

SPEECHES AND WRITINGS
OF
MAHATMA GANDHI

FOURTH EDITION

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NOTE

THREE editions of Mahatma Gandhi's Speeches and Writings have been sold out in quick succession and this new omnibus edition is issued in response to a public demand which has been insistent for some years past. Mahatma Gandhi holds a unique position in the public life of this country, not only as the leader of a great political movement, but as a moral and social reformer with an immense following. Nor is his following confined to this country only. Thousands of men and women of different classes and diverse occupations, in the West as well as in the East, have felt the call of his idealism; and thousands more who do not swear by his political or social philosophy, nor own allegiance to his way of life have acknowledged the singular charm of his personality and the profound influence of his thought and example on our generation. To those of his way of thinking he has become an *avatar*, while to others who do not exactly see eye to eye with him he is a force to be reckoned with in the complex life of our civilization.

His speeches and writings, which cover the whole field of his public activity in South Africa and India for over three decades, are naturally as varied and copious as his interests are manifold. They embrace every phase of his life's work—politics, education, economics, ethics, social, and religious reform, and, indeed, touch the entire gamut of human endeavour. To gifts of leadership Mahatma Gandhi adds the gift of words, and no writer of our

time has surpassed him in that supreme faculty—swaying great multitudes by the magic of words—simple, direct, inspiring. His words partake of his character and are strong by virtue of mere simplicity, which is the mark of great minds.

This collection claims to be fairly comprehensive and up-to-date. The chapters are so divided as to cover the Mahatma's varied activities in different periods of life, and the top notes set forth the time and circumstance of the writing or utterance. Select articles from his pen and excerpts from his writings and speeches are also taken from *Young India* and *Navajivan*—the Mahatma's English and Gujarati Weeklies—articles throwing light on the movements of his mind, and forming a running commentary on the leading events of our time. The book is thus of equal interest as history and autobiography.

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SECOND CAPE TOWN AGREEMENT, 1932

The Second Round Table Conference was held at Cape Town from the 12th January to 4th February 1932. The Indian delegation which included the Rt. Hon. Sastri, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Mr. Bajpai was led by the Hon. Sir Fazli Hussain, Member of the Government of India in charge of the Department of Emigration. They were helped in their work by the then Agent-General S. K. V. Reddi and the indefatigable Mr. C. F. Andrews. The results of the Conference were announced simultaneously in the Indian Legislature and the Union Parliament on the 5th April. The aim of the Conference was to review the working of the first Agreement of 1927 with a view to bring about any modifications that experience might suggest. The members of the delegation could not, as on previous occasions, avail themselves of the advice and guidance of Mahatma Gandhi as, at the time, he was a prisoner at Yeravada. The Rt. Hon. Sastri gave expression to the feelings of the delegation on this matter in his reply to the civic address presented to him by the Corporation of Madras on April 26.

"Twice before it has fallen to my lot to return from South Africa after fulfilling certain missions. On both these occasions, it was felt by all my colleagues that the first thing to do on return to the shores of India was to go to Mahatma Gandhi and make a representation to him of our doings. To no one could a prior report be made. If he approved of our work, that was enough—this was the feeling not merely of myself who may be considered to have a weakness for Mahatma Gandhi, but it was the feeling of all with whom I was associated. And if I may for the first time publish a secret, it was also the feeling of the Members of the Government of India. How sad I must feel now, you can imagine, when it was not possible for me to make a similar report to the one man in all India who has a right to form a judgment of South African affairs and lead public sentiment in the country. But I have a feeling that if it had been possible to do as I did on the two previous occasions, the result would have been exactly similar. The Mahatma, I think, would have blessed our work and would have said that the Indian delegation could not have done better."

PASSIVE RESISTANCE

THE GENESIS OF PASSIVE RESISTANCE

In answer to a question put to him by the Rev. Joseph Doke, his biographer, as to the birth and evolution of this principle so far as he was concerned, Mr. Gandhi replied as follows :

“I remember,” he said, “how one verse of a Gujarati poem which, as a child I learned at school, clung to me. In substance it was this :

‘If a man gives you a drink of water and you give him a drink in return, that is nothing.

Real beauty consists in doing good against evil.’

“As a child, this verse had a powerful influence over me and I tried to carry it into practice. Then came the Sermon on the Mount.”

“But,” said I, “surely the *Bhagavad Gita* came first?”

“No,” he replied, “of course I knew the *Bhagavad Gita* in Sanskrit tolerably well, but I had not made its teaching in that particular a study. It was the New Testament which really awakened me to the rightness and value of Passive Resistance. When I read in the Sermon on the Mount such passages as ‘Resist not him that is evil but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also’ and ‘Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you, that ye may be sons of our Father which is in heaven.’ I was simply overjoyed and found my own opinion confirmed where I least expected it. The *Bhagavad Gita* deepened the impression and Tolstoy’s ‘The Kingdom of God is within you’ gave it a permanent form.”

Tolstoy, Ruskin, Thoreau and the Passive Resistance Movement in England "had proved an object lesson, not only to him but to his people, of singular force and interest". Mr. Gandhi's ideal "is not so much to resist evil passively, it has its active compliment—to do good in return to evil". In answer to Rev. Joseph Doke, he said:

I do not like the term "passive resistance". It fails to convey all I mean. It describes a method but gives no hint of the system of which it is only part. Real beauty and that is my aim, is in doing good against evil. Still, I adopt the phrase because it is well known and easily understood and because, at present, the great majority of my people can only grasp that idea. To me the ideas which underlie the Gujarati hymn and the "Sermon on the Mount" should revolutionise the whole of life.

SOUL FORCE *versus* PHYSICAL FORCE

The advantages of soul force against physical force are well pictured by Mr. Gandhi in the following words:

Passive resistance is an all sided sword; it cannot be used anyhow; it blesses him who uses it and him against whom it is used. Without drawing a drop of blood it produces far-reaching results. It never rusts and cannot be stolen. Competition between passive resisters does not exhaust them. The sword of passive resistance does not require a scabbard and one cannot be forcibly dispossessed of it.

THE BIRTH OF SATYAGRAHA

In one of the chapters in his autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi explains how the principle called *Satyagraha* came into being before even the name was invented. After saying that *Brahmacharya* which he had been observing since 1900, was sealed with a vow in the middle of 1906, Mr. Gandhi writes:

Events were so shaping themselves in Johannesburg as to make this self-purification on my part a preliminary as it were to *Satyagraha*. I can now see that all the principal events of my life, culminating in the vow of *Brahmacharya*, were secretly preparing me for it.

The principle called *Satyagraha* came into being before that name was invented. Indeed when it was born, I myself could not say what it was. In Gujarati also we used the English phrase 'passive resistance' to describe it. When in a meeting of Europeans I found that the term 'passive resistance' was too narrowly construed, that it was supposed to be a weapon of the weak, that it could be characterised by hatred and that it could finally manifest itself as violence, I had to demur to these statements and explain the real nature of the Indian movement. It was clear that a new word must be coined by the Indians to designate their struggle.

But I could not for the life of me find out a new name and therefore offered a nominal prize through the *Indian Opinion* to the reader who made the best suggestion on the subject. As a result Maganlal Gandhi coined the word '*Sadagraha*' (*Sat* = truth, *Agraha* = firmness) and won the prize. But in order to make it clearer I changed the word to '*Satyagraha*' which has since become current in Gujarati as a designation for the struggle.

PASSIVE RESISTANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

As to how the movement originated in South Africa, here is Mr. Gandhi's statement:

Some years ago when I began to take an active part in the public life of Natal, the adoption of this method occurred to me as the best course to pursue should petitions fail, but in the then unorganised condition of our Indian community, the attempt seemed useless. Here however in Johannesburg when the Asiatic Registration Act was introduced, the Indian community was so deeply stirred and so knit together in a common determination to resist it that the moment seemed opportune. Some action they would take; it seemed to be best for the Colony and altogether right that their action should not take a riotous form but that of Passive Resistance. They had no vote in Parliament, no hope of obtaining redress, no one would listen to their complaints. The Christian Churches were indifferent, so I proposed this pathway of suffering and after much discussion it was adopted. In September 1906, there was a large gathering of Indians in the old Empire Theatre when the position was thoroughly faced and under the inspiration of deep feeling and on the proposal of one of our leading men, they swore a solemn oath committing themselves to Passive Resistance.

THE ETHICS OF PASSIVE RESISTANCE

In an address that Mr. Gandhi delivered before an audience of Europeans at the Germiston (Transvaal) Literary and Debating Society in 1908, he said :

Passive resistance was a misnomer. But the expression had been accepted as it was popular and had been for a long time used by those who carried out in practice the idea denoted by the term. The idea was more completely and better expressed by the term "soul force". As such, it was as old as the human race. Active resistance was better expressed by the term "body force". Jesus Christ, Daniel, and Socrates represented the purest form of passive resistance or soul force. All these teachers counted their bodies as nothing in comparison to their soul. Tolstoy was the best and brightest (modern) exponent of the doctrine. He not only expounded it but lived according to it. In India, the doctrine was understood and commonly practised long before it came into vogue in Europe. It was easy to see that soul force was infinitely superior to body force. If people in order to secure redress of wrongs resorted to soul force, much of the present suffering would be avoided. In any case the wielding of this force never caused suffering to others. So that whenever it was misused, it only injured the users and not those against whom it was used. Like virtue it has its own reward. There was no such thing as failure in the use of this kind of force. "Resist not evil" meant that evil was not to be repelled by