struggle, Mahatma Gandhi, was still out, issuing from day to day messages and directions which inspired the people, as well as checking many an undesirable activity. The Government had not touched him so far, for they feared the consequences, the reactions on the Indian Army and the police.

Suddenly, early in February 1922, the whole scene shifted, and we in prison learnt, to our amazement and consternation, that Gandhiji had stopped the aggressive aspects of our struggle, that he had suspended civil resistance. We read that this was because of what had happened near the village of Chauri Chaura where a mob of villagers had retaliated on some policemen by setting fire to the police-station and burning half a dozen or so policemen in it.

We were angry when we learnt of this stoppage of our struggle at a time when we seemed to be consolidating our position and advancing on all fronts. But our disappointment and anger in prison could do little good to any one, and civil resistance stopped and non-co-operation wilted away. After many months of strain and anxiety the Government breathed again, and for the first time had the opportunity of taking the initiative. A few weeks later they arrested Gandhiji and sentenced him for a long term of imprisonment.
NON-VIOLENCE AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE SWORD

The sudden suspension of our movement after the Chauri Chaura incident was resented, I think, by almost all the prominent Congress leaders—other than Gandhiji of course. My father (who was in gaol at the time) was much upset by it. The younger people were naturally even more agitated. Our mounting hopes tumbled to the ground, and this mental reaction was to be expected. What troubled us even more were the reasons given for this suspension and the consequences that seemed to flow from them. Chauri Chaura may have been and was a deplorable occurrence and wholly opposed to the spirit of the non-violent movement; but were a remote village and a mob of excited peasants in an out-of-the-way place going to put an end, for some time at least, to our national struggle for freedom? If this was the inevitable consequence of a sporadic act of violence, then surely there was something lacking in the philosophy and technique of a non-violent struggle. For it seemed to us to be impossible to guarantee against the occurrence of some such untoward incident. Must we train the three hundred and odd millions of India in the theory and practice of non-violent action before we could go forward? And, even so, how many of us could say that under extreme provocation from the police we would be able to remain perfectly peaceful? But even if we succeeded, what of the numerous *agents provocateurs*, stool pigeons, and the like who crept into our movement and indulged in violence themselves or induced others to do so? If this was the sole condition of its function, then the non-violent method of resistance would always fail.

We had accepted that method, the Congress had made that method its own, because of a belief in its effectiveness. Gandhiji had placed it before the country not only as the right method but as the most effective one for our purpose. In spite of its negative name it was a dynamic method, the very opposite of a meek submission to a tyrant's will. It was not a coward's refuge from action, but the brave man's defiance of evil and national subjection. But what was the use of the bravest and the strongest if a few odd persons—maybe even our opponents in the guise of friends—had the power to upset or end our movement by their rash behaviour?
Gandhiji had pleaded for the adoption of the way of non-violence, of peaceful non-co-operation, with all the eloquence and persuasive power which he so abundantly possessed. His language had been simple and unadorned, his voice and appearance cool and clear and devoid of all emotion, but behind that outward covering of ice there was the heat of a blazing fire and concentrated passion, and the words he uttered winged their way to the innermost recesses of our minds and hearts, and created a strange ferment there. The way he pointed out was hard and difficult, but it was a brave path, and it seemed to lead to the promised land of freedom. Because of that promise we pledged our faith and marched ahead. In a famous article—"The Doctrine of the Sword"—he had written in 1920:

"I do believe that when there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence... I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless victim to her own dishonour. But I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment.

"Forgiveness adorns a soldier. But abstinence is forgiveness only when there is power to punish; it is meaningless when it pretends to proceed from a helpless creature. A mouse hardly forgives a cat when it allows itself to be torn to pieces by her.... But I do not believe India to be helpless, I do not believe myself to be a helpless creature...."

"Let me not be misunderstood. Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will...."

"I am not a visionary. I claim to be a practical idealist. The religion of non-violence is not meant merely for the Rishis and saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law—to the strength of the spirit.

"I have therefore ventured to place before India the ancient law of self-sacrifice. For Satyagraha and its off-shoots, non-co-operation and civil resistance, are nothing but new names for the law of suffering. The Rishis who discovered the law of non-violence in the midst of violence, were greater geniuses than Newton. They were themselves greater warriors than Wellington. Having themselves known the use of arms, they realised their uselessness and taught a weary world that its salvation lay not through violence but through non-violence."
"Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means the putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul and lay the foundation for that empire's fall or regeneration.

"And so I am not pleading for India to practise non-violence because it is weak. I want her to practise non-violence being conscious of her strength and power. . . . I want India to recognise that she has a soul that cannot perish, and that can rise triumphant above any physical weakness and defy the physical combination of a whole world. . . .

"I isolate this non-co-operation from Sinn Feinism, for, it is so conceived as to be incapable of being offered side by side with violence. But I invite even the school of violence to give this peaceful non-co-operation a trial. It will not fail through its inherent weakness. It may fail because of poverty of response. Then will be the time for real danger. The high-souled men, who are unable to suffer national humiliation any longer, will want to vent their wrath. They will take to violence. So far as I know, they must perish without delivering themselves or their country from the wrong. If India takes up the doctrine of the sword, she may gain momentary victory. Then India will cease to be the pride of my heart. I am wedded to India because I owe my all to her. I believe absolutely that she has a mission for the world."

We were moved by these arguments, but for us and for the National Congress as a whole the non-violent method was not, and could not be, a religion or an unchallengeable creed or dogma. It could only be a policy and a method promising certain results, and by those results it would have to be finally judged. Individuals might make of it a religion or incontrovertible creed. But no political organisation, so long as it remained political, could do so.

Chauri Chaura and its consequences made us examine these implications of non-violence as a method, and we felt that, if Gandhiji's argument for the suspension of civil resistance was correct, our opponents would always have the power to create circumstances which would necessarily result in our abandoning the struggle. Was this the fault of the non-violent method itself or of Gandhiji's interpretation of it? After all, he was the author and originator of it, and who could be a better judge of
what it was and what it was not? And without him where was our movement?

Many years later, just before the 1930 Civil Disobedience movement began, Gandhiji, much to our satisfaction, made this point clear. He stated that the movement should not be abandoned because of the occurrence of sporadic acts of violence. If the non-violent method of struggle could not function because of such almost inevitable happenings, then it was obvious that it was not an ideal method for all occasions, and this he was not prepared to admit. For him the method, being the right method, should suit all circumstances and should be able to function, at any rate in a restricted way, even in a hostile atmosphere. Whether this interpretation, which widened the scope of non-violent action, represented an evolution in his own mind or not I do not know.

As a matter of fact even the suspension of civil resistance in February 1922 was certainly not due to Chauri Chaura alone, although most people imagined so. That was only the last straw. Gandhiji has often acted almost by instinct; by long and close association with the masses he appears to have developed, as great popular leaders often do, a new sense which tells him how the mass feels, what it does and what it can do. He reacts to this instinctive feeling and fashions his action accordingly, and later, for the benefit of his surprised and resentful colleagues, tries to clothe his decision with reasons. This covering is often very inadequate, as it seemed after Chauri Chaura. At that time our movement, in spite of its apparent power and the widespread enthusiasm, was going to pieces. All organisation and discipline was disappearing; almost all our good men were in prison, and the masses had so far received little training to carry on by themselves. Any unknown man who wanted to do so could take charge of a Congress Committee and, as a matter of fact, large numbers of undesirable men, including agents provocateurs, came to the front and even controlled some local Congress and Khilafat organisations. There was no way of checking them.

This kind of thing is, of course, to some extent almost inevitable in such a struggle. The leaders must take the lead in going to prison, and trust to others to carry on. All that can be done is to train the masses in some simple kinds of activity and, even more so, to abstain from certain other kinds of activity. In 1930 we had already spent several years in giving some such training, and the Civil Disobedience movement then and in 1932 was a very powerful and organised affair. This was lacking in 1921 and 1922, and there was little behind the excitement and
enthusiasm of the people. There is little doubt that if the move-
men had continued there would have been growing sporadic
violence in many places. This would have been crushed by
Government in a bloody manner and a reign of terror estab-
lished which would have thoroughly demoralised the people.

These were probably the reasons and influences that worked in
Gandhiji's mind, and granting his premises and the desirability
of carrying on with the technique of non-violence, his decision
was right. He had to stop the rot and build anew. From another
and an entirely different view-point his decision might be con-
sidered wrong, but that view-point had nothing to do with the
non-violent method. It was not possible to have it both ways. To
invite a bloody suppression of the movement in that particular
sporadic way and at that stage would not, of course, have put an
end to the national movement, for such movements have a way
of rising from their ashes. Temporary set-backs are often helpful
in clarifying issues and in giving backbone; what matters is not
a set-back or apparent defeat, but the principles and ideals: If
these principles can be kept un tarnished by the masses, then re-
cover comes soon. But what were our principles and objectives
in 1921 and 1922? A vague Swaraj with no clear ideology behind
it and a particular technique of non-violent struggle. The latter
method would naturally have gone if the country had taken to
sporadic violence on any big scale, and as to the former, there
was little to hold on to. The people generally were not strong
enough to carry on the struggle for long and, in spite of almost
universal discontent with foreign rule and sympathy with the
Congress, there was not enough backbone or organisation. They
could not last. Even the crowds that went to prison did so on the
spur of the moment, expecting the whole thing to be over very
soon.

It may be, therefore, that the decision to suspend civil resis-
tance in 1922 was a right one, though the manner of doing it left
much to be desired and brought about a certain demoralisation.

It is possible, however, that this sudden bottling up of a great
movement contributed to a tragic development in the country.
The drift to sporadic and futile violence in the political struggle
was stopped, but the suppressed violence had to find a way out,
and in the following years this perhaps aggravated the com-
munal trouble. The communalists of various denominations,
mostly political reactionaries, had been forced to lie low because
of the overwhelming mass support for the non-co-operation and
civil disobedience movement. They emerged now from their
retirement. Many others, secret service agents and people who
sought to please the authorities by creating communal friction, also worked on the same theme. The Moplah rising and its extraordinarily cruel suppression—what a horrible thing was the baking to death of the Moplah prisoners in the closed railway vans!—had already given a handle to those who stirred the waters of communal discord. It is just possible that if civil resistance had not been stopped and the movement had been crushed by Government, there would have been less communal bitterness and less superfluous energy left for the subsequent communal riots.

Before civil resistance was called off an incident occurred which might have led to different results. The first wave of civil resistance amazed and frightened the Government. It was then that Lord Reading, the Viceroy, said in a public speech that he was troubled and perplexed. The Prince of Wales was in India, and his presence added greatly to the Government's responsibility. An attempt was made by the Government in December 1921, soon after the mass arrests at the beginning of the month, to come to some understanding with the Congress. This was especially in view of the Prince's forthcoming visit to Calcutta. There were some informal talks between representatives of the Bengal Government and Deshbandhu Das, who was in gaol then. A proposal seems to have been made, that a small round table conference might take place between the Government and the Congress. This proposal appears to have fallen through because Gandhiji insisted that Maulana Mohamad Ali, who was then in prison in Karachi, should be present at this conference. Government would not agree to this.

Mr. C. R. Das did not approve of Gandhiji's attitude in this matter and, when he came out of prison later, he publicly criticised him and said that he had blundered. Most of us (we were in gaol) do not know the details of what took place then, and it is difficult to judge without all the facts. It seems, however, that little good could have come out of the conference at that stage. It was an effort on the part of Government to tide over somehow the period of the Prince's visit to Calcutta. The basic problems that faced us would have remained. Nine years later, when the nation and the Congress were far stronger, such a conference took place without any great results. But apart from this, it seems to me that Gandhiji's insistence on Mohamad Ali's presence was perfectly justified. Not only as a Congress leader but as the leader of the Khilafat movement—and the Khilafat question was then an important plank in the Congress programme—his presence was essential. No policy or manœuvre can ever be a right one if
it involves the forsaking of a colleague. The fact that Government were not prepared to release him from gaol itself shows that there was no likelihood of any results from a conference.

Both my father and I had been sentenced to six months' imprisonment on different charges and by different courts. The trials were farcical and, as was our custom, we took no part in them. It was easy enough, of course, to find enough material in our speeches or other activities for a conviction. But the actual choice was amusing. Father was tried as a member of an illegal organisation, the Congress Volunteers, and to prove this a form with his signature in Hindi was produced. The signature was certainly his, but, as it happened, he had hardly ever signed in Hindi before, and very few persons could recognise his Hindi signature. A tattered gentleman was then produced who swore to the signature. The man was quite illiterate, and he held the signature upside down when he examined it. My daughter, aged four at the time, had her first experience of the dock during father's trial, as he held her in his arms throughout.

My offence was distributing notices for a hartal. This was no offence under the law then, though I believe it is one now, for we are rapidly advancing towards Dominion Status. However, I was sentenced. Three months later I was informed in the prison, where I was with my father and others, that some revising authority had come to the conclusion that I was wrongly sentenced and I was to be discharged. I was surprised, as no one had taken any step on my behalf. The suspension of civil resistance had apparently galvanised the revising judges into activity. I was sorry to go out, leaving my father behind.

I decided to go almost immediately to Gandhiji in Ahmadabad. Before I arrived there he had been arrested, and my interview with him took place in Sabarmati Prison. I was present at his trial. It was a memorable occasion, and those of us who were present are not likely ever to forget it. The judge, an Englishman, behaved with dignity and feeling. Gandhiji's statement to the court was a most moving one, and we came away, emotionally stirred, and with the impress of his vivid phrases and striking images in our mind.

I came back to Allahabad. I felt unhappy and lonely outside the prison when so many of my friends and colleagues were behind prison bars. I found that the Congress organisation was not functioning well and I tried to put it straight. In particular I interested myself in the boycott of foreign cloth. This item of our programme still continued in spite of the withdrawal of civil resistance. Nearly all the cloth merchants in Allahabad had
pledged themselves not to import or purchase foreign cloth, and had formed an association for the purpose. The rules of this association laid down that any infringement would be punished by a fine. I found that several of the big dealers had broken their pledges and were importing foreign cloth. This was very unfair to those who stuck to their pledges. We remonstrated with little result, and the cloth dealers’ association seemed to be powerless to take action. So we decided to picket the shops of the erring merchants. Even a hint of picketing was enough for our purpose. Fines were paid, pledges were taken afresh. The money from the fines went to the cloth merchants’ association.

Two or three days later I was arrested, together with a number of colleagues who had taken part in the negotiations with the merchants. We were charged with criminal intimidation and extortion! I was further charged with some other offences, including sedition. I did not defend myself, but I made a long statement in court. I was sentenced on at least three counts, including intimidation and extortion, but the sedition charge was not proceeded with, as it was probably considered that I had already got as much as I deserved. As far as I remember there were three sentences, two of which were for eighteen months and were concurrent. In all, I think, I was sentenced to a year and nine months. That was my second sentence. I went back to prison after about six weeks spent outside it.
IMPRISONMENT for political offences was not a new thing in the India of 1921. From the time of the Bengal partition agitation especially, there had always been a continuous stream of men going to prison, sentenced often to very long terms. There had been internments without trial also. The greatest Indian leader of the day, Lokamanya Tilak, was sentenced in his declining years to six years' imprisonment. The Great War speeded up this process of internment and imprisonment, and conspiracy cases became frequent, usually resulting in death sentences or life terms. The Ali brothers and M. Abulkalam Azad were among the war-time internees. Soon after the war, martial law in the Punjab took a heavy toll, and large numbers were sentenced in conspiracy cases or summary trials. So political imprisonment had become a frequent enough occurrence in India, but so far it had not been deliberately courted. It had come in the course of a person's activities, or perhaps because the secret police did not fancy him, and every effort was made to avoid it by means of a defence in the law court. In South Africa, of course, a different example had been set by Gandhiji and thousands of his followers in their campaign of Satyagraha.

But still in 1921 prison was an almost unknown place, and very few knew what happened behind the grim gates that swallowed the new convict. Vaguely we imagined that its inhabitants were desperate people and dangerous criminals. In our minds the place was associated with isolation, humiliation, and suffering, and, above all, the fear of the unknown. Frequent references to gaol-going from 1920 onwards, and the march of many of our comrades to prison, gradually accustomed us to the idea and took away the edge from that almost involuntary feeling of repugnance and reluctance. But no amount of previous mental preparation could prevent the tension and nervous excitement that filled us when we first entered the iron gates. Since those days, thirteen years ago, I imagine that at least three hundred thousand men and women of India have entered those gates for political offences, although often enough the actual charge has been under some other section of the criminal code. Thousands of these have gone in and out many a time; they have got to know well what to expect inside; they have tried to adapt them-
selves to the strange life there, as far as one can adapt oneself to an existence full of abnormality and a dull suffering and a dreadful monotony. We grow accustomed to it, as one grows accustomed to almost anything; and yet every time that we enter those gates again, there is a bit of the old excitement, a feeling of tension, a quickening of the pulse. And the eyes turn back involuntarily to take a last good look outside at the greenery and wide spaces, and people and conveyances moving about, and familiar faces that they may not see again for a long time.

My first term in gaol, which ended rather suddenly after three months, was a hectic period both for us and the gaol staff. The gaol officials were half paralysed by the influx of the new type of convict. The number itself of these newcomers, added to from day to day, was extraordinary and created an impression of a flood which might sweep away the old traditional landmarks. More upsetting still was the type of the newcomer. It belonged to all classes, but had a high proportion of the middle class. All these classes, however, had this in common: they differed entirely from the ordinary convict, and it was not easy to treat them in the old way. This was recognised by the authorities, but there was nothing to take the place of the existing rules; there were no precedents and no experience. The average Congress prisoner was not very meek and mild, and even inside the gaol walls numbers gave him a feeling of strength. The agitation outside, and the new interest of the public in what transpired inside the prisons, added to this. In spite of this somewhat aggressive attitude, our general policy was one of co-operation with the gaol authorities. But for our help, the troubles of the officials would have been far greater. The gaoler would come to us frequently and ask us to visit some of the barracks containing our volunteers in order to soothe them or get them to agree to something.

We had come to prison of our own accord, many of the volunteers indeed having pushed their way in almost uninvited. There was thus hardly any question of any one of them trying to escape. If he had any desire to go out, he could do so easily by expressing regret for his action or giving an undertaking that he would refrain from such activity in future. An attempt to escape would only bring a measure of ignominy, and in itself was tantamount to a withdrawal from political activity of the civil resistance variety. The superintendent of our prison in Lucknow fully appreciated this and used to tell the gaoler (who was a Khan Sahib) that if he could succeed in allowing some of the Congress
prisoners to escape he, the superintendent, would recommend him to Government for the title of Khan Bahadur.

Most of our fellow-prisoners were kept in huge barracks in the inner circle of the prison. About eighteen of us, selected I suppose for better treatment, were kept in an old weaving shed with a large open space attached. My father, two of my cousins, and I had a small shed to ourselves, about 20 feet by 16. We had considerable freedom in moving about from one barrack to another. Frequent interviews with relatives outside were allowed. Newspapers came, and the daily news of fresh arrests and the developments of our struggle kept up an atmosphere of excitement. Mutual discussions and talks took up a lot of time, and I could do little reading or other solid work. I spent the mornings in a thorough cleaning and washing of our shed, in washing father’s and my own clothes, and in spinning. It was winter, the best time of year in North India. For the first few weeks we were allowed to open classes for our volunteers, or such of them as were illiterate, to teach them Hindi and Urdu and other elementary subjects. In the afternoons we played volley-ball.¹

Gradually restrictions grew. We were stopped from going outside our enclosure and visiting the part of the gaol where most of our volunteers were kept. The classes naturally stopped. I was discharged about that time.

I went out early in March, and six or seven weeks later, in April, I returned. I found that the conditions had greatly changed. Father had been transferred to the Naini Tal Gaol and, soon after his departure, new rules were enforced. All the prisoners in the big weaving shed, where I had been kept previously, were transferred to the inner gaol and kept in the barracks (single halls) there. Each barrack was practically a gaol within a gaol, and no communications were allowed between different barracks. Interviews and letters were now restricted to one a month. The food was much simpler, though we were allowed to supplement it from outside.

In the barrack in which I was kept there must have been about

¹ A ridiculous story has appeared in the Press, and, though contradicted, continues to appear from time to time. According to this, Sir Harcourt Butler, the then Governor of the U.P., sent champagne to my father in prison. Sir Harcourt sent my father nothing at all in prison; nobody sent him champagne or any other alcoholic drink; and indeed he had given up alcohol in 1920 after the Congress took to non-co-operation, and was not taking any such drinks at that time.
fifty persons. We were all crowded together, our beds being about three or four feet from each other. Fortunately almost everybody in that barrack was known to me, and there were many friends. But the utter want of privacy, all day and night, became more and more difficult to endure. Always the same crowd looking on, the same petty annoyances and irritations, and no escape from them to a quiet nook. We bathed in public and washed our clothes in public, and ran round and round the barrack for exercise, and talked and argued till we had largely exhausted each other's capacity for intelligent conversation. It was the dull side of family life, magnified a hundred-fold, with few of its graces and compensations, and all this among people of all kinds and tastes. It was a great nervous strain for all of us, and often I yearned for solitude. In later years I was to have enough of this solitude and privacy in prison, when for months I would see no one except an occasional gaol official. Again I lived in a state of nervous tension, but this time I longed for suitable company. I thought then sometimes, almost with envy, of my crowded existence in the Lucknow District Gaol in 1922, and yet I knew well enough that of the two I preferred the solitude, provided at least that I could read and write.

And yet I must say that the company was unusually decent and pleasant, and we got on well together. But all of us, I suppose, got a little bored with the others occasionally and wanted to be away from them and have a little privacy. The nearest approach to privacy that I could get was by leaving my barrack and sitting in the open part of the enclosure. It was the monsoon season and it was usually possible to do so because of the clouds. I braved the heat and an occasional drizzle even, and spent as much time as possible outside the barrack.

Lying there in the open, I watched the skies and the clouds and I realised, better than I had ever done before, how amazingly beautiful were their changing hues.

"To watch the changing clouds, like clime in clime;  
Oh! sweet to lie and bless the luxury of time."

Time was not a luxury for us, it was more of a burden. But the time I spent in watching those ever-shifting monsoon clouds was filled with delight and a sense of relief. I had the joy of having made almost a discovery, and a feeling of escape from confinement. I do not know why that particular monsoon had that great effect on me; no previous or subsequent one has moved me in that way. I had seen and admired many a fine sunrise and sunset in the mountains and over the sea, and bathed in its
glory, and felt stirred for the time being by its magnificence. Having seen it, I had almost taken it for granted and passed on to other things. But in gaol there were no sunrises or sunsets to be seen, the horizon was hidden from us, and late in the morning the hot-rayed sun emerged over our guardian walls. There were no colours anywhere, and our eyes hardened and grew dull at seeing always that same drab view of mud-coloured wall and barrack. They must have hungered for some light and shade and colouring, and when the monsoon clouds sailed gaily by, assuming fantastic shapes, and playing in a riot of colour, I gasped in surprised delight and watched them almost as if I was in a trance. Sometimes the clouds would break, and one saw through an opening in them that wonderful monsoon phenomenon, a dark blue of an amazing depth, which seemed to be a portion of infinity.

The restrictions on us gradually grew in number, and stricter rules were enforced. The Government, having got the measure of our movement, wanted us to experience the full extent of its displeasure with our temerity in having dared to challenge it. The introduction of new rules or the manner of their enforcement led to friction between the gaol authorities and the political prisoners. For several months nearly all of us—we were some hundreds at the time in that particular gaol—gave up our interviews as a protest. Evidently it was thought that some of us were the trouble-makers, and so seven of us were transferred to a distant part of the gaol, quite cut off from the main barracks. Among those who were thus separated were Purushottam Das Tandon, Mahadev Desai, George Joseph, Balkrishna Sharma, Devadas Gandhi and I.

We were sent to a smaller enclosure, and there were some disadvantages in living there. But on the whole I was glad of the change. There was no crowding here; we could live in greater quiet and with more privacy. There was more time to read or do other work. We were cut off completely from our colleagues in other parts of the gaol as well as from the outside world, for newspapers were now stopped for all political prisoners.

Newspapers did not come to us, but some news from outside trickled through, as it always manages to trickle through in prison. Our monthly interviews and letters also brought us odd bits of information. We saw that our movement was at a low ebb outside. The magic moment had passed and success seemed to retire into the dim future. Outside, the Congress was split into two factions—the pro-changers and no-changers. The former, under the leadership of Deshbandhu Das and my father, wanted
the Congress to take part in the new elections to the central and provincial councils and, if possible, to capture these legislatures; the latter, led by C. Rajagopalachari, opposed any change of the old programme of non-co-operation. Gandhiji was, of course, in prison at the time. The fine ideals of the movement which had carried us forward, as on the crest of an advancing tide, were being swamped by petty squabbles and intrigues for power. We realised how much easier it was to do great and venturesome deeds in moments of enthusiasm and excitement than to carry on from day to day when the glow was past. Our spirits were damped by the news from outside, and this, added to the various humours that prison produces, increased the strain of life there. But still there remained within us an inner feeling of satisfaction, that we had preserved our self-respect and dignity, that we had acted rightly whatever the consequences. The future was dim, but, whatever shape it might take, it seemed that it would be the lot of many of us to spend a great part of our lives in prison. So we talked amongst ourselves, and I remember particularly a conversation with George Joseph in which we came to this conclusion. Since those days Joseph has drifted far apart from us and has even become a vigorous critic of our doings. I wonder if he ever remembers that talk we had on an autumn evening in the Civil Ward of the Lucknow District Gaol?

We settled down to a routine of work and exercise. For exercise we used to run round and round the little enclosure, or two of us would draw water, like two bullocks yoked together, pulling a huge leather bucket from a well in our yard. In this way we watered a small vegetable garden in our enclosure. Most of us used to spin a little daily. But reading was my principal occupation during those winter days and long evenings. Almost always, whenever the superintendent visited us, he found me reading. This devotion to reading seemed to get on his nerves a little, and he remarked on it once, adding that, so far as he was concerned, he had practically finished his general reading at the age of twelve! No doubt this abstention on his part had been of use to that gallant English colonel in avoiding troublesome thoughts, and perhaps it helped him subsequently in rising to the position of Inspector-General of Prisons in the United Provinces.

The long winter evenings and the clear Indian sky attracted us to the stars and, with the help of some charts, we spotted many of them. Nightly we would await their appearance and greet them with the satisfaction of seeing old acquaintances.
So we passed our time, and the days lengthened themselves into weeks, and the weeks became months. We grew accustomed to our routine existence. But in the world outside the real burden fell on our womenfolk, our mothers and wives and sisters. They weaned with the long waiting, and their very freedom seemed a reproach to them when their loved ones were behind prison bars.

Soon after our first arrest in December 1921 the police started paying frequent visits to Anand Bhawan, our house in Allahabad. They came to realise the fines which had been imposed on father and me. It was the Congress policy not to pay fines. So the police came day after day and attached and carried away bits of furniture. Indira, my four-year-old daughter, was greatly annoyed at this continuous process of despoilation and protested to the police and expressed her strong displeasure. I am afraid those early impressions are likely to colour her future views about the police force generally.

In the gaol every effort was made to keep us apart from the ordinary non-political convicts, special gaols being as a rule reserved for politicals. But complete segregation was impossible, and we often came into touch with those prisoners and learnt from them, as well as directly, the realities of prison life in those days. It was a story of violence and widespread graft and corruption. The food was quite amazingly bad; I tried it repeatedly and found it quite uneatable. The staff was usually wholly incompetent and was paid very low salaries, but it had every opportunity to add to its income by extorting money on every conceivable occasion from the prisoners or their relatives. The duties and responsibilities of the gaoler and his assistants and the warders, as laid down by the Gaol Manual, were so many and so various that it was quite impossible for any person to discharge them conscientiously or competently. The general policy of the prison administration in the United Provinces (and probably in other provinces) had absolutely nothing to do with the reform of the prisoner or of teaching him good habits and useful trades. The object of prison labour was to harass the convict.¹ He was

¹ Article 987 of the United Provinces Gaol Manual, which has now been removed from the new edition, stated that:

"Labour in a gaol should be considered primarily as a means of punishment and not of employment only; neither should the question of its being highly remunerative have much weight, the object of paramount importance being that prison work should be irksome and laborious and a cause of dread to evil-doers."

This might be compared with the following articles of the Russian S.F.S.R. Criminal Code:
to be frightened and broken into blind submission; the idea was that he should carry away from prison a fear and a horror of it, so that he might avoid crime and a return to prison in the future.

There have been some changes in recent years for the better. Food has improved a little, so also clothing and other matters. This was largely due to the agitation carried on outside by political prisoners after their discharge. Non-co-operation also resulted in a substantial increase in the warders' salaries to give them an additional inducement to remain loyal to the Sarkar. A feeble effort is also made now to teach reading and writing to the boys and younger prisoners. But all these changes, welcome as they are, barely scratch the problem, and the old spirit remains much the same.

The great majority of the political prisoners had to put up with this regular treatment for ordinary prisoners. They had no special privileges or other treatment, but being more aggressive and intelligent than the others, they could not easily be exploited, nor could money be made out of them. Because of this they were naturally not popular with the staff, and when occasion offered itself a breach of gaol discipline by any of them was punished severely. For such a breach a young boy of fifteen or sixteen, who called himself Azad, was ordered to be flogged. He was stripped and tied to the whipping triangle, and as each stripe fell on him and cut into his flesh, he shouted "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai". Every stripe brought forth the slogan till the boy fainted. Later, that boy was to become one of the leaders of the group of Terrorists in North India.

Article 9.—"The measures of social defence do not have for their object the infliction of physical suffering nor the lowering of human dignity, nor are they meant to avenge or to punish."

Article 26.—"Sentences, being a measure of protection, must be free from any element of torture, and must not cause the criminal needless or superfluous suffering."
One misses many things in prison, but perhaps most of all one misses the sound of women's voices and children's laughter. The sounds one usually hears are not of the pleasantest. The voices are harsh and minatory, and the language brutal and largely consisting of swear-words. Once I remember being struck by a new want. I was in the Lucknow District Gaol and I realised suddenly that I had not heard a dog bark for seven or eight months.

On the last day of January 1923 all of us politicals in the Lucknow Gaol were discharged. There must have been between one hundred and two hundred 'special class' prisoners in Lucknow then. All those who had been sentenced to a year or less in December 1921 or the beginning of 1922 had already served out their sentences. Only those with longer sentences, and a few who had come back a second time, remained. This sudden release took us by surprise, as there had been no previous intimation of an amnesty. The local Provincial Council had passed a resolution favouring a political amnesty, but the executive Government seldom pays heed to such demands. As it happened, however, the time was propitious from the point of view of Government. The Congress was doing nothing against the Government, and Congressmen were engrossed in mutual squabbles. There were not many well-known Congress people left in gaol and so the gesture was made.

There is always a feeling of relief and a sense of glad excitement in coming out of the prison gate. The fresh air and open expanses, the moving street scene, and the meeting with old friends, all go to the head and slightly intoxicate. Almost, there is a touch of hysteria in one's first reactions to the outer world. We felt exhilarated, but this was a passing sensation, for the state of Congress politics was discouraging enough. In the place of ideals there were intrigues, and various cliques were trying to capture the Congress machinery by the usual methods which have made politics a hateful word to those who are at all sensitive.

My own inclination was wholly against Council entry, because this seemed to lead inevitably to compromising tactics and to a continuous watering down of our objective. But there really
was no other political programme before the country. The no-
changers laid stress on a 'constructive programme', which in
effect was a programme of social reform, and its chief merit
was that it brought our workers in touch with the masses. This
was not likely to satisfy those who believed in political action,
and it was inevitable that after a wave of direct action, which
had not succeeded, there should be a phase of parliamentary
activity. Even this activity was envisaged by Deshbandhu Das
and my father, the leaders of the new movement, as one of
obstruction and defiance and not of co-operation and con-
struction.

Mr. C. R. Das had always favoured entry into the legislatures
for the purpose of carrying on the national struggle there also.
My father had more or less the same outlook, his acceptance of
the Council boycott in 1920 was partly a subordination of his own
view-point to Gandhiji's. He wanted to throw his full weight into
the struggle, and the only way to do it then was to accept the
Gandhi formula in toto. The minds of many of the younger
people were full of the tactics of Sinn Fein in so far as they had
captured the parliamentary seats and then refused to enter the
House of Commons. I remember pressing Gandhiji in the sum-
mer of 1920 to adopt this variant of the boycott, but in such
matters he was adamant. Mohamad Ali was in Europe then on
a Khilafat deputation. On his return he also expressed his regret
at the method of boycott adopted; he would have preferred
the Sinn Fein way. But it was quite immaterial what other in-
dividuals thought in the matter, as ultimately Gandhiji's view
was bound to prevail. He was the author of the movement, and
it was felt that he must be given freedom as to the details. His
chief objections to the Sinn Fein method were (apart from its
association with violence) that it would not be understood by the
masses as much as a straight call to boycott the polling-booths
and the voting. To get elected and then not to go to the Councils
would create confusion in the mass mind. Further, that once
our people got elected they would be drawn towards the Councils
and it would be difficult for them to keep out of them. There
was not enough discipline and power in our movement to keep
them out for long, and a demoralising dribble would set in
towards the many direct and indirect ways of taking advantage
of Government patronage through the Councils.

These were weighty arguments and, indeed, we saw many of
them justified in the middle 'twenties when the Swaraj Party
went into the Councils. And yet one cannot help wondering
what would have happened if the Congress had set itself to
capture the legislatures in 1920. There can be no doubt that, supported as it was by the Khilafat Committee, it would have won almost every elective seat in the provincial Councils as well as in the central Assembly. To-day (August 1934) there is again talk of the Congress putting up candidates for the Assembly, and a Parliamentary Board has been set up. But much has happened since 1920 to deepen the fissures in our social and political fabric, and whatever may be the measure of success of the Congress in the coming elections, it can hardly be what it might have been in 1920.

On my discharge from gaol I co-operated with a few others who were trying to bring about an understanding between the rival groups. We met with little success, and I was fed up with the pro-change and no-change politics. As secretary of the U.P. Provincial Congress Committee I devoted myself to the work of Congress organisation. There was much to be done after the shake-up of the past year. I worked hard, but I worked with little purpose. Mentally I was at a loose end. Soon a new field of activity opened out before me. Within a few weeks of my release I was pitchforked into the headship of the Allahabad Municipality. This election was so unexpected that forty-five minutes before the event no one had mentioned my name, or perhaps even thought of me, in this connection. But at the last moment it was felt on the Congress side that I was the only person of their group who was certain of success.

It so happened that year that leading Congressmen all over the country became presidents of municipalities. Mr. C. R. Das became the first Mayor of Calcutta, Mr. Vithalbhai Patel the President of Bombay Corporation, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel of Ahmedabad. In the United Provinces most of the big municipalities had Congressmen for their chairman.

Municipal work in all its varied forms began to interest me, and I gave more and more time to it. Some of its problems fascinated me. I studied the subject and developed ambitious notions of municipal reform. I was to find out later that there is little room for ambition or startling development in Indian municipalities as they are constituted to-day. Still, there was room for work and a cleaning and speeding-up of the machine, and I worked hard enough at it. Just then my Congress work was growing, and in addition to the provincial secretaryship I was made the All-India Secretary also. These various jobs often made me work fifteen hours a day, and the end of the day found me thoroughly exhausted.

On my return home from gaol the first letter that met my eyes
was one from Sir Grimwood Mears, the then Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court. The letter had been written before my discharge, but evidently in the knowledge that it was coming. I was a little surprised at the cordiality of his language and his invitation to me to visit him frequently. I hardly knew him. He had just come to Allahabad in 1919 when I was drifting away from legal practice. I think I argued only one case before him, and that was my last one in the High Court. For some reason or other he developed a partiality for me without knowing much about me. He had an idea—he told me so later—that I would go far, and he wanted to be a wholesome influence on me to make me appreciate the British viewpoint. His method was subtle. He was of opinion, and there are many Englishmen who still think so, that the average ‘extremist’ politician in India had become anti-British because in the social sphere he had been treated badly by Englishmen. This had led to resentment and bitterness and extremism. There is a story, which has been repeated by responsible persons, to the effect that my father was refused election to an English club and this made him anti-British and extremist. The story is wholly without foundation and is a distortion of an entirely different incident. But to many an Englishman such instances, whether true or not, afford a simple and sufficient explanation of the origins of the nationalist movement. As a matter of fact neither my father nor I had any particular grievance on this score. As individuals we had usually met with courtesy from the Englishman and we got on well with him, though, like all Indians, we were no doubt racially conscious of subjection, and resented it bitterly. I must confess that even to-day I get on very well with an Englishman, unless he happens to be an official and wants to patronise me, and even then there is no lack of humour in our contacts. Probably I have more in common with him than the Liberals or others who co-operate with him politically in India.

Sir Grimwood’s idea was to root out this original cause of bitterness by friendly intercourse and frank and courteous treatment. I saw him several times. On the pretext of objecting to some municipal tax he would come to see me and discuss other matters. On one occasion he made quite an onslaught on the Indian Liberals—timid, weak-kneed opportunists with no character or backbone, he called them, and his language was stronger and full of contempt. “Do you think we have any respect for them?” he said. I wondered why he spoke to me in this way;

1 See the footnote in Chapter XXXVIII for a fuller account of this incident.
probably because he thought that this kind of talk might please me. And then he led up the conversation to the new Councils and their Ministers and the opportunities these Ministers had for serving their country. Education was one of the most vital problems before the country. Would not an Education Minister, with freedom to act as he chose, have a worthy opportunity to mould the destinies of millions, the chance of a lifetime? Suppose, he went on, a man like you, with intelligence, character, ideals, and the energy to push them through, was in charge of education for the province, could you not perform wonders? And he assured me, adding that he had seen the Governor recently, that I would be given perfect freedom to work out my policy. Then realising, perhaps, that he had gone too far, he said that he could not, of course, commit anybody officially, and the suggestion he had made was a personal one.

I was diverted by Sir Grimwood’s diplomatic and roundabout approach to the proposal he had made. The idea of my associating myself with the Government as a Minister was unthinkable for me; indeed, it was hateful to me. But I have often yearned, then as well as in later years, for a chance to do some solid, positive, constructive work. Destruction and agitation and non-co-operation are hardly normal activities for human beings. And yet, such is our fate, that we can only reach the land where we can build after passing through the deserts of conflict and destruction. And it may be that most of us will spend our energies and our lives in struggling and panting through those shifting sands, and the building will have to be done by our children or our children’s children.

Ministries were going cheap in those days, in the United Provinces at least. The two Liberal Ministers, who had functioned throughout the non-co-operation period, had gone. When the Congress movement threatened the existing order, the Government tried to exploit the Liberal Ministers in fighting Congress. They were respected then and treated with honour by the executive government, for it was something to hold them up in those days of trouble, as supporters of the Government. They thought, perhaps, that this respect and honour were due to them as of right, not realising that this was but a reaction on the part of Government to the mass attack of the Congress. When that attack was drawn off the value of the Liberal Ministers fell heavily in the eyes of Government, and the respect and honour were suddenly conspicuous by their absence. The Ministers resented this, but this availed them little, and soon they were forced to resign. Then began a search for new Ministers, and
this was not immediately successful. The handful of Liberals in the Council kept aloof in sympathy with their colleagues who had been unceremoniously thrown out. Of the others, mostly zamindars, there were few who could be called even moderately educated. The Congress having boycotted the Councils, a curious assortment of people had got in.

There is a story of a person who was offered a ministership in the U.P. about this time, or perhaps a little later. He is reported to have replied that he was not vain enough to consider himself an unusually clever man, but he did think himself to be moderately intelligent and, perhaps, a little above the average, and he hoped that he had that reputation. Did the Government want him to accept a ministership and thus proclaim himself to the world to be a damned fool?

This protest had some justification. The Liberal Ministers had been narrow-minded with no broad vision of politics or social affairs, but that was the fault of the sterile Liberal creed. They had, however, the ability of professional men, and they did their routine work conscientiously. Some of those who followed them in office came from the ranks of the zamindars, and their education, even in the formal sense, had been strictly limited. I think they might justly have been called literate, and nothing more. It almost seemed that the Governor chose these gentlemen and put them in high office to display the utter incapacity of Indians. Of them it might well have been said that:

"Fortune advanced thee that all might aver
That nothing is impossible to her."¹

Educated or not, these Ministers had the zamindar vote with them, and they could give delightful garden parties to the high officials. What worthier use could be made of the money that came to them from their starving tenantry?

¹ Richard Garnett.
I occupied myself with many activities and sought thereby to keep away from the problems that troubled me. But there was no escape from them, no getting away from the questions that were always being formed in my mind and to which I could find no satisfactory answer. Action now was partly an attempt to run away from myself; no longer was it a wholehearted expression of the self as it had been in 1920 and 1921. I came out of the shell that had protected me then and looked round at the Indian scene as well as at the world outside. I found many changes that I had not so far noticed new ideas, new conflicts, and instead of light I saw a growing confusion. My faith in Gandhiji’s leadership remained, but I began to examine some parts of his programme more critically. But he was in prison and beyond our reach, and his advice could not be taken. Neither of the two Congress parties then functioning—the Council party and the No-changers—attracted me. The former was obviously veering towards reformism and constitutionalism, and these seemed to me to lead to a blind alley. The No-changers were supposed to be the ardent followers of the Mahatma, but like most disciples of the great, they prized the letter of the teaching more than the spirit. There was nothing dynamic about them, and in practice most of them were inoffensive and pious social reformers. But they had one advantage. They kept in touch with the peasant masses, while the Swarajists in the Councils were wholly occupied with parliamentary tactics.

Deshbandhu Das tried, soon after my discharge from prison, to convert me to the Swarajist creed. I did not succumb to his advocacy, though I was by no means clear as to what I should do. It is curious and rather remarkable, but characteristic of him, that my father, who was at the time very keen on the Swaraj Party, never tried to press me or influence me in that direction. It was obvious that he would have been very pleased if I had joined him in his campaign, but with extraordinary consideration for me, he left me to myself so far as this subject was concerned.

During this period there grew up a close friendship between my father and Mr. C. R. Das. It was something much more than political camaraderie. There was a warmth and intimacy
in it that I was not a little surprised to notice, since intimate friendships are perhaps rarely formed at advanced ages. My father had a host of acquaintances, and had the gift of laughing his way through them, but he was chary of friendship, and in later years he had grown rather cynical. And yet between him and Deshbandhu the barriers seemed to fall, and they took each other to heart. My father was nine years older, but was, physically, probably the stronger and the healthier of the two. Though both had the same background of legal training and success at the Bar, they differed in many ways. Mr. Das, in spite of being a lawyer, was a poet and had a poet’s emotional outlook— I believe he has written fine poetry in Bengali. He was an orator, and he had a religious temperament. My father was more practical and prosaic; he was a great organiser, and he had little of religion in him. He had always been a fighter, ready to receive and give hard blows. Those whom he considered fools he suffered not at all, or at any rate not gladly; and opposition he could not tolerate. It seemed to him a challenge requiring the use of a broom. The two, my father and Deshbandhu, unlike in some ways as they were, fitted in and made a remarkable and effective combination for the leadership of a party, each in some measure supplying the other’s deficiencies. And between the two of them there was absolute confidence, so much so that each had authorised the other to use his name for any statement or declaration, even without previous reference or consultation.

It was this personal factor that went a long way to establish the Swaraj Party firmly and give it strength and prestige in the country. From the earliest days there were fissiparous tendencies in it, for many careerists and opportunists had been drawn into it by the possibilities of personal advancement through the Councils. There were also some genuine moderates in it who were inclined to more co-operation with the Government. As soon as these tendencies appeared on the surface after the elections, they were denounced by the Party leadership. My father declared that he would not hesitate ‘to cut off a diseased limb’ from the Party, and he acted up to this declaration.

From 1923 onwards I found a great deal of solace and happiness in family life, though I gave little time to it. I have been fortunate in my family relationships, and in times of strain and difficulty they have soothed me and sheltered me. I realised, with some shame at my own unworthiness in this respect, how much I owed to my wife for her splendid behaviour since 1920. Proud and sensitive as she was, she had not only put up with
my vagaries but brought me comfort and solace when I needed them most.

Our style of living had undergone some change since 1920. It was much simpler, and the number of servants had been greatly reduced. Even so, it was not lacking in any essential comfort. Partly to get rid of superfluities and partly to raise money for current expenditure, many things had been sold off—horses and carriages, and household articles which did not fit in with our new style of living. Part of our furniture had been seized and sold by the police. For lack of furniture and gardeners, our house lost its prim and clean appearance, and the garden went wild. For nearly three years little attention had been paid to house or garden. Having become accustomed to a lavish scale of expenditure, father disliked many economies. He decided therefore to go in for chamber practice in his spare time and thus earn some money. He had very little spare time, but, even so, he managed to earn a fair amount.

I felt uncomfortable and a little unhappy at having to depend financially on father. Ever since I had given up my legal practice I had practically no income of my own, except a trifle from some dividends on shares. My wife and I did not spend much. Indeed, I was quite surprised to find how little we spent. This was one of the discoveries made by me in 1921 which brought me great satisfaction. Khadi clothes and third-class railway travelling demand little money. I did not fully realise then, living as we did with father, that there are innumerable other household expenses which mount up to a considerable figure. Anyhow, the fear of not having money has never troubled me; I suppose I could earn enough in case of necessity, and we can do with relatively little.

We were not much of a burden on father, and even a hint of this kind would have pained him greatly. Yet I disliked my position, and for the next three years I thought over the problem without finding a solution. There was no great difficulty in my finding paying work, but the acceptance of any such work necessitated my giving up or, at any rate, my curtailing the public work I was doing. So far I had given all my working time to Congress work and Municipal work. I did not like to withdraw from them for the sake of making money. So I refused offers, financially very advantageous, from big industrial firms. Probably they were willing to pay heavily, not so much for my competence as for the opportunity to exploit my name. I did not like the idea of being associated with big-industry in this way. To go back to the profession of law was also out of the
question for me. My dislike for it had grown and kept on growing.

A suggestion was made in the 1924 Congress that the General Secretaries should be paid. I happened to be one of the secretaries then, and I welcomed the proposal. It seemed to me quite wrong to expect whole-time work from any one without paying him a maintenance allowance at least. Otherwise some person with private means has to be chosen, and such gentlemen of leisure are not perhaps always politically desirable, nor can they be held responsible for the work. The Congress would not have paid much; our rates of payment were low enough. But there is in India an extraordinary and thoroughly unjustified prejudice against receiving salaries from public funds (though not from the State), and my father strongly objected to my doing so. My co-secretary, who was himself in great need of money, also considered it below his dignity to accept it from the Congress. And so I, who had no dignity in the matter and was perfectly prepared to accept a salary, had to do without it.

Once only I spoke to father on the subject and told him how I disliked the idea of my financial dependence. I put it to him as gently and indirectly as possible so as not to hurt him. He pointed out to me how foolish it would be of me to spend my time, or most of it, in earning a little money, instead of doing public work. It was far easier for him to earn with a few days' work all that my wife and I would require for a year. The argument was weighty, but it left me unsatisfied. However, I continued to act in consonance with it.

These family affairs and financial worries carried us from the beginning of 1923 to the end of 1925. Meanwhile the political situation had been changing and, almost against my will, I was dragged into various combinations and acceptance of responsible office in the All-India Congress. The position in 1923 was a peculiar one. Mr. C. R. Das had been the President of the preceding Congress at Gaya. As such, he was the ex-officio Chairman of the All-India Congress Committee for the year 1923. But in this Committee there was a majority against him and the Swarajist policy, though the majority was a small one, and the two groups were pretty evenly balanced. Matters came to a head in the early summer of 1923 at a meeting of the A.I.C.C. in Bombay. Mr. Das resigned from the chairmanship, and a small centre group emerged and formed the new Working Committee. This centre group had no backing whatever in the A.I.C.C., and could only exist with the goodwill of one of the two main parties. Allied to either, it could just defeat the other.
Dr. Ansari was the new President, and I was one of the secretaries.

We soon got into trouble on both sides. Gujrat, which was a no-change stronghold, refused to carry out some of the directions of the central office. Late in the summer of the same year another meeting of the A.I.C.C. was held, this time in Nagpur, where the National Flag Satyagraha was being carried on. Our Working Committee, representing the unfortunate Centre Group, came to an end here after a brief and inglorious career. It had to go because it represented nobody in particular, and it tried to boss it over those who held the real power in the Congress organisation. The resignation was brought about by the failure of an attempt to censure Gujrat for its indiscipline. I remember how glad I felt in my resignation and how relieved I felt. Even a short experience of party manoeuvres had been too much for me, and I was quite shocked at the way some prominent Congressmen could intrigue.

At this meeting Mr. C. R. Das accused me of being 'cold-blooded'. I suppose he was right; it depends on the standard used for comparison. Compared to many of my friends and colleagues I am cold-blooded. And yet I have always been afraid of being submerged in or swept away by too much sentiment or emotion or temper. For years I have tried my hardest to become 'cold-blooded', and I fear that the success that has attended me in this respect has been superficial only.
XVI

AN INTERLUDE AT NABHA

The tug-of-war between the Swarajists and the No-changers went on, the former gradually gaining. Another stage, marking a Swarajist advance, was reached at a special session of the Congress held at Delhi in the autumn of 1923. It was immediately after this Congress that I had a strange and unexpected adventure.

The Sikhs, and especially the Akalis among them, had been coming into repeated conflict with the Government in the Punjab. A revivalist movement among them had taken it upon itself to purge their Gurdwaras by driving out corrupt Mahants and taking possession of the places of worship and the property belonging to them. The Government intervened and there was conflict. The Gurdwara movement was partly due to the general awakening caused by non-co-operation, and the methods of the Akalis were modelled on non-violent Satyagraha. Many incidents took place, but chief among them was the famous Guru-ka-Bagh struggle, where scores of Sikhs, many of them ex-soldiers, allowed themselves to be brutally beaten by the police without raising their hands or turning back from their mission. India was startled by this amazing display of tenacity and courage. The Gurdwara Committee was declared illegal by the Government, and the struggle continued for some years and ended in the victory of the Sikhs. The Congress was naturally sympathetic, and for some time it had a special liaison officer in Amritsar to keep in close touch with the Akali movement.

The incident to which I am going to refer had little to do with this general Sikh movement, but there is no doubt that it occurred because of this Sikh upheaval. The rulers of two Sikh States in the Punjab, Patiala, and Nabha, had a bitter, personal quarrel which resulted ultimately in the deposition of the Maharaja of Nabha by the Government of India. A British Administrator was appointed to rule the Nabha State. This deposition was resented by the Sikhs, and they agitated against it both in Nabha and outside. In the course of this agitation, a religious ceremony, at a place called Jaito in Nabha State, was stopped by the new Administrator. To protest against this, and with the declared object of continuing the interrupted ceremony, the Sikhs began sending jatnas (batches of men) to Jaito.
These jathas were stopped, beaten by the police, arrested, and usually carried to an out-of-the-way place in the jungle and left there. I had been reading accounts of these beatings from time to time, and when I learnt at Delhi, immediately after the Special Congress, that another jatha was going and I was invited to come and see what happened, I gladly accepted the invitation. It meant the loss of only a day to me, as Jaito was near Delhi. Two of my Congress colleagues—A. T. Gidwani and K. Santanum of Madras—accompanied me. The jatha marched most of the way. It was arranged that we should go to the nearest railway station and then try to reach by road the Nabha boundary near Jaito just when the jatha was due to arrive there. We arrived in time, having come in a country cart, and followed the jatha, keeping apart from it. On arrival at Jaito the jatha was stopped by the police, and immediately an order was served on me, signed by the English Administrator, calling upon me not to enter Nabha territory, and if I had entered it, to leave it immediately. A similar order was served on Gidwani and Santanum, but without their names being mentioned, as the Nabha authorities did not know them. My colleagues and I told the police officer that we were there not as part of the jatha but as spectators, and it was not our intention to break any of the Nabha laws. Besides, when we were already in the Nabha territories there could be no question of our not entering them, and obviously we could not vanish suddenly into thin air. Probably the next train from Jaito went many hours later. So for the present, we told him, we proposed to remain there. We were immediately arrested and taken to the lock-up. After our removal the jatha was dealt with in the usual manner.

We were kept the whole day in the lock-up and in the evening we were marched to the station. Santanum and I were handcuffed together, his left wrist to my right one, and a chain attached to the handcuff was held by the policeman leading us. Gidwani, also handcuffed and chained, brought up the rear. This march of ours down the streets of Jaito town reminded me forcibly of a dog being led on by a chain. We felt somewhat irritated to begin with, but the humour of the situation dawned upon us, and on the whole we enjoyed the experience. We did not enjoy the night that followed. This was partly spent in crowded third-class compartments in slow-moving trains, with, I think, a change at midnight, and partly in a lock-up at Nabha. All this time, till the forenoon of next day, when we were finally delivered up at the Nabha Gaol, the joint handcuff and the heavy chain kept us company. Neither of us could move at all
without the other's co-operation. To be handcuffed to another person for a whole night and part of a day is not an experience I should like to repeat.

In Nabha Gaol we were all three kept in a most unwholesome and insanitary cell. It was small and damp, with a low ceiling which we could almost touch. At night we slept on the floor, and I would wake up with a start, full of horror, to find that a rat or a mouse had just passed over my face.

Two or three days later we were taken to court for our case, and the most extraordinary and Gilbertian proceedings went on there from day to day. The magistrate or judge seemed to be wholly uneducated. He knew no English, of course, but I doubt if he knew how to write the court language, Urdu. We watched him for over a week, and during all this time he never wrote a line. If he wanted to write anything he made the court reader do it. We put in a number of small applications. He did not pass any orders on them at the time. He kept them and produced them the next day with a note written by somebody else on them. We did not formally defend ourselves. We had got so used to not defending cases in court during the non-co-operation movement that the idea of defence, even when it was manifestly permissible, seemed almost indecent. But I gave the court a long statement containing the facts, as well as my own opinion about Nabha ways, especially under British administration.

Our case was dragging on from day to day although it was a simple enough affair. Suddenly there was a diversion. One afternoon after the court had risen for the day we were kept waiting in the building; and late in the evening, at about 7 p.m., we were taken to another room where a person was sitting by a table and there were some other people about. One man, our old friend the police officer who had arrested us at Jaito, was there, and he got up and began making a statement. I inquired where we were and what was happening. I was informed that it was a court-room and we were being tried for conspiracy. This was an entirely different proceeding from the one we had so far attended, which was for breach of the order not to enter Nabha territory. It was evidently thought that the maximum sentence for this breach being only six months was not enough punishment for us and a more serious charge was necessary. Apparently three were not enough for conspiracy, and so a fourth man, who had absolutely nothing to do with us, was arrested and put on his trial with us. This unhappy man, a Sikh, was not known to us, but we had just seen him in the fields on our way to Jaito.
The lawyer in me was rather taken aback by the casualness with which a conspiracy trial had been started. The case was a totally false one, but decency required that some formalities should be observed. I pointed out to the judge that we had had no notice whatever and that we might have wanted to make arrangements for our defence. This did not worry him at all. It was the Nabha way. If we wanted to engage a lawyer for our defence we could choose some one in Nabha. When I suggested that I might want some lawyer from outside I was told that this was not permitted under the Nabha rules. We were further enlightened about the peculiarities of Nabha procedure. In some disgust we told the judge to do what he liked, but so far as we were concerned we would take no part in the proceedings. I could not wholly adhere to this resolve. It was difficult to listen to the most astounding lies about us and remain silent, and so occasionally we expressed our opinion, briefly but pointedly, about the witnesses. We also gave the court a statement in writing about the facts. This second judge, who tried the conspiracy case, was more educated and intelligent than the other one.

Both these cases went on and we looked forward to our daily visits to the two courts-rooms, for that meant a temporary escape from the foul cell in gaol. Meanwhile, we were approached, on behalf of the Administrator, by the Superintendent of the gaol, and told that if we would express our regret and give an undertaking to go away from Nabha, the proceedings against us would be dropped. We replied that there was nothing to express regret about, so far as we were concerned; it was for the administration to apologise to us. We were also not prepared to give any undertaking.

About a fortnight after our arrest the two trials at last ended. All this time had been taken up by the prosecution, for we were not defending. Much of it had been wasted in long waits, for every little difficulty that arose necessitated an adjournment or a reference to some authority behind the scenes—probably the English Administrator. On the last day when the prosecution case was closed we handed in our written statements. The first court adjourned and, to our surprise, returned a little later with a bulky judgment written out in Urdu. Obviously this huge judgment could not have been written during the interval. It had been prepared before our statements had been handed in. The judgment was not read out; we were merely told that we had been awarded the maximum sentence of six months for breach of the order to leave Nabha territory.

In the conspiracy case we were sentenced the same day to
either eighteen months or two years, I forget which. This was to be in addition to the sentence for six months. Thus we were given in all either two years or two and a half years.

Right through our trial there had been any number of remarkable incidents which gave us some insight into the realities of Indian State administration, or rather the British administration of an Indian State. The whole procedure was farcical. Because of this I suppose no newspaperman or outsider was allowed in court. The police did what they pleased, and often ignored the judge or magistrate and actually disobeyed his directions. The poor magistrate meekly put up with this, but we saw no reason why we should do so. On several occasions I had to stand up and insist on the police behaving and obeying the magistrate. Sometimes there was an unseemly snatching of papers by the police, and the magistrate, being incapable of action or of introducing order in his own court, we had partly to do his job! The poor magistrate was in an unhappy position. He was afraid of the police, and he seemed to be a little frightened of us, too, for our arrest had been noised in the press. If this was the state of affairs when more or less prominent politicians like us were concerned, what, I wonder, would be the fate of others less known?

My father knew something of Indian States, and so he was greatly upset at my unexpected arrest in Nabha. Only the fact of arrest was known; little else in the way of news could leak out. In his distress he even telegraphed to the Viceroy for news of me. Difficulties were put in the way of his visiting me in Nabha, but he was allowed at last to interview me in prison. He could not be of any help to me, as I was not defending myself, and I begged him to go back to Allahabad and not to worry. He returned, but he left a young lawyer colleague of ours, Kapil Dev Malaviya, in Nabha to watch the proceedings. Kapil Dev’s knowledge of law and procedure must have been considerably augmented by his brief experience of the Nabha Courts. The police tried to deprive him forcibly in open court of some papers that he had.

Most of the Indian States are well known for their backwardness and their semi-feudal conditions. They are personal autocracies, devoid even of competence or benevolence. Many a strange thing occurs there which never receives publicity. And yet their very inefficiency lessens the evil in some ways and lightens the burden on their unhappy people. For this is reflected in a weak executive, and it results in making even tyranny and injustice inefficient. That does not make tyranny more
bearable, but it does make it less far-reaching and widespread. The assumption of direct British control over an Indian State has a curious result in changing this equilibrium. The semi-feudal conditions are retained, autocracy is kept, the old laws and procedure are still supposed to function, all the restrictions on personal liberty and association and expression of opinion (and these are all-embracing) continue, but one change is made which alters the whole background. The executive becomes stronger and a measure of efficiency is introduced, and this leads to a tightening-up of all the feudal and autocratic bonds. In course of time the British administration would no doubt change some of the archaic customs and methods, for they come in the way of efficient government as well as commercial penetration. But to begin with they take full advantage of them to tighten their hold on the people who have now to put up not only with feudalism and autocracy, but with an efficient enforcement of them by a strong executive.

I saw something of this in Nabha. The State was under a British Administrator, a member of the Indian Civil Service, and he had the full powers of an autocrat, subject only to the Government of India. And yet at every turn we were referred to Nabha laws and procedure to justify the denial of the most ordinary rights. We had to face a combination of feudalism and the modern bureaucratic machine with the disadvantages of both and the advantages of neither.

So our trial was over and we had been sentenced. We did not know what the judgments contained, but the solid fact of a long sentence had a sobering effect. We asked for copies of the judgments, and were told to apply formally for them.

That evening in gaol the Superintendent sent for us and showed us an order of the Administrator under the Criminal Procedure Code suspending our sentences. There was no condition attached, and the legal result of that order was that the sentences ended so far as we were concerned. The Superintendent then produced a separate order called an Executive Order, also issued by the Administrator, asking us to leave Nabha and not to return to the State without special permission. I asked for the copies of the two orders, but they were refused. We were then escorted to the railway station and released there. We did not know a soul in Nabha, and even the city gates had been closed for the night. We found that a train was leaving soon for Ambala, and we took this. From Ambala I went on to Delhi and Allahabad.

From Allahabad I wrote to the Administrator requesting him
to send me copies of his two orders, so that I might know exactly what they were, also copies of the two judgments. He refused to supply any of these copies. I pointed out that I might decide to file an appeal, but he persisted in his refusal. In spite of repeated efforts I have never had the opportunity to read these judgments, which sentenced me and my two colleagues to two years or two and a half years. For aught I know, these sentences may still be hanging over me, and may take effect wherever the Nabha authorities or the British Government so choose.

The three of us were discharged in this 'suspended' way, but I could never find out what had happened to the fourth member of the alleged conspiracy, the Sikh who had been tacked on to us for the second trial. Very likely he was not discharged. He had no powerful friends or public interest to help him and, like many another person, he sank into the oblivion of a State prison. He was not forgotten by us. We did what we could and this was very little, and, I believe, the Gurdwara Committee interested itself in his case also. We found out that he was one of the old 'Komagata Maru' lot, and he had only recently come out of prison after a long period. The police do not believe in leaving such people out, and so they tacked him on to the trumped-up charge against us.

All three of us—Gidwani, Santanum and I—brought an unpleasant companion with us from our cell in Nabha Gaol. This was the typhus germ, and each one of us had an attack of typhoid. Mine was severe and for a while dangerous enough, but it was the lightest of the three, and I was only bed-ridden for about three or four weeks, but the other two were very seriously ill for long periods.

There was yet another sequel to this Nabha episode. Probably six months, or more, later Gidwani was acting as the Congress representative in Amritsar, keeping in touch with the Sikh Gurdwara Committee. The Committee sent a special jatha of five hundred persons to Jaito, and Gidwani decided to accompany it as an observer to the Nabha border. He had no intention of entering Nabha territory. The jatha was fired on by the police near the border, and many persons were, I believe, killed and wounded. Gidwani went to the help of the wounded when he was pounced upon by the police and taken away. No proceedings in court were taken against him. He was simply kept in prison for the best part of a year when, utterly broken in health, he was discharged.

Gidwani's arrest and confinement seemed to me to be a monstrous abuse of executive authority. I wrote to the Adminis-
trator (who was still the same English member of the I.C.S.) and asked him why Gidwani had been treated in this way. He replied that Gidwani had been imprisoned because he had broken the order not to enter Nabha territory without permission. I challenged the legality of this as well as, of course, the propriety of arresting a man who was giving succour to the wounded, and I asked the Administrator to send me or publish a copy of the order in question. He refused to do so. I felt inclined to go to Nabha myself and allow the Administrator to treat me as he had treated Gidwani. Loyalty to a colleague seemed to demand it. But many friends thought otherwise and dissuaded me. I took shelter behind the advice of friends, and made of it a pretext to cover my own weakness. For, after all, it was my weakness and disinclination to go to Nabha Gaol again that kept me away, and I have always felt a little ashamed of thus deserting a colleague. As often with us all, discretion was preferred to valour.
In December 1923 the annual session of the Congress was held at Coconada in the South. Maulana Mohamad Ali was the President and, as was his wont, he delivered an enormously long presidential address. But it was an interesting one. He traced the growth of political and communal feeling among the Moslems and showed how the famous Moslem deputation to the Viceroy in 1908, under the leadership of the Aga Khan, which led to the first official declaration in favour of separate electorates, was a command performance and had been engineered by the Government itself.

Mohamad Ali induced me, much against my will, to accept the All-India Congress secretaryship for his year of presidency. I had no desire to accept executive responsibility, when I was not clear about future policy. But I could not resist Mohamad Ali, and both of us felt that some other secretary might not be able to work as harmoniously with the new President as I could. He had strong likes and dislikes, and I was fortunate enough to be included in his ‘likes’. A bond of affection and mutual appreciation tied us to each other. He was deeply and, as I considered, most irrationally religious, and I was not, but I was attracted by his earnestness, his over-flowing energy and keen intelligence. He had a nimble wit, but sometimes his devastating sarcasm hurt, and he lost many a friend thereby. It was quite impossible for him to keep a clever remark to himself, whatever the consequences might be.

We got on well together during his year of office, though we had many little points of difference. I introduced in our A.I.C.C. office a practice of addressing all our members by their names only, without any prefixes or suffixes, honorific titles and the like. There are so many of these in India—Mahatma, Maulana, Pandit, Shaikh, Syed, Munshi, Moulvi, and latterly Sriyut and Shri, and, of course, Mr. and Esquire—and they are so abundantly and often unnecessarily used that I wanted to set a good example. But I was not to have my way. Mohamed Ali sent me a frantic telegram directing me ‘as president’ to revert to our old practice and, in particular, always to address Gandhiji as Mahatma.

Another frequent subject for argument between us was the Almighty. Mohamed Ali had an extraordinary way of bringing
in some reference to God even in Congress resolutions, either by way of expressing gratitude or some kind of prayer. I used to protest, and then he would shout at me for my irreligion. And yet, curiously enough, he would tell me later that he was quite sure that I was fundamentally religious, in spite of my superficial behaviour or my declarations to the contrary. I have often wondered how much truth there was in his statement. Perhaps it depends on what is meant by religion and religious.

I avoided discussing this subject of religion with him, because I knew we would only irritate each other, and I might hurt him. It is always a difficult subject to discuss with convinced believers of any creed. With most Moslems it is probably an even harder matter for discussion, since no latitude of thought is officially permitted to them. Ideologically, theirs is a straight and narrow path, and the believer must not swerve to the right or the left. Hindus are somewhat different, though not always so. In practice they may be very orthodox; they may, and do, indulge in the most out-of-date, reactionary and even pernicious customs, and yet they will usually be prepared to discuss the most radical ideas about religion. I imagine the modern Arya Samajists have not, as a rule, this wide intellectual approach. Like the Moslems, they follow their own straight and narrow path. There is a certain philosophical tradition among the intelligent Hindus, which, though it does not affect practice, does make a difference to the ideological approach to a religious question. Partly, I suppose, this is due to the wide and often conflicting variety of opinions and customs that are included in the Hindu fold. It has, indeed, often been remarked that Hinduism is hardly a religion in the usual sense of the word. And yet, what amazing tenacity it has got, what tremendous power of survival! One may even be a professing atheist—as the old Hindu philosopher, Charvaka, was—and yet no one dare say that he has ceased to be a Hindu. Hinduism clings on to its children, almost despite them. A Brahman I was born, and a Brahman I seem to remain whatever I might say or do in regard to religion or social custom. To the Indian world I am ‘Pandit’ so and so, in spite of my desire not to have this or any other honorific title attached to my name. I remember meeting a Turkish scholar once in Switzerland, to whom I had sent previously a letter of introduction in which I had been referred to as ‘Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru’. He was surprised and a little disappointed to see me for, as he told me, the ‘Pandit’ had led him to expect a reverend and scholarly gentleman of advanced years.

So Mohamad Ali and I did not discuss religion. But he did
not possess the virtue of silence, and some years later (I think this was in 1925 or early in 1926) he could not repress himself on this subject any more. He burst out one day, as I was visiting him in his house in Delhi, and said that he insisted on discussing religion with me. I tried to dissuade him, pointing out that our viewpoints were very different, and we were not likely to make much impression on each other. But he was not going to be diverted. "We must have it out," he said. "I suppose you think that I am a fanatic. Well, I am going to show you that I am not." He told me that he had studied the subject of religion deeply and extensively. He pointed out shelves full of books on various religions, especially Islam and Christianity, and including some modern books like H. G. Wells's *God, the Invisible King*. During the long years of his war-time internment, he had gone through the Quran repeatedly, and consulted all the commentaries on it. As a result of this study he found out, so he told me, that about 97 per cent. of what was contained in the Quran was entirely reasonable, and could be justified even apart from the Quran. The remaining 3 per cent. was not prima facie acceptable to his reason. But was it more likely that the Quran, which was obviously right in regard to 97 per cent., was also right in regard to the remaining 3 per cent., than that his feeble reasoning faculty was right and the Quran wrong? He came to the conclusion that the chances were heavily in favour of the Quran, and so he accepted it as 100 per cent. correct.

The logic of this argument was not obvious, but I had no wish to argue. What followed really surprised me. Mohamad Ali said that he was quite certain that if any one read the Quran with an open and receptive mind, he would be convinced of its truth. He knew (he added) that Bapu (Gandhiji) had read it carefully, and he must, therefore, have been convinced of the truth of Islam. But his pride of heart had kept him from declaring this.

After his year of presidency, Mohamad Ali gradually drifted away from the Congress, or, perhaps, as he would have put it, the Congress drifted away from him. The process was a slow one, and he continued to attend Congress and A.I.C.C. meetings, and take vigorous part in them for several years more. But the rift widened, estrangement grew. Perhaps no particular individual or individuals were to blame for this; it was an inevitable result of certain objective conditions in the country. But it was an unfortunate result, which hurt many of us. For, whatever the differences on the communal question
might have been, there were very few differences on the political issue. He was devoted to the idea of Indian independence. And because of this common political outlook, it was always possible to come to some mutually satisfactory arrangement with him on the communal issue. There was nothing in common, politically, between him and the reactionaries who pose as the champions of communal interests.

It was a misfortune for India that he left the country for Europe in the summer of 1928. A great effort was then made to solve the communal problem, and it came very near success. If Mohamad Ali had been here then, it is just conceivable that matters would have shaped differently. But by the time he came back the break had already taken place and, inevitably, he found himself on the other side.

Two years later, in 1930, when large numbers of our people were in prison and the Civil Disobedience movement was in full swing, Mohamad Ali ignored the Congress decision, and attended the Round Table Conference. I was hurt by his going. I believe that in his own heart he was unhappy about it, and there is enough evidence of this in his activities in London. He felt that his real place was in the fight in India, not in the futile conference chamber in London. And if he had returned to his country he would, I feel sure, have joined that struggle. Physically, he was a doomed man, and for years past the grip of disease was tightening upon him. In London his overwhelming anxiety to achieve, to do something worth while, when rest and treatment was what he needed, hastened his end. The news of his death came to me in Naini Prison as a blow.

I met him for the last time on the occasion of the Lahore Congress in December 1929. He was not pleased with some parts of my presidential address, and he criticised it vigorously. He saw that the Congress was going ahead, and becoming politically more aggressive. He was aggressive enough himself, and, being so, he disliked taking a back-seat and allowing others to be in the front. He gave me solemn warning: "I warn you, Jawahar, that your present colleagues will desert you. They will leave you in the lurch in a crisis. Your own Congressmen will send you to the gallows." A dismal prophecy!

The Coconada Congress, held in December 1923, had a special interest for me, because the foundations of an all-India volunteer organisation, the Hindustani Seva Dal, were laid there. There had been no lack of volunteer organisations even before, both for organisational work and for gaol-going. But there was little discipline, little cohesion. Dr. N. S. Hardiker conceived
the idea of having a well-disciplined all-India corps trained to do national work under the general guidance of the Congress. He pressed me to co-operate with him in this, and I gladly did so, for the idea appealed to me. The beginnings were made at Coconada. We were surprised to find later how much opposition there was to the Seva Dal among leading Congressmen. Some said that this was a dangerous departure, as it meant introducing a military element in the Congress, and the military arm might over-power the civil authority! Others seemed to think that the only discipline necessary was for the volunteer to obey orders issued from above, and for the rest it was hardly desirable for volunteers even to walk in step. At the back of the mind of some was the notion that the idea of having trained and drilled volunteers was somehow inconsistent with the Congress principle of non-violence. Hardiker, however, devoted himself to this task, and by the patient labour of years he demonstrated how much more efficient and even non-violent our trained volunteers could be.

Soon after my return from Coconada, in January 1924, I had a new kind of experience in Allahabad. I write from memory, and I am likely to get mixed up about dates. But I think that was the year of the Kumbh, or the Ardh-Kumbh, the great bathing mela held on the banks of the Ganges at Allahabad. Vast numbers of pilgrims usually turn up, and most of them bathe at the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna—the Triveni, it is called, as the mythical Saraswati is also supposed to join the other two. The Ganges river-bed is about a mile wide, but in winter the river shrinks and leaves a wide expanse of sand exposed, which is very useful for the camps of the pilgrims. Within this river-bed, the Ganges frequently changes its course. In 1924 the current of the Ganges was such that it was undoubtedly dangerous for crowds to bathe at the Triveni. With certain precautions, and the control of the numbers bathing at a time, the danger could be greatly lessened.

I was not at all interested in this question, as I did not propose to acquire merit by bathing in the river on the auspicious days. But I noticed in the Press that a controversy was going on between Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and the Provincial Government, the latter (or the local authorities) having issued orders prohibiting all bathing at the junction of the rivers. This was objected to by Malaviyaji, as, from the religious point of view, the whole point was to bathe at that confluence. The Government was perfectly justified in taking precautions to prevent accidents and possible serious loss of life, but, as usual,
it set about its work in the most wooden and irritating way possible.

On the big day of the Kumbh, I went down to the river early in the morning to see the mela, with no intention of bathing. On arrival at the river bank, I learnt that Malaviyaji had sent some kind of polite ultimatum to the District Magistrate, asking him for permission to bathe at the Triveni. Malaviyaji was agitated, and the atmosphere was tense. The Magistrate refused permission. Thereupon Malaviyaji decided to offer Satyagraha, and, accompanied by about two hundred others, he marched towards the junction of the rivers. I was interested in these developments and, on the spur of the moment, joined the Satyagraha band. A tremendous barrier had been erected right across the open space, to keep away people from the confluence. When we reached this high palisade, we were stopped by the police, and a ladder we had was taken away from us. Being non-violent Satyagrahis, we sat down peacefully on the sands near the palisade. And there we sat for the whole morning and part of the afternoon. Hour after hour went by, the sun became stronger, the sand hotter, and all of us hungrier. Foot and mounted police stood by on both sides of us. I think the regular cavalry was also there. Most of us grew impatient, and said that something should be done. I believe the authorities also grew impatient, and decided to force the pace. Some order was given to the cavalry, who mounted their horses. It struck me (I do not know if I was right) that they were going to charge us and drive us away in this fashion. I did not fancy the idea of being chased by mounted troopers, and, anyhow, I was fed up with sitting there. So I suggested to those sitting near me that we might as well cross over the palisade, and I mounted it. Immediately scores of others did likewise, and some even pulled out a few stakes, thus making a passage-way. Somebody gave me a national flag, and I stuck it on top of the palisade, where I continued to sit. I grew rather excited, and thoroughly enjoyed myself, watching the people clambering up or going through and the mounted troopers trying to push them away. I must say that the cavalry did their work as harmlessly as possible. They waved about their wooden staffs, and pushed people with them, but refrained from causing much injury. Faint memories of revolutionary barricades came to me.

At last I got down on the other side and, feeling very hot after my exertions, decided to have a dip in the Ganges. On coming back, I was amazed to find that Malaviyaji and many others were still sitting on the other side of the palisade as before. But
the mounted troopers and the foot police now stood shoulder to shoulder between the Satyagrahis and the palisade. So I went (having got out by a roundabout way) and sat down again near Malaviyaji. For some time we sat on, and I noticed that Malaviyaji was greatly agitated; he seemed to be trying to control some strong emotion. Suddenly, without a hint to any one, he dived in the most extraordinary way through the policemen and the horses. For any one, that would have been a surprising dive, but for an old and physically weak person like Malaviyaji, it was astounding. Anyhow, we all followed him; we all dived. After some effort to keep us back the cavalry and the police did not interfere. A little later they were withdrawn.

We half expected some proceedings to be taken against us by the Government, but nothing of the kind happened. Government probably did not wish to take any steps against Malaviyaji, and so the smaller fry got off too.
EARLY in 1924 there came suddenly the news of the serious illness of Gandhiji in prison, followed by his removal to a hospital and an operation. India was numbed with anxiety; we held our breaths almost and waited, full of fear. The crisis passed, and a stream of people began to reach Poona from all parts of the country to see him. He was still in hospital, a prisoner under guard, but he was permitted to see a limited number of friends. Father and I visited him in the hospital.

He was not taken back from the hospital to the prison. As he was convalescing, Government remitted the rest of his sentence and discharged him. He had then served about two years out of the six years to which he had been sentenced. He went to Juhu, by the sea-side near Bombay, to recuperate.

Our family also trekked to Juhu, and established itself in a tiny little cottage by the sea. We spent some weeks there, and I had, after a long gap, a holiday after my heart, for I could indulge in swimming and running and riding on the beach. The main purpose of our stay, however, was not holiday-making, but discussions with Gandhiji. Father wanted to explain to him the Swarajist position, and to gain his passive co-operation at least, if not his active sympathy. I was also anxious to have some light thrown on the problems that were troubling me. I wanted to know what his future programme of action was going to be.

The Juhu talks, so far as the Swarajists were concerned, did not succeed in winning Gandhiji, or even in influencing him to any extent. Behind all the friendly talk, and the courteous gestures, the fact remained that there was no compromise. They agreed to differ, and statements to this effect were issued to the Press.

I also returned from Juhu a little disappointed, for Gandhiji did not resolve a single one of my doubts. As is usual with him, he refused to look into the future, or lay down any long-distance programme. We were to carry on patiently 'serving' the people, working for the constructive and social reform programme of the Congress, and await the time for aggressive activity. The real difficulty, of course, was that even when that time came, would not some incident like Chauri Chaura upset all our calcu-
lations and again hold us up? To that he gave no answer then. Nor was he at all definite in regard to our objective. Many of us wanted to be clear in our own minds what we were driving at, although the Congress did not then need to make a formal declaration on the subject. Were we going to hold out for independence and some measure of social change, or were our leaders going to compromise for something very much less? Only a few months before, I had stressed independence in my presidential address at the U.P. Provincial Conference. This Conference was held in the autumn of 1923, a little after my return from Nabha. I was just recovering from the illness with which Nabha Gaol had presented me and I was unable to attend the Conference; but my address, written under fever in bed, went to it.

While some of us wanted to make the issue of independence clear in the Congress, our friends the Liberals had drifted so far from us—or perhaps the drifting had been done by us—that they publicly gloried in the pomp and power of the Empire, although that Empire might treat our countrymen as a doormat, and its dominions keep our countrymen as helots or refuse them all admittance. Mr. Sastri had become an Imperial Envoy, and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had proudly declared at the Imperial Conference in London in 1923: “I can say with pride that it is my country that makes the Empire imperial.”

A vast ocean seemed to separate us from these Liberal leaders; we lived in different worlds, we spoke in different languages, and our dreams—if they ever had dreams—had nothing in common. Was it not necessary then to be clear and precise about our goal?

But such thoughts were then confined to a few. Precision is not loved by most people, especially in a nationalist movement which by its very nature is vague and somewhat mystical. In the early months of 1924, public attention was largely concentrated on the Swarajists in the Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Councils. What were these groups going to do after their brave talk about “opposition from within” and wrecking the Councils? Some fine gestures took place. The budget for the year was rejected by the Assembly; a resolution demanding a round-table discussion to settle the terms of Indian freedom was passed. The Bengal Council, under Deshbandhu’s leadership, also bravely voted down supplies. But both in the Assembly and in the provinces, the Viceroy or the Governor certified the budgets and they became law. There were some speeches, some excitement in the legislatures, a momentary feeling of triumph among the Swarajists, headlines in the Press, and nothing more. What else could they do? They could repeat their tactics, but the novelty
wore off, the excitement vanished, and the public mind grew accustomed to budgets and laws being certified by the Viceroy or Governor. The next step, of course, was beyond the competence of the Swarajists inside the Councils. It lay outside the Council chamber.

Some time in the middle of that year (1924) a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee was held at Ahmedabad. At this meeting, unexpectedly, a sharp conflict appeared between Gandhiji and the Swarajists, and there were some dramatic situations. The initiative was taken by Gandhiji. He proposed a fundamental alteration in the Congress constitution, changing the franchise and the rules for membership. So far, every one who subscribed to the first article of the Congress constitution, which laid down the objective of Swaraj and peaceful methods, and paid four annas could become a member. He now wanted to limit membership to those who gave a certain amount of self-spun yarn instead of the four annas. This was a serious limitation of the franchise, and the A.I.C.C. was certainly not competent to do this. But Gandhiji has seldom cared for the letter of a constitution when this has come in his way. I was shocked at what I considered a violence to our constitution, and I offered to the Working Committee my resignation from the secretariat. But some new developments took place and I did not press it. In the A.I.C.C. the proposal was fiercely resisted by my father and Mr. Das, and ultimately, to show their entire disapproval of it, they marched out with a goodly number of their followers just before the voting. Even then some people, opposed to the resolution, still remained present in the Committee. The resolution was passed by a majority, but ultimately it was withdrawn. For Gandhiji had been tremendously affected by the walk-out of the Swarajists and the unbending attitude on this subject of Deshbandhu and my father. He was emotionally worked up, and a chance remark of a member upset him and he broke down. It was obvious that he had been cut to the quick. He addressed the Committee in a most feeling manner and reduced a number of members to tears. It was a moving and extraordinary sight.¹

¹ The above account was written in prison from memory. I find now that my memory was defective and I had overlooked an important aspect of the A.I.C.C. discussions, thus giving a wrong impression of what happened: What moved Gandhiji was a resolution relating to a young Bengali terrorist (Gopinath Saha) which was moved in the meeting and was ultimately lost. The resolution, so far as I remember, condemned his deed but expressed sympathy for
I could never make out why he was so keen on that exclusive form of spinning franchise then, for he must have known that it would be bitterly opposed. Probably he wanted the Congress to consist only of people who were believers in his constructive programme of Khadi, etc., and was prepared to drive out the others or make them conform. But although he had the majority with him, he weakened in his resolve and began to compromise with the others. During the next three or four months, to my amazement, he changed several times on this question. He seemed to be completely at sea, unable to find his bearings. That was the one idea that I did not associate with him, and hence my surprise. The question itself was not, so it seemed to me, a very vital one. The idea of labour being made the qualification for franchise was a very desirable one, but in the restricted form in which it came up, it lost some of its meaning.

I came to the conclusion that Gandhiji's difficulties had been caused because he was moving in an unfamiliar medium. He was superb in his special field of Satyagrahic direct action, and his instinct unerringly led him to take the right steps. He was also

his motives. More than the resolution itself, the speeches accompanying it distressed Gandhiji, and it was this feeling that many people in the Congress were not serious about its profession of non-violence that upset him. Writing of this meeting in Young India soon after, he said: "I had a bare majority always for the four resolutions. But it must be regarded by me as a minority. The house was fairly evenly divided. The Gopinath Saha resolution clinched the issue. The speeches, the result and the scenes I witnessed after were a perfect eye-opener. . . . Dignity vanished after the Gopinath Saha resolution. It was before this house that I had to put my last resolution. As the proceedings went on, I must have become more and more serious. I felt like running away from the oppressive scene. I dreaded having to move a resolution in my charge. . . . I do not know that I have made it clear that no speaker had any malice in him. What preyed upon my mind was the fact of unconscious irresponsibility and disregard of the Congress creed or policy of non-violence. . . . That there were seventy Congress representatives to support the resolution was a staggering revelation." This incident, with Gandhiji's commentary on it, is very significant, as it shows the extreme importance attached by Gandhiji to non-violence, and the reactions on him of any attempt, even though this might be unconscious and indirect, to challenge it. Much that he has subsequently done is probably due fundamentally to some such reactions. Non-violence has been, and is, the sheet-anchor of his policy and activities.
very good in working himself and making others work quietly for social reform among the masses. He could understand absolute war or absolute peace. Anything in between he did not appreciate. The Swarajist programme, of struggle and opposition inside Councils, left him cold. If a person wants to go to the legislature, let him do so with the object of co-operating with the authorities for better legislation, etc., and not for the sake of opposition. If he does not want to do so, let him stay out. The Swarajists adopted neither of these positions, and hence his difficulty in dealing with them.

Ultimately he adjusted himself to them. The spinning franchise became an alternative form, the old four-anna franchise remaining. He almost blessed the Swarajist work in the legislatures, but for himself he kept severely aloof. It was said that he had retired from politics, and the British Government and its officers believed that his popularity was waning and that he was a spent force. Das and Nehru, it was said, had driven Gandhi into the background; they seemed to dominate the political scene. Such remarks, with suitable variations, have been repeated many times in the course of the last fifteen years, and they have demonstrated every time how singularly ignorant our rulers are about the feelings of the Indian people. Ever since Gandhiji appeared on the Indian political scene, there has been no going back in popularity for him, so far as the masses are concerned. There has been a progressive increase in his popularity, and this process still continues. They may not carry out his wishes, for human nature is often weak, but their hearts are full of goodwill for him. When objective conditions help they rise in huge mass movements, otherwise they lie low. A leader does not create a mass movement out of nothing, as if by a stroke of the magician's wand. He can take advantage of the conditions themselves when they arise; he can prepare for them, but not create them.

But it is true to say that there is a waning and a waxing of Gandhiji's popularity among the intelligentsia. In moments of forward-going enthusiasm they follow him; when the inevitable reaction comes they grow critical. But even so the great majority of them bow down to him. Partly this has been due to the absence of any other effective programme. The Liberals and various groups resembling them, like the Responsivists, do not count; those who believe in terroristic violence are completely out of court in the modern world and are considered ineffective and out of date. The socialist programme is still little known, and it frightens the upper-class members of the Congress.

After a brief political estrangement in the middle of 1924, the
old relations between my father and Gandhiji were resumed and they grew even more cordial. However much they differed from one another, each had the warmest regard and respect for the other. What was it that they so respected? Father has given us a glimpse into his mind in a brief Foreword he contributed to a booklet called *Thought Currents*, containing selections from Gandhiji’s writings:

“I have heard,” he writes, “of saints and supermen, but have never had the pleasure of meeting them, and must confess to a feeling of scepticism about their real existence. I believe in men and things manly. The ‘Thought Currents’ preserved in this volume have emanated from a man and are things manly. They are illustrative of two great attributes of human nature—Faith and Strength. . . .

‘What is all this going to lead to?’ asks the man with neither faith nor strength in him. The answer ‘to victory or death’ does not appeal to him. . . . Meanwhile the humble and lowly figure standing erect . . . on the firm footholds of faith unshakable and strength unconquerable, continues to send out to his countrymen his message of sacrifice and suffering for the motherland. That message finds echo in millions of hearts. . . .”

And he finishes up by quoting Swinburne’s lines:

Have we not men with us royal,
Men the masters of things? . . .

Evidently he wanted to stress the fact that he did not admire Gandhiji as a saint or a Mahatma, but as a man. Strong and unbending himself, he admired strength of spirit in him. For it was clear that this little man of poor physique had something of steel in him, something rock-like which did not yield to physical powers, however great they might be. And in spite of his unimpressive features, his loin-cloth and bare body, there was a royalty and a kinglyness in him which compelled a willing obeisance from others. Consciously and deliberately meek and humble, yet he was full of power and authority, and he knew it, and at times he was imperious enough, issuing commands which had to be obeyed. His calm, deep eyes would hold one and gently probe into the depths; his voice, clear and limpid, would purr its way into the heart and evoke an emotional response. Whether his audience consisted of one person or a thousand, the charm and magnetism of the man passed on to it, and each one had a feeling of communion with the speaker. This feeling had little to do with the mind, though the appeal to the mind was not wholly ignored. But mind and reason definitely had second
place. This process of 'spell-binding' was not brought about by oratory or the hypnotism of silken phrases. The language was always simple and to the point and seldom was an unnecessary word used. It was the utter sincerity of the man and his personality that gripped; he gave the impression of tremendous inner reserves of power. Perhaps also it was a tradition that had grown up about him which helped in creating a suitable atmosphere. A stranger, ignorant of this tradition and not in harmony with the surroundings, would probably not have been touched by that spell, or, at any rate, not to the same extent. And yet one of the most remarkable things about Gandhiji was, and is, his capacity to win over, or at least to disarm, his opponents.

Gandhiji had little sense of beauty or artistry in man-made objects, though he admired natural beauty. The Taj Mahal was for him an embodiment of forced labour and little more. His sense of smell was feeble. And yet in his own way he had discovered the art of living and had made of his life an artistic whole. Every gesture had meaning and grace, without a false touch. There were no rough edges or sharp corners about him, no trace of vulgarity or commonness, in which, unhappily, our middle classes excel. Having found an inner peace, he radiated it to others and marched through life's tortuous ways with firm and undaunted step.

How different was my father from him! But in him too there was strength of personality and a measure of kingliness, and the lines of Swinburne he had quoted would apply to him also. In any gathering in which he was present he would inevitably be the centre and the hub. Whatever the place where he sat at table it would become, as an eminent English judge said later, the head of the table. He was neither meek nor mild, and, again unlike Gandhiji, he seldom spared those who differed from him. Consciously imperious, he evoked great loyalty as well as bitter opposition. It was difficult to feel neutral about him; one had to like him or dislike him. With a broad forehead, tight lips and a determined chin, he had a marked resemblance to the busts of the Roman Emperors in the museums in Italy. Many friends in Italy who saw his photograph with us remarked on this resemblance. In later years especially, when his head was covered with silver hair—unlike me, he kept his hair to the end—there was a magnificence about him and a grand manner, which is sadly to seek in this world of to-day. I suppose I am partial to him, but I miss his noble presence in a world full of pettiness and weakness. I look round in vain for that grand manner and splendid strength that was his.
I remember showing Gandhiji a photograph of father's some time in 1924, when he was having a tug-of-war with the Swaraj Party. In this photograph father had no moustache, and, till then, Gandhiji had always seen him with a fine moustache. He started almost on seeing this photograph and gazed long at it, for the absence of the moustache brought out the hardness of the mouth and the chin, and he said, with a somewhat dry smile, that now he realised what he had to contend against. The face was softened, however, by the eyes and by the lines that frequent laughter had made. But sometimes the eyes glittered.

Father had taken to the work in the Assembly like a duck to water. It suited his legal and constitutional training, and, unlike Satyagraha and its offshoots, he knew the rules of this game. He kept his party strictly disciplined and even induced other groups and individuals to give support. But soon he had to face difficulties with his own people. During the early days of the Swaraj Party, it had to contend against the No-changers in the Congress, and many undesirables were taken in to increase its strength within the Congress. Then came the elections, and these demanded funds which had to come from the rich. So these rich folk had to be kept in good humour, and some were even asked to become Swarajist candidates. "Politics," says an American socialist (quoted by Sir Stafford Cripps), "is the gentle art of getting votes from the poor and campaign funds from the rich by promising to protect each from the other."

All these elements weakened the Party from the very beginning. Work in the Assembly and the Councils necessitated daily compromises with other and more moderate groups, and no crusading spirit or principles could long survive this. Gradually a decline in the discipline and temper of the Party set in, and the weaker elements and the opportunists began to give trouble. The Swaraj Party had invaded the legislatures with the declared object of "opposition from within". But two could play at this game, and the Government decided to have a hand in it by creating opposition and disruption within the ranks of the Swarajists. High office and patronage in innumerable ways was placed in the way of the weaker brethren. They had just to pick them up. Their ability and their qualities of statesmanship and sweet reasonableness were praised. A pleasant and agreeable atmosphere was created round them—so different from the dust and tumult of the field and market-place.

The general tone of the Swarajists went down. Individuals here and there began to slip away to the other side. My father shouted and thundered and talked about cutting 'the diseased
limb’. But this threat has no great effect when the limb is eager to walk away by itself. Some Swarajists became ministers, some became Executive Councillors in the provinces later. A number formed a separate group calling themselves ‘Responsivists’ or ‘Responsive Co-operators’, a name originally used by Lokamanya Tilak in entirely different circumstances. As used now it seemed to mean: take a job when you have the chance and make the best of it. The Swaraj Party carried on in spite of these defections, but father and Mr. Das became a little disgusted with the turn of events and somewhat weary of what seemed to be their profitless work in the legislatures. To add to this weariness of spirit was the growing Hindu-Muslim tension in North India, leading occasionally to riots.

Some Congressmen who had been to prison with us in 1921 and 1922 were now ministers and holders of high offices in the Government. In 1921 we had had the satisfaction of being declared unlawful and being sentenced to prison by a Government of which some Liberals (also old-time Congressmen) were members. In future we were going to have the additional solace of being imprisoned and outlawed by some of our own old colleagues in some provinces at least. These new ministers and Executive councillors were far more efficient for this job than the Liberals had been. They knew us and our weaknesses and how to exploit them; they were well acquainted with our methods; and they had some experience of crowds and the feelings of the masses. Like the Nazis, they had flirted with revolutionary methods before changing sides, and could apply this knowledge to suppress more efficiently their old colleagues of the Congress than either the official hierarchy or the Liberal ministers in their ignorance could have done.

In December 1924 the Congress session was held at Belgaum, and Gandhiji was President. For him to become the Congress President was something in the nature of an anticlimax, for he had long been the permanent super-president. I did not like his presidential address. It struck me as being very uninspiring. At the end of the session I was again elected, at Gandhiji’s instance, the working secretary of the A.I.C.C. for the next year. In spite of my own wishes in the matter, I was gradually becoming a semi-permanent secretary of the Congress.

In the summer of 1925 my father was unwell and his asthma troubled him greatly. He went with the family to Dalhousie in the Himalayas, and I joined him for a short while later. We made a little trip from Dalhousie to Chamba in the interior of the Himalayas. It was a June day when we arrived, and we were
a little tired after our journey by mountain paths. A telegram came. It told us that Chitta Ranjan Das had died. For a long time father sat still without a word, bowed down with grief. It was a cruel blow to him, and I had seldom seen him so affected. The one person who had grown to be a closer and dearer comrade to him than any one else had suddenly gone and left him to shoulder the burden alone. That burden had been growing, and both he and Deshbandhu had grown aweary of it and of the weakness of their people. Deshbandhu’s last speech at the Faridpur Conference was the speech of a person who is a little tired.

We left Chamba the next morning and tramped back over the mountains to Dalhousie, and from there to the distant railhead by car, and then to Allahabad and Calcutta.
XIX

COMMUNALISM RAMPANT

My illness in the autumn of 1923, after my return from Nabha prison, when I had a bout with the typhus germ, was a novel experience for me. I was unused to illness or lying in bed with fever or physical weakness. I was a little proud of my health, and I objected to the general valetudinarian attitude that was fairly common in India. My youth and good constitution pulled me through, but, after the crisis was over, I lay long in bed in an enfeebled condition, slowly working my way to health. And during this period I felt a strange detachment from my surroundings and my day-to-day work, and I viewed all this from a distance, apart. I felt as if I had extricated myself from the trees and could see the wood as a whole; my mind seemed clearer and more peaceful than it had previously been. I suppose this experience, or something like it, is common enough to those who have passed through severe illness. But for me it was in the nature of a spiritual experience—I use the word not in a narrow religious sense—and it influenced me considerably. I felt lifted out of the emotional atmosphere of our politics and could view the objectives and the springs that had moved me to action more clearly. With this clarification came further questioning for which I had no satisfactory answer. But more and more I moved away from the religious outlook on life and politics. I cannot write much about that experience of mine; it was a feeling I cannot easily express. It was eleven years ago, and only a faded impression of it remains in the mind now. But I remember well that it had a lasting effect on me and on my way of thinking, and for the next two years or more I went about my work with something of that air of detachment.

Partly, no doubt, this was due to developments which were wholly outside my control and with which I did not fit in. I have referred already to some of the political changes. Far more important was the progressive deterioration of Hindu-Muslim relations, in North India especially. In the bigger cities a number of riots took place, brutal and callous in the extreme. The atmosphere of distrust and anger bred new causes of dispute which most of us had never heard of before. Previously a fruitful source of discord had been the question of cow sacrifice, especially on the Bakr-id day. There was also tension when Hindu and
Muslim festivals clashed, as, for instance, when the Moharram fell on the days when the Ram Lila was celebrated. The Moharram revived the memory of a past tragedy and brought sorrow and tears; the Ram Lila was a festival of joy and the celebration of the victory of good over evil. The two did not fit in. Fortunately they came together only once in about thirty years, for the Ram Lila is celebrated according to the solar calendar at a fixed time of the year, while the Moharram moves round the seasons, following a lunar year.

But now a fresh cause of friction arose, something that was ever present, ever recurring. This was the question of music before mosques. Objection was taken by the Muslims to music or any noise which interfered with their prayers in their mosques. In every city there are many mosques, and five times every day they have prayers, and there is no lack of noises and processions (including marriage and funeral processions). So the chances of friction were always present. In particular, objection was taken to processions and noises at the time of the sunset prayer in the mosques. As it happens, this is just the time when evening worship takes place in the Hindu temples, and gongs are sounded and the temple bells ring. *Arti*, this is called, and *arti-namaz* disputes now assumed major proportions.

It seems amazing that a question which could be settled with mutual consideration for each other’s feelings and a little adjustment should give rise to great bitterness and rioting. But religious passions have little to do with reason or consideration or adjustments, and they are easy to fan when a third party in control can play off one group against another.

One is apt to exaggerate the significance of these riots in a few northern cities. Most of the towns and cities and the whole of rural India carried on peacefully, little affected by these happenings, but the newspapers naturally gave great prominence to every petty communal disturbance. It is perfectly true, however, that communal tension and bitterness increased in the city masses. This was pushed on by the communal leaders at the top, and it was reflected in the stiffening up of the political communal demands. Because of the communal tension, Muslim political reactionaries, who had taken a back seat during all these years of non-co-operation, emerged into prominence, helped in the process by the British Government. From day to day new and more far-reaching communal demands appeared on their behalf; striking at the very root of national unity and Indian freedom. On the Hindu side also political reactionaries were among the principal communal leaders, and, in the name of
guarding Hindu interests, they played definitely into the hands of the Government. They did not succeed, and indeed they could not, however much they tried by their methods, in gaining any of the points on which they laid stress; they succeeded only in raising the communal temper of the country.

The Congress was in a quandary. Sensitive to and representative of national feeling as it was, these communal passions were bound to affect it. Many a Congressman was a communist under his national cloak. But the Congress leadership stood firm and, on the whole, refused to side with either communal party, or rather with any communal group, for now the Sikhs and other smaller minorities were also loudly voicing their particular demands. Inevitably this led to denunciation from both the extremes.

Long ago, right at the commencement of non-co-operation or even earlier, Gandhiji had laid down his formula for solving the communal problem. According to him, it could only be solved by goodwill and the generosity of the majority group, and so he was prepared to agree to everything that the Muslims might demand. He wanted to win them over, not to bargain with them. With foresight and a true sense of values he grasped at the reality that was worth while; but others who thought they knew the market price of everything, and were ignorant of the true value of anything, stuck to the methods of the market-place. They saw the cost of purchase with painful clearness, but they had no appreciation of the worth of the article they might have bought.

It is easy to criticise and blame others, and the temptation is almost irresistible to find some excuse for the failure of one’s plans. Was not the failure due to the deliberate thwarting of others, rather than to an error in one’s own way of thinking or acting? We cast the blame on the Government and the communalists, the latter blame the Congress. Of course, there was thwarting of us, deliberate and persistent thwarting, by the Government and their allies. Of course, British governments in the past and the present have based their policy on creating divisions in our ranks. Divide and rule has always been the way of empires, and the measure of their success in this policy has been also the measure of their superiority over those whom they thus exploit. We cannot complain of this or, at any rate, we ought not to be surprised at it. To ignore it and not to provide against it is in itself a mistake in one’s thought.

How are we to provide against it? Not surely by bargaining and haggling and generally adopting the tactics of the market-
place, for whatever offer we make, however high our bid might be, there is always a third party which can bid higher and, what is more, give substance to its words. If there is no common national or social outlook, there will not be common action against the common adversary. If we think in terms of the existing political and economic structure and merely wish to tamper with it here and there, to reform it, to 'Indianise' it, then all real inducement for joint action is lacking. The object then becomes one of sharing in the spoils, and the third and controlling party inevitably plays the dominant rôle and hands out its gifts to the prize boys of its choice. Only by thinking in terms of a different political framework—and even more so a different social framework—can we build up a stable foundation for joint action. The whole idea underlying the demand for independence was this: to make people realise that we were struggling for an entirely different political structure and not just an Indianised edition (with British control behind the scenes) of the present order, which Dominion Status signifies. Political independence meant, of course, political freedom only, and did not include any social change or economic freedom for the masses. But it did signify the removal of the financial and economic chains which bind us to the City of London, and this would have made it easier for us to change the social structure. So I thought then. I would add now that I do not think it is likely that real political freedom will come to us by itself. When it comes it will bring a large measure of social freedom also.

But almost all our leaders continued to think within the narrow steel frame of the existing political, and of course the social, structure. They faced every problem—communal or constitutional—with this background and, inevitably, they played into the hands of the British Government, which controlled completely that structure. They could not do otherwise, for their whole outlook was essentially reformist and not revolutionary, in spite of occasional experiments with direct action. But the time had gone by when any political or economic or communal problem in India could be satisfactorily solved by reformist methods. Revolutionary outlook and planning and revolutionary solutions were demanded by the situation. But there was no one among the leaders to offer these.

The want of clear ideals and objectives in our struggle for freedom undoubtedly helped the spread of communalism. The masses saw no clear connection between their day-to-day sufferings and the fight for swaraj. They fought well enough at times by instinct, but that was a feeble weapon which could be easily
blunted or even turned aside for other purposes. There was no reason behind it, and in periods of reaction it was not difficult for the communalists to play upon this feeling and exploit it in the name of religion. It is nevertheless extraordinary how the bourgeois classes, both among the Hindus and the Muslims, succeeded, in the sacred name of religion, in getting a measure of mass sympathy and support for programmes and demands which had absolutely nothing to do with the masses, or even the lower middle class. Every one of the communal demands put forward by any communal group is, in the final analysis, a demand for jobs, and these jobs could only go to a handful of the upper middle class. There is also, of course, the demand for special and additional seats in the legislatures, as symbolising political power, but this too is looked upon chiefly as the power to exercise patronage. These narrow political demands, benefiting at the most a small number of the upper middle classes, and often creating barriers in the way of national unity and progress, were cleverly made to appear the demands of the masses of that particular religious group. Religious passion was hitched on to them in order to hide their barrenness.

In this way political reactionaries came back to the political field in the guise of communal leaders, and the real explanation of the various steps they took was not so much their communal bias as their desire to obstruct political advance. We could only expect opposition from them politically, but still it was a peculiarly distressing feature of an unsavoury situation to find to what lengths they would go in this respect. Muslim communal leaders said the most amazing things and seemed to care not at all for Indian nationalism or Indian freedom; Hindu communal leaders, though always speaking apparently in the name of nationalism, had little to do with it in practice and, incapable of any real action, sought to humble themselves before the Government, and did that too in vain. Both agreed in condemning socialistic and such-like "subversive" movements; there was a touching unanimity in regard to any proposal affecting vested interests. Muslim communal leaders said and did many things harmful to political and economic freedom, but as a group and individually they conducted themselves before the Government and the public with some dignity. That could hardly be said of the Hindu communal leaders.

There were many Muslims in the Congress. Their numbers were large, and included many able men, and the best-known and most popular Muslim leaders in India were in it. Many of those Congress Muslims organised themselves into a group called
the 'Nationalist Muslim Party', and they combated the communal Muslim leaders. They did so with some success to begin with, and a large part of the Muslim intelligentsia seemed to be with them. But they were all upper middle-class folk, and there were no dynamic personalities amongst them. They took to their professions and their businesses, and lost touch with the masses. Indeed, they never went to their masses. Their method was one of drawing-room meetings and mutual arrangements and pacts, and at this game their rivals, the communal leaders, were greater adepts. Slowly the latter drove the Nationalist Muslims from one position to another, made them give up, one by one, the principles for which they stood. Always the Nationalist Muslims tried to ward off further retreat and to consolidate their position by adopting the policy of the 'lesser evil', but always this led to another retreat and another choice of the 'lesser evil'. There came a time when they had nothing left to call their own, no fundamental principle on which they stood except one, and that had been the very sheet-anchor of their group: joint electorates. But again the policy of the lesser evil presented the fatal choice to them, and they emerged from the ordeal minus that sheet-anchor. So to-day they stand divested of every shred of principle or practice on the basis of which they formed their group, and which they had proudly nailed to their masthead—of everything, all, except their name!

The collapse and elimination of the Nationalist Muslims as a group—as individuals they are, of course, still important leaders of the Congress—forms a pitiful story. It took many years, and the last chapter has only been written this year (1934). In 1923 and subsequent years they were a strong group, and they took up an aggressive attitude against the Muslim communalists. Indeed, on several occasions, Gandhiji was prepared to agree to some of the latter's demands, much as he disliked them, but his own colleagues, the Muslim Nationalist leaders, prevented this and were bitter in their opposition.

During the middle twenties many attempts were made to settle the communal problem by mutual talks and discussions—'Unity Conferences', they were called. The most notable of these was the conference convened by M. Mohamad Ali, the Congress president for the year, in 1924, and held in Delhi under the shadow of Gandhiji's twenty-one-day fast. There were many earnest and well-meaning people at these conferences, and they tried hard to come to an agreement. Some pious and good resolutions were passed, but the basic problem remained unsolved. It could not be solved by those conferences, for a solution
could not be reached by a majority of votes but by virtual unanimity, and there were always extremists of various groups present whose idea of a solution was a complete submission of all others to their views. Indeed, one was led to doubt whether some of the prominent communalists desired a solution at all. Many of them were political reactionaries, and there was no common ground between them and those who desired radical political change.

But the real difficulties went deeper and were not just the result of individual back-sliding. The Sikhs were now loudly advancing their communal demands, and an extraordinarily complicated triangle was created in the Punjab. The Punjab, indeed, became the crux of the matter, and the fear of each group of the others produced a background of passion and prejudice. In some provinces agrarian trouble—Hindu zamindars and Muslim tenants in Bengal—appeared under communal guise. In the Punjab and Sind, the banker and richer classes generally were Hindus, the debtors were Muslim agriculturists, and all the feeling of the impoverished debtors against the creditor, out for his pound of flesh, went to swell the communal tide. As a rule, the Muslims were the poorer community, and the Muslim communal leaders managed to exploit the antagonism of the have-nots against the haves for communal purposes, though, strangely enough, these purposes had nothing whatever to do with the betterment of those have-nots. Because of this, these Muslim communal leaders did represent some mass elements, and gained strength thereby. The Hindu communal leaders, in an economic sense, represented the rich banker and professional classes; they had little backing among the Hindu masses although, on occasions, they had their sympathy.

The problem, therefore, is getting a little mixed up with economic groupings, though unhappily this fact is not realised. It may develop into more obvious conflicts between economic classes, but if that time comes, the present-day communal leaders, representing the upper classes of all groups, will hasten to patch up their differences in order to face jointly the common class foe. Even under present conditions it should not be difficult to arrive at a political solution, but only if, and it is a big if, the third party was not present.

The Delhi Unity Conference of 1924 was hardly over when a Hindu-Muslim riot broke out in Allahabad. It was not a big riot, as such riots go, in so far as casualties were concerned, but it was painful to have these troubles in one's home town. I rushed back with others from Delhi to find that the actual riot-
ing was over; but the aftermath, in the shape of bad blood and court cases, lasted a long time. I forget why the riot had begun. That year, or perhaps later, there was also some trouble over the Ram Lila celebrations at Allahabad. Probably because of restrictions about music before mosques, these celebrations, involving huge processions as they did, were abandoned as a protest. For about eight years now the Ram Lila has not been held in Allahabad, and the greatest festival of the year for hundreds of thousands in the Allahabad district has almost become a painful memory. How well I remember my visits to it when I was a child! How excited we used to get! And the vast crowds that came to see it from all over the district and even from other towns. It was a Hindu festival, but it was an open-air affair, and Muslims also swelled the crowds, and there was joy and lightheartedness everywhere. Trade flourished. Many years afterwards when, as a grown-up, I visited it I was not excited, and the procession and the tableaux rather bored me. My standards of art and amusement had gone up. But even then, I saw how the great crowds appreciated and enjoyed the show. It was carnival time for them. And now, for eight or nine years, the children of Allahabad, not to mention the grown-ups, have had no chance of seeing this show and having a bright day of joyful excitement in the dull routine of their lives. And all because of trivial disputes and conflicts! Surely religion and the spirit of religion have much to answer for. What kill-joys they have been!
XX

MUNICIPAL WORK

For two years I carried on, but with an ever-increasing reluctance, with the Allahabad Municipality. My term of office as chairman was for three years. Before the second year was well begun, I was trying to rid myself of the responsibility. I had liked the work, and given a great deal of my time and thought to it. I had met with a measure of success and gained the goodwill of all my colleagues. Even the Provincial Government had overcome its political dislike of me to the extent of commending some of my municipal activities. And yet I found myself hedged in, obstructed and prevented from doing anything really worth while.

It was not deliberate obstruction on anybody's part; indeed, I had a surprising amount of willing co-operation. But on the one side, there was the Government machine; on the other, the apathy of the members of the municipality as well as the public. The whole steel-frame of municipal administration, as erected by Government, prevented radical growth or innovation. The financial policy was such that the municipality was always dependent on the Government. Most radical schemes of taxation or social development were not permissible under the existing municipal laws. Even such schemes as were legally permissible had to be sanctioned by Government, and only the optimists, with a long stretch of years before them, could confidently ask for and await this sanction. It amazed me to find out how slowly and laboriously and inefficiently the machinery of Government moved when any job of social construction, or of nation building was concerned. There was no slowness or inefficiency, however, when a political opponent had to be curbed or struck down. The contrast was marked.

The department of the Provincial Government dealing with Local Self-government was presided over by a Minister; but, as a rule, this presiding genius was supremely ignorant of municipal affairs or, indeed, of any public affairs. Indeed, he counted for little and was largely ignored by his own department, which was run by the permanent officials of the Indian Civil Service. These officials were influenced by the prevailing conception of high officials in India that government was primarily a police function. Some idea of authoritarian paternalism coloured this
conception, but there was hardly any appreciation of the necessity of social services on a large scale.

Government is always a creditor of the municipalities, and, next to the police view, it is the creditor’s view that it takes of them. Are the debt instalments paid regularly? Is the municipality thoroughly solvent, and has it got a substantial balance in hand? All very necessary and relevant questions, but it is often overlooked that the municipality has some positive functions to perform—education, sanitation, etc.—and that it is not merely an organisation for borrowing money and paying it back at regular intervals. The social services provided by Indian municipalities are few enough, but even these are curtailed where there is financial stringency, and usually the first to suffer is education. The ruling classes are not personally interested in municipal schools; their children go to more up-to-date and expensive private schools, often receiving grants-in-aid from the State.

Most Indian cities can be divided into two parts: the densely crowded city proper, and the widespread area with bungalows and cottages, each with a fairly extensive compound or garden, usually referred to by the English as the ‘Civil Lines’. It is in these Civil Lines that the English officials and business-men, as well as many upper middle-class Indians, professional men, officials, etc., live. The income of the municipality from the city proper is greater than that from the Civil Lines, but the expenditure on the latter far exceeds the city expenditure. For the far wider area covered by the Civil Lines requires more roads, and they have to be repaired, cleaned-up, watered, and lighted; and the drainage, the water supply, and the sanitation system have to be more widespread. The city part is always grossly neglected, and, of course, the poorer parts of the city are almost ignored; it has few good roads, and most of the narrow lanes are ill-lit and have no proper drainage or sanitation system. It puts up with all these disabilities patiently and seldom complains; and when it does complain, nothing much happens. Nearly all the Big Noises and Little Noises live in the Civil Lines.

To equalise the burden a little and to encourage improvements, I wanted to introduce a tax on land values. But hardly had I made the suggestion when a protest came from a Government official, I think it was the District Magistrate, who pointed out that this would be in contravention of various enactments or conditions of land tenure. Such a tax would obviously have fallen more heavily on the owners of the bungalows in the Civil
Lines. But Government approves thoroughly of an indirect tax like the octroi which crushes trade, raises prices of all goods, including foodstuffs, and falls most heavily on the poor. And this most unsocial and harmful levy has been the mainstay of most Indian municipalities, though, I believe, it is very slowly disappearing in the larger cities.

As chairman of the Municipality I had thus to deal with, on the one side, an impersonal authoritarian government machine which jogged along laboriously in the old ruts and obstinately refused either to move faster or in a different direction; and on the other, were my colleagues, the members, most of whom were equally in the ruts. Some of them were idealists, and took to their work with enthusiasm, but taken as a whole there was no vision, no passion for change or betterment. The old ways were good enough, why try experiments which might not come off? Even the idealists and enthusiasts gradually succumbed to the narcotic effects of dull routine. But one subject could always be relied upon to infuse vigour into the members—the subject of patronage and appointments. This interest did not always result in greater efficiency.

Year after year government resolutions and officials and some newspapers criticise municipalities and local boards, and point out their many failings. And from this the moral is drawn that democratic institutions are not suited to India. Their failings are obvious enough, but little attention is paid to the framework within which they have to function. This framework is neither democratic nor autocratic; it is a cross between the two, and has the disadvantages of both. That a central government should have certain powers of supervision and control may be admitted, but this can only fit in with a popular local body if the central government itself is democratic and responsive to public needs. Where this is not so, there will either be a tussle between the two or a tame submission to the will of the central authority, which thus exercises power without in any way shouldering responsibility. This is obviously unsatisfactory, and it takes away from the reality of popular control. Even the members of the Municipal Board look more to the central authority than to their constituents, and the public also often ignores the Board. Real social issues hardly ever come before the Board, chiefly because they lie outside its functions, and its most obvious activities are tax-collecting, which do not make it excessively popular.

The franchise for the local bodies is also limited, and should be greatly lowered and extended. Even a great city corporation
like the Bombay Corporation is, I believe, elected on a very restricted franchise. Some time back a resolution asking for wider franchise was actually defeated in the Corporation itself. Evidently the majority of councillors were satisfied with their lot and saw no reason to change it or risk it.

Whatever the reasons, the fact remains that our local bodies are not, as a rule, shining examples of success and efficiency, though they might, even so, compare with some municipalities in advanced democratic countries. They are not usually corrupt; they are just inefficient, and their weak point is nepotism, and their perspectives are all wrong. All this is natural enough; for, democracy to be successful, must have a background of informed public opinion and a sense of responsibility. Instead, we have an all-pervading atmosphere of authoritarianism, and the accompaniments of democracy are lacking. There is no mass educational system, no effort to build up public opinion based on knowledge. Inevitably public attention turns to personal or communal or other petty issues.

The main interest of Government in municipal administration is that 'politics' should be kept out. Any resolution of sympathy with the national movement is frowned upon; textbooks which might have a nationalist flavour are not permitted in the municipal schools, even pictures of national leaders are not allowed there. A national flag has to be pulled down on pain of suppression of the municipality. Lately a concerted attempt seems to have been made by several Provincial Governments to hound out Congressmen from the service of the municipal corporations and boards. Usually, pressure was enough to bring this about, accompanied as it was with the threat of withholding various Government grants for municipal education or other purposes. But in some cases, notably that of the Calcutta Corporation, legislation has been promoted to keep out all persons who may have gone to prison in connection with civil disobedience or any other political movement against the Government. The object was purely political; there was no question of incompetence or unfitness for the job.

These few instances show how much freedom our municipal and district boards have, how little democratic they are. The attempt to keep out political opponents from all municipal and local services—of course they did not go in for direct government service—deserves a little attention. It is estimated that about three hundred thousand persons have gone to prison at various times during the past fourteen years; and there can be no doubt that, politics apart, these three hundred thousand
included some of the most dynamic and idealistic, the most socially minded and selfless people in India. They had push and energy and the ideal of service to a cause. They were thus the best material from which a public department or utility service could draw its employees. And yet Government has made every effort, even to the extent of passing laws, to keep out these people, and so to punish them and those who sympathised with them. It prefers and pushes on the lap-dog breed, and then complains of the inefficiency of our local bodies. And although politics are said to be outside the province of local bodies, Government has no objection whatever to their indulging in politics in support of itself. Teachers in local board schools have been practically compelled, for fear of losing their jobs, to go out in the villages to do propaganda on behalf of Government.

During the last fifteen years Congress workers have had to face many difficult positions; they have shouldered heavy responsibilities; they have, after all, combated, not without success, a powerful and entrenched Government. This hard course of training has given them self-reliance and efficiency and strength to persevere; it has provided them with the very qualities of which a long andemasculating course of authoritarian government had deprived the Indian people. Of course, the Congress movement, like all mass movements, had, and has, many undesirables—fools, inefficient, and worse people. But I have no doubt whatever that an average Congress worker is likely to be far more efficient and dynamic than another person of similar qualifications.

There is one aspect of this matter which Government and its advisers perhaps do not appreciate. The attempt to deprive Congress workers of all jobs and to shut avenues of employment to them is welcomed by the real revolutionary. The average Congressman is notoriously not a revolutionary, and after a period of semi-revolutionary action he resumes his humdrum life and activities. He gets entangled either in his business or profession or in the mazes of local politics. Larger issues seem to fade off in his mind, and revolutionary ardour, such as it was, subsides. Muscle turns to fat, and spirit to a love of security. Because of this inevitable tendency of middle-class workers, it has always been the effort of advanced and revolutionary-minded Congressmen to prevent their comrades from entering the constitutional mazes of the legislatures and the local bodies, or accepting whole-time jobs which prevent them from effective action. The Government has, however, now come
to their help to some extent by making it a little more difficult for the Congress worker to get a job, and it is thus likely that he will retain some of his revolutionary ardour or even add to it.

After a year or more of municipal work I felt that I was not utilising my energies to the best advantage there. The most I could do was to speed-up work and make it a little more efficient. I could not push through any worth-while change. I wanted to resign from the chairmanship, but all the members of the Board pressed me to stay. I had received uniform kindness and courtesy from them, and I found it hard to refuse. At the end of my second year, however, I finally resigned.

This was in 1925. In the autumn of that year my wife fell seriously ill, and for many months she lay in a Lucknow hospital. The Congress was held that year at Cawnpore, and, somewhat distracted, I rushed backwards and forwards between Allahabad, Cawnpore, and Lucknow. (I was still General Secretary of the Congress.)

Further treatment in Switzerland was recommended for my wife. I welcomed the idea, for I wanted an excuse to go out of India myself. My mind was befogged, and no clear path was visible; and I thought that, perhaps, if I was far from India I could see things in better perspective and lighten up the dark corners of my mind.

At the beginning of March 1926 we sailed, my wife, our daughter and I, from Bombay for Venice. With us on the same boat went also my sister and brother-in-law, Ranjit S. Pandit. They had planned their European trip long before the question of our going had arisen.
IN EUROPE

I was going back to Europe after more than thirteen years—years of war, and revolution, and tremendous change. The old world I knew had expired in the blood and horror of the War and a new world awaited me. I expected to remain in Europe for six or seven months or, at most, till the end of the year. Actually our stay lengthened out to a year and nine months.

It was a quiet and restful period for both my mind and body. We spent it chiefly in Switzerland, in Geneva, and in a mountain sanatorium at Montana. My younger sister, Krishna, came from India and joined us early in the summer of 1926, and remained with us till the end of our stay in Europe. I could not leave my wife for long, and so I could only pay brief visits to other places. Later, when my wife was better, we travelled a little in France, England, and Germany. On our mountain-top, surrounded by the winter snow, I felt completely cut off from India as well as the European world. India, and Indian happenings, seemed especially far away. I was a distant onlooker, reading, watching, following events, gazing at the new Europe, its politics, economics, and the far freer human relationships, and trying to understand them. When we were in Geneva I was naturally interested in the activities of the League of Nations and the International Labour Office.

But with the coming of winter, the winter sports absorbed my attention; for some months they were my chief occupation and interest. I had done ice-skating previously, but ski-ing was a new experience, and I succumbed to its fascination. It was a painful experience for a long time, but I persisted bravely, in spite of innumerable falls, and I came to enjoy it.

Life was very uneventful on the whole. The days went by and my wife gradually gained strength and health. We saw few Indians; indeed, we saw few people apart from the little colony living in that mountain resort. But in the course of the year and three-quarters that we spent in Europe, we came across some Indian exiles and old revolutionaries whose names had been familiar to me.

There was Shyamaji Krishnavarma living with his ailing wife high up on the top floor of a house in Geneva. The aged couple lived by themselves with no whole-time servants, and their rooms
were musty and suffocating, and everything had a thick layer of dust. Shyamaji had plenty of money, but he did not believe in spending it. He would even save a few centimes by walking instead of taking the tram. He was suspicious of all comers, presuming them, until the contrary was proved, to be either British agents or after his money. His pockets bulged with ancient copies of his old paper, the *Indian Sociologist*, and he would pull them out and point with some excitement to some article he had written a dozen years previously. His talk was of the old days, of India House at Hampstead, of the various persons that the British Government had sent to spy on him, and how he had spotted them and outwitted them. The walls of his rooms were covered with shelves full of old books, dust-laden and neglected, looking down sorrowfully on the intruder. Books and papers also littered the floor; they seemed to have remained so for days and weeks, and even months past. Over the whole place there hung an atmosphere of gloom, an air of decay; life seemed to be an unwelcome stranger there, and, as one walked through the dark and silent corridors, one almost expected to come across, round the corner, the shadow of death. With relief one came out of that flat and breathed the air outside.

Shyamaji desired to make some arrangement about his money, to create some trust for a public purpose, preferably for the education of Indians in foreign countries. He suggested that I might be one of the trustees, but I showed no keenness for shouldering this responsibility. I had no desire to get mixed up with his financial affairs; and, besides, I felt that if I showed any undue interest he would immediately suspect me of coveting his money. No one knew how much he had. It was rumoured that he had lost greatly in the German inflation.

Occasionally prominent Indians used to pass through Geneva. Those who came to the League of Nations were of the official variety, and Shyamaji would not, of course, go anywhere near them. But the Labour Office sometimes brought non-officials of note, even prominent Congressmen, and Shyamaji would try to meet them. It was interesting to watch their reactions to him. Invariably they felt uncomfortable, and tried to avoid him in public, and excused themselves, whenever they could, in private. He was not considered a safe person with whom to be associated or seen with.

And so Shyamaji and his wife lived their lonely life without children or relatives or friends, with hardly any associations, hardly any human contacts. He was a relic of the past, and had
really outlived his day. He did not fit in with the present, and the world passed him by, ignoring him. But there was still some of the old fire in his eyes, and though there was little in common between him and me, I could not withhold my sympathy and consideration for him.

Recently the newspapers reported his death, followed soon after by the death of the gentle Gujrati old lady who had been his life-long companion in exile in foreign lands. It was stated that a large sum of money was left by her for the training of Indian women abroad.

Another well-known person whose name I had often heard, but whom I met for the first time in Switzerland, was Raja Mahendra Pratap. He was (and, I suppose, is still) a delightful optimist, living completely in the air and refusing to have anything to do with realities. I was a little taken aback when I first saw him. He appeared in strange composite attire, which might have been suitable in the highlands of Tibet or in the Siberian plains, but was completely out of place at Montreux in the summer. It was a kind of semi-military costume, with high Russian boots, and there were numerous large pockets, all bulging with papers, photographs, etc. There was a letter from Bethmann-Hollweg, the German Chancellor, an autographed picture of the Kaiser, a fine scroll from the Dalai Lama of Tibet, and innumerable documents and pictures. It was amazing how much those various pockets contained. He told us that once he had lost a dispatch-box, containing valuable papers, in China, and ever since then he had considered it safer to carry his papers on his person! Hence the numerous pockets.

Mahendra Pratap was full of stories of his wanderings and adventures in Japan, China, Tibet, and Afghanistan. He had led a varied life, and the record of it was an interesting one. His latest enthusiasm was for a ‘Happiness Society’, which he had himself founded, and which had for its motto: “Be Happy”. Apparently this society had met with greatest success in Latvia (or was it Lithuania?)

His idea of propaganda was to send out periodically large numbers of post cards containing a printed message from him to members of various conferences that met in Geneva or elsewhere. These messages were signed by him, but the name given was an extraordinary one—long and varied. ‘Mahendra Pratap’ had been reduced to initials, but many other names had been added, each addition representing apparently some favoured country he had visited. In this way he emphasized his international and cosmopolitan character, and, fittingly, the final
description below this unique name was "Servant of Mankind". It was difficult to take Mahendra Pratap seriously. He seemed to be a character out of medieval romance, a Don Quixote who had strayed into the twentieth century. But he was absolutely straight and thoroughly earnest.

In Paris we saw old Madame Cama, rather fierce and terrifying as she came up to you and peered into your face, and, pointing at you, asked abruptly who you were. The answer made no difference (probably she was too deaf to hear it) for she formed her own impressions and stuck to them, despite facts to the contrary.

Then there was Moulvi Obeidulla, whom I met for a short while in Italy. He seemed to me to be clever, but rather in the sense of possessing an ability for old-style political manœuvring. He was not in touch with modern ideas. He had produced a scheme for the 'United States' or 'United Republics of India', which was quite an able attempt to solve the communal problem. He told me of some of his past activities in Istanbul (it was still called Constantinople then) and, not attaching much importance to them, I soon forgot about them. Some months later he met Lala Lajpat Rai and, apparently, repeated the same story to him. Lalaji was vastly impressed and exercised about it, and that story, with many unjustifiable inferences and amazing deductions, played an important part in the Indian Council elections that year. Moulvi Obeidulla later went to the Hedjaz, and for years past no news of him has come my way.

Another Moulvi, but a different type entirely, was Barkatulla whom I first met in Berlin. He was a delightful old man, very enthusiastic and very likeable. He was rather simple, not very intelligent, but still trying to imbibe new ideas and to understand the present-day world. He died in San Francisco in 1927, while we were in Switzerland. I was grieved to learn of his passing away.

In Berlin there was quite a number of those who had formed an Indian group in war-time, but the group had long gone to pieces. They had fallen out and quarrelled amongst themselves, each suspecting the other of betrayal. That seems to be the fate of political exiles everywhere. Many of these Berlin Indians had settled down to sedate middle-class occupations—when these could be had, and that was not often in post-war Germany—and had ceased to be in any way revolutionary. They even avoided politics.

The story of this old war-time group was interesting. Most of
them were students in various German universities in that fateful summer of 1914. They lived a common life with the German students, sang their songs, joined in their games, drank beer with them, and approached their culture with sympathy and consideration. The War was no concern of theirs, but they could not help being moved to some extent by the wave of nationalistic hysteria that swept over Germany. Their feeling was really anti-British, and not pro-German, and their Indian nationalism inclined them to the enemies of Britain. Soon after the outbreak of the War a few other Indians, more consciously revolutionary, drifted into Germany through Switzerland. These people formed themselves into a committee, and sent for Hardayal, who was on the west coast of the United States at the time. Hardayal came some months later, but meanwhile the Committee had become quite important. This importance had been thrust upon them by the German Government, who were, naturally, anxious to exploit all anti-British feelings to their own advantage. The Indians, on their part, wanted to take advantage of the international situation for their own nationalistic purposes, and had no intention of allowing themselves to be exploited purely for Germany’s advantage. They did not have much choice in the matter, but they felt that they had something to give which the German authorities were keen on having, and this gave them a handle to bargain with. They insisted on assurances and pledges for Indian freedom. The German Foreign Office seems to have entered into a regular treaty with them, in which it pledged itself to acknowledge Indian independence in case of victory, and it was on this pledge and condition, and many other minor conditions, that the Indian group promised support in the war. The Committee was officially honoured in every way, and its representatives were treated almost on the footing of foreign ambassadors.

This sudden importance, thrust on a small group consisting mainly of inexperienced young men, went to the heads of some of them. They felt that they were playing a historic rôle, that they were involved in great and epoch-making undertakings. Many of them had exciting adventures, hair-breadth escapes. In the later stages of the war, their importance visibly lessened, and they began to be ignored. Hardayal, who had come over from America, had long been discarded. He did not fit in with the Committee at all, and both the Committee and the German Government considered him unreliable, and quietly pushed him aside. Years later, when I was in Europe in 1926 and 1927, I was surprised to find with what bitterness and resent-
ment most of the old Indian residents in Europe thought of Hardayal. He lived at the time in Sweden. I did not meet him.

The War ended, and with it ended finally the Indian Committee in Berlin. Life became a dreary affair for them after the failure of all their hopes. They had gambled for high stakes and lost. In any event, life would have seemed a humdrum affair after the high adventure and importance of those wartime years. But even a secure, humdrum life was not to be had for the asking. They could not return to India, and defeated Germany after the War was not an easy place to live in. It was a hard struggle. A few of them were later allowed by the British Government to return to India, but many had to stay on in Germany. Their position was peculiar. They were, apparently, citizens of no State. They had no proper passports. Travel outside Germany was hardly possible, even residence in Germany was full of difficulties and was at the mercy of the local police. It was a life of insecurity and hardship, and day-to-day worry; of continual anxiety to find the wherewithal to eat and live.

The Nazi régime since early in 1933 has added to their misfortunes, unless they fall in completely with the Nazi doctrine. Non-Nordic, and especially Asiatic, foreigners are not welcome in Germany; they are only suffered to exist so long as they behave. Hitler has pointedly declared himself in favour of British imperialist rule in India, no doubt because he wants to gain the goodwill of Britain, and he does not wish to encourage any Indians who may have displeased the British Government.

One of the exiles in Berlin whom we met, a prominent member of the old war-time group, was Champakranath Pillai. He was rather pompous, and young Indian students had given him an irreverent title. He could think in terms of nationalism only, and shrank away from the social or economic approach to a question. With the German Nationalists, the Steelhelmets, he was perfectly at home. He was one of the very few Indians in Germany who got on with the Nazis. A few months back, in gaol, I read of his death in Berlin.

An entirely different type of person was Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, member of a famous family in India. Popularly known as Chatto, he was a very able and a very delightful person. He was always hard up, his clothes were very much the worse for wear, and often he found it difficult to raise the wherewithal for a meal. But his humour and lightheartedness never left him. He had been some years senior to me during my
educational days in England. He was at Oxford when I went
to Harrow. Since those days he had not returned to India, and,
sometimes, a fit of homesickness came to him, when he longed
to be back. All his home-ties had long been severed, and it is
quite certain that if he came to India he would soon feel un-
happy and out of joint. But in spite of the passage of many
years and long wandering, the pull of the home remains. No
exile can escape the malady of his tribe, that consumption of
the soul, as Mazzini called it.

I must say that I was not greatly impressed by most of the
Indian political exiles that I met abroad, although I admired
their sacrifice, and sympathised with their sufferings and present
difficulties, which are very real. I did not meet many of them;
there are so many spread out all over the world. Only a few
are known to us even by reputation, and the others have dropped
out of the Indian world and been forgotten by their countrymen
whom they sought to serve. Of the few I met, the only persons
who impressed me intellectually were V. Chattopadhyaya and
M. N. Roy. Roy I met for a brief half-hour in Moscow. He was
a leading Communist then, although, subsequently, his com-
munism drifted away from the orthodox Comintern brand.
Chatto was not, I believe, a regular Communist, but he was
communistically inclined. Roy has been in an Indian prison
for more than three years now.

There were many other Indians floating about the face of
Europe, talking a revolutionary language, making daring and
fantastic suggestions, asking curious questions. They seemed
to have the impress of the British Secret Service upon them.

We met, of course, many Europeans and Americans. From
Geneva we went on a pilgrimage many a time (the first time
with a letter of introduction from Gandhiji) to the Villa Olga
at Villeneuve, to see Romain Rolland. Another precious
memory is that of Ernst Toller, the young German poet and
dramatist, now, under Nazi rule, no longer a German; and of
Roger Baldwin, of the Civil Liberties Union of New York. In
Geneva we also made friends with Dhan Gopal Mukerji, the
author, who has settled down in America.

Before going to Europe I had met Frank Buchman, of the
Oxford Group Movement, in India. He had given me some of
the literature of his movement, and I had read it with amaze-
ment. Sudden conversions and confessions, and a revivallist
atmosphere generally, seemed to me to go ill with intellectuality.
I could not make out how some persons, who seemed obviously
intelligent, should experience these strange emotions and be
affected by them to a great extent. I grew curious. I met Frank Buchman again, in Geneva, and he invited me to one of his international house-parties, somewhere in Rumania, I think, this one was. I was sorry I could not go and look at this new emotionalism at close quarters. My curiosity has thus remained unsatisfied, and the more I read on the growth of the Oxford Group Movement, the more I was.
Soon after our arrival in England, the General Strike broke out in England. I was vastly excited, and my sympathies were naturally all on the strikers' side. The collapse of the strike, after a few days, came almost as a personal blow. Some months later I happened to visit England for a few days. The miners' struggle was still on, and London lay in semi-darkness at night. I paid a brief visit to a mining area—I think it was somewhere in Derbyshire. I saw the haggard and pinched faces of the men and women and children and, more revealing still, I saw many of the strikers and their wives being tried in the local or county court. The magistrates were themselves directors or managers of the coal mines, and they tried the miners and sentenced them for trivial offences under certain emergency regulations. One case especially angered me: three or four women, with babies in their arms, were brought up in the dock for the offence of having jeered at the blacklegs. The young mothers (and their babies) were obviously miserable and undernourished; the long struggle had told upon them and enfeebled them, and embittered them against the scabs who seemed to take the bread from their mouths.

One reads often about class justice, and in India nothing is commoner than this, but somehow I had not expected to come across such a flagrant example of it in England. It came as a shock. Another fact that I noticed with some surprise was the general atmosphere of fear among the strikers. They had definitely been terrorised by the police and the authorities, and they put up very meekly, I thought, with rather offensive treatment. It is true that they were thoroughly exhausted after a long struggle, their spirit was near breaking-point, their comrades of other trade unions had long deserted them. But still, compared to the poor Indian worker, there was a world of difference. The British miners had still a powerful organisation, the sympathy of a nation-wide, and indeed world-wide, trade union movement, publicity, and resources of many kinds. All these were lacking to the Indian worker. And yet that frightened and terrorised look in the two had a strange resemblance.

In India that year there were the triennial elections to the Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Councils. I was not
interested in them, but some echoes of fierce controversies managed to reach me in Switzerland. I learnt of a new party having been formed by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai to oppose the Swaraj Party or the regular Congress Party in the legislature, as it now was. The Nationalist Party, this was called. I could not make out, and I still do not know, what grounds of principle separated the new party from the old. Indeed, most present-day Indian parties in the legislature are like Tweedledum and Tweedledee; no real principles separate them. The Swaraj Party, for the first time, brought a new and aggressive element in the Councils, and it stood for a more extreme political policy than the others. But the difference was one of degree, not of kind.

The new Nationalist Party represented a more moderate outlook, and was definitely more to the right than was the Swaraj Party. It was also wholly a Hindu party working in close cooperation with the Hindu Mahasabha. Pandit Malaviya’s leadership of it was easy to understand, for it represented as nearly as possible his own public attitude. He had, because of old associations, continued to remain in the Congress, but his intellectual outlook was not dissimilar to that of the Liberals or Moderates. He had not taken kindly to non-co-operation and the new direct action methods of the Congress, and had had no share in shaping Congress policy. Although greatly respected and always welcome to it, he was not really of the new Congress. He was not a member of its small executive, the Working Committee. He did not carry out the Congress mandates, especially in regard to the legislatures. He was also the most popular leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, and, in regard to communal matters, his policy differed from that of the Congress. To Congress he had that sentimental attachment to an organisation with which he had been connected almost from the very beginning, partly to an emotional pull in the direction of the freedom struggle, for he saw that the Congress was the only organisation doing anything effective about it. His heart was thus often in the Congress camp, especially in times of struggle; his head was in other camps. Inevitably this led to a continual conflict within him, and occasionally to a simultaneous attempt to march in opposite directions. The result was public confusion; but nationalism is a confusing medley, and Malaviyaji was a nationalist alone and not concerned with social or economic change. He was, and is, a supporter of the old orthodox order culturally, socially, economically; the Indian princes and the taluqadars and big zamindars consider him rightly as a benevolent friend. The sole change he desires, and
desires passionately, is the complete elimination of foreign
control in India. The political training and reading of his youth
still influence his mind greatly, and he looks upon this dynamic,
revolutionary, post-war world of the twentieth century with the
spectacles of a semi-static, nineteenth century, of T. H. Green
and John Stuart Mill and Gladstone and Morley, and a three-
or four-thousand-year background of old Hindu culture and socio-
logy. It is a curious combination, bristling with contradictions,
but he has an amazing confidence in his own capacity to resolve
contradictions. His long record of public service in various fields
from early youth upwards, his success in establishing a great
institution like the Benares Hindu University, his manifest sinc-
erity and earnestness, his impressive oratory, and his gentle
nature and winning personality, have endeared him to the Indian
public, particularly the Hindu public, and though many may not
agree with him or follow him in politics, they yield him respect
and affection. Both by his age and his long public record he is
the Nestor of Indian politics, but a Nestor who seems a little out
of date, and very much out of touch, with the modern world.
His voice commands attention, but the language he speaks is no
longer understood or heeded by many.

It was natural, therefore, for Malaviyaji not to join the Swaraj
Party, which was too advanced politically for him and required
a disciplined adherence to the Congress policy. He wanted some-
thing more to the right and greater latitude, both politically and
communally, and he got this in a new party, of which he was the
founder and leader.

It is not so easy to understand Lala Lajpat Rai’s adherence to
this new party, though his inclination was also somewhat to the
right as well as towards a more communal orientation. I had
met Lalaji in Geneva that summer, and from our talks I had not
gathered that he contemplated taking up an aggressive attitude
against the Congress Party. How this happened I have still no
idea. But in the course of the election campaign, he made certain
vague charges, which showed how his mind had been working.
He accused the Congress leaders of intriguing with people out-
side India. He further accused them of some such intrigue in
establishing a Congress branch in Kabul. I do not think he ever
specified his charges or went into any details, in spite of repeated
requests.

I remember that when I read in the Indian papers that reached
me in Switzerland about Lalaji’s charges I was astounded. As
Congress Secretary, I knew all about our organisation; I had
myself been instrumental in getting the Kabul Committee affil-
ated (Deshbandhu Das had taken the initiative in the matter); and though I did not then know (as I do not now know) the details of the charges, I could say from their general nature that they could have no foundation so far as the Congress was concerned. I do not know how Lalaji was misled in the matter. He may have relied on various rumours, and I think he must have been influenced by the talk he had recently had with Moulvi Obaidulla, although there was nothing in that talk which seemed extraordinary to me. But elections are extraordinary phenomena. They have a curious way of upsetting tempers and ordinary standards. The more I see of them the more I wonder, and a wholly undemocratic distaste of them grows within me.

But, personalities apart, the rise of the Nationalist Party, or some such party, was inevitable owing to the growing communal temper of the country. On the one side, there were the Muslim fears of a Hindu majority; on the other side, Hindu resentment at being bullied, as they conceived it, by the Muslims. Many a Hindu felt that there was too much of the stand-up-and-deliver about the Muslim attitude, too much of an attempt to extort special privileges with the threat of going over to the other side. Because of this, the Hindu Mahasabha rose to some importance, representing as it did Hindu nationalism, Hindu communalism opposing Muslim communalism. The aggressive activities of the Mahasabha acted on and stimulated still further this Muslim communalism, and so action and reaction went on, and in the process the communal temperature of the country went up. Essentially this was a question between the majority group in the country and a big minority. But, curiously enough, in some parts of the country the position was reversed. In the Punjab and Sind the Hindus as well as the Sikhs were in a minority, the Muslims in a majority; and these provincial minorities had as much fear of being crushed by a hostile majority in those provinces as the Muslims had in the whole of India. Or, to be more accurate, the middle-class job-seekers in each group were afraid of being ousted by the other group, and to some extent the holders of vested interests were afraid of radical changes affecting those interests.

The Swaraj Party suffered because of this growth of communalism. Some of its Muslim members dropped off and joined the communal organisations, and some of its Hindu members drifted off to the Nationalist Party. Malaviyaji and Lala Lajpat Rai made a powerful combination so far as the Hindu electorate was concerned, and Lalaji had great influence in the Punjab, the storm centre of communalism. On the side of the Swaraj Party
or Congress, the chief burden of fighting the elections fell on my father. C. R. Das was no longer there to share it with him. He enjoyed a fight, or at any rate never shirked it, and the growing strength of the opposition made him throw all his great energy into the election campaign. He received and gave hard blows; little grace was shown or quarter given by either party. That election left a trail of bitter memories.

The Nationalist Party met with a great measure of success, but this success definitely lowered the political tone of the Legislative Assembly. The centre of gravity moved more to the right. The Swaraj Party had itself been the right wing of the Congress. In its attempts to add to its strength, it had allowed many a doubtful person to creep in, and had suffered in quality because of this. The Nationalist Party followed the same policy, only on a lower plane, and a motley crew of title-holders, big landholders, industrialists and others, who had little to do with politics, came into its ranks.

The end of that year 1926 was darkened by a great tragedy, which sent a thrill of horror all over India. It showed to what depths communal passion could reduce our people. Swami Shraddhanand was assassinated by a fanatic as he lay in bed. What a death for a man who had bared his chest to the bayonets of the Gurkhas and marched to meet their fire! Nearly eight years earlier he, an Arya Samajist leader, had stood in the pulpit of the great Jame Musjid of Delhi and preached to a mighty gathering of Muslims and Hindus of unity and India’s freedom. And that great multitude had greeted him with loud cries of Hindu-Musulman-ki-jai, and outside in the streets they had jointly sealed that cry with their blood. And now he lay dead, killed by a fellow-countryman, who thought, no doubt, that he was doing a meritorious deed, which would lead him to paradise.

Always I have admired sheer physical courage, the courage to face physical suffering in a good cause, even unto death. Most of us, I suppose, admire it. Swami Shraddhanand had an amazing amount of that fearlessness. His tall and stately figure, wrapped in a sanyasin’s robe, perfectly erect in spite of advanced years, eyes flashing, sometimes a shadow of irritation or anger at the weakness of others passing over his face—how I remember that vivid picture, and how often it has come back to me!