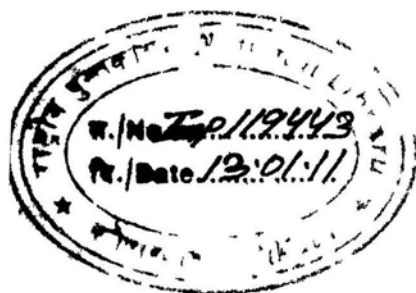




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# The Momentous Issue.

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[ This article was written in November in 1921, when it was decided to launch civil disobedience shortly in Bardoli. ]

The next few weeks should see civil disobedience in full working order in some part of India. With illustrations of partial and individual civil disobedience the country has become familiar. Complete civil disobedience is rebellion without the element of violence in it. An out and out civil resister simply ignores the authority of the state. He becomes an outlaw claiming to disregard every unmoral state law. Thus, for instance, he may refuse to pay taxes, he may refuse to recognise the authority of the state in his daily intercourse. He may refuse to obey the law of trespass and claim to enter military barracks in order to speak to the soldiers, he may refuse to submit to limitations upon the manner of picketing and may picket within the prescribed area. In doing all this he never

uses force and never resists force when it is used against him. In fact, he invites imprisonment and other uses of force against himself. This he does because and when he finds the bodily freedom he seemingly enjoys to be an intolerable burden. He argues to himself, that a state allows personal freedom only in so far as the citizen submits to its regulations. Submission to the state law is the price a citizen pays for his personal liberty. Submission, therefore, to a state wholly or largely unjust is an immoral barter for liberty. A citizen who thus realises the evil nature of a state is not satisfied to live on its sufferance, and therefore appears to the others who do not share his belief to be a nuisance to society whilst he is endeavouring to compel the state without committing a moral breach to arrest him. Thus considered, civil resistance is a most powerful expression of a soul's anguish and an eloquent protest against the continuance of an evil state. Is not this the history of all reform? Have not reformers, much to the disgust of their fellows, discarded even innocent symbols associated with an evil practice?

When a body of men disown the state under which they have hitherto lived, they nearly establish their own government. I say nearly, for they do not go to the point of using force when they are resisted by the state. Their 'business' as of the individual is to be locked up or shot by the state, unless it recognises their separate existence, in other words bows to their will. Thus three thousand Indians in South Africa after due notice to the Government of the Transvaal crossed the Transvaal border in 1914 in defiance of the Transvaal immigration law and compelled the Government to arrest them. When it failed to provoke them to violence or to coerce them into submission, it yielded to their demand. ( A body of civil resisters is, therefore, like an army subject to all the discipline of a soldier, only harder because of want of excitement of an ordinary soldier's life. And as a civil resistance army is or ought to be free from passion because free from the spirit of retaliation, it requires the fewest number of soldiers. Indeed one perfect civil resister is enough to win the battle of Right against Wrong. )



Though, therefore, the All India Congress Committee has authorised civil disobedience by Provincial Congress Committees on their own responsibility, I hope they will put due emphasis on the word 'responsibility' and not start civil disobedience with a light heart. Every condition must be given its full effect. The mention of Hindu-Muslim unity, non-violence, Swadeshi and removal of untouchability means that they have not yet become an integral part of our national life. If an individual or mass have still misgivings about Hindu-Muslim unity, if they have still any doubt about the necessity of non-violence for the attainment of our triple goal, if they have not yet enforced Swadeshi in its completeness, if the Hindus among that mass have still the poison of untouchability in them, that mass or that individual are not ready for civil disobedience. Indeed it would be best to watch and wait whilst the experiment is being carried on in one area. Reverting to the analogy of the army, those divisions that watch and wait are just as much co-operating actively as the division that is actually fighting. The only time, whilst the experiment is going on

that individual civil disobedience may be resorted to simultaneously, is when the Government obstruct even the silent prosecution of Swadeshi. Thus if an order of prohibition is served upon an expert spinner going to teach or organise spinning, that order should be summarily disregarded and the teacher should court imprisonment. But in all other respects, in so far as I can judge at present, it will be best for every other part of India scrupulously to respect all orders and instructions whilst one part is deliberately taking the offensive and committing a deliberate breach of all the unmoral state laws it possibly can. Needless to add that any outbreak of violence in any other part of India must necessarily injure and may even stop the experiment. The other parts will be expected to remain immovable and unperturbed, even though the people within the area of experiment may be imprisoned, riddled with bullets or otherwise ill-treated by the authorities. We must expect them to give a good account of themselves in every conceivable circumstance.

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# Things that sink

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[This article was written in December, 1921, when repression was going on in full swing and when even distinguished citizens like Professor H. C. Maitra were not immune from assaults at the hands of the military police in public streets.]

To imprison those who, whether high or low, break the commandments, to treat them as common felons, to deprive them of their prison privileges, one can understand. I would not call that foul play. If you incur the wrath of one who is over you or who has you under his power for the time being, to be punished by him for your disobedience is what you expect. But if he humiliates you, if he makes your children do things you and they do not like and which you are not required in law to do, if he treats you like dirt, it becomes unbearable. One learns that in Coconada a Magistrate had the Swaraj and the Khilafat flags pulled down, that he

issued orders prohibiting the use of such flags for one week, that the children of a school were compelled to salute the Union Jack, that a distinguished Professor in Calcutta, going out in his academic costume and on the strength thereof going up to an officer to stop a wanton hunt of inoffensive men, was brutally assaulted for his innocent inquiry as to the cause of the hunt, that a party of brave cultured young men were kicked about by those who were their warders for the time being. These are things that sink. These humiliations show that there is little change in the manners of our 'masters'. The O'Dwyerian spirit has not died out. Of what use is it that Lord Ronaldshay sends for the injured Professor, soothes him and assures him that the thing will not happen again? What will not happen again? The Professor will not be assaulted? Of course he will not be during the present crisis. The Professor himself will not again presume upon his academic costume and challenge an officer very soon. But has the officer any respect for the Professor? The Professor did not seek relief for himself. He interceded for injured humanity. Will Indian humanity be protected and respected in

future because of his Lordship's assurance ? It is the habitual training given to the soldier that matters. He is converted into a vicious animal to be let loose on harmless people on given occasions. The Dases and the Azads have gone to gaol to prevent a repetition of such unmanly and brutal exhibitions. They have welcomed imprisonment in order that even the worst criminal may be protected against wanton injury, that even he may not have his self-respect wounded. They have not gone to gaol for any mechanical transference of power. The organic change they want, that Lala Lajpat Rai has been pining for years, that has become the breath of life for the ease-loving Motilal Nehru and has made of him practically a Fakir, is not to be brought about by Lord Ronaldshay, however well-intentioned he may be in his apologies, nor by Lord Reading's smooth phrases and his personal care that officers and men might not overstep the limits of law. The organic change will be and can only be brought about by the suffering that has come to the people and for which thank God they find themselves prepared. A cautious friend in order to restrain my optimism tells me, that the suffering has only

just begun, that for the end in view we must pay a much higher price still. He really expects that we shall have to invite a repetition of Jalianwalas and that instead of approaching the triangles of the crawling lane fame tremblingly and reluctantly, we shall have now to walk to them cheerfully and with a steady step and suffer lashes for refusing to crawl. I assure the friend that my optimism has room for all these things and much worse that he can imagine. But I promise, too, that if India remains calm and unperturbed and does not retaliate even mentally—a very difficult process I admit and yet not so difficult in India's present exalted mood,—our very preparedness and consequent absence of re-action will exhaust the brute spirit for want of nutrition, and Lord Reading, instead of talking big things to us, will himself adopt the human language of penitence and see ample occasion in the Indian atmosphere for a new diplomacy. Whereas if we forget ourselves and our pledge, we must be ready for a thousand Jalianwalas and India being turned into a vast shambles. The President-elect has prepared us for such a consummation. He is sure that we have shed the fear of the

prison. He is almost certain probably from the experience of his brave son and his company that we will be prepared to undergo the ordeal of assaults. But he bids us give up the fear of death itself. If that time is in store for us, I hope that there will be non-violent non-co-operators enough in India, of whom it will be written :

‘They suffered bullets without anger and with prayer on their lips even for the ignorant murderer.’

Well, if the reports are to be credited, two Assamese volunteers have been whipped, the volunteers of Lahore have meekly borne the wanton assaults committed on them. This fight is not a joke. We have disciplined ourselves for the past twelve months and more, and we must now go through it to the end. There is no turning back.

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# The Immediate Issue.

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[At the end of November, 1921, Government declared the Congress and Khilafat Committees as illegal and meetings were prohibited by the seditious meetings Act. It was decided by the Congress to defy the orders and court imprisonment. This article was written on that occasion.]

Swaraj, the Khilafat, the Punjab occupy a subordinate place to the issue sprung upon the country by the Government. We must first make good the right of free speech and free association before we can make any further progress towards our goal. The Government would kill us if they could by a flank attack. To accept defeat in the matter of free speech and free association is to court disaster. If the Government is allowed to destroy non-violent activities in the country, however dangerous they may be to its existence, even the moderates' work must come to a standstill. In the general interest, therefore, we must defend these elementary rights with our lives. We



cannot be coerced into welcoming the Prince nor can we be coerced into disbanding volunteer associations or giving up any other activities which we may deem desirable for our growth.

The safest and the quickest way to defend these rights is to ignore the restriction. We must speak the Truth under a shower of bullets. We must band together in the face of bayonets. No cost is too great for purchasing these fundamental rights. And on this there can be no compromise, no parleying, no conference. Withdrawal of notifications of disbandment and prohibition orders and discharge of all who are imprisoned for non-violent activities must precede any conference or settlement. We must be content to die, if we cannot live as free men and women.

I wish I could persuade everybody that civil disobedience is the inherent right of a citizen. He dare not give it up without ceasing to be a man. Civil disobedience is never followed by anarchy. Criminal disobedience can lead to it. Every state puts down criminal disobedience by force. It perishes, if it does not. But to put down civil disobedience is to attempt to imprison conscience. Civil disobedience can only lead to

strength and purity. A civil resister never uses arms and hence he is harmless to a state, that is at all willing to listen to the voice of public opinion. He is dangerous for an autocratic state, for he brings about its fall by engaging public opinion upon the matter for which he resists the state. Civil disobedience therefore becomes a sacred duty when the state has become lawless, or which is the same thing, corrupt. And a citizen that barter with such a state shares its corruption or lawlessness.

It is therefore possible to question the wisdom of applying civil disobedience in respect of a particular act or law ; it is possible to advise delay and caution. But the right itself cannot be allowed to be questioned. It is a birthright that cannot be surrendered without surrender of one's self-respect.

At the same time that the right of civil disobedience is insisted upon, its use must be guarded by all conceivable restrictions. Every possible provision should be made against an outbreak of violence or general lawlessness. Its area as well as its scope should also be limited to the barest necessity of the case. In the present case therefore aggressive civil disobedience

should be confined to a vindication of the right of free speech and free association. In other words non-co-operation, so long as it remains non-violent, must be allowed to continue without let or hindrance. When that position is attained it is time for a representative conference to be summoned for the settlement of Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj but not till then.

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# Independence

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[ This article was written in January, 1922, just after the session of the Ahmedabad Congress.]

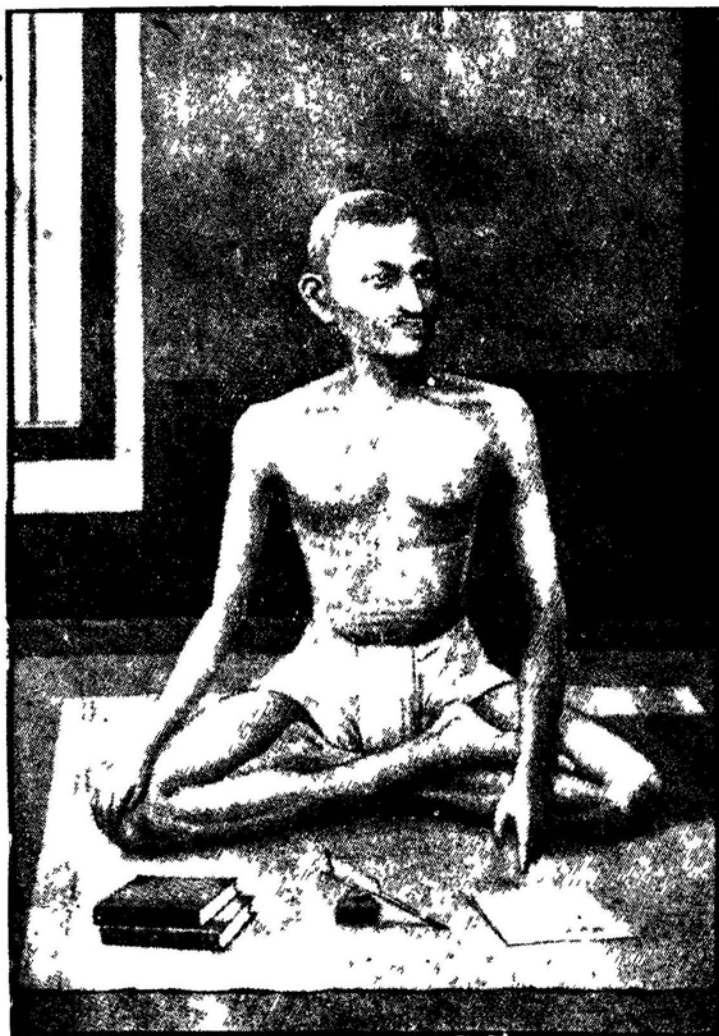
Maulana Hasrat Mohani put up a plucky fight for independence on the Congress platform and then as President of the Muslim League and was happily each time defeated. There is no mistake about the meaning of the Maulana. He wants to sever all connection with the British people even as partners and equals and even though the Khilafat question be satisfactorily solved. It will not do to urge that the Khilafat question can never be solved without complete independence. We are discussing merely the theory. It is common cause that if the Khilafat question cannot be solved without complete independence, i. e. if the British people retain hostile attitude towards the aspirations of the Islamic world, there is nothing left for us to do but to insist upon complete independence. India cannot afford to give Britain even her

moral support and must do without Britain's support moral and material, if she cannot be induced to be friendly to the Islamic world.

But assuming that Great Britain alters her attitude, as I know she will when India is strong, it will be religiously unlawful for us to insist on independence. For it will be vindictive and petulant. It would amount to a denial of God for the refusal will then be based upon the assumption that the British people are not capable of response to the God in man. Such a position is untenable for both a believing Musalman and a believing Hindu.

India's greatest glory will consist not in regarding Englishmen as her implacable enemies fit only to be turned out of India at the first available opportunity but in turning them into friends and partners in a new commonwealth of nations in the place of an Empire based upon exploitation of the weaker or undeveloped nations and races of the earth and therefore finally upon force.

Let us see clearly what Swaraj together with the British connection means. It means undoubtedly India's ability to declare her independence if she wishes. Swaraj therefore will not



be a free gift of the British Parliament. It will be a declaration of India's full self-expression. That it will be expressed through an Act of Parliament is true. But it will be merely a courteous ratification of the declared wish of the people of India even as it was in the case of the Union of South Africa. Not an unnecessary adverb in the Union scheme could be altered by the House of Commons. The ratification in our case will be of a treaty to which Britain will be party.

Such Swaraj may not come this year, may not come within our generation. But I have contemplated nothing less. The British Parliament, when the settlement comes, will ratify the wishes of the people of India as expressed not through the bureaucracy but through her freely chosen representatives.

(Swaraj can never be a free gift by one nation to another. It is a treasure to be purchased with a nation's best blood.) It will cease to be a gift when we have paid dearly for it. The Viceroy was confused when he said that Swaraj would have to come from the Parliament unless it came by the sword. He paid no compliment to his country when he allowed his audience to

infer that England was incapable of listening to the moral pressure of suffering, and he insulted the intelligence of his audience if he wished it to understand that the British Parliament would give Swaraj when it wished irrespective of India's desires and aspirations. The fact is that Swaraj will be a fruit of incessant labour, suffering beyond measure.

But His Excellency is unused to any substitute for the sword and therefore does probably think that by exercising our debating skill in the legislative councils, some day or other we shall be able to impress the British Parliament with the desirability of granting us Swaraj. He will soon learn that there is a better and more effective substitute for the sword and that is civil disobedience. It is daily becoming increasingly clear that civil disobedience will afford the course of suffering through which India must pass before she comes to her own.

We have not come to our own. There is still mutual distrust between Musalmans and Hindus. The untouchables have not yet felt the glow of the Hindu touch. The Parsis and the Christians of India do not yet know their future under Swaraj to a certainty. We have



not yet learnt the art nor realised the necessity of obeying our own laws. The spinning wheel has not yet found a permanent place in our homes. *Khadi* has not yet become the national garment. In other words we have not yet understood the art or the conditions of self-protection.

There is still a body of opinion diminishing in volume but not yet negligible which considers that violence alone will bring *Swaraj* to us and that therefore violence might be permitted to continue side by side with non-violence, i. e. our non-violence should be regarded as merely a prelude to and a preparation for violence. Those who hold these views little know that their attitude constitutes to fraud upon the world. Our pledge requires that whilst we are under it we believe in the efficacy of non-violence for the quickest attainment of our goal. Each one of us is under a sacred obligation to cancel the pledge as soon as he believes that *Swaraj* is unattainable by non-violence or except by violence. Non-violence is a creed while it lasts. It is an expedient because it is an experiment. But whilst we are under the pledge we

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are not only bound to believe in and observe non-violence but we are equally bound to persuade others to be non-violent and condemn those who do violence. I am more than ever convinced that we have not reached our goal because even we who have subscribed to the Congress creed have not all remained non-violent in word and deed nor endeavoured to be non-violent in thought or intent.

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*Imp 119443 dt 13.01.11*



## Next is Gunpowder.

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[This article was written in January, 1922, to suggest that the next step of repression was gun-powder.]

The reader will peruse with careful attention the informing *resume* by K. of the new type of repression that is fast coming into vogue. It is possible that there is exaggeration in the details but almost all the reports hitherto received from non-co-operation quarters have proved so accurate and the denials so false that I am not disposed to discount the graphic details collected by K. from the correspondence received by me and from the newspapers.

The police are mostly our own countrymen but it is evident that they are being incited to become lawless by the example and the precept of their superior officers. When a mob becomes unruly, it knows no better; when the police become unruly, their action is deliberate and unpardonable. The mob frenzy can be controlled, the police frenzy spells disaster for an

unprepared people. We have groaned under it all these long years. Thank God, India is to-day prepared to meet the ordered frenzy of the Government.

We must tear down the mask of the so-called enforcement of the ordinary law against so-called intimidators and we must invite and welcome honest martial law. O'dwyerism and Dyerism are honest ideals, be they ever so indefensible. But what is going on in India to-day is indescribable hypocrisy.

If it is true that under the cover of distress warrants the police have entered our homes in Benares and taken away ornaments even from the inmates, if it is true that in Bulandshaher under the pretence of preserving order they have entered people's homes in order to assault them, if it is true that they have stripped prisoners almost naked in order to execute distress warrants, the case is complete for the fiercest civil disobedience of the most aggressive type consistently with the preservation of non-violence on our side. We must not wait for gunpowder to be used upon helpless people nor can we afford to put an undue strain upon the people's patience by merely remaining on the

defensive and letting the Government agents pillage and plunder our homes. We must draw the gunpowder on our own hands and that too at the earliest possible opportunity. We the principal workers cannot afford to watch with philosophic calmness these exasperating criminal assaults upon inoffensive people although they are volunteers and have therefore undertaken to suffer.

The shooting of a Musalman youth by a European 'youth' (are European youths armed ?) for the crime of wearing or selling (whichever it was) a *Khadi* cap, cannot be passed by in silence. We must avenge the wrong if necessary by inviting the shooting on our own heads.

The Government want to goad us into violence or abject submission. We must do neither. We must report by such civil disobedience as would compel shooting.

They want civil war. We must not play into their hands. Here is what I call open canvassing for civil war. The Magistrate of Aligarh is responsible for the following circular to the Raies of the Aligarh District :—

“As you are doubtless aware the Khilafat and Congress Volunteers have been declared by

the Local Government to be illegal associations and orders have been received for their suppression. They are becoming very active in Aligarh and may at any time give trouble in Hathras also by picketing shops, intimidation and by causing loss and annoyance to private persons as well as to Government.

"The number of police at my disposal is limited and I am very reluctant to ask for military assistance in dealing with a matter of this kind unless it leads to actual and violent disorder.

"I am therefore writing to a number of the leading Rases and gentlemen of the District to ask for their assistance in case the present trouble proves to be too widespread for the police to deal with without undue fatigue and harassment. If you are willing to help me in this matter I would ask you kindly to select 50 of your retainers and tenants, stout able-bodied men, whom you could send in, on receiving a message that they are required for enrolment as special police.

"At present it is only necessary that selection of the men should be made and list prepared of their names and residence so that they can be readily collected when called for.

"I shall be glad to hear from you in due course."

(Sd) J. C. Smith

We must refuse the bait by letting the gullible Rases do as they like. We must seek only such forms of civil disobedience as would prevent any clash with our own people, whether turned into civil guard or still laymen. Given unflinching courage and preservation of complete non-violence, the fight can be brought to a victorious end inside of a month. May God grant India light and courage.

I had hoped that the pledge to face death was a distant event. Evidently God wills that we must be tested thoroughly and well. In His name was the battle begun. He must give us the strength to go through it.

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# Worse than Martial Law.

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[ This article was written in January 1922, to demonstrate the brutal character of the treatment meted out to political prisoners in Indian Jails.]

For the time that savage repression continues, I must fill the pages of *Young India* with authentic tales of repression till India puts an end to it by an act of supreme sacrifice. I call the repression savage because it is wooden, wild, uncultivated, cruel. Grant that there is intimidation and even violence resorted to by some non-co-operators in pursuit of *hartal* or other activity. Is it difficult to find and punish the culprits? If the Government cannot get witnesses, does it not show that the whole populace is behind the so-called intimidation? An Act, however reprehensible in itself, when it becomes the act of a people, ceases to be a crime capable of being dealt with by its laws. Therefore repression by an irresponsible government can never be a popular act or an act designed for the safety of the people. But in the present instance, repres-



sion is designed to suppress the rising agitation directed against the misdeeds of the Government and is therefore doubly unpardonable.

However it is not the purpose of this article to demonstrate its unjustifiable character, but to demonstrate its brutal quality, to show that it is worse than martial law.

The Punjab martial law was comparatively a civilised measure and being so named, at least, served the purpose of producing a shock. The acts now being done under the protection of the ordinary law but really without any law at all are absolutely without any check. Martial law has its own code of honour, but this state lawlessness has none.

Take the Faridpur flogging. Dr. Maitra is a well-known physician of Calcutta. He is a non-party man. He has given a graphic report of his visit to the Faridpur Jail. Two cultured men, one a headmaster, were tied to a whipping triangle and whipped for the offence evidently of not salaaming the jail officials. When Dr. Maitra visited the Jail, the punishment was not even registered anywhere. He found many prisoners including under-trial ones in handcuffs for whole nights. One prisoner had standing handcuff for

three days. 'Nearly double the number of prisoners have been huddled together in particular rooms or cells of the jail than their allotted capacity of accommodation without adequate attention to their diet, clothes and bedding in this cold weather.' The only thing that the Bengal Government have to say, is not to deny any of the acts but to justify them on the ground of discipline ! The Government *communique* says, 'The punishments have had the desired effect and discipline has since been maintained.'

Now let us travel to Allahabad. The U. P. Government have produced a certificate of character from Mahadev Desai who is able to say truthfully that now he is humanely treated. But let the reader digest the blood-curdling story of the ill-treatment of the prisoners in the Naini Jail including the flogging supplied by him.

From Sitamadhī comes the news that a fine of Rs. 25,000 and a punitive police have been imposed upon its inhabitants. Sitamadhī is a sub-division in Bihar. The fine and the punitive police means sacking of the households of Sitamadhī. The *Motherland* gives an account of the looting of villages—Sihulia, Chandarpur

and Bharatawa. 'The mounted police, the commanding officer and the factory manager are reported to have taken part in looting. The crime committed by these villages is said to consist in their refusal to give *har* and *begar*. Awadh Bihari Sharan (a Congress worker) was tied to a charpai...The Jamadar of the factory asked the mounted police to cane them (the volunteers). Every volunteer was caned. Their caps and badges were all taken away.'

In Sindh things are no better, as the following letter from the Sindh Congress Committee will show :—

"The *Hindu* publishes a letter from one Rahmat Rasool, a Punjabi martial law prisoner who along with two other co-accused is now confined in Hyderabad Central Prison. He writes that on their arrival in this jail from the Andamans in November last, they were locked up in a cell meant for prisoner condemned to death and there no meals were given them for three days, till the Medical Officer saw them and got them meals. Later on, whenever the Superintendent approached them they were required to raise their hands as a Muslim does in prayer with the greeting—"Sarkar is one." This

immoral rule interfering with the fundamental principles of Islam, Rahmat Rasool refused to obey, telling the Superintendent that for him God alone is one and that he ~~can~~ raise his hands in prayer before God alone, when the Superintendent proudly replied that he, as representative of Government, was his God in jail. The prisoner however boldly refused to be led away from the path of religion even when the Jail Committee, including some European members, insisted on his doing as required, with the result that his religiousness was rewarded with the five-fold punishment of thirty stripes, six months' solitary confinement, six months' gunny—clothing, six months' cross-fetters and six months' bar-fetters. This is only one instance of the attitude of the officials here towards the political prisoners, who are all treated as if they were worse than even common criminals. When yesterday we interviewed Mr. Hassanand, a Congress worker in jail, he was allowed only five minutes' talk with us although rules permit 15 minutes.

“It will also be remembered that in July last police had fired on innocent people in Matiari, killing one and wounding several others. The Government Commission report has been pigeon-

holed in Bombay Secretariat and in the meantime the Sub-Inspector who was responsible for that tragedy, now encouraged by absence of any the least punishment for his crime, is now at Kambar behaving like an all-powerful autocrat.

“Recently with a view to recover a fine he entered the house of a convicted and imprisoned non-co-operator and forcibly removed his property from the possession of *purda* ladies occupying the house, including a gold nose-ring which he forcibly snatched from the nose of the convict’s brother’s wife. On a gentleman coming to protect the helpless *pardanishin* women, he also was roughly handled and beaten. Although this gentleman protested that the Sub-Inspector should not enter the house until he had removed the ladies to a secluded room, the police officer paid no heed and did not hesitate to enter the house immediately and approached the unprotected women in his rude and rough manner.”

Neither person nor property, neither man nor woman is safe from the attentions of the Government. Nor is life easy in the jails. Mere custody of the body does not satisfy the requirements of the Government. Tortures and humiliations have also been added.

Thus we have martial law less Jallianwalla Bagh. And this is worse. Jallianwalla Bagh though atrocious was the cleanest demonstration of the Government intentions and it gave us the needed shock. It was an open air transaction. What is now going on is being done inside the cold prison walls or in little unknown villages and therefore has no theatrical value. Our duty therefore clearly is to invite martial law and "no damned nonsense" and evolve the courage to draw the rifle fire not in our backs as in 1919 but in our open and willing breasts and without resentment.

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# Fraught with Danger.

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[This article was written in January, 1922, to warn the non-co-operators that every step towards Civil Disobedience that they would take, should be followed after due consideration of their strength.]

“Jhajjar is a tehsil town in the Rohtak district with a population of about 11,000. It has got a Municipality with 4 nominated and 8 elected members. The president is elected. Yet the Municipality was not sympathetic towards popular activities. Therefore the Local Congress workers, rightly or wrongly, issued a notice upon the Municipality without any permission from the District Congress Committee that if it did not make itself popular within 15th to 22nd January, the Congress Committee will take possession of the Town Hall. The Municipality ignored this notice altogether. On the other hand, the local leading worker Pandit Sriram was charged under section 107, and sent to prison for a year by the D. C. on the 15th January, the

first day of the allotted period. The Pandit unveiled a portrait of the Lokamanya in the Town Hall on that day, for which the D. C. had given previous permission upon an application from the Municipality. After Pandit Sriram's imprisonment the President of the local Congress Committee and the volunteers took possession of the Town Hall on the 16th. A regular guard of volunteers was set up. The volunteers took possession also of the four gates of the town and disturbed the octroi arrangement. As soon as this news reached Rohtak, I started for Jhajjar, for Lala Shyamlal was not present there, having gone to Ferozepur-Jhirka to attend a Congress Committee meeting. The people are even bent on violence. I advised them at night to remain non-violent, which produced some effect. But an influential preacher of non-violence is necessary to convert them. On the 18th night at 8 p.m. some respectable citizens of the town called together the Congress workers and Municipal Commissioners and tried to settle the matter amicably. All the elected members excepting the President, who was absent, and two nominated members of the Municipality, agreed to resign. And it was decided also that the Town



Hall would be under the control of the Congress Committee. However, the matter will be finally settled at noon to-day. The volunteers are still guarding the premises. The people have proclaimed by *Panchayeti* a social boycott of the six witnesses who stood against Pandit Sriram, viz., the Tahsildar, Thandar, Lambardar, and the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Municipal Committee. The Town Hall was erected with public subscription in memory of the late Queen Victoria. For some 5 or 6 years it remained uncared for, but now for the last ten years or so the Municipality has taken charge of the building. If the settlement arrived at the conference of the 18th night is not observed, popular excitement will grow which may, I fear, ultimately lead to violence. The local leaders and volunteers are unbending. I am writing this at 10 a.m. on the 19th. Please guide us as to what to do by wire or by letter to the address at Rohtak."

Thus writes ( the original is in Hindi ) Lala Daulatram Gupta, acting President of Rohtak District Congress Committee. The action of the Congress workers in Jhajjar is audacious and inspiring. But it is fraught with the greatest

danger. It has reached the border line of violence and indiscipline. I can fully appreciate the noble desire of the people to possess their own property. Municipalities are perhaps the greatest fraud palmed off upon India. The Government has hitherto used them for consolidating its power. But where the citizens are united, they can attain the municipal home-rule in a moment. I have not yet described the quiet, orderly and evolutionary revolution that is going on in three big municipalities in the Bombay Presidency, viz., Ahmedabad, Surat and Nadiad. Of that some other time. It is not as yet a completed picture. But Jhajjar will outpace the three municipalities, if it remains steady and absolutely non-violent. Possession of the Town Hall can be retained without any ado, if the citizens of the place are unanimous, it cannot be retained if there is real opposition. Any outbreak of popular violence will be a crime of the first magnitude, because it would be wanton and unprovoked. India, in the language of Maulana Abul Kalam, is the greatest Gurdwara; it is the largest Town Hall. And if we have not yet succeeded in possessing it, we may wait for the occupation of the Town Hall of Jhajjar. The

Congress officers *must* surrender it, (1) if there is the slightest fear of violence, (2) if the elected members oppose the act of occupation, (3) if the Committee at Rohtak, or failing that, the Committee at Lahore vetoes the occupation, (4) if the Police demand it at the point of the bayonet, unless the occupiers are prepared to die at their post without retaliation or resentment, and if the other citizens are certain not to get excited, impatient and violent.

The occupation appears to me to be a hasty act, but if it can be defended non-violently, the defect can be cured.

There is no harm in surrender. We shall gain strength by retracing every false or hasty step. What may have been taken wrongly, must be given up, and can be retaken by methodical work. In the case of Jhajjar, if the Town Hall has to be surrendered, it can be retaken by the elected members, who are in a majority, passing a resolution giving the use to the Congress Committee. If the elected members will not do so, the electors may, by a requisition, call upon the elected members to give effect to their views.

Social boycott of the witnesses who gave

evidence against Pandit Sri Ram is clearly a mistake and will defeat its own end. We must not resort to social boycott of our opponents. It amounts to coercion. Claiming the right of free opinion and free action as we do, we must extend the same to others. The rule of majority when it becomes coercive, is as intolerable as that of a bureaucratic minority. We must patiently try to bring round the minority to our view by gentle persuasion and argument. Having been trained only to do things by order and under fear of punishment, we are likely, in the consciousness of strength we are daily acquiring, to repeat the mistakes of the rulers in an exaggerated form in our relations with those, who may happen to be weaker than we are. That will be a worse state than the first.

I am aware that, by discussing Lala Daulatram Gupta's letter publicly, I am exposing the actors in the little drama in Jhajjar to misrepresentation and risk. The authorities can easily distort and exaggerate the facts related, as they are often prone to do. But as the matter is of great importance, and as the workers have exposed themselves to greater risks than I can possibly expose them to, I have felt it my duty

publicly to discuss the pros and cons of the act of occupation which, though fraught with danger, commands one's admiration for its bravery. Non-co-operators have burnt their boats. They have no secrets. But correspondents who wish to write in confidence are welcome to do so. I shall respect their confidence. But as all my work is done in open daylight, and as my post passes through the hands of many helpers, I would like to discountenance confidential correspondence as much as possible. Though the Government, be it said to their credit, have generally not tampered with my correspondence, the correspondents must note that like all correspondence mine is equally at their mercy.

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## Poles Asunder.

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[ The attitude of the Government and its supporters was radically in opposition to the Congress demands. There was, therefore, no other alternative left for the Congress than launching the Non-Co-operation movement; the reasons thereof were clearly explained in this article which was written in January 1922.]

The debate in the Assembly and the Council of State affords the clearest possible justification for my distrust of the Government and therefore any round table conference at the present moment. The Government supporters consider the Congress demands to be impossible and repression to be the only way possible to put down non-co-operation. If I believed the Congress demands to be impossible and the use of force to be justifiable for putting down the pursuit of impossible ideals, I should also vote with the Government. I have, therefore, no difficulty about understanding and even appre-

ciating the attitude of the Government and its supporters.

But I oppose the Government and thoroughly distrust it, because I so thoroughly understand its attitude. India can never attain freedom by going along the route the Government will take her.

Let us see.

Why is the Khilafat demand impossible? All that the Congress asks in effect is that the Government of India and the Imperial Government, if they wish to retain the people's co-operation, should, work with them in getting the demands fulfilled. They should, therefore, perform that part of the obligation which rests with them, and vigorously prosecute the rest as if it was their own grievance. What will the Imperial Government do if France were to attempt to deprive England of Dover, and India were secretly to help France or openly to show indifference or hostility to England's struggle to retain Dover? Can Indians be expected to sit idle when the Khilafat is vivisected?

What is impossible about the Punjab demand? Why do they talk about the legalities of the case? If they take care of the moralities, legalities will take care of themselves. As a boy I learnt

a legal maxim that where there is a conflict between Law and Equity, the latter should prevail. It is not with me a copy-book maxim. But I am told it is immoral to ask for the deprivation of a pension, which is but deferred pay. Why has Sardar Gauharsingh been deprived of his "deferred pay" and why are the other pensioners threatened if they should take part in the present agitation? Does a servant who vilifies his employer receive pay or pension? Have Sir Michael O'Dwyer or General Dyer ever admitted their 'error of judgment'? Why should the children of the murdered men of Jallianwalla Baugh, or the men who were brutally flogged or made to crawl, although they had done no wrong, pay those who were responsible for these barbarities? I do not know a single principle of ethics, save that of might, that can justify the continuation of pensions to servants who are unrepentant. The viewpoints of the two parties are so different that what appears to be just and moral to the one, appears unjust and immoral to the other. I venture to claim that in asking for the stoppage of pensions, the Congress is just without being vindictive. It waives prosecution or impeachment. It



waives penalties. It merely refuses still further to participate in the wrong by continuing to give pensions. The truth is that the Government still considers the two offenders to be distinguished servants of the Crown. *That* attitude has to be changed before a repetition of the Punjab becomes impossible.

As with the Punjab so with Swaraj. It appears to the Government impossible to return to India what is hers. Reforms by instalments is the motto. The underlying idea is not to give anything unless it is absolutely necessary. The differences are so great that I dread to think of Swaraj before the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs are put away. They seem so simple in the statement. But they are as difficult as Swaraj because their redress means obedience to India's will.

This is all cold logic. There is nothing impossible about the demands. The impossibility consists in the unwillingness of the power-holders to part with the power that should never have been theirs.

Why should there be repression at all if only the Government will do their duty? Assume that violence is a certainty if mass civil disobedience

dience is precipitated. Are the people to be balked of their rights for fear of violence ? It does not strike the co-operators that they uphold injustice and add insult to it, when they accuse civil resisters of precipitating a crisis. The Government are deliberately inviting a crisis. They are precipitating violence by removing every one who has any influence over the people and who can keep them non-violent. Co-operators do not see that the action of the Government is like that of a man, who refuses to give food to a hungry man and then threatens to shoot him whilst he is attempting to help himself.

In the midst of an enervating atmosphere such as ours, the duty before non-co-operators is clear. They must keep exemplary patience. They must not be goaded into precipitate action. They must refuse battle where they are not ready. It is no business of the Government to keep us non-violent or to help us to remain so. Even their method of restraining violence is exasperatingly violent. In one respect, however, we must feel thankful to them, for their protest and criticism amount to nothing but this, that we do not know how to practise our creed and

that we are incompetent to inflict successful violence, even if we would. Let us admit both these arguments. We must be true to our creed. Then it is common cause that the Government must lay down arms. And let those who do not believe in the creed at least see that *India is neither ready nor willing to meet violence with violence*. I wish those who believe in the necessity of violence for India's freedom will realise the truth of my positions. They must not think that because *they* are ready and willing to do violence, India is likewise ready or willing. I claim that India is unready, *not* because she is helpless *but* because she is unwilling. Therefore non-violence is unexpectedly succeeding, whereas violence, in spite of the vaunted talk of human nature, would have failed. India's past training for ages, I mean the training of the masses, has been against violence. Human nature in India has advanced so far that the doctrine of non-violence is more natural for the people at large than that of violence. Let us also remember that the experiences of Bombay and Madras prove my proposition. If the people of India were violent by nature, there was enough in

Bombay and Madras to give rise to an unquenchable conflagration. A little violence like dirt is enough to disturb or soil a peaceful or clean surface, but either being a foreign addition is soon removed. To train India for violence and thus to wrest Swaraj by violence is a work of ages. I verily believe that this wonderful manifestation of energy and national consciousness is purely and simply due to the advent of non-violence. People have come to their own. Let no hasty action arrest its progress.

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## Bardoli's Decision.

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[ This article was written on the 30th of January, 1922, to give a detailed outline of the form of Civil Disobedience which was decided to be adopted at Bardoli in the early part of the following month.]

Bardoli has come to a momentous decision. It has made its final and irrevocable choice. Vithalbhai Patel, the President, addressed a conference of the representatives of the Taluka in a speech impressive for its warning. He certainly did not mince matters. There was an audience of *khaddar*-clad representatives numbering 4,000. There were five hundred women, a large majority of whom were also in *khaddar*. They were interested and interesting listeners. It was an audience of sober, responsible men and women with a stake.

I followed Vithalbhai and went through every one of the conditions of mass civil disobedience laid down by the Congress. I took the sense of

the meeting on every one of the conditions, separately. They understood the implications of Hindu-Muslim-Parsi-Christian unity. They realised the significance and the truth of non-violence. They saw what the removal of untouchability meant; they were prepared, not merely to take into National Schools, but to induce 'untouchable' children to join them; they have had no objection to the 'untouchable' drawing water from the village wells. They knew that they were to nurse the 'untouchable' sick as they would nurse their ailing neighbours. They knew that they could not exercise the privilege of non-payment of revenue and other forms of civil disobedience until they had purified themselves in the manner described by me. They knew too, that they had to become industrious and spin their own yarn and weave their own *khaddar*. And lastly, they were ready to face forfeiture of their movables, their cattle and their land. They were ready to face imprisonment and even death, if necessary, and they would do all this without resentment.

There was an old dissentient voice on the question of untouchability. He said, what I said was right in theory, but it was difficult in

practice to break down the custom all of a sudden. I drove the point home but the audience had made up its mind.

Before the larger meeting, I had met the real workers about fifty in number. Before that meeting Vithalbhai Patel, some workers and I conferred together and felt that we would pass a resolution postponing the decision for about a fortnight, to make the Swadeshi preparation more complete and removal of untouchability more certain, by actually having untouchable children in all the sixty National Schools. The brave and earnest workers of Bardoli will not listen to the postponement. They were certain that more than 50 per cent of the Hindu population were quite ready about untouchability and they were sure of being able to manufacture enough *khaddar* for their future wants. They were bent on trying conclusions with the Government. They bore down every objection raised by Vithalbhai Patel, and Abbas Tyabji, with his hoary beard and ever smiling face, was there to utter the warning. But they would not budge an inch from their position and so the resolution which I give below was unanimously passed.

“After having fully understood and considered

the conditions as essential for the starting of mass civil disobedience, this Conference of the inhabitants of the Bardoli Taluka resolves that this Taluka is fit for mass civil disobedience.

This Conference is of opinion :—

(a) That for the redress of India's grievances, unity among Hindus, Mahomedans, Paris, Christians and other communities of India is absolutely necessary.

(b) That non-violence, patience and endurance are the only remedy for the redress of the said grievances.

(c) That the use of the spinning wheel in every home, and the adoption of hand-spun and hand-woven garments to the exclusion of all other cloth by every individual are indispensable for India's freedom.

(d) That Swaraj is impossible without complete removal of untouchability by the Hindus.

(e) That for the people's progress and for the attainment of freedom, readiness to sacrifice movable and immovable property, to suffer imprisonment and, if necessary, to lay down one's life, is indispensable.

"This Conference hopes that the Bardoli Taluka will have the privilege to be the first for



the aforesaid sacrifices, and this Conference hereby respectfully informs the Working Committee that unless the Working Committee otherwise decides or unless proposed Round Table Conference is held, this Taluka will immediately commence mass civil disobedience under the advice and guidance of Mr. Gandhi and the President of the Conference.

"This Conference recommends that those taxpayers of the Taluka who are ready and willing to abide by the conditions laid down by the Congress for mass civil disobedience, will refrain, till further instruction, from paying land revenue and other taxes due to the Government."

Who knows the issue? Who knows whether the men and women of Bardoli will stand the repression that the Government may resort to? God only knows. In His name has the battle been undertaken. He must finish it.

The Government have acted hitherto in a most exemplary manner. They might have prohibited the Conference. They did not. They know the workers. They would have removed them long ago. They have not done so. They have not interfered with any of the activities of the people. They have permitted them to make

all preparations. I have watched their conduct with wonder and admiration. Both sides have up to the time of writing behaved in a manner worthy of chivalrous warriors of old. In this battle of peace it ought not to be otherwise. If the battle continues in this fashion, it will end only in one way. Whoever has the ear of 85000 men and women of Bardoli will gain the day.

The Working Committee has to sit and pass its judgment upon Bardoli's decision. The Viceroy has still choice and will have yet another choice given to him. No charge of hurry, want of preparation or thought, no charge of discourtesy will it be possible to bring against the people of Bardoli.

Therefore,

Lead kindly Light, amid the encircling  
gloom,

Lead Thou me on ;

The night is dark, and I am far from home ;

Lead Thou me on.

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# Mr. Gandhi's Letter to the Viceroy.

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[ This letter was written in February, 1922, when Bardoli had finally decided to embark on mass civil disobedience ].

To

HIS EXCELLENCY,  
THE VICEROY  
DELHI.

Sir,

Bardoli is a small *tehsil* in the Surat District in the Bombay Presidency, having a population of about 87,000 all told.

On the 29th ultimo it decided under the presidency of Mr. Vithalbhai Patel to embark on mass civil disobedience, having proved its fitness for it in terms of the resolution of the All-India Congress Committee which met at Delhi during the first week of November last. But as I am perhaps chiefly responsible for Bardoli's decision, I owe it to your Excellency

and the public to explain the situation under which the decision has been taken.

It was intended under the resolution of the All-India Congress Committee, before referred to, to make Bardoli the first unit for mass civil disobedience in order to mark the national revolt against the Government for its consistently criminal refusal to appreciate India's resolve regarding the Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj.

Then followed the unfortunate and regrettable rioting on the 17th November last in Bombay, resulting in the postponement of the step contemplated by Bardoli.

Meanwhile repression of a virulent type has taken place with concurrence of the Government of India in Bengal, Assam, the United Provinces, the Punjab, the Province of Delhi and in a way in Bihar and Orissa and elsewhere. I know that you have objected to the use of the word "repression" for describing the action of the authorities in these provinces. In my opinion when action is taken which is in excess of the requirements of a situation, it is undoubtedly repression. The looting of property, assaults on innocent people, the brutal treatment of

prisoners in the jails including flogging can in no sense, be described as legal, civilized or in any way necessary. This official lawlessness cannot be described by any other term but lawless repression. Intimidation by non-co-operators or their sympathisers to a certain extent in connection with *hartals* and picketing may be admitted but in no case can it be held to justify the wholesale suppression of peaceful volunteering or equally peaceful public meetings under a distorted use of an extraordinary law which was passed in order to deal with activities which were manifestly violent both in intention and action, nor is it possible to designate as otherwise than repression, action taken against innocent people under what has appeared to many of us an illegal use of the ordinary law, nor again can the administrative interference with the liberty of the press under a law that is under promise of repeal be regarded as anything but repression,

The immediate task before the country, therefore, is to rescue from paralysis freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of the press. In the present mood of the Government of India and in the present unprepared state of the country in respect of

complete control of the forces of violence. non-co-operators were unwilling to have anything to do with the Malaviya Conference whose object was to induce Your Excellency to convene a Round Table Conference. But as I was anxious to avoid all avoidable suffering, I had no hesitation in advising the Working Committee of the Congress to accept the recommendations of that Conference. Although in my opinion the terms were quite in keeping with your own requirements as I understood them through your Calcutta speech and otherwise, you have summarily rejected the proposal.

In the circumstances, there is nothing before the country but to adopt some non-violent method for the enforcement of its demands including the elementary rights of free speech, free association and free press. In my humble opinion the recent events are a clear departure from the civilized policy laid down by Your Excellency at the time of the generous, manly and unconditional apology of the Ali Brothers viz., that the Government of India should not interfere with the activities of non-co-operation so long as they remained non-violent in word and deed. Had the Government's policy remained

neutral and allowed public opinion to ripen and have its full effect, it would have been possible to advise postponement of the adoption of civil disobedience of an aggressive type till the Congress had acquired fuller control over the forces of violence in the country and enforced greater discipline among the millions of its adherents. But this lawless repression (in a way unparalleled in the history of this unfortunate country) has made the immediate adoption of mass civil disobedience an imperative duty. The Working Committee of the Congress has restricted it to only certain areas to be selected by me from time and time, and at present it is confined only to Bardoli. I may, under said authority, give my consent at once in respect of a group of 100 villages in Gujurat in the Madras Presidency, provided they can strictly conform to the conditions of non-violence, unity among different classes, the adoption and manufacture of hand-spun *khadi* and untouchability.

But before the people of Bardoli actually commence mass civil disobedience, I would respectfully urge you as the head of the Government of India, finally to revise your policy and set free all the non-co-operating prisoners who

are convicted or under trial for non-violent activities and to declare in clear terms a policy of absolute non-interference with all non-violent activities in the country whether they be regarding the redress of the Khilafat or the Punjab wrongs or Swaraj or any other purpose and even though they fall under the repressive sections of the Penal Code or the Criminal Procedure Code or other repressive laws subject always to the condition of non-violence. I would further urge you to free the Press from all administrative control and to restore all the fines and forfeitures recently imposed. In thus urging I am asking Your Excellency to do what is being done to-day in every country which is deemed to be under civilized Government. If you can see your way to make the necessary declaration within seven days of the date of publication of this manifesto, I shall be prepared to advise postponement of civil disobedience of an aggressive character, till the imprisoned workers have, after their discharge, reviewed the whole situation and considered the position *de novo*. If the Government make the requested declaration I shall regard it as an honest desire on its part to give effect to public opinion and shall therefore have



no hesitation in advising the country to be engaged in further moulding public opinion without violent restraint from either side and trust to its working to secure the fulfilment of its unalterable demands. Aggressive civil disobedience in that case will be taken up only when the Government departs from its policy of strictest neutrality or refuses to yield to clearly expressed opinion of the vast majority of the people of India.

I remain,  
Your Excellency's faithful  
servant and friend,  
M. K. GANDHI.

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## The Only Issue.



[ This article was written to explain why Mr. Gandhi wrote the letter to the Viceroy. ]

It was not without deep thought and prayer that I wrote the letter to His Excellency the Viceroy. It is not a threat because every word in it is meant. It is a heartfelt prayer to the tyrant to desist from evil. Lord Reading is not the tyrant. The system of which he is himself an unconscious and helpless victim is the tyrant. But every system becomes embodied in a person. Today it is personified in Lord Reading, no matter how unconscious he is of it. I have invited him in all humility seriously to consider the position and ask himself whether the official lawlessness can in any case be justified. Let him turn to the week's summary to which the old heading "In Cold Blood" is restored. It is all true if the witnesses are not all liars. Should these things be?

But what of defiance of authority? Must

defiance (non-violent at least) indeed of authority be met by barbarous and wicked abuse of it ?

If the Viceroy cannot or will not see such an incredibly simple issue must India sit still ? Defensive civil disobedience *must* continue at any cost. If the whole of India were to say that even peaceful public meetings may not be held without permission, that peaceful volunteer associations may not be formed without permission and that newspapers cannot be published without permission, that prohibition cannot be accepted. For a man may not be expected to ask for another's leave to breathe or eat or drink. The three things I have mentioned are the breath, the food and the drink of public life.

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# The Crime of Chauri Chaura

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[ The tragedy at Chauri Chaura led Mr. Gandhi to abandon the idea of launching mass civil disobedience sine die. His reasons thereof are beautifully put in this article which was written in the middle of February, 1922, 'when this postponement after final decision produced a keen sense of disappointment in the hearts of the national workers. ]

God has been abundantly kind to me. He has warned me the third time that there is not as yet in India that truthful and non-violent atmosphere which and which alone can justify mass disobedience which can be at all described as civil which means gentle, truthful, humble, knowing, wilful yet loving, never criminal and hateful.

He warned me in 1919 when the Rowlatt Act agitation was started. Ahmedabad, Viramgam, and Kheda erred ; Amritsar and Kasur erred. I retraced my steps, called it a Himalayan misal-

culatation, humbled myself before God and man, and stopped not merely mass civil disobedience but even my own which I knew was intended to be civil and non-violent.

The next time it was through the events of Bombay that God gave a terrific warning. He made me eyewitness of the deeds of the Bombay mob on the 27th November. The mob acted in in the interest of non-co-operation. I announced my intention to stop the mass civil disobedience which was to be immediately started in Bardoli. The humiliation was greater than in 1919. But it did me good. I am sure that the nation gained by the stopping. India stood for truth and non-violence by the suspension.

But the bitterest humliliation was still to come. Madras did give the warning, but I heeded it not. But God spoke clearly through Chauri Chaura. I understand that the constables who were so brutally hacked to death had given much provocation. They had even gone back upon the word just given by the Inspector that they would not be molested, but when the procession had passed the stragglers were interfered with and abused by the constables. The former cried out for help. The mob returned.

The constables opened fire. The little ammunition they had was exhausted and they retired to the Thana for safety. The mob, my informant tells me, therefore set fire to the Thana. The self imprisoned constables had to come out for dear life and as they did so, they were hacked to pieces and the mangled remains were thrown into the raging flames.

It is claimed that no non-co-operation volunteer had a hand in the brutality and that the mob had not only the immediate provocation but they had also general knowledge of the high-handed tyranny of the police in that district. No provocation can possibly justify the brutal murder of men who had been rendered defenceless and who had virtually thrown themselves on the mercy of the mob. And when India claims to be non-violent and hopes to mount the throne of Liberty through non-violent means, mob-violence even in answer to grave provocation is a bad augury. Suppose the 'non-violent' disobedience of Bardoli was permitted by God to succeed, the Government had abdicated in favour of the victors of Bardoli, who would control the unruly element that must be expected to perpetrate inhumanity upon due provocation?

Non-violent attainment of self-government presupposes a non-violent control over the violent elements in the country. Non-violent non-co-operators can only succeed when they have succeeded in attaining control over the hooligans of India, in other words, when the latter also have learnt patriotically or religiously to refrain from their violent activities, at least whilst the campaign of non-co-operation is going on. The tragedy at Chauri Chaura, therefore, roused me thoroughly.

‘ But what about your manifesto to the Viceroy and your rejoinder to his reply ?’ spoke the voice of Satan. It was the bitterest cup of humiliation to drink. ‘ Surely it is cowardly to withdraw the next day after pompous threats to the Government and promises to the people of Bardoli.’ Thus Satan’s invitation was to deny Truth and therefore Religion, to deny God Himself. I put my doubts and troubles before the Working Committee and other associates whom I found near me. They did not all agree with me at first. Some of them probably do not even now agree with me. But never has a man been blessed, perhaps, with colleagues and associates, so considerate and forgiving as I have. They

understood my difficulty and patiently followed my argument. The result is before the public in the shape of the resolutions of the Working Committee. The drastic reversal of practically the whole of the aggressive programme may be politically unsound and unwise, but there is no doubt that it is religiously sound, and I venture to assure the doubters that the country will have gained by my humiliation and confession of error.

The only virtue I want to claim is Truth and Non-violence. I lay no claim to superhuman powers. I want none. I wear the same corruptible flesh that the weakest of my fellow beings wears and am therefore as liable to err as any. My services have many limitations, but God has upto now blessed them in spite of the imperfections.

For, confession of error is like a broom that sweeps away dirt and leaves the surface cleaner than before. I feel stronger for my confession. And the cause must prosper for the retracing. Never has man reached his destination by persistence in deviation from the straight path.

It has been urged that Chauri Chaura cannot



affect Bardoli. There is danger, it is argued, only if Bardoli is weak enough to be swayed by Chauri Chaura and is betrayed into violence. I have no doubt whatsoever on that account. The people of Bardoli are in my opinion the most peaceful in India. But Bardoli is but a speck on the map of India. Its effort cannot succeed unless there is perfect non-co-operation from the other parts. Bardoli's disobedience will be civil only when the other parts of India remain non-violent. Just as the addition of a grain of arsenic to a pot of milk renders it unfit as food so will the civility of Bardoli prove unacceptable by the addition of the deadly poison from Chauri Chaura. The latter represents India as much as Bardoli.

Chauri Chaura is after all an aggravated symptom. I have never imagined that there has been no violence, mental or physical, in the places where repression is going on. Only I have believed, I still believe and the pages of *Young India* amply prove, that the repression is out of all proportion to the insignificant popular violence in the areas of repression. The determined holding of meetings in prohibited areas I do not call violence. The violence I am refer-

ring to is the throwing of brickbats or intimidation and coercion practised in stray cases. As a matter of fact in civil disobedience there should be no excitement. Civil disobedience is a preparation for mute suffering. Its effect is marvellous though unperceived and gentle. But I regarded certain amount of excitement as inevitable, certain amount of unintended violence even pardonable, i. e. I did not consider civil disobedience impossible in somewhat imperfect conditions. Under perfect conditions disobedience when civil is hardly felt. But the present movement is admittedly a dangerous experiment under fairly adverse conditions.

The tragedy of Chauri Chaura is really the index finger. It shows the way India may easily go, if drastic precautions be not taken. If we are not to evolve violence out of non-violence, it is quite clear that we must hastily retrace our steps and re-establish an atmosphere of peace, re-arrange our programme and not think of starting mass civil disobedience until we are sure of peace being retained inspite of mass civil disobedience being started and inspite of Government provocation. We must be sure of unauthorised portions not starting mass civil disobedience.