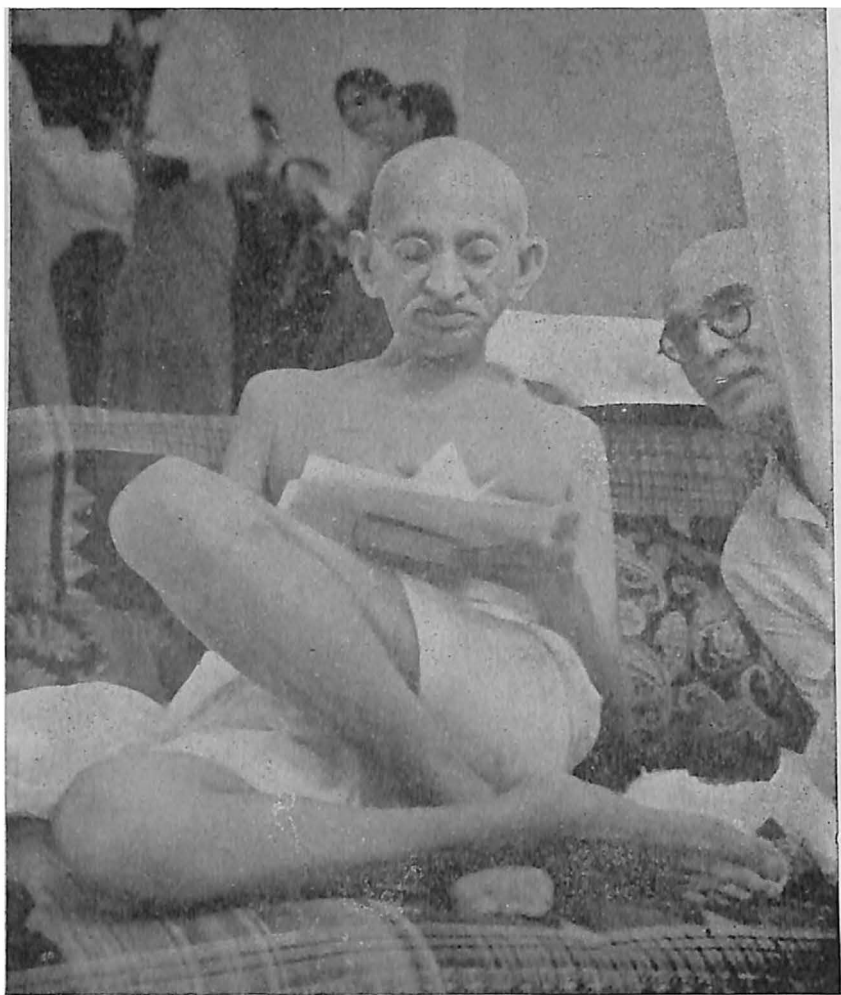
Thus the struggle was revived. The Government resorted to repression. The people showed a bold front, and courted imprisonment. Ordinances were the reply of the Government. Free life became almost impossible. Sir Samuel Hoare himself admitted in the House of Commons that the Ordinances were of a very drastic character.

Lathi charges became the order of the day. But the police would not be satisfied merely with this. They committed unmentionable atrocities and tortures on the Satyagrahis that were in jail. Even women and children had their share of the abuses and ill treatment by the police. When the police found that the people are not likely to be daunted and unnerved by these sorts of harrassments, they resorted to heavy fines, which very often ran to three and four figures. Not only were movables like furniture, household utensils etc. attached and sold, but even the lands were not spared.

In the midst of all this unprecedented horror, it is refreshing to find that the larger bulk of the people, if not the whole of it, remained absolutely non-violent. Great credit is due to them for thus restraining themselves, in face of great provocation.



CHIANG-KAI-SHEK AND GANDHIJI



GANDHIJI AND MAHADEV DESAI

Even though free movement had become almost impossible, the enthusiasm of the people had not waned and a session of the Congress was organised at Delhi in April 1932. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the veteran Indian leader was to preside over the session but he was arrested en route. It may be mentioned that Malaviyaji was the only great leader who was out during this period. He continued to advise and guide the country by issuing statements, press interviews etc. He was a great source of inspiration to the younger generation that was struggling hard to keep aloft the banner of Independence. His imprisonment was therefore, a great setback to the movement.

9. The Untouchables or Harijans

Gandhiji is nothing if not a benefactor of the poor and the downtrodden. There is hardly a leader in India who has done more than the Mahatma for the uplift of the so called depressed classes. He is of opinion that creation of separate electorates for the depressed classes would be a great disservice to them, and therefore had declared in London that he would resist it with his life, if need be. It was on the 17th of August 1932 that Mr. Macdonald's decision re the Communal Award was announced, and separate electorates were a part of his decision. On the very next day Gandhiji wrote to the Premier that if separate electorates were not removed, and the Communal decision not so modified, he would resort to a fast unto death on the 20th of September. The Premier attached no great importance to Gandhiji's warning and the Communal Award remained un-

modified. In the mean time the news about Gandhiji's impending fast spread throughout the length and breadth of India.

"The fast was to begin on the 20th of September 1932. The interval of one week between the publication of the correspondence and the commencement of the fast was a period of utter stress and strain to the nation,—yea, to the whole world,—a period of tension, in which people, institutions and nations tried to do whatever immediately occurred to them. Interviews were sought and rejected. Cables flew from the ends of the earth to Poona. Exhortations and arguments were resorted to, to dissuade Gandhi from his determination..... When storm breaks, and floods uproot trees, submerge houses, demolish buildings, and sweep away roads and bridges, where conflagrations rage and destroy life and property, when natural catalysms occur, they rouse the idle interest of the curious and the greedy interest of the wicked. Some such outbreak of emotions was witnessed, when Gandhiji, in reply to the Premier, declared that his fast would begin. It threw the country into a state of alarm, consternation and confusion. All of us have witnessed deathbed scenes in our life. People gather round the dying person and when the doctor arrives, he is almost to feel like one of them..... When a series of remedial measures are suggested, hot water fomentations, smellingsalt, medicine, turpentine, brandy, this, that and the other, people disperse each to do his bit, for the dying patient or the living

physician, and the latter gets some little peace of mind to think and act. Here was Gandhi, not accidentally struck by appendicitis as he was eight years previously in the same jail, but deliberately taking to his death-bed and entering upon a fast. No wonder then that the country should have been thrown into a state of paralysis, from which, however, the patient himself raised it to life and activity."

The above paragraph gives a vivid picture of the Country's reaction to the announcement about the fast. It became imperative for the leaders of the Hindu Community to confer immediately to discuss how far they could go in agreeing to revise the Communal Award. Accordingly Pandit Malaviya, Dr. Ambedkar, Sjt. Amratlal Thakkar, St. Rajgopalachariar, Sir Chunilal Mehta, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Jayakar, and others met, and evolved a scheme, which would be approved by all the parties concerned. Fortunately they came to a decision by the fifth day of the fast. The Government accepted the formula known as the Poona Pact and simultaneous announcements were made both in India and in England, on the 26th of September. That very evening Gandhiji broke his fast, after prayers and the singing of religious hymns. Gandhiji got the abolition of separate electorates for the Depressed Classes, and that is a signal service that he has rendered not only to the Depressed Classes, but to the Hindu Community as a whole. Separate Electorates would have done an immense harm to India, and would possibly have widened the gulf between the Depressed Classes and

Caste Hindus. Besides this, the Poona Pact increased twofold the number of the Depressed Class representatives to the Provincial Assemblies. Mr. MacDonald's scheme offered 71 seats to them while the Poona Pact raised the number to as many as 148.

The resolution unanimously adopted by the Hindu leaders, who met at Bombay under the distinguished presidentship of Pandit Malaviya, on the 25th of September, runs as follows:—

“The Conference resolves that, henceforth, amongst Hindus no one shall be regarded as an untouchable by reason of his birth and that those who have been so regarded hitherto will have the same right as other Hindus in regard to the use of public wells, public schools, and other public institutions. This right shall have statutory recognition at the first opportunity and shall be one of the earliest acts of the Swaraj Parliament, if it shall not have received such recognition before that time.

It is further agreed that it shall be the duty of all Hindu leaders to secure by every legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities now imposed by custom upon the so called untouchable classes, including the bar in respect of admission to temples”.

The above resolution has been adopted as the motto of HARIJAN, a weekly which Gandhiji started to perpetuate the memory of this momentous event in the history of India. It must be noted that at the suggestion of the Mahatma, the Depressed Classes

are to be known as Harijans hereafter. These classes now began to obtain a distinct status in Society, and received better treatment at the hands of the caste Hindus and others.

Moreover the question of improving the condition of the Harijans, in all possible ways, now began to engage the attention of the country. Everybody felt that something must be done to uplift those whom they had neglected so far. A public fund was started for helping the Harijans to better their lot. There was a handsome response to Gandhiji's appeal with the result that a good amount was collected, the interest of which is now utilized for giving free-studentships to Harijan students, for digging wells for Harijans, and for such other purposes as may be calculated to uplift them. Again one of the terms of the Poona Pact was that an adequate sum shall be earmarked, in every Province, for providing Educational facilities to Harijans.

10. Another Fast and Yet Another.

Gandhiji's inner voice is a mystery and defies elucidation. One does not know what his 'inner voice' may urge him to do to-morrow. Very often, therefore we are taken by a sudden surprise. One of such surprises for India was the Mahatma's decision to undertake another fast of 21 days for the Harijans. The fast was started on the 8th of May 1933. It was a self-purificatory fast and was 'a heart prayer for purification of myself and my associates for greater vigilance and watchfulness in connection

with the Harijan cause.' He added in a press interview, "A religious movement does not depend for its success on the intellectual or material resources of its sponsors; but it depends solely upon the spiritual resources and fasting is the most known method of adding to these resources."

Fortunately for the country, and for the World, if one might say so, the Government exhibited greater courage, wisdom and foresight and released the Mahatma on the very evening of the 8th of May, the day on which he commenced his fast. He was not slow in reciprocating and issued a statement in which he recommended the suspension of the Civil Disobedience campaign for six weeks. This was followed by an informal Conference of Congressmen in Poona in July 1933. This Conference recommended suspension of Civil Disobedience altogether. Gandhiji's attempts for an honourable settlement with Government having failed, he advised Congressmen to follow individual Civil Disobedience, though he was against Mass Civil Disobedience at that stage. He himself came forward to disband the Sabarmati Ashram which he had built up with the loving care of a father. The Sabarmati Ashram was an institution by itself and ever since its inception in 1915, was an inspiration to many. Gandhiji's decision to disband the same, was therefore a great shock to a large number of his friends and admirers.

Gandhiji was to commence his march on the 1st of August 1933, but before he could do so, he was arrested, and subsequently sentenced to one year's

imprisonment. It was found that the Government was not prepared to continue the facilities granted to him previously, for carrying on Harijan work. He therefore decided to have another fast. The Government remained firm for some time but finding that the Mahatma's health had grown worse, and was causing great anxiety, it yielded and released him on the 23rd August, the eighth day of his fast. Gandhiji was disgusted of this 'cat and mouse game' of arrest and fast and release. He therefore came to the conclusion that he must regard himself not a free man and therefore decided to impose a limited self restraint upon himself upto the termination of his sentence, i.e. upto 3rd August, 1934. This period he devoted to the furtherance of the cause now dearest to him viz., the uplift of the Harijans. To this end he undertook an extensive tour of the country, delivering speeches and collecting money for the Harijans. As the Civil Disobedience movement was practically given up, the people also were, as if waiting for some other activity, to which they might usefully turn. There was no wonder therefore that the people readily responded to Gandhiji's appeal.

11. Gandhiji retires from the Congress.

The country wanted a change in the method of fight and as such a change in the programme. The old Swaraj Party was, therefore, revived and the Annual Session of the Congress held in Bombay in October 1934, adopted the Council entry programme.

A few days before the Congress Session at Bombay, Gandhiji sprung another surprise upon the country by

declaring that he would retire from the Congress. In the course of a long statement issued by him he said:—

‘ It has appeared to me that there is a growing and vital difference of outlook between many Congressmen and myself. I seem to be going in a direction just the opposite of what many of the most intellectual Congressmen would gladly and enthusiastically take if they were not hampered by their unexampled loyalty to me. No leader can expect greater loyalty and devotion than what I have received from intellectually minded Congressmen, even when they have protested and signified their disapproval of the policy I have laid before the Congress. For me any more to draw upon this loyalty and devotion is to put undue strain upon them. Their loyalty cannot blind my eyes to what appear to me to be fundamental differences between the Congress intelligentsia and me’. It was his impression ‘ that a very large body of Congress intelligentsia were tired of my method and views and programme based upon them, that I was a hindrance rather than a help to the National growth of the Congress, that, instead of remaining the most democratic and representative organization, it was dominated by my personality, that in it there was no free play of reason.’

This announcement of Gandhiji's created a stir in the political circles of India. The Mahatma received letters and telegrams from individuals and public bodies requesting, and entreating him not to leave the Congress. But as usual he stuck to his decision. However, it is interesting to note that in spite of his

theoretical retirement from the Congress, there has not been a single important decision of the Congress that has not received his approval. Even a superficial study of some of the important events in India since 1934, is sufficient to convince us that it is the Saint of Shegaon that still continues to be the guiding spirit of the Congress. Acceptance of office by Congressmen and formation of ministries in the provinces where Congress members are in a majority, tactful solution of the ministerial crisis in United Provinces and Behar, the release of detenues of Bengal—all these are a clear testimony of the fact that the Mahatma's personality has a unique hold on India. Not only this, but Wardha is yet the centre of political activities. Almost all the meetings of the Congress Executive are held in Wardha, so that leaders may have the benefit of advice and guidance from Gandhiji.

The Bombay session of the Congress having permitted Congressmen to contest legislatures, the activities of Congressmen were now directed towards the campaign for election to the Central Legislative Assembly. This breathed a new life, into the drooping spirits of the people, whose enthusiasm had received a set-back on account of lathi charges, imprisonment, and sufferings during the course of the last four years. The Congress put up candidates for every district and an intensive campaign for election was carried on, with the result that the Congress succeeded in capturing 44 seats in the Central Assembly. In accordance with the new policy of the Congress, it put up candidates for Provincial Assemblies also, at

the time of elections in 1937 and succeeded in capturing a majority of seats in seven out of the eleven provinces in India. The next question that engaged the attention of the public was whether Congress would accept offices and form ministries in these provinces. The safeguards and the powers vested in the Governors of Provinces, according to the Government of India Act of 1935 prevented the Congress from accepting the responsibility of conducting the administration. The Congressmen wanted an assurance that the Governors would not make use of the special powers, so long as the Ministers continued to discharge their duties. The Governors and the Viceroy issued statements explaining the meaning of the Special Powers. To this there was a reply by the Congress Executive that interference in the day to day administration of the Province would cut at the root of responsible Government. This controversy lasted for a fairly long time, after which Gandhiji succeeded in getting the necessary assurance in a modified form. This was followed by the decision of the Congress Working Committee that Congressmen should accept offices, wherever they were in a majority. Accordingly Congress Ministries were formed in seven provinces from 1st of August, 1937.

12. Gandhiji and Education

It would not be wrong to say that the decision of the Congress to undertake the responsibility of conducting the administration of the country meant an important landmark in the history of India. The law-breakers of yesterday became the lawgivers of

to-day. The country settled down to quiet and useful work. Leaders began to devote more attention to constructive work for the nation. It was, therefore, no wonder that education of the children received their very best attention. It was felt by many that the present system of education did not meet the requirements of the country. Nobody realized this more keenly than Gandhiji himself. He, therefore, called a conference of leading educationists at Wardha in October 1937. After prolonged discussion the conference resolved as under :—

" (1) That in the opinion of this Conference free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nation wide scale.

(2) That the medium of instruction be the mother tongue.

(3) That the conference endorses the proposal made by Mahatma Gandhi that the process of Education throughout this period should centre round some form of manual and productive work, and that all other abilities to be developed or training to be given should, as far as possible, be integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child.

(4) That the conference expects that this system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teachers."

This is what Gandhiji would call Basic Education. His main concern is the villager rather than the citizen. He therefore laid great emphasis on the knowledge of a craft that would suit local conditions. For

the same reason he emphasized the necessity of a really sound primary education. According to him :—‘The course of primary education should be extended at least to seven years and should include the general knowledge gained upto the Matriculation standard less English and plus a substantial vocation.’

This Scheme of Education, popularly known as the Wardha Scheme is now engaging the attention of thinkers, educationists and Ministers of Education. Schools on these lines have already been started at Wardha and other places and the public are waiting to see how far the new Scheme would be a success.

Early in 1938, a serious difference of opinion arose between the Ministers and the Governor of the United Provinces and Behar over the question of the release of political prisoners. The Governors of these two provinces did not accept the recommendation of their ministers for the release of certain prisoners. The Ministers were of opinion that this interference on the part of the Governors was uncalled for and would be a serious blow to the very principle of responsible government, which they were trying to establish in India. The Premiers of these two provinces, therefore, submitted their resignation. This happened on the eve of the Annual session of the Congress at Haripura, a village in the district of Surat. It created a stir in the political circles of India, and it appeared as if the much dreaded clash between the Governors and the Ministers has after all come and would soon give a death blow to the growth of parliamentary institutions in India. Fortunately for the country, however, the

statesmanlike and diplomatic statements of the Viceroy on one hand and Gandhiji on the other, removed the clouds that had begun to hover on India. The Governors of these two provinces sent for their respective premiers, discussed the question with them, and came to a decision acceptable to the ministers. Gandhiji's tactful solution of the intricate problem won for him applause from all, officials and non-officials alike. The "Times of India", in the editorial of the 25th February 1938 on 'The Crisis Over' observed "Mr. Gandhi's reply is on the lines of his previous statesmanlike policy, for which the country as a whole is both grateful and indebted. It is not too much to say that in handling this crisis, as in the office acceptance issue, Mr. Gandhi has raised himself still higher in the estimation not only of his countrymen but of the Empire and the world."

13. A Post-Dated Cheque

Soon after the declaration of the War in September 1939, the Viceroy had talks with Gandhiji and other Congress leaders. The Viceroy then issued a statement, the substance of which was:—'At the end of the War, H's Majesty's Government, will be very willing to enter into consultations'. This was a great disappointment to Gandhiji who said:—'The Viceregal declaration is profoundly disappointing'. Another effort was made in November 1939, but that also failed. This was followed by the resignation of Congress Ministries.

Thereafter the War situation deteriorated and the British Government was anxious to see if it could

placate India. They, therefore, deputed Sir Stafford Cripps to India in March 1942. He had discussions with Mr. Gandhi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Mr. Jinnah and other leaders in the course of which he told the leaders how far England was prepared to go. The discussions revealed that Britain's offer was more in terms of the future than in terms of the present. In Gandhiji's words it was 'A post-dated cheque'. India wanted an immediate declaration that the authorities would grant Independence to India. If freedom and democracy were the objectives for which the Allied nations were fighting, then they must necessarily include the ending of Imperialism and the recognition of the Independence of India. This, India failed to secure from Cripps, as a result of which the proposals were rejected by the country and there was great disappointment everywhere.

14. 'Quit India'

This was followed by a meeting of the Working Committee at Wardha on 6th July 1942. The 'Quit India' resolution was adopted and Gandhiji was requested to lead and guide the country in case the struggle was renewed. The resolution of the Working Committee was subsequently ratified by the All India Congress Committee at its historic meeting on the 8th of August 1942. Gandhiji made it very clear that he would write to the Viceroy and exhaust all possibilities of a peaceful settlement of the Indian Problem, and that he would advise the country to launch a struggle, only as a last alternative. The Government, however, was in no mood of carrying on

negotiations. They, therefore, arrested Gandhiji and other leaders, on the very next day i.e. on the 9th of August 1942.

15. Conclusion

Mr. Gandhi is a great soul. He is one of the greatest men the world has produced. His transparent sincerity, his utter selflessness, his devotion to truth, his insistence on non-violence, his scrupulous regard for honesty and straightforwardness in the administration of public funds, his supreme faith and trust in God and above all his indomitable will and courage are qualities which have attracted to him people from far and near. It is these sterling qualities that compel friends and foes alike to look at him with respect and veneration.

Mr. Gandhi is more than 76 years old. He began his public life in South Africa in 1893. He has served mankind for more than half a century and has left a mark on individuals and institutions alike. One may say without fear of contradiction that there is not a single sphere of human activity which does not bear the impress of his personality. His feeling for the poor and down-trodden has contributed to the uplift of the Harijans. Women and children are his special care as exemplified by the arrangement for the use of funds collected for perpetuating the memory of Kasturba. His insistence on the use of the mother-tongue has secured a new status for Gujarati, Marathi and other Indian Languages. Hindustani owes its birth to his desire for a common language for India.

He has taught people principles of plain-living and high-thinking. His evening prayers are a new feature in the social and political life of India.

PART IV.

1. Kasturba Gandhi

Kasturba was born in 1869, the very year in which Gandhiji was born. They were married when only 12 or 13. Though not educated in the modern sense of the word, she knew how to read and write. The stories from Ramayan and Maha Bharat made a deep impression upon her. She would take neither wine nor meat, even as medicine. Once when she was very ill, the Doctor advised her to take beef tea. But she would not. On being requested by Gandhiji, she gave a resolute reply :—"I will not take beef tea. It is a rare thing in the world to be born a human being and I would far rather die in your arms, than pollute my body with such abominations."

A quiet and unostentatious worker, she was a faithful and devoted wife, who stood by her illustrious husband in the many ordeals through which he passed. She identified herself with his aims and ideals and lent him an ungrudging co-operation. In the words of Gandhiji :—"She was blessed with one great quality to a considerable degree, a quality which most Hindu wives possess in some measure. And it is this : willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, she considered herself blessed following in my footsteps". She was a loving and affectionate mother. The inmates of the Ashram, who were her special care,

addressed her as Ba. She was more than a mother to them.

She died in Aga Khan Palace (Gandhiji's place of detention) on the 22nd of February 1943, in Gandhiji's lap. Her sons, grandsons and other near relations were present at the time. Devdas Gandhi describes the last moments of her death in the following touching words :—"Then in the twinkling of an eye the collapse came. Tears rolled down from several eyes while Gandhiji forced back his. The entire group stood in a semi-circle and chanted the favourite prayer which they had been used to say so long in her company. Within two minutes she was still. As one of the inmates remarked to me, she waited for us to finish our meals. The last meal of the day in the detention camp is taken at about 6 p.m. She died at 7-35 p.m. It was the auspicious night " Shivaratri."

Gandhiji gives a well merited tribute to her when he says :—"She was a woman of very strong will, which in our early days, I used to mistake for obstinacy. But that strong will enabled her to become, quite unwittingly, my teacher in the art and practice of non-violent non-cooperation."

Her death was a great and personal loss to Gandhiji. In less than two years Nature deprived him of two of his closest associates, Mahadev and Kasturba. To add to his sorrow, she was burnt at the very place where Mahadev was burnt on the 15th of August 1942. Gandhiji's sorrow is too great to be described in words. However, he has stood the ordeal with faith, courage

and patience all his own.

A large number of Gandhiji's friends and admirers in India and outside mourned Kasturba's death and sent messages of condolence to him. Many felt as if they had lost a mother. So dear she was to them. A public memorial has been raised to perpetuate her memory. More than a crore of Rupees has been collected, a clear testimony of India's love and affection for her. This fund will be utilized for the training of women for welfare work amongst women and children in the rural area.

2. Mahadev Desai

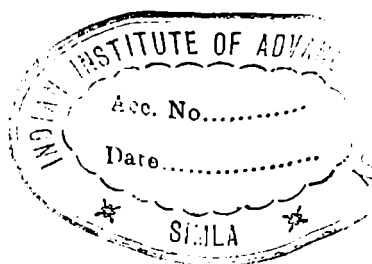
Mahadev Desai more popularly known as M.D. was born at Olpad a village in the district of Surat. He passed the lawyer's examination of the Bombay University and joined Gandhiji soon after the latter's arrival in India from South Africa. Mahadev soon became Gandhiji's secretary and retained his post till his death in 1942. He was loyal and faithful to his master. No writer has represented Gandhiji more faithfully than Mahadev. In fact Mahadev was Gandhi's Boswell. He made Gandhiji the best known man in the world, certainly the best loved. Father Elwin says :—"The punctual; vivid, intimate stories that appeared week by week in Young India and Harijan displayed to readers all over a personality as lovable that love was inevitably roused in response..... As a writer Mahadev revealed a very wide and general culture, with a catholic taste in Poetry, Art and Literature. He had a clear, clean indomitable English style. He wrote prodigiously but never with a care-

lessness or inaccuracy. I have, probably, like thousands of other men of my time read every word that Mahadev published. Few writers could have commanded so many regular readers."

Mahadev was an unostentious and quiet worker. He wore a cheerful countenance and had an attractive personality. His reading was vast and varied. Besides, he wielded a facile pen. His writings in Young India and Harijan are remarkable for precision and depth. His death on the 15th of August 1942 came as a great shock not only to Gandhiji but to the whole of India.

3. Hindu-Muslim Unity

Like all well wishers of India, Gandhiji realizes that the unity between the two great communities will pave the way to Self-Government for India. He has therefore put this question in the forefront of his constructive programme and has striven his best to the attainment of complete understanding between Hindus and Muslims. His support to the Khilafat agitation brought the two communities together and it appeared as if the gulf had been bridged. However, the agreement was only short-lived and again there was misunderstanding between the two. Various efforts were made by prominent leaders to bring the two together but in vain. Gandhiji made one supreme effort in September 1944. He had prolonged conversation with Mr. M. A. Jinnah, the President of the Muslim League but unfortunately for India, the negotiations broke off and the two leaders parted without coming to any settlement.



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