*1. TALK TO RELIEF WORKERS*1

CHANDPUR,

*November 7, 1946*

GANDHIJI: What goes against my grain is that a single individual can be converted or a single woman can be kidnapped or raped. So long as we feel we can be subjected to these indignities, we shall continue to be so subjected. If we say we cannot do without police or military protection, we really confess defeat even before the battle has begun. No police or military in the world can protect people who are cowards. Today you say thousands of people are terrorizing a mere handful, so what can the latter do? But even a few individuals are enough to terrorize the whole mass, if the latter feel helpless. Your trouble is not numerical inferiority but the feeling of helplessness that has seized you and the habit of depending on others. The remedy lies with you. That is why I am opposed to the idea of your evacuating East Bengal *en masse*. It is no cure for impotence or helplessness.

A WORKER: East Bengal is opposed to such a move.

G. They should not leave. 20,000 able-bodied men prepared to die like brave men non-violently might today be regarded as a fairy tale, but it would be no fairy tale for every able-bodied man in a population of 20,000 to die like stalwart soldiers in open fight. They will go down in history like the immortal three hundred of Leonidas who made Thermopylae :

Stranger! Tell Sparta, here her sons are laid,

Such was her law and we that law obeyed.

I will proclaim from the housetops that it is the only condi- tion under which you can live in East Bengal. You have asked for Hindu officers, Hindu police and Hindu military in the place of Muslim. It is a false cry. You forget that Hindu offi- cers, Hindu police and Hindu military have in the past done all these things—looting, arson, abduction, rape. I come from Kathiawar—the land of petty principa lities. I cannot describe to you to what depths of depravity human

1 Extracted from Pyarelal’s “The First Lesson”. A group of 20 to 25 workers and representatives of relief organizations had met Gandhiji in the dining saloon of the *Kiwi* on the morning of November 7.

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nature can go. No woman’s honour is safe in some principalities and the chief is no hooligan but a duly annointed one.

W. These are cases of individual depravity. Here we have got this on a mass scale.

G. But the individual there is not alone. He is backed by the machinery of his little State.

W. He is condemned even by his compeers. Here such acts are not condemned by the Muslims.

G. I have heard nothing but condemnation of these acts from Shaheed Suhrawardy downwards since I have come here. Words of condemnation may tickle your ears, but they are no consolation to the unfortunate women whose houses have been laid desolate or who have been abducted, forcibly converted and forcibly married.

What a shame for Hindus, what a disgrace for Islam! No, I am not going to leave you in peace. Presently you will say to your- self, ‘When will this man leave us and go?’ But this man will not go. He did not come on your invitation and he will go only on his own, but with your blessings, when his mission in East Bengal is fulfilled.

A WORKER: It is a part of their plan for Pakistan.

G. It is midsummer madness and they have realized it. They will soon sicken of it. They have already begun to.

W. Why do not they come here then and set this right?

G. That stage will come. Sickness only marks the crisis. Convalescence must precede cure. You see I am a nature-curist.

A WORKER: But here we are a mere drop in the ocean.

Gandhiji replied that even if there was one Hindu in East Bengal, he wanted him to have the courage to go and live in the midst of the Mussalmans and die if he must like a hero. He should refuse to live as a serf and a slave. He might not have the non-violent strength to die without fighting. But he could command their admiration if he had the courage not to submit to wrong and died fighting like a man.

There is not a man, however cruel and hard-hearted, but would give his admiration to a brave man. A *goonda* is not the vile man he is imagined to be. He is not without his noble traits.

W. A *goonda* does not understand reason.

G. But he understands bravery. If he finds that you are braver than he, he will respect you. You will note that for the purposes of our present discussion I have not asked you to discard the use of arms. I

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can’t provide you with arms. It is not for me to provide arms to the Chittagong Armoury Raid1 men. The most tragic thing about the Armoury Raid people is that they could not even multiply themselves. Their bravery was lop-sided. It did not infect others.

A WORKER: No wonder it could not. They were condemned.

G. By whom? I may have—that is a different thing.

W. The people did so. I am myself an Armoury Raid man.

G. They did not. You are no Armoury Raid man or, you should not have been here to tell these things. That so many of them should have remained living witnesses of the things that have happened is in my eyes a tragedy of the first order. If they had shown the same fearlessness and courage to face death in the present crisis as they did when they made that raid, they would have gone down in history as heroes. As it is, they have only inscribed a small footnote in the page of history. You will see I am not, as I have already said, asking you just now to unlearn the use of arms or to follow my type of heroism. I have not made it good even in my own case. I have come here to test it in East Bengal. I want you to take up the conventional type of heroism. You should be able to infect others— both men and women—with courage and fearlessness to face death when the alternative is dishonour and humiliation. Then the Hindus can stay in East Bengal, not otherwise. After all, the Mussalmans are blood of our blood and bone of our bone.

W. Here the proportion of Mussalmans and Hindus is 6 to 1. How can you expect us to stand against such heavy odds?

G. When India was brought under British subjection, there were 70,000 European soldiers against 33 crores of Indians.

W. We have no arms. The Government backs them with its bayonets. G. The odds were much heavier against the Indians in South Africa. The Indian community there was a mere hand- ful in the midst of an overwhelming majority of Europeans and Negroes. The Europeans had arms. We had none. So we forged the weapon of satyagraha. Today the Indian is respected by the White man in South Africa, not so the Zulu with all his fine physique.

A WORKER: So we are to fight with arms anyhow?

G. Not anyhow. Even violence has its code of ethics. For 1 Carried out by a group of terrorists on April 18, 1930

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instance, to butcher helpless old men, women and children is not bravery but rank cowardice. Chivalry requires that they should be protected even at the cost of one’s life. The history of early Islam is replete with such instances of chivalry and Islam is all the stronger for them.

W. Would you permit the Hindus to take the offensive?

G. The people of Bihar did and brought disgrace upon thems elves and India. They have set the clock of India’s independence back. I have a right to speak about Bihar. In a sense I feel closer to Bihar than to Bengal as fortune enabled me to give a striking demonstration of the non-violence technique in Champaran.1 I have heard it said that the retaliation in Bihar has ‘cooled’ the Muslims down. They mean it has cowed them down for the time being. They forget that two can play at a game. Bihar has forged a link in the chain of our slavery. If the Bihar performance is repeated or if the Bihar mentality does not mend, you may note down my words in your diary: *Before long India will pass under the yoke of the Big Three with one of them probably as the mandatory power. The Independence of India is today at stake in Bengal and Bihar*. The British Government entrusted the Congress with power not because they are in love with the Congress but because they had faith that the Congress would use it wisely and well, not abuse it. Today Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru finds the ground slipping from under his feet. But he won’t let that happen. That is why he is in Bihar. He has said he is going to stay there as long as it may be necessary.

Biharis have behaved as cowards. Use your arms well, if you must. Do not ill-use them. Bihar has not used its arms well. If the Biharis wanted to retaliate, they could have gone to Noakhali and died to a man. But for a thousand Hindus to fall upon a handful of Mussalmans—men, women and children —living in their midst is no retaliation but just brutality. It is the privilege of arms to protect the weak and helpless. The best succour that Bihar could have given to the Hindus of East Bengal would have been to guarantee with their own lives the absolute safety of the Muslim population living in their midst.

Their example would have told. And I have faith that they will still do so with due repentance when the present madness has passed away. Anyway that is the price I have put upon my life if they want me to live. Here ends the first lesson.

*Harijan*, 1-12-1946

1 In 1917

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*2. DISCUSSION WITH MUSLIM LEAGUE LEADERS*1

CHANDPUR,

*November 7, 1946*

One of them remarked that no disturbances had taken place in Chandpur sub division. The rush of refugees to Chandpur was due to panic caused by false Press propaganda. The number of Hindus killed by the Muslims was only 15 while double that number of Muslims had died as a result of firing by the military who were mostly Hindus.

Another member of the deputation who was an M. L. A. was even more bitter about the fact that the Hindus were still evacuating and their rehabilitation was being ‘obstructed’ by the Hindu workers who encouraged them to migrate in order to discredit the Muslim League Government and paralyse the administration.

Shamsuddin Saheb who was present at the meeting along with Nasrullah Saheb2 and Abdul Rashid Saheb interposed that it was no use isolating Chandpur sub division and ignoring what had taken place elsewhere in the district. Equally irrelevant to their present argument was their reference to the military firing.

When they had finished, Gandhiji replying remarked that if what they had said was to be taken at its face value, then it amounted to this: that the Muslims had committed no excesses. The mischief had all been provok ed by the excesses of the police and the military who were harassing the Mussalmans and it was they, therefore, who together with the panic-monger ing Hindus were the real culprits. That was too big a pill for anybody to swallow. Why had it become necessary to call the military, if no disturbances had taken place? A deputation of 20 to 25 Hindus had a meeting with him in the morning.3 They had told him awful tales of what had happened in Tippera and Noakhali. Similar tales had been pouring into his ears ever since he had set foot in Bengal. Even Muslim Leaguers had admitted that terrible things had been done. They disputed the figures which they feared were exaggerated. He was not concerned with numbers. Even if there was a single case of abduction, forcible conversion or forcible marriage, it was enough to make every godfearing man or woman hang down his or her head in shame.

He was not going to keep anything secret, Gandhiji proceeded. He would place all the information which he might receive before the Ministers. He had come to

1 Extracted from Pyarelal’s “Overproof is Admission”. Several prominent Muslim League leaders of Tippera District met Gandhiji at Chandpur on board the *Kiwi* before he left for Chaumuhani.

2 K. Nasrullah, M. L. A. and Parliamentary Secretary in the Home Department of the Muslim League Ministry in Bengal

3 *Vide* the preceding item.

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promote mutual goodwill and confidence. In that he wanted their help. He did not want peace to be established with the help of the police and the military. An imposed peace was no peace. He did not wish to encourage people to flee from their homes in East Bengal either. If the mass flight of the refugees had been deliberately planned to discredit the Muslim League Ministry, it would recoil on the heads of those who had done so. To him it seemed hardly credible. He suggested that the right course would be to make a clean breast of the matter.

It is far better to magnify your own mistake and proclaim it to the whole world than leave it to the world to point the accusing finger at you. God never spares the evil-doer.

The gentleman who had spoken first thereupon admitted that he had heard of some cases of arson and looting but the looting had taken place after the occupants had fled. The deserted houses offered too strong a temptation to the hooligans.

GANDHIJI: But why should people flee from their homes? People do not do so normally. Everybody knows that an unoccupied and unprotected house is bound to be looted by someone or the other. Would anyone risk the loss of all he owns just to discredit the League?

Still another member of the deputation remarked that only one per cent of the people had indulged in acts of hooliganism. The rest of the 99 per cent were really good people and in no way responsible for the happenings.

That was not a correct way of looking at it, Gandhiji replied. If 99 per cent were good people and had actively disapproved of what had taken place, the one per cent would have been able to do nothing and could easily have been brought to book. Good people ought actively to combat the evil, to entitle them to that name. Sitting on the fence was no good. If they did not mean it, they should say so and openly tell all the Hindus in the Muslim majority areas to quit. But that was not their position as he understood it. The Qaid-e-Azam had said that the minorities in Pakistan would get unadulterated justice. Where was that justice? Today the Hindus asked him if Noakhali was an indication of what they were to expect in Pakistan. He had studied Islam. His Muslim friends in South Africa used to say to him: “Why not recite the *Kalama* and forget Hinduism?” He used to say in reply that he would gladly recite the *Kalama* but forget Hinduism never. His respect and regard for Hazrat Mohammed was not less than theirs. But authoritarianism and compulsion was the way to corrupt religion, not to advance it.

Shamsuddin Saheb agreeing with Gandhiji quoted a verse from the Koran to the effect that there can be no compulsion in religion. He had told the Mussalmans, he said, that if they wanted Pakistan they must mete out justice to the minority community and win its confidence. “By doing what you have done, you have killed Pakistan,” he had told them.

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G. Mr. McInerny, the District Magistrate of Noakhali, in a leaflet he has issued, has said that he will assume, unless the contrary is conclusively proved, that anyone who accepted Islam after the beginning of the recent disturbances was forcibly converted and in fact remained a Hindu. If all the Muslims made that declaration, it would go a long way to settle the question. Why should there be a public show of it, if anybody genuinely felt inclined to recite the *Kalama*? A heart conversion needs no other witness than God.

Mere recitation of the *Kalama* while one continued to indulge in acts which are contrary to elementary decency was not Islam but a travesty of it. That reminded him of the Plymouth Brothers1 who had invited him to embrace Christianity because then he would be free to do anything he liked since Christ redeemed the sins of those who accepted him. As against that there was the conclusive verse of the New Testament: “Not everyone who says Lord, Lord, with his lips comes to me.”2It was therefore up to the leaders of the Muslims to declare that forcible repetition of a formula could not make a non-Muslim into a Muslim. It only shamed Islam.

“All that has happened is the result of false propaganda,” argued one member of the deputation who had not hitherto spoken.

G. Let us not make a scapegoat of false propaganda. False propaganda would fall flat if we are all right.

Finally one of the deputationists remarked that they were all prepared to go into the interior along with the Hindu leaders to restore peace and confidence but the latter distrusted them.

Gandhiji replied that that did not matter. He would gladly accept their offer. He said :

You and I will visit every village and every home in the interior and restore peace and confidence.

*Harijan*, 24-11-1946

1 *Vide* “An Autobiography”

2*St*. *Matthew*, vii. 21

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*3. TALK TO REFUGEES*1

LAKSHAM,

*November 7, 1946*

I have not come on a whirlwind propaganda visit. I have come to stay here with you as one of you. I have no provincialism in me. I claim to be an Indian and therefore a Bengali even as I am a Gujarati. I have vowed to myself that I will stay on here and die here if necessary, but I will not leave Bengal till the hatchet is finally buried and even a solitary Hindu girl is not afraid to move freely about in the midst of Mussalmans.

The greatest help you can give me is to banish fear from your hearts. And what is the talisman that can do that for you. It is the unfailing *mantra* of Ramanama. You may say, you do not believe in Him. You do not know that but for His will you could not draw a single breath. Call Him Ishwar, Allah, God, Ahura Mazda. His names are as innumerable as there are men. He is one without a second. He alone is great. There is none greater than He. He is timeless, formless, stainless. Such is my Rama. He alone is my Lord and Master.

Gandhiji touchingly described to them how as a little boy he used to be usually timid and afraid of even shadows and how his nurse Rambha had taught him the secret of Ramanama as an antidote to fear. “When in fear, take Ramanama. He will protect you,” she used to tell him. Ever since then Ramanama had been his unfailing refuge and shelter from all kinds of fear.

He resides in the heart of the pure always. Tulsidas, that prince of devotees, whose name had become a household word among the Hindus from Kashmir to Cape Comorin as Shri Chaitanya’s and Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa’s in Bengal, had presented the message of that name to us in his immortal *Ramayana*. If you walked in fear of that name, you did not need to fear any man on earth, be he a prince or a pauper.

Why should they be afraid of the cry of “*Allaho Akbar*”? The Allah of Islam was the protector of innocence. What had been done in East Bengal had not the sanction of Islam as preached by its Prophet.

Who could dare to dishonour their wives or daughters if they had faith in God?

1 According to a report in *Hindustan Standard*, 8-11-1946, Gandhiji addressed a gathering of about 10,000 people—Hindus and Muslims—waiting from early morning at Laksham Junction—*en route* to Chaumuhani, which he reached shortly after midday.

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He, therefore, expected them to cease to be afraid of Mussalmans. If they believed in Ramanama, they must not think of leaving East Bengal. They must live where they were born and brought up and die there if necessary, defending their honour as brave men and women.

To run away from danger instead of facing it is to deny one’s faith in man and God and even one’s own self. It were better for one to drown oneself than live to declare such bankruptcy of faith.

If you ask the military, they will tell you that God is their protector. I want you, therefore, to be able to tell Shamsuddin Saheb that you no longer need the protection of the police and the military, which may be withdrawn, but would rather put yourself under the protection of Him whose protection they all seek.1

Gandhiji said that the military and the police could not give any protection. They could ask the soldiers (who were then standing with them) whether anybody could save them in war. Guns were unavailing before death. It was only God who could protect. The only way to save oneself was to rely on one’s fellowmen, no matter whether they were Hindus or Muslims. It was the gospel of love that he had come here to preach.

The Bengal Ministers and other officials were accompanying him, he added, but not to look after him. They would help him preach and convince the people to have faith in their fellowmen and neighbours and remove fear from their minds. Gandhiji felt convinced that the people would soon learn to dispense with the military and the police. The sooner they could do so, he said, the better. He would like to hear people say so from today.

*Harijan*, 24-11-1946; and *The Hindu*, 10-11-1946

*4. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*2

CHAUMUHANI,

*November 7, 1946*

Gandhiji told them how he had toured East Bengal in the company of the Ali Brothers during the Khilafat days. In those days the Muslims felt that all that he said was right. If the Ali Brothers went into a women’s meeting, they went blindfolded. He was allowed to go with his eyes open. Why should he blindfold himself when he went

1 What follows is from *The Hindu*.

2 Extracted from Pyarelal’s “Weekly Letter”. The meeting was held in the compound of the Hindu Vidya Mandir, a local school. The audience was estimated at 15,000, the majority of whom were Muslims.

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to his mothers and sisters? He had no desire to go among the *purdah* ladies. But the Ali Brothers insisted that he must go. The women were eager to meet him and they were sure that his advice would do good to them. In South Africa he had lived in the midst of Muslim friends for twenty years. They treated him as a member of their family and told their wives and sisters that they need not observe *purdah* with him. He had become a barrister in England but what was a dinner barrister worth? It was South Africa and the struggle that he had launched there that had made him. It was there that he discovered satyagraha and civil disobedience.

He had come to them in sadness. What sin had Mother India committed that her children, Hindus and Muslims, were quarrelling with each other? He had learnt that no Hindu woman was safe today in some parts of East Bengal. Ever since he had come to Bengal, he was hearing awful tales of Muslim atrocities. Shaheed Saheb, their Prime Minister, and Shamsuddin Saheb had admitted that there was some truth in the reports that one heard.

I have not come to excite the Hindus to fight the Mussalmans. I have no enemies. I have fought the British all my life. Yet they are my friends. I have never wished them ill.

He had heard of forcible conversions, forcible feeding of beef, abductions and forcible marriages, not to talk about murders, arson and loot. They had broken idols. The Muslims did not worship them nor did he. But why should they interfere with those who wished to worship them? These incidents are a blot on the name of Islam. He said :

I have studied the Koran. The very word Islam means peace. The Muslim greeting *‘Salam Alaikum*’ is the same for all, whether Hindus or Muslims or any other. Nowhere does Islam allow such things as had happened in Noakhali and Tippera. Shaheed Saheb and all the Ministers and League leaders who met me in Calcutta have condemned such acts unequivocally. The Muslims are in such overwhelming majority in East Bengal that I expect them to constitute themselves the guardians of the small Hindu minority. They should tell Hindu women that while they are there, no one dare cast an evil eye on them.1

*Harijan*, 24-11-1946

1*The Hindu*, 10-11-1946, reported: “After Gandhiji concluded the 20 minute speech and before a Bengali translation of the speech could be given by Satis Chandra Das Gupta, it was time for Muslims to offer the evening *namaz*. An interval of ten minutes was allowed to enable Muslims in the gathering to offer their prayers.”

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*5. MESSAGE TO PEOPLE OF CHITTAGONG*1

CHAUMUHANI,

[On or after *November 7, 1946*]2

Cultivate the spirit of fearlessness and self-sacrifice. Do not evacuate.

*Hindustan Standard*, 16-11-1946

*6. TALK TO RELIEF WORKERS*3

CHAUMUHANI,

[On or after *November 7, 1946*]

GANDHIJI: The tragedy is not that so many Muslims have gone mad, but that so many Hindus in East Bengal have been witnesses to these things. If every Hindu in East Bengal had been done to death, I would not have minded it. Do you know what the Rajputs did? They killed their womenfolk when they issued forth to sacrifice themselves on the battlefield. The surviving ones immolated them- selves by mounting the funeral pyre before the fortress fell rather than allow themselves to be captured and dishonoured. There is nothing coura geous in thousands of Mussalmans killing out a handful of Hindus in their midst, but that the Hindus should have degraded themselves by such cowardice, i.e., being witness to abduction and rape, forcible conversion and forcible marriage of their womenfolk, is heart rending.

QUESTION: How can we create a sense of security and self-confidence? By learning to die bravely. Let us turn our wrath against ourselves. I am not interested in getting the police substituted by the military or the Muslim police by the Hindu police. They are broken reeds.

To whom should we appeal—the Congress, the League or the British Government?

1 The report said: “A deputation from Chittagong waited upon Gandhiji at Chaumuhani and apprised him of the situation in Chittagong.”

2 Gandhiji reached Chaumuhani on November 7.

3 Extracted from Pyarelal’s “Weekly Letter”

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To none of these. Appeal to yourselves, therefore to God.

We are men—made of flesh and blood. We need some material support. Then appeal to your own flesh and blood. Purify it of all dross.

A WOMAN WORKER: What is your idea of rehabilitation?

GANDHIJI: Not to send them to Assam and West Bengal but to infuse courage in them so that they are not afraid to stay in their original homes.

How is that possible?

You must stay in their midst and say to them: ‘We shall die to the last person before a hair of your head is injured.’ Then you will produce heroines in East Bengal.

That was once our idea too.

I do not mind if each and every one of the 500 families in your area is done to death. Here you are 20 per cent of the population. In Bihar, the Muslims constitute only 14 per cent.

They know they won’t be molested there.

They have been butchered in a more unsufferable manner and there have been cases of molestation of women too, this time.

If the Government do not provide rations?

There are so many relief organizations. Rations can be purchased but honour and self-respect cannot be bought. I have a feeling that even the Bengal Government do not want this thing to go any further. The lesson has been taught not by Bihar but the vile things done in Bengal. They stand aghast.

You have opened up a new vista before us, Mahatmaji. We feel fresh blood coursing through our veins.

*Harijan*, 8-12-1946; and *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 20-1

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*7. SPEECH AT DATTAPARA*1

*November 8, 1946*

Gandhiji told them that it was a shame for both the Hindus and the Mussalmans that the Hindus should have to run away from their homes as they had done. It was a shame for the Muslims because it was out of fear of the Muslims that the Hindus had run away. Why should a human being inspire another with fear? It was no less a shame for the Hindus to have given way to craven fear. He had always said that man should fear none but God. The Government officials accompanying him were all anxious that they should return to their homes. To feed and clothe thousands in one place involved difficulties for the refugees as well as for the Government. The Government officials were ashamed of the fact that such things should have happened in their jurisdiction. He wanted them to forgive and forget what had happened in Noakhali and Tippera. That did not mean that they were to become cowards. But it served no useful purpose to keep on recalling the unpleasant past. He hoped and prayed that the Hindus and Muslims of these parts would become friends once more. He knew the Hindus had suffered a lot and were suffering still. He would not ask them to return to their homes till at least one good Muslim and one good Hindu came forward to accompany them and stand surety for their safety in each village. He was sure there were plenty of good Hindus and good Muslims in these parts who would give the necessary guarantee.

A Muslim friend from the audience said, they had already given them the assurance that they would look after them but the Hindus would not listen to them. Gandhiji replied that they should try to understand and appreciate the reasons of the Hindus’ distrust and overcome their fear. A Hindu refugee got up and asked2 how they could have confidence in the assurances of the Muslims any more. When the trouble was threatening they had promised to look after them but had failed to protect them afterwards. Besides, where were they to go and stay? They had lost their all. Were they to go back and stay in the jungles? And when fifty good Muslims in the village had failed to save them on the previous occasion, how would one good Muslim do so now? Moreover, miscreants were still at large roaming about in villages even after one month of the incidents.3 Gandhiji replied that the Government would see that

1 Extracted from Pyarelal’s “Weekly Letter”. Gandhiji was on his way back to Chaumuhani in the evening after a visit to Gopairbagh where, according to *The Bombay Chronicle* report, 19 out of the 22 male members of a family had been butchered and burnt in a corner of the compound. At Dattapara, the house where Gandhiji halted had at the time some 6,000 refugees.

2 According to *The Bombay Chronicle*, Gandhiji invited questions from the refugees.

3 This sentence is from *The Bombay Chronicle*.

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their huts were rebuilt and they had food and clothing when they returned to their homes. Whatever might have happened in the past, if now one good Muslim and one good Hindu took the responsibility for their safety in each village, they could rely on their word backed as it would be by the collective invitation of all the Muslims in the village. If they were still afraid they were cowards and not even God could help the cowardly.

*Harijan*, 1-12-1946; and *The Bombay Chronicle*, 11-11-1946

*8. DISCUSSION WITH MUSLIM LEAGUE LEADERS*1 CHAUMUHANI,

*November 8, 1946*

One of the friends suggested that in order to restore confidence Hindu leaders should reinforce the appeals of the Muslims to the refugees to go back to their villages. Gandhiji replied that that was not the right way to dispel the apprehension and distrust of the Hindus which was well grounded. He would not be able to advise them to return to their homes unless there was at least one good Hindu and one good Mussalman for each village who would stand guarantee for their safety and security and who would be prepared to immolate himself before a hair of their head was touched. It was for the Muslim League leaders who were also members of the Government to say whether such men would be forthcoming. There was no other way to restore confidence after all that had happened. They all agreed with Gandhiji’s suggestion and said that they would do their best to give effect to it.

*Harijan*, 24-11-1946

*9. LETTER TO JITENDRA CHAKRAVARTI*

CHAUMUHANI,

*November 8, 1946*

BHAI JITEN2,

In the present condition of Noakhali and Tippera you can sell khadi without insisting on yarn in exchange. Keep sending an account of the khadi thus sold.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

1 Extracted from Pyarelal’s “Weekly letter”. Pyarelal says: “That night Shamsuddin Saheb with his colleagues from Calcutta and some local prominent Muslims saw Gandhiji and discussed the question of refugees.”

2 Jitendra Chakravarti, Secretary, Bengal Charkha Sangh

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*10. LETTER TO SHRIKRISHNADAS JAJU*

[After *November 8, 1946*]1

BHAI JAJUJI,

Keep this letter. My advice is that you should have Saraladevi’s name among the trustees. She is an extremely pure-hearted and truthful lady. What I wrote2 in *Harijan* was regarding her. If you see anything wrong in this, write to me.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

[PS.]

(Enclosure: Saralabehn’s letter of November 8, 1946) SHRI SHRIKRISHNADAS JAJU

WARDHA

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

*11. LETTER TO MANILAL GANDHI*

*November 9, 1946*

CHI. MANILAL,

Do not worry on hearing about my fast, rather rejoice. When somebody does his duty, instead of worrying one should feel greater zeal in doing one’s own work. I am on a partial fast but am able to do my work as usual. Let us see when the total fast begins. That is in the hands of the Biharis. Rajendra Babu and the others have gone there. There are hopes that they will succeed in their mission. Whatever happens, should I not do my duty as I understand it? And, therefore, without worrying in the least, you should do yours.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 4993

1 From the date of the enclosure

2*Vide* “Who Can be a Trustee”, 3-11-1946

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*12. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS*

CHAUMUHANI,

*November 9, 1946*

Two telegrams from Patna reprove me on my “threatened” fast. “Threatened” is the word used in one of the wires. My proposed fast is not meant to coerce anyone; it is meant to quicken the dead conscience into life. Those who act from fear harm themselves and the cause they profess to serve. Surely, it is as plain as A. B. C. that the action of the Biharis in injuring the very small minority of Muslims in Bihar must postpone the day of India’s independence and ultimately sour Muslims all over India unless Bihar repents her folly of senseless and cowardly violence.

Rashtrapati Acharya Kripalani, whom every Bihari knows for his sterling services, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and now Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Shri Jayaprakash Narayan are now in Bihar and expect to show fair Bihar that their terrible ill treatment of the Muslims is communalism of the worst type and is calculated to defeat the growing nationalism of Bihar. I, therefore, warn everyone from abusing my contemplated fast which is in no way intended to deflect anyone from what he believes is the course of duty for him.

*The Hindu*, 11-11-1946

*13. LETTER TO H. S. SUHRAWARDY*

DATTAPARA,

*November 10, 1946*

BHAISHRI SHAHID SUHRAWARDY,

The work here is more difficult than I had imagined. And the Qaid-e-Azam’s statement1 given to the representative of the *Globe* which I saw in the *Morning News* of November 10, has rendered it even more difficult. In the beginning it uses the expression ‘caste Hindu’, later followed by the word ‘Hindu’. Is co-operation between Hindus and Muslims an utter impossibility? If it is so, what will be the plight of Bengal and Hindustan? What will happen to Noakhali and

1*Vide* “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 14-11-1946

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Tippera?

The refugees here do not get even half their rations and the rice they get is unfit for consumption. They have nothing to cover themselves with during winter. Their houses are damaged, the sanitation is unsatisfactory. Satis Babu has prepared a report which I am sending you.

The officials here are fully co-operating with me for which I am grateful to you as well as to them. But is it not our task to settle the differences and turn both the communities into mutual friends?

*Yours*

M. K.GANDHI

*14. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*1

DATTAPARA,

*November 10, 1946*

Whether you believe me or not, I want to assure you that I am a servant of both the Hindus and the Mussalmans. I have not come here to fight Pakistan. If India is destined to be partitioned, I cannot prevent it. But I wish to tell you that Pakistan cannot be established by force. In the *bhajan* that was just sung ‘the poet has likened God to the philosophers’ stone. The proverbial philosophers’ stone is said to turn iron into gold. That is not always desirable. For instance, if all the rails of the railway track were turned into gold by the touch of the stone, the trains would not be able to run over them. But the touch of God purifies the soul. That is always desirable.

That philosophers’ stone is within us all. All that I wish to tell my Muslim brethren is that, whether they live as one people or two, they should live as friends with the Hindus. If they do not wish to do so, they should say so plainly. I would in that case confess myself defeated. The refugees cannot stay on as refugees for ever. The Government cannot go on feeding them. And what sort of feed are they getting? Less than half the daily ration of cereals to keep an able bodied man alive, no fish, no vegetables, nor anything else to

1 This appeared under the title “An Appeal to Conscience” as reported by Pyarelal.

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supplement it. It is not possible for them to exist like this for any length of time. If, therefore, the Muslims do not want them back in their villages, they must go elsewhere.

But even if every Hindu of East Bengal went away, I will still continue to live amidst the Muslims of East Bengal and eat what they give me and what I consider lawful for me to partake of. I will not bring my food from outside. I do not need fish or flesh. All that I need is a little fruit, vegetables and some goat’s milk. As far as goat’s milk and cereals are concerned, I would take them again only when it pleases God that I should do so. I have given it up and would not resume it till the Hindus are really penitent of what they have done in Bihar.

For a thousand Hindus to surround a hundred Mussalmans or for a thousand Mussalmans to surround a hundred Hindus and oppress them is not bravery but cowardice. Fair fight means even numbers and previous notice. That does not mean that I approve of their fighting. It has been said that the Hindus and Mussalmans cannot stay together as friends or co-operate with each other. No one can make me believe that, but if that is your belief, you should say so. I would in that case not ask the Hindus to return to their homes. They would leave East Bengal, and it would be a shame for both the Mussalmans and the Hindus. If, on the other hand, you want the Hindus to stay in your midst, you should tell them that they need not look to the military for protection but to their Muslim brethren instead. Their daughters and sisters and mothers are your own daughters, sisters and mothers and you should protect them with your lives. I addressed them in the refugee camp yesterday. The District Magistrate, Mr. McInerny, told them that all mankind being descended from Adam and Eve, they were all members of one family—relatives, whatever their race or religion. So they should live together as relatives.

One man is said to have returned to his village last evening after the prayer meeting. He found his house surrounded by Muslims. They would not let him take his property. How can I, under these circumstances (if they are true), ask anyone to go back? You should ponder over what I have said and let me know what you really wish. I shall advise the Hindus accordingly.

I am told and I believe that there are many good Muslims who

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would welcome the Hindus back but the *goondas* stand in the way. I wish to tell you that if the good Muslims spoke out with one voice and acted according to their professions, the so-called *goondas* would become ineffective and would mend their ways.

*Harijan*, 1-12-1946

*15. LETTER TO MATHURADAS TRIKUMJI*

*November 11, 1946*

These days I write very few letters myself. One of them is this one to you. Your telegram1 was thoughtlessly drafted. You don’t know the facts. The newspapers are more or less useless. You are very ill. You can know almost nothing of the latest developments, and any conclusions you may draw from such knowledge will be mostly wrong. You have not even understood the full meaning of the step I have taken. I am writing this only to tell you that, though you are wise, you are unnecessarily spoiling your health. Better read good books, reflect on them and write on them. Or just think of God, that is, repeat Ramanama so that it may get inscribed in your heart. If you do so, you will not waste your energy in useless thoughts.

[From Gujarati]

*Bapuni Prasadi*, p. 214

*16. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*2

DATTAPARA,

*November 11, 1946*

Gandhiji poured out the anguish which the sights which he had seen had filled him with. Wherever he had gone, he had seen burnt houses and heard stories of looting and forcible conversions. Hindu women were without the auspicious vermilion mark on their heads and foreheads and without their conch-shell bangles. How he wished that all Muslim brothers would condemn these atrocities with one voice so that the Hindus could go back to their homes and live there as they used to before the disturbances. Their houses would be rebuilt before they could go back. The Muslims should help in that. Such he believed was the injunction of the holy Koran too.

*Harijan*, 1-12-1946

1 This had reference to Gandhiji’s intended fast over the Bihar atrocities. 2 Extracted from Pyarelal’s “Weekly Letter”. It being a silence-day the speech was read out.

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*17. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM*

[DATTAPARA,]

*November 11, 1946*

CHI. AMTUL SALAAM,

I have your letter. You will send the khadi here.

I shall certainly come but I cannot say when. If I am late, Bapa will come. The work is difficult. But whatever the situation, we have to do our duty. What more shall I write? I have now come back from Noakhali and Sonachaka. Prayer is over and I am writing this.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 538

*18. LETTER TO N. K. BOSE1*

[DATTAPARA,]

*November 12, 1946*

DEAR NIRMAL,

You went away suddenly and without seeing me. I was under the impression that you were with Satis Babu and therefore [with] me to the end. Hemprabha Devi says you would come if I needed you. I do need you for any work that may be assigned to you by me directly or through Satis Babu. If you are agreeable, please come without delay.2

*Yours,*

BAPU

From a photostat: C. W. 10532. Courtesy: N. K. Bose. Also G. N. 10507

*19. LETTER TO LILAVATI ASAR*

*November 12, 1946*

CHI. LILY,

What a letter you have written ! Your mind is extremely unsteady. No one can travel with me as a matter of right. How often did Mahadev have to leave me? Is there any rule that a daughter must

1 The addressee, a professor in Calcutta University, had accompanied Gandhiji during his Noakhali tour till November 8 and then left to resume university work. 2 He rejoined Gandhiji on November 17.

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travel with her father? I have showed you your dharma. You are doing well in your studies. Do better still; I shall be fully satisfied with that.

I was not displeased with you when you were in Delhi. If you see only the bad in everything, how can I help it? The only way to please me is for you to complete your studies and use your knowledge for serving others.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 9605. Also C. W. 6577. Courtesy: Lilavati Asar

*20. LETTER TO D. B. KALELKAR*

CAMP DATTAPARA,

*November 12, 1946*

If this conflagration does not subside, I am certain that I shall be consumed by it.

I intend to fix all those who are accompanying me separately or they will take up their own independent work.

I shall be touring the surrounding villages here. I shall not be able to use your services. You may go on sending for *Harijan* whatever you can. Your place is in Assam. By all means go there. Bardoloi1 needs somebody by his side, and you are the right man.

Your duty is to look after the Hindustani work and bring credit to it. All need not offer themselves up in the sacrifice I am performing. Everyone should remain engrossed in his own work.

I got the articles sent by you. They will be published without any mention of my name. What is the point in giving my name in a journal being published by me, and that, too, over an article written by you? You can do that only after my death or in some other journal. But that also with a restrained pen.

I hope you are well.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 10982

1 Gopinath Bardoloi, Prime Minister of Assam

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*21. LETTER TO BRIJKRISHNA CHANDIWALA* CAMP DATTAPARA,

*November 12, 1946*

CHI. BRIJKRISHNA,

I see that it is useless sending for you here. There is no possibility at all of your being with me. Arrangements are being made for all those who are with me to be put in separate places. Therefore your duty is to stay on in Delhi and render whatever service you can there. The first duty is to make your body healthy.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 2494

*22. LETTER TO MAHESH DATT MISHRA*

*November 12, 1946*

CHI. MAHESH,

I think of you every day. I can now say definitely that your coming here will be useless. I am suggesting that each coworker should be put in a different village. What would be the good of sending for you? In fact, they should all be Bengalis. First I have to see about those who are with me. What shall I do if I send for new workers? How does it help if the new arrivals remain with me. Now do whatever you think is right. What will happen to me, only God knows. Have you fitted yourself for Hindustani *Harijan.*1

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 6717. Also C. W. 4461. Courtesy: Mahesh Datt Mishra

*23. LETTER TO JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN*

DATTAPARA,

*November 12, 1946*

CHI. JAYAPRAKASH,

I feel that today you are the God in Bihar. Will Bihar really become calm? We have committed a grievous error. Write to me frankly what is likely to happen now. Give me your unreserved

1*Vide* “Letter to Mahesh Datt Mishra”, 22-10-1946 and “Letter to Mahesh Datt Mishra”, 24-10-1946

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opinion. I have a feeling that there should be no Congress [session] this time. Leaders of all the provinces should remain in their own provinces. You may convey my opinion to all. I may not be able to do it as I have little free time.

Where is Prabha1 ? What does she do?

I hope you are keeping well.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

SHRI JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

PATNA

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

*24. LETTER TO RAJENDRA PRASAD*

DATTAPARA,

*November 12, 1946*

BHAI RAJENDRA BABU,

You have again fallen ill ! How are you now? What is the condition in Bihar? Are those who committed the atrocities relenting? Do they need me there? They should not. If the Bihar fury does not abate, I do not wish to remain alive because my life would then be meaningless. Write to me what precisely the condition is.

The work here is very delicate. Let us see what comes about. *Blessings from*

BAPU

DR. RAJENDRA PRASAD

PATNA

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

*25. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*2

DATTAPARA,

*November 12, 1946*

Gandhiji again referred to the question of repatriation. The Moulvi Saheb, the Vice-President of Union No. 6, who had addressed them before him had invited them in the name of the Mussalmans to return to their homes. But it was not so easy in action as it was in speech. Everyone was anxious to see the two communities live in

1 Prabhavati, addressee’s wife

2 Extracted from Pyarelal’s “Weekly Letter” in *Harijan.* The audience consisted mostly of refugees.

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peace and harmony once again. For that it was not necessary that they should have the same religion. He had seen awful sights of destruction. He had seen the terror stricken faces of the sufferers. They had been forcibly converted once and they were afraid the same thing would be repeated. He wanted them to shed that fear. He alone deserved to live who refused to give up God’s name.1 He remembered how during the Jallianwala Bagh days, young English lads made big, hefty men crawl on their bellies. The lane through which they were made to crawl was called the crawling lane. Those men had a human form but they were worse than worms. So they must learn to be brave and face death rather than give up Ramanama.

He was not enamoured of the military and the police. The function of the police was to arrest thieves and dacoits, that of the military to guard them against foreign aggression. The police and the military could not teach them to cease fighting among themselves and live as friends. He would not ask anyone to return to their homes unless one good Hindu and one good Muslim stood surety for their safety in their respective villages.2 He referred to the scheme for repatriation but it could work only if the Muslim League wished to have peace and fully co-operated. Shamsuddin Saheb was coming in two or three days. They would hear from him what the League Government wanted to do.

*Harijan,* 1-12-1946; and *Hindustan Standard,* 15-11-1946

*26. TRIBUTE TO MADAN MOHAN MALAVIYA* DATTAPARA,

*November 13, 1946*

In Pandit Malaviya’s death3 India loses the oldest and one of the ablest and unswerving servants. Up to the last moment he never ceased to think of India and her freedom.

*Hindustan Standard,* 15-11-1946

*27. DISCUSSION WITH CO-WORKERS*

DATTAPARA,4

*November 13, 1946*

Early in the morning Gandhiji announced to his party an important decision. He had decided to disperse his party detailing each member, including the ladies, to settle down in one affected village and make himself or herself hostage for the safety and security of the Hindu minority of that village. They must be pledged to protect

1 The rest of the paragraph is from *Hindustan Standard.*

2 This sentence is from *Hindustan Standard.*

3 Madan Mohan Malaviya died on November 12, 1946; *vide* also “Letter to V. A. Sundaram”, 18-11-1946

4 Extracted from Pyarelal’s “A Venture in Faith”

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with their lives, if necessary, the Hindu population of that village. His decision was not binding on anyone of his party, he said. Those who wanted to, were free to go away and take up any of his other constructive activities.

Those who have ill-will against the Mussalmans or Islam in their hearts or cannot curb their indignation at what has happened should stay away. They will only misrepresent me by working under this plan.

So far as he was concerned, he added, his decision was final and irrevocable and left no room for discussion. He was going to bury himself in East Bengal till the Hindus and Mussalmans learnt to live together in harmony and peace. He would deprive himself of the services of all his companions and fend for himself with whatever assistance he could command locally.1 His ahimsa would be incomplete, he argued, unless he took that step. Either ahimsa is the law of life or it is not. A friend used to say that the *Ahimsa Sutra* in Patanjali—*Ahimsa Pratishthayam Tatsannidhau vairatyagah* was a mistake and needed to be amended and the saying *Ahimsa Paramodharmah* ought to be read as *Himsa Paramodharmah *; in other words, violence, not non violence was the supreme law. If at the crucial moment he lost faith in the law of non-violence, he must accept the deceased friend’s amendment which appeared to him to be absurd. Gandhiji continued : 

I know the women of Bengal better than probably the Bengalis do. Today they feel crushed and helpless. The sacrifice of myself and my companions would at least teach them the art of dying with self respect. It might open, too, the eyes of the oppressors and melt their hearts. I do not say that the moment my eyes are closed theirs will open. But that will be the ultimate result, I have not the slightest doubt. If ahimsa disappears, Hindu Dharma disappears.

“The issue is not religious but political. It is not a movement against the Hindus, but against the Congress,” remarked one member of the party. GANDHIJI: Do you not see that they think that the Congress is a purely Hindu body? And do not forget that I have no watertight compartments such as religious, political and other. Let us not lose ourselves in a forest of words. How to solve the tangle—violently or non-violently—is the question. In other words, has my method efficacy today?

1 Pyarelal says what follows was explained by Gandhiji in the evening. In the discussion which followed, Thakkar Bapa and Sucheta Kripalani also took part.

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QUESTION: How can you reason with people who are thirsting for your blood? Only the other day one of our workers was murdered.

GANDHIJI: I know it. To quell the rage is our job.

Another worker asked whether it was right to invite people to return to their villages under the prevailing conditions which involved a considerable amount of risk.

Gandhiji’s reply was that there was no harm in asking them to return to their villages if the Muslims of that village collectively guaranteed their safety and their guarantee was backed by one good Hindu and one good Mussalman, who would stay with them in that village and protect them by laying down their lives, if necessary. If there was that much guarantee, the refugees ought to return to their homes and face whatever risk there might be. If they had not the courage to live on these terms, Hinduism was doomed to disappear from East Bengal. The question of East Bengal is not one of Bengal alone. The battle for India is today being decided in East Bengal. Today Mussalmans are being taught by some that Hindu religion is an abomination and therefore forcible conversion of Hindus to Islam is a merit. It would save to Islam at least the descendants of those who were forcibly converted. If retaliation is to rule the day, the Hindus, in order to win, will have to outstrip the Mussalmans in the nefarious deeds that the latter are reported to have done. The United Nations set out to fight Hitler with his weapons and ended by out-Hitlering Hitler.

QUESTION: How can we reassure the people when the miscreants are still at large in these villages?

G. That is why I have insisted upon one good Mussalman standing surety along with a good Hindu for the safety and security of those who might be returning. The former will have to be provided by the Muslim Leaguers who form the Bengal Government.

*Harijan,* 24-11-1946

*28. TALK TO OFFICIALS*1

DATTAPARA,

*November 13, 1946*

It was represented by the Maulvi Saheb who had spoken the previous day in the prayer meeting that the Muslims, far from wanting to drive away the Hindus, themselves felt insecure as a number of them with status and standing had been put under arrest although they were innocent and that was the real obstacle in the way of

1 The officials included the District Magistrate, the Superintendent of Police and some officials. There were besides a number of representatives of relief organizations, the refugees and some local Muslims.

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their befriending the Hindus. Gandhiji replied that he did not see how that could stand in the way of their establishing good relations with the Hindus. On the contrary, it ought to provide an incentive for cultivating their friendship and winning their confidence so that there would be no motive left to get innocent Muslims implicated. The issue was really irrelevant to the proposition before them.

When large numbers have participated in crime, it is but natural that some innocent men will be implicated with the guilty ones. It is so all the world over. That does not mean that the guilty ones should not be proceeded against.

The remedy was for the Muslims to confer with the Hindus and produce agreed lists of those who had been really guilty. No innocent person would then suffer. To bring to book the really guilty ones was the acid test of the sincerity of the authorities and the local Muslims alike. Addressing the members of the Muslim League in the gathering, Gandhiji proceeded:

I have come here to seek your co-operation. You are a pow erful party. What has happened here does not show Islam at its best or even at its worst. It is the very negation of Islam. The first question we have got to settle is whether there *can* be co-operation between the Hindus and Muslims. I have apprised Shaheed Shurawardy of the things that have prevented the refugees from returning to their villages. The havoc which I saw yesterday was appalling. These things cannot be whitewashed. Energetic steps have to be taken.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase,* Vol. I, Book 2, pp. 29-30

*29. LETTER TO SUDHIR GHOSH*

*November 14, 1946*

CHI. SUDHIR,1

I have your two notes.2 You are just now more useful there3 than here. But when you feel that you want to consult me on anything, of course you are free to come. I am fixed up in East Bengal for some time, perhaps months, to come.

Both your letters are good so far as they go. Of course I was wholly right in what I had said about the Viceroy.

1 This is in Devanagari.

2 In *Gandhi’s Emissary*, “Discussion with Amiya Chakravarty”, 4-12-1946, the addressee explains that these were his drafts of letters written to interpret Gandhiji to Stafford Cripps and Pethick- Lawrence.

3 In New Delhi

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Both the major parties are demoralized each in its own way. So is the third party—the British rulers. They cannot think cogently. Military glory and love of power will not allow them to do so. We see others as we are. Hence the central teaching of the *Gita:* acquisition of the capacity to see things with detachment as perfect as it is humanly possible.

In my opinion for the British not to leave India till there is perfect peace in the land seems to be an impossible dream. What they can and must do is to transfer the whole power to the willing and capable party at the earliest moment, to withdraw the British part of the army and disband the rest. They should not think of keeping any part for the protection of British interests. These must be left to the goodwill of the people of India. This is the royal road to peaceful transfer and no other. This conviction has not yet gone home to the cabinet. I doubt not that you can work out all the corollaries to the above. If you flounder at any point, send me your questions through a messenger.

Love to you and Shanti.1

BAPU

Sudhir Ghosh Papers. Courtesy: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Also a facsimile in *Gandhi’s Emissary,* Between pp. 212 and 213

*30. LETTER TO JAISUKHLAL GANDHI*

*November 14, 1946*

CHI. JAISUKHLAL,

I have replied to your wire. I cannot call both of you to stay here. Here it is a matter of ‘do or die’. Do’ means making the Muslims see light. Besides, those who are with me will each have to go and camp in a different village and, if necessary, lay down his life. How can you then fit in here? You are in service. How can Manu stay alone in a strange village? Nevertheless, if both of you are willing to stay in separate villages and sacrifice yourselves, I shall be ready to take you. But if your telegram is meant only to seek permission for the two of you to come and see me, by all means do come. There will no doubt be some risk in that too. I cannot say where I shall be then. I expect of course to be somewhere in East Bengal. I do not even know whether I shall be alive. Now do as you think fit.

I hope Manudi has recovered. If she keeps indifferent health, 1 Addressee’s wife

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she will not feel comfortable here. The climate and water are not very good. Even the necessities may not be available, or available only with great difficulty. The roads are difficult. The distance in miles from Calcutta is not great but there is a river to cross which is as wide as a sea. So it takes time.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a microfilm of the Gujarati: M.M.U./24

*31. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL*

DATTAPARA,

*November 14, 1946*

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

I began with ‘Chi’. and therefore do not score it out to make ‘Bhai’. You are to me what you are. Acharya1 told me everything. I have communicated my view to Jawaharlal. Please see it. The more I think about it, the more I find myself against the Congress session at Meerut. It is best not to have a session, but if you must have one, have it in New Delhi.2 Since it is Kripalani’s affair, it is only right to let him take the final decision, though everyone should give his own view. His address may be printed and read if the Congress is called off. You have many problems before you. You need peace to be able to solve them. You need time as well. If a mistake is made now, it will prove to be very costly.

I cannot leave this place. If it is necessary to consult me, you should come here and ask me. That is the only way out. Truly speaking, there should be no need at all to consult me. I have said and done enough. The work here may perhaps be my last. If I survive this, it will be a new life for me. My non-violence is being tested here in a way it has never been tested before.

I hope you are all well enough to be able to work.

[From Gujarati]

*Bapuna Patro—2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine,* pp. 327-8

1 J. B. Kripalani

2 The session was held in New Delhi on November 19 and 20 and at Meerut from November 21.

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*32. SPEECH AT PUBLIC MEETING*1

SHAHPUR,

*November 14, 1946*

Gandhiji had been told that there would be a big gathering at Shahpur. But someone had spread the rumour that he would be accompanied by the Superintendent of Police, the District Magistrate and an armed guard who would utilize the occasion for making arrests, with the result that very few people were in evidence when Gandhiji arrived there.

“It is a cruel joke,” remarked Gandhiji. For so far as he was concerned, he had never wanted any police or district authorities to accompany him. But the authorities said they could not take the risk of letting him go about unprotected.

It had been brought to his notice that in several places, while the local Mussalmans professed to be anxious that peace should be re-established, they were not prepared to do anything for it or give any guarantee unless the Muslim League leaders asked them to. Gandhiji, recognizing the reasonableness of their suggestion, referred to a statement of Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah which he had read that morning. He

did not like everything in that statement but there were some things in it which should commend themselves to all. In that statement Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah had said: “If the Mussalmans lose their balance and give vent to the spirit of vengeance and retaliation and prove false to the highest codes of morality and preachings of our great religion Islam, they will not only lose their title to the claim of Pakistan but also it will start of a most vicious circle of bloodshed and cruelty which will at once put off the day of our freedom and we shall only be helping to prolong the period of slavery and bondage.”

He had further said :

“We must prove politically that we are brave, generous and trustworthy . . . that in the Pakistan areas the minorities will enjoy the fullest security of life, property and honour just as the Mussalmans themselves, nay, even greater.”

He would like them, remarked Gandhiji, to ponder over that statement, if, on examination, they found that his quotation was correct. Murder, loot, arson, abduction, forcible marriages and forcible conversions could not but prolong India’s slavery. If they kept on quarrelling among themselves, if they looked to the police and the military for protection, they would be inciting the third party to rule over them.

*Harijan,* 1-12-1946

1 Extracted from Pyarelal’s “Weekly Letter”. Gandhiji left Dattapara for Kazirkhil in the afternoon. *En route* he addressed a public meeting at Shahpur.

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*33. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*1

KAZIRKHIL,

*November 14, 1946*

Gandhiji said he found indescribable peace in the natural scenery around him but he found that peace missing on the faces of the men and women. And how could they have peace after all that they had been through? He found a number of guards standing there to protect him and his party. Against whom were they to protect him? He was not used to going about with a guard. He had toured in Bengal unprotected before this. He said:

But today the authorities would not let me do so. It is a matter of sorrow and shame for me and more than me it should be a matter of shame for the Mussalmans of East Bengal.

Even the schools and temples had been destroyed, he proceeded. Shamsuddin Saheb, their Minister, did not like it. The happenings in East Bengal, he said, had hurt him deeply. The hearts of the people had to be purged of hatred. For that their help and co-operation was necessary.

This fratricide was more awful than anything in his experience. He had carried on a grim struggle for 20 years in South Africa and for the last 30 years in India. But this mutual slaughter had nonplussed him. He did not know how he could induce the two communities to live in peace and harmony again. He had come to Bengal to find out a solution for the problem. Bengal was a big province. If the communal problem could be solved here, it would be solved elsewhere also. If he succeeded here, he would go away from Bengal with a new lease of life. If not, he wished God to remove him from this earth. He did not wish to leave Bengal empty-handed. The word “pessimism” was not to be found in his dictionary.

The Muslims butchered the Hindus and did worse things than butchery in Bengal and the Hindus butchered the Muslims in Bihar. When both acted wickedly it was no use making comparisons or saying one was less wicked than the other, or who started the trouble. If they wished to take revenge they should learn the art from him. He also took revenge, but it was of a different type. He had read a Gujarati poem in his childhood which said: “If to him who gives you a glass of water, you give two, there is no merit in it. Real merit lies in doing good to him who does you evil.” Gandhiji concluded:

That I consider noble revenge.

1 Extracted from Pyarelal’s “Weekly Letter”. At Kazirkhil, Gandhiji had been lodged in a partially destroyed house which had been cleaned up and made habitable. Prayers were held in the compound of the house.

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I read a story about one of the earlier Caliphs. A man attacked the Caliph with a sword. The Caliph wrested the sword from the assailant’s hands and was going to kill him when the assailant spat on his face. The Caliph thereupon let him go free because the indignity had filled him with personal anger. This produced a great impression upon the assailant and he embraced Islam. One who is forcibly converted to Islam ceases to be a man. To recite the *Kalma* through fear is meaningless.

*Harijan,* 1-12-1946

*34. TELEGRAM TO JAISUKHLAL GANDHI*

RAMGANJ,

*November 15, 1946*

JAISUKHLAL GANDHI

CARE SCINDIA NAVIGATION COMPANY

MAHUVA

DIFFICULT FOR YOU COME HERE. WHEN IS MANU COMING MAHUVA? WRITING.

BAPU

From a microfilm: M.M.U./24

*35. LETTER TO AMTUSSALAAM*

*November 15, 1946*

CHI. AMTUL SALAAM,

I have your letter. There is no doubt at all about my going to Dashgharia1. Discussion is going on with the Muslim League. There is no need for you to come here. You should get absorbed in your own work. Do not worry too much. Do what your strength permits you to do and be content.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 539

1 A village, four miles from Kazirkhil, where the addressee was working. Gandhiji had posted her in Siraudi centre and she had under her charge ten villages.

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*36. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*1

RAMGANJ,

*November 15, 1946*

Gandhiji reiterated and emphasized his previous day’s appeal. He could talk to them of nothing but sorrow and suffering these days. Wherever he went he saw awful sights of destruction. There were no tears in his eyes. He who shed tears could not wipe those of others, but his heart did weep. He had come with the hope that he could have a frank talk with the Mussalmans and that they would repent of their misdeeds and request the Hindus not to leave their homes. If the repentance was genuine, the Hindus would recognize their sincerity and regain lost confidence. But he could see that the Hindus and the Muslims of East Bengal had been embittered against one another. He would not go into the reasons thereof. But the Muslim brethren would permit him to say that so far as he knew, in East Bengal they had been the aggressors. The Hindus were mortally afraid of them. At Chaumuhani Muslims came to his meeting in larger numbers than the Hindus did. But he did not know why they were avoiding him after the first meeting at Dattapara. It hurt him. He wanted the few Mussalmans who were present at the meeting to carry his message to the rest. A Muslim sister who had been going about meeting leading Muslims in these parts had said that the Muslims told her plainly that they wanted orders from the League leaders before they could promise to befriend the Hindus or attend Gandhiji’s meetings. The exodus of the Hindus was still continuing. If the Muslims assured them that they were neighbours, friends and brothers, sons of the same soil, breathing the same air and drinking the same water, that the Hindus had nothing to fear from them, the exodus would stop and even those who had left their homes would return. Even animals were friendly to those who befriended them. But man was made in the image of God. To justify his inheritance, man had to return good for evil. Whosoever was at fault, this truth applied to both the parties. The Muslims wanted orders from the League. He could understand it. There was a League Government in the province. But that did not mean that the Government should be inimical to those outside the League.

He reiterated what he said2about Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah’s message on the previous day. They should search their hearts and ask themselves if they had lived up to that message. He concluded:

So far as I know, Islam does not permit forcible conversion and atrocities on women. What good can a mere repetition of the *Kalma* do to one whose heart does not accept Islam? You should ask your leaders, therefore, whether you are to be friends with the Hindus or

1 Extracted from Pyarelal’s “Weekly Letter”. The meeting was held in the school *maidan*.

2 *Vide* “Speech at Public Meeting”, 14-11-1946

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enemies and tell me. If you wish to be enemies, the Hindus should be asked to leave East Bengal. For myself, I have come to stay in East Bengal till there is reconciliation between the two.

*Harijan,* 1-12-1946

*37. LETTER TO VIYOGI HARI*

*November 16, 1946*

BHAI VIYOGI HARI,

Yesterday I read the letter written to you by your colleagues there. I do not consider it uncivil. The answer to it is not your resignation1. On the contrary, you should have a talk with them and satisfy them . . .2 is one of them. Work under him. To come out from there would be forsaking your duty. If you find yourself in a dilemma, you may come here and thrash it out with me. Bapa has seen this. He agrees with me. Both of us are stuck here.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

[From Hindi]

*Badonke Preranadayak Kuchh Patra,* p. 19

*38. LETTER TO MANORANJAN CHAUDHURI November 16, 1946*

BHAI MANORANJAN BABU3,

Why do you fall ill so often? It is the duty of a worker to keep his body and mind healthy. Observe scrupulously the rules of good health. I hope there is no fever now.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 10576

1 From the Udyogshala of Harijan Sevak Sangh

2 Omission as in the source

3Hindu Mahasabha leader, who had been working for the formation of a peace committee

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*39. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*1

KAZIRKHIL,

*November 16, 1946*

Gandhiji, addressing the meeting after Goffran Saheb2, began by referring to Shamsuddin Saheb’s speech3 at Chaumuhani a few days ago. They had now heard Goffran Saheb. The Ministers wanted them to live together as friends. The police and the military could not protect them. God alone could protect them. They had, therefore, to look to each other for their safety. Goffran Saheb had told them that the Government did not wish the Hindus to leave East Bengal. Awful things had no doubt happened but they should let bygones be bygones. They must turn a new leaf. When one had suffered as they had, one was liable to become filled with suspicion. But that had to be overcome.

A member from the audience had requested him to allow him five minutes to reply to Goffran Saheb’s speech which he said, required correction in several places. But Gandhiji replied that he was afraid he could not allow the meeting to be turned into a public debate. Whatever was said at the meeting was said in good faith4 and to do His work. But if the friend in question sent him a letter, not couched offensively, he would gladly forward it to Goffran Saheb. He rebuked the audience too for not observing pindrop silence while the Muslim Members of the audience were performing *namaz*. Culture and good breeding required that they should observe silence when others said their prayer. There should be mutual respect. All worshi-pped the same God, whatever their religion. He was glad to see the Congress and the League flags flying together in the prayer ground. Both had great significance. They should realize as Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah Saheb had said that if they kept on quarrelling among themselves the country would remain a slave country and Pakistan would vanish into thin air.

He was receiving threatening letters, said Gandhiji. Some Muslims feared that he had come to suppress them. He could assure them that he had never suppressed anyone in all his life. They asked him why he had not gone to Bihar. He had declared his resolve to fast5 if Bihar did not stop the madness. He was in constant touch with Bihar. Pandit Jawaharlalji, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and others had assured him that his

1 Extracted from Pyarelal’s “Weekly Letter”

2 Abdul Goffran, Minister for Civil Supplies, Bengal Government 3 Shamsuddin Ahmed met Gandhiji on November 8, *vide* “Discussion with Muslim League Leaders”, 8-11-1946.

4 *Hindustan Standard* has “in God’s name”.

5 *Vide* “To Bihar”, 6-11-1946

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presence there was not required. Bihar, he understood, was practically peaceful now. Tension was still there, but it was going. The Muslims were returning to their villages. The Government had taken the responsibility to build the houses of those who had been rendered homeless. He was also receiving many telegrams from Hindus asking why he did not fast against the Muslims for the happenings in Bengal. He could not do so today. If the Mussalmans realized that he was their friend, he would be entitled to fast against them also. If he was to leave East Bengal he would go only

after peace ruled the breasts of the Hindus and the Muslims. He had no desire to live any longer otherwise.1

He was in the midst of a Muslim population in Noakhali, he said. He did not like the idea of staying with Hindu friends. He would like to see if he could stay with a League Mussalman.

My requirements are very few. All I want is cleanliness, clean water, permissible food and the freedom to pray to God in my own way.

The Muslim friends will have an opportunity to examine me at close quarters and find out whether I am an enemy or a friend.

*Harijan,* 8-12-1946; and *Hindustan Standard,* 21-11-1946

*40. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*2

KAZIRKHIL,

*November 17, 1946*

The District Magistrate had issued orders and advertized the fact, remarked Gandhiji, that forcible conversions, i.e., conversions out of fear, would not be recognized by law. He did not know if everyone of those who had been converted forcibly had been restored to Hinduism. It not, it should be done if they wanted to replace the present bitterness between the two communities by cordiality.

Some abducted girls were still missing. They should be returned without further delay. A dhobi had brought to him his boy of one year this afternoon. He had recovered the child after a month from a Muslim with police help. It was the duty of the Muslim brethren to put an end to such acts. They should make a frank confession of error in the past and promise to avoid it in future. He, who tried to hide his mistakes, could never rectify them. He himself was a votary of truth. Even when he

1 What follows is extracted from Pyarelal’s “The ‘Do or Die’Mission”. 2 Extracted from Pyarelal’s “Weekly Letter”. On the morning of November 17, Gandhiji had visited the village of Dashgharia, two miles from Kazirkhil, where he was met by a large number of women, who had all been forcibly converted and now reconverted to their own religion.

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practised law, he told his clients to tell him the truth if they wanted him to take up their case. He would not plead for a false case. The result was that only true and *bona-fide* cases were brought to him. He had long ceased to practise law and had even been struck off the rolls of the Bar register1 for the offence of sedition. But he continued to follow the same principle. His advice to the Hindus and the Muslims was to get rid of all evil in themselves. Without that they would not be able to live in peace or have respect for one another.

Gandhiji observed that he had heard that because he did not allow a gentleman to reply to Goffran Saheb’s remarks there and then at the meeting, the Hindus were annoyed and had boycotted the meeting.2 He was unrepentant. He never said or did anything merely to please others. He had always taught that one should do one’s duty irrespective of the reaction it may have on others. A man who always did what he believed to be right never feared anyone.

*Harijan,* 8-12-1946

*41. TELEGRAM TO VIYOGI HARI*

*November 18, 1946*

BAPA I GLAD YOU WITHDREW RESIGNATION. WRITING.3

BAPU

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

*42. TELEGRAM TO D. B. KALELKAR*

[*November 18, 1946*]4

KAKASAHEB

YOUR LETTER. WROTE YOU TWO LETTERS. 5 YOU CAN COME. DISCUSS THINGS.

BAPU

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

1 Gandhiji had been disbarred on November 10, 1922, following his conviction by Ahmedabad Sessions Court on March 18, 1922.

2 Gandhiji was later assured “that they had not boycotted the meeting but as it was Sunday and the bazaar day, the women were afraid to come out as there would be many Muslims, including *goondas* about. *Vide* also “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 19-11-1946

3 *Vide* “Letter to Viyogi Hari”, 18-11-1946

4 This was found among items of this date in the source.

5 *Vide* “Letter to D. B. Kalelkar”, 25-10-1946 and “Letter to D.B. Kalelkar”, 12-11-1946

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*43. SILENCE-DAY NOTE TO N. K. BOSE*

*November 18, 1946*

I want you, if you can and will, to be with me wherever I go and stay while I am in Bengal. The idea is that I should be alone only with you as my companion and interpreter. This you should do only if you can sever your connection with the University and would care to risk death, starvation, etc. Satis Babu knows all about my design. You will know from him.

Secondly, I want to collect from *Dawn, Azad, Mornin News* and *Star of India* all the telling extracts from Qaid-e-Azam’s and other League leaders’ writings and speeches and put them in chron-ological order giving under each extract date and origin.

These things you can do simultaneously.1

From a photostat: C. W. 1533. Courtesy: N. K. Bose

*44. LETTER TO V. A. SUNDARAM*

*November 18, 1946*

CHI. SUNDARAM,2

So Panditji is gone and yet he is not gone ! How can he, of so many unrivalled services? His ailing body is delivered from torture. But he is immortal.

Now is your testing time. You have to do all you can to make his monumental work a success. I do not mean merely financially. I am trying to write an article3 which you will see, if I succeed in finis hing it as I hope to.

Love.

BAPU

From a photostat: G. N. 3197

1 The addressee replied saying: “The university releases me for your service and as long as you are in Bengal. . . . I shall try to fulfil your conditions.” 2 Secretary to Madan Mohan Malaviya. The superscription is in Tamil. 3 *Vide* “Malaviyaji”.

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*45. LETTER TO DINSHAW K. MEHTA*

*November 18, 1946*

CHI. DINSHAW,

I got your letter of the 11th today. Do whatever you wish calmly and with deliberation. Nature-cure treatment is not only for the body but also for the mind.

Your duty at present is to stay near your mother. You can think of coming here only after she is all right. Whatever you are doing there, you are doing as a matter of duty. Moreover, there is also the work of the sanatorium, which also you must attend to. I am carrying on as usual. God is there to take care of me.

*Blessings to Gulbehn, children and you from*

BAPU

[PS.]

I have not given any address because we don’t stay at one place. It will do if you address the letters to Khadi Pratishthan, Sodepur. For the time being, I may not have to go on a total fast.

BAPU

DR. DINSHAW MEHTA

POONA

From a copy of the Gujarati: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

*46. LETTER TO GOVIND MALAVIYA*

KAZIRKHIL,

*November 18, 1946*

CHI. GOVIND,

Father is gone, yet not quite gone. He is in our midst in the manifold services he rendered. So his having passed away only means that he has been freed from physical suffering, which I regard as a relief. Now it is your duty, and your brothers’ and ours as well, to make a success of his great work as best as we can. I am writing an article in this connection; see it when it is published.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

SHRI GOVIND MALAVIYA

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

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*47. LETTER TO VIYOGI HARI*

KAZIRKHIL,

*November 18, 1946*

BHAI VIYOGI HARI,

I have your wire. I have sent a wire1 saying that we are both glad. You must have received my other letter2 as well. Now have an amicable discussion with colleagues and mend matters where necessary.

You deserve to be President of the Sammelan3. Render whatever service you can. My blessings you have but I wish to say nothing about the Sammelan. So my name must not be brought in on any account.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

*48. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*4

KAZIRKHIL,

*November 18, 1946*

What can I tell you on my silence day? The more I go about in these parts, the more I find that your worst enemy is fear. It eats into the vitals of the terror-stricken as well as the terrorist. The latter fears something in his victim. It may be his different religion or his riches that he fears. The second kind of fear is otherwise known as greed [or love of material possession]5. If you search [deeply] enough, you will find that greed is a variety of fear. But there has never been, and will never be, a man who is able to intimidate one who has cast out fear from his heart. Why can no one intimidate the fearless? You will find

1 *Vide* “Letter to Viyogi Hari”, 16-11-1946 and “Telegram to Viyogi Hari”, 18- 11-1946

2*ibid*

3 Hindi Sahitya Sammelan in Karachi

4 Extracted from Pyarelal’s “Weekly Letter”. It being a silence day, the speech was read out. The first and the last sentences are reproduced from *Hindustan Standard*, 22-11-1946, which also reported that “the prayer meeting was held in the camp compound.”

5 From *Mahatma Gandhi*—*The Last Phase*

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that God is always by the side of the fearless. Therefore, we should fear Him alone and seek His protection. All other fear will then disappear by itself. Till fearlessness is cultivated by the people there will never be any peace in these parts for the Hindus or for the Mussalmans. Hence in order to establish any real peace, I have suggested that each affected village must have one good Hindu and one good Mussalman to accompany the returning refugees.

*Harijan,* 8-12-1946; and *Hindustan Standard*, 22-11-1946

*49. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*1

MADHUPUR,

*November 19,1946*

Gandhiji observed that a friend2 had told him that the explanation3 was a make-believe. If they had boycotted the meeting, he did no mind it. They owed him no apology on that account. And if they had stayed away out of fear, certainly no apology was due to him. But it was a shame for them to be so afraid. Were the men also such cowards that they had stayed away out of fear? Were the Muslims going to eat them up? If they were such cowards, they were not worthy of living in this country. The sister who had gone to him in the morning to request him to hold a women’s meeting at Madhupur had put before him three questions. The first question was that in spite of all their efforts they were unable to rescue some of the abducted women. He had told her that she should write to him about it and he would forward the letter to Shaheed Suhrawardy. He could even write to the Prime Minister directly. It was a matter which brooked no delay. Secondly she said there were some women in the villages who wanted to come away but wanted a military escort. He never could be a party to that. He had told the Prime Minister that he for one was not enamoured of the police and the military and that he could withdraw it at any time. The Hindus and the Muslims should be free to break each other’s heads if they wanted to. He would put up with that. But if they continued to look to the police and the military for help, they would remain slaves for ever. Those who preferred security to freedom had no right to live. He wanted the women to become brave. To change one’s religion under threat of force was no conversion but rather cowardice. A cowardly man or woman was a dead weight on any religion. Out of fear they might become Muslims today, Christians tomorrow and pass into a third religion the day after. That was not

1 Extracted from Pyarelal’s “Weekly Letter”

2 According to *Hindustan Standard,* this was Uma Guha.

3 *Vide* footnote 3, “Speech at Prayer Meeting”, 17-11-1946

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worthy of human beings. It was up to the men workers to tell the women that they would be their escort and would protect them with their lives. If still the women were afraid to come away, there was no help for them. He had come to proclaim from the housetops that the women had to become brave or else die. They should make use of the calamity that had befallen them to cast out the demon of fear. Lastly the sister had asked as to how they could advise the refugees to go back to their homes. He would not ask them to go back under police or military protection. They had run away out of the fear of the Muslims. Therefore, it was the Muslims who had to come forward and reassure them that they would regard them as their own mothers, daughters and sisters and protect them with their lives. Everybody must be entitled to retain his or her own religion without interference. All worshipped the same God although under different names. “If I see my God in this tree and worship it, why should the Muslims object?”

It was wrong for anyone to say that his God was superior to another’s. God was one and the same for all. Hence, his formula was that from every village one good Hindu and one good Muslim should stand surety for the peace of the village. Then and then alone would he ask the refugees to return. The Ministers had liked his suggestion.

*Harijan,* 8-12-1946

*50. INTERVIEW TO “THE HINDU”1*

KAZIRKHIL,

[*November 19, 1946*]2

QUESTION: Will the new experiment, which you propose to inaugurate tomorrow, of going and living singly in affected villages, infuse courage into the hearts of refugees and succeed in persuading them to return to their villages? What is the significance underlying this experiment?

GANDHIJI: This question would not arise if you knew that I was going to a village for my own sake, that is, to test my ahimsa. I am not going singly; there will be Nirmal Kumar Bose as my Bengali interpreter and my stenographer Parasuram from the South. If I have the requisite courage and capacity to undergo a comparatively hard life and to encourage inner ahimsa, I should expect to affect both Hindus and Muslims in the right manner.

You should also know that all members of my original party will similarly distribute themselves, taking with them a local Bengali

1 The report said that Gandhiji’s interview to “a special correspondent” was on “the eve of his departure for Srirampur”. He left for Srirampur on November 20. 2*ibid*

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worker. The choice of village will rest with Satis Chandra Das Gupta.

Asked whether Bengal Government would not feel that his action was aimed at bringing ridicule on them, Gandhiji replied:

I think not, only because I have not the remotest idea of bringing ridicule on them, assuming of course that Bengal Govern ment have meant every word of what they have said. Indeed, I am in search of a League Muslim who will harbour me in his house as a member of his family.

Q. Are you not taking a serious liberty with your life at this stage by proposing to live in a village which is perhaps not free from *goondas* ? G. I recognize no one as a *goonda*—or all are *goondas*, some more, some less. I have the conviction that so long as God wants my service in the present body, He will keep it from all harm. *Hindustan Standard,* 22-11-1946

*51. A TALK1*

[On or before *November 20, 1946*]2

When I was in detention in the Aga Khan Palace, I once sat down to write a thesis on India as a protagonist of non-violence. But as I proceeded with my writing, I could not go on. I had to stop. There are two aspects of Hinduism. There is, on the one hand, the historical Hinduism with its untouchability, superstitious worship of stocks and stones, animal sacrifice and so on. On the other, we have the Hinduism of the *Gita*, the *Upanishads* and Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutra* which is the acme of ahimsa and oneness of all creation, pure worship of one immanent, formless imperishable God. Ahimsa which to me is the chief glory of Hinduism has been sought to be explained away by our people as being meant for sannyasis only. I do not share that view. I have held that it is *the* way of life and India has to show it to the world. Where do I stand? Do I represent this ahimsa in my person? If I do, then deceit and hatred that poison the atmosphere should dissolve. It is only by going into isolation from my compa nions, those on whose help I have relied all along, and standing on my own feet that I shall find my bearings and also test my faith in God.

*Harijan,* 8-12-1946

1 Extracted from Pyarelal’s “The ‘Do or Die’ Mission”

2From the reference to decision of “going into isolation from my companions”. Gandhiji reached Srirampur on November 20; *vide* the preceding item.

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*52. LETTER TO N. G. RANGA*

*November 20, 1946*

MY DEAR RANGA1,

This2 is one of the many letters about you. If there is any truth in it, you tell me. Why such complaints? My movements are fleeting. Hence the address is Khadi Pratishthan, Sodepur, Bengal.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

PROF. N. G. RANGA

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

*53. LETTER TO SHAH NAWAZ*

*November 20, 1946*

DEAR SHAH NAWAZ,

I dare not write to you in Urdu3 during the short time at my disposal. I sent you a wire yesterday in reply to yours. Things here are so complex that they defy me. I do not know what use I can make of you at this juncture. I am breaking up even the party I have brought with me. I am distributing them singly in villages. There appears to me to be an atmosphere of falsity. Therefore I can only say: do the best you can wherever you are. I shall tell you further if I see more light.

BAPU

CAPT. SHAH NAWAZ

CONGRESS CAMP

MEERUT

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

1 President, All-India Kisan Sabha; President, Andhra Provincial Congress Committee; Member, Congress Parliamentary Party; Founder-President, Swatantra Party

2 The enclosure is not traceable.

3 This word is in Devanagari.

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*54. LETTER TO SATINDRANATH SEN*

*November 20, 1946*

DEAR SATIS1,

Amrit Babu has given me your letter.

A most complex position faces Bengal. I am not sure what is the exact thing to do. I am hoping that light will pierce through this darkness. I can therefore give you no guidance at present. Wait, watch and pray.

BAPU

SHRI SATINDRANATH SEN

BARISAL2

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

*55. LETTER TO VIJAYA*

*November 20, 1946*

CHI. VIJAYA,

You have been married for quite some time but I am able to write to you only today. I intended and wished to write to you earlier. I trust your married life is happy and the capacity of both of you to render service has further increased as both of you are inclined to serve. You will have recovered. I hope the climate of Sevagram is suiting Apteji.

Sushila must be writing to you about the conditions prevailing here.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 3161

1 A Congress leader

2 This is in Devanagari.

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*56. LETTER TO RAIHANA TYABJI AND SAROJ NANAVATI*

KAZIRKHIL,

*Wednesday, November 20, 1946*

DEAR DAUGHTERS RAIHANA AND SAROJ,

I had two letters from you. Yesterday I started taking milk and shall take whatever diet agrees with me. Rajendra Babu says that the Bihar affair is settled now.1 Let us see what God now prompts us to do. My proposal to fast was absolutely right but there is no time to argue about it. I shall argue it out if we meet some day, and I hope that you will agree that my action was right, or you will point out my error. I shall be satisfied either way.

It will not be right to invite you two here. The weather here is also not good.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

RAIHANA TYABJI

WARDHA

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

*57. LETTER TO MALATI CHOWDHURI*

*November 20, 1946*

CHI. MALATIBEHN2,

Bapa has shown me your letter.

Send me the judgment. But now that Mahtab Babu3is the Premier, why can’t he do something? Since there is a popular ministry, a man like me is redundant.

It will not be right for you or anyone else to come here at present. There is darkness all around which will not be dispelled but

1 *Vide* “Statement to the Press”, 20-11-1946

2President of the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee; subsequently nominated as a member of the Constituent Assembly

3 Harekrushna Mahtab

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only deepen with the arrival of outsiders. The best thing is to remain where you are and do your duty.

BAPU

SMT. MALATI CHOWDHURI

CUTTACK

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

*58. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS*

*November 20, 1946*

I find myself in the midst of exaggeration and falsity. I am unable to discover the truth. There is terrible mutual distrust. Oldest friendships have snapped. Truth and ahimsa by which I swear, and which have, to my knowledge, sustained me for sixty years, seem to fail to show the attributes I have ascribed to them.

To test them, or better, to test myself, I am going to a village called Srirampur, cutting myself away from those who have been with me all these years, and who have made life easy for me. I am taking Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose as my Bengali teacher and interpreter and Shri Parasuram, who has been my most devoted, selfless and silent stenographer.

The other workers, whom I have brought with me, will each distribute themselves in other villages of Noakhali to do the work ofpeace, if it is at all possible, between the two communities. They are, unfortunately, all non-Bengalis except little Abha1. They will, there fore, be accompanied by one Bengali worker each as teacher and interpreter, even like Prof. N. K. Bose will be to me.

Distribution work and selection work will be done by Shri Satis Chandra Das Gupta of the Khadi Pratishthan. My ideal is to live in a local Muslim League family, but I see that I must not wait for that happy day. I must meanwhile establish such contacts with the

Muslims as I can in their own villages. My suggestion to the League Ministers is that they should give me one honest and brave Muslim to accompany one equally honest and brave Hindu for each affected village. They should guarantee, at the cost of their lives if need be, the

1 Abha Gandhi, wife of Kanu Gandhi

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safety of the returning Hindu refugees. I am sorry to have to confess that without some such thing it seems to me difficult to induce them to return to their villages.

From all accounts received by me, life is not as yet smooth and safe for the minority community in the villages. They, therefore, prefer to live as exiles from their own homes, crops, plantations and surroundings, and live on inadequate and ill-balanced doles.

Many friends from outside Bengal have written to me to allow them to come for peace work but I have strongly dissuaded them from coming. I would love to let them come if and when I see light through this impenetrable darkness.

In the meantime, both Pyarelal and I have decided to suspend all other activities in the shape of correspondence, including the heavy work of the *Harijan* and the allied weeklies. I have asked Shri Kishorelal, Shri Kakasaheb, Shri Vinoba and Shri Narahari Parikh to edit the weeklies jointly and severally. Pyarelal and I may, if our work permits, send stra contributions from our respective villages. Corresp ondence will be attended to from Sevagram.

How long this suspense will last is more than I can say. This much, however, I can. I do not propose to leave East Bengal till I am satisfied that mutual trust has been established between the two communities and the two have resumed the even tenor of their life in their villages. Without this there is neither Pakistan nor Hindustan— only slavery awaits India, torn asunder by mutual strife and engrossed in barbarity.

No one need at present be disturbed about my low diet. On receipt of the following wire from Dr. Rajendra Prasad :“Letter received. Have already wired quiet. There have been no incidents for a week now. Situation satisfactory. Most earnestly desire resumption of normal diet. Myself going Delhi 19th”, I resumed goat’s milk from yesterday and propose to revert to normal diet as early as the system permits. The future is in God’s keeping.

*Harijan*, 1-12-1946

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*59. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*1

SRIRAMPUR,

*November 20, 1946*

Speaking after the prayer at Srirampur to an audience of about a thousand persons, Gandhiji said that he had never imagined he would be able to come and settle down in a devastated village in Noakhali so soon. This had become possible through Satish Babu’s efforts. He had come here alone, with two companions only. One was to act as his interpreter and teach him Bengali, while the other, Shri Parasuram, who was from Malabar, had been brought along because he knew no Bengali and little Hindustani and so could not be set up in a village alone. For all practical purposes he had thus come here alone. His companions had been left behind at Kazirkhil, and each of them was likewise to choose one village for himself. His idea was that every Hindu worker thus sent should be accompanied by a single Mussalman worker, and both of them together should mix with the local people and gradually create an atmosphere in which the refugees would shed their fear and be able to come back and live in peace and friendship once more. For a Mussalman worker he depended on Shaheed Saheb and Shamsuddin Saheb. But he could not afford to wait until such a worker was available. He had, therefore, come here as soon as he found the opportunity. It was good that some Mussalmans were present in the meeting and two local Mussalman friends had already invited him to visit their homes. They had assured him that they also wanted the Hindus back in the village, but the Hindus were not yet in the proper frame of mind to do so.

Fear is a thing which he disliked. Why should one man be afraid of another man? Man should stand in fear of God alone, and then he can shed all other fears. Pyarelal had come to the meeting a short while ago. On his way, he had met about 150 refugees who were going away from the village with their

belongings. On enquiry the refugees had told him that they were afraid that when the military and police left there would be fresh trouble. Whilst the roads were safe, therefore, they took the opportunity of moving away to some place of safety. But the man who is possessed by fear will not find safety anywhere. What help can the military or the police give to such a man? To depend on military and police aid is to add to one’s helplessness. He would therefore like these refugees to develop personal courage so that they would consider it beneath their dignity to fly from fancied danger merely for fear of losing their lives. Therefore, the better course for intending refugees would be to derive personal courage from men like him who went to the affected villages, assuming of course that these had the requisite courage.

But whether he could personally infuse such courage in another man or not he

1 Extracted from “Srirampur Diary”, which was “prepared from Press messages in newspapers . . . to make handy for the reader Gandhiji’s utterances. . .”

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did not know. So long he had lived amidst a number of companions. But now he had begun to say to himself, “Now is the time. If you want to know yourself, go forth alone.” It was therefore that he had come practically alone like this to the present village. With unquenchable faith in God he proposed to persevere so as to succeed in disarming all opposition and inspiring confidence.

He would live here amidst the Muslim villagers, form intimate acquaintance with each family, know their mind, and help them also to know his mind. When they thus knew one another intimately, then would perhaps come the time when the atmosphere would change and sweetness prevail in the relations between Hindus and Mussalmans, where sourness was prevailing today.

*Harijan*, 5-1-1947

*60. INTERVIEW TO “THE HINDU”1*

SRIRAMPUR,

*November 20, 1946*

When I asked him whether he did not feel he was living alone as in jail, Gandhiji said :

Yes, but with this difference.,In jail I had willy-nilly to live alone. Here I have deliberately imposed it on myself. There are now two with me and they are too many. While Nirmal Babu will be my interpreter, Parasuram will help me in other ways. I want to reduce my correspondence to the minimum and I may write for the *Harijan* if I feel the urge.

When asked whether he was not putting too great a physical strain on himself, he said :

People have been pampering me too much. I would not have felt free until I was severely alone. . . .

Asked how long he proposed to stay in the village, he said that it all depended on how things shaped in the coming days.

Explaining his programme of activity in the village, Gandhiji said that he had already seen local Muslims and explained the object of his visit. He proposed to go every morning to the houses of local Muslims and talk to them in order to ascertain their real views on the present situation. He would invite them to attend his prayer meetings and would influence them in every way so as to bring about friendly relations between the two communities.

*The Hindu*, 24-4-1946

1 The correspondent reported that he saw Gandhiji in the “evening in his new abode in Srirampur, sitting calmly in a half-burnt house amidst ruins”.

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*61. A WARNING*1

[On or after *November 20, 1946*]2

In the army, a soldier who does not take care of his feet, for instance, and allows corns to form makes himself liable to be cashiered; much more is expected of a soldier of non-violence. *Harijan*, 12-1-1947

*62. NOTE TO PYARELAL*3

[On or after *November 20, 1946*]

You are not to proceed to your village. Those who go to village have to go there with the determination to do or die. If they fall ill, they must get well or die there. Then alone would their going have any meaning. In practice, this means that in case of illness, they must be content to do with home remedies or the therapy of nature’s elements. Sushila’s medical services are not supposed to be available to the members of our party. Her services are all premortgaged to the village folk of East Bengal. She has her work cut out in her village. . . .4

It won’t do to live in the villages like a jinn. We must learn to live and move with the proverbial cautiousness and wisdom of a she elephant. Then alone shall we have the fitness to live there. To live in the villages of Bengal calls for a special knack. We have all to cultivate it. You and I have to pass that test.

Come to me when you are well and I shall further explain the meaning of ‘Do or Die’.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book. II, pp. 73-4

1 Extracted from Pyarelal’s article “Initiated”. Gandhiji gave the warning “when he sent out the members of his party separately on their ‘Do or Die’ assignment” on November 20.

2 *ibid*

3 Pyarelal explains that he had had an attack of malaria even before he had set out for his village and a worker had written to Gandhiji to send Sushila Nayyar to look after him. The following day he received the note in Gandhiji’s own hand. Gandhiji had disbanded his camp on November 20, 1946. *Vide* also the preceding item.

4 Omission as in the source. Dr. Sushila Nayyar had set up a free dispensary for the poor at Changirgaon.

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*63. LETTER TO SEVAGRAM ASHRAM INMATES*1 [On or after *November 20, 1946*]2

I am afraid you must give up all hope of my returning early or returning at all to the Ashram. The same applies to my companions. It is a Herculean task that faces me. I am being tested. Is the satyagraha of my conception a weapon of the weak or really that of the strong? I must either realize the latter or lay down my life in the attempt to attain it. That is my quest. In pursuit of it I have come to bury myself in this devastated village. His will be done.

*Harijan*, 8-12-1946

*64. NOTE TO V. V. DASTANE*3

[On or after *November 20, 1946*]4

I have understood the aforesaid and it expresses my own opinion.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

*65. LETTER TO DEVPRAKASH NAYYAR*

*November 21, 1946*

CHI. DEV,

I read your letter to Pyarelal. Your dharma is clear. If you are not able to make yourself understood through talk, you should put down in writing what you want to say. Loyalty demands that you should frankly tell both of them what you feel and then dissociate

1 Extracted from Pyarelal’s “The ‘Do or Die’ Mission”

2 From the reference to Gandhiji’s decision “to bury myself in this devastated village”; *vide* also the preceding two items.

3 According to the source, this was Gandhiji’s postscript to Pyarelal’s letter to the addressee which read: “Your institution being an authorized one, all the rules of the Charkha Sangh should apply to it and, therefore, the Charkha Sangh alone is entitled to the profits accruing therefrom.”

4 In the source, the letter has been placed between the items of November 20 and 24.

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yourself from the Sangh.1 Run an independent school on the same lines. This of course is for the future. If you give your consent I am prepared to write to the couple2.

What he says about Balvantsinha and Chimanlal is totally incorrect. I don’t know how this misunderstanding arose. I hope you are well.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a microfilm of the Hindi. Courtesy: National Archives of India

*66. EXTRACT FROM DIARY*3

SRIRAMPUR,

*November 21, 1946*

Conducted the morning prayer myself with the exception of the *Gita* chapters. After prayer, wrote letters to X, Y and Z. A Maulvi attached to the Howrah mosque (Noakhali) had a talk with me during the morning walk. A and B (two Hindu workers) came afterwards and had a long talk.4 Told them that people ought to take their courage in both hands and return to their villages, especially where there is a good Hindu with a good Muslim to give guarantee of safety and protection. . . .

Massaged the body with my own hands but had to forgo a shave (for lack of time). Had curdled milk with vegetable soup for midday meal. Some Muslims . . . saw me before the evening prayer; some more followed after the prayer. Made inquiries about local Muslims

. . . . Had a two hours’ talk with M. and his friends. Diet the same as yesterday but without grape-fruit.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 40

1 The Talimi Sangh. The addressee was a probationer in Nayee Talim. 2 E. W. Aryanayakam and Ashadevi

3 Omissions here and in other extracts from Diary are as in the source. 4For a talk with the Hindu worker,*vide* “Talk With Hindu Workers”, 21-11-1945

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*67. TALK WITH NALINI MITRA AND*

*RASHAMOY SUR* 1

SRIRAMPUR,

*November 22, 1946*

Gandhiji told them that if Noakhali set any precedent in the transfer of population to other districts in Bengal, other provinces might follow it, and such a policy would be suicidal for the whole country. He could never approve of such a scheme. He would not advise the people to leave their homes and go away somewhere else. The Bengalees were always in the forefront of civilized life in bravery and sacrifice and it was really shocking to find that people would run away in fear giving up their hearths and homes. He wanted to see every Hindu family settle down in its own village and face the situation fearlessly and with courage.

Concluding, Gandhiji told them that the present problem was not the question of Noakhali alone; it was a problem for the whole of Bengal and the whole of India. *Hindustan Standard*, 24-11-1946

*68. SPEECH AT MEETING OF REPRESENTATIVES OF HINDUS AND MUSLIMS*2

RAMGUNJ,

*November 22, 1946*

Consenting to the formation of the Committees, Mahatma Gandhi said that

1 The U. P. I. report said: “On behalf of Noakhali Central Relief, Rescue and Rehabilitation Committee, they met Gandhiji during his morning walk to place before him concrete suggestions about the temporary removal of refugees to West Bengal or outside for rehabilitation on a planned scheme.”

2 In *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Pyarelal says: “A conference of about 30 representatives of both the communities and Government spokesmen was held at Ramgunj Dak Bungalow on the evening of November 22, when a plan for the establishment of peace, based on the Bengal Government’s proposals, was finally hammered out, and a nucleus of the Peace Committee for Ramgunj police station was formed. The formula adopted was that there should be Peace Committees, with equal number of Hindus and Muslims, for the village, the village union, and the police station. The Muslims would be selected by the Hindus and an official would be the chairman. The Government would undertake to implement the recommen- dations of the Peace Committees. . . . The functions of the Peace Committees were defined to be (a) to do intensive propaganda work to restore confidence, (b) to help in constructing shelters for the returning refugees, and in procuring and distributing relief, e.g., food, clothing, etc., (c) to draw up lists of culprits and disturbers of peace, who should be rounded up, and (d) to prepare a list of houses destroyed or damaged during the disturbances.”

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the Committees’ decisions should be accepted by the Government if they called themselves a people’s government. He again stressed the need for one honest Muslim and one honest Hindu to stand as sureties for the protection of the villagers and these two men must be prepared to die if necessary. Even if they died the result would be

good, he added.1

*Hindustan Standard*, 25-11-1946

*69. EXTRACT FROM DIARY*

SRIRAMPUR,

*November 22, 1946*

Rose at 4 a. m. The *Gita* recitation took two hours. Pronun ciation of the reciter was very unsatisfactory.

Wrote to R. that his son (who recently lost his wife) should not remarry, or marry a widow if he must.

Visited a Muslim *badi*2 at 7.30 a. m. The way was long. It took full 20 minutes to get there—55 minutes coming and going. Gave myself massage like yesterday. . . . At 10.30 a number of visitors came. After they had gone, had a short nap with mud-pack on the abdomen. Span for one hour. Abdullah (the Superintendent of Police) with some others came for the meeting at Ramgunj in the evening. Started at 4 p. m. with them for Ramgunj. Reached Ramgunj at 5.20 p. m. The meeting continued till 10.30 p. m. Addressed a few words at the end. . . . Had evening prayer on the boat on the return journey and then some sleep. Had milk while proceeding to Ramgunj; hot water on return. Reached Srirampur at midnight.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 40

*70. MALAVIYAJI*3

There is a saying in English, “The King is dead, Long Live the King”. The same may be said with reference to Malaviyaji. Malaviyaji was born for India and lives in the works he did for India. They were many. They were great works. The most magnificent among them is the Hindu Vishva Vidyalaya. We erroneously call it the Benares Hindu University. For this, not Malaviyaji but his followers are to blame.

1 The report said that after three hours’ discussion, the representatives agreed to form and join peace committees.

2 Homestead or a cluster of homesteads

3 A translation of this also appeared in *Harijan*, 8-12-1946.

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Malaviyaji was a servant of his servants. He let his followers do as they liked. I know he was full of such magnanimity. He had it to the point of a fault. But the saying ‘no blame attaches to the mighty’ applies equally to Malaviyaji. He cherished the name Hindu Vishva Vidyalaya. The correction is even now due. Every stone of this University should reflect Hindu dharma. Not a single building should symbolize the materialism of the West, rather, it should stand for spirituality. The same should go for the teachers and scholars. Is that so today? Can it be said that every scholar of the University is a living embodiment of pure religion? If not, why not? The University will be judged not by the number of its scholars but by the degree to which they exemplify Hindu dharma, however small their number.

I know the task is an arduous one. But this is of essence for the University. If this be not so, the University is no- thing. The duty, therefore, of Malaviyaji’s sons and followers is clear. What place does Hinduism occupy in the world today? What are its blemishes? How can they be removed? It is for the devotees of Malaviyaji to answer these questions. Malaviyaji has left us his bequest. To make it lasting and to develop it would be the right memorial for him.

Malaviyaji collected a great deal of money for the University, but a great deal still remains to be collected. Everyone can make his contribution to this work.

So much for his outward activity. His inner life was of the purest. He was an ocean of kindness. His knowledge of the Shastras was immense. *Bhagavata* was his most favourite book. He was a competent preacher. His memory was prodigious. His life was clean and simple.

I leave out his politics and his other manifold activities. He whose life was dedicated to selfless service and who was endowed with so many gifts, could not be confined in his activities. I have wanted to draw attention only to the most abiding of his works. Those who wish to make of the University an institution full of purity, would better study, ponder and follow the ideals of Malaviyaji.

SRIRAMPUR, November 23, 1946

*Harijan Sevak*, 8-12-1946

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*71. STATEMENT TO THE PRESS*

SRIRAMPUR,

[*November 23, 1946*]1

Beyond feeling still weak2and having skin eruptions I am feeling no ill effects of the recent reduction in diet. This is the fourth day since I resumed taking milk. Dr. Sushila Nayyar thinks that normal diet will remove skin eruptions which, she thinks, are due to lowered vitality, and restoration of normal strength is a matter of days now if I take care of myself otherwise.

Like the rest of my companions she has gone to a village near by. I may add that my work has not suffered and I hope it will not have to suffer for my physical weakness.

*Hindustan Standard*, 26-11-1946

*72. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*

CHANDIPUR,

*November 23, 1946*

Gandhiji said his advice to them was that all must help in the work of the Peace Committee3 that had been formed and strengthen its hands. By staying out of the Committee and carrying on Press propaganda they would not be helping the cause. He wanted to tell them his own experience in Champaran. As a result of the struggle there, a Commission of Enquiry was appointed. He was requested to become a member of the Commission unconditionally. He consulted his friends and accepted the offer. The result was that the indigo monopoly ended. It was probably a century-old wrong. Seven times the labourers had rebelled before. Each time the rebellion was put down ruthlessly, so that their condition was worse than before.

Similarly, let everyone join the Peace Committee and air his views before it. Probably there would be redress of every legitimate grievance.

They had heard the speeches of Minister Shamsuddin Saheb, Parliamentary Secretary Hamiduddin Saheb and others. They had requested the refugees to return to

1 According to the report, Gandhiji made the statement “prior to departure to Chandipur” on this date.

2 A report said that Gandhiji had had an attack of diarrhoea and vomiting while going by boat to Chandipur.

3 *Vide* “Extract from Diary”, 22-11-1946. For a more detailed report of Gandhiji’s views on the subject, *Vide* “Talk with Hindu Workers”, 21-11-1946

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their villages and had assured them that they would guarantee their safety and honour. They should accept their assurance.

They might say all this was mere talk. They had been deceived before. It was beneath one’s dignity to distrust a man’s word without sufficient ground. If all Muslims were liars, Islam could not be a true religion. But his knowledge of history contradicted such a theory. A false thing could not last long in this world.

Islam spread amongst crores of people all over the world. It spread mostly because of its own intrinsic merits. Here were elected Muslims who were running the Government of the Province who gave them their word of honour. His advice to Hindus was to believe their word and give them a trial. This did not mean that there would not be a single bad Mussalman left in East Bengal. There were good and bad men amongst all communities. Dishonourable conduct would break any ministry or organization in the end. Shamsuddin Saheb had told them plainly that Pakistan could not be achieved by cruel deeds. It was clear to him as daylight that if they kept quarrelling amongst themselves, a third power was bound to rule over them. Whether it was British or Allied Powers, it made no difference. They would remain slaves.

There was a time when Hindus and Muslims had been united. There was the pact of unity between the League and the Congress in 1916. Whether it was good or bad was not the question. He was a newcomer in India at that time and hardly knew anybody or affairs in this country. Then came the Khilafat Movement and there was a communal unity that had never been seen before that. Today Hindus were frightened when they heard the cries of “*Allah-o-Akbar*”. In those days, these were the slogans repeated at all meetings: “*Vande mataram*”, “*Allah-o-Akbar*” and “*Sat Sri Akal*”. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in their thousands shouted these slogans with one voice. They were the same people today. Those who were youngsters in those days were grown-up men today. Why could not they live together as friends now? Gandhiji was not prepared to admit that bitterness had gone so deep that it could not be overcome.

The Peace Committee could not function without their help. If they wanted real peace there was no other way except to have mutual trust and confidence. Bihar, they said, had avenged Noakhali. Supposing Muslims in East Bengal or Muslims all over India made up their minds to avenge Bihar, where would India be?

Gandhiji said that where houses had been burnt and destroyed, Government was, he understood, raising new ones. If there were any difficulties or they were harassed in any way after they returned to their villages, they should place their complaints before the Peace Committee.

The speaker referred to a letter that had been handed to him during the meeting. It was said that in Chandipur the damage amounted to a crore of rupees and it should be compensated. He did not know whether it was a crore or a lakh. But the Government

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was bound to do what it could in such matters.

Then it was said in the letter that the Chief Minister’s speeches breathed fire. God alone knew the hearts of men. He could not say whether Suhrawardy Saheb was a good man or a bad one. But he knew that he was elected by the voters. Hindus and Muslims had to live under his Government just as those in Bihar had to live under the rule of the Congress Government. If people did not like a particular Government the electorate could change it. But it was not in his power to do so.

The letter further said that the Superintendent of Police was a bad man and should be sent away from Noakhali. Again, he did not know whether the Police Superintendent was a good man or bad. But he had the confidence of his chief. Gandhiji himself had come into contact with him fairly frequently during the last few days and he felt that the Superintendent would deny those charges if they were false, and express regret for his mistake if they were true. But he wanted to tell them this. If he was bad, it was so because the people of Noakhali were bad. There were very few men who remained good in the midst of bad people. All those in the Congress were not angels.

Then there was a request that the military must stay on. According to the present constitution, the military had to act under the orders of the Ministers. That was democracy. When the Ministers themselves were offering to become their soldiers, why should they ask for the military? After all, if the worst came to the worst they could only lose their lives. They must do so as brave men and women. By running away from East Bengal they would become the worst cowards. He could never wish that for anybody.

If all Hindus were bad, Hinduism must be bad. If all Muslims were bad, Islam must be bad. But neither Hinduism nor Islam was bad. Christ had said that he alone was His disciple who did His work, not he who merely called him ‘Lord, Lord’. That applied to all religions.

If Shamsuddin Saheb and his companions did not mean what they said they would know. Gandhiji for one did not wish to be a living witness of such a tragedy. *The Hindu*, 28-11-1946

*73. EXTRACT FROM DIARY*

SRIRAMPUR,

*November 23, 1946*

Recited the *Gita* chapters (during morning prayer) also myself. In future Pyarelal is to recite the *Gita* only when he has sufficiently mastered the pronunciation. Had an English hymn sung at the prayer.

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Completed the statement1 on the death of Malaviyaji. Visited a Muslim house at 7.30 a. m. Talked about the Koran to the inmates. Later they sent a present of coconuts and oranges.

Massage was given by N. so that I was able to have a 40 minutes’ nap on the massage table. Leafy vegetable served at midday was very bitter. Took it with 1 oz. of coconut milk. . . . Next unsuccessfully tried to have a little sleep — nausea and gripe. Gave myself enema. . . . Dozed off with mud-pack on the abdomen while proceeding to Ramgunj. . . . Had to stop the boat on account of violent diarrhoea and vomiting. . . . Felt relieved. . . . Reached Ramgunj2 at 5 p. m. Had another motion during the recess but was able to address the meeting at the end without difficulty. Started on the return journey at 8.15 p. m. . . . Reached Srirampur at 11 p. m. . . . Completed the daily quota of spinning, partly on the boat while proceeding to the meeting and the balance at the meeting itself.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 40-1

*74. A TELEGRAM*

[On or after *November 23, 1946*]3

DO PERFORM MARRIAGE CEREMONY BOMBAY. WISH WELL. BAPU

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

*75. FOREWORD TO “SATYAGRAHA WA SWARAJYA”* Appasaheb Patwardhan4 is one of my few co-workers who have thought over my views in an independent way. I have known him for the last several years. His thought is reflected in his behaviour. That is why his articles have a great impact. I have gone through this book, but not thoroughly. I do not have the time. I have very little knowledge of the Marathi language. I can’t speak it but I do

1 *Vide* “Malaviyaji”, 8-12-1946

2 According to other available sources, Gandhiji did not go to Ramgunj on the 23rd November.

3 The draft of the wire is scribbled on the reverse side of a telegram received on November 23, 1946.

4 Sitaram Purushottam Patwardhan

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understand the substance of the articles. Hence I cannot assert that whatever is written in this book conforms to my thinking. But I can certainly say that there is great similarity between my views and those stated in this book. Appasaheb needs no certificate from me. The source of his ideas may be my views, but their final form is entirely his own. That only adds to the value of the book. The readers, too, will find much material to ponder over and will be able to form their ideas independently.

M. K. GANDHI

SRIRAMPUR, EAST BENGAL, November 24, 1946

[From Hindi]

*Satyagraha aur Swarajya*

*76. LETTER TO D. B. KALELKAR*

*November 24, 1946*

CHI. KAKA,

Here is my Foreword1. I could manage it in time. You will get it in time.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 10983

*77. TELEGRAM TO D. B. KALELKAR*

*November* [*24*]2, *1946*

KAKASAHEB, KAKAWADI

WARDHA

FOREWORD APPA’S BOOK POSTED.

BAPU

From a photostat: G. N. 10984

1*Vide* the preceding item.

2 *ibid*

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*78. NOTE TO N. K. BOSE*

*November 24, 1946*

CHI. NIRMAL,

Put this in an envelope and give it to Shailen1. When his man goes to Chandipur he should post it from there. Ask him if he would do so. Herewith a telegram; write it down and give it to Shailen. Tell him to send it. Give him the charges for the telegram. Send a telegram to Bihar also.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 10514

*79. DISCUSSION WITH S. C. BOSE AND OTHERS*2

SRIRAMPUR,

[*November 24, 1946*]3

Gandhiji agreed that the leaders had sunk to the lowest level, but not the common people. Their hearts were still sound. He added :

Even in this village I have noticed some response. But, of course, I do not build upon it.

BOSE: We believe your attempt is to raise humanity from the lowest level. But we are sceptical as to whether you will succeed.

GANDHIJI: I myself am sceptical about it. I may succeed, I can perish in the attempt. Success or failure is not the final test.

B. You are right.

G. And attempt up to the last is the only real test.

Bose next asked Gandhiji if there was any change of mentality on the part of

1 Shailen Chatterjee

2 This appeared under the title “At Srirampur” by Pyarelal, who in *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase* says: “Early in the morning of November 24, Sarat Chandra Bose . . . Bengal Congress leader, with a number of friends from Calcutta had a two hour talk with Gandhiji at Srirampur in regard to the Government’s peace proposals. In *My Days with Gandhi*, p. 67, N. K. Bose says that Chapalakanta Bhattacharya, Editor, *Anand Bazar Patrika*, Debnath Das, Capt. Razik, Lieut. Samson of the Indian National Army and another local friend accompanied S. C. Bose.

3 *ibid*

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the authorities. Gandhiji replied :

There is a change in the Government policy for the better. But as for the change of heart, it is for you and me to make a contribution to that consummation.

The interviewer remarked that it was painful to see how listless the Hindus had become. Gandhiji replied :

It is no prerogative of the Hindus. Listlessness is common to us all. Even if I am the only one, I shall fight this listlessness that has come over the Hindus of East Bengal. I have not come here to do a good turn to this community or that. I have come to do a good turn to myself. Non-violence is not meant to be practised by the individual only. It can be and has to be practised by society as a whole. I have come to test that for myself in Noakhali. Has my ahimsa become bankrupt? If I fail here, it won’t be any proof that the theory is wrong. It will simply mean that my *sadhana* has been imperfect, that there is some fault somewhere in my technique.

B. If the League leaders were to take the Noakhali situation as seriously as you and Jawaharlal took Bihar, order would be restored in a day.

To make such comparisons is to degrade oneself. What is called for is introspection and more introspection.

I have come here not only to speak to the Mussalmans but to the Hindus as well. Why are they such cowards? The Harijans, the Namashudras, have been relatively better so far as courage and physical prowess is concerned. They are brave. But the other Hindus must shed utterly the caste distinctions. If this calamity would open the eyes of the Hindus and result in eradicating untouchability root and branch, it will have served a good purpose.

Narrating his earlier experiences in India he recalled how during the Champaran Satyagraha, in Rajendra Babu’s absence, he could only sit in the outhouse in Rajendra Babu’s house and how Rajendra Babu’s servant would not let the speaker bathe at the well. Things had improved, but much more remained to be done.

The visitor agreed that Hinduism had still to go a long way to eradicate the evil. Talking of forced conversions in Noakhali, the interviewer remarked that unless those who had been converted were brought back to the Hindu fold quickly, the cleavage between the Hindus and the Muslims might become permanent.

G. Many had returned. But all must.

The question was put to him whether by taking up an unbending attitude on conversion, he was not identifying himself with one particular community. How

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could his stand in this respect be squared with his claim that he regarded all religions as equal?1

G. I have, of course, always believed in the principle of religious tolerance. But I have even gone further. I have advanced from tolerance to equal respect for all religions. All religions are branches of the same mighty tree, but I must not change over from one branch to another for the sake of expediency. By doing so, I cut the branch on which I am sitting. Therefore, I always feel the change over from one religion to another very keenly, unless it is a case of spontaneous urge, a result of inner growth. Such conversions by their very nature cannot be on a mass scale and never to save one’s life or property or for temporal gain.

He narrated his meeting with a South Indian Bishop who was a Harijan converted to Christianity and retained all his original weakness in spite of the change of religion. He had told the late Charlie Andrews that to his mind he was no bishop at all.

B. There is no end to the monstrosities that have been committed here and that too in the name of religion. It is enough to fill one with blank despair. G. I have met human monsters from my early youth. I have found that even they are not beyond redemption if we know how to touch the right chord in their soul.

And he cited two instances within his recent experience of the milk of human kindness welling up in hard-boiled, sun-baked functionaries at the sight of stark human misery and devastation.

G. The whole thing is so ghastly. You do not need to exa ggerate it. I have told the authorities I do not care for numbers. Has a single case of abduction, rape, forcible marriage, or forcible conver sion occurred? If so, it is enough for me. It is admitted that such things have happened.

B. What about the rescue of abducted women? It was complained that as soon as information was received about such cases and the rescue party with the military police set out on their assignment, the miscreants received intimation and removed the victim to some other place.

G. I have told our people :‘Do not depend on military and the police help.’ You have to uphold democracy, and democracy and dependence on the military and the police are incompatible. You cannot say it is good in one place and bad in another. Military help

1 This paragraph is reproduced from *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*.

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will degrade you.1 In a democracy, if you set up a hooligan as the head of the Government, you lie in the bed you have made. The only remedy is to educate and convert the electorate by satyagraha, if necessary. We should be consistent all along. If democracy is good in Bihar, it ought to be good in Bengal, too. I must, therefore, go to the popular, elected Ministers, for they are my Ministers. If they fail,

public opinion must be created to replace them. That is de mocracy. Whether it is Bihar or Bengal, the people have to be brave and stand on their legs. I want everyone to die at his post like a brave man and not to leave his home or his village.

Another interviewer2 asked Gandhiji why Pandit Jawaharlal went to Bihar and took such an active part in putting down disturbances there while he did nothing for Bengal. If the Interim Government could not interfere in one Province because of provincial autonomy, how could it do so in another?

Gandhiji replied that they must not forget that besides being the Vice President of the Interim Government, Jawaharlal was the first servant of the Congress. As the Vice-President of the Central Cabinet, he must act within the four corners of the constitution. It does not permit interference with provincial autonomy. But in Bihar, Pandit Nehru and Rajendra Babu have a standing and responsibility as Congressmen.

One of the interviewers remarked that Bengal was being used as a pawn on the political chess-board.

G. No. Bengal is in the forefront today because Bengal is Bengal. It is Bengal that produced Tagore and Bankim Chandra. It was here that the heroes of the Chittagong Armoury Raid were born, however misguided their action might have been in my eyes. No, you must understand it. If Bengal plays the game, it will solve all India’s

problem. That is why I have made myself a Bengali.3I have seen enough of ravages in Noakhali to make me weep my eyes out but I am not going to shed a tear for what has happened. We have a long way yet to go. Why should there be cowardice in the Bengal of such men?

B. Yes, when I see these desecrated places of worship, I ask, why did not every man, woman and child of the house die there before those places were touched.

1 The following six sentences are reproduced from *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*.

2 Chapalakanta Bhattacharya

3 The following two sentences are reproduced from *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*.

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Q. If they had done that, you would not have required any other help. Today Noakhali is bereft of its leading men. They refused to take the risk and have left their hearths and homes. Poor Manoranjan Babu is in a fix. Whom is he to put on the Peace Committees? I have told him that the common man must rise to fill the vacuum. There is no such thing as a vacuum in nature. Nature abhors it. Let him write to them, I have told him. If they come back, well and good. Otherwise, the common man must come forward. It is his day.

Q. Mahatmaji, tell us in one word, whether it is war or peace? Peace Committees or War Committees?

G. Peace Committees. War results when peace fails. Our effort must always be directed towards peace, but it must be peace with honour and fair security for life and property. On these two conditions alone will the refugees return. Of course, if they develop enough courage, they will return without any safeguards. Today I have suggested one Hindu and one Muslim standing surety for each village. If the people have the requisite courage, they would depend on none but God and their own strength of spirit for their defence. If they do that, all the *goondas* in Noakhali will feel the change in the atmosphere and behave decently. I know what I am saying. I come from Kathiawad, a Province notorious for its bandits. I know that they are not beyond redemption. Nor do I believe that *goondas* are responsible for all that had happened.

A suggestion was next made as to why they should not have only Muslims in the Peace Committees as the Hindus had played no part in breaking the peace. G. No. The Hindus must be there to play their part, else the Peace Committees will be a farce.1

B. Was it not possible no control Bihar with non-violence? Why did the Congress Ministers resort to the free use of Military there?2

G. Yes. But Bihar has been having a lesson in organized violence since 1942 and before. Our weakness for the *goondas* rose to the highest in 1942. I know the merits of 1942. The people were not

1 In *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase* Pyarelal says “During the morning walk in which Sarat Bose joined, Gandhiji remarked that he was beginning to feel that even if Muslim workers were not forthcoming for his peace mission, Hindus alone might do. A handful of such workers, if they were worthy of their salt, could turn the tide. The only condition was that the local Hindus should play the game. The least that he expected of them was that they should eradicate the curse of untouchability root and branch from their midst. Otherwise they would never come into their own.”

2 This question is reproduced from *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*.

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cowed down. But all the same I cannot shut my eyes to our mistakes. We have to learn to do better [or else pay the penalty].

*Harijan*, 12-1-1947; and *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 48-50

*80. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*1

SRIRAMPUR,

*November 24, 1946*

I am sorry I had to start the weekly silence earlier than usual. Such was Shamsuddin Saheb’s order. But wherever I may happen to be, my heart is here. I can have no peace until the Muslim brothers and sisters of the village call back the Hindus who used to live here, and they return to their homes. They should treat this as a duty and try to fulfil it.

*Harijan*, 5-1-1947

*81. LETTER TO BRIJKRISHNA CHANDIWALA*

*November 25, 1946*

CHI. BRIJKRISHNA,

I have your letter. It is good that you have written and given me the news. If you want to go to Vinoba, you may. But your first task is to improve your health. I cannot move from here. Give me all the news about the Congress. Of course, you are already rendering service. Who was at fault at Garhmukteshwar?2

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 2493

*82. SPEECH AT PEACE COMMITTEE MEETING* RAMGUNJ,

*November 25, 1946*

Brothers, I had no desire to speak to you tonight, for, as you see, my voice is still very weak. Let me hope that your work will proceed well.

But there are indications that trouble is brewing even now. I

1 It being a silence-day, the speech was read out.

2 There had been a communal riot there on the occasion of an annual fair on November 8, and a large number of people had been killed.

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have just received a wire from Sandwip and some more complaints which tend to show that all is not well. I am handing them over to Shamsuddin Saheb for enquiry and necessary action, if the reports prove true.

With regard to the Peace Committees formed in villages,1a complaint has reached me that some of the Muslim members on the Committees are not reliable. The Hindus stand in fear of them but have not the courage to speak out openly. But unless they muster such courage, and if wrong people are left there, the Committees will not be able to command confidence. What we really want is the right sort of person. My suggestion is that if two good and brave men, one a

Hindu and another a Mussalman, take the responsibility of prevent ing mischief even at the cost of their life, that would be enough. Why should there be eagerness for entering the Committees? It is not a place for acquiring position or honour but a place of service, and if anyone really wishes to serve, he can as well serve outside as on the Committee.

It is only in order to serve the cause of Islam that the Muslims are being called to join the Committees. The most important task is to restore the confidence among the Hindus so that they would be able to pursue their religious practices in freedom. Mr. Akhil Dutta has

lately sent me a cheque for Rs. 850 and a letter stating that 200 pairs of conch-shell bangles and a pound of vermilion had been despatched to Noakhali. These are for distribution among women who had suffered during the riots. The best part of the presents is that

they were collected by eleven Muslim gentlemen and one Engli shman. I have met women who put on the vermilion mark indoors but wipe it off when they stir out in public. Such fear has to be removed by the Muslims. It is not a question of giving monetary aid, but of restoring confidence by respect shown to the culture of others. I will ask my Mussalman friends to treat this as their sacred duty. The Prophet once advised Mussalmans to consider the Jewish places of worship to be as pure as their own and offer it the same protection. It is the duty of the Mussalmans of today to assure the same freedom to their Hindu neighbours. Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah has said that every Muslim must show by his conduct that not a single non-Muslim need be afraid of him, the latter would be guaranteed safety and protection.

1 Shamsuddin Ahmed, who was present, had announced that seven Peace Committees had been formed.

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For, thus alone can the Mussalmans command honour and respect. *My Days with Gandhi*, pp. 72-3

*83. LETTER TO RENUKA RAY*

SRIRAMPUR,

*November 26, 1946*

MY DEAR RENUKA,

I have delayed answering your letter for pressure of work. I am in an out-of-the-way village, quite happy but a little run down owing to the silly mistake I made in taking a very bitter *bhaji*. My work has not been interrupted.

You are doing well as you are. I dare not guide you from here. If you wish to see me, you will have to come to this out-of-the-way place.

Love.

BAPU

SHRIMATI RENUKA RAY

CHANDPUR

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

*84. LETTER TO G. D. BIRLA*

*November 26, 1946*

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

You know I am staying at Srirampur all by myself, with only Prof. Nirmal Kumar1 Bose and Parasuram as my companions. The people with whom I am putting up are gentlemen. There is only one Hindu family in the entire village, the rest are all Muslims. They all stay widely separated from each other. The hundreds of villages here do not maintain much contact with each other through any convey ance after the water dries up. The result is that work is possible only on foot. Therefore, only desperadoes, hooligans, or able-bodied men can maintain contact among themselves. I am living in one such village at present and intend to spend more time in another village similar to this. It is my intention to stay on here so long as the Hindus and Muslims do not start living together as sincere friends. God alone

1 The source has “Nirmal Chandra”.

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can keep man’s resolve unshaken. At the moment I have forgotten Delhi, Sevagram, Uruliand Panchgani. My only desire is to do or die. This will test my non-violence, too. I have come here determined to emerge successful from this ordeal. If you are anxious to see me, then you can come over here. I personally do not see any necessity for it. If you wish to send a messenger to know something or carry letters by hand, you can do so.

I am not going into the Constituent Assembly; it is not quite necessary either. Jawaharlal, Sardar, Rajendra Babu, Rajaji, Maulana— any of these or all five can go—or Kripalani.

Send them the message.

If it is possible to arrange for a sitting of the Constituent Assembly only with the help of the military, then it is better not to have it. If it can be arranged peacefully, then the laws can be framed only for the participating Provinces. Let us see what the future of the police and the military will be. We have also to see what the Muslim majority Provinces will do, and what is to be done in the Provinces where Muslims are in minority, how the British Government will conduct itself, and how the Princes will react. I believe the State Paper of May 16 will probably have to be changed. The job is complicated enough, if we want to work independently. I have only given an indication of how I view the problem.

Friends will also do well to bear in mind that what I am doing here is not in the name of the Congress. Nor is there any thought of associating it with this work. What I am doing is only from my personal view of non-violence. Anybody, if he so desires, can publicly oppose my work. That in fact is his right; it may even be his duty. Therefore, whosoever wishes to do anything or say anything, let him do so fearlessly. If anybody wants to warn me of anything, let him do that too.

Please send a copy of this to Sardar so that he may tell the others named above. Or you can get copies made and send them to the five friends yourself.

Do express whatever you wish to. Write to me direct so that I may reply. Pyarelal, Sushila, etc., all are in different villages. Pyarelal has been ill since yesterday. I hope you are all right.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From the Hindi original: C. W. 8081. Courtesy: G. D. Birla. also G. N. 2212

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*85. LETTER TO CHANDRAMANI VIDYALANKAR November 26, 1946*

BHAI CHANDRAMANI VIDYALANKAR,

I have your letter. Thanks. I am myself in the dark. Under the circumstances I do not regard it as proper to send for anyone. You should do your duty remaining at your own place.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

PANDIT CHANDRAMANI VIDYALANKAR

BHASKAR PRESS

DEHRA DUN

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

*86. INTERVIEW TO MEMBERS OF COMMUNIST PARTY AND STUDENTS’ FEDERATION*1

*November 26, 1946*

Gandhiji stated that he was personally cast in a different mould; when he had no confidence in a particular step, he never took it. Under the present circumstances, he did not think that the step suggested by the friends would be of any use. Personally, he was trying to have everything done through the Ministry. He had also undertaken a programme here all by himself and this was without the co-operation of the tallest in Bengal. The Hindu population in Bengal could co-operate by utterly forgetting caste, not as mere lip-profession but in actual practice. They had also to purge themselves of all fear. For, it is only when a man’s heart is freed from fear that the flower of religion can find a place in it. Finally he added :

I do not want to retire from Bengal as a defeated coward. I would like to die here, if need be, at the hands of an assassin. But I do not want to court such death.

*My Days with Gandhi*, p. 74

1 N. K. Bose explains: “Some members of the Communist Party and the Students’ Federation saw Gandhiji by appointment at 8.20 a. m. As he sat basking in the sun outside his room, they reported that people apprehended fresh trouble on December 9, when the Constituent Assembly was to begin work. They had gone to Hamiduddin Ahmed for assurance, but had been advised by him to wait for the direction of the League High Command in this connection. The friends suggested that Gandhiji should convene an all-parties’ meeting in the district and co-ordinate the work done severally by various organizations.”

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*87. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*

SRIRAMPUR,

*November 26, 1946*

Gandhiji said that even if a solitary refugee had to return to his village populated by Muslims, he would unhesitatingly advise his return. Whe ther they were men or women, if they were to become brave people, this cour age was indispensable. Numerous letters had been coming to him in which people had questioned the wisdom of thus tempting faith, but he held that this was necessary if they were to become a self-respecting nation. He made no distinction between men and women. The latter should feel just as independent as men. Bravery was not man’s monopoly. The art of self-defence excluded all outside help. What he saw and heard showed him that people were apt to forget self-respect in order to save themselves. There was no *swadesh* and swaraj for persons who would not sacrifice themselves or their belongings for their honour. As his hearers knew, the Ministers and the Parliamentary Secretaries, who had come to Noakhali, had been proclaiming that for the sake of their honour and the influence of Islam, they were anxious that the refugees should return to their villages and feel perfectly safe and serene in the midst of the majority of Muslims living there. The speaker had no hesitation in trusting their pledged word and asking the people to do likewise. Those who trusted were never the losers; deceivers ever were. There was no room for *goondaism* in any religion worth the name, be it Islam, Hinduism or any other. He was trying to become a Bengali in order that if God gave him strength, he might try to live the life in the midst of the people of East Bengal and induce them to do likewise.

*Harijan*, 5-1-1947

*88. LETTER TO ASUTOSH SINHA*1

*November 27, 1946*

If the refugees had the required spirit of co-operation, it would be possible. But it is a plant of slow growth and personal courage does not come even from co-operation. It comes when it does come, because it is a virtue which is its own reward. Therefore, the principle that there should be volunteers who would go to each one of the

1 Vice-President, Tippera Rescue, Relief and Rehabilitation Committee. The addressee had suggested that in order to restore their self-confidence the refugees instead of living separately should live and work together in one or two selected *badis*.

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affected villages is perfectly sound. You may have noticed that I have been giving effect to it myself and I have made a beginning. Those who came with me from Sevagram are following suit. Whether they will prove themselves worthy of the great trust reposed in them remains to be seen. That may be said even about myself. Only I am not following anybody but am the originator so far as I am concerned, of the idea. Therefore, if you have any volunteers in view with the requisite qualifications, please send me their names and

addresses.

He did not want to make a public appeal, he explained, because the right quality of men and women would not come in answer to an advertisement. They have to be persons of sterling worth and equally high courage. . .1 full of ahimsa, i. e., respect for the Muslims. It would be a pity if these volunteers started with distrust. Real courage is based on trust which is the surest foundation for it.

Besides, if he allowed volunteers, who might be attracted by the glamour of his presence to inundate Noakhali, it would create unhealthy excitement and cause the authorities and the local Muslims unnecessary trepidation. To make an individual act non-violently he has to be put absolutely at his ease first. Meticulously correct conduct on their part would put the local Muslims and the Bengal Government on their honour. He concluded :

I am watching what the Government are doing. People cannot be compelled to return to their villages. It would be a disastrous experiment in my opinion.

*Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 62-3

*89. LETTER TO PYARELAL*

*November 27, 1946*

CHI. PYARELAL,

I have your letter. It is good that you think that what I wrote was unnecessary. I do not think so. I do not understand what is painful in it? Sushila has come now to see the patient she did not see yesterday. Whether it is anger or pain or both it is the same as before. Let me see what happens.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: Pyarelal Papers. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Courtesy: Beladevi Nayyar and Dr. Sushila Nayyar

1 Omission as in the source

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*90. LETTER TO SYED MAHMUD*

SRIRAMPUR, RAMGUNJ,

*November 27, 1946*

BHAI MAHMUD1,

I have your telegram. Rajendra Babu writes that I need not go to Bihar. Everything necessary is being done there. I am quite all right. Whatever weakness is left will go away. Write to me how things are over there. Are the Muslims who had fled coming back? Do write fully. Here my work is going on well.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a photostat of the Hindi: G. N. 5105

*91. INTERVIEW TO THE PRESS*

SRIRAMPUR,

*November 27, 1946*

QUESTION: How do you think lasting peace can be achieved by your new plan, unless the Muslim League itself which presumably guides the majority of the Muslim intelligentsia, sincerely co-operates in creating such atmosphere by their words and deeds?

GANDHIJI: My new plan does contemplate the necessity for a lasting peace and sincere co-operation of the Muslim League in establishing friendly relations between the two communities, irrespec tive of the merits or otherwise of Pakistan.

Asked as to what was the guarantee that some months later this sort of calamity would not be repeated in places like Noakhali, where Hindus were in a minority, Gandhiji said :

The only real guarantee is to be sought in the personal courage of individuals. Everything else depends on it.

The next question asked was whether he should not advise people in those areas where one or two houses were Hindu and the rest Muslim, to migrate to areas inside a district where the Hindus were in comparatively larger numbers, so that in case of emergencies they could put up some sort of resistance if they did not believe in non-violence. Gandhiji’s reply was:

1 Minister for Development and Transport, Government of Bihar

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There is no such safety as you imagine in numbers in imagined conditions. Migration is no remedy whilst there is hope of co operation. It will become a necessity when the majority party wishes it, if a clash is to be avoided. All this is a matter of mutual adjustment, not arbitrary action. What is needed is that barbarities must cease, if we are to survive as one nation or two, or many free nations still living in friendly co-operation.

*The Bombay Chronicle*, 29-11-1946

*92. LETTER TO CHIMANLAL N. SHAH*

*November 28, 1946*

CHI. CHIMANLAL,

Herewith I am sending you two cheques for Rs. 412 and Rs. 451 received from Uganda. I have countersigned them. Credit them to Harijan [Fund]. Ultimately the amounts are to be sent to Delhi to the Harijan Sevak [Sangh] office.

I intend to write to Babudi1. It will depend on when I can spare the time. I hope things are going well there. Keep on writing.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 10653

*93. LETTER TO JIVANJI D. DESAI*

*November 28, 1946*

CHI. JIVANJI,

Herewith an article which I could write with great difficulty. I hope you will not find it too difficult to decipher the handwriting. There is an English translation too. Just now, you must not expect me to do articles for *Harijan*.

Write to me and let me know how things are. Pyarelal will send you whatever is possible.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 9973. Also C. W. 6947. Courtesy: Jivanji D. Desai

1 Sharda G. Chokhawala, addressee’s daughter; *vide* “Letter to Sharda G. Chokhawala”, 29-11-1946

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*94. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING*

SRIRAMPUR,

*November 28, 1946*

Gandhiji related the story of how the Ashram prayer had taken its present shape. When he came to India in 1915, Gurudev invited him through the late Deenabandhu Andrews to stay at Santiniketan along with the inmates of the Phoenix Settlement. Kaka Saheb and Harihar Sharma were there and so were the late Deenabandhu Andrews and Pearson. These friends had created a sort of South African group at the place. The prayer which was recited at that early time by the small group practically continues to this day so far as the Sanskrit part is concerned.

While on his Harijan tour in Travancore, he added the first Hindu verse of the *Ishopanishad* to it, as, in his opinion, it contained the cream of spiritual thought. Later on, Raihana Tyabjee, daughter of the late Abbas Tyabjee, who is noted for her musical talents, proposed the incorporation of a passage from the Koran, and this was done. Lastly, on Kasturba’s death1 at the Aga Khan Palace, Dr. Gilder2 had recited a passage from the Zoroastrian scripture. Since then that prayer has been a part of the Ashram prayer. In addition there was a *bhajan* in an Indian language or an English hymn and *Ramdhun*.

The prayer which has thus taken shape can, on no account, be considered as belonging to any single community or religion. It is of universal appeal; and no one, whatever his denomination may be, should have hesitation in sharing it. *Harijan*, 5-1-1947

*95. LETTER TO FOSS WESTCOTT*3

SRIRAMPUR, NOAKHALI,

*November 29, 1946*

DEAR FRIEND,

I fear that I have neglected your question for a long time. You know the reason why. Many of my activities, including important correspondence, are held up and must remain so for the time being. Meanwhile I pick up what comes uppermost for the moment. Such before me is your letter to Pyarelalji.

1 On February 22, 1944

2 M. D. D. Gilder, Minister of Health and Excise in the Congress Ministry of Bombay, 1937-39.

3 Bishop of Calcutta and Metropolitan of India, Burma and Ceylon, 1919-45

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Of course conversions will, so far as I know, continue under swaraj but there would be no State favouritism as there has been during the British regime.

Let us hope, under Swaraj, there will be no one man’s rule but the people’s. You and I will probably not be alive to see it in action.

*Yours sincerely,*

M. K. GANDHI

THE REV. DR. FOSS WESTCOTT

THE RECTORY

ST. PAUL’S SCHOOL

JALAPAHAR, DARJEELING

From a copy: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

*96. LETTER TO CHIMANLAL N. SHAH*

*November 29, 1946*

CHI. CHIMANLAL,

Herewith a cheque from Bangalore for Rs. 895. Credit it to my different accounts. I have sent a receipt to the *Vanarasena*1. A letter for Babu is enclosed.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From a photostat of the Gujarati: G. N. 10654

*97. LETTER TO SHARDA G. CHOKHAWALA*

*November 29, 1946*

CHI. BABUDI,

Chi. Chimanlal writes in his letter that since you are not recovering quickly you are in a hurry to go to Surat. This is not right. Now you should go only after getting fully well. You will thereby be helping Gordhandas2. If you make up your mind, you can certainly get well in Sevagram. You don’t seem to be suffering from any disease. If you take enough milk, fruit and vegetables, you are bound to get well. You must take hip-baths and friction-baths. Apply mud

1 A team of young volunteers

2 Addressee’s husband

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packs regularly and take sun-rays through blue glass. Do you have any problems there? If so, write to me.

Now about your letter. When I repeat Ramanama, or even otherwise, I have no definite image in my mind. I do not believe in such image-worship. In fact God is without form. There is no need at all to invest Him with a form while worshipping Him. We must believe God to be the absolute Truth and worship Him. He is both the law and the law-giver. If this sinks in one’s mind, there is nothing more to think about. This being so, if you ask what more does one gain by repeating His name, my answer is that, as the saying is, a man becomes what he thinks. By repeating His name, we become one with Him.

Your mind keeps changing. But don’t worry. Keep on ceaselessly repeating the name, so that no other thoughts may enter the mind. I know it is difficult for the sick to do this. Do not worry about it. If that repetition is diligently done, it sinks in one’s heart and proves an unfailing remedy even for the sick. Do not, therefore, think further but stay on there. Cling to nature-cure remedies and to Rama, and everything will be all right.

I hope Anand1 is well.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From the Gujarati original: C. W. 10073. Courtesy: Sharda G. Chokhawala

*98. LETTER TO G. D. BIRLA*

*November 29, 1946*

CHI. GHANSHYAMDAS,

I have your letter. Yesterday I sent you a letter for Rajaji which is to be sent to him through someone. You will know after reading it. I do not know what I am doing. If I have imbibed ahimsa I could not act otherwise. Let us see what God prompts me to do.

*Blessings from*

BAPU

From the Hindi original: C. W. 8082. Courtesy: G. D. Birla

1 Addressee’s son

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*99. LETTER TO RAVISHANKER SHUKLA*

NOAKHALI,

*November 29, 1946*

BHAI SHUKLAJI1,

What is this complaint2about? Please return the letter of complaint with your reply.

*Yours,*

M. K. GANDHI

PANDIT RAVISHANKAR SHUKLA

NAGPUR

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

*100. LETTER TO RAMACHANDRA RANO*

*November 29, 1946*

BHAI RANO,

I had your wire. As it is, I do not interfere in such matters. Moreover I am not at all acquainted with this case.

I am returning the proforma for reply.

*Vande Mataram from*

M. K. GANDHI

SHRI RAMACHANDRA RANO

HARIJAN BADRI

HYDERABAD (SIND)

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

*101. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING3*

SRIRAMPUR,

*November 29, 1946*

Gandhiji explained to the audience the object of his visit which he said was not to cause the ill-feeling between the two communities go deeper, but to cement their fellow-feeling so that Hindus and Muslims could live as brothers as before. God,

1 Premier, Central Provinces

2 The reference is to an open letter dated November 18, 1946, from the Secretary, City Muslim League, on the statement of the addressee that there was no communal disturbance in the Central Provinces.

3 According to the report Gandhiji held the prayer meeting at the house of a Muslim villager, about a mile from his place of residence. About 500 people, mostly Muslims, attended.

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he said, had not distinguished between a Hindu and a Muslim. Why should man, breathing the same air and drinking the same water, do it?

*Hindustan Standard*, 2-12-1946

*102. LETTER TO SECRETARY, ARYA PRATINIDHI SABHA November 30, 1946*

SECRETARY

ARYA PRATINIDHI SABHA

HYDERABAD (DN.)

SIR,

I have received your letter along with an English translation. Now please write to me what happened.

*Yours,*

M. K. GANDHI

From a copy of the Hindi: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

*103. A SIGN OF PROGRESS*

Though I have noticed it in the Gujarati columns of the *Harijanbandhu* from a different source, at the risk of repetition in another form, I must quote1from a touching letter from Shri Parikshitlal Majumdar addressed to Shyamlalji2, a copy of which has been sent by the latter.

I am writing this from Bardoli . . . . This year, during the Gandhi Jayanti week, nearly 40 public wells have been freely opened for the Harijans. . . . People have taken to this programme of their own will . . . local people have invited Harijans and taken them to the public wells. . . . I myself have attended some functions and personally have become a witness to the marvellous change. . . . No doubt, it is Gandhiji’s efforts and the recent writings that have brought this change. . . . Numerous inter-communal dinners have been held. There was one such big dinner at Nadiad, the real capital of the Kaira District. . . . One prominent well has been opened in Kadi, a citadel of orthodoxy and 150 people dined with Harijans at Padra in Baroda. There are numerous such incidents but I cannot enumerate them at present. . . .

Of course, compared to what we want to achieve, this pro gress is a miserable show. But seeing that Gujarat has been so far behindhand in this matter of removal of untouchability, the little progress of which Shri Parikshitlal takes note with pardonable

1 Only excerpts are reproduced here.

2 Secretary of Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Fund, Sevagram

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