# CHAPTER IX

THE LAST FAST

R ichard symonds, a British friend who had met

Gandhi in Bengal while doing relief work there, fell ill with

L typhoid in New Delhi in November 1947. Gandhi invited

the patient to Birla House.

Once the doctor advised brandy for the sick man. The house

was searched and a bottle of brandy found; on being asked,

Gandhi, a strict prohibitionist, said he had no objection to

it being given to Symonds. He took the same attitude subse¬

quently when sherry was recommended to Symonds.

On the approach of Christmas, Gandhi asked a group of

Indian Christian girls to decorate Symonds’s room with holly and

gay festoons; on Christmas Eve, at the Mahatma’s suggestion, the

girls came and sang carols.

Gandhi spent at least a few minutes and often much longer,

with the patient each day. His only interference in the cure was

to urge the application of mud packs to the abdomen. For the

rest, his chief contribution to the restoration of the Englishman’s

health was to make him laugh whenever he was with him.

Symonds had been to Kashmir and wanted to discuss the situa¬

tion with Gandhi, but except on the Mahatma’s day of silence he

never got a chance, for Gandhi entertained Symonds with funny

stories and jokes from the moment he came into the room till the

moment he left. The Kashmir problem was too grave for a

patient.

Kashmir, including the beautiful Vale of Kashmir, is at the top

of the world,, in northernmost India. Its Hindu maharaja had

ruled his 800,000 Hindu subjects and 3,200,000 Moslem subjects

with equal disregard of their welfare arid freedom. In September

1947 the Pakistan government abetted incursions into Kashmir

by the wild warriors of the tribal area between the north-west

frontier and Afghanistan; subsequently Pakistan regular troops

invaded Kashmir. Alarmed and helpless, the maharaja asked

that his state be admitted into the Indian Union. On October

526

THE LAST FAST

29th the accession was officially announced, and the maharaja

thereupon appointed as his prime minister Sheik Abdulla, a

Moslem, whom he had held in prison for protracted periods.

Simultaneously, the New Delhi authorities rushed troops to

Kashmir by air and road. Without the airlift, Kashmir would

have been overrun and annexed by Pakistan. Soon Kashmir and

neighbouring Jammu, likewise the realm of the maharaja, became

the scene of a small war between India and Pakistan which

seriously drained the financial resources, patience and military

establishments of both Dominions. Moslems called it ‘Holy

War’.

In a Christmas Day broadcast, Gandhi approved of India’s

action in sending troops to Kashmir to repel the tribal invaders.

He condemned suggestions to partition the State between India

and Pakistan. He regretted the fact that Nehru had submitted

the dispute to the United Nations. At the U.N., he told Horace

Alexander, the British pacifist, considerations of international

‘power politics’ rather than merit would determine the attitude

of countries towards the Kashmir issue. Gandhi therefore urged

India and Pakistan to ‘come to an amicable settlement with the

assistance of impartial Indians’; that, he said, would ‘enable the

Indian Union’s representation to the U.N. to be withdrawn with

dignity’. If direct negotiations failed, Gandhi contemplated

mediation by one or two Englishmen; in his talk with Horace

Alexander, the Mahatma mentioned Philip Noel-Baker, a member

of the British Labour government, as an acceptable mediator. He

also envisaged the possibility of a plebiscite or referendum among

the inhabitants of the disputed region.

The Indian government, however, rejected mediation and

arbitration; bitter U.N. debates continued interminably while

tempers and military expenditures rose.

Gandhi always combined high politics with low politics. He

talked Kashmir with Nehru one day, and the next day he went to

a village and told the peasants how to mix ‘the excreta of animals

and human beings’ with rubbish to make ‘valuable manure’.

They must improve their cattle, he advised further. Hindus com¬

plained that Moslems killed cows, Gandhi said, but Hindus killed

cows ‘by inches through ill treatment’. The villagers’ address to

him had lauded the virtues of non-violence. ‘But I know how

527

THE BIRTH OF TWO NATIONS

such an address is prepared,\* he stated in his reply. ‘Someone

writes it out and someone else reads it parrotwise and that is the

end of it.’ Did they practise non-violence? ‘There must be

consistency between one’s thoughts, words and actions.\*

By this touchstone, Gandhi was great; greater in fact after

India became independent than before. On the eve of his depar¬

ture from India after several months’ sojourn, the Reverend Dr.

John Haynes Holmes, of the Community Church in New York,

wrote to Gandhi saying, ‘I count these last months to be the crown

and climax of your unparalleled career. You were never so great

as in these dark hours.’ Dr. Holmes had talked with Gandhi and

knew his mood. ‘Of course,’ he wrote to the Mahatma, ‘you have

been sad, well-nigh overborne, by the tragedies of recent months,

but you must never feel that this involves any breakdown of your

life work.’

Gandhi printed the praise in Harijan of January nth, 1948,

under the caption: ‘Is It Deserved?\* His answer was, ‘I wonder

if the claim can be proved.’ In the same issue of the paper,

Gandhi printed another letter, from a European friend, who had

written to comfort him, ‘I for one, and I am sure I speak the heart

of untold millions,’ the friend declared, ‘feel it my bounden duty

to express my deepest gratitude to you for giving the whole of

your life to what you felt to be the one way to salvation for

mankind’, non-violence.

‘I must not flatter myself with the belief, nor allow friends like

you to entertain the belief,’ Gandhi replied, ‘that I have exhibited

any heroic and demonstrable non-violence in myself. All I can

claim is that I am sailing in that direction without a moment’s

stop. . . .’

Gandhi’s views on these matters were sober and modest. But

he was too involved emotionally in his life work to be objective

about it. He could not see himself in historic perspective. He was

too disappointed by the failure of others to judge his own

success correctly.

Would it be right to judge Christ by his crucifiers and detractors?

Gandhi was too great to succeed. His goals were too high, his

followers too human and frail.

Gandhi did not belong to India alone. His failures in India in

no wise detract from his message and meaning to the world. He

528

THE LAST FAST

may be very dead in India and very alive outside India. Ultim¬

ately he may live there and here.

It is the manner of Gandhi’s life that matters, not his immediate

effect on his immediate neighbours.

Jesus may have thought that God had forsaken Him and Gandhi

may have thought his people had forsaken him. The verdict of

history cannot be anticipated by those who make it.

The stature of a man is in the eye of the beholder. Harassed,

unhappy, thwarted by those who adored him, Gandhi could not

have seen what heights he attained in the last months of his life.

In that period he did something of endless value to any society:

he gave India a concrete, living demonstration of a different

and better life. He showed that men could live as brothers and

that brute man with blood on his hands can respond, however

briefly, to the touch of the spirit. Without such moments human¬

ity would lose faith in itself. For ever after, the community must

compare that flash of light with the darkness of normal existence.

The fact that Gandhi’s fast restored Calcutta to its senses and

peace, the fact that his presence reduced the mass killings in

Delhi to occasional outbursts, the fact that his fleeting visit to

Dr. Zakir Hussain’s Okla academy gave it immunity to violence,

the fact that hardened bandits laid their arms at his feet, the fact

that Hindus would listen to Koran verses and that Moslems would

not object to hearing the holy words of Islam from the mouth of a

Hindu — all this remains to inspire or haunt those whose actions

would suggest that they have forgotten it. It is the seed of con¬

science and the source of hope.

On January 13th, 1948, Mahatma Gandhi commenced his last

fast. It engraved an image of goodness on India’s brain.

The killings in Delhi had ceased. Gandhi’s presence in the city

had produced its effect. But he was still in ‘agony’. ‘It is intoler¬

able to me,’ he said, ‘that a person like Dr. Zakir Hussain, for

instance, or for that matter Shaheed Suhrawardy [the ex-prime

minister of Bengal] should not be able to move about in Delhi

as freely and with as much safety as I myself.’ Gandhi wanted to

go to Pakistan to help the Hindus and Sikhs there, but how could

he when the Moslems of Delhi had not obtained full redress? ‘I

felt helpless,’ he said. ‘I have never put up with helplessness in

all my life.’

529

THE BIRTH OF TWO NATIONS

He therefore fasted; it was an ‘all-in fast’, to death. ‘It came

to me in a flash.’ He had not consulted Nehru or Patel or his

doctors. To the charge that he had acted impatiently when the

situation was improving, he replied that he had waited patiently

since the riots started a year ago; the spirit of inter-religious killing

was still abroad in the land. ‘It was only when in terms of human

effort I had exhausted all resources . . . that I put iny head on

God’s lap . . . God sent me the fast. . . Let our sole prayer be that

God may vouchsafe me strength of spirit during the fast that fhe

temptation to live may not lead me into a hasty or premature

termination of the fast.’

The fast, Gandhi declared on the first day, was directed to ‘the

conscience of all’, to the Hindus and Moslems in the Indian

Union and to the Moslems of Pakistan. ‘If all or any one of the

groups respond fully, I know the miracle will be achieved. For

instance, if the Sikhs respond to my appeal as one man I shall be

wholly satisfied.’ He would go and live among the Sikhs of the

Punjab.

‘We are steadily losing hold on Delhi,’ Gandhi asserted; he

feared a recrudescence of violence in the capital, and ‘if Delhi

goes, India goes and with that the last hope of world peace’.

Hindus had been murdered in Karachi, the capital of Pakistan,

and elsewhere in the Moslem Dominion. With his fingertips, the

Mahatma sensed the danger of a new wave of riots. In Delhi

refugees were ejecting Moslems from their homes, and demands

had been heard to banish all the Moslem inhabitants of the city.

‘There is storm within the breast,’ Gandhi said; ‘it may burst

forth any day.’

He had brooded over the situation for three days without telling

anybody. When at last he decided to fast ‘it made me happy’. He

felt happy for the first time in months.

He knew he might die, ‘but death for me would be a glorious

deliverance rather than that I should be a helpless witness to the

destruction of India, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam’. His friends,

he announced, must not rush to Birla House to try to dissuade

him. Nor must they be anxious. ‘I am in God’s hands.’ Instead

of worrying about him they should ‘turn the searchlight inward;

this is essentially a testing time for all of us’.

The first day of the fast he walked to the evening prayer meeting

530

THE LAST FAST

and conducted the services as usual. ‘A fast weakens nobody

during the first twenty-four hours after a meal/ he told the con¬

gregation with a smile. A written question passed to him on the

platform asked who was to blame for the fast. No one, he replied,

‘but if the Hindus and Sikhs insist on turning out the Moslems of

Delhi they will betray India and their religions; and it hurts me’.

Some taunted him, he said, with fasting for the sake of the

Moslems. They were right. ‘All my life I have stood, as everyone

should stand, for minorities and those in need....

‘I expect a thorough cleansing of hearts,’ he declared. It did not

matter what the Moslems in Pakistan were doing. Hindus and

Sikhs should remember Tagore’s favourite song: ‘If no one responds

to your call, Walk alone, Walk alone.’

He would break his fast when Delhi became peaceful ‘in the real

sense of the term’.

The second day of the fast the doctors told Gandhi not to go to

prayers, so he dictated a message to be read to the congregation.

But then he decided to attend and addressed the worshippers after

the hymns and holy scriptures had been chanted. He had been

deluged with messages, he said. The most pleasant was from

Mrdulla Sarabhai in Lahore, Pakistan. She wired that his Moslem

friends, including some in the Moslem League and Pakistan

government were anxious for his safety and asked what they

should do.

His answer was: ‘The fast is a process of self-purification and is

intended to invite all who are in sympathy with the mission of the

fast to take part in the process of self-purification . . . Supposing

there is a wave of self-purification throughout both parts of

India. Pakistan will become pak , pure . . . Such a Pakistan can

never die. Then, and only then, shall I repent that I ever called

partition a sin, as I am afraid I must hold today. . . .’

As a child, he revealed, after listening to his father’s discussions

with friends of other communities, he had dreamed of real amity

between religions. ‘In the evening of my life, I shall jump like a

child to feel that the dream has been fulfilled.’ Then his wish to

live 125 years would be revived.

‘I have not the slightest desire that the fast should be ended as

soon as possible,’ he assured the congregation. ‘It matters little

if the ecstatic wishes of a fool like me are never realized and the

m.g. 531

LL

THE BIRTH OF TWO NATIONS

fast is never broken. I am content to wait as long as it may be

necessary, but it will hurt me to think that people have acted

merely to save my life. 5

In this fast Gandhi did not wish to be examined by the physi¬

cians. T have thrown myself on God, 5 he told them. But Dr.

Gilder, the heart specialist of Bombay, said the doctors wished to

issue daily bulletins and could not tell the truth unless they

examined him. That convinced the Mahatma and he relented.

Dr. Sushila Nayyar told him there were acetone bodies in his

urine.

‘That is because I haven’t enough faith, 5 Gandhi said.

‘But this is a chemical, 5 she protested.

He looked at her with a faraway look and said, ‘How little

science knows. There is more in life than science and there is

more in God than in chemistry. 5

He could not drink water; it caused nausea. He refused to add

some drops of citrus juice or honey to the water to prevent

nausea. The kidneys were functioning poorly. He had lost much

strength; his weight dropped two pounds each day.

The third day he submitted to a high colonic irrigation. At

2.30 in the morning he awoke and asked for a hot bath. In the

tub he dictated a statement to Pyarelal asking the Indian Union

government to pay the government of Pakistan 550,000,000

rupees, or approximately £40,000,000. This was Pakistan’s

share in the assets of pre-partition India; the New Delhi authori¬

ties had delayed payment, and Gandhi was demanding immediate

transfer of the money. Having dictated the memorandum, he

felt giddy and Pyarelal lifted him out of the water and sat him in

a chair. The Mahatma’s weight was down to 107 pounds, his

blood pressure 140.98.

The Indian Union government paid out the money.

That day, Gandhi occupied a cot which stood in an enclosed

porch at the side of Birla House. Most of the time he lay in a

crouched position, like an embryo, with his knees pulled up

towards his stomach and his fists under his chest. The body and

head were completely covered with a white khadi cloth which

framed the face. His eyes were closed and he appeared to be

asleep or half conscious. An endless queue filed past at a distance

of ten feet. Indians and foreigners in the line were moved to pity

532

THE LAST FAST

as they observed him; many wept and murmured a prayer and

touched their palms together in a greeting which he did not see.

Acute pain was written on his face. Yet even in sleep or semi¬

consciousness, the suffering seemed to be sublimated; it was

suffering dulled by the exhilaration of faith, suffering moderated

by an awareness of service. His inner being knew that he was

making a contribution to peace and he was therefore at peace

with himself.

Before prayers at 5 p.m. he was fully awake but he could not

walk to the prayer ground and arrangements were made for him

to speak from his bed into a microphone connected with a loud¬

speaker at the prayer ground and with the All-India Radio

which would broadcast his remarks throughout the country.

‘Do not bother about what others are doing,’ he said in a weak

voice. ‘Each of us should turn the searchlight inward and purify

his or her heart as much as possible. I am convinced that if you

purify yourselves sufficiently you will help India and shorten the

period of my fast... You should think how best to improve your¬

selves and work for the good of the country . . . No one can escape

death. Then why be afraid of it? In fact, death is a friend who

brings deliverance from suffering.’

He could speak no further. The rest of his message was read for

him. Journalists had submitted questions to him and he was

answering them orally.

‘Why have you undertaken a fast when there was no dis¬

turbance of any kind in any part of the Indian Dominion?’

‘What was it if not a disturbing disturbance’, he replied, ‘for a

crowd to make an organized and a determined effort to take

forcible possession of Moslem houses? The disturbance was such

that the police had reluctantly to resort to tear gas and even a

little shooting, if only overhead, before the crowd dispersed. It

would have been foolish for me to wait till the last Moslem had

been turned out of Delhi by subtle, undemonstrative methods

which I would describe as killing by inches.’

The charge had been made that he was fasting against Vallabh-

bhai Patel, the assistant Prime Minister and Home Minister,

whom some regarded as anti-Moslem. Gandhi denied it and said

this seemed like an attempt to create a gulf between him and

Nehru on the one hand and Patel on the other.

533

THE BIRTH OF TWO NATIONS

The fourth day, Gandhi’s pulse was irregular. He allowed the

doctors to take an electro-cardiogram and give him another

irrigation. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad pleaded in vain with the

Mahatma to drink some water with citrus juice. Gandhi had been

drinking no water and passing no urine. The physicians warned

him that even if he survived the fast he would suffer permanent,

serious injury. Unheeding, he spoke to the prayer meeting by

microphone from his cot and boasted that his voice was stronger

than the day before. T have never felt so well on the fourth day

of a fast,’ he stated. ‘My sole guide, even dictator, is God, the

Infallible and Omnipotent. If he has any further use for this

frail body of mine He will keep it in spite of the prognostications

of medical men and women. I am in His hands. Therefore I hope

you will believe me when I say that I dread neither death nor

permanent injury even if I survive. But I do feel that this warning

of medical friends should, if the country has any use for me, hurry

the people up to close their ranks.’

He insisted on addressing the prayer meeting by microphone

for two minutes. This was followed by the reading of a statement

which he had dictated earlier. The government of the Indian

Union was paying Pakistan 550,000,000 rupees. This, Gandhi,

hoped, would lead to an honourable settlement of the Kashmir

question and all outstanding differences between the two

Dominions. ‘Friendship should replace the present enmity . . .

What will be Pakistan’s counter gesture?’

On January 17th, Gandhi’s weight was stabilized at 107

pounds. He was accumulating water apparently from the irriga¬

tions. He suffered from nausea and was restless. But for hours he

rested quietly or slept. Nehru came and cried. Gandhi sent

Pyarelal into the city to ascertain whether it was safe for Moslems

to return. Hundreds of telegrams arrived from princes, from

Moslems in Pakistan, from every corner of India. Gandhi felt

gratified, but his written statement that day was a warning:

‘Neither the Rajas nor Maharajas nor the Hindus or Sikhs or any

others will serve themselves or India as a whole if at this, what is

to me sacred juncture they mislead me with a view to terminating

my fast. They should know that I never feel so happy as when I

am fasting for the spirit. This fast has brought me higher happi¬

ness than hitherto. No one need disturb this happy state unless

534

THE LAST FAST

he can honestly claim that in his journey he has turned deliberately

from Satan towards God.’

On January 18th, Gandhi felt better. Pie permitted some light

massage. His weight remained at 107 pounds.

Ever since n a.m. on the 13th when Gandhi commenced to

fast, committees representing numerous communities, organiza¬

tions and refugee groups in Delhi had been meeting in the house

of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the new Congress president, in an effort

to establish real peace among divergent elements. It was not a

matter of obtaining signatures to a document. That would not

satisfy Gandhi. They must make concrete pledges which they

knew their followers would carry out. If the pledges were broken

Gandhi could easily and quickly ascertain the fact and then he

would fast irrevocably to death. Conscious of the responsibility,

some representatives hesitated and went away to consult their

conscience and subordinates.

At last, on the morning of the 18th, the pledge was drafted and

signed and over a hundred delegates repaired from Prasad’s home

to Birla House. Nehru and Azad were already there. The Chief

of Police of Delhi and his deputy were also present; they too had

signed the pledge. Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs, Christians and Jews

attended. The Hindu Mahasabha and the R.S.S. were repre¬

sented.

Jarab Zahid Hussain-Saheb, the High Commissioner (Ambas¬

sador) of Pakistan in Delhi, was also present.

Prasad opened the conference with the fasting Mahatma by

explaining that their pledge included a promise and programme

for implementation. The undertakings were definite. ‘We take

the pledge that we shall protect the life, property and faith of the

Moslems and that the incidents which have taken place in Delhi

will not happen again.’

Gandhi listened and nodded.

‘We want to assure Gandhiji,’ Point Two, ‘that the annual fair

at Kwaja Qutab-ud-Din Mazar will be held this year as in

previous years.’ This was a reference to a fair held regularly at a

Moslem shrine outside the city.

The specific nature of this promise seemed to brighten Gandhi 5

face.

‘Moslems will be able to move about in Subzimandi, Karol

535

THE BIRTH OF TWO NATIONS

Baghj Paharganj and other localities just as they could in the past.

‘The mosques which have been left by Moslems and which are

now in the possession of Hindus and Sikhs will be returned. The

areas which have been set apart for Moslems will not be forcibly

occupied.’

Moslems who had fled could return and conduct their business

as before.

‘These things/ they assured him, ‘will be done by our personal

efforts and not with the help of the police or military.’

Prasad accordingly begged the Mahatma to discontinue the

fast.

A Hindu representative then reported to Gandhi on the touch¬

ing scenes of fraternization that had taken place that morning

when a procession of 150 Moslem residents of Subzimandi was

given an ovation and then feted by the Hindus of the locality.

Gandhi had been kept informed of the deliberations in Rajendra

Prasad’s house; he had originally formulated several of the points

which the delegates were presenting to him as adopted.

Gandhi now addressed the group before him. He was moved,

he said, by their words. But ‘your guarantee is nothing worth and

I will feel and you will one day realize that it was a great blunder

for me to give up the fast if you hold yourself responsible for the

communal peace of Delhi only.’ The press had reported inter¬

religious troubles in Allahabad. Representatives of the Hindu

Mahasabha and R.S.S., Gandhi continued, were in the room

and had signed the pledge for Delhi. ‘If they are sincere about

their professions surely they cannot be indifferent to outbreaks of

madness in places other than Delhi.’ This was a clear implication

of the guilt of these two organizations. ‘Delhi,’ Gandhi continued,

‘is the heart of the Indian Dominion and you are the cream of

Delhi. If you cannot make the whole of India realize that the

Hindus, Sikhs and Moslems are all brothers, it will bode ill for the

future of both Dominions. What will happen to India if they both

quarrel?’

Here Gandhi, overcome with emotion, broke down; tears

streamed down his hollow cheeks. Onlookers sobbed; many wept.

When he resumed his voice was too weak to be heard and Dr.

Sushila Nayyar repeated aloud what he whispered to her. Were

they deceiving him, Gandhi asked. Were they merely trying to

53 ^

THE LAST FAST

save his life? Would they guarantee peace in Delhi and release

him so he could go to Pakistan and plead for peace there? Did

Moslems regard Hindus as infidels who worshipped idols and who

should therefore be exterminated?

Maulana Azad and other Moslem scholars spoke and assured

Gandhi that this was not the Islamic attitude. Ganesh Dutt,

speaking for the R.S.S. and the Hindu Mahasabha, pleaded with

Gandhi to break his fast. The Pakistan Ambassador also addressed

a few friendly words to the Mahatma. A Sikh representative

added his pledge.

Gandhi sat on the cot, silent and sunk in thought. The assembly

waited. Finally he announced that he would break the fast. Farsi,

Moslem and Japanese scriptures were read and then the Hindu

verse:

Lead me from untruth to truth,

From darkness to light,

From death to immortality.

The girls of Gandhi’s entourage sang a Hindu song and " When

I survey the Wondrous Gross’, Gandhi’s favourite Christian

hymn.

Thereupon, Maulana Azad handed Gandhi a glass filled with

eight ounces of orange juice which Gandhi slowly drank.

If the pledge was kept, Gandhi said, it would revive his wish to

live his full span of life and serve humanity. ‘That span, according

to learned opinion,’ he declared, ‘is at least 125 years, some say

133 -’

The same afternoon, Gandhi had a talk with Arthur Moore,

former editor of the British-owned daily Statesman . ‘He was

lightsome and gay,’ Moore wrote, ‘and his interest while he talked

with me was not in himself but in me, whom he plied with

•probing questions.’

When he awoke that morning, Nehru had decided to fast until

evening in sympathy with Gandhi. Then the Prime Minister was

summoned to Birla House where he witnessed the giving of the

pledge and the breaking of the fast. ‘See here,’ Nehru said to

Gandhi in mock censure, ‘I have been fasting; and now this will

force me to break my fast prematurely.

Gandhi was pleased. In the afternoon he sent some documents

537

THE BIRTH OF TWO NATIONS

to Nehru with a note saying he hoped he had ended his fast.

‘May you long remain the jewel of India,’ Gandhi added. Jawahar

is ‘jewel’ in Hindustani.

Gandhi told his evening prayer meeting that he interpreted the

pledge as meaning, ‘Come what may, there will be complete

friendship between the Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs, Christians and

Jews, a friendship not to be broken.’

Sir Mohamed Zafrullah Khan, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan,

informed the U.N. Security Council at Lake Success that ‘a new

and tremendous wave of feeling and desire for friendship between

the two Dominions is sweeping the subcontinent in response to the

fast’.

The national boundary between Pakistan and the Indian Union

is an unhealed cut through the heart of India and friendship is

difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, Gandhi’s last fast did perform

the miracle not merely of pacifying Delhi but of putting an end

to religious riots and violence throughout both Dominions.

That partial solution of a problem which is world wide stands as

a monument to the moral force of one man whose desire to serve

was greater than his attachment to life. Gandhi loved life and

wanted to live. But through the readiness to die he recovered the

capacity to serve, and therein lay happiness. In the twelve days

that followed the fast he was happy and jolly; despondency had

fled and he was full of plans for further work. He courted death

and found a new lease on life.

53 8