



GUJARAT POLITICAL CONFERENCE

The following is an English translation of Mr. Gandhi's Presidential Address to the First Gujarat Political Conference held at Godhra, on November 3, 1917.

Brothers and Sisters, I am thankful to you all for the exalted position to which you have called me. I am but a baby of two years and a half in Indian politics. I cannot trade, here, on my experience in South Africa. I know that acceptance of the position is to a certain extent an impertinence. And yet I have been unable to resist the pressure your over-whelming affection has exerted upon me.

I am conscious of my responsibility. This Conference is the first of its kind in Gujarat. The time is most critical for the whole of India. The empire is labouring under a strain never before experienced. My views do not quite take the general course. I feel that some of them run in the opposite direction. Under the circumstances, I can hardly claim this privileged position. The president of a meeting is usually its spokesman. I cannot pretend to lay any such claim. It is your kindness that gives me such a unique opportunity of placing my thoughts before the Gujarat public. I do not see anything wrong in these views being subjected to criticism, dissent, and even emphatic protest. I would like them to be freely discussed. I will only say with regard to them that they were not formed to-day or yesterday. But they were formed years ago. I am enamoured of them, and my Indian experience of two years and a half has not altered them.



I congratulate the originators of the proposal to hold this Conference as also those friends who have reduced it to practice. It is a most important event for Gujarat. It is possible for us to make it yield most important results. This conference is in the nature of a foundation, and if it is well and truly laid, we need have no anxiety as to the superstructure. Being the first progenitor, its responsibility is great. I pray that God will bless us with wisdom and that our deliberations will benefit the people.

This is a political conference. Let us pause a moment over the word 'political.' It is, as a rule, used in a restricted sense, but I believe it is better to give it a wider meaning. If the work of such a conference were to be confined to a consideration of the relations between the rulers and the ruled, it would not only be incomplete, but we should even fail to have an adequate conception of those relations. For instance the question of Mhowra flowers is of great importance for a part of Gujarat. If it is considered merely as a question between the Government and the people, it might lead to an untoward end, or even to one never desired by us. If we considered the genesis of the law on Mhowra flowers and also appreciated our duty in the matter, we would, very probably, succeed sooner in our fight with Government than otherwise, and we would easily discover the key to successful agitation. You will more clearly perceive my interpretation of the word 'political' in the light of the views now being laid before you.

Conferences do not, as a rule, after the end of their deliberations, appear to leave behind them an executive body, and even when such a body is appointed, it is, to use the language of the late Mr. Gokhale, composed of



men who are amateurs. What is wanted in order to give effect to the resolutions of such conferences is men who would make it their business to do so. If such men come forward in great numbers, then and then only will such conferences be a credit to the country and produce lasting results. At present there is much waste of energy. It is desirable that there were many institutions of the type of the Servants of India Society. Only when men fired with the belief that service is the highest religion, come forward in great numbers, only then could we hope to see great results. Fortunately, the religious spirit still binds India, and if during the present age the service of the motherland becomes the end of religion, men and women of religion in large numbers would take part in our public life. When sages and saints take up this work, India will easily achieve her cherished aims. At all events it is incumbent on us that for the purposes of this conference we formed an executive committee whose business, it would be, to enforce its resolutions.

The sound of Swaraj pervades the Indian air. It is due to Mrs. Besant that Swaraj is on the lips of hundreds of thousands of men and women. What was unknown to men and women only two years ago, has, by her consummate tact and her indefatigable efforts, become common property for them. There cannot be the slightest doubt that her name will take the first rank in history among those who inspired us with the hope that Swaraj was attainable at no distant date. Swaraj was, and is, the goal of the Congress. The idea did not originate with her. But the credit of presenting it to us as an easily attainable goal belongs to that lady alone. For that we could hardly thank



her enough. By releasing her and her associates, Messrs. Arundale and Wadia, Government have laid us under an obligation, and at the same time acknowledged the just and reasonable nature of the agitation for Swaraj. It is desirable that Government should extend the same generosity towards our brothers, Mahomed Ali and Shaukat Ali. It is no use discussing the appositeness or otherwise of what Sir William Vincent has said about them. It is to be hoped that the Government will accede to the peoples' desire for their release and thus make them responsible for any improper result that might flow from their release. Such clemency will make them all the more grateful to the Government. The act of generosity will be incomplete so long as these brothers are not released. The grant of freedom to the brothers will gladden the peoples' hearts and endear the Government to them.

Mr. Montagu will shortly be in our midst. The work of taking signatures to the petition to be submitted to him is going on apace. The chief object of this petition is to educate the people about Swaraj. To say that a knowledge of letters is essential to obtain Swaraj betrays ignorance of history. A knowledge of letters is not necessary to inculcate among people the idea that we ought to manage our own affairs. What is essential is the grasp of such an idea. People have to desire Swaraj. Hundreds of unlettered kings have ruled kingdoms in an effective manner. To see how far such an idea exists in the minds of the people and to try to create it where it is absent, is the object of this petition. It is desirable that millions of men and women should sign it intelligently. That such a largely signed petition will have its due weight with Mr. Montagu is its natural result.



No one has the right to alter the scheme of reforms approved by the Congress and the Moslem League, and one need not, therefore, go into the merits thereof. For our present purposes, we have to understand thoroughly the scheme formulated most thoughtfully by our leaders and to faithfully do the things necessary to get it accepted and enforced.

This scheme is not Swaraj, but is a great step towards Swaraj. Some English critics tell us that we have no right to enjoy Swaraj, because the class that demands it is incapable of defending India. "Is the defence of India to rest with the English alone," they ask, "and are the reins of Government to be in the hands of the Indians? Now this is a question which excites both laughter and sorrow. It is laughable, because our English friends fancy that they are not of us, whilst our plan of Swaraj is based upon retention of the British connection. We do not expect the English settlers to leave this country. They will be our partners in Swaraj. And they need not grumble if in such a scheme the burden of the defence of the country falls on them. They are, however, hasty in assuming that we shall not do our share of defending the country. When India decides upon qualifying herself for the act of soldiering, she will attain to it in no time. We have but to harden our feelings to be able to strike. To cultivate a hardened feeling does not take ages. It grows like weeds. The question has also its tragic side, because it puts us in mind of the fact that Government have up to now debarred us from military training. Had they been so minded they would have had at their disposal to-day, from among the educated classes, an army of trained soldiers. Government have to



accept a larger measure of blame than the educated classes for the latter having taken little part in the war. Had the Government policy been shaped differently from the very commencement, they would have to-day an unconquerable army. But let no one be blamed for the present situation. At the time British rule was established, it was considered to be a wise policy for the governance of crores of men to deprive them of arms and military training. But it is never too late to mend, and both the rulers and the ruled must immediately repair the omission.

In offering these views I have assumed the propriety of the current trend of thought. To me, however, it does not appear to be tending altogether in the right direction. Our agitation is based on the Western model. The Swaraj we desire is of a Western type. As a result of it, India will have to enter into competition with the Western nations. Many believe that there is no escape from it. I do not think so. I cannot forget that India is not Europe, India is not Japan, India is not China. The divine word that 'India alone is the land of Karma' (Action), the rest is the land of Bhoga (Enjoyment), is indelibly imprinted on my mind. I feel that India's mission is different from that of the others. India is fitted for the religious supremacy of the world. There is no parallel in the world for the process of purification that this country has voluntarily undergone. India is less in need of steel weapons, it has fought with divine weapons; it can still do so. Other nations have been votaries of brute force. The terrible war going on in Europe furnishes a forcible illustration of the truth. India can win all by soul-force. History supplies numerous instances to prove that brute force is as nothing



before soul-force. Poets have sung about it and Seers have described their experiences. A thirty-year old Hercules behaves like a lamb before his eighty-year old father. This is an instance of love-force. Love is Atman : it is its attribute. If we have faith enough we can wield that force over the whole world. Religion having lost its hold on us, we are without an anchor to keep us firm amidst the storm of modern civilisation, and are therefore being tossed to and fro. Enough, however, of this, for the present. I shall return to it at a later stage.

In spite of my views being as I have just described them, I do not hesitate to take part in the Swaraj movement, for India is being governed in accordance with the Western system and even the Government admit that the British Parliament presents the best type of that system. Without parliamentary government, we should be nowhere. Mrs. Besant is only too true when she says that we shall soon be facing a hunger-strike, if we do not have Home Rule. I do not want to go into statistics. The evidence of my eyes is enough for me. Poverty in India is deepening day by day. No other result is possible. A country that exports its raw produce and imports it after it has undergone manufacturing processes, a country that in spite of growing its own cotton, has to pay crores of rupees for its imported cloth, cannot be otherwise than poor. It can only be said of a poor country that its people are spend-thrifts, because they ungrudgingly spend money in marriage and such other ceremonies. It must be a terribly poor country that cannot afford to spend enough in carrying out improvements for stamping out epidemics like the plague. The poverty of a country must contin-



uously grow when the salaries of its highly paid officials are spent outside it. Surely it must be India's keen poverty that compels its people, during cold weather for want of woollen clothing, to burn their precious manure, in order to warm themselves. Throughout my wanderings in India I have rarely seen a buoyant face. The middle classes are groaning under the weight of awful distress. For the lowest order there is no hope. They do not know a bright day. It is a pure fiction to say that India's riches are buried under ground, or are to be found in her ornaments. What there is of such riches is of no consequence. The nation's expenditure has increased, not so its income. Government have not deliberately brought about this state of things. I believe that their intentions are pure. It is their honest opinion that the nation's prosperity is daily growing. Their faith in their Blue Books is immovable. It is only too true that statistics can be made to prove anything. The economists deduce India's prosperity from statistics. People like me who appreciate the popular way of examining figures shake their heads over bluebook statistics. If the gods were to come down and testify otherwise, I would insist on saying that I see India growing poorer.

What then would our Parliament do? When we have it, we would have a right to commit blunders and to correct them. In the early stages we are bound to make blunders. But we being children of the soil, won't lose time in setting ourselves right. We shall, therefore, soon find out remedies against poverty. Then our existence won't be dependent on Lancashire goods. Then we shall not be found spending untold riches on Imperial Delhi. It will, then, bear some



correspondence to the peasant cottage. There will be some proportion observed between that cottage and our Parliament House. *The nation to-day is in a helpless condition, it does not possess even the right to err. He who has no right to err can never go forward.* The history of the Commons is a history of blunders. Man, says an Arabian proverb, is error personified. *Freedom to err and the duty of correcting errors is one definition of Swaraj.* And such Swaraj lies in Parliament. That Parliament we need to-day. We are fitted for it to-day. We shall, therefore, get it on demand. It rests with us to define 'to-day'. Swaraj is not to be attained through an appeal to the British democracy. The English nation cannot appreciate such an appeal. Its reply will be:—"We never sought outside help to obtain Swaraj. We have received it through our own ability. You have not received it, because you are unfit. When you are fit for it, nobody can withhold it from you." How then shall we fit ourselves for it? We have to demand Swaraj from our own democracy. Our appeal must be to it. When the peasantry of India understand what Swaraj is, the demand will become irresistible. The late Sir W.W. Hunter used to say that in the British system, victory on the battlefield was the shortest cut to success. If educated India could have taken its full share in the war, I am certain that we would not only have reached our goal already, but the manner of the grant would have been altogether unique. We often refer to the fact that many sepoys of Hindustan have lost their lives on the battle-fields of France and Mesopotamia. It is not possible for the educated classes to claim the credit for this event. It is not patriotism that had prompted those sepoys to go to



the battlefield. They know nothing of Swaraj. At the end of the war they will not ask for it. They have gone to demonstrate that they are faithful to the salt they eat. In asking for Swaraj, I feel that it is not possible for us to bring into account their services. The only thing we can say is that we may not be considered blameworthy for our inability to take a large active part in the prosecution of the war.

That we have been loyal at a time of stress is no test of fitness for Swaraj. Loyalty is no merit. It is a necessity of citizenship all the world over. That loyalty can be no passport to Swaraj is a self-demonstrated maxim. Our fitness lies in that we now keenly desire Swaraj, and in the conviction we have reached that bureaucracy, although it has served India with pure intentions, has had its day. And this kind of fitness is sufficient for our purpose. Without Swaraj there is now no possibility of peace in India.

But if we confine our activities for advancing Swaraj only to holding meetings, the nation is likely to suffer harm. Meetings and speeches have their own place and time. *But they cannot make a Nation.*

In a nation fired with Swaraj-zeal we shall observe an awakening in all departments of life. The first step to Swaraj lies in the Individual. The great truth, 'As with the Individual so with the Universe,' is applicable here as elsewhere. If we are ever torn by conflict from within, if we are ever going astray, and if instead of ruling our passions we allow them to rule us, Swaraj can have no meaning for us. Government of self, then, is primary education in the school of Swaraj.

Then the Family. If dissensions reign supreme in our families, if brothers fight among themselves, if joint



families, *i.e.*, families enjoying Self-government, become divided through family quarrels, and if we are unfit even for such restricted Swaraj, how can we be considered fit for the larger Swaraj ?

Now for the Caste. If caste-fellows become jealous of one another, if the castes cannot regulate their affairs in an orderly manner, if the elders want to usurp power, if the members become self-opinionated and thus show their unfitness for tribal Self-government, how can they be fit for national Self-government ?

After caste the City Life. If we cannot regulate the affairs of our cities, if our streets are not kept clean, if our homes are dilapidated and if our roads are crooked, if we cannot command the services of selfless citizens for civic government, and those who are in charge of affairs are neglectful or selfish, how shall we claim larger powers ? The way to national life lies through the cities. It is, therefore, necessary to linger a little longer on civic government.

The plague has found a home in India. Cholera has been always with us. Malaria takes an annual toll of thousands. The plague has been driven out from every other part of the world. Glasgow drove it out as soon as it entered it. In Johannesburg it could appear but once. Its municipality made a great effort and stamped it out within a month, whereas we are able to produce little impression upon it. We cannot blame the Government for this state of things. In reality we cannot make our poverty answerable for it. None can interfere with us in the prosecution of any remedies that we might wish to adopt. Ahmedabad, for instance, cannot evade responsibility by pleading poverty. I fear that in respect of the plague we must



shoulder the whole responsibility. It is a matter of wonderment that when the plague is working havoc in our rural quarters, cantonments, as a rule, remain free. Reasons for such immunity are obvious. In the cantonments the atmosphere is pure, houses detached, roads are wide and clean, the sanitary habits of the residents are exceptionally sound. Whereas ours are as unhygienic as they well could be. Our closets are pestilentially dirty. Ninety per cent. of our population go barefoot, people spit anywhere, perform natural functions anywhere and are obliged to walk along roads and paths thus dirtied. It is no wonder that the plague has found a home in our midst.

Unless we alter the conditions of our cities, rid ourselves of dirty habits, and reform our castes, Swaraj for us can have no value.

It will not be considered out of place here to refer to the condition of the so-called untouchables. The result of considering the most useful members of society as unworthy of being even touched by us, has been that we let them clean only a part of our closets. In the name of religion we ourselves would not clean the remainder, for fear of pollution, and so, in spite of personal cleanliness, a portion of our houses remains the dirtiest in the world, with the result that we are brought up in an atmosphere which is laden with disease germs. We were safe so long as we kept to our villages. But in the cities we ever commit suicide by reason of our insanitary habits.

Where many die before their death there is every probability that people are devoid of both religion and its practice. I believe that it ought not to be beyond us to banish the plague from India, and if we could do so,



we shall have increased our fitness for Swaraj, as it could not be by agitation, no matter howsoever great. This is a question meriting the serious consideration of our Doctors and Vaidyas.

Our sacred Dakorji is our next door neighbour. I have visited that holy place. Its unholiness is limitless. I consider myself a devout Vaishnavite. I claim, therefore, a special privilege of criticising the condition of Dakorji. The insanitation of that place is so great, that one used to hygienic conditions can hardly bear to pass even twenty-four hours there. The pilgrims are permitted to pollute the tank and the streets as they choose. The keepers of the idol quarrel among themselves, and to add insult to injury, a receiver has been appointed to take charge of the jewellery and costly robes of the idol. It is our clear duty to set this wrong right. How shall we, Gujaratis, bent on attaining Swaraj, discharge ourselves in its army, if we cannot sweep our houses clean?

The inconsideration of the state of education in our cities also fills us with despondency. It is up to us to provide by private effort for the education of the masses. But our gaze is fixed upon Government, whilst our children are starving for want of education.

In the cities the drink-evil is on the increase, tea-shops are multiplying, gambling is rampant. If we cannot remedy these evils how should we attain Swaraj whose meaning is government of ourselves?

We have reached a time when we and our children are likely to be deprived of our milk-supply. Dairies in Gujarat are doing us infinite harm. They buy out practically the whole milk-supply and sell its products, butter, cheese etc., in a wider market. How can a



nation whose nourishment is chiefly derived from milk allow this important article of food to be thus exploited? How can men be heedless of the national health, and think of enriching themselves, by such an improper use of this article of diet? Milk and its products are of such paramount value to the nation that they deserve to be controlled by the municipalities. What are we doing about them?

I have just returned from the scene of Bakr-Id riots. For an insignificant cause, the two communities quarrelled, mischievous men took advantage of it, and a mere spark became a blaze. We were found to be helpless. We have been obliged to depend only upon Government assistance. This is a significant illustration of the condition I am trying to describe.

It will not be inopportune to dwell for a moment on the question of cow-protection. It is an important question. And yet it is entrusted to the so-called cow-protection societies. The protection of cows is an old custom. It has originated in the necessity of the condition of the country. Protection of its cows is incumbent upon a country, 73 per cent. of whose population lives upon agriculture, and uses only bullocks for it. In such a country even meat-eaters should abstain from beef-eating. These natural causes should be enough justification for not killing cows. But here we have to face a peculiar situation. The chief meaning of cow-protection seems to be to prevent cows from going into the hands of our Mussalman brethren, and being used as food. The governing class seem to need beef. In their behalf thousands of cows are slaughtered daily. We take no steps to prevent the slaughter. We hardly make any attempt to prevent the cruel torture of cows by certain



Hindu dairies of Calcutta, which subject them to certain indescribable practices and make them yield the last drop of milk. In Gujarat Hindu drivers use spiked sticks to goad bullocks into action. We say nothing about it. The bullocks of our cities are to be seen in a pitiable condition. Indeed, protection of the cow and her progeny is a very great problem. With us it has degenerated into a pretext for quarrelling with the Mahomedans, and we have thus contributed to a further slaughter of cows. It is not religion, but want of it, to kill a Mahomedan brother who declines to part with his cow. I feel sure that if we were to negotiate with our Mussalman brothers upon a basis of love, they will appreciate the peculiar condition of India and readily co-operate with us in the protection of cows. By courtesy and even by Satyagraha we can engage them in that mission. But in order to be able to do this, we shall have to understand the question in its true bearing. We shall have to prepare rather to die than to kill. But we shall be able to do this only when we understand the real value of the cow and have pure love for her. Many ends will be automatically served in achieving this one end. Hindus and Mahomedans will live in peace, milk and its products will be available in a pure condition and will be cheaper than now, and our bullocks will become the envy of the world. By real *tapasya* it is possible for us to stop cow slaughter whether by the English, Mahomedans or Hindus. This one act will bring Swaraj many a step nearer.

Many of the foregoing problems belong to Municipal Government. We can, therefore, clearly see that *National Government is dependent upon purity of the government of our cities.*



It will not be considered an improper statement to say that the Swadeshi movement is in an insane condition. We do not realise that Swaraj is almost wholly obtainable through Swadeshi. If we have no regard for our respective vernaculars, if we dislike our clothes, if our dress repels us, if we are ashamed to wear the sacred *Shikha*, if our food is distasteful to us, our climate is not good enough, our people uncouth and unfit for our company, our civilisation faulty and the foreign attractive, in short, if everything native is bad and everything foreign pleasing to us, I should not know what Swaraj can mean for us. If everything foreign is to be adopted, surely it will be necessary for us to continue long under foreign tutelage, because foreign civilisation has not permeated the masses. It seems to me that, before we can appreciate Swaraj, we should have not only love but passion, for Swadeshi. Every one of our acts should bear the Swadeshi stamp. Swaraj can only be built upon the assumption that most of what is national is on the whole sound. If the view here put forth be correct, the Swadeshi movement ought to be carried on vigorously. Every country that has carried on the Swaraj movement has fully appreciated the Swadeshi spirit. The Scotch Highlanders hold on to their kilts even at the risk of their lives. We humorously call the Highlanders the 'petticoat brigade.' But the whole world testifies to the strength that lies behind that petticoat and the Highlanders of Scotland will not abandon it, even though it is an inconvenient dress, and an easy target for the enemy. The object in developing the foregoing argument is not that we should treasure our faults, but that what is national, even though comparatively less agreeable should be adhered to, and



that what is foreign should be avoided, though it may be more agreeable than our own. That which is wanting in our civilisation can be supplied by proper effort on our part. I do hope that the Swadeshi spirit will possess every member in this assembly, and that we would carry out the Swadeshi vow in spite of great difficulties and inconvenience. Then Swaraj will be easy of attainment.

The foregoing illustrations go to show that our movement should be twofold. We may petition the Government, we may agitate in the Imperial Council for our rights, but for a real awakening of the people, internal activity is more important. There is likelihood of hypocrisy and selfishness tainting external activity. There is less danger of such a catastrophe in the internal activity. Not only will external activity, without being balanced by the internal, lack grace, but it is likely to be barren of results. It is not my contention that we have no internal activity at all, but I submit that we do not lay enough stress upon it.

One sometimes hears it said, 'Let us get the government of India in our own hands, and every thing will be all right.' There could be no greater superstition than this. No nation has thus gained its independence. The splendour of the spring is reflected in every tree, the whole earth is then filled with the freshness of youth. Similarly when the Swaraj spirit has really permeated society, a stranger suddenly come upon us will observe energy in every walk of life, he will find national servants engaged, each according to his own abilities, in a variety of public activities.

If we admit that our progress has not been what it might have been, we shall have to admit two reasons



for it. We have kept our women strangers to these activities of ours, and have thus brought about paralysis of half the national limb. The nation walks with one leg only. All its work appears to be only half or incompletely done. Moreover, the learned section having received its education, through a foreign tongue, has become enervated and it is unable to give the nation the benefit of such ability as it possesses. I need not reiterate my views on this subject, as I have elaborated them in my address delivered before the Gujarat Educational Conference. It is a wise decision, that of conducting the proceedings of this Conference in Gujarati, and I hope that all Gujaratis will adhere to the determination and resist every temptation to alter it.

The educated class, lovers of Swaraj, must freely mix with the masses. We dare not reject a single member of the community. We shall make progress only if we carry all with us. Had the educated class identified itself with the masses, Bakr-Id riots would have been an impossibility.

Before coming to the last topic, it remains for me to refer to certain events as a matter of duty and to make one or two suggestions. Every year the god of death exacts his toll from among our leaders. I do not intend to mention all such occasions of sorrow. But it is impossible to omit reference to the Grand Old Man of India. Who am I to estimate the value of the service rendered to the country by the deceased patriot? I have only sat at his feet. I paid my respects to him when I went to London as a mere lad. I was privileged to carry with me a note of introduction to him, and from the moment of presentation I became his worshipper. Dadabhai's flawless and uninterrupted service to the



country, his impartiality, his spotless character, will always furnish India with an ideal servant of his country. May God* give him peace ! May He grant his family and the Nation the ability to bear the loss ! It is possible for us to immortalise him, by making his character our own, by copying his manner of service and by enthroning him for ever in our hearts. May the great soul of Dadabhai watch over our deliberations !

It is our duty to express our thanks to His Excellency the Viceroy for having announced the decision of the government of India to abolish what is known as the Viramgam customs. This step should have been taken earlier. The nation was groaning under the weight of this impost. Many have lost their calling by reason of it. It has caused much suffering to many a woman. The decision has not yet been reduced to practice. It is to be hoped that it will soon be.

I have submitted through the Press my experiences about the hardships of third class railway travellers. They are, indeed, intolerable. The people of India are docile, they have received training in silent suffering. Thousands, therefore, put up with the hardships and they remain unredressed. There is merit in such suffering. But it must have its limits. Submission out of weakness is unmanliness. That we tamely put up with the hardships of railway travelling is probably proof of our unmanliness. These hardships are twofold. They are due to the remissness of railway administration as also that of the travelling-public. The remedies are also, therefore, twofold. Where the railway administration is to blame, complaints should be addressed to it, even in Gujarati. The matter should be ventilated in the press. Where the public are to blame, the knowing travellers



should enlighten their ignorant companions, as to their carelessness and dirty habits. Volunteers are required for this purpose. Every one can do his share, according to his ability, and the leading men might, in order to appreciate the difficulties of third class travelling, resort to it from time to time, without making themselves known, and bring their experiences to the notice of the administration. If these remedies are adopted, we should, in a short time see great changes.

An inter-departmental committee recently sat in London to consider certain measures about the supply of indentured labour to Fiji and the other sister islands. The Report of that committee has been published and the Government of India have invited the opinion of the public upon it. I need not dwell at length upon the matter as I have submitted my views already through the press. I have given it as my opinion that the recommendations of the committee, if adopted, will result in a kind of indenture. We can therefore only come to one conclusion. We can have no desire to see our labouring classes emigrating under bondage in any shape or form. There is no need for such emigration. The law of indenture should be totally abolished. It is no part of our duty to provide facilities for the Colonies.

I now reach the concluding topic. There are two methods of attaining desired end: Truthful and Truthless. In our scriptures they have been described respectively as divine and devilish. In the path of Satyagraha there is always unflinching adherence to Truth. It is never to be forsaken on any account, not even for the sake of one's country. The final triumph of Truth is always assumed for the divine method. Its



votary does not abandon it, even though at times the path seems impenetrable and beset with difficulties and dangers, and a departure however slight from that straight path may appear full of promise. His faith even then shines resplendent like the midday sun and he does not despond. With truth for sword, he needs neither steel nor gunpowder. He conquers the enemy by the force of the soul, which is Love. Its test is not to be found among friends. There is neither newness, nor merit nor yet effort in a friend loving a friend. It is tested truly when it is bestowed on the so-called enemy; it then becomes a virtue, there is effort in it, it is an act of manliness and real bravery. We can adopt this method towards the Government and doing so, we should be in a position to appreciate their beneficial activities and with greater ease correct their errors because we should draw attention to them not in anger but in Love. Love does not act through fear. There can, therefore, be no weakness in its expression. A coward is incapable of exhibiting Love, it is the prerogative of the brave. Following this method we shall not look upon all Governmental activity with suspicion, we shall not ascribe bad motives to them. And our examination of their actions, being directed by Love, will be unerring and is bound, therefore, to carry conviction with them.

Love has its struggles. In the intoxication of power, man often fails to detect his mistakes. When that happens a Passive Resister does not sit still. He suffers. He disobeys the ruler's laws and orders in a civil manner, and willingly incurs hardships caused by such disobedience, [e.g., imprisonment and gallows.] Thus is the soul disciplined. Here there is no waste of energy, and any untoward results of such respectful



disobedience are suffered merely by him and his companions. A Passive Resister is not at sixes and sevens with those in power but the latter willingly yield to him. *They know that they cannot effectively exercise force against the Passive Resister. Without his concurrence they cannot make him do their will. And this is the full fruition of Swaraj, because in it is complete independence.* It need not be taken for granted, that such decorous resistance is possible only in respect of civilised rulers. Even a heart of flint will melt in front of a fire kindled by the power of the soul. Even a Nero becomes a lamb when he faces Love. This is no exaggeration. It is as true as an algebraical equation. This Satyagraha is India's special weapon. It has had others but Satyagraha has commanded greater attention. It is omnipresent, and is capable of being used at all times and under all circumstances. It does not require a Congress license. He who knows its power cannot help using it. Even as the eye-lashes automatically protect the eyes, so does Satyagraha when kindled automatically protect the freedom of the Soul.

But truthlessness has opposite attributes. The terrible war going on in Europe is a case in point. Why should a nation's cause be considered right and another's wrong because it overpowers the latter by sheer brute force? The strong are often seen preying upon the weak. The wrongness of the latter's cause is not to be inferred from their defeat in a trial of brute strength, nor is the rightness of the strong to be inferred from their success in such a trial. The wielder of brute force does not scruple about the means to be used. He does not question the propriety of means, if he can somehow achieve his purpose. This is not



Dharma, it is Adharma. In Dharma, there cannot be a particle of untruth, cruelty or the taking of life. The measure of Dharma is the measure of love, kindness, truth. Heaven itself is no acceptable exchange for them. Swaraj itself is useless at the sacrifice of Truth. Sacrifice of Truth is the foundation of a nation's destruction. The believer in brute force becomes impatient and desires the death of the so-called enemy. There can be but one result of such an activity. Hatred increases. The defeated party vows vengeance, and simply bides his time. Thus does the spirit of revenge descend from father to son. It is much to be wished that India may not give predominance to the worship of brute force. If the members of this assembly will deliberately accept Satyagraha, in laying down its own programme, they will reach their goal all the easier for it. They may have to face disappointment in the initial stages. They may not see results for a time. But Satyagraha will triumph in the end. The brute-force-man like the oilman's ox moves in a circle. It is a motion, but it is not progress. Whereas the votary of Truth force ever moves forward.

A superficial critic reading the foregoing is likely to conclude that the views herein expressed are mutually destructive. On the one hand I appeal to the Government to give military training to the people. On the other I put Satyagraha on the pedestal. Surely there can be no room for the use of arms in Satyagraha, nor is there any. But military training is intended for those who do not believe in Satyagraha. That the whole of India will ever accept Satyagraha is beyond my imagination. Not to defend the weak is an entirely effeminate idea, everywhere to be rejected. In order to protect our



innocent sister from the brutal designs of a man we ought to offer ourselves a willing sacrifice and by the force of Love conquer the brute in the man. But if we have not attained that power, we would certainly use up all our bodily strength in order to frustrate those designs. The votaries of soul-force and brute-force are both soldiers. The latter, bereft of his arms, acknowledges defeat, the former does not know what defeat is. He does not depend upon the perishable body and its weapons, but he derives his strength from the unconquerable and immortal soul. The thing outside the two is not a man, for he does not recognise the Dweller within him. If he did, he would not take fright and run away from danger. Like a miser trying to save his flesh, he loses all, he does not know how to die. But the armoured soldier always has death by him as a companion. There is hope of his becoming a Passive Resister, and one has a right to hope that India, the holy land of the gods, will ever give the predominant place to the divine force, rather than to the brute force. Might is right, is a formula which, let us hope, will never find acceptance in India. Her formula is, Truth alone conquers.

Upon reflection, we find that we can employ Satyagraha even for social reform. We can rid ourselves of many defects in our social institutions. We can settle the Hindu-Mohammedan problem, and we can deal with political questions. It is well that for the sake of facilitating progress we divide our activities according to the subjects handled. But it should never be forgotten that all are inter-related. It is not true to say that neither religion nor social reform has anything to do with politics. The result obtained by bringing religion into play



in the consideration of political subjects will be different from that obtained without it. The Hindus can ill afford to neglect 56 lakhs of ignorant Sadhus in considering political matters. Our Mussalman brethren cannot lose sight of their Fakeers. In advancing political progress the condition of our widows and child marriages must have their proper place, and the purdah must tax Mussalman wit. Nor can we, Hindus and Muhammedans, in considering politics, shut our eyes to scores of questions that arise between us.

Indeed our difficulties are like the Himalayas. But we have equally powerful means at our disposal for removing them. We are children of an ancient nation. We have witnessed the burial of civilizations, those of Rome, Greece, and Egypt. Our civilization abides even as the ocean in spite of its ebbs and flows. We have all we need to keep ourselves independent. We have the mountains that kiss the sky, we have the mighty rivers. We have the matchless beauties of nature and we have handed down to us a heritage of deeds of valour. This country is the treasure-house of *tapasya*. In this country alone do people belonging to different religions live together in amity. In this country alone do all the gods receive their due measure of worship. We shall disgrace our heritage, and our connection with the British nation will be vain if in spite of such splendid equipment, by some unique effort, we do not conquer our conquerors. The English nation is full of adventure, the religious spirit guides it, it has unquenchable faith in itself, it is a nation of great soldiers, it treasures its independence, but it has given the place of honour to its commercial instinct, it has not always narrowly examined the



means adopted for seeking wealth. It worships modern civilisation. The ancient ideals have lost their hold upon it. If therefore, instead of imitating that nation, we do not forget our past, we have real regard for our civilisation, we have firm faith in its supremacy, we shall be able to make a proper use of our connection with the British nation, and make it beneficial to ourselves, to them and to the whole world. I pray to the Almighty that this assembly taking its full share of this great work may shed lustre upon itself, upon Gujarat, and upon the whole of Bharatavarsha.

ADDRESS TO SOCIAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

Mr. Gandhi delivered the following address as President of the First All-India Social Service Conference held at Calcutta on December 27, 1917.

Friends, I thank you for the honour you have conferred upon me. I was totally unprepared for the invitation to preside over the deliberations of this assembly. I do not know that I am fitted for the task. Having fixed views about the use of Hindi at national gatherings, I am always disinclined to speak in English. And I felt that the time was not ripe for me to ask to be allowed to deliver the Presidential Speech in Hindi. Moreover I have not much faith in conferences. Social Service to be effective has to be rendered without noise. It is best performed when the left hand knoweth not what the right is doing. Sir Gibbie's work told because nobody knew it. He could not be spoiled by praise or held back by blame. Would that our service were of this nature. Holding such views it was not without

considerable hesitation and misgivings that I obeyed the summons of the Reception Committee. You will, therefore, pardon me if you find in me a candid critic rather than an enthusiast carrying the conference to its goal with confidence and assurance.

It seems to me then that I cannot do better than draw attention to some branches of Social Service which we have hitherto more or less ignored.

The greatest service we can render society is to free ourselves and it from the superstitious regard we have learnt to pay to the learning of the English language. It is the medium of instruction in our schools and colleges. It is becoming the *lingua franca* of the country. Our best thoughts are expressed in it. Lord Chelmsford hopes that it will soon take the place of the mother tongue in high families. This belief in the necessity of English training has enslaved us. It has unfitted us for true national service. Were it not for force of habit, we could not fail to see that, by reason of English being the medium of instruction, our intellect has been segregated, we have been isolated from the masses, the best mind of the nation has become gagged and the masses have not received the benefit of the new ideas we have received. We have been engaged these past sixty years in memorising strange words and their pronunciation instead of assimilating facts. In the place of building upon the foundation, the training received from our parents, we have almost unlearned it. There is no parallel to this in History. It is a national tragedy. The first and the greatest Social Service we can render is to revert to our vernaculars, to restore Hindi to its natural place as the National Language and begin carrying on all our provincial proceedings



in our respective vernaculars and national proceedings in Hindi. We ought not to rest till our schools and colleges give us instruction through the vernaculars. It ought not to be necessary even for the sake of our English friends to have to speak in English. Every English Civil and Military Officer has to know Hindi. Most English merchants learn it because they need it for their business. The day must soon come when our legislatures will debate national affairs in the vernaculars or Hindi as the case may be. Hitherto the masses have been strangers to their proceedings. The vernacular papers have tried to undo the mischief a little. But the task was beyond them. The *Patrika* reserves its biting sarcasm, the *Bengalee* its learning for ears tuned to English. In this ancient land of cultured thinkers the presence in our midst of a Tagore or a Bose or a Ray ought not to excite wonder. Yet the painful fact is that there are so few of them. You will forgive me if I have carried too long on a subject which, in your opinion, may hardly be treated as an item of Social Service. I have however taken the liberty of mentioning the matter prominently as it is my conviction that all national activity suffers materially owing to this radical defect in our system of education.

Coming to more familiar items of Social Service, the list is appalling. I shall select only those of which I have any knowledge.

Work in times of sporadic distress such as famine and floods is no doubt necessary and most praiseworthy. But it produces no permanent results. There are fields of Social Service in which there may be no renown but which may yield lasting results.

In 1914 cholera, fevers and plague together claimed



4,649,663 victims. If so many had died fighting on the battlefield during the war that is at present devastating Europe, we would have covered ourselves with glory and lovers of Swaraj would need no further argument in support of their cause. As it is, 4,639,663 have died a lingering death unmourned and their dying has brought us nothing but discredit. A distinguished Englishman said the other day that Englishmen did all the thinking for us whilst we sat supine. He added that most Englishmen basing their opinions on their English experience presented impossible or costly remedies for the evils they investigated. There is much truth in the above statement. In other countries reformers have successfully grappled with epidemics. Here Englishmen have tried and failed. They have thought along western lines ignoring the vast differences, climatic and other, between Europe and India. Our doctors and physicians have practically done nothing. I am sure that half-a-dozen medical men of the front rank dedicating their lives to the work of eradicating the triple curse would succeed where Englishmen have failed. I venture to suggest that the way lies not through finding out cures but through finding or rather applying preventive methods. I prefer to use the participle 'applying' for I have it on the aforementioned authority that to drive out plague (and I add cholera and malaria) is absurdly simple. There is no conflict of opinion as to the preventive methods. We simply do not apply them. We have made up our minds that the masses will not adopt them. There could be no greater calumny uttered against them. If we would but stoop to conquer, they can be easily conquered. The truth is that we



expect the Government to do the work. In my opinion, in this matter, the Government cannot lead; they can follow and help if we could lead. Here, then, there is work enough for our doctors and an army of workers to help them. I note that you in Bengal are working somewhat in this direction. I may state that a small but earnest band of volunteers are at the present moment engaged in doing such work in Champaran. They are posted in different villages. There they teach the village children, they give medical aid to the sick and they give practical lessons in hygiene to the village folk by cleaning their wells and roads and showing them how to treat human excreta. Nothing can yet be predicted as to results as the experiment is in its infancy. This Conference may usefully appoint a committee of doctors who would study rural conditions on the spot and draw up a course of instructions for the guidance of workers and of the people at large.

Nothing perhaps affords such splendid facility to every worker, wholtime or otherwise, for effective service as the relief of agony through which the 3rd class railway passengers are passing. I feel keenly about this grievance not because I am in it but I have gone to it as I have felt keenly about it. This matter affects millions of our poor and middle class countrymen. This helpless toleration of every inconvenience and insult is visibly deteriorating the nation even as the cruel treatment to which we have subjected the so called depressed classes has made them indifferent to the laws of personal cleanliness and the very idea of self-respect. What else but downright degradation can await those who have to make a scramble always like mad animals for seats in a miserable compartment, who have to swear

and curse before they can speak through the window in order to get standing room, who have to wallow in dirt during their journey, who are served their food like dogs and eat it like them, who have ever to bend before those who are physically stronger than they and who being packed like sardines in compartments have to get such sleep as they can in a sitting posture for nights together. Railway servants swear at them, cheat them. On the Howrah-Lahore service our friends from Kabul fill to the brim the cup of the misery of the third class travellers. They become lords of the compartments they enter. It is not possible for any one to resist them. They swear at you on the slightest pretext, exhaust the whole of the obscene vocabulary of the Hindi language. They do not hesitate to belabour you if you retort or in any way oppose them. They usurp the best seats and insist on stretching themselves full length even in crowded compartment. No compartment is deemed too crowded for them to enter. The travellers patiently bear all their awful impertinence out of sheer helplessness. They would, if they could, knock down the man who dared to swear at them as do these Kabulis. But they are physically no match for the Kabulis and every Kabuli considers himself more than a match for any number of travellers from the plains. This is not right. The effect of this terrorising on the national character cannot but be debasing. We the educated few ought to deliver the travelling public from this scourge or for ever renounce our claim to speak on its behalf or to guide it. I believe the Kabulis to be amenable to reason. They are a God-fearing people. If you know their language, you can successfully appeal to their good sense.



But they are spoilt children of nature. Cowards among us have used their undoubted physical strength for our nefarious purposes. And they have now come to think that they can treat poor people as they choose and consider themselves above the law of the land. Here is work enough for Social Service. Volunteers for this class of work can board trains and educate the people to a sense of their duty, call in guards and other officials in order to remove over-crowding, see that passengers leave and board trains without a scramble. It is clear that until the Kabulis can be patiently taught to behave themselves, they ought to have a compartment all to themselves and they ought not to be permitted to enter any other compartment. With the exception of providing additional plant, every one of the other evils attendant on railway travelling ought to be immediately redressed. It is no answer that we have suffered the wrong so long. Prescriptive rights cannot accrue to wrongs.

No less important is the problem of the depressed classes. To lift them from the position to which Hindu society has reduced them is to remove a big blot on Hinduism. The present treatment of these classes is a sin against religion and humanity.

But the work requires service of the highest order. We shall make little headway by merely throwing schools at them. We must change the attitude of the masses and orthodoxy. I have already shown that we have cut ourselves adrift from both. We do not react on them. We can do so only if we speak to them in their own language. An anglicised India cannot speak to them with effect. If we believe in Hinduism we must approach them in the Hindu fashion. We must



do *tapasya* and keep our Hinduism undefiled. Pure and enlightened orthodoxy must be matched against superstitious and ignorant orthodoxy. To restore to their proper status a fifth of our total population is a task worthy of any Social Service organisation.

The bustees of Calcutta and the chawls of Bombay badly demand the devoted services of hundreds of social workers. They send our infants to an early grave and promote vice, degradation and filth.

Apart from the fundamental evil arising out of our defective system of education I have hitherto dealt with evils calling for service among the masses. The classes perhaps demand no less attention than the masses. It is my opinion that all evils like diseases are symptoms of the same evil or disease. They appear various by being refracted through different media. The root evil is loss of true spirituality brought about through causes, I cannot examine, from this platform. We have lost the robust faith of our forefathers in the absolute efficacy of *Satya* (truth) *Ahimsa* (love) and *Brahmacharya* (Self-restraint.) We certainly believe in them to an extent. They are the best policy but we may deviate from them if our untrained reason, suggests deviation. We have not faith enough to feel that though the present outlook seems black, if we follow the dictates of truth or love or exercise self-restraint, the ultimate result must be sound. Men whose spiritual vision has become blurred mostly look to the present rather than conserve the future good. He will render the greatest social service who will re-instate us in our ancient spirituality. But humble men that we are, it is enough for us if we recognise the loss and by such ways as are open to us prepare the way



for the man who will infect us with his power and enable us to feel clearly through the heart, things we are to-day unable to perceive through our reason.

Looking then at the classes I find that our Rajahs and Maharajahs squander their resources after so called useless sport and drink. I was told the other day that the cocaine habit was sapping the nation's manhood and that like the drink habit it was on the increase and in its effect more deadly than drink. It is impossible for a social worker to blind himself to the evil. We dare not ape the West. We are a nation that has lost its prestige and its self-respect. Whilst a tenth of our population is living on the verge of starvation, we have no time for indulging ourselves. What the West may do with impunity is like in our case to prove our ruin. The evils that are corroding the higher strata of society are difficult for an ordinary worker to tackle. They have acquired a certain degree of respectability. But they ought not to be beyond the reach of this Conference.

Equally important is the question of the status of women both Hindu and Mahomedan. Are they or are they not to play their full part in the plain of regeneration alongside of their husband? They must be enfranchised. They can no longer be treated either as dolls or slaves without the social body remaining in a condition of social paralysis. And here again I would venture to suggest to the reformer that the way to women's freedom is not through education but through the change of attitude on the part of men and corresponding action. Education is necessary but it must follow the freedom. We dare not wait for literary education to restore our womanhood to its proper state. Even without



literary education our women are as cultured as any on the face of the earth. The remedy largely lies in the hands of husbands.

It makes my blood boil as I wander through the country and watch lifeless and fleshless oxen with their ribs sticking through their skins, carrying loads or ploughing our fields. To improve the breed of our cattle, to rescue them from the cruelty practised on them by their cow-worshipping masters and to save them from the slaughter house is to solve half the problem of our poverty.....We have to educate the people to a humane use of their cattle and plead with the Government to conserve the pasture land of the country. Protection of the cow is an economic necessity. It can not be brought about by force. It can only be achieved by an appeal to the finer feelings of our English friends and our Mahomedan countrymen to save the cow from the slaughter-house. This question involves the overhauling of the management of our Pinjrapoles and cow-protection societies. A proper solution of this very difficult problem means establishment of perfect concord between Hindus and Mahomedans and an end of Bakr-id riots.

I have glanced at the literature kindly furnished at my request by the several Leagues who are rendering admirable Social Service. I note that some have included in their programme many of the items mentioned by me. All the Leagues are non-sectarian and they have as their members the most distinguished men and women in the land. The possibilities for services of a far reaching character are therefore great. But if the work is to leave its impress on the nation, we must have workers who are prepared, in Mr. Gokhale's words,—



to dedicate their lives to the cause. Give me such workers and I promise they will rid the land of all the evils that afflict it.

THE PROTECTION OF THE COW.

Mr. Gandhi published the following reply in the "Statesman" of January 19, 1918 to Mr. Irwin's attack on Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi in the columns of the same journal :—

Mr. Irwin's latest letter published in your issue of the 12th instant compels me to court the hospitality of your columns. So long as your correspondent confined himself to matters directly affecting himself, his misrepresentations did not much matter, as the real facts were as much within the knowledge of the Government and those who are concerned with the agrarian question in Champaran, as within mine. But in the letter under notice, he has travelled outside his jurisdiction as it were, and uncavalierously attacked one of the most innocent women walking on the face of the earth (and this I say although she happens to be my wife) and has unpardonably referred to a question of the greatest moment, I mean, the cow-protection question, without taking the precaution as behoves a gentleman of ascertaining facts at first hand.

My address to the *Gau-rakshini Sabha* he could have easily obtained upon application to me. This at least was due to me as between man and man. Your correspondent accuses me of 'making a united attack on *saheb log* (their landlords) who slaughter and eat cows daily.' This pre-supposes that I was addressing a comparatively microscopic audience of the planters'

riyats. The fact is that the audience was composed chiefly of the non-raiyat class. But I had in mind a much bigger audience, and not merely the few thousand hearers before me. I spoke under a full sense of my responsibility. The question of cow-protection is, in my opinion, as large as the Empire to which Mr. Irwin and I belong. I know that he is the proud father of a young lad of 24, who has received by his gallantry the unique honour of a Colonelcy at his age. Mr. Irwin can, if he will, obtain a greater honour for himself by studying the cow question and taking his full share in its solution. He will, I promise, be then much better occupied, than when is dashing off his misrepresentations to be published in the press, and most unnecessarily preparing to bring 2,200 cases against his tenants for the sake of deriving the questionable pleasure of deeming me responsible for those cases.

I said at the meeting that the Hindus had no warrant for resenting the slaughter of cows by their Mahomedan brethren who kill them from religious conviction, so long as they themselves were a party to the killing by inches of thousands of cattle who were horribly ill-treated by their Hindu owners, to the drinking of milk drawn from cows in the inhuman dairies of Calcutta, and so long as they calmly contemplated the slaughter of thousands of cattle in the slaughter houses of India for providing beef for the European or Christian residents of India. I suggested that the first step towards procuring full protection for cows was to put their own house in order by securing absolute immunity from ill-treatment of their cattle by Hindus themselves, and then to appeal to the Europeans to abstain from beef-eating whilst resident in India, or at least to procure



beef from outside India. I added that in no case could the cow protection propaganda, if it was to be based upon religious conviction, tolerate a sacrifice of Mahomedans for the sake of saving cows, that the religious method of securing protection from Christians and Mahomedans alike was for Hindus to offer themselves a willing sacrifice of sufficient magnitude to draw out the merciful nature of Christians and Mahomedans. Rightly or wrongly worship of the cow is ingrained in the Hindu nature and I see no escape from a most bigotted and sanguinary strife over this question between Christians and Mahomedans on the one hand and Hindus on the other except in the fullest recognition and practice by the Hindus of the religion of *ahimsa*, which it is my self-imposed and humble mission in life to distribute prison to the world. I must not be and delivered a very informing address on the subject of the cow protection, in the course of which I said — their

It is necessary for the European that we must have we talk to-day being buried under the awe inspired by English rule. But there is not a Hindu throughout the length and breadth of India who does not expect one day to free his land from cow-slaughter. But contrary to the genius of Hinduism as I know it, he would not mind forcing even at the point of the sword either the Christian or the Mahomedan to abandon cow-slaughter. I wish to play my humble part in preventing such a catastrophe and I thank Mr. Irwin for having provided me with an opportunity of inviting him and your readers to help me in my onerous mission. The mission may fail to prevent cow-slaughter. But there is no reason why by patient plodding and consistent practice it should not succeed in showing the folly, the stupidity and the inhumanity of committing the crime of

killing a fellow human being for the sake of saving a fellow animal.

So much on behalf of the innocent cow. A word only for my innocent wife who will never even know the wrong your correspondent has done her. If Mr. Irwin would enjoy the honour of being introduced to her he will soon find out that Mrs. Gandhi is a simple woman almost unlettered, who knows nothing of the two bazaars mentioned by him, even as I knew nothing of them until very recently and sometime after the establishment of the rival bazaar referred to by Mr. Irwin. He will then further assure himself that Mrs. Gandhi has had no hand in its establishment and is totally incapable of managing such a bazaar. Lastly he will at once learn that Mrs. Gandhi's time is occupied in cooking for and serving the teachers in the school.

and in the meeting between the Hindus and the Muslims for settling the chest the women or the other Mahomedan view together with an idea of simple hygiene. Gandhi, I may add, has not learnt the art of making speeches or addressing letters to the press.

As to the rest of the letter, the less said the better. It is so full of palpable mis-representations that it is difficult to deal with them with sufficient self-restraint. I can only say that I am trying to the best of my ability to fulfil the obligation, I hold myself under, of promoting good will between planters and the raiyats, and if I fail it would not be due to want of efforts on my part, but it would be largely, if not entirely, due to the mischievous propaganda Mr. Irwin is carrying on openly and some others *sub rosa* in Champaran in order to nullify the effect of the report published by the Agrarian Committee, which was brought into being not



as Mr. Irwin falsely suggests at my request but by the agitation carried on, as your files would demonstrate, by Mr. Irwin and his friends of the Anglo-Indian Association. If he is wise, he will abide by his written word, voluntarily and after full discussion and deliberation, given by him at Ranchi.

ON WOMANHOOD

The annual gathering of the Bombay Bhagini Samaj was held on Wednesday, February 20, 1918, at the Morarji Gokuldas Hall, under the presidency of Mr. M. K. Gandhi. The annual report of the Samaj having been read by the General Secretary, the President distributed prizes to the pupils of the female classes, and delivered a very informing address on the education of women, in the course of which he said :—

It is necessary to understand what we mean when we talk of the regeneration of women. It presupposes degeneration and if that is so we should further consider what led to it and how. It is our primary duty to have some very hard thinking on these points. In travelling all over India, I have come to realize that all the existing agitation is confined to an infinitesimal section of our people who are really a mere speck in the vast firmament. Crores of people of both the sexes live in absolute ignorance of this agitation. Full eighty-five per cent of the people of this country pass their innocent days in a state of total detachment from what is going on around them. These men and women ignorant as they are do their "bit" in life well and properly. Both have the same education or rather the



absence of education. Both are helping each other as they ought to do. If their lives are in any sense incomplete, the cause can be traced to the incompleteness of the lives of the remaining fifteen per cent. If my sisters of the Bhagini Samaj will make a close study of the lives of these 85 per cent of our people, it will provide them ample material for an excellent programme of work for the Samaj.

MAN MADE SOCIAL LAWS.

In the observations that I am going to make, I will confine myself to the 15 per cent. abovementioned and even then it would be out of place to discuss the disabilities that are common both to men and women. The point for us to consider is the regeneration of our women relatively to our men. Legislation has been mostly the handi-work of men; and man has not always been fair and discriminate in performing that self-appointed task. The largest part of our effort in promoting the regeneration of women should be directed towards removing those blemishes which are represented in our Shastras as the necessary and ingrained characteristic of women. Who will attempt this and how? In my humble opinion in order to make the attempt, we will have to produce women pure, firm and self-controlled as Sita, Damayanti and Draupadi. If we do produce them such modern sisters will receive the same homage from Hindu society as is being paid to their prototypes of yore. Their words will have the same authority as the Shastras. We will feel ashamed of the stray reflections on them in our Smritis and will soon forget them. Such revolutions have occurred in Hinduism in the past and will still take place in the future, leading to the stability of our faith. I pray to



God that this Association might soon produce such women as I have described above.

PLACE OF LITERARY EDUCATION

We have now discussed the root cause of the degeneration of our women and have considered the ideals by the realization of which the present conditions of our women can be improved. The number of women who can realize those ideals will be necessarily very few and therefore, we will now consider what ordinary women can accomplish if they would try. Their first attempt should be directed towards awakening in the minds of as many women as possible a proper sense of their present condition. I am not among those who believe that such an effort can be made through literary education only. To work on that basis would be to postpone indefinitely the accomplishment of our aims; I have experienced at every step that it is not at all necessary to wait so long. We can bring home to our women the sad realities of their present condition without in the first instance giving them any literary education. Woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in very minutest detail in the activities of man and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him. She is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his. This ought to be the natural condition of thing and not as a result only of learning to read and write. By sheer force of a vicious custom even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority over women which they do not deserve and ought not to have. Many of our movements stop half way because of the condition of our women. Much of our work does not yield



appropriate results ; our lot is like that of the penny wise and pound foolish trader who does not employ enough capital in his business.

FAULTY SYSTEM OF EDUCATION.

But although much good and useful work can be done without a knowledge of reading and writing yet it is my firm belief that you cannot always do without a knowledge thereof. It develops and sharpens one's intellect and it stimulates our power of doing good. I have never placed an unnecessarily high value on the knowledge of reading and writing. I am only attempting to assign its proper place to it. I have pointed out from time to time that there is no justification for men to deprive women or to deny to them equal rights on the ground of their illiteracy : but education is essential for enabling women to uphold these natural rights, to improve them and to spread them ; again the true knowledge of self is unattainable by the millions who are without such education. Many a book is full of innocent pleasure and this will be denied to us without education. It is no exaggeration to say that a human being without education is not far removed from an animal. Education, therefore, is necessary for women as it is for men. Not that the methods of education should be identical in both cases. In the first place our state system of education is full of error and productive of harm in many respects. It should be eschewed by men and women alike. Even if it were free from its present blemishes I would not regard it as proper for women from all points of view. Man and woman are of equal rank but they are not identical. They are a peerless pair being supplementary to one another ; each helps the other so what without the one the existence



of the other cannot be conceived, and therefore it follows as a necessary corollary from these facts that anything that will impair the status of either of them will involve the equal ruin of them both. In framing any scheme of women's education this cardinal truth must be constantly kept in mind. Man is supreme in the outward activities of a married pair and therefore it is in the fitness of things that he should have a greater knowledge thereof. On the other hand home life is entirely the sphere of woman and therefore in domestic affairs, in the upbringing and education of children, women ought to have more knowledge. Not that knowledge should be divided into watertight compartments or that some branches of knowledge should be closed to any one; but unless courses of instruction are based on a discriminating appreciation of these basic principles the fullest life of man and woman cannot be developed.

IS EDUCATION NECESSARY ?

I should say a word or two as to whether English education is or is not necessary for our women. I have come to the conclusion that in the ordinary course of our lives neither our men nor our women need necessarily have any knowledge of English. True English is necessary for making a living and for active association in our political movements. I do not believe in women working for a living or undertaking commercial enterprises. The few women who may require or desire to have English education can very easily have their way by joining the schools for men. To introduce English education in schools meant for women could only lead to prolong our helplessness. I have often read and heard people saying that the rich treasures of



English literature should be opened alike to men and women. I submit in all humility that there is some misapprehension in assuming such an attitude. No one intends to closs these treasures against women while keeping them open for men. There is none on earth able to prevent you from studying the literature of the whole world if you are fond of literary tastes. But when courses of education have been framed with the needs of a particular society in view, you cannot supply the requirements of the few who have cultivated a literary taste. In asking our men and women to spend less time in the study of English than they are doing now, my object is not to deprive them of the pleasure which they are likely to derive from it, but I hold that the same pleasure can be obtained at less cost and trouble if we follow a more natural method. The world is full of many a gem of priceless beauty ; but then these gems are not all of English setting. Other languages can well boast of productions of similar excellence ; all these should be made available for our common people and that can only be done if our own learned men will undertake to translate them for us in our own languages.

UNSPEAKABLE SIN OF CHILD MARRIAGE.

Merely to have outlined a scheme of education as above is not to have removed the bane of child marriage from our society or to have conferred on our women an equality of rights. Let us now consider the case of our girls who disappear, so to say, from view, after marriage. They are not likely to return to our schools. Conscious of the unspeakable and unthinkable sin of the child marriage of their daughters, their mothers cannot think of educating them or of otherwise making



their dry life a cheerful one. The man who marries a young girl does not do so out of any altruistic motives but through sheer lust. Who is to rescue these girls? A proper answer to this question will also be a solution of the woman's problem. The answer is albeit difficult, but it is only one. There is of course none to champion her cause but her husband. It is useless to expect a child-wife to be able to bring round the man who has married her. The difficult work must, therefore, for the present at least be left to man. If I could, I would take a census of child wives and will find the friends as well as through moral and polite exhortations I will attempt, to bring home to them the enormity of their crime in linking their fortunes with child wives and will warn them that there is no expiation for that sin unless and until they have by education made their wives fit not only to bear children but also to bring them up properly and unless in the meantime they live a life of absolute celibacy.

QUIET AND UNOBTRUSIVE WORK NEEDED.

Thus, there are many fruitful fields of activity before the members of the Bhagini Samaj for devoting their energies to. The field for work is so vast that if resolute application is brought to bear thereon the wider movements for reform may for the present be left to themselves and great service can be done to the cause of Home Rule without so much as even a verbal reference to it. When printing presses were non-existent and scope for speech-making very limited, when one could hardly travel twenty-four miles in the course of a day instead of a thousand miles as now, we had only one agency for propagating our ideals and that was our 'Acts'; and acts had

immense potency. We are now rushing to and from with the velocity of air, delivering speeches, writing newspaper articles and yet we fall short of our accomplishments and the cry of despair fills the air. I, for one, am of opinion that as in old days our acts will have a more powerful influence on the public than any number of speeches and writing. It is my earnest prayer to your Association that its members should give prominence to quiet and unobtrusive work in whatever it does.

PLEA FOR HINDI

Mr. Gandhi wrote the following letter to the press under date, Indore, March 3, 1918 soon after the conclusion of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan —

At the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan just closing a committee consisting of the Hon'ble Rai Bahadur Bishen Dutta Shukla, Rai Bahadur Saryoo Prasad, Babu Shivar Prasad Gupta, Babu Purushottan Das Tandon, Babu Gauri Shanker Prasad, Pandit Venkatesha Narayan Tiwari and myself, were appointed as a special committee to give effect to certain resolutions of the Sammelan. One of the instructions given to the committee is to find out six Tamil and Telugu youths of promise and good character who would undertake to learn Hindi with a view to ultimately becoming missionaries for the propagation of Hindi among the Tamil and the Telugu people. It has been proposed to locate them either at Allahabad or at Benares, and to teach them Hindi. Expenses of their board and lodging as well as instruction will be paid for by the committee. It is expected that the course will not take longer than a year at the most and as soon as they have attained a certain standard



of knowledge of Hindi they would be entrusted with the missionary work, that is, the work of teaching Hindi to the Tamil or the Telugu people as the case may be, for which they would get a salary to maintain themselves suitably. The Committee will guarantee such service for at least a period of three years, and will expect applicants to enter into a contract with the Committee to render the stipulated service faithfully and well for that period. The Committee expects that the services of these youths will be indefinitely prolonged and that they will be able to serve themselves as well as the country. The desire of the Committee is to offer liberal payment and expect in return absolute faithfulness and steadfastness. I trust that you agree with the Sammelan that Hindi and Hindi alone, whether in Sanskrit form or as Urdu, can become the language of intercourse between the different provinces. It is already that amongst the Muhammadans all over India, as also amongst the Hindus except in the Madras Presidency. I exclude the English educated Indians who have made English, in my humble opinion, much to the detriment of the country, the language of mutual intercourse. If we are to realise the Swaraj ideal we must find a common language that can be easily learnt and that can be understood by the vast masses. This has always been Hindi or Urdu and is so even now as I can say from personal experience. I have faith enough in the patriotism, selflessness and the sagacity of the people of the Madras Presidency to know that those who at all want to render national service or to come in touch with the other Provinces, will undergo the sacrifice, if it is one, of learning Hindi. I suggest that they should consider it a privilege to be able to learn a



language that will enable them to enter into the hearts of millions of their countrymen. The proposal set forth is a temporary make-shift. An agitation of great potency must arise in the country that would compel the educational authorities to introduce Hindi as the second language in the public schools. But it was felt by the Sammelan that no time should be lost in popularising Hindi in the Madras Presidency. Hence the above-mentioned proposal which, I hope, you will be able to commend to your readers. I may add that the Committee proposes to send Hindi teachers to the Tamil as also to the Andhra districts in order to teach Hindi free of charge to those who would care to learn it. I hope that many will take advantage of the proffered tuition. Those youths who wish to apply for the training above-mentioned should do so under cover addressed to me care of Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Allahabad, before the end of April.

THE AHMEDABAD MILL HANDS

When the mill hands at Ahmedabad went on strike Mr. Gandhi was requisitioned to settle the dispute between the mill owners and the workmen. Mr. Gandhi was guiding the labourers to a successful settlement of their wages when some of them betrayed a sense of weakness and despair, and demoralisation was apprehended. At a critical stage in the crisis Mr. Gandhi and Miss Anasuyabai took the vow of fast. This extreme action on the part of Mr. Gandhi was disquieting to friends and provoked some bitter comments from the unfriendly. In the following statement issued from Nadiad under date, March 27,



1918, *Mr. Gandhi explains the circumstances which necessitated this action :—*

Perhaps I owe an explanation to the public with regard to my recent fast. Some friends consider the action to have been silly, others, cowardly and some others still worse. In my opinion I would have been untrue to my Maker and to the cause I was espousing if I had acted otherwise.

When over a month ago I reached Bombay I was told that Ahmedabad millhands had threatened a strike and violence if the bonus that was given to them during the plague was withdrawn. I was asked to intervene and I consented.

Owing to the plague the men were getting as much as 70 per cent. bonus since August last. An attempt to recall that bonus had resulted in grave dissatisfaction among the labourers. When it was almost too late, the millowners offered in the place of the plague bonus and for the sake of the high prices a rise of 20 per cent. The labourers were unsatisfied. The matter was referred to arbitration, Mr. Chatfield, the Collector being the Umpire. The men in some mills however struck work. The owners thinking that they had done so without just cause withdrew from the arbitration, and declared a general lockout to be continued till the labourers were exhausted into accepting the 20 per cent. increase they had offered. Messrs. Shankarlal Banker, V. J. Patel and I the arbitrators appointed on behalf of the labourers, thought that they were to be demoralised if we did not act promptly and decisively. We, therefore, investigated the question of increase, we sought the millowners' assistance. They would not give it. Their one purpose was to organise