

the penalty for non-co-operation with evil. I am here, therefore, to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen.

[CWMG 23:114–115, 116, 117–119.]

What follows are first the judgment by Justice R. S. Broomfield, and then Gandhi's response.

Justice Broomfield: Mr. Gandhi, you have made my task easy in one way by pleading guilty to the charge. Nevertheless what remains, namely, the determination of a just sentence, is perhaps as difficult a proposition as a judge in this country could have to face. The law is no respecter of persons. Nevertheless, it will be impossible to ignore the fact that you are in a different category from any person I have ever tried or am likely to have to try. It would be impossible to ignore the fact that, in the eyes of millions of your countrymen, you are a great patriot and a great leader. Even those who differ from you in politics look upon you as a man of high ideals and of noble and of even saintly life. I have to deal with you in one character only. It is not my duty and I do not presume to judge or criticize you in any other character. It is my duty to judge you as a man subject to the law, who has by his own admission broken the law and committed what to an ordinary man must appear to be grave offences against the State. I do not forget that you have constantly preached against violence and that you have on many occasions, as I am willing to believe, done much to prevent violence, but having regard to the nature of your political teaching and the nature of many of those to whom it is addressed, how you could have continued to believe that violence would not be the inevitable consequence it passes my capacity to understand. . . .

Gandhi: . . . So far as the sentence itself is concerned, I certainly consider that it is as light as any judge would inflict on me, and so far as the whole proceedings are concerned, I must say that I could not have expected greater courtesy.

[CWMG 23:119, 120.]

## CONSTRUCTIVE WORK IN THE MID 1920S

### *HINDU–MUSLIM TENSION, ITS CAUSE AND CURE: TIRED OF NON-VIOLENCE*

Gandhi was in prison from 1922 to 1924. After his release, he concentrated on the program of social reforms that he called "constructive work" and swadeshi. This "constructive work" sought to achieve Hindu–Muslim unity, the abolition of Untouchability, women's equality, and the uplift of villages, especially through the improvement

of handicraft industries like spinning and weaving of cotton cloth (*khadi*). These social reforms, he insisted, were prerequisites for swaraj.

Two years ago, a Mussalman friend said to me in all sincerity, "I do not believe [in] your non-violence. At least, I would not have my Mussalmans to learn it. Violence is the law of life. I would not have swaraj by non-violence as you define the latter. I must hate my enemy." This friend is an honest man. I entertain great regard for him. Much the same has been reported of another very great Mussalman friend of mine. The report may be untrue, but the reporter himself is not an untrue man. . . .

Nor is this repugnance to non-violence confined to Mussalmans. Hindu friends have said the same thing, if possible, with greater vehemence. My claim to Hinduism has been rejected by some, because I believe [in] and advance non-violence in its extreme form. They say that I am a Christian in disguise. I have been even seriously told that I am distorting the meaning of the *Gita* when I ascribe to that great poem the teaching of unadulterated non-violence. Some of my Hindu friends tell me that killing is a duty enjoined by the *Gita* under certain circumstances. A very learned Shastri only the other day scornfully rejected my interpretation of the *Gita* and said that there was no warrant for the opinion held by some commentators that the *Gita* represented the eternal duel between forces of evil and good, and inculcated the duty of eradicating evil within us without hesitation, without tenderness.

I state these opinions against non-violence in detail, because it is necessary to understand them if we would understand the solution I have to offer. What I see around me today is, therefore, a reaction against the spread of non-violence. I feel the wave of violence coming. The Hindu–Muslim tension is an acute phase of this tiredness. . . .

My religion is a matter solely between my Maker and myself. If I am a Hindu, I cannot cease to be one even though I may be disowned by the whole of the Hindu population. I do, however, suggest that non-violence is the end of all religions. . . .

But I have never presented to India that extreme form of non-violence, if only because I do not regard myself fit enough to re-deliver that ancient message. Though my intellect has fully understood and grasped it, it has not as yet become part of my whole being. My strength lies in my asking people to do nothing that I have not tried repeatedly in my own life. I am then asking my countrymen today to adopt non-violence as their final creed, only for the purpose of regulating the relations between the different races, and for purpose of attaining swaraj. Hindus and Mussalmans, Christians, Sikhs and Parsis must not settle their differences by resort to violence, and the means for the attainment of swaraj must be non-violent. This I venture to place before India, not as a weapon of the weak, but of the strong. Hindus and Mussalmans prate about no compulsion in religion. What is it but compulsion if Hindus will kill a

Mussalman for saving a cow? It is like wanting to convert a Mussalman to Hinduism by force. And similarly, what is it but compulsion if Mussalmans seek to prevent by force Hindus from playing music before mosques? Virtue lies in being absorbed in one's prayers in the presence of din and noise. We shall both be voted irreligious savages by posterity if we continue to make a futile attempt to compel one another to respect our religious wishes. Again, a nation of three hundred million people should be ashamed to have to resort to force to bring to book one hundred thousand Englishmen. To convert them or, if you will, even to drive them out of the country, we need, not force of arms, but force of will. If we have not the latter, we shall never get the former. If we develop the force of will, we shall find that we do not need the force of arms. . . .

It must be common cause between the two communities that neither party shall take the law into its own hands, but that all points in dispute, wherever and whenever they arise, shall be decided by reference either to private arbitration, or to the law courts if they wish. This is the whole meaning of non-violence, so far as communal matters are concerned. To put it another way, just as we do not break one another's heads in respect of civil matters, so may we not do even in respect of religious matters. This is the only pact that is immediately necessary between the parties, and I am sure that everything else will follow.

[CWMG 24:139-141.]

### *UNTOUCHABILITY AND SWARAJ*

On June 12, 1924, Gandhi was asked to explain why he felt there to be a necessarily inverse relationship between the evil of Untouchability and the establishment of political independence, or swaraj, and why he was adamant that without the removal of Untouchability there would be no freedom.

I abhor with my whole soul the system which has reduced a large number of Hindus to a level less than that of beasts. The vexed problem would be solved if the poor *Panchama*, not to use the word "untouchable," was allowed to mind his own business. Unfortunately, he has no mind or business he can call his own. Has a beast any mind or business but that of his master's? Has a *Panchama* a place he can call his own? He may not walk on the very roads he cleans and pays for by the sweat of his brow. He may not even dress as the others do. The correspondent talks of toleration. It is an abuse of language to say that we Hindus extend any toleration towards our *Panchama* brothers. We have degraded them and then have the audacity to use their very degradation against their rise.

Swaraj for me means freedom for the meanest of our countrymen. If the lot of the *Panchama* is not improved when we are all suffering, it is not likely to be better under the intoxication of swaraj. If it is necessary for us to buy peace with the Mussalmans as a condition of swaraj, it is equally necessary for us to give