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AN ANTHOLOGY OF HIS WRITINGS

ON HIS LIFE, WORK, AND IDEAS



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PREFACE BY

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VINTAGE SPIRITUAL CLASSICS

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[In February, 1933, Gandhi, still in prison, had started the Harijan Sevak Sangh, a society to help Harijans, and *Harijan*, a new weekly which replaced *Young India*, suspended by the Government.]

... The fight against Sanatanists [orthodox Hindus who believe the doctrine of untouchability] is becoming more and more interesting, if also increasingly difficult. The one good thing is that they have been awakened from a long lethargy. The abuses they are hurling at me are wonderfully refreshing. I am all that is bad and corrupt on this earth. But the storm will subside. For I apply the sovereign remedy of ahimsa, nonretaliation. The more I ignore the abuses, the fiercer they are becoming. But it is the death dance of the moth round a lamp. ...¹

... *Harijan* is a views-paper as distinguished from a newspaper. People buy and read it not for amusement but for instruction and [for] regulating their daily conduct. They literally take their weekly lessons in Non-violence. ...²

[On May 8, Gandhi undertook a three weeks' fast for self-purification and to impress the ashram with the importance of service rather than indulgence—the presence of an attractive American woman visitor had caused some backsliding. The first day of the fast the Government released him. It seemed certain after the physical agony of the seven days of the "Epic Fast" against untouchability that twenty-one days without food would kill him. And Britain did not want a dead Gandhi within prison walls.

He completed the fast and survived.

¹ Letter to Nehru, February 15, 1933, in Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 109.

² *Harijan*, July 19, 1942.

Throughout his remaining years Gandhi continued to evolve ideas for a better material and spiritual life. These ideas were relevant then and remain relevant for India.]

... Every man has an equal right to the necessities of life even as birds and beasts have. ...³

I hate privilege and monopoly. Whatever cannot be shared with the masses is taboo to me.⁴

[Economic equality] is the master key to non-violent Independence. Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labor. It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth ... and the levelling up of the semi-starved millions. ... A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor laboring class nearby cannot last one day in a free India, in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land. A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give, and a sharing of them for the common good.⁵

All have not the same capacity. It is in the nature of things, impossible. ... I would allow a man of intellect to earn more, I would not cramp his talent. ...⁶

I want to bring about an equalization of status. The working classes have all these centuries been isolated and relegated to a lower status. ... I want to allow no differentiation between the son of a weaver, of an agriculturist and of a school master.⁷

Complete renunciation of one's possessions is a thing which very few even among ordinary folk are capable of. All that can legitimately be expected of the wealthy class is that they should hold

³ *Young India*, March 26, 1931.

⁴ *Harijan*, November 2, 1934.

⁵ M. K. Gandhi, *Constructive Program: Its Meaning and Place* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1945), second edition, Chapter 13, pp. 20–22.

⁶ *Young India*, November 26, 1931.

⁷ *Harijan*, January 15, 1938.

their riches and talents in trust and use them for the service of the society. To insist on more would be to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs.⁸

... Regard human labor [as] more even than money and you have an untapped and inexhaustible source of income which ever increases with use. ...⁹

... Swaraj as conceived of by me does not mean the end of ... capital. Accumulated capital means ruling power. I am for the establishment of right relations between capital and labor ... I do not wish for the supremacy of the one over the other. I do not think there is any natural antagonism between them. The rich and the poor will always be with us. ...¹⁰

I do not believe the capitalists and the landlords are all exploiters by an inherent necessity or there is a basic or irreconcilable antagonism between their interests and those of the masses. All exploitation is based on the coöperation, willing or forced, of the exploited. ...¹¹

[Destruction] of the capitalist must mean destruction in the end of the worker, and no human being is so bad as to be beyond redemption, no human being is so perfect as to warrant his destroying him whom he wrongly considers to be wholly evil.¹²

There is in English a very potent word, and you have it in French also, all the languages of the world have it—it is “No,” and the secret we have hit upon is that when Capital wants Labor to say “Yes,” Labor roars out “No,” if it means “No.” And immediately Labor comes to recognize that it has got its choice of saying “Yes” when it wants to ... and “No” when it wants to. ... Labor is free of Capital and Capital has to woo Labor. And it would not matter in the slightest degree that Capital has guns and even poison gas at its disposal. Capital would still be perfectly helpless if Labor would assert its dignity by making good its “No.” Labor does not need to

⁸ Prayer speech to village work trainees, April 11, 1945. Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1956), Volume I, Chapter 3, p. 66.

⁹ Letter to the British Governor of Bengal, December 8, 1945, M. K. Gandhi, *Gandhi's Correspondence with the Government, 1944-1947* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1959), p. 109.

¹⁰ *Young India*, January 8, 1925.

¹¹ *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, August 3, 1934.

¹² *Young India*, March 26, 1931.

retaliate but ... stand defiant, receiving the bullets and poison gas, and still insist upon its “No.” ... [A] laborer who courts death and has the courage to die without even carrying arms, with no weapon of self-defence, shows a courage of a much higher degree than a man who is armed from top to toe.¹³

... Prophets and supermen are born only once in an age. But if even a single individual realizes the ideal of [Non-violence] in its fullness, he covers and redeems the whole society. Once Jesus had blazed the trail, his twelve disciples could carry on his mission without his presence. It needed the perseverance and genius of so many generations of scientists to discover the laws of electricity but today everybody, even children, use electric power in their daily life. Similarly, it will not always need a perfect being to administer an ideal State, once it has come into being: What is needed is a thorough social awakening to begin with. The rest will follow. ...¹⁴

Industrialism is, I am afraid, going to be a curse for mankind. Exploitation of one nation by another cannot go on for all time: Industrialism depends entirely on your capacity to exploit, on foreign markets' being open to you and on the absence of competition. ... And why should I think of industrializing India to exploit other nations? Don't you see the tragedy of the situation—that we can find work for our three hundred millions unemployed but England can find none for its three millions and is faced with a problem that baffles the greatest intellects of England. The future of industrialism is dark. ... And if the future of industrialism is dark for the West, would it not be darker still for India?¹⁵

... I have no quarrel with steamships or telegraphs. They may stay, if they can, without the support of industrialism and all it connotes. They are not an end. [But] we must not suffer exploitation for the sake of steamships and telegraphs. ...

... To change to industrialism is to court disaster. The present

¹³ M. K. Gandhi, *India's Case for Swaraj*, compiled and edited by Waman P. Kabadi (Bombay: Yeshanand & Co., 2nd ed., 1932), p. 393.

¹⁴ In conversation with village workers, 1942, Pyarelal, *The Last Phase*, Volume II, Chapter 21, p. 633.

¹⁵ *Young India*, November 12, 1931.

distress is undoubtedly insufferable. Pauperism must go. But industrialism is no remedy. The evil does not lie in the use of bullock carts. It lies in our selfishness and want of consideration for our neighbors. If we have no love for our neighbors, no change, however revolutionary, can do us any good. And if we love our neighbors, the paupers of India, for their sakes, we shall use what they make for us [homespun cloth], for their sakes we who should know shall not engage in an immoral traffic with the West in the shape of buying the foreign fineries and taking them to the villages.

[The] one great change to make is to discard foreign cloth and reinstate the ancient cottage industry of handspinning. We must thus restore our ancient and healthgiving industry if we would resist industrialism.

I do not fight shy of capital. I fight capitalism. The West teaches one to avoid concentration of capital, to avoid a racial war in another and deadlier form. Capital and Labor need not be antagonistic to each other. I cannot picture to myself a time when no man shall be richer than another. But I do picture to myself a time when the rich will spurn to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor and the poor will cease to envy the rich. Even in a most perfect world, we shall fail to avoid inequalities, but we can and must avoid strife and bitterness. . . .¹⁶

India's destiny lies not along the bloody way of the West, of which she shows signs of tiredness but along the bloodless way of peace that comes from a simple and godly life. *India is in danger of losing her soul.* She cannot lose it and live. She must not, therefore, lazily and helplessly say, "I cannot escape the onrush from the West." She must be strong enough to resist it for her own sake and that of the world.¹⁷

. . . I make bold to say that the Europeans themselves will have to remodel their outlook if they are not to perish under the weight of the comforts to which they are becoming slaves.

It may be that my reading is wrong, but I know that for India to run after the Golden Fleece is to court certain death. Let us engrave on our hearts the motto of a Western philosopher, "plain

¹⁶ *Young India*, October 7, 1926.

¹⁷ *Young India*, October 7, 1931.

living and high thinking." Today it is certain that the millions cannot have high living and we the few who profess to do the thinking for the masses run the risk, in a vain search after high living, of missing high thinking.¹⁸

[Those] from the West should not consciously or unconsciously lay violent hands upon the manners, customs and habits of the [East] insofar as they are not repugnant to fundamental ethics and morality. . . . Tolerate what is good in them and do not hastily, with your preconceived notions, judge them. . . . In spite of your belief in the greatness of Western civilization and in spite of your pride in all your achievements, I plead with you for humility and ask you to leave some little room for doubt. . . . Let us each one live our life and if ours is the right life, where is the cause for hurry [to change it]? . . .¹⁹

There is a growing body of enlightened opinion which distrusts [Western] civilization, which has insatiable material ambition at one end, and consequent war at the other. But whether good or bad, why must India become industrial in the Western sense?

The Western civilization is urban. Small countries like England or Italy may afford to urbanize their systems. A big country like America with a very sparse population, perhaps cannot do otherwise. But one would think that a big country, with a teeming population [of] an ancient rural tradition which has hitherto answered its purpose, need not, must not, copy the Western model. What is good for one nation situated in one condition is not necessarily good enough for another, differently situated. One man's food is often another man's poison. Physical geography of a country has a predominant share in determining its culture. A fur coat may be a necessity for the dweller in the polar regions, it will smother those living in the equatorial regions.²⁰

. . . The distinguishing characteristic of modern civilization is an infinite multiplicity of human wants. . . . The modern or Western insatiableness arises really from want of a living faith in a future state, and therefore also in Divinity. The restraint of ancient

¹⁸ *Young India*, April 4, 1931.

¹⁹ Speech to Young Men's Christian Association, Colombo, Ceylon, in *Young India*, December 8, 1927.

²⁰ *Young India*, July 25, 1929.

or Eastern civilization arises from a belief, often in spite of ourselves, in a future state and the existence of A Divine Power. . . .²¹

If we are to make progress we must not repeat history but make new history. . . .²²

[Though mankind] is not all of the same age, the same height, the same skin and the same intellect, these inequalities are temporary and superficial, the soul that is hidden beneath this earthly crust is one and the same for all men and women belonging to all climes. [There] is a real and substantial unity in all the variety that we see around us. The word "inequality" has a bad odor about it, and it has led to arrogance and inhumanities, both in the East and the West. What is true about men is also true about nations, which are but groups of men. . . .

[There] is no such thing as a literal complete revival of ancient tradition possible, even if it were desirable. . . . And I am humble enough to admit that there is much we can profitably assimilate from the West. Wisdom is no monopoly of one continent or one race. My resistance to Western civilization is really a resistance to its indiscriminate and thoughtless imitation based on the assumption that Asiatics are fit only to copy everything that comes from the West. I do believe that if India has patience enough to go through the fire of suffering and to resist any unlawful encroachment upon its own civilization, which imperfect though it undoubtedly is, has hitherto stood the ravages of time, she can make a lasting contribution to the peace and solid progress of the world.²³

. . . There is nothing to prevent me from profiting by the light that may come out of the West. Only I must take care that I am not overpowered by the glamor of the West. I must not mistake the glamor for true light.²⁴

. . . The political domination of England is bad enough. The cultural is infinitely worse. For whilst we resent and therefore endeavor to resist the political domination, we hug the cultural, not

realizing in our infatuation that when the cultural domination is complete the political will defy resistance. . . .²⁵

Mere withdrawal of the English is not independence. It means the consciousness in the average villager that he is the maker of his own destiny, he is his own legislator through his chosen representative.²⁶

India became impoverished when our cities became foreign markets and began to drain the villages dry by dumping cheap and shoddy goods from foreign lands.²⁷

When I succeed in ridding the villages of their poverty, I have won [Independence].²⁸

I would say if the village perishes India will perish too. India will be no more India. . . . The revival of the village is possible only when it is no more exploited. Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition and marketing come in. Therefore we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools they can make and can afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others.²⁹

What I object to is the "craze" for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labor-saving machinery. Men go on "saving labor" till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labor not for a fraction of mankind but for all, I want the concentration of wealth not in the hands of a few but in the hands of all. Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labor but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might.

²⁵ *Young India*, July 9, 1925.

²⁶ *Young India*, February 13, 1930.

²⁷ *Harijan*, February 27, 1937.

²⁸ Louis Fischer, *Mahatma Gandhi: His Life and Message for the World* (New York: New American Library, 1954), Chapter 14, p. 351.

²⁹ *Harijan*, August 29, 1936.

²¹ *Young India*, June 2, 1927.

²² *Young India*, May 6, 1926.

²³ *Young India*, August 11, 1927.

²⁴ *Harijan*, January 13, 1940.

... The supreme consideration is man. The machine should not tend to make atrophied the limbs of man. For instance, I would make intelligent exceptions. Take the case of the Singer Sewing Machine. It is one of the few useful things ever invented and there is a romance about the device itself. Singer saw his wife laboring over the tedious process of sewing and seaming with her own hands and simply out of his love for her he devised the sewing machine in order to save her from unnecessary labor. He, however, saved not only her labor but also the labor of everyone who could purchase a sewing machine.

... This mad rush for wealth must cease, and the laborer must be assured not only of a living wage but of a daily task that is not a mere drudgery. The machine will, under these conditions, be as much a help to the man working it as to the State or the man who owns it. ... The sewing machine had love at its back. ... The saving of labor of the individual should be the object and the honest humanitarian consideration, and not greed the motive. Replace greed by love and everything will come right.³⁰

Pandit Nehru wants industrialization because he thinks that if it is socialized, it would be free from the evils of capitalism. My own view is that the evils are inherent in industrialism, and no amount of socialization can eradicate them.³¹

As a moderately intelligent man, I know man cannot live without industry. Therefore, I cannot be opposed to industrialization. But I have a great concern about introducing machine industry. The machine produces too much too fast, and brings with it a sort of economic system which I cannot grasp. I do not want to accept something when I see its evil effects, which outweigh whatever good it brings with it. I want the dumb millions of our land to be healthy and happy, and I want them to grow spiritually. As yet, for this purpose we do not need the machine. There are many, too many, idle hands. But as we grow in understanding, if we feel the need of machines, we certainly will have them. We want industry, let us become industrious. Let us become more self-dependent, then we will not follow the other people's lead so much. We shall introduce machines if and when we need them. Once we have

³⁰ *Young India*, November 13, 1924.

³¹ *Harijan*, September 29, 1940.

shaped our life on [Nonviolence], we shall know how to control the machine.³²

... Your "mass production" is ... production by the fewest possible number through the aid of highly complicated machinery. ... My machinery must be of the most elementary type, which I can put in the homes of the millions.³³

There is a difference between the civilization of the East—the civilization of India—and that of the West. It is not generally realized wherein the difference lies. Our geography is different, our history is different, our ways of living are different. Our continent, though vast, is a speck of the globe, but it is the most thickly populated, barring China. Well, now, the economics and civilization of a country where the pressure of population on land is greatest are and must be different from those of a country where the pressure is least. Sparsely populated, America may have need of machinery. India may not need it at all. Where there are millions and millions of units of idle labor, it is no use thinking of labor-saving devices. ...

Not that there is not enough land. ... It is absurd to say India is overpopulated and the surplus population must die. ... Only we have got to be industrious and make two blades of grass grow where one grows today.

The remedy is to identify ourselves with the poor villager and to help him make the land yield its plenty, help him produce what we need and confine ourselves to use what he produces, live as he lives and persuade him to take to more rational ways of diet and living.³⁴

Let not capitalists and other entrenched personages range themselves against the poor villagers and prevent them from bettering their hard lot by dignified labor.³⁵

["What would happen in a free India?" asked Louis Fischer of Gandhi, visiting him for a week in June, 1942. "What is your program for the improvement of the lot of the peasantry?"]

³² *Community Service News*, September-October, 1946.

³³ *Harijan*, November 2, 1934.

³⁴ *Harijan*, November 5, 1935.

³⁵ *Harijan*, October 27, 1946.

The peasants would take the land. We would not have to tell them to take it. They would take it.

["Would the landlords be compensated?" Fischer asked.]

No. That would be fiscally impossible. You see, [Gandhi smiled] our gratitude to our millionaire friends [who supported Gandhi's ashrams and works] does not prevent us from saying such things. The village would become a self-governing unit living its own life.

["But there would of course be a national government," Fischer said.]

No.

["But surely you need a national administration to direct the railroads, the telegraphs and so on."]

I would not shed a tear if there were no railroads in India.

["But that would bring suffering to the peasant, he needs city goods and he must sell his produce in other parts of the country and abroad. The village needs electricity and irrigation. No single village could build a hydro-electric power station or an irrigation system like the Sukkhar barrage in Sind."]

And that has been a big disappointment [Gandhi interjected]. It has put the whole province in debt.

["I know, but it has brought much new land under cultivation, and it is a boon to the people."]

I realize [Gandhi said shaking his head] that despite my views there will be a central government administration. However; I do not believe in the accepted Western form of democracy with its universal voting for parliamentary representatives.

["What would you have India do?"]

There are seven hundred thousand villages in India. Each would be organized according to the will of its citizens, all of them voting. Then there would be seven hundred thousand votes and not four hundred million. Each village, in other words, would have one vote. The villages would elect their district administrations, and the district administrations would elect the provincial administrations, and these in turn would elect a president who would be the national chief executive.

["That is very much like the Soviet system."]

I did not know that [Gandhi admitted]. I don't mind.³⁶

³⁶ Louis Fischer, *A Week with Gandhi*, pp. 55-56.

An ideal Indian village will be so constructed as to lend itself to perfect sanitation. It will have cottages with sufficient light and ventilation built of material obtainable within a radius of five miles of it. The cottages will have courtyards enabling householders to plant vegetables for domestic use and to house their cattle. The village lanes and streets will be free of all avoidable dust. It will have wells according to its needs and accessible to all. It will have houses of worship for all, also a common meeting place, a village common for grazing its cattle, a coöperative dairy, primary and secondary schools in which industrial education will be the central fact, and it will have panchayats [village councils of five persons elected by the people] for settling disputes. It will produce its own grains, vegetables and fruit, and its own [homespun material]. This is roughly my idea of a model village. . . . Given . . . coöperation among the people, almost the whole of the program other than model cottages can be worked out at an expenditure within the means of the villagers . . . without Government assistance. . . . The greatest tragedy is the hopeless unwillingness of the villagers to better their lot.³⁷

. . . There will be a compulsory service of village guards who will be selected by rotation from the register maintained by the village. . . . Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office. . . . Here there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. . . . He and his village are able to defy the might of a world. For the law governing every villager is that he will suffer death in the defence of his and his village's honor.³⁸

We have long been accustomed to think that power comes only through legislative assemblies. I have regarded this belief as a grave error brought about by inertia or hypnotism. A superficial study of British history has made us think that all power percolates to the people from parliaments. The truth is that power resides in the people, and it is entrusted for the time being to those whom they may choose as their representatives. Parliaments have no power or

³⁷ *Harijan*, January 9, 1937.

³⁸ *Harijan*, July 26, 1942.

even existence independently of the people. . . . Civil Disobedience is the storehouse of power. Imagine a whole people unwilling to conform to the laws of the legislature, and prepared to suffer the consequences of non-compliance! They will bring the whole legislative and executive machinery to a standstill. The police and the military are of use to coerce minorities, however powerful they may be. But no police or military coercion can bend the resolute will of a people who are out for suffering to the uttermost.³⁹

. . . Simple homes from which there is nothing to take away require no policing, the palaces of the rich must have strong guards to protect them. . . . So must huge factories. Rurally organized India will run less risk of foreign invasion than urbanized India, well-equipped with military, naval and air forces.⁴⁰

[If] India is to attain true freedom, and through India the whole world also, then sooner or later the fact must be recognized that people will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts, not in palaces. [The millions] of people will never be able to live at peace with each other in towns and palaces. They will then have no recourse but to resort to both violence and untruth.

[Without] truth and non-violence there can be nothing but destruction for humanity. We can realize truth and non-violence only in the simplicity of village life . . . I must not fear if the world today is going the wrong way. It may be that India too will go that way and like the proverbial moth, burn itself eventually in the flame round which it dances more and more fiercely. But it is my bounden duty up to my last breath to try to protect India and through India, the entire world from such a doom.⁴¹

[Gandhi believed the only method of achieving independence was work—welfare work—among the people, which he called “constructive work” or “constructive program.”]

[For] such an indefinable thing as Swaraj [Self-Rule] people must have previous training in doing things of [national] interest. Such work must throw together the people and their leaders, whom they would trust implicitly. Trust begotten in the pursuit of

³⁹ M. K. Gandhi, *Constructive Program*, Chapter 1, pp. 8–9.

⁴⁰ *Harijan*, December 30, 1939.

⁴¹ Letter to Nehru, October, 1945, in *Bhoodan*, March 26, 1960.

continuous constructive work becomes a tremendous asset at the critical moment. . . . Individual Civil Disobedience among an unprepared people and by leaders not known to or trusted by them is of no avail, and mass Civil Disobedience is an impossibility. . . .⁴²

[The] Constructive Program is the truthful and non-violent way of winning Poorna Swaraj [Complete Independence]. . . .

Civil Disobedience, mass or individual, is an aid to Constructive effort and is a full substitute for armed revolt. Training is necessary as well for Civil Disobedience as for armed revolt. Only the ways are different. . . . Training for military revolt means learning the use of arms, ending perhaps in the atomic bomb. For Civil Disobedience it means the Constructive Program.

. . . Political pacts, we know, have been and can be [broken], but personal friendship with individuals cannot be. . . . Such friendships, selfless and genuine, must be the basis for political pacts. . . . [The] men composing the Government are not to be regarded as enemies. To regard them as such will be contrary to the non-violent spirit. Part we must, but as friends.

[The Constructive Program] should prove as absorbing as politics, so called, and platform oratory, and certainly more important and useful.⁴³

[It] is necessary to know the place of Civil Disobedience in a nation-wide non-violent effort.

It has three definite functions:

1. It can be effectively offered for the redress of a local wrong.
2. It can be offered without regard to effect, though aimed at a particular wrong or evil, by way of self-immolation in order to rouse local consciousness or conscience. . . .
3. . . . Civil Disobedience can never be directed for a general cause, such as for Independence. The issue must be definite and capable of being clearly understood and within the power of the opponent to yield. . . .

[When] Civil Disobedience is itself devised for the attainment of Independence, previous preparation is necessary, and it has to

⁴² *Young India*, January 9, 1930.

⁴³ M. K. Gandhi, *Constructive Program*, Foreword to 1945 edition, p. iii.

be backed by the visible and conscious effort of those who are engaged in the battle. 'Civil Disobedience is thus a stimulation for the fighters and a challenge to the opponent. . . . Civil Disobedience in terms of Independence without the coöperation of the millions by way of constructive effort is mere bravado and worse than useless.⁴⁴

[Gandhi intended the members of the Congress Party, who took the lead in the independence movement, to carry on the Constructive Program.]

. . . In our country there has been a divorce between labor and intelligence. The result has been stagnation. . . .

[One] ought to learn how to handle and make simple tools. Imagine the unifying and educative effect of the whole nation simultaneously taking part in the processes up to spinning! Consider the levelling effect of the bond of common labor between the rich and the poor.⁴⁵

[Home-spun cloth] to me is the symbol of the unity of Indian humanity, of its economic freedom and equality, and therefore, ultimately, in the poetic expression of Jawaharlal Nehru, "the livery of India's freedom."⁴⁶

Divorce between intelligence and labor has resulted in criminal neglect of the villages. And so, instead of having graceful hamlets dotting the land, we have dung-heaps. The approach to many villages is not a refreshing experience. . . .⁴⁷

. . . Village economy cannot be complete without the essential village industries such as hand-grinding, hand-pounding, soap-making, paper-making, match-making, tanning, oil-pressing, etc. Congressmen can interest themselves in these and, if they are villagers or will settle down in the village, they will give these industries a new life and a new dress. All should make it a point of honor to use only village articles whenever and wherever available. Given the demand, there is no doubt that most of our wants can be sup-

plied from our villages. When we have become village-minded, we will not want imitations of the West or machine-made products, but we will develop a true national taste in keeping with the vision of a new India, in which pauperism, starvation and idleness will be unknown.⁴⁸

. . . If India was pulsating with new life, if we were all in earnest about winning independence in the quickest manner possible by truthful and non-violent means, there would not be a leper or beggar in India uncared for and unaccounted for. . . .⁴⁹

[So] far as the Harijans [Children of God—Gandhi's name for the untouchables] are concerned, every Hindu should make common cause with them and befriend them in their awful isolation—such isolation as perhaps the world has never seen in the monstrous immensity one witnesses in India. I know from experience how difficult the task is. But it is part of the task of building the edifice of [Home-rule]. . . .⁵⁰

. . . If we are to reach our goal through non-violent effort, we may not leave to the future government the fate of thousands of men and women who are laboring under the curse of intoxicants and narcotics.

Medical men can make a most effective contribution toward the removal of this evil. They have to discover ways of weaning the drunkard and the opium addict from the curse.

Women and students have a special opportunity in advancing this reform. By many acts of loving service they can acquire on addicts a hold which will compel them to listen to the appeal to give up the evil habit.

Congress [Party] committees can open recreation booths where the tired laborer will rest his limbs, get healthy and cheap refreshments, and find suitable games. All this work is fascinating and uplifting. The non-violent approach to [Self-Rule] is a novel approach. In it old values give place to new. In the violent way such reforms may find no place. Believers in that way, in their impatience and, shall I say, ignorance, put off such things to the day of deliverance.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Chapter 18, pp. 28–29.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Chapter 4, p. 11.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Chapter 6, p. 15.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Chapter 5, pp. 14–15.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Chapter 17, p. 25.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Chapter 2, p. 10.

They forget that lasting and healthy deliverance comes from within—from self-purification. . . .⁵¹

. . . Congressmen who want to build up the structure of [Self-Rule] from its very foundation dare not neglect the children. Foreign rule has unconsciously, though none the less surely, begun with the children in the field of education. Primary education is a farce designed without regard to the wants of the India of the villages, and for that matter, even of the cities. Basic education links the children, whether of the cities or the villages, to all that is best and lasting in India. It develops both the body and the mind, and keeps the child rooted to the soil with a glorious vision of the future in the realization of which he or she begins to take his or her share from the very commencement of his or her career in school. . . .⁵²

[Adult education] has been woefully neglected by Congressmen. Where they have not neglected it, they have been satisfied with teaching illiterates to read and write. If I had charge of adult education, I should begin with opening the minds of the adult pupils to the greatness and vastness of their country. The villager's India is contained in his village. . . . We have no notion of the ignorance prevailing in the villages. The villagers know nothing of foreign rule and its evils. What little knowledge they have picked up fills them with the awe the foreigner inspires. The result is the dread and hatred of the foreigner and his rule. They do not know how to get rid of it. They do not know that the foreigner's presence is due to their own weaknesses and their ignorance of the power they possess to rid themselves of the foreign rule. My adult education means, therefore, first, true political education of the adult by word of mouth. . . . Side by side with the education by mouth will be the literary education. . . .⁵³

. . . Congressmen have not felt the call to see that women became equal partners in the fight for [Self-Rule]. They have not realized that woman must be the true helpmate of man in the mission of service. Woman has been suppressed under custom and law, for which man was responsible, and in the shaping of which she had

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Chapter 3, pp. 10–11.

⁵² *Ibid.*, Chapter 7, pp. 15–16.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Chapter 8, pp. 16–17.

no hand. . . . But as every right in a non-violent society proceeds from the previous performance of a duty, it follows that rules of social conduct must be framed by mutual coöperation and consultation. They can never be imposed from outside. Men have not realized this truth in its fullness in their behavior toward women. They have considered themselves to be lords and masters . . . instead of . . . friends and co-workers. . . .

. . . Wives should not be dolls and objects of indulgence, but should be treated as honored comrades in common service. To this end, those who have not received a liberal education should receive such instruction as is possible from their husbands. . . .⁵⁴

This is . . . the outcome of conversations I had with some co-workers in Sevagram. . . .

. . . Many people do many things, big and small, without connecting them with Non-violence or Independence. They have then their limited value, as expected. The same man appearing as a civilian may be of no consequence, but appearing in his capacity as General he is a big personage, holding the lives of millions at his mercy. Similarly, the [spinning wheel] in the hands of a poor widow brings a paltry [penny] to her, in the hands of a Jawaharlal it is an instrument of India's freedom. It is the office which gives the [spinning wheel] its dignity. It is the office assigned to the Constructive Program which gives it an irresistible prestige and power.

Such at least is my view. It may be that of a mad man. If it makes no appeal to the Congressman, I must be rejected. For my handling of Civil Disobedience without the Constructive Program will be like a paralyzed hand attempting to lift a spoon.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Chapter 9, pp. 17–18.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, "Conclusion," p. 29.

LOVE VERSUS WAR AND DICTATORS

[Gandhi's correspondence with children gave him much joy, and he attended to it with the same devotion and care that he showed all his work. A little girl once wrote him: "We are working to prevent war and making posters. God bless you." Gandhi gave this reply:]

I was delighted to have your sweet notes with funny drawings made by you. . . . Yes, it is little children like you who will stop all war. This means that you never quarrel with other boys and girls or among yourselves. You cannot stop big wars if you carry on little wars yourselves. . . . May God bless you all. My kisses to you all if you will let me kiss you. . . .¹

. . . It is a trite saying that one half the world knows not how the other lives. Who can say what sores might be healed, what hurts solved, were the doings of each half of the world's inhabitants understood and appreciated by the other?²

War with all its glorification of brute force is essentially a degrading thing. It demoralizes those who are trained for it. It brutalizes men of naturally gentle character. It outrages every beautiful canon of morality. Its path of glory is foul with the passions of lust, and red with the blood of murder. This is not the pathway to our goal. The grandest aid to development of strong, pure, beautiful character which is our aim, is the endurance of suffering. Self-restraint, unselfishness, patience, gentleness, these are the flowers

¹ Entry for August 24, 1932, in Mahadev Desai, *The Diary of Mahadev Desai*, pp. 308-309.

² *Indian Opinion*, June 2, 1906.

which spring beneath the feet of those who accept but refuse to impose suffering. . . .³

A pacifism which can see the cruelties only of occasional military warfare and is blind to the continuous cruelties of our social system is worthless. Unless our pacifism finds expression in the broad human movement which is seeking not merely the end of war but our equally non-pacifist civilization as a whole, it will be of little account in the onward march of mankind. The spirit of life will sweep on, quite uninfluenced by it.⁴

Immediately the spirit of exploitation is gone armaments will be felt as a positively unbearable burden. Real disarmament cannot come unless the nations of the world cease to exploit one another.⁵

A society which anticipates and provides for meeting violence with violence will either lead a precarious life or create big cities and magazines for defence purposes. It is not unreasonable to presume from the state of Europe that its cities, its monster factories and huge armaments are so intimately interrelated that the one cannot exist without the other.⁶

Even if Hitler was so minded, he could not devastate seven hundred thousand non-violent villages. He would himself become non-violent in the process.⁷

[As Gandhi watched the darkness advance during the 1930's across China, Abyssinia, Spain, Czechoslovakia and above all, Germany, his zeal for pure pacifism grew. He saw the Second World War approaching.]

. . . I have the unquenchable faith that, of all the countries in the world, India is the one country which can learn the art of non-violence, that if the test were applied even now, there would be found, perhaps, thousands of men and women who would be willing to die without harboring malice against their persecutors. I have harangued crowds and told them repeatedly that they might

³ *Indian Opinion*, February 12, 1910.

⁴ *Young India*, November 18, 1926.

⁵ *Harijan*, November 12, 1938.

⁶ *Harijan*, January 13, 1940.

⁷ *Harijan*, November 4, 1939.

have to suffer much, including death by shooting. Did not thousands of men and women brave hardships during the salt campaign equal to any that soldiers are called upon to bear? No different capacity is required from what has been already evinced, if India has to contend against an invader. Only it will have to be on vaster scale.

One thing ought not to be forgotten. India unarmed would not require to be destroyed through poison gas or bombardment. . . . Free India can have no enemy. And if her people have learnt the art of saying resolutely "No" and acting up to it, I daresay no one would want to invade her. Our economy would be modelled as to prove no temptation for the exploiter.

. . . The world is looking for something new and unique from India. . . .

. . . For India to enter into the race for armaments is to court suicide. With the loss of India to non-violence the last hope of the world will be gone. . . .⁸

. . . I believe that Independent India can discharge her duty towards a groaning world only by adopting a simple but ennobled life by developing her thousands of cottages and living at peace with the world.

Whether such plain living is possible for an isolated nation, however large geographically and numerically in the face of a world armed to the teeth, and in the midst of pomp and circumstance, is a question open to the doubt of a skeptic. The answer is straight and simple. If plain life is worth living, then the attempt is worth making, even though only an individual or a group makes the effort.⁹

Several letters have been received by me asking me to declare my views about the Arab-Jew question in Palestine and the persecution of the Jews in Germany. It is not without hesitation that I venture to offer my views on this very difficult question.

My sympathies are all with the Jews. I have known them intimately in South Africa. Some of them became lifelong compan-

⁸ *Harijan*, October 14, 1939.

⁹ *Harijan*, September 1, 1946.

ions. Through these friends I came to learn much of their age-long persecution. They have been the untouchables of Christianity. The parallel between their treatment by Christians and the treatment of untouchables by Hindus is very close. Religious sanction has been invoked in both cases for the justification of the inhuman treatment meted out to them. . . .

But my sympathy does not blind me to the requirements of justice. The cry for a national home for the Jews does not make much appeal to me. . . . Why should they not, like other peoples of the earth, make that country their home where they are born and where they earn their livelihood?

The nobler course would be to insist on a just treatment of the Jews wherever they are born and bred. The Jews born in France are French in precisely the same sense that Christians born in France are French. If the Jews have no home but Palestine, will they relish the idea of being forced to leave the other parts of the world in which they are settled? . . .

But the German persecution of the Jews seems to have no parallel in history. . . .

Germany is showing to the world how efficiently violence can be worked when it is not hampered by any hypocrisy or weakness masquerading as humanitarianism. It is also showing how hideous, terrible and terrifying it looks in its nakedness.

Can the Jews resist this organized and shameless persecution? Is there a way to preserve their self-respect, and not to feel helpless, neglected and forlorn? I submit there is. . . . If I were a Jew and were born in Germany and earned my livelihood there, I would claim Germany as my home even as the tallest gentile German might, and challenge him to shoot me or cast me in the dungeon; I would refuse to be expelled or to submit to discriminating treatment. And for doing this I should not wait for the fellow-Jews to join me in civil resistance, but would have confidence that in the end the rest were bound to follow my example. If one Jew or all the Jews were to accept the prescription here offered, he or they cannot be worse off than now. And suffering voluntarily undergone will bring them an inner strength and joy which no number of resolutions of sympathy passed in the world outside Germany can. . . .

. . . I am convinced that, if someone with courage and vision can

arise among them to lead them in non-violent action, the winter of their despair can in the twinkling of an eye be turned into the summer of hope. And what has today become a degrading manhunt can be turned into a calm and determined stand offered by unarmed men and women possessing the strength of suffering given to them by Jehovah. It will be then a truly religious resistance offered against the Godless fury of dehumanized man. The German Jews will score a lasting victory over the German gentiles in the sense that they will have converted the latter to an appreciation of human dignity. They will have rendered service to fellow-Germans and proved their title to be the real Germans as against those who are today dragging, however unknowingly, the German name into the mire.

And now a word to the Jews in Palestine. I have no doubt that they are going about things in the wrong way. The Palestine of the Biblical conception is not a geographical tract. It is in their hearts. But if they must look to the Palestine of geography as their national home, it is wrong to enter it under the shadow of the British gun. A religious act cannot be performed with the aid of the bayonet or the bomb. They can settle in Palestine only by the goodwill of the Arabs. They should seek to convert the Arab heart. They can offer Satyagraha in front of the Arabs and offer themselves to be shot or thrown into the Dead Sea without raising a little finger against them. They will find the world opinion in their favor in their religious aspiration. There are hundreds of ways of reasoning with the Arabs, if they will only discard the help of the British bayonet. As it is, they are co-sharers with the British in despoiling a people who have done no wrong to them.

... Every country is their home, including Palestine, not by aggression but by loving service. . . .¹⁰

... If [the Jewish people] were to adopt the matchless weapon of non-violence, whose use their best prophets have taught and which Jesus the Jew who gladly wore the crown of thorns bequeathed to a groaning world, their case would be the world's, and I have no doubt that among the many things the Jews have given to the world, this would be the best and the brightest. It is twice blessed.

¹⁰ *Harijan*, November 26, 1938.

It will make them happy and rich in the true sense of the word, and it will be a soothing balm to the aching world.¹¹

... I happen to have a Jewish friend [Herman Kallenbach, who purchased the farm for Gandhi's first ashram in South Africa] living with me. He has an intellectual belief in non-violence. But he says he cannot pray for Hitler. He is so full of anger over the German atrocities that he cannot speak of them with restraint. I do not quarrel with him over his anger. He wants to be non-violent, but the sufferings of his fellow-Jews are too much for him to bear. What is true of him is true of thousands of Jews who have no thought even of "loving the enemy." With them, as with millions, "revenge is sweet, to forgive is divine."¹²

It is no non-violence if we love merely those that love us. It is non-violence only when we love those that hate us. I know how difficult it is to follow this grand law of love. But are not all great and good things difficult to do? . . .¹³

... Human nature will find itself only when it fully realizes that to be human it has to cease to be beastly or brutal. . . .¹⁴

A violent man's activity is most visible, while it lasts. But it is always transitory. . . . Hitler . . . Mussolini . . . and Stalin . . . are able to show the immediate effectiveness of violence. . . . But the effects of Buddha's non-violent action persist and are likely to grow with age. And the more it is practiced, the more effective and inexhaustible it becomes, and ultimately the whole world stands agape and exclaims, "A miracle has happened." All miracles are due to the silent and effective working of invisible force. Non-violence is the most invisible and the most effective.¹⁵

Belief in non-violence is based on the assumption that human nature in the essence is one and therefore unfailingly responds to the advances of love. . . .

How can non-violence combat aerial warfare; seeing that there are no personal contacts? The reply to this is that behind the death-

¹¹ *Harijan*, July 21, 1946.

¹² *Harijan*, February 18, 1939.

¹³ Letter to a friend, December 31, 1934, in Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Selections from Gandhi*, p. 18.

¹⁴ *Harijan*, October 8, 1938.

¹⁵ *Harijan*, March 20, 1937.

dealing bomb there is the human hand that releases it, and behind that still is the human heart that sets the hand in motion. And at the back of the policy of terrorism is the assumption that terrorism if applied in a sufficient measure, will produce the desired result, namely, bend the adversary to the tyrant's will. But supposing a people make up their mind that they will never do the tyrant's will, nor retaliate with the tyrant's own methods, the tyrant will not find it worth his while to go on with his terrorism. . . .¹⁶

. . . If some other country resorts to methods which I consider to be inhuman, I may not follow them. . . . The caliphs [heads of Islam] issued definite instructions to the armies of Islam that they should not destroy the utility services, they should not harass the aged and women and children, and I do not know that the arms of Islam suffered any disaster because the armies obeyed these instructions.¹⁷

. . . I see neither bravery nor sacrifice in destroying life or property for offence or defence. I would far rather leave, if I must, my crops and homestead for the enemy to use than destroy them for the sake of preventing their use by him. There is reason, sacrifice and even bravery in so leaving my homestead and crops if I do so not out of fear, but because I refuse to regard anyone as my enemy. . . .¹⁸

[One who believes in violence will wish God "to save the King, scatter his enemies, frustrate their knavish tricks"—as in the British national anthem.] If God is the Incarnation of Mercy, He is not likely to listen to such prayer but it cannot but affect the minds of those who sing it, and in times of war it simply kindles their hatred and anger to white heat. [But the soldier of non-violence] may give the supposed enemy a sense of right, and bless him. His prayer for himself will always be that the spring of compassion in him may ever be flowing, and that he may ever grow in moral strength so that he may face death fearlessly.¹⁹

. . . We have to live and move and have our being in [non-violence], even as Hitler does in [violence]. . . . Hitler is awake all

the twenty-four hours of the day in perfecting his [practices]. He wins because he pays the price.²⁰

[Dictators] have up to now always found ready response to the violence they have used. Within their experience, they have not come across organized non-violent resistance on an appreciable scale, if at all. Therefore, it is not only highly likely, but . . . inevitable, that they would recognize the superiority of non-violent resistance over any display of violence that they may be capable of putting forth.

. . . Supposing a people make up their mind they will never do the tyrant's will, nor retaliate with the tyrant's own methods, the tyrant will not find it worth his while to go on with his terrorism. If sufficient food is given to the tyrant, a time will come when he will have more than his surfeit. If all the mice in the world held conference together and resolved that they would no more fear the cat but all run into her mouth, the mice would live.²¹

[While their country was being invaded, non-violent resisters] would offer themselves unarmed as fodder for the aggressor's cannon. . . . The unexpected spectacle of endless rows upon rows of men and women simply dying rather than surrender to the will of an aggressor must ultimately melt him and his soldiery.²²

Who enjoys the freedom [afterward] when whole divisions of armed soldiers rush into a hailstorm of bullets to be mown down? But in the case of non-violence, everybody seems to start with the assumption that the non-violent method must be set down as a failure unless he himself at least lives to enjoy the success thereof. This is both illogical and invidious. In Satyagraha [Soul-Force] more than in armed warfare, it may be said that we find life by losing it.²³

. . . We are discussing a final substitute for armed conflict called war, in naked terms, mass murder.²⁴

The science of war leads one to dictatorship pure and simple. The science of non-violence alone can lead on to pure democracy.²⁵

¹⁶ *Harijan*, December 24, 1938.

¹⁷ *Harijan*, May 24, 1942.

¹⁸ *Harijan*, March 22, 1942.

¹⁹ *Harijan*, October 13, 1940.

²⁰ *Harijan*, July 21, 1940.

²¹ *Harijan*, December 24, 1938.

²² *Harijan*, April 13, 1940.

²³ *Harijan*, July 28, 1940.

²⁴ *Harijan*, May 12, 1946.

²⁵ *Harijan*, October 15, 1938.

... Where a whole nation is militarized the way of military life becomes part and parcel of its civilization.²⁶

I believe all war to be wholly wrong. But if we scrutinize the motives of two warring parties, we may find one to be in the right and the other in the wrong. For instance, if A wishes to seize B's country, B is obviously the wronged one. Both fight with arms. I do not believe in violent warfare but all the same B, whose cause is just, deserves my moral help and blessings.²⁷

My resistance to war does not carry me to the point of thwarting those who wish to take part in it. I reason with them. I put before them the better way and leave them to make the choice.²⁸

The present war is the saturation point in violence. It spells to my mind also its doom. Daily I have testimony of the fact that [non-violence] was never before appreciated by mankind as it is today. . . .²⁹

["How would you meet the atom bomb . . . with non-violence?" Margaret Bourke-White, on assignment for *Life* magazine, asked Gandhi on January 30, 1948, a few hours before he was assassinated.]

I will not go underground. I will not go into shelter. I will come out in the open and let the pilot see I have not a trace of ill-will against him. The pilot will not see our faces from his great height, I know. But the longing in our hearts—that he will not come to harm—would reach up to him and his eyes would be opened. If those thousands who were done to death in Hiroshima, if they had died with that prayerful action . . . their sacrifice would not have gone in vain.³⁰

[Non-violence] is the only thing the atom bomb cannot destroy. I did not move a muscle when I first heard that an atom bomb had wiped out Hiroshima. On the contrary, I said to myself, "Unless the world adopts non-violence, it will spell certain suicide for mankind."³¹

There have been cataclysmic changes in the world. Do I still adhere to my faith in Truth and Non-violence? Has not the atom bomb exploded that faith? Not only has it not done so but it has clearly demonstrated to me that the twins constitute the mightiest force in the world. Before them, the atom bomb is of no effect. The opposing forces are wholly different in kind, the one moral and spiritual, the other physical and material. The one is infinitely superior to the other, which by its very nature has an end. The force of the spirit is ever progressive and endless. Its full expression makes it unconquerable in the world. . . . What is more, that force resides in everybody, man, woman and child, irrespective of the color of the skin. Only in many it lies dormant, but it is capable of being awakened by judicious training.³²

It has been suggested by American friends that the atom bomb will bring in Ahimsa [Non-violence] as nothing else can. It will, if it is meant that its destructive power will so disgust the world that it will turn away from violence for the time being. This is very like a man glutting himself with dainties to the point of nausea and turning away from them, only to return with redoubled zeal after the effect of nausea is well over. Precisely in the same manner will the world return to violence with renewed zeal after the effect of disgust is worn out.

So far as I can see, the atomic bomb has deadened the finest feeling that has sustained mankind for ages. There used to be the so-called laws of war which made it tolerable. Now we know the naked truth. War knows no law except that of might. The atom bomb brought an empty victory to the allied armies but it resulted for the time being in destroying the soul of Japan. What has happened to the soul of the destroying nation is yet too early to see. . . . I assume that Japan's greed was the more unworthy [ambition]. But the greater unworthiness conferred no right on the less unworthiness of destroying without mercy men, women and children of Japan in a particular area.

The moral to be legitimately drawn from the supreme tragedy of the bomb is that it will not be destroyed by counter-bombs even as violence cannot be by counter-violence. Mankind has to get out of violence only through non-violence. Hatred can be overcome only

²⁶ *Harijan*, March 1, 1942.

²⁷ *Harijan*, August 18, 1940.

²⁸ *Harijan*, January 18, 1942.

²⁹ *Harijan*, August 11, 1940.

³⁰ Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase*, Volume II, Chapter 25, pp. 808-809.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 808.

³² *Harijan*, February 10, 1946.

by love..Counter-hatred only increases the surface as well as the depth of hatred. . . .³³

We have to make truth and non-violence not matters for mere individual practice but for practice by groups and communities and nations. That at any rate is my dream. . . .³⁴

[Before] general disarmament . . . commences . . . some nation will have to dare to disarm herself and take large risks. The level of non-violence in that nation, if that event happily comes to pass, will naturally have risen so high as to command universal respect. Her judgments will be unerring, her decisions firm, her capacity for heroic self-sacrifice will be great, and she will want to live as much for other nations as for herself.³⁵

³³ *Harijan*, July 7, 1946.

³⁴ *Harijan*, March 2, 1940.

³⁵ *Young India*, October 8, 1925.

[27]

“QUIT INDIA”

[The day the Second World War started, England took India into the war by proclamation without consulting any Indians. India resented this additional proof of foreign control.

The day after the war's beginning, Gandhi pledged publicly that he would not embarrass the British government. He would also lend moral support to England and her allies. Even one who disapproves of war should distinguish between aggressor and defender.

“Should the thought of consequences that might accrue to the enemy as a result of your non-violence at all constrain you?” Gandhi was asked by an American visitor, Dr. Benjamin Mays, President of Morehouse College, in 1937.]

Certainly. You may have to suspend your movement. . . .¹

. . . I am and have always been a friend of the British. Therefore I could never use the weapon of Civil Disobedience during the war unless there was a very grave reason, as for instance the thwarting of India's natural right to freedom.

[If] I wanted to do it, I could start Civil Disobedience today on the strength of my supposed influence with the masses. But I would be doing so merely to embarrass the British Government. This cannot be my object. . . . It is my conviction that we cannot improve the food situation and alleviate the suffering of the people unless power and responsibility are transferred from the British into Indian hands. Without such a transfer, the attempt of Congressmen and others to alleviate the people's sufferings are most likely to lead to conflicts with the Government.²

¹ *Harijan*, March 20, 1937.

² Interview with Stuart Gelder, a journalist, July 4, 1944, in M. K. Gandhi, *Gandhiji's Correspondence with the Government, 1944-1947*, Appendix I, pp. 283-284.