seasonal gains for the peasants do not amount to much, but I have no doubt that, such as they were, they were largely due to the persistent efforts of the U.P. Congress Committee on behalf of the peasantry. The general body of the peasantry benefited temporarily, but the bravest of them were among the casualties in that struggle.

When the U.P. Special Ordinance was issued in December 1931 an explanatory statement accompanied it. This statement, as well as the statements accompanying other Ordinances, contained many half-truths and untruths which were to serve as propaganda. It was all part of the initial ballyhoo, and we had no chance to answer them or even contradict their glaring errors. One particularly glaring attempt, in which a falsehood was sought to be fastened on Sherwani, was corrected by him just before his arrest. These various statements and apologies of Government made curious reading. They showed how rattled Government was, how its nerve was shaken. Reading the other day of a decree issued by the Bourbon Charles III of Spain, banishing the Jesuits from his realm, I was forcibly reminded of these decrees and ordinances of the British Government in India and of the reasons given for them. In this decree, issued in February 1767, the King justified his action by “extremely grave reasons relative to my duty to maintain subordination, tranquillity, and justice among my subjects, and other urgent, just, and necessary reasons which I reserve in my royal breast.”

So the real reasons for the Ordinances remained locked up in the Viceregal breast or in the imperialist breasts of his counsellors, though they were obvious enough. The reasons given out officially helped us to understand the new technique of propaganda which the British Government in India was perfecting. Some months later we learnt of semi-official pamphlets and leaflets being widely distributed all over the rural areas containing quite an astonishing number of misrepresentations and, in particular, hinting at the fact that the Congress had caused the fall in agricultural prices which had hurt the peasantry so much. This was a remarkable tribute to the power of the Congress, which could bring about a world depression! But the lie was spread persistently and assiduously, in the hope that the prestige of the Congress might suffer.

In spite of all this, the response of the peasantry in some of the principal districts of the U.P. to the call for civil disobedience, which inevitably got mixed up with the dispute about fair rent and remissions, was very fine. It was a far bigger and more disciplined response than in 1930. To begin with there
was good humour about it too. A delightful story came to us of a visit of a police party to the village Bakulia in Rae Bareli district. They had gone to attach goods for non-payment of rent. The village was relatively prosperous, and its residents were men of some spirit. They received the revenue and police officials with all courtesy and, leaving the doors of all the houses open, invited them to go wherever they wanted to. Some attachments of cattle, etc., were made. The villagers then offered pan supari to the police and revenue officials, who retired looking very small and rather shamefaced! But this was a rare and unusual occurrence, and very soon there was little of humour or charity or human kindness to be seen. Poor Bakulia could not escape punishment for its spirit because of its humour.

For many months in these particular districts rent was withheld by the tenantry, and it was only early in summer probably that collections began to dribble in. Large numbers of arrests were of course made, but this was almost in spite of Government's policy. Generally arrests were confined to special workers and village leaders. The others were merely beaten. Beating was found to be superior to prison as well as shooting. It could be repeated whenever necessary and, taking place in remote rural areas, attracted little outside attention; nor did it add to the swelling number of prisoners. There were of course large numbers of ejectments, attachments and sale of cattle and property. With terrible anguish, the peasants watched the little they possessed being taken away and disposed of for ridiculous prices.

Swaraj Bhawan had been seized by the Government, in common with numerous other buildings all over the country. All the valuable equipment and material belonging to the Congress Hospital, which was functioning in Swaraj Bhawan, was also seized. For a few days the hospital ceased functioning altogether, but then an open-air dispensary was established in a park near by. Later the hospital, or rather dispensary, moved to a small house adjoining Swaraj Bhawan, and there it functioned for nearly two and a half years.

There was some talk of our dwelling-house, Anand Bhawan, also being taken possession of by the Government, for I had refused to pay a large amount due as income tax. This tax had been assessed on father's income in 1930, and he had not paid it that year because of civil disobedience. In 1931, after the Delhi Pact, I had an argument with the income tax authorities about it, but ultimately I agreed to pay and did pay an instal-
ment. Just then came the Ordinances, and I decided to pay no more. It seemed to me utterly wrong, and even immoral, for me to ask the peasants to withhold payment of rent and revenue and to pay income tax myself. I expected, therefore, that our house would be attached by the Government. I disliked this idea intensely, as it would have meant my mother being turned out; our books, papers, goods and chattels and many things that we valued for personal and sentimental reasons going into strange hands and perhaps being lost; and our National Flag being pulled down and the Union Jack put up instead. At the same time I was attracted to the idea of losing the house. I felt that this would bring me nearer to the peasantry, who were being dispossessed, and would hearten them. From the point of view of our movement it was certainly a desirable thing. But the Government decided otherwise and did not touch the house, perhaps because of consideration for my mother, perhaps because they judged rightly that it would give an impetus to civil disobedience. Many months afterwards some odd railway shares of mine were discovered and attached, for non-payment of income tax. My motor-car, as well as my brother-in-law's, had been previously attached and sold.

One feature of these early months pained me greatly. This was the hauling down of our National Flag by various municipalities and public bodies, and especially by the Calcutta Corporation which was said to have a majority of Congress members. The flag was taken down under pressure from the police and the Government, which threatened severe action in case of non-compliance. This action would have probably meant a suspension of the municipality or punishment of its members. Organisations with vested interests are apt to be timid, and perhaps it was inevitable that they should act as they did, but nevertheless it hurt. That flag had become a symbol to us of much that we held dear, and under its shadow we had taken many a pledge to protect its honour. To pull it down with our own hands, or to have it pulled down at our behest, seemed not only a breaking of that pledge but almost a sacrilege. It was a submission of the spirit, a denial of the truth in one; an affirmation, in the face of superior physical might, of the false. And those who submitted in this way lowered the morale of the nation, and injured its self-respect.

It was not that they were expected to behave as heroes, and rush into the fire. It was wrong and absurd to blame any one for not being in the front rank and courting prison, or other
suffering or loss. Each one had many duties and responsibilities to shoulder, and no one else had a right to sit in judgment on him. But to sit or work in the background is one thing; to deny the truth, or what one conceives to be the truth, is a more serious matter. It was open to members of municipalities, when called upon to do anything against the national interest, to resign from their seats. As a rule they preferred to remain in those seats.

“But bees, on flowers alighting, cease their hum—
So, settling upon places, Whigs grow dumb!”

Perhaps it is unjust to criticise any one for his behaviour during a sudden crisis which threatens to overwhelm him. The nerve of the bravest fails them sometimes, as the World War demonstrated over and over again. Earlier still, in the great *Titanic* disaster of 1912, famous people, who could never have been associated with cowardice, escaped by bribing the crew, leaving others to drown. Very recently the fire on the *Morro Castle* revealed a shameful state of affairs. No one knows how he will behave in a similar crisis when the primeval instincts overpower reason and restraint. So we may not blame. But that should not prevent us from noting that falling away from right conduct, and from taking care in future that the steering-wheel of the ship of the nation is not put in hands that tremble and fail when the need is greatest. Worse still is the attempt to justify this failure and call it right conduct. That, surely, is a greater offence than the failure itself.

All struggles between rival forces depend greatly on morale and nerve. Even the bloodiest war depends upon them: “In the final event battles are won by nerves,” said Marshal Foch. Much more so are nerve and morale necessary in a non-violent struggle, and any one who, by his conduct, impairs that morale and shakes the nation’s nerve, does a serious disservice to the cause.

The months went by bringing their daily toll of good news and bad, and we adapted ourselves in our respective prisons, to our dull and monotonous routine. The National Week came—April 6th to 13th—and we knew that this would witness many an unusual happening. Much, indeed, happened then; but for me everything else paled before one occurrence. In Allahabad my mother was in a procession which was stopped by the police

1 Thomas Moore.
and later charged with lathis. When the procession had been halted some one brought her a chair, and she was sitting on this on the road at the head of the procession. Some people who were especially looking after her, including my secretary, were arrested and removed, and then came the police charge. My mother was knocked down from her chair, and was hit repeatedly on the head with canes. Blood came out of an open wound in the head; she fainted, and lay on the roadside, which had now been cleared of the processionists and public. After some time she was picked up and brought by a police officer in his car to Anand Bhawan.

That night a false rumour spread in Allahabad that my mother had died. Angry crowds gathered together, forgot about peace and non-violence, and attacked the police. There was firing by the police, resulting in the death of some people.

When the news of all this came to me some days after the occurrence (for we had a weekly paper), the thought of my frail old mother lying bleeding on the dusty road obsessed me, and I wondered how I would have behaved if I had been there. How far would my non-violence have carried me? Not very far, I fear, for that sight would have made me forget the long lesson I had tried to learn for more than a dozen years; and I would have recked little of the consequences, personal or national.

Slowly she recovered, and when she came to see me next month in Bareilly Gaol she was still bandaged up. But she was full of joy and pride at having shared with our volunteer boys and girls the privilege of receiving cane and lathi blows. Her recovery, however, was more apparent than real, and it seems that the tremendous shaking that she received at her age upset her system entirely and brought into prominence deep-seated troubles, which a year later assumed dangerous proportions.
IN BAREILLY AND DEHRA DUN GAOLS

After six weeks in Naini Prison I was transferred to the Bareilly District Gaol. I was again keeping indifferent health and, much to my annoyance, I used to get a daily rise in temperature. After four months spent in Bareilly, when the summer temperature was almost at its highest, I was again transferred, this time to a cooler place, Dehra Dun Gaol, at the foot of the Himalayas. There I remained, without a break, for fourteen and a half months, almost to the end of my two-year term. News reached me, of course, from interviews and letters and selected newspapers, but I was wholly out of touch with much that was happening and had only a hazy notion of the principal events.

When I was discharged I was kept busy with personal affairs as well as the political situation as I found it then. After a little more than five months of freedom I was brought back to prison, and here I am still. Thus, during the last three years I have been mostly in prison and out of touch with events, and I have had little opportunity of making myself acquainted in any detail with all that has happened during this period. I have still the vaguest of knowledge as to what took place behind the scenes at the second Round Table Conference, which was attended by Gandhiji. I have had no chance so far of a talk with him on this subject, nor of discussing with him or others much that has happened since.

I do not know enough of those years 1932 and 1933 to trace the development of our national struggle. But I knew the stage and the background well and the actors also, and had an instinctive appreciation of many a little thing that happened. I could thus form a fair notion of the general course of the struggle. For the first four months or so civil disobedience functioned strongly and aggressively, and then there was a gradual decline with occasional bursts. A direct action struggle can only remain at a revolutionary pitch for a very short time. It cannot remain static; it has to go up or down. Civil disobedience, after the first flush, went down slowly, but it could carry on at a lower level for long periods. In spite of outlawry, the All-India Congress organisation continued to function with a fair measure of success. It kept in touch
with its provincial workers, sent instructions, received reports, occasionally gave financial assistance.

The provincial organisations also continued with more or less success. I do not know much about other provinces during those years when I was in prison, but I gathered some information about U.P. activities after my release. The U.P. Congress office functioned regularly right through 1932 and till the middle of 1933, when civil disobedience was first suspended by the then acting Congress president, on the advice of Gandhiji. During this period frequent directions were sent to districts, printed or cyclostyled bulletins issued regularly, district work inspected from time to time, and our National Service workers paid their allowances. Much of this work was necessarily secret work; but the secretary of the Provincial Committee in charge of the office, etc., was always working as such, publicly, till he was arrested and removed and another took his place.

Our experience of 1930 and 1932 showed that it was easily possible for us to organise a secret network of information all over India. Without much effort, and in spite of some opposition, good results were produced. But many of us had the feeling that secrecy did not fit in with the spirit of civil disobedience, and produced a damping effect on the mass consciousness. As a small part of a big open mass-movement it was useful, but there was always the danger, especially when the movement was declining, of a few more or less ineffective secret activities taking the place of the mass-movement. Gandhiji condemned all secrecy in July 1933.

Agrarian no-tax movements flourished for some time in Gujrat and the Karnatak, apart from the U.P. In both Gujrat and Karnatak there were peasant proprietors who refused to pay their revenue to the Government, and suffered greatly because of this. Some effort, necessarily inadequate, was made on behalf of the Congress to help the sufferers and relieve the misery caused by the ejectments and confiscation of property. In the U.P. no effort to help the dispossessed tenantry in this way was made by the Provincial Congress. The problem here was a much vaster one (tenants are far more numerous than peasant proprietors), the area was much bigger, and the provincial resources were very limited. It was quite impossible for us to help scores of thousands who had suffered because of the campaign, and equally difficult for us to draw a line between them and the vast numbers who were always on the starvation line. To help a few thousands only would have led to trouble and bad blood. So we decided not to give financial assis-
tance, and we broadcasted this fact right at the beginning, and our position was thoroughly appreciated by the peasantry. It was wonderful how much they put up with without complaint or murmur. Of course, we tried to help individuals where we could, especially the wives and children of workers who went to prison. Such is the poverty of this unhappy country that even one rupee per month was a godsend.

Right through this period the U.P. Provincial Committee (which was, of course, a proscribed body) continued to pay the usual meagre allowances to its paid workers; and if they went to prison, as all of them did in turn, to support their families. This was a major item in its budget. Then came the charge for printing and duplicating leaflets and bulletins; this also was a heavy charge. Travelling expenses formed another principal item, and some grants had to be given to the less prosperous districts. In spite of all these and other expenses during a period of intensive mass-struggle against a powerful and entrenched government, the total expenditure of the U.P. Provincial Committee for twenty months from January 1932 to the end of August 1933 were about Rs. 63,000, that is about Rs. 3140 per month. (This figure does not include the separate expenditure of some of the strong and more prosperous district committees like Allahabad, Agra, Cawnpore, Lucknow.) As a province, the U.P. kept in the very forefront of the struggle right through 1932 and 1933, and I think, considering the results obtained, it is remarkable how little it spent. It would be interesting to compare with this modest figure the provincial Government's special expenditure to crush civil disobedience. I imagine (though I have no knowledge) that some of the other major Congress provinces spent much more. But Behar was, from the Congress view-point, an even poorer province than its neighbour, the U.P., and yet its part in the struggle was a splendid one.

So, gradually, the civil disobedience movement declined; but still it carried on, not without distinction. Progressively it ceased to be a mass movement. Apart from the severity of Government repression, the first severe blow to it came in September 1932 when Gandhi fasted for the first time on the Harjeev issue. That fast roused mass consciousness, but it directed it in another direction. Civil disobedience was finally killed for all practical purposes by the suspension of it in May 1933. It continued after that more in theory than in practice. It is no doubt true that, even without that suspension, it would have gradually petered out. India was numbed by the violence
and harshness of repression. The nervous energy of the nation as a whole was for the moment exhausted, and it was not being re-charged. Individually there were still many who could carry on civil resistance, but they functioned in a somewhat artificial atmosphere.

It was not pleasant for us in prison to learn of this slow decay of a great movement. And yet very few of us had expected a flashing success. There was always an odd chance that something flashing might happen if there was an irrepressible upheaval of the masses. But that was not to be counted upon, and so we looked forward to a long struggle with ups and downs and many a stalemate in between, and a progressive strengthening of the masses in discipline and united action and ideology. Sometimes in those early days of 1932 I almost feared a quick and spectacular success, for this seemed to lead inevitably to a compromise leaving the ‘Governmentarians’ and opportunists at the top. The experience of 1931 had been revealing. Success to be worth while should come when the people generally were strong enough and clear enough in their ideas to take advantage of it. Otherwise the masses would fight and sacrifice and, at the psychological moment, others would step in gracefully and gather the spoils. There was grave danger of this, because in the Congress itself there was a great deal of loose thinking and no clear ideas as to what system of government or society we were driving at. Some Congressmen, indeed, did not think of changing the existing system of government much, but simply of replacing the British or alien element in it by the swadeshi brand.

The ‘Governmentarians’ of the pure variety did not matter much, for their first article of faith was subservience to the State authority whatever it was. But even the Liberals and Responsivists accepted the ideology of the British Government almost completely; and their occasional criticism, such as it was, was thus wholly ineffective and valueless. It was well known that they were legalists at any price, and as such they could not welcome civil resistance. But they went much further, and more or less ranged themselves on the side of the Government. They were almost silent and rather frightened spectators of the complete suppression of civil liberties of all kinds. It was not merely a question of civil disobedience being countered and suppressed by the Government, but of all political life and public activity being stopped, and hardly a voice was raised against this. Those who usually stood for these liberties were involved in the struggle itself, and they took the penalties for refusing to
submit to the State's coercion. Others were cowed into abject submission, and hardly raised their voices in criticism. Mild criticism, when it was indulged in, was apologetic in tone and was accompanied by strong denunciation of the Congress and those who were carrying on the struggle.

In Western countries a strong public opinion has been built up in favour of civil liberties, and any limitation of them is resented and opposed. (Perhaps this is past history now.) There are large numbers of people who, though not prepared to participate in strong and direct action themselves, care enough for the liberty of speech and writing, Assembly and Organisation, person and Press, to agitate for them ceaselessly and thus help to check the tendency of the State to encroach upon them. The Indian Liberals claim to some extent to carry on the traditions of British Liberalism (although they have nothing in common with them except the name), and might have been expected to put up some intellectual opposition to the suppression of these liberties, for they suffered from this also. But they played no such part. It was not for them to say with Voltaire: "I disagree absolutely with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

It is not perhaps fair to blame them for this, for they have never stood out as the champions of democracy or liberty, and they had to face a situation in which a loose word might have got them into trouble. It is more pertinent to observe the reactions of those ancient lovers of liberty, the British Liberals, and the new socialists of the British Labour Party to repression in India. They managed to contemplate the Indian scene with a certain measure of equanimity, painful as it was, and sometimes their satisfaction at the success of the "scientific application of repression," as a correspondent of the Manchester Guardian put it, was evident. Recently the National Government of Great Britain has sought to pass a Sedition Bill, and a great deal of criticism has been directed to it, especially from Liberals and Labourites on the ground, inter alia, that it restricts free speech and gives magistrates the right of issuing warrants for searches. Whenever I read this criticism I sympathised with it, and I had at the same time the picture of India before me, where the actual laws in force to-day are approximately a hundred times worse than the British Sedition Bill seeks to enact. I wondered how it was that Britishers who strain at a gnat in England could swallow a camel in India without turning a hair. Indeed I have always wondered at and admired the astonishing knack of the British people of
making their moral standards correspond with their material interests, and of seeing virtue in everything that advances their imperial designs. Mussolini and Hitler are condemned by them in perfect good faith and with righteous indignation for their attacks on liberty and democracy; and, in equal good faith, similar attacks and deprivation of liberty in India seem to them as necessary, and the highest moral reasons are advanced to show that true disinterested behaviour on their part demands them.

While fire raged all over India and men’s and women’s souls were put to the test, far away in London the chosen ones forgathered to draw up a constitution for India. There was the third Round Table Conference in 1932 and numerous committees, and large numbers of members of the Legislative Assembly angled for membership of these committees so that they might thus combine public duty with private pleasure. Quite a crowd went at the public expense. Later, in 1933, came the Joint Committee with its Indian assessors, and again free passages were provided by a benevolent Government to those who went as witnesses. Many people crossed the seas again at public cost in their earnest desire to serve India, and some, it was stated, even haggled for more passage money.

It was not surprising to see these representatives of vested interests, frightened by the mass movements of India in action, gathering together in London under the aegis of British imperialism. But it hurt the nationalism in us to see any Indian behave in this way when the mother country was involved in a life-and-death struggle. And yet from one point of view it seemed to many of us a good thing, for it separated once and for all, as we thought (wrongly, it now appears), the reactionary from the progressive elements in India. This sifting would help in the political education of the masses, and make it clearer still to all concerned, that only through independence could we hope to face social issues and raise the burdens from the masses.

But it was surprising to find how far these people had alienated themselves, not only in their day-to-day lives, but morally and mentally, from the Indian masses. There were no links with them, no understanding of them or of that inner urge which was driving them to sacrifice and suffering. Reality for these distinguished statesmen consisted of one thing—British imperial power, which could not be successfully challenged and therefore should be accepted with good or bad grace. It did not seem to strike them that it was quite im-
possible for them to solve India's problem or draw up a real live constitution without the goodwill of the masses. Mr. J. A. Spender, in his recent *Short History of Our Times*, refers to the failure of the Irish Joint Conference of 1910 which sought to end the constitutional crisis. He says that the political leaders who were trying to find a constitution in the midst of a crisis were like men trying to insure a house when it is on fire. The fire in India in 1932 and 1933 was far greater than in Ireland in 1910, and even though the flames died down, the burning embers will remain for a long time, hot and unquenchable as India's will to freedom.

In India there was an amazing growth of the spirit of violence in official circles. The tradition was an old one, and the country had been governed by the British mainly as a police State. The overriding outlook even of the civilian ruler had been military; there was always a touch of a hostile army occupying alien and conquered soil. This mentality grew because of the serious challenge to the existing order. The occasional acts of terrorism in Bengal or elsewhere fed this official violence, and gave it some justification for its own acts. The various ordinances and the Government policy gave such tremendous power to the executive and the police, that in effect India was under Police Raj and there were hardly any checks.

To a greater or less degree all the provinces of India went through this fire of fierce repression, but the Frontier Province and Bengal suffered most. The Frontier Province had always been a predominantly military area, administered under semi-military regulations. Its strategic position was important, and the 'Redshirt' movement had thoroughly upset the Government. Military columns were very much in evidence in the 'pacification' of the province, and in dealing with 'recalcitrant villages'. It was a common practice all over India to impose heavy collective fines on villages, and occasionally (in Bengal especially) on towns. Punitive police were often stationed, and police excesses were inevitable when they had enormous powers and no checks. We had typical instances of the lawlessness and disorderliness of law and order.

Parts of Bengal presented the most extraordinary spectacle. Government treated the whole populations (or, to be exact, the Hindu population) as hostile, and everyone—man, woman, boy or girl between 12 and 25—had to carry identity cards. There were exterminations and internments in the mass, dress was regulated, schools were regulated or closed, bicycles were
not allowed, movements had to be reported to the police, curfew, sunset law, military marches, punitive police, collective fines, and a host of other rules and regulations. Large areas seemed to be in a continuous state of siege, and the inhabitants were little better than ticket-of-leave men and women under the strictest surveillance. Whether, from the point of view of the British Government, all these amazing provisions and regulations were necessary or not, it is not for me to judge. If they were not necessary, then that Government must be held guilty of a grave offence in oppressing and humiliating and causing great loss to the populations of whole areas. If they were necessary then surely that is the final verdict on British rule in India.

The spirit of violence pursued our people even within the gaols. The class division of prisoners was a farce, and often a torture for those who were put in an upper class. Very few went to these upper classes, and many a sensitive man and woman had to submit to conditions which were a continuing agony. The deliberate policy of Government seems to have been to make the lot of political prisoners worse than that of ordinary convicts. An Inspector-General of Prisons went to the length of issuing a confidential circular to all the prisons, pointing out that Civil Disobedience prisoners must be "dealt with grimly." Whipping became a frequent gaol punishment. On April 27, 1933, the Under Secretary for India stated in the House of Commons "that Sir Samuel Hoare was aware that over 500 persons in India were whipped during 1932 for offences in connection with the civil disobedience movement." It is not clear if this figure includes the many whappings in prisons for breaches of gaol discipline. As news of frequent whippings came to us in prison in 1932, I remembered our protest and our three-day fast in December 1930 against one or two odd instances of whipping. I had felt shocked then at the brutality of it, and now I was still shocked and there was a dull pain inside me, but it did not strike me that I should protest and fast again. I felt much more helpless in the matter. The mind gets blunted to

1 This circular was dated June 30, 1932, and it contained the following: "The Inspector-General impresses upon Superintendents and gaol subordinates the fact that there is no justification for preferential treatment in favour of Civil Disobedience Movement prisoners as such. This class require to be kept in their places and dealt with grimly."
brutality after a while. A bad thing has only to continue for long for the world to get used to it.

The hardest of labour was given to our men in prison—mills, oil-presses, etc.—and their lot was made as unbearable as possible in order to induce them to apologise and be released on an undertaking being given to Government. That was considered a great triumph for the gaol authorities.

Most of these gaol punishments fell to the lot of boys and young men, who resented coercion and humiliation. A fine and spirited lot of boys they were, full of self-respect and ‘pep’ and the spirit of adventure, the kind that in an English public school or university would have received every encouragement and praise. Here in India their youthful idealism and pride led them to fetters and solitary confinement and whipping.

The lot of our womenfolk in prison was especially hard and painful to contemplate. They were mostly middle-class women, accustomed to a sheltered life, and suffering chiefly from the many repressions and customs produced by a society dominated to his own advantage, by man. The call of freedom had always a double meaning for them, and the enthusiasm and energy with which they threw themselves into the struggle had no doubt their springs in the vague and hardly conscious, but nevertheless intense, desire to rid themselves of domestic slavery also. Excepting a very few, they were classed as ordinary prisoners and placed with the most degraded of companions, and often under horrid conditions. I was once lodged in a barrack next to a female enclosure, a wall separating us. In that enclosure there were, besides other convicts, some women political prisoners, including one who had been my hostess and in whose house I had once stayed. A high wall separated us, but it did not prevent me from listening in horror to the language and curses which our friends had to put up with from the women convict warders.

It was very noticeable that the treatment of political prisoners in 1932 and 1933 was worse than it had been two years earlier, in 1930. This could not have been due merely to the whims of individual officers, and the only reasonable inference seems to be that this was the deliberate policy of the Government. Even apart from political prisoners, the United Provinces Gaol Department had had the reputation in those years of being very much against anything that might savour of humanity. We had an interesting instance of this from an unimpeachable source. A distinguished gaol visitor, a gallant knight, not a rebel and a sedition-monger like us, but one whom the Govern-
ment had delighted to honour, paid us a visit once in prison. He told us that some months earlier he had visited another gaol, and in his inspection note had described the gaoler as a "humane disciplinarian." The gaoler in question begged him not to say anything about his humanity, as this was at a discount in official circles. But the knight insisted, as he could not conceive that any harm would befall the gaoler because of his description. Result: soon after the gaoler was transferred to a distant and out-of-the-way place, which was in the nature of a punishment to him.

Some gaolers, who were considered to be particularly fierce and unscrupulous, were promoted and given titles. Graft is such a universal phenomenon in gaols that hardly any one keeps clear of it. But my own experience, and that of many of my friends, has been that the worst offenders among the gaol staff are usually those who pose as strict disciplinarians.

I have been fortunate in gaol and outside, and almost every one I have come across has given me courtesy and consideration, even when perhaps I did not deserve them. One incident in gaol, however, caused me and my people much pain. My mother, Kamala and Indira, my daughter, had gone to interview my brother-in-law, Ranjit Pandit, in the Allahabad District Gaol and, for no fault of theirs, they were insulted and hustled out by the gaoler. I was grieved when I learnt of this, and the reaction of the Provincial Government to it shocked me. To avoid the possibility of my mother being insulted by gaol officials, I decided to give up all interviews. For nearly seven months, while I was in Dehra Dun Gaol, I had no interview.
Two of us were transferred together from the Bareilly District Gaol to the Dehra Dun Gaol—Govind Ballabh Pant and I. To avoid the possibility of a demonstration, we were not put on the train at Bareilly, but at a wayside station fifty miles out. We were taken secretly by motor-car at night, and, after many months of seclusion, that drive through the cool night air was a rare delight.

Before we left Bareilly Gaol, a little incident took place which moved me then and is yet fresh in my memory. The Superintendent of Police of Bareilly, an Englishman, was present there, and, as I got into the car, he handed to me rather shyly a packet which he told me contained old German illustrated magazines. He said that he had heard that I was learning German and so he had brought these magazines for me. I had never met him before, nor have I seen him since. I do not even know his name. This spontaneous act of courtesy and the kindly thought that prompted it touched me and I felt very grateful to him.

During that long midnight drive I mused over the relations of Englishmen and Indians, of ruler and ruled, of official and non-official, of those in authority and those who have to obey. What a great gulf divided the two races, and how they distrusted and disliked each other. But more than the distrust and the dislike was the ignorance of each other, and, because of this, each side was a little afraid of the other and was constantly on its guard in the other’s presence. To each, the other appeared as a sour-looking, unamiable creature, and neither realised that there was decency and kindliness behind the mask. As the rulers of the land, with enormous patronage at their command, the English had attracted to themselves crowds of cringing place-hunters and opportunists, and they judged of India from these unsavoury specimens. The Indian saw the Englishman function only as an official with all the inhumanity of the machine and with all the passion of a vested interest trying to preserve itself. How different was the behaviour of a person acting as an individual and obeying his own impulses from his behaviour as an official or a unit in an army. The soldier, stiffening to attention, drops his humanity, and, acting as an automaton, shoots and kills inoffensive and harmless persons who have done him no ill. So also, I thought, the police officer who would hesitate to do an unkindness to an
individual would, the day after, direct a lathi charge on innocent people. He would not think of himself as an individual then, nor will he consider as individuals those crowds whom he beats down or shoots.

As soon as one begins to think of the other side as a mass or a crowd, the human link seems to go. We forget that crowds also consist of individuals, of men and women and children, who love and hate and suffer. An average Englishman, if he was frank, would probably confess that he knows some quite decent Indians, but they are exceptions, and as a whole Indians are a detestable crowd. The average Indian would admit that some Englishmen whom he knows were admirable, but, apart from these few, the English were an overbearing, brutal, and thoroughly bad lot. Curious how each person judges of the other race, not from the individual with whom he has come in contact, but from others about whom he knows very little or nothing at all.

Personally, I have been very fortunate and, almost invariably, I have received courtesy from my own countrymen as well as from the English. Even my gaolers and the policemen, who have arrested me or escorted me as a prisoner from place to place, have been kind to me, and much of the bitterness of conflict and the sting of gaol life has been toned down because of this human touch. It was not surprising that my own countrymen should treat me so, for I had gained a measure of notoriety and popularity among them. Even for Englishmen I was an individual and not merely one of the mass, and, I imagine, the fact that I had received my education in England, and especially my having been to an English public school, brought me nearer to them. Because of this, they could not help considering me as more or less civilised after their own pattern, however perverted my public activities appeared to be. Often I felt a little embarrassed and humiliated because of this special treatment when I compared my lot with that of most of my colleagues.

Despite all these advantages that I had, gaol was gaol, and the oppressive atmosphere of the place was sometimes almost unbearable. The very air of it was full of violence and meanness and graft and untruth; there was either cringing or cursing. A person who was at all sensitive was in a continuous state of tension. Trivial occurrences would upset one. A piece of bad news in a letter, some item in the newspaper, would make one almost ill with anxiety or anger for a while. Outside there was always relief in action, and various interests and activities pro-
duced an equilibrium of the mind and body. In prison there was no outlet and one felt bottled up and repressed, and, inevitably, one took one-sided and rather distorted views of happenings. Illness in gaol was particularly distressing.

And yet I managed to accustom myself to the gaol routine, and with physical exercise and fairly hard mental work kept fit. Whatever the value of work and exercise might be outside, they are essential in gaol, for without them one is apt to go to pieces. I adhered to a strict time-table and, in order to keep up to the mark, I carried on with as many normal habits as I could, such as the daily shave (I was allowed a safety razor). I mention this minor matter because, as a rule, people gave it up and slacked in other ways. After a hard day’s work, the evening found me pleasantly tired and sleep was welcomed.

And so the days passed, and the weeks and the months. But sometimes a month would stick terribly and would not end, or so it seemed. And sometimes I would feel bored and fed up and angry with almost everything and everybody—with my companions in prison, with the gaol staff, with people outside for something they had done or not done, with the British Empire (but this was a permanent feeling), and above all with myself. I would become a bundle of nerves, very susceptible to various humours caused by gaol life. Fortunately I recovered soon from these humours.

Interview days were the red-letter days in gaol. How one longed for them and waited for them and counted the days! And after the excitement of the interview there was the inevitable reaction and a sense of emptiness and loneliness. If, as sometimes happened, the interview was not a success, because of some bad news which upset me, or some other reason, I would feel miserable afterwards. There were gaol officials present of course at the interviews, but two or three times at Bareilly there was in addition a C.I.D. man present with paper and pencil, eagerly taking down almost every word of the conversation. I found this exceedingly irritating, and these interviews were complete failures.

And then I gave up these precious interviews because of the treatment my mother and wife had received in the course of an interview in the Allahabad Gaol and afterwards from the Government. For nearly seven months I had no interview. It was a dreary time for me, and when at the end of that period I decided to resume interviews and my people came to see me, I was almost intoxicated with the joy of it. My sister’s little children also came to see me, and when a tiny one wanted to
mount on my shoulder, as she used to do, it was more than my emotions could stand. That touch of home life, after the long yearning for human contacts, upset me.

When interviews stopped, the fortnightly letters from home or from some other gaol (for both my sisters were in prison) became all the more precious and eagerly expected. If the letter did not come on the appointed day I was worried. And yet when it did come, I almost hesitated to open it. I played about with it as one does with an assured pleasure, and at the back of my mind there was also a trace of fear lest the letter contain any news or reference which might annoy me. Letter writing and receiving in gaol were always serious incursions on a peaceful and untroubled existence. They produced an emotional state which was disturbing, and for a day or two afterwards one’s mind wandered and it was difficult to concentrate on the day’s work.

In Naini Prison and Bareilly Gaol I had several companions. In Dehra Dun there were three of us to begin with—Govind Ballabh Pant, Kunwar Anand Singh of Kashipur and I—but Pantji was discharged after a couple of months on the expiry of his six months. Two others joined us later. By the beginning of January 1933 all my companions had left me and I was alone. For nearly eight months, till my discharge at the end of August, I lived a solitary life in Dehra Dun Gaol with hardly any one to talk to, except some member of the gaol staff for a few minutes daily. This was not technically solitary confinement, but it was a near approach to it, and it was a dreary period for me. Fortunately I had resumed my interviews, and they brought some relief. As a special favour, I suppose, I was allowed to receive fresh flowers from outside and to keep a few photographs, and they cheered me greatly. Ordinarily, flowers and photographs are not permitted, and on several occasions I have not been allowed to receive the flowers that had been sent for me. Attempts to brighten up the cells were not encouraged, and I remember a superintendent of a gaol once objecting to the manner in which a companion of mine, whose cell was next to mine, had arranged his toilet articles. He was told that he must not make his cell look attractive and “luxurious”. The articles of luxury were: a tooth brush, tooth paste, fountain-pen ink, a bottle of hair oil, a brush and comb, and perhaps one or two other little things.

One begins to appreciate the value of the little things of life in prison. One’s belongings are so few and they cannot easily be added to or replaced, and one clings to them and gathers up odd bits of things which, in the world outside, would go to the
waste-paper basket. The property sense does not leave one even when there is nothing worth while to own and keep.

Sometimes a physical longing would come for the soft things of life—bodily comfort, pleasant surroundings, the company of friends, interesting conversation, games with children. . . . A picture or a paragraph in a newspaper would bring the old days vividly before one, carefree days of youth, and a nostalgia would seize one, and the day would be passed in restlessness.

I used to spin a little daily, for I found some manual occupation soothing and a relief from too much intellectual work. My main occupation, however, was reading and writing. I could not have all the books I wanted, as there were restrictions and a censorship, and the censors were not always very competent for the job. Spengler's *Decline of the West* was held up because the title looked dangerous and seditious. But I must not complain, for I had, on the whole, a goodly variety of books. Again I seem to have been a favoured person, and many of my colleagues (A Class prisoners) had the greatest difficulty in getting books on current topics. In Benares Gaol, I was told, even the official White Paper, containing the British Government's constitutional proposals, was not allowed in, as it dealt with political matters. The only books that British officials heartily recommended were religious books or novels. It is wonderful how dear to the heart of the British Government is the subject of religion and how impartially it encourages all brands of it.

When the most ordinary civil liberties have been curtailed in India, it is hardly pertinent to talk of a prisoner's rights. And yet the subject is worthy of consideration. If a court of law sentences a person to imprisonment, does it follow that not only his body but also his mind should be incarcerated? Why should not the minds of prisoners be free even though their bodies are not? Those in charge of the prison administrations in India will no doubt be horrified at such a question, for their capacity for new ideas and sustained thought is usually limited. Censorship is bad enough at any time and is partisan and stupid. In India it deprives us of a great deal of modern literature and advanced journals and newspapers. The list of proscribed books is extensive and is frequently added to. To add to all this, the prisoner has to suffer a second and a separate censorship, and thus many books and newspapers that can be legally purchased and read outside the prison may not reach him.

Some time ago this question arose in the United States, in the famous Sing Sing Prison of New York, where some Communist newspapers had been banned. The feeling against Communists
is very strong among the ruling classes in America, but in spite of this the prison authorities agreed that the inmates of the prison could receive any publication which they desired, including Communist newspapers and magazines. The sole exception made by the Warden was in the case of cartoons which he regarded as inflammatory.

It is a little absurd to discuss this question of freedom of mind in prison in India when, as it happens, the vast majority of the prisoners are not allowed any newspapers or writing materials. It is not a question of censorship but of total denial. Only A Class (or in Bengal, Division I) prisoners are allowed writing materials as a matter of course, and not even all these are allowed daily newspapers. The daily newspaper allowed is of the Government’s choice. B and C Class prisoners, politicals and non-politics, are not supposed to have writing materials. The former may sometimes get them as a very special privilege, which is frequently withdrawn. Probably the proportion of A Class prisoners to the others is one to a thousand, and they might well be excluded in considering the lot of prisoners in India. But it is well to remember that even these favoured A Class convicts have far less privileges in regard to books and newspapers than the ordinary prisoners in most civilised countries.

For the rest, the 999 in every thousand, two or three books are permitted at a time, but conditions are such that they cannot always take advantage of this privilege. Writing or the taking of notes of books read are dangerous pastimes in which they must not indulge. This deliberate discouragement of intellectual development is curious and revealing. From the point of view of reclaiming a prisoner and of making him a fit citizen, his mind should be approached and diverted, and he should be made literate and taught some craft. But this point of view has perhaps not struck the prison authorities in India. Certainly it has been conspicuous by its absence in the United Provinces. Recently attempts has been made to teach reading and writing to the boys and young men in prison, but they are wholly ineffective, and the men in charge of them have no competence. Sometimes it is said that convicts are averse to learning. My own experience has been the exact opposite, and I found many of them, who came to me for the purpose, to have a perfect passion for learning to read and write. We used to teach such convicts as came our way, and they worked hard; and sometimes when I woke up in the middle of the night I was surprised to find one or two of them sitting by a dim
lantern inside their barrack, learning their lessons for the next day.

So I occupied myself with my books, going from one type of reading to another, but usually sticking to ‘heavy’ books. Novels made one feel mentally slack, and I did not read many of them. Sometimes I would weary of too much reading, and then I would take to writing. My historical series of letters to my daughter kept me occupied right through my two-year term, and they helped me very greatly to keep mentally fit. To some extent I lived through the past I was writing about and almost forgot about my gaol surroundings.

Travel books were always welcome—records of old travellers, Hiuen Tsang, and Marco Polo, and Ibn Battuta and others, and moderns like Sven Hedin, with his journeys across the deserts of Central Asia, and Roerich, finding strange adventures in Tibet. Picture books also, especially of mountains and glaciers and deserts, for in prison one hungers for wide spaces and seas and mountains. I had some beautiful picture books of Mont Blanc, the Alps, and the Himalayas, and I turned to them often and gazed at the glaciers when the temperature of my cell or barrack was 115°F. or even more. An atlas was an exciting affair. It brought all manner of past memories and dreams of places we had visited and places we had wanted to go to. And the longing to go again to those haunts of past days, and visit all the other inviting marks and dots that represented great cities, and cross the shaded regions that were mountains, and the blue patches that were seas, and to see the beauties of the world, and watch the struggles and conflicts of a changing humanity—the longing to do all this would seize us and clutch us by the throat, and we would hurriedly and sorrowfully put the atlas by, and return to the well-known walls that surrounded us and the dull routine that was our daily lot.
ANIMALS IN PRISON

For fourteen and a half months I lived in my little cell or room in the Dehra Dun Gaol, and I began to feel as if I was almost a part of it. I was familiar with every bit of it; I knew every mark and dent on the whitewashed walls and on the uneven floor and the ceiling with its moth-eaten rafters. In the little yard outside I greeted little tufts of grass and odd bits of stone as old friends. I was not alone in my cell, for several colonies of wasps and hornets lived there, and many lizards found a home behind the rafters, emerging in the evenings in search of prey. If thoughts and emotions leave their traces behind in the physical surroundings, the very air of that cell must be thick with them, and they must cling to every object in that little space.

I had had better cells in other prisons, but in Dehra Dun I had one privilege which was very precious to me. The gaol proper was a very small one, and we were kept in an old lock-up outside the gaol walls, but within the gaol compound. This place was so small that there was no room to walk about in it, and so we were allowed, morning and evening, to go out and walk up and down in front of the gate, a distance of about a hundred yards. We remained in the gaol compound, but this coming outside the walls gave us a view of the mountains and the fields and a public road at some distance. This was not a special privilege for me; it was common for all the A and B Class prisoners kept at Dehra Dun. Within the compound, but outside the gaol walls, there was another small building called the European Lock-up. This had no enclosing wall, and a person inside the cell could have a fine view of the mountains and the life outside. European convicts and others kept here were also allowed to walk in front of the gaol gate every morning and evening.

Only a prisoner who has been confined for long behind high walls can appreciate the extraordinary psychological value of these outside walks and open views. I loved these outings, and I did not give them up even during the monsoon, when the rain came down for days in torrents and I had to walk in ankle-deep of water. I would have welcomed the outing in any place, but the sight of the towering Himalayas near by was an
added joy which went a long way to removing the weariness of prison. It was my good fortune that during the long period when I had no interviews, and when for many months I was quite alone, I could gaze at these mountains that I loved. I could not see the mountains from my cell, but my mind was full of them and I was ever conscious of their nearness, and a secret intimacy seemed to grow between us.

"Flocks of birds have flown high and away;
A solitary drift of cloud, too, has gone, wandering on.
And I sit alone with Ching-ting Peak, towering beyond.
We never grow tired of each other, the mountain and I."

I am afraid I cannot say with the poet, Li T'ai Po, that I never grew weary, even of the mountain; but that was a rare experience, and, as a rule, I found great comfort in its proximity. Its solidity and imperturbability looked down upon me with the wisdom of a million years, and mocked at my varying humours and soothed my fevered mind.

Spring was very pleasant in Dehra, and it was a far longer one than in the plains below. The winter had denuded almost all the trees of their leaves, and they stood naked and bare. Even four magnificent peepal trees, which stood in front of the gaol gate, much to my surprise, dropped nearly all their leaves. Gaunt and cheerless they stood there, till the spring air warmed them up again and sent a message of life to their innermost cells. Suddenly there was a stir both in the peepals and the other trees, and an air of mystery surrounded them as of secret operations going on behind the scenes; and I would be startled to find little bits of green peeping out all over them. It was a gay and cheering sight. And then, very rapidly, the leaves would come out in their millions and glisten in the sunlight and play about in the breeze. How wonderful is the sudden change from bud to leaf!

I had never noticed before that fresh mango leaves are reddish-brown, russet coloured, remarkably like the autumn tints on the Kashmir hills. But they change colour soon and become green.

The monsoon rains were always welcome, for they ended the summer heat. But one could have too much of a good thing, and Dehra Dun is one of the favoured haunts of the rain god. Within the first five or six weeks of the break of the monsoon we would have about fifty or sixty inches of rain, and it was not pleasant to sit cooped up in a little narrow place trying to
avoid the water dripping from the ceiling or rushing in from the windows.

Autumn again was pleasant, and so was the winter, except when it rained. With thunder and rain and piercing cold winds, one longed for a decent habitation and a little warmth and comfort. Occasionally there would be a hailstorm, with hailstones bigger than marbles coming down on the corrugated iron roofs and making a tremendous noise, something like an artillery bombardment.

I remember one day particularly; it was the 24th of December, 1932. There was a thunderstorm and rain all day, and it was bitterly cold. Altogether it was one of the most miserable days, from the bodily point of view, that I have spent in gaol. In the evening it cleared up suddenly, and all my misery departed when I saw all the neighbouring mountains and hills covered with a thick mantle of snow. The next day—Christmas Day—was lovely and clear, and there was a beautiful view of snow-covered mountains.

Prevented from indulging in normal activities we became more observant of nature's ways. We watched also the various animals and insects that came our way. As I grew more observant I noticed all manner of insects living in my cell or in the little yard outside. I realised that while I complained of loneliness, that yard, which seemed empty and deserted, was teeming with life. All these creeping or crawling or flying insects lived their life without interfering with me in any way, and I saw no reason why I should interfere with them. But there was continuous war between me and bed-bugs, mosquitoes, and, to some extent, flies. Wasps and hornets I tolerated, and there were hundreds of them in my cell. There had been a little tiff between us when, inadvertently I think, a wasp had stung me. In my anger I tried to exterminate the lot, but they put up a brave fight in defence of their temporary home, which probably contained their eggs, and I desisted and decided to leave them in peace if they did not interfere, with me any more. For over a year after that I lived in that cell surrounded by these wasps and hornets, and they never attacked me, and we respected each other.

Bats I did not like, but I had to endure them. They flew soundlessly in the evening dusk, and one could just see them against the darkening sky. Eerie things; I had a horror of them. They seemed to pass within an inch of one's face, and I was always afraid that they might hit me. Higher up in the air passed the big bats, the flying-foxes.
I used to watch the ants and the white ants and other insects by the hour. And the lizards as they crept about in the evenings and stalked their prey and chased each other, wagging their tails in a most comic fashion. Ordinarily they avoided wasps, but twice I saw them stalk them with enormous care and seize them from the front. I do not know if this avoidance of the sting was intentional or accidental.

Then there were squirrels, crowds of them if trees were about. They would become very venturesome and come right near us. In Lucknow Gaol I used to sit reading almost without moving for considerable periods, and a squirrel would climb up my leg and sit on my knee and have a look round. And then it would look into my eyes and realise that I was not a tree or whatever it had taken me for. Fear would disable it for a moment, and then it would scamper away. Little baby squirrels would sometimes fall down from the trees. The mother would come after them, roll them up into a little ball, and carry them off to safety. Occasionally the baby got lost. One of my companions picked up three of these lost baby squirrels and looked after them. They were so tiny that it was a problem how to feed them. The problem was, however, solved rather ingeniously. A fountain-pen filler, with a little cotton wool attached to it, made an efficient feeding bottle.

Pigeons abounded in all the gaols I went to, except in the mountain prison of Almora. There were thousands of them, and in the evenings the sky would be thick with them. Sometimes the gaol officials would shoot them down and feed on them. There were mainas, of course; they are to be found everywhere. A pair of them nested over my cell door in Dehra Dun, and I used to feed them. They grew quite tame, and if there was any delay in their morning or evening meal they would sit quite near me and loudly demand their food. It was amusing to watch their signs and listen to their impatient cries.

In Naini there were thousands of parrots, and large numbers of them lived in the crevices of my barrack walls. Their courtship and love-making was always a fascinating sight, and sometimes there were fierce quarrels between two male parrots over a lady parrot, who sat calmly by waiting for the result of the encounter and ready to grant her favours to the winner.

Dehra Dun had a variety of birds, and there was a regular jumble of singing and lively chattering and twittering, and high above it all came the koël's plaintive call. During the monsoon and just before it the Brain-Fever bird visited us, and I realised soon why it was so named. It was amazing the per-
sistence with which it went on repeating the same notes, in
daytime and at night, in sunshine and in pouring rain. We
could not see most of these birds, we could only hear them
as a rule, as there were no trees in our little yard. But I used
to watch the eagles and the kites gliding gracefully high up in
the air, sometimes swooping down and then allowing them-
selves to be carried up by a current of air. Often a horde of
wild duck would fly over our heads.

There was a large colony of monkeys in Bareilly Gaol and
their antics were always worth watching. One, incident im-
pressed me. A baby monkey managed to come down into our
barrack enclosure and he could not mount up the wall again.
The warder and some convict overseers and other prisoners
captured and tied a bit of string round his neck. The parents (presumably) of the little one saw all this from
the top of the high wall, and their anger grew. Suddenly one
of them, a huge monkey, jumped down and charged almost
right into the crowd which surrounded the baby monkey. It
was an extraordinary brave thing to do, for the warder and
C.O.'s had sticks and lathis and they were brandishing them
about, and there was quite a crowd of them. Reckless courage
triumphed, and the crowd of humans fled, terrified, leaving
their sticks behind them! The little monkey was rescued.

We had often animal visitors that were not welcome.
Scorpions were frequently found in our cells, especially after
a thunderstorm. It was surprising that I was never stung by
one, for I would come across them in the most unlikely places—
on my bed, or sitting on a book which I had just lifted up. I
kept a particularly black and poisonous-looking brute in a
bottle for some time, feeding him with flies, etc., and then
when I tied him up on a wall with a string he managed to
escape. I had no desire to meet him loose again, and so I
cleaned my cell out and hunted for him everywhere, but he
had vanished.

Three or four snakes were also found in my cells or near
them. News of one of them got out, and there were headlines
in the Press. As a matter of fact I welcomed the diversion.
Prison life is dull enough, and everything that breaks through
the monotony is appreciated. Not that I appreciate or welcome
snakes, but they do not fill me with terror as they do some
people. I am afraid of their bite, of course, and would protect
myself if I saw a snake. But there would be no feeling of
repulsion or overwhelming fright. Centipedes horrify me
much more; it is not so much fear as instinctive repulsion. In
Alipore Gaol in Calcutta I woke in the middle of the night and felt something crawling over my foot. I pressed a torch I had and I saw a centipede on the bed. Instinctively and with amazing rapidity I vaulted clear out of that bed and nearly hit the cell wall. I realised fully then what Pavlov's reflexes were.

In Dehra Dun I saw a new animal, or rather an animal which was new to me. I was standing at the gaol gate talking to the gaoler when we noticed a man outside carrying a strange animal. The gaoler sent for him, and I saw something between a lizard and a crocodile, about two feet long with claws and a scaly covering. This uncouth animal, which was very much alive, had been twisted round in a most peculiar way forming a kind of knot, and its owner had passed a pole through this knot and was merrily carrying it in this fashion. He called it a "Bo." When asked by the gaoler what he proposed to do with it, he replied with a broad smile that he would make bhujji—a kind of curry—out of it! He was a forest-dweller. Subsequently I discovered from reading F. W. Champion's book—The Jungle in Sunlight and Shadow—that this animal was the Pangolin.

Prisoners, especially long-term convicts, have to suffer most from emotional starvation. Often they seek some emotional satisfaction by keeping animal pets. The ordinary prisoner cannot keep them, but the convict overseers have a little more freedom and the gaol staff usually does not object. The commonest pets were squirrels and, strangely, mongooses. Dogs are not allowed in gaols, but cats seem to be encouraged. A little kitten made friends with me once. It belonged to a gaol official, and when he was transferred he took it away with him. I missed it. Although dogs are not allowed, I got tied up with some dogs accidentally in Dehra Dun. A gaol official had brought a bitch, and then he was transferred, and he deserted her. The poor thing became a homeless wanderer, living under culverts, picking up scraps from the warders, usually starving. As I was being kept in the lock-up outside the gaol proper, she used to come to me begging for food. I began to feed her regularly, and she gave birth to a litter of pups under a culvert. Many of these were taken away, but three remained and I fed them. One of the puppies fell ill with a violent distemper, and gave me a great deal of trouble. I nursed her with care, and sometimes I would get up a dozen times in the course of the night to look after her. She survived, and I was happy that my nursing had pulled her round.

I came in contact with animals far more in prison than I had
done outside. I had always been fond of dogs, and had kept some, but I could never look after them properly as other matters claimed my attention. In prison I was grateful for their company. Indiana do not, as a rule, approve of animals as household pets. It is remarkable that in spite of their general philosophy of non-violence to animals, they are often singularly careless and unkind to them. Even the cow, that favoured animal, though looked up to and almost worshipped by many Hindus and often the cause of riots, is not treated kindly. Worship and kindliness do not always go together.

Different countries have adopted different animals as symbols of their ambition or character—the eagle of the United States of America and of Germany, the lion and bulldog of England, the fighting-cock of France, the bear of old Russia. How far do these patron animals mould national character? Most of them are aggressive, fighting animals, beasts of prey. It is not surprising that the people who grow up with these examples before them should mould themselves consciously after them and strike up aggressive attitudes, and roar, and prey on others. Nor is it surprising that the Hindu should be mild and non-violent, for his patron animal is the cow.
XLVI

STRUGGLE

Outside, the struggle went on, and brave men and women continued to defy peacefully a powerful and entrenched government, though they knew that it was not for them to achieve in the present or the near future. And repression without break and with ever-increasing intensity, demonstrated the basis of British rule in India. There was no camouflage about it now, and this at least was some satisfaction to us. Bayonets were triumphant, but a great warrior had once said that “you can do everything with bayonets save sit on them.” It was better that we should be governed thus, we thought, than that we should sell our souls and submit to spiritual prostitution. We were physically helpless in prison, but we felt we served our cause even there, and served it better than many outside. Should we, because of our weakness, sacrifice the future of India to save ourselves? It was true that the limits of human vitality and human strength were narrow, and many an individual was physically disabled, or died, or fell out of the ranks, or even betrayed the cause. But the cause went on despite setbacks; there could be no failure if ideals remained undimmed and spirits undaunted. Real failure was a desertion of principle, a denial of our right, and an ignoble submission to wrong. Self-made wounds always took longer to heal than those caused by an adversary.

There was often a weariness at our weaknesses and at a world gone awry, and yet there was a measure of pride for our achievement. For our people had indeed behaved splendidly, and it was good to feel oneself to be a member of a gallant band.

During those years of civil disobedience two attempts were made to hold open Congress sessions, one at Delhi and the other at Calcutta. It was obvious that an illegal organisation could not meet normally and in peace, and any attempt at an open session meant conflict with the police. The meetings were in fact dispersed forcibly with the help of the lathi by the police, and large numbers of people were arrested. The extraordinary thing about these gatherings was the fact that thousands came from all parts of India as delegates to these illegal gatherings. I was glad to learn that people from the United
Provinces played a prominent part in both of them. My mother also insisted on going to the Calcutta session at the end of March 1933. She was arrested, however, together with Pandit Malaviya and others, and detained in prison for a few days at Asansol, on the way to Calcutta. I was amazed at the energy and vitality she showed, frail and ailing as she was. Prison was really of little consequence to her; she had gone through a harder ordeal. Her son and both her daughters and others whom she loved spent long periods in prison, and the empty house where she lived had become a nightmare to her.

As our struggle toned down and stabilised itself at a low level there was little of excitement in it, except at long intervals. My thoughts travelled more to other countries, and I watched and studied, as far as I could in gaol, the world situation in the grip of the great depression. I read as many books as I could find on the subject, and the more I read the more fascinated I grew. India with her problems and struggles became just a part of this mighty world drama, of the great struggle of political and economic forces that was going on everywhere, nationally and internationally. In that struggle my own sympathies went increasingly towards the communist side.

I had long been drawn to socialism and communism, and Russia had appealed to me. Much in Soviet Russia I dislike—the ruthless suppression of all contrary opinion, the wholesale regimentation, the unnecessary violence (as I thought) in carrying out various policies. But there was no lack of violence and suppression in the capitalist world, and I realised more and more how the very basis and foundation of our acquisitive society and property was violence. Without violence it could not continue for many days. A measure of political liberty meant little indeed when the fear of starvation was always compelling the vast majority of people everywhere to submit to the will of the few, to the greater glory and advantage of the latter.

Violence was common in both places, but the violence of the capitalist order seemed inherent in it; whilst the violence of Russia, bad though it was, aimed at a new order based on peace and co-operation and real freedom for the masses. With all her blunders, Soviet Russia had triumphed over enormous difficulties and taken great strides towards this new order. While the rest of the world was in the grip of the depression and going backward in some ways, in the Soviet
country a great new world was being built up before our eyes. Russia, following the great Lenin, looked into the future and thought only of what was to be, while other countries lay numbed under the dead hand of the past and spent their energy in preserving the useless relics of a bygone age. In particular, I was impressed by the reports of the great progress made by the backward regions of Central Asia under the Soviet régime. In the balance, therefore, I was all in favour of Russia, and the presence and example of the Soviets was a bright and heartening phenomenon in a dark and dismal world.

But Soviet Russia’s success or failure, vastly important as it was as a practical experiment in establishing a communist state, did not affect the soundness of the theory of communism. The Bolsheviks may blunder or even fail because of national or international reasons, and yet the communist theory may be correct. On the basis of that very theory it was absurd to copy blindly what had taken place in Russia, for its application depended on the particular conditions prevailing in the country in question and the stage of its historical development. Besides, India, or any other country, could profit by the triumphs as well as the inevitable mistakes of the Bolsheviks. Perhaps the Bolsheviks had tried to go too fast because, surrounded as they were by a world of enemies, they feared external aggression. A slower tempo might avoid much of the misery caused in the rural areas. But then the question arose if really radical results could be obtained by slowing down the rate of change. Reformism was an impossible solution of any vital problem at a critical moment when the basic structure had to be changed, and however slow the progress might be later on, the initial step must be a complete break with the existing order, which had fulfilled its purpose and was now only a drag on future progress.

In India, only a revolutionary plan could solve the two related questions of the land and industry as well as almost every other major problem before the country. “There is no graver mistake,” as Mr. Lloyd George says in his War Memoirs, “than to leap the abyss in two jumps.”

Russia apart, the theory and philosophy of Marxism lightened up many a dark corner of my mind. History came to have a new meaning for me. The Marxist interpretation threw a flood of light on it, and it became an unfolding drama with some order and purpose, howsoever unconscious, behind it. In spite of the appalling waste and misery of the past and the
present, the future was bright with hope, though many dangers intervened. It was the essential freedom from dogma and the scientific outlook of Marxism that appealed to me. It was true that there was plenty of dogma in official communism in Russia and elsewhere, and frequently heresy hunts were organised. That seemed to be deplorable, though it was not difficult to understand in view of the tremendous changes taking place rapidly in the Soviet countries when effective opposition might have resulted in catastrophic failure.

The great world crisis and slump seemed to justify the Marxist analysis. While all other systems and theories were groping about in the dark, Marxism alone explained it more or less satisfactorily and offered a real solution.

As this conviction grew upon me, I was filled with a new excitement and my depression at the non-success of civil disobedience grew much less. Was not the world marching rapidly towards the desired consummation? There were grave dangers of wars and catastrophes, but at any rate we were moving. There was no stagnation. Our national struggle became a stage in the longer journey, and it was as well that repression and suffering were tempering our people for future struggles and forcing them to consider the new ideas that were stirring the world. We would be the stronger and the more disciplined and hardened by the elimination of the weaker elements. Time was in our favour.

And so I studied carefully what was happening in Russia, Germany, England, America, Japan, China, France, Spain, Italy and Central Europe, and tried to understand the tangled web of current affairs. I followed with interest the attempts of each country separately, and of all of them together, to weather the storm. The repeated failures of international conferences to find a solution for political and economic ills and the problem of disarmament reminded me forcibly of a little, but sufficiently troublesome, problem of our own—the communal problem. With all the goodwill in the world, we have so far not solved the problem; and, in spite of a widespread belief that failure would lead to world catastrophe, the great statesmen of Europe and America have failed to pull together. In either case the approach was wrong, and the people concerned did not dare to go the right way.

In thinking over the troubles and conflicts of the world, I forgot to some extent my own personal and national troubles. I would even feel buoyant occasionally at the fact that I was alive at this great revolutionary period of the world's history.
Perhaps I might also have to play some little part in my own corner of the world in the great changes that were to come. At other times I would find the atmosphere of conflict and violence all over the world very depressing. Worse still was the sight of intelligent men and women who had become so accustomed to human degradation and slavery that their minds were too coarsened to resent suffering and poverty and inhumanity. Noisy vulgarity and organised humbug flourished in this stifling moral atmosphere, and good men were silent. The triumph of Hitler and the Brown Terror that followed was a great shock, though I consoled myself that it could only be temporary. Almost one had the feeling of the futility of human endeavour. The machine went on blindly, what could a little cog in it do?

But still the communist philosophy of life gave me comfort and hope. How was it to be applied to India? We had not solved yet the problem of political freedom, and the nationalist outlook filled our minds. Were we to jump to economic freedom at the same time or take them in turn, however short the interval might be? World events as well as happenings in India were forcing the social issue to the front, and it seemed that political freedom could no longer be separated from it.

The policy of the British Government in India had resulted in ranging the socially reactionary classes in opposition to political independence. That was inevitable, and I welcomed the clearer demarcation of the various classes and groups in India. But was this fact appreciated by others? Apparently not by many. It was true that there were a handful of orthodox Communists in some of the big cities and they were hostile to, and bitterly critical of, the national movement. The organised Labour movement, especially in Bombay and, to a lesser extent, in Calcutta, was also socialistic in a loose kind of way, but it was broken up into bits and suffering from the depression. Vague communistic and socialistic ideas had spread among the intelligentsia, even among intelligent Government officials. The younger men and women of the Congress, who used to read Bryce on Democracies and Morley and Keith and Mazzini, were now reading, when they could get them, books on socialism and communism and Russia. The Meerut Conspiracy Case had helped greatly in directing people's minds to these new ideas, and the world crisis had compelled attention. Everywhere there was in evidence a new spirit of enquiry, a questioning, and a challenge to existing institutions. The
general direction of the mental wind was obvious, but still it was a gentle breeze, unsure of itself. Some people flirted with Fascist ideas. A clear and definite ideology was lacking. Nationalism still was the dominating thought.

It seemed clear to me that nationalism would remain the outstanding urge, till some measure of political freedom was attained. Because of this the Congress had been, and was still (apart from certain Labour circles), the most advanced organisation in India, as it was far the most powerful. During the past thirteen years, under Gandhiji's leadership, it had produced a wonderful awakening of the masses and, in spite of its vague bourgeois ideology, it had served a revolutionary purpose. It had not exhausted its utility yet, and was not likely to do so till the nationalist urge gave place to a social one. Future progress, both ideological and in action, must therefore be largely associated with the Congress, though other avenues could also be used.

To desert the Congress seemed to me thus to cut oneself adrift from the vital urge of the nation, to blunt the most powerful weapon we had, and perhaps to waste energy in ineffective adventurism. And yet, was the Congress, constituted as it was, ever likely to adopt a really radical social solution? If such an issue was placed before it, the result was bound to be to split it into two or more parts, or at least to drive away large sections from it. That in itself was not undesirable or unwelcome if the issues became clearer and a strongly-knit group, either a majority or minority in the Congress, stood for a radical social programme.

But Congress at present meant Gandhiji. What would he do? Ideologically he was sometimes amazingly backward, and yet in action he had been the greatest revolutionary of recent times in India. He was a unique personality, and it was impossible to judge him by the usual standards, or even to apply the ordinary canons of logic to him. But because he was a revolutionary at bottom and was pledged to political independence for India, he was bound to play an uncompromising rôle till that independence was achieved. And in this very process he would release tremendous mass energies and would himself, I half hoped, advance step by step towards the social goal.

The orthodox Communists in India and outside have for many years past attacked Gandhiji and the Congress bitterly, and imputed all manner of base motives to the Congress leaders. Many of their theoretical criticisms of Congress
ideology were able and pointed, and subsequent events partly justified them. Some of the earlier Communist analyses of the general Indian political situation turned out to be remarkably correct. But as soon as they leave their general principles and enter into details, and especially when they consider the role of the Congress, they go hopelessly astray. One of the reasons for the weakness in numbers as well as influence of the Communists in India is that, instead of spreading a scientific knowledge of communism and trying to convert people's minds to it, they have largely concentrated on abuse of others. This has reacted on them and done them great injury. Most of them are used to working in labour areas, where a few slogans are usually enough to win over the workers. But mere slogans are not enough for the intellectual, and they have not realised that in India to-day the middle-class intellectual is the most revolutionary force. Almost in spite of the orthodox Communists, many intellectuals have been drawn to communism, but even so there is a gulf between them.

According to the Communists, the objective of the Congress leaders has been to bring mass pressure on the Government in order to obtain industrial and commercial concessions in the interests of Indian capitalists and zamindars. The task of the Congress is "to harness the economic and political discontent of the peasantry, the lower middle-class and the industrial working-class to the chariot of the mill-owners and financiers of Bombay, Ahmedabad and Calcutta." The Indian capitalists are supposed to sit behind the scenes and issue orders to the Congress Working Committee first to organise a mass movement and, when it becomes too vast and dangerous, to suspend it or side-track it. Further, that the Congress leaders really do not want the British to go away, as they are required to control and exploit a starving population, and the Indian middle class do not feel themselves equal to this.

It is surprising that able Communists should believe this fantastic analysis, but believing this as they apparently do, it is not surprising that they should fail so remarkably in India. Their basic error seems to be that they judge the Indian National Movement from European Labour standards, and used as they are to the repeated betrayals of the labour movement by the labour leaders, they apply the analogy to India. The Indian National Movement is obviously not a labour or proletarian movement. It is a bourgeois movement, as its very name implies, and its objective so far has been, not a change of the social order, but political independence. This objective
may be criticised as not far-reaching enough, and nationalism itself may be condemned as out of date. But accepting the fundamental basis of the movement, it is absurd to say that the leaders betray the masses because they do not try to upset the land system or the capitalist system. They never claimed to do so. Some people in the Congress, and they are a growing number, want to change the land system and the capitalist system, but they cannot speak in the name of the Congress.

It is true that the Indian capitalist classes (not the big zamindars and taluqadors) have profited greatly by the national movement because of British and other foreign boycotts, and the push given to swadeshi. This was inevitable, as every national movement encourages home industries and preaches boycotts. As a matter of fact the Bombay mill industry in a body, during the continuance of civil disobedience and when we were preaching the boycott of British goods, had the temerity to conclude a pact with Lancashire. From the point of view of the Congress, this was a gross betrayal of the national cause, and it was characterised as such. The representative of the Bombay mill-owners in the Assembly also consistently ran down the Congress and 'extremists' while most of us were in gaol.

The part that many capitalist elements have played in India during the past few years has been scandalous, even from the Congress and nationalist viewpoint. Ottawa may have benefited temporarily some small groups, but it was bad in the interest of Indian industry as a whole, and made it even more subservient to British capital and industry. It was harmful to the masses, and it was negotiated while our struggle was being carried on, and many thousands were in prison. Every Dominion wrung out the hardest terms from England, but India had the privilege of making almost a gift to her. During the last few years also financial adventurers have trafficked in gold and silver at India's expense.

As for the big zamindars and taluqadors, they ranged themselves completely against the Congress in the Round Table Conference, and they openly and aggressively declared themselves on the side of the Government right through civil disobedience. It was with their help that Government passed repressive legislation in various provinces embodying the Ordinances. And in the United Provinces Council the great majority of the zamindar members voted against the release of civil disobedience prisoners.
The idea that Gandhiji was forced to launch seemingly aggressive movements in 1921 and 1930 because of mass pressure, is also absolutely wrong. Mass stirrings there were, of course, but on both occasions it was Gandhiji who forced the pace. In 1921 he carried the Congress almost single-handed, and plunged it into non-co-operation. In 1930 it would have been quite impossible to have any aggressive and effective direct action movement if he had resisted it in any way.

It is very unfortunate that foolish and ill-informed criticisms of a personal nature are made, because they divert attention from the real issues. To attack Gandhiji's bona fides is to injure oneself and one's own cause, for to the millions of India he stands as the embodiment of truth, and any one who knows him at all realises the passionate earnestness with which he is always seeking to do right.

Communists in India have associated with the industrial workers of the big towns. They have little knowledge of, or contact with, the rural areas. The industrial workers, important as they are, and likely to be more so in the future, must take second place before the peasants, for the problem of to-day in India is the problem of the peasantry. Congress workers, on the other hand, have spread all over these rural areas and, in the ordinary course, the Congress must develop into a vast peasant organisation. Peasants are seldom revolutionary after their immediate objective is attained, and it is likely that some time in the future the usual problem of city versus village and industrial worker versus peasant will rise in India also.

It has been my privilege to be associated very closely with a large number of Congress leaders and workers, and I could not wish for a finer set of men and women. And yet I have differed from them on vital issues, and often I have felt a little weary at finding that they do not appreciate or understand something that seems to me quite obvious. It was not due to want of intelligence, somehow we moved in different ideological grooves. I realised how difficult it is to cross these boundaries suddenly. They constitute different philosophies of life, and we grow into them gradually and unconsciously. It is futile to blame the other party. Socialism involves a certain psychological outlook on life and its problems. It is more than mere logic. So also are the other outlooks based on heredity, upbringing, the unseen influences of the past and our present environments. Only life itself with its bitter lessons forces us
along new paths and ultimately, which is far harder, makes us think differently. Perhaps we may help a little in this process. And perhaps

"On rencontre sa destinée
Souvent par les chemins qu'on prend pour l'éviter."
WHAT IS RELIGION?

Our peaceful and monotonous routine in gaol was suddenly upset in the middle of September 1932 by a bombshell. News came that Gandhiji had decided to “fast unto death” in disapproval of the separate electorates given by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald’s Communal Award to the Depressed Classes. What a capacity he had to give shocks to people! Suddenly all manner of ideas rushed into my head; all kinds of possibilities and contingencies rose up before me and upset my equilibrium completely. For two days I was in darkness with no light to show the way out, my heart sinking when I thought of some results of Gandhiji’s action. The personal aspect was powerful enough, and I thought with anguish that I might not see him again. It was over a year ago that I had seen him last on board ship on the way to England. Was that going to be my last sight of him?

And then I felt annoyed with him for choosing a side-issue for his final sacrifice—just a question of electorate. What would be the result on our freedom movement? Would not the larger issues fade into the background, for the time being at least? And if he attained his immediate object and got a joint electorate for the Depressed Classes, would not that result in a reaction and a feeling that something has been achieved and nothing more need be done for a while? And was not his action a recognition, and in part an acceptance, of the Communal Award and the general scheme of things as sponsored by the Government? Was this consistent with Non-Co-operation and Civil Disobedience? After so much sacrifice and brave endeavour, was our movement to tail off into something insignificant?

I felt angry with him at his religious and sentimental approach to a political question, and his frequent references to God in connection with it. He even seemed to suggest that God had indicated the very date of the fast. What a terrible example to set!

If Bapu died! What would India be like then? And how would her politics run? There seemed to be a dreary and dismal future ahead, and despair seized my heart when I thought of it.
So I thought and thought, and confusion reigned in my head, and anger and hopelessness, and love for him who was the cause of this upheaval. I hardly knew what to do, and I was irritable and short-tempered with everybody, and most of all with myself.

And then a strange thing happened to me. I had quite an emotional crisis, and at the end of it I felt calmer and the future seemed not so dark. Bapu had a curious knack of doing the right thing at the psychological moment, and it might be that his action—impossible to justify as it was from my point of view—would lead to great results, not only in the narrow field in which it was confined, but in the wider aspects of our national struggle. And even if Bapu died our struggle for freedom would go on. So whatever happened, one must keep ready and fit for it. Having made up my mind to face even Gandhiji’s death without flinching, I felt calm and collected and ready to face the world and all it might offer.

Then came news of the tremendous upheaval all over the country, a magic wave of enthusiasm running through Hindu society, and untouchability appeared to be doomed. What a magician, I thought, was this little man sitting in Yeravda Prison, and how well he knew how to pull the strings that move people’s hearts!

A telegram from him reached me. It was the first message I had received from him since my conviction, and it did me good to hear from him after that long interval. In this telegram he said:

During all these days of agony you have been before mind’s eye. I am most anxious to know your opinion. You know how I value your opinion. Saw Indu (and) Sarup’s children. Indu looked happy and in possession of more flesh. Doing very well. Wire reply. Love.

It was extraordinary, and yet it was characteristic of him, that in the agony of his fast and in the midst of his many preoccupations, he should refer to the visit of my daughter and my sister’s children to him, and even mention that Indira had put on flesh! (My sister was also in prison then and all these children were at school in Poona.) He never forgets the seemingly little things in life which really mean so much.

News also came to me just then that some settlement had been reached over the electorate issue. The superintendent of the gaol was good enough to allow me to send an answer to Gandhiji, and I sent him the following telegram:
Your telegram and brief news that some settlement reached filled me with relief and joy. First news of your decision to fast caused mental agony and confusion, but ultimately optimism triumphed and I regained peace of mind. No sacrifice too great for suppressed downtrodden classes. Freedom must be judged by freedom of lowest but feel danger of other issues obscuring only goal. Am unable to judge from religious viewpoint. Danger your methods being exploited by others but how can I presume to advise a magician. Love.

A 'pact' was signed by various people gathered in Poona, and with unusual speed the British Prime Minister accepted it and varied his previous award accordingly, and the fast was broken. I disliked such pacts and agreements greatly, but I welcomed the Poona Pact apart from its contents.

The excitement was over and we reverted to our gaol routine. News of the Harijan movement and of Gandhiji's activities from prison came to us, and I was not very happy about it. There was no doubt that a tremendous push had been given to the movement to end untouchability and raise the unhappy depressed classes, not so much by the pact as by the crusading enthusiasm created all over the country. That was to be welcomed. But it was equally obvious that civil disobedience had suffered. The country's attention had been diverted to other issues, and many Congress workers had turned to the Harijan cause. Probably most of these people wanted an excuse to revert to safer activities which did not involve the risk of gaol going or, worse still, lathi blows and confiscations of property. That was natural, and it was not fair to expect all the thousands of our workers to keep always ready for intense suffering and the break-up and destruction of their homes. But still it was painful to watch this slow decay of our great movement. Civil disobedience was, however, still going on, and occasionally there were mass demonstrations like the Calcutta Congress in March-April 1933. Gandhiji was in Yeravda Prison, but he had been given certain privileges to meet people and issue directions for the Harijan movements. Somehow this took away from the sting of his being in prison. All this depressed me.

Many months later, early in May 1933, Gandhiji began his twenty-one-day fast. The first news of this had again come as a shock to me, but I accepted it as an inevitable occurrence and schooled myself to it. Indeed I was irritated that people should urge him to give it up, after he had made up his mind and declared it to the public. For me the fast was an incomprehensible thing and, if I had been asked before the decision had
been taken, I would certainly have spoken strongly against it. But I attached great value to Gandhiji's word, and it seemed to me wrong for any one to try to make him break it, in a personal matter which, to him, was of supreme importance. So, unhappy as I was, I put up with it.

A few days before beginning his fast he wrote to me, a typical letter which moved me very much. As he asked for a reply I sent him the following telegram:

Your letter. What can I say about matters I do not understand. I feel lost in strange country where you are the only familiar landmark and I try to grope my way in dark but I stumble. Whatever happens my love and thoughts will be with you.

I had struggled against my utter disapproval of his act and my desire not to hurt him. I felt, however, that I had not sent him a cheerful message, and now that he was bent on undergoing his terrible ordeal, which might even end in his death, I ought to cheer him up as much as I could. Little things make a difference psychologically, and he would have to strain every nerve to survive. I felt also that we should accept whatever happened, even his death, if unhappily it should occur, with a stout heart. So I sent him another telegram:

Now that you are launched on your great enterprise may I send you again love and greetings and assure you that I feel more clearly now that whatever happens it is well and whatever happens you win.

He survived the fast. On the first day of it he was discharged from prison, and on his advice Civil Disobedience was suspended for six weeks.

Again I watched the emotional upheaval of the country during the fast, and I wondered more and more if this was the right method in politics. It seemed to be sheer revivalism, and clear thinking had not a ghost of a chance against it. All India, or most of it, stared reverently at the Mahatma and expected him to perform miracle after miracle and put an end to untouchability and get swaraj and so on—and did precious little itself! And Gandhiji did not encourage others to think; his insistence was only on purity and sacrifice. I felt that I was drifting further and further away from him mentally, in spite of my strong emotional attachment to him. Often enough he was guided in his political activities by an unerring instinct. He
had the flair for action, but was the way of faith the right way to train a nation? It might pay for a short while, but in the long run?

And I could not understand how he could accept, as he seemed to do, the present social order, which was based on violence and conflict. Within me also conflict raged, and I was torn between rival loyalties. I knew that there was trouble ahead for me, when the enforced protection of gaol was removed. I felt lonely and homeless, and India, to whom I had given my love and for whom I had laboured, seemed a strange and bewildering land to me. Was it my fault that I could not enter into the spirit and ways of thinking of my countrymen? Even with my closest associates I felt that an invisible barrier 
came between us and, unhappy at being unable to overcome it, I shrank back into my shell. The old world seemed to envelop them, the old world of past ideologies, hopes and desires. The new world was yet far distant.

"Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest his head."

India is supposed to be a religious country above everything else, and Hindu and Moslem and Sikh and others take pride in their faiths and testify to their truth by breaking heads. The spectacle of what is called religion, or at any rate organised religion, in India and elsewhere has filled me with horror, and I have frequently condemned it and wished to make a clean sweep of it. Almost always it seems to stand for blind belief and reaction, dogma and bigotry, superstition and exploitation, and the preservation of vested interests. And yet I knew well that there was something else in it, something which supplied a deep inner craving of human beings. How else could it have been the tremendous power it has been and brought peace and comfort to innumerable tortured souls? Was that peace merely the shelter of blind belief and absence of questioning, the calm that comes from being safe in harbour, protected from the storms of the open sea, or was it something more? In some cases certainly it was something more.

But organised religion, whatever its past may have been, today is very largely an empty form devoid of real content. Mr. G. K. Chesterton has compared it (not his own particular brand of religion, but others!) to a fossil which is the form of an animal or organism from which all its own organic substance has entirely disappeared, but which has kept its shape, because
it has been filled up by some totally different substance. And even where something of value still remains, it is enveloped by other and harmful contents.

That seems to have happened in our Eastern religions as well as in the Western. The Church of England is perhaps the most obvious example of a religion which is not a religion in any real sense of the word. Partly that applies to all organised Protestantism, but the Church of England has probably gone further because it has long been a State political department.¹

Many of its votaries are undoubtedly of the highest character, but it is remarkable how that Church has served the purposes of British imperialism and given both capitalism and imperia-

¹ In India the Church of England has been almost indistinguishable from the Government. The officially paid (out of Indian revenues) priests and chaplains are the symbols of the imperial power just as the higher services are. The Church has been, on the whole, a conservative and reactionary force in Indian politics and generally opposed to reform or advance. The average missionary is usually wholly ignorant of India’s past history and culture and does not take the slightest trouble to find out what it was or is. He is more interested in pointing out the sins and failings of the heathen. Of course, there have been many fine exceptions. India does not possess a more devoted friend than Charlie Andrews, whose abounding love and spirit of service and overflowing friendliness it is a joy to have. The Christa Seva Sangh of Poona contains some fine Englishmen, whose religion has led them to understand and serve and not to patronise, and who have devoted themselves with all their great gifts to a selfless service of the Indian people. There are many other English churchmen whose memory is treasured in India.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking in the House of Lords on December 12, 1934, referred to the preamble of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of 1919 and said that “he sometimes thought the great declaration had been somewhat hastily made, and supposed that it was one of the hasty, generous gestures after the War, but the goal set could not be withdrawn.” It is worthy of note that the head of the English Church should take such an exceedingly conservative view of Indian politics. A step, which was considered wholly insufficient by Indian opinion and which, because of this, led to non-co-operation and all its consequences, is considered by the Archbishop as “hasty and generous.” It is a comforting doctrine from the point of view of the English ruling classes, and, no doubt, this conviction of their own generosity, even to the point of rashness, must produce a righteous glow of satisfaction.
ism a moral and Christian covering. It has sought to justify, from the highest ethical standards, British predatory policy in Asia and Africa, and given that extraordinary and enviable feeling of being always in the right to the English. Whether the Church has helped in producing this attitude of smug rectitude or is itself a product of it, I do not know. Other less favoured countries on the Continent of Europe and in America often accuse the English of hypocrisy—perfidie Albion is an old taunt—but the accusation is probably the outcome of envy at British success, and certainly no other imperialist Power can afford to throw stones at England, for its own record is equally shady. No nation that is consciously hypocritical could have the reserves of strength that the British have repeatedly shown, and the brand of 'religion' which they have adopted has apparently helped them in this by blunting their moral susceptibilities where their own interests were concerned. Other peoples and nations have often behaved far worse than the British have done, but they have never succeeded, quite to the same extent, in making a virtue of what profited them. All of us find it remarkably easy to spot the mote in the other's eye and overlook the beam in our own, but perhaps the British excel at this performance.¹

Protestantism tried to adapt itself to new conditions and wanted to have the best of both worlds. It succeeded remarkably so far as this world was concerned, but from the religious point of view it fell, as an organised religion, between two stools, and religion gradually gave place to sentimentality and big business. Roman Catholicism escaped this fate, as it stuck on to the old stool, and, so long as that stool holds, it will flourish. To-day it seems to be the only living religion, in the restricted sense of the word, in the West. A Roman Catholic friend sent me in prison many books on Catholicism and Papal Encyclicals and I read them with interest. Studying them, I realised the

¹ A recent instance of how the Church of England indirectly influences politics in India has come to my notice. At a provincial conference of the U.P. Indian Christians held at Cawnpore on the 7th November, 1934, the Chairman of the Reception Committee, Mr. E. V. David, said: “As Christians we are bound by our religion to loyalty to the King, who is the Defender of our Faith.” Inevitably that meant support of British imperialism in India. Mr. David further expressed his sympathies with some of the views of the ‘die-hard’ Conservative elements in England in regard to the I.C.S., the police, and the whole proposed constitution, which, according to them, might endanger Christian missions in India.
hold it had on such large numbers of people. It offered, as Islam and popular Hinduism offer, a safe anchorage from doubt and mental conflict, an assurance of a future life which will make up for the deficiencies of this life.

I am afraid it is impossible for me to seek harbourage in this way. I prefer the open sea, with all its storms and tempests. Nor am I greatly interested in the after life, in what happens after death. I find the problems of this life sufficiently absorbing to fill my mind. The traditional Chinese outlook, fundamentally ethical and yet irreligious or tinged with religious scepticism, has an appeal for me, though in its application to life I may not agree. It is the Tao, the path to be followed and the way of life that interests me; how to understand life, not to reject it but to accept it, to conform to it and to improve it. But the usual religious outlook does not concern itself with this world. It seems to me to be the enemy of clear thought, for it is based not only on the acceptance without demur of certain fixed and unalterable theories and dogmas, but also on sentiment and emotion and passion. It is far removed from what I consider spiritually and things of the spirit, and it deliberately or unconsciously shuts its eyes to reality lest reality may not fit in with preconceived notions. It is narrow and intolerant of other opinions and ideas; it is self-centred and egotistic, and it often allows itself to be exploited by self-seekers and opportunists.

This does not mean that men of religion have not been and are not still often of the highest moral and spiritual type. But it does mean that the religious outlook does not help, and even hinders, the moral and spiritual progress of a people, if morality and spirituality are to be judged by this world’s standards, and not by the hereafter. Usually religion becomes an asocial quest for God or the Absolute, and the religious man is concerned far more with his own salvation than with the good of society. The mystic tries to rid himself of self, and in the process usually becomes obsessed with it. Moral standards have no relation to social needs, but are based on a highly metaphysical doctrine of sin. And organised religion invariably becomes a vested interest and thus inevitably a reactionary force opposing change and progress.

It is well known that the Christian Church in the early days did not help the slaves to improve their social status. The slaves became the feudal serfs of the Middle Ages of Europe because of economic conditions. The attitude of the Church, as late as two hundred years ago (in 1727), was well exemplified in a letter
written by the Bishop of London to the slave-owners of the southern colonies of America.¹

“Christianity,” wrote the Bishop, “and the embracing of the gospel does not make the least alteration in Civil property or in any of the duties which belong to civil relations; but in all these respects it continues Persons just in the same State as it found them. The Freedom which Christianity gives is Freedom from the bondage of Sin and Satan and from the Dominion of Men’s Lusts and Passions and inordinate Desires; but as to their outward condition, whatever that was before, whether bond or free, their being baptised and becoming Christians makes no manner of change in them.”

No organised religion to-day will express itself in this outspoken manner, but essentially its attitude to property and the existing social order will be the same.

Words are well known to be, by themselves, very imperfect means of communication, and are often understood in a variety of ways. No word perhaps in any language is more likely to be interpreted in different ways by different people as the word ‘religion’ (or the corresponding words in other languages). Probably to no two persons will the same complex of ideas and images arise on hearing or reading this word. Among these ideas and images may be those of rites and ceremonial, of sacred books, of a community of people, of certain dogmas, of morals, reverence, love, fear, hatred, charity, sacrifice, asceticism, fasting, feasting, prayer, ancient history, marriage, death, the next world, of riots and the breaking of heads, and so on. Apart from the tremendous confusion caused by this immense variety of images and interpretations, almost invariably there will be a strong emotional response which will make dispassionate consideration impossible. The word ‘religion’ has lost all precise significance (if it ever had it) and only causes confusion and gives rise to interminable debate and argument, when often enough entirely different meanings are attached to it. It would be far better if it was dropped from use altogether and other words with more limited meanings were used instead, such as: theology, philosophy, morals, ethics, spirituality, metaphysics, duty, ceremonial, etc. Even these words are vague enough, but they have a much more limited range than ‘religion.’ A great advantage would be that these words have not yet attached to

¹ This letter is quoted in Reinhold Niebuhr’s *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (p. 78), a book which is exceedingly interesting and stimulating.
themselves, to the same extent, the passions and emotions that surround and envelop the word 'religion.'

What then is religion (to use the word in spite of its obvious disadvantages)? Probably it consists of the inner development of the individual, the evolution of his consciousness in a certain direction which is considered good. What that direction is will again be a matter for debate. But, as far as I understand it, religion lays stress on this inner change and considers outward change as but the projection of this inner development. There can be no doubt that this inner development powerfully influences the outer environment. But it is equally obvious that the outer environment powerfully influences the inner development. Both act and interact on each other. It is a commonplace that in the modern industrial West outward development has far outstripped the inner, but it does not follow, as many people in the East appear to imagine, that because we are industrially backward and our external development has been slow, therefore our inner evolution has been greater. That is one of the delusions with which we try to comfort ourselves and try to overcome our feeling of inferiority. It may be that individuals can rise above circumstances and environment and reach great inner heights. But for large groups and nations a certain measure of external development is essential before the inner evolution can take place. A man who is the victim of economic circumstances, and who is hedged and restricted by the struggle to live, can very rarely achieve inner consciousness of any high degree. A class that is downtrodden and exploited can never progress inwardly. A nation which is politically and economically subject to another and hedged and circumscribed and exploited can never achieve inner growth. Thus even for inner development external freedom and a suitable environment become necessary. In the attempt to gain this outer freedom and to change the environment so as to remove all hindrances to inner development, it is desirable that the means should be such as not to defeat the real object in view. I take it that when Gandhiji says that the means are more important than the end, he has something of this kind in view. But the means should be such as lead to the end, otherwise they are wasted effort, and they might even result in even greater degradation, both outer and inner.

"No man can live without religion," Gandhiji has written somewhere. "There are some who in the egotism of their reason declare that they have nothing to do with religion. But that is like a man saying that he breathes, but that he has no nose." Again he says: "My devotion to truth has drawn me into the
field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.” Perhaps it would have been more correct if he had said that most of these people who want to exclude religion from life and politics mean by that word ‘religion’ something very different from what he means. It is obvious that he is using it in a sense—probably moral and ethical more than any other—different from that of the critics of religion. This use of the same word with different meanings makes mutual comprehension still more difficult.

A very modern definition of religion, with which the men of religion will not agree, is that of Professor John Dewey. According to him, religion is “whatever introduces genuine perspective into the piecemeal and shifting episodes of existence”; or again “any activity pursued in behalf of an ideal end against obstacles, and in spite of threats of personal loss, because of conviction of its general and enduring value, is religious in quality.” If this is religion, then surely no one can have the slightest objection to it.

Romain Rolland also has stretched religion to mean something which will probably horrify the orthodoxy of organised religions. In his Life of Ramkrishna, he says:

“... many souls who are or who believe they are free from all religious belief, but who in reality live immersed in a state of super-rational consciousness, which they term Socialism, Communism, Humanitarianism, Nationalism and even Rationalism. It is the quality of thought and not its object which determines its source and allows us to decide whether or not it emanates from religion. If it turns fearlessly towards the search for truth at all costs with single-minded sincerity prepared for any sacrifice, I should call it religious; for it presupposes faith in an end to human effort higher than the life of existing society, and even higher than the life of humanity as a whole. Scepticism itself, when it proceeds from vigorous natures true to the core, when it is an expression of strength and not of weakness, joins in the march of the Grand Army of the religious Soul.”

I cannot presume to fulfil the conditions laid down by Romain Rolland, but on these terms I am prepared to be a humble camp-follower of the Grand Army.
XLVIII

THE ‘DUAL POLICY’ OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT

The Harijan movement was going on, guided by Gandhiji from Yeravda Prison and later from outside. There was a great agitation for removing the barriers to temple entry, and a Bill to that effect was introduced in the Legislative Assembly. And then the remarkable spectacle was witnessed of an outstanding leader of the Congress going from house to house in Delhi, visiting the members of the Assembly and canvassing for their votes for this Temple Entry Bill. Gandhiji himself sent an appeal through him to the Assembly members. And yet civil disobedience was still going on and people were going to prison, and the Assembly had been boycotted by the Congress and all our members had withdrawn from it. The rump that remained and the others who had filled the vacancies had distinguished themselves in this crisis by opposition to the Congress and support of the Government. A majority of them had helped the Government to pass repressive legislation giving some permanence to the extraordinary provisions of the Ordinances. They had swallowed the Ottawa Pact, they had fed and feasted with the great ones in Delhi and Simla and London, and joined in the thank-offerings for British rule in India, and prayed for the success of what was called the ‘Dual Policy’ in India.

I was amazed at Gandhiji’s appeal, under the circumstances then existing, and even more so by the strenuous efforts of Rajagopalachariar, who, a few weeks before, had been the acting-President of the Congress. Civil Disobedience, of course, suffered by these activities, but what hurt me more was the moral side. To me, for Gandhiji or any Congress leader to countenance such activities appeared immoral and almost a breach of faith with the large numbers of people in gaol or carrying on the struggle. But I knew that his way of looking at it was different.

The Government attitude to this Temple Entry Bill, then and subsequently, was very revealing. It put every possible difficulty in the way of its promoters, went on postponing it and encouraging opposition to it, and then finally declared its own opposition to it, and killed it. That, to a greater or lesser extent, has been its attitude to all measures of social reform in India,
and on the plea of non-interference with religion, it has prevented social progress. But this, it need hardly be said, has not prevented it from criticising our social evils and encouraging others to do so. By a fluke, the Sarda Child Marriage Restraint Bill became law, but the subsequent history of this unhappy Act showed more than anything else how much averse to enforcing any such measure the Government was. The Government that could produce ordinances overnight, creating novel offences and providing for vicarious punishment, and could send scores of thousands of people to prison for breach of their provisions, apparently quailed at the prospect of enforcing one of its regular laws like the Sarda Act. The effect of the Act was first to increase tremendously the very evil it was intended to combat, for people rushed to take advantage of the intervening six months of grace which the Act very foolishly allowed. And then it was discovered that the Act was more or less of a joke and could be easily ignored without any steps being taken by Government. Not even the slightest attempt at propaganda was made officially, and most people in the villages never knew what the Act was. They heard distorted accounts of it from Hindu and Muslim village preachers, who themselves seldom knew the correct facts.

This extraordinary spirit of toleration of social evils in India which the British Government has shown is obviously not due to any partiality for them. It is true that they do not very much care about their removal, for these evils do not interfere with their business of governing India and exploiting her resources. There is also always the danger of irritating various people by proposing social reforms, and, having to face enough anger and irritation on the political plane, the British Government has no desire whatever to add to its troubles. But latterly the position has become worse from the point of view of the social reformer, for the British are becoming more and more the silent bulwarks of these evils. This is due to their close association with the most reactionary elements in India. As opposition to their rule increases they have to seek strange allies, and to-day the firmest champions of British rule in India are the extreme communalists and the religious reactionaries and obscurantists. The Muslim communal organisations are notoriously reactionary from every point of view—political, economic, social. The Hindu Mahasabha rivals them, but it is left far behind in this backward-moving race by the Sanatanists, who combine religious obscurantism of an extreme type with fervent, or at any rate loudly expressed, loyalty to British rule.
If the British Government was quiescent and took no steps to popularise the Sarda Act and to enforce it, why did not the Congress or other non-official organisations carry on propaganda in favour of it? This question is often put by British and other foreign critics. So far as the Congress is concerned, it has been engaged during the last fifteen years, and especially since 1930, in a fierce life-and-death struggle for national freedom with the British rulers. The other organisations have no real strength or contact with the masses. Men and women of ideals and force of character and influence among the masses were drawn into the Congress and spent much of their time in British prisons.

Other organisations could seldom go beyond the passing of resolutions by select people who feared the mass touch. They functioned in a gentlemanly way or, like the All-India Women's Association, in a lady-like way, and the spirit of aggressive propaganda was not theirs. Besides, they too were paralysed by the terrible repression of all public activities by the Ordinances and the laws that followed them. Martial law may crush revolutionary activity, but at the same time it paralyses civilisation and most civilised activities.

But the real reason why the Congress and other non-official organisations cannot do much for social reform goes deeper. We suffer from the disease of nationalism, and that absorbs our attention and it will continue to do so till we get political freedom. As Bernard Shaw has said: "A conquered nation is like a man with cancer; he can think of nothing else. . . . There is indeed no greater curse to a nation than a nationalist movement, which is only the agonising symptom of a suppressed natural function. Conquered nations lose their place in the world's march because they can do nothing but strive to get rid of their nationalist movements by recovering their national liberty."

Past experience shows us that we can make little social progress under present conditions, in spite of apparent transfers of subjects to elected ministers. The tremendous inertia of the Government is always helpful to the conservative elements, and for generations past the British Government has crushed initiative and ruled despotically, or paternalistically, as it has itself called it. It does not approve of any big organised effort by non-officials, and suspects ulterior motives. The Harijan movement, in spite of every precaution taken by its organisers, has occasionally come in conflict with officials. I am sure that if the Congress started a nation-wide propaganda for the greater use
of soap it would come in conflict with Government in many places.

I do not think it is very difficult to convert the masses to social reform if the State takes the matter in hand. But alien rulers are always suspect, and they cannot go far in the process of conversion. If the alien element was removed and economic changes were given precedence, an energetic administration could easily introduce far-reaching social reforms.

But social reform and the Sarda Act and the Harijan Movement did not fill our minds in prison, except in so far as I felt a little irritated by the Harijan Movement because it had come in the way of civil disobedience. Early in May 1933 Civil Disobedience had been suspended for six weeks, and we waited anxiously for further developments. That suspension had given a final blow to the movement, for one cannot play fast and loose with a national struggle and switch it on and off at will. Even before the suspension the leadership of the movement had been singularly weak and ineffective. There were petty conferences being held, and all manner of rumours spread which militated against active work. Some of the acting-Presidents of the Congress were very estimable men, but it was unkindness to them to make them generals of an active campaign. There was too much of a hint of tiredness about them, of a desire to get out of a difficult position. There was some discontent against this vacillation and indecision in high quarters, but it was difficult to express it in an organised way, as all Congress bodies were unlawful.

Then came Gandhiji’s twenty-one-day fast, his discharge from prison, and the suspension of civil disobedience for six weeks. The fast was over, and very slowly he recovered from it. In the middle of June the period of suspension of civil disobedience was extended by another six weeks. Meanwhile the Government had in no way toned down its aggression. In the Andaman Islands political prisoners (those convicted in Bengal for acts of revolutionary violence were sent there) were on hunger-strike on the question of treatment, and one or two of them died—starved to death. Others lay dying. People who addressed meetings in India in protest of what was happening in the Andamans were themselves arrested and sentenced. We were not only to suffer, but we were not even to complain, even though prisoners died by the terrible ordeal of the hunger-strike, having no other means of protest open to them. Some months later, in September 1933 (when I was out of prison), an appeal was issued over a number of signatures including
'DUAL POLICY' OF BRITISH GOVERNMENT

Rabindra Nath Tagore, C. F. Andrews, and many other well-known people, mostly unconnected with the Congress, asking for more humanitarian treatment of the Andamans' prisoners, and preferably for their transfer to Indian gaols. The Home Member of the Government of India expressed his great displeasure at this statement, and criticised the signatories strongly for their sympathy for the prisoners. Later, as far as I can remember, the expression of such sympathy was made a punishable offence in Bengal.

Before the second six weeks of suspension of civil disobedience were over, news came to us in Dehra Dun Gaol that Gandhiji had called an informal conference at Poona. Two or three hundred people met there and, on Gandhiji's advice, mass civil disobedience was suspended, but individual civil disobedience was permitted, and all secret methods were barred. The decisions were not very inspiring, but I did not particularly object to them so far as they went. To stop mass civil disobedience was to recognise and stabilise existing conditions, for, in reality, there was no mass movement then. Secret work was merely a pretence that we were carrying on, and often it demoralised, having regard to the character of our movement. To some extent it was necessary in order to send instructions and keep contacts, but civil disobedience itself could not be secret.

What surprised me and distressed me was the absence of any real discussion at Poona of the existing situation and of our objectives. Congressmen had met together after nearly two years of fierce conflict and repression, and much had happened meanwhile in the world at large and in India, including the publication of the White Paper containing the British Government's proposals for constitutional reform. We had to put up during this period with enforced silence, and on the other side there had been ceaseless and perverted propaganda to obscure the issues. It was frequently stated, not only by supporters of the Government but by Liberals and others, that the Congress had given up its objective of independence. The least that should have been done, I thought, was to lay stress on our political objective, to make it clear again, and, if possible, to add to it social and economic objectives. Instead of this, the discussion seems to have been entirely confined to the relative merits of mass and individual civil disobedience, and the desirability or otherwise of secrecy. There was also some strange talk of 'peace' with the Government. Gandhiji sent a telegram to the Viceroy, as far as I remember, asking for an
interview, to which the Viceroy replied with a 'No', and then Gandhi sent a second telegram mentioning something about 'honourable peace'. Where was this elusive peace that was being sought, when the Government was triumphantly trying to crush the nation in every way, and people were starving to death in the Andamans? But I knew that, whatever happened, it was Gandhi's way always to offer the olive branch.

Repression was going on in full swing, and all the special laws suppressing public activities were in force. In February 1933 even a memorial meeting on my father's death anniversary was prohibited by the police, although it was a non-Congress meeting, and such a good Moderate as Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru was to have presided over it. And as a vision of future favours to come we had been presented with the White Paper.

This was a remarkable document, a perusal of which left one gasping for breath. India was to be converted into a glorified Indian State, with a dominating influence of the States' feudal representatives in the Federation. But in the States themselves no outside interference would be tolerated, and undiluted autocracy would continue to prevail there. The real imperial links, the chains of debt, would bind us for ever to the City of London, and the currency and monetary policy would also be controlled, through a Reserve Bank, by the Bank of England. There would be an impregnable defence of all vested rights, and additional vested interests were going to be created. Our revenues were mortgaged up to the hilt for the benefit of these vested interests. The great imperial services, which we love so much, would continue uncontrolled and untouched, to train us for further instalments of self-government. There was going to be Provincial Autonomy, but the Governor would be a benevolent and all-powerful dictator keeping us in order. And high above all would sit the All-Highest, the supreme Dictator, the Viceroy, with complete powers to do what he will and check when he desires. Truly, the genius of the British ruling class for colonial government was never more in evidence, and well may the Hitlers and Mussolinis admire them and look with envy on the Viceroy of India.

Having produced a constitution which tied up India hand and foot, a collection of 'special responsibilities' and safeguards were added as additional fetters, making the unhappy country a prisoner incapable of movement. As Mr. Neville Chamberlain said: 'They had done their best to surround the proposals with all the safeguards the wit of man could devise.'

Further, we were informed that for these favours we would
have to pay heavily—to begin with a lump sum of a few crores, and then annual payment. We could not have the blessings of Swaraj without adequate payment. We had been suffering under the delusion that India was poverty-stricken and already had too heavy a burden to carry, and we had looked to freedom to lighten it. That had been for the masses the urge for freedom. But it now appeared that the burden was to become heavier.

This Gilbertian solution of the Indian problem was offered with true British grace, and we were told how generous our rulers were. Never before had an imperial Power of its own free will offered such power and opportunities to a subject people. And a great debate arose in England between the donors and those who, horrified at such generosity, objected to it. This was the outcome of the many comings and goings between India and England during three years, of the three Round Table Conferences, and innumerable committees and consultations.

But the visits to England were not over yet. There was the Joint Select Committee of the British Parliament which was going to sit in judgment on the White Paper, and Indians went to it as a kind of assessors and as witnesses. There were also many other committees sitting in London, and there was an undignified scramble behind the scenes for membership of any committee which meant a free passage to and stay in the heart of the Empire. Brave men, undaunted by the petrifying provisions of the White Paper, undertook to face the perils of the sea voyage or the air journey, and the greater dangers of a stay in London city in order to attempt, with all the eloquence and power of persuasion at their command, to vary the provisions of the White Paper. They knew and said that the task was an almost hopeless one, but they were no quitters, and would continue to have their say even though there was no one to listen to them. One of them, a leader of the Responsivists, stuck on till the bitter end, when all others had left, probably having interview after interview and dinner after dinner with the men in authority in London, so that he might impress upon them what political changes he desired. When at last he returned to his native land, he informed an expectant public that, with the well-known tenacity of the Marathas, he had refused to give up his job, and had stayed on in London to have his say to the very end.

I remember a frequent complaint of my father’s that his Responsivist friends had no sense of humour. He often got
into trouble with them because of his humorous remarks, which were not appreciated by them at all, and then he had to explain and soothe—a tiring operation. And I thought of the fine fighting spirit of the Marathas, not only in the past but in the present during our national struggles, and of the great and indomitable Tilak, who would not bend though he break.

The Liberals utterly disliked the White Paper. They also had no liking for the repression that was going on from day to day in India, and sometimes though rarely, even protested against it, always making it clear that they condemned the Congress and all its works. They would suggest to Government occasionally to release some prominent Congressman from prison—they could only think in terms of individuals they knew. The argument advanced, both by the Liberals and Responsivi- visits, was that so-and-so should be released as there was no longer any danger to the public peace. And then it is always open to the Government to re-arrest that person if he misbehaves, and Government could do so with more justification. Some people in England also were good enough to plead for the release of some members of the Working Committee, or special individuals, on these grounds. We could not help being grateful to people who were interested in us while we were in prison, but we felt also sometimes that it would be a good thing if we were saved from our well-meaning friends. We did not doubt their good intentions, but it was obvious that they had adopted completely the ideology of the British Government, and between them and us there was a wide chasm.

The Liberals did not like much that was happening in India; they were unhappy about it, and yet what were they to do? It was unthinkable for them to take any effective action against Government. Merely to preserve themselves as a separate entity they had to retreat further away from the masses and the active elements in the population; to drift to the Right, till their ideology was hardly distinguishable from that of the Government. Small in numbers, and with no mass influence, they could not make any difference to a mass struggle. But among them were some distinguished and well-known persons who were personally respected. And these leaders, as well as the Liberal and Responsivist groups as a whole, did an inestimable service to the British Government at a moment of grave crisis by a moral support of the official policy. Even the coercion and lawlessness of Government profited by the lack of effective criticism and occasional acquiescence and approval of the Liberals. Thus the Liberals and Responsivists gave a moral
sanction to the fierce and unprecedented coercion that was going on in the country at a time when the Government was hard put to it to justify it.

The White Paper was bad, very bad, so said the Liberal leaders. What was to be done about it? At the Liberal Federation meeting held in Calcutta in April 1933, Mr. Srinivasa Sastri, the most eminent of the Liberal leaders, pleaded that however unsatisfactory the constitutional changes might be they should work them. "This is no time to stand by and let things pass," he said. The only action that apparently was conceivable to him was to accept what was given and to try to work it. The alternative to this was doing nothing. Further he added: "If we have wisdom, experience, moderation, power of persuasion, quiet influence, and real efficiency—if we have these virtues, this is the time to display them in the fullest strength." "Shining words" was the Calcutta Statesman's comment on this eloquent appeal.

Mr. Sastri is always eloquent, and has the orator's love of fine words and their musical use. But he is apt to be carried away by his enthusiasms, and the word-magic that he creates blurs his meaning to others and perhaps to himself. It is worth while examining this appeal he made at Calcutta in April 1933 during the continuance of the Civil Disobedience Movement. Fundamental principles and objectives apart, two points seem to me worthy of note. The first is that whatever happens, however much we might be insulted, crushed, humiliated, and exploited by the British Government, we must submit to it. The line can never be drawn beyond which we must not go. A worm may turn, but not the Indian people if they followed Mr. Sastri's advice. There is no other way according to him. This means that, so far as he is concerned, submission to and acceptance of the British Government's decisions is tantamount to a religion (if I may use that unfortunate word). It is the fate—Kismet—to which all of us have to bow whether we want to or not.

It must be noted that he was not giving advice on a definite, known situation. The 'constitutional changes' were still in the making, though one had a fair notion that they would be very bad. If he had said that, bad as the White Paper proposals are, having regard to all the circumstances, I am in favour of working them, should they be enacted, his advice might have been good or bad, but it had relation to existing facts. Mr. Sastri went much further, and said that however unsatisfactory the constitutional changes might be his advice would hold. He was
prepared to give a blank cheque to the British Government on the most vital matter from the nation's view-point. It is a little difficult for me to understand how any individual, group, or party, can take up this attitude of commitment to an unforeseen future, unless it has no principles or moral and political standards whatever, and has for its creed and policy invariable subservience to the ruler's mandates.

The second point that strikes me is one of pure tactics. The White Paper was one stage in the long march to the enactment of the new reforms. It was, from Government's point of view, an important stage, but many stages remained, and it was possible that it might be altered for better or worse during its subsequent journey. These alterations would obviously depend on the pressure brought to bear on the British Government and Parliament from various interests. In this tug-of-war it was conceivable that the desire to win over the Indian Liberals to its side might have influenced the Government and induced it to liberalise the proposals, or at least to resist encroachments. But Mr. Sastri's emphatic declaration, long before the question of acceptance or rejection, working or not working the new reforms arose, made it clear to the Government that they could completely ignore the Indian Liberals. There was no question of winning them over. They would not desert the Government, even if they were pushed out. Looking at the matter from the Liberal view-point, as far as I can, Mr. Sastri's speech at Calcutta seems to me to have been extraordinarily bad tactics and injurious to the Liberal cause.

I have ventured to write so much on Mr. Sastri's old speech, not because of any intrinsic importance of that speech or the Liberal Federation meeting, but because of my desire to understand the mentality and psychology of the Liberal leaders. They are able and estimable men, and yet, with the best will in the world, I have been wholly unable to appreciate why they act as they do. Another speech of Mr. Sastri's, which I read in prison, influenced me greatly. He was addressing the Servants of India Society, of which he is president, at Poona in June 1933. He is reported to have pointed the danger in India if British influence were suddenly withdrawn, of political movements being marked by acute hatred, persecution, and oppression of one party by another. On the other hand, toleration having throughout been a feature of British political life, the more India's future is worked out in co-operation with Britain, the greater the likelihood of toleration prevailing in India. Being in prison, I have to rely on the summary of
Mr. Sastri’s speech given by the *Statesman* of Calcutta. The *Statesman* added: “It is a pleasant doctrine, and we note that Doctor Moonje has been speaking in the same sense.” Mr. Sastri is further reported to have referred to the suppression of freedom in Russia, Italy, and Germany, and to the inhumanities and savageries that were being perpetrated there.

It struck me, when I read this, how extraordinarily similar was Mr. Sastri’s outlook in regard to Britain and India to that of the ‘diehard’ British Conservative. In matters of detail there were no doubt differences, but fundamentally the ideology was the same. Mr. Winston Churchill could have expressed himself in identical language without doing any violence to his convictions. And yet Mr. Sastri belongs to the Left wing of the Liberal party, and is the ablest of its leaders.

I am afraid I am wholly unable to accept Mr. Sastri’s reading of history, or his views on world affairs, and more particularly on Britain and India. Probably no foreigner, who is not an Englishman, will accept them; possibly many Englishmen of advanced views will disagree with him. It is his happy gift to see the world and his own country through the tinted glasses of the British ruling class. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that he should ignore in this speech the very unusual occurrence which had taken place from day to day in India during the previous eighteen months, and were taking place at the time the speech was delivered. He referred to Russia, Italy, and Germany, but not to the fierce repression and suppression of all liberties in his own country. He may not have known of all the terrible occurrences in the Frontier Province and in Bengal—the ‘rape of Bengal’ as Rajendra Babu has called it in his recent Congress presidential address—as the heavy veil of censorship hid much of what was happening. But was he oblivious to the agony of India and the struggle for life and freedom that his people were waging against a powerful adversary? Did he not know of the police raj that prevailed over large areas, of conditions resembling martial law, of the Ordinances, of the hunger-strikes, and other sufferings in prison? Did he not realise that the very toleration and freedom for which he praised Britain had been crushed by Britain herself in India?

It did not matter whether he agreed with the Congress or not. He was perfectly entitled to criticise and condemn Congress policy. But as an Indian, as a lover of freedom, as a sensitive man, what were his reactions to the wonderful courage and sacrifice of his countrymen and countrywomen? Did he not feel any pain and anguish when our rulers played with a
hatchet on India’s heart? Was it nothing to him that scores of thousands were refusing to bend before the physical might of a proud empire, and preferred to see their bodies crushed, their homes broken, their dear ones suffer, rather than yield their souls? We put on a brave face in gaol or outside, and smiled and laughed, but we smiled often through our tears, and our laughter was sometimes near to crying.

Mr. Verrier Elwin, a brave and generous Englishman, tells us what his reactions were. “It was a wonderful experience,” he says of 1930, “to watch a whole nation throwing off its mental bonds of servitude and rising to its true dignity of fearless determination.” And again: “The amazing discipline exhibited by most of the Congress volunteers during the Satyagraha struggle, a discipline to which one of the provincial Governors has borne generous testimony. . . .”

Mr. Srinivasa Sastri is an able and sensitive man who is widely respected by his countrymen, and it seems impossible that he would not react in the same way and feel for his countrymen during such a struggle. One would have expected him to raise his voice in denunciation of the suppression of all civil liberty and all public activities by the Government. One would further have hoped that he and his colleagues would personally visit the worst affected areas—Bengal and the Frontier—not in any way to help the Congress or civil disobedience, but to expose and thus check official and police excesses. This is usually done by the lovers of freedom and civil liberty in other countries. But instead of acting in this way, instead of trying to check the executive when it was riding rough-shod over India’s men and women and had done away with even the usual liberties; instead at least of finding out what was happening, he chose to give a certificate to the British for toleration and freedom just when both of these virtues were completely lacking under British rule in India. He gave them his moral backing and thus heartened and encouraged them in their task of repression.

I am quite sure that he could not have meant this or realised the consequences of his action. But that his speech must have had this effect cannot be doubted. Why, then, should he think and act in this manner?

I have found no adequate answer to this question except that the Liberal leaders have cut themselves completely aloof from their countrymen as well as from all modern thought. The musty books that they read have shut out the people of India from their view, and they have developed a kind of narcissism. We went to gaol and our bodies were locked up in cells, but
our minds ranged free and our spirits were undismayed. But they created mental prisons of their own fashioning, where they went round and round and from which they found no escape. They worshipped the God of Things as they are; and when things changed, as they do in this changing world, they were without rudder and compass, helpless in mind and body, without ideals or moral values. The choice for each one of us always is to go forward or be pushed; we cannot remain static in a dynamic universe. Afraid of change and movement, the Liberals were frightened at the tempests that surrounded them; weak of limb, they could not go forward, and so they were tossed hither and thither, clutching at every straw that came their way. They became the Hamlets of Indian politics, "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought", ever doubting, hesitating, and irresolute.

"The time is out of joint. O cursed spite! That ever I was born to set it right."

The Servant of India, a Liberal weekly, accused Congressmen, during the latter days of the Civil Disobedience Movement, of wanting to go to prison, and when they got there wanting to come out again. That, it said with some irritation, was the sole Congress policy. The Liberal alternative to that, apparently, was to send a deputation to England to wait on the British ministers, or to wait and pray for a change of Government in England.

It was true, to some extent, that the Congress policy then was mainly one of defiance of the Ordinance laws and other repressive measures, and this led to gaol. It was also true that the Congress and the nation were exhausted after the long struggle and could not bring any effective pressure on the Government. But there was a practical and moral consideration.

Naked coercion, as India was experiencing, is an expensive affair for the rulers. Even for them it is a painful and nerve-shaking ordeal, and they know well that ultimately it weakens their foundations. It exposes continually the real character of their rule, both to the people coerced and the world at large. They infinitely prefer to put on the velvet glove to hide the iron fist. Nothing is more irritating and, in the final analysis, harmful to a Government than to have to deal with people who will not bend to its will, whatever the consequences. So even sporadic defiance of the repressive measures had value; it strengthened the people and sapped the morale of Government,
The moral consideration was even more important. In a famous passage Thoreau has said: "At a time when men and women are unjustly imprisoned the place for just men and women is also in prison." This advice may not appeal to Liberals and others, but many of us often feel that a moral life under existing conditions is intolerable, when, even apart from civil disobedience, many of our colleagues are always in prison and the coercive apparatus of the State is continually repressing us and humiliating us, as well as helping in the exploitation of our people. In our own country we move about as suspects, shadowed and watched, our words recorded lest they infringe the all-pervading law of sedition, our correspondence opened, the possibility of some executive prohibition or arrest always facing us. For us the choice is: abject submission to the power of the State, spiritual degradation, the denial of the truth that is in us, and our moral prostitution for purposes that we consider base—or opposition with all the consequences thereof. No one likes to go to gaol or to invite trouble. But often gaol is preferable to the other alternative. "The only real tragedy in life," as Bernard Shaw has written, "is the being used by personally minded men for purposes which you know to be base. All the rest is at the worst mere misfortune and mortality: this alone is misery, slavery, hell on earth."
THE END OF A LONG TERM

The time for my discharge was drawing near. I had received the usual remissions for 'good behaviour', and this had reduced my two-year term by three and half months. My peace of mind, or rather the general dullness of the mind which prison produces, was being disturbed by the excitement created by the prospect of release. What must I do outside? A difficult question, and the hesitation I had in answering it took away from the joy of going out. But even that was a momentary feeling, and my long-suppressed energy was bubbling up and I was eager to be out.

The end of July 1933 brought a painful and very disturbing piece of news—the sudden death of J. M. Sen-Gupta. We had not only been close colleagues on the Congress Working Committee for many years, but he was also a link with my early Cambridge days. We met in Cambridge first—I was a freshman, and he had just taken his degree.

Sen-Gupta died under detention. He had been made a State prisoner on his return from Europe early in 1932, while he was yet on board ship in Bombay. Since then he had been a prisoner or a detenu, and his health had deteriorated. Various facilities were given to him by the Government, but evidently they could not check the course of the disease. His funeral in Calcutta was the occasion for a remarkable mass demonstration and tribute; it seemed that the long pent-up suffering soul of Bengal had found an outlet for a while at least.

So Sen-Gupta had gone. Subhas Bose, another State prisoner whose health had broken down by years of interment and prison, had at last been permitted by the Government to go to Europe for treatment. The veteran Vithabhbhai Patel also lay ill in Europe. And how many others had broken down in health or died, unable to stand the physical strain of gaol life and ceaseless activity outside! How many, though outwardly not much changed, had suffered deeper mental derangements and developed complexes on account of the abnormal lives they had been made to lead!

Sen-Gupta's death made me vividly aware of all this terrible, silent suffering going on throughout the country, and I felt weary and depressed. To what end was all this? To what end?
I had been fortunate about my own health, and in spite of the strains and irregular life of Congress activity I had, on the whole, kept well. Partly, I suppose, this was due to a good constitution I had inherited, partly to my care of the body. Illness and weak health as well as too much fat seemed to me a most unbecoming state of affairs, and with the help of exercise, plenty of fresh air, and simple food, I managed to keep away from them. My own experience has been that a vast proportion of the ailments of the Indian middle classes are caused by wrong feeding; the food is both rich and excessive. (This applies only to those who can afford such wasteful habits.) The fond mother lays the firm foundation of life-long indigestion by over-feeding the child with sweets and other so-called dainties. The child is also muffled up in too many clothes. The English people in India also seem to eat far too much, although their food is less rich. Probably they have improved a little from the older generation which used to consume enormous quantities of food, hot and strong.

I have cared little for food fads, and have only avoided over-eating and rich foods. Like nearly all Kashmiri Brahmans our family was a meat-eating one, and from childhood onwards I had always taken meat, although I never fancied it much. With the coming of Non-Co-operation in 1920 I gave up meat and became a vegetarian. I remained a vegetarian till a visit to Europe six years later, when I relapsed to meat-eating. On my return to India I became a vegetarian again, and since then I have been more or less a vegetarian. Meat-eating seems to agree with me well, but I have developed a distaste for it, and it gives me a feeling of coarseness.

My periods of ill-health, chiefly in prison in 1932, when for many months I got a rise of temperature every day, annoyed me, because they hurt my conceit of good health. And for the first time I did not think, as I used to do, in terms of abounding life and energy, but a spectre of a gradual decay and a wearing away rose up before me and alarmed me. I do not think I am particularly frightened of death. But a slow deterioration, bodily and mental, was quite another matter. However, my fears proved exaggerated, and I managed to get rid of the indisposition and bring my body under control. Long sun-baths during the winter helped me to get back my feeling of well-being. While my companions in prison would shiver in their coats and shawls, I would sit, bare-bodied, delightfully warmed up by the sun’s embrace. This was only possible in North India during the winter, as elsewhere the sun is usually too hot.
Among my exercises one pleased me particularly — the shirshāsana, standing on the head with the palms of the hands, fingers interlocked, supporting the back of the head, elbows on the floor, body vertical, upside down. I suppose physically this exercise is very good: I liked it even more for its psychological effect on me. The slightly comic position increased my good humour and made me a little more tolerant of life's vagaries.

My usual good health and the bodily sense of well-being have been of very great help to me in getting over periods of depression, which are inevitable in prison life. They have helped me also in accommodating myself to changing conditions in prison or outside. I have had many shocks, which at the time seemed to bowl me over, but to my own surprise I have recovered sooner than I expected. I suppose a test of my fundamental sobriety and sanity is the fact that I hardly know what a bad headache is, nor have I ever been troubled with insomnia. I have escaped these common diseases of civilisation, as also bad eyesight, in spite of excessive use of the eyes for reading and writing, sometimes in a bad light in gaol. An eye specialist expressed his amazement last year at my good eyesight. Eight years before he had prophesied that I would have to take to spectacles in another year or two. He was very much mistaken, and I am still carrying on successfully without them. Although these facts might establish my reputation for sobriety and sanity, I might add that I have a horror of people who are inescapably and unchangingly sane and sober.

While I waited for my discharge from prison, the new form of civil disobedience for individuals was beginning outside. Gandhiji decided to give the lead and, after giving full notice to the authorities, he started on August 1st with the intention of preaching civil resistance to the Gujrat peasantry. He was immediately arrested, sentenced to one year, and sent back again to his cell in Yeravda. I was glad he had gone back. But soon a new complication arose. Gandhiji claimed the same facilities for carrying on Harijan work from prison as he had had before; the Government refused to grant them. Suddenly we heard that Gandhiji had started fasting again on this issue. It seemed an extraordinarily trivial matter for such a tremendous step. It was quite impossible for me to understand his decision, even though he might be completely right in his argument with the Government. We could do nothing, and we looked on, bewildered.

After a week of the fast his condition grew rapidly worse. He had been removed to a hospital, but he was still a prisoner
and Government would not give in on the question of facilities for Harijan work. He lost the will to live (which he had during his previous fasts) and allowed himself to go down hill. The end seemed to be near. He said good-bye and even made dispositions about the few personal articles that were lying about him, giving some to the nurses. But the Government had no intention of allowing him to die on their hands, and that evening he was suddenly discharged. It was just in time to save him. Another day and perhaps it would have been too late. Probably a great deal of the credit for saving him should go to C. F. Andrews who had rushed to India, contrary to Gandhiji's advice.

Meanwhile I was transferred from Dehra Dun Gaol on August 23rd, and I returned to Naini Prison after more than a year and a half's residence in other gaols. Just then news came of my mother's sudden illness and her removal to hospital. On the 30th August, 1933, I was discharged from Naini because my mother's condition was considered serious. Ordinarily I would have been released, at the latest, on September 12th when my term expired. I was thus given an additional thirteen days of remission by the Provincial Government.
A VISIT TO GANDHIJI

Immediately after my release, I hastened to Lucknow to my mother's bed-side, and I remained with her for some days. I had come out of prison after a fairly long period, and I felt detached and out of touch with my surroundings. I realised with a little shock, as we all do, that the world had gone on moving and changing while I lay stagnating in prison. Children and boys and girls growing up, marriages, births, deaths; love and hate, work and play, tragedy and comedy. New interests in life, new subjects for conversation, always there was a little element of surprise in what I saw and heard. Life seemed to have passed by, leaving me in a backwater. It was not a wholly pleasant feeling. Soon I would have adapted myself to my environment, but I felt no urge to do so. I realised that I was only having a brief outing outside prison, and would have to go back again before long. So why trouble myself about adaptation to something which I would leave soon?

Politically, India was more or less quiet; public activities were largely controlled and suppressed by the Government, and arrests occasionally took place. But the silence of India then was full of significance. It was the ominous silence which follows exhaustion after experiencing a period of fierce repression, a silence which is often very eloquent, but is beyond the ken of governments that repress. India was the ideal police state, and the police mentality pervaded all spheres of government. Outwardly all non-conformity was suppressed, and a vast army of spies and secret agents covered the land. There was an atmosphere of demoralisation and an all-pervading fear among the people. Any political activity, especially in the rural areas, was immediately suppressed, and the various provincial governments were trying to hound out Congressmen from the service of municipalities and local boards. Every person who had been to prison as a civil resister was unfit, according to Government, for teaching in a municipal school or serving the municipality in any other way. Great pressure was brought to bear on municipalities, etc., and threats were held out that Government grants would be stopped, if the offending Congressmen were not dismissed. The most notorious example of
this coercion took place in the Calcutta Corporation. Ultimately, I believe, the Bengal Government passed a law against the employment by the Corporation of persons who had been convicted for political offences.

Reports of Nazi excesses in Germany had a curious effect on British officials and their Press in India. They gave them a justification for all they had done in India, and it was pointed out to us, with a glow of conscious virtue, how much worse our lot would have been if the Nazis had had anything to do with us. New standards and records had been set up by the Nazis, and it was certainly not an easy matter to rival them. Perhaps our lot would have been worse; it is difficult for me to judge for I have not all the facts of the occurrences that have taken place in various parts of India during the past five years. The British Government in India believes in the charity that its right hand should not know what its left hand does, and so it has turned down every suggestion for an impartial enquiry, although such enquiries are always weighted on the official side. I think it is true that the average Englishman hates brutality, and I cannot conceive English people openly glorying in and repeating lovingly the word ‘Brutalität’ (or its English equivalent) as the Nazis do. Even when they indulge in the deed, they are a little ashamed of it. But whether we are Germans or English or Indians, I am afraid our veneer of civilised conduct is thin enough, and when passions are aroused it rubs off and reveals something that is not good to look at. The Great War brutalised humanity terribly, and we saw the aftermath of this in that awful hunger blockade of Germany even after the Armistice—“one of the most senseless, brutal and hideous atrocities ever committed by any nation” as an English writer has described it. The years 1857 and 1858 have not been forgotten in India. Whenever the challenge to our own interests is made we forget our good breeding and society manners, and untruth becomes ‘propaganda’, and brutality ‘scientific repression’ and the preservation of ‘law and order’.

It is not the fault of individuals or any particular people. More or less every one behaves so under similar circumstances. In India, and in every country under foreign domination, there is always a latent challenge to the ruling power, and from time to time this becomes more obvious and threatening. This challenge always develops the military virtues and vices in the ruling groups. We have had evidence of these military virtues and vices in a superlative degree in India during the last few
years, because our challenge had become powerful and effective. But to some extent we have always to put up with the military mind (or absence of it) in India. That is one of the consequences of Empire, and it degrades both the parties involved. The degradation of Indians is obvious enough, the other degradation is more subtle, but in times of crisis it becomes patent. Then there is a third group, which has the misfortune to share in both types of degradation.

I have had ample leisure in gaol to read the speeches of high officials, their answers to questions in the Assembly and Councils, and Government statements. I noticed, during the last three years, a marked change coming over them, and this change became progressively more and more obvious. They became more threatening and minatory, developing more and more in the style of a sergeant-major addressing his men. A remarkable example of this was a speech delivered by the Commissioner of, I think, the Midnapur Division in Bengal in November or December 1933. Vae victis seems to run like a thread through these utterances. Non-official Europeans, in Bengal especially, go even further than the official variety, and both in their speeches and actions have shown a very decided Fascist tendency.

Yet another revealing instance of brutalisation was the recent public hangings of some convicted criminals in Sind. Because crime was on the increase in Sind the authorities there decided to execute these criminals publicly, as a warning to others. Every facility was given to the public to attend and watch this ghastly spectacle, and it is said that many thousands came.

So after my discharge from prison, I surveyed political and economic conditions in India, and felt little enthusiasm at them. Many of my comrades were in prison, fresh arrests continued, all the Ordinance laws were in operation, censorship throttled the Press and upset our correspondence. A colleague of mine, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, was greatly irritated at the vagaries of the censor regarding his correspondence. Letters would be held up and came very late, or would get lost, and this would upset his engagements. He wanted to appeal to the censor to do his job a little more efficiently, but who was he to write to? The censor was not a public official. He was probably some C.I.D. officer working secretly, whose existence and work were not even acknowledged openly. Rafi Ahmad solved the difficulty by writing to the censor, and addressing the envelope of this letter to himself! Sure enough the letter reached its proper
destination, and there was some improvement afterwards in Rafi Ahmad's correspondence.

I had no desire to go back to prison. I had had enough of it. But I could not see how I could escape it under the existing circumstances, unless I decided to retire from all political activity. I had no such intention, and so I felt that I was bound to come into conflict with the Government. At any moment some order might be served on me to do something, or to abstain from doing something, and all my nature rebelled at being forced to act in a particular way. An attempt was being made to cow down and coerce the people of India. I was helpless, and could do nothing on the wider field, but, at any rate, I could refuse personally to be cowed down and coerced into submission.

Before I went back to prison I wanted to attend to certain matters. My mother's illness claimed my attention first of all. Very slowly she improved; the process was so slow that for a year she was bedridden. I was eager to see Gandhiji, who lay recovering from his latest fast in Poona. For over two years I had not met him. I also wanted to meet as many of my provincial colleagues as possible to discuss, not only the existing political situation in India, but the world situation as well as the ideas that filled my mind. I thought then that the world was going rapidly towards a catastrophe, political and economic, and we ought to keep this in mind in drawing up our national programmes.

My household affairs also claimed my attention. I had ignored them completely so far, and I had not even examined my father's papers since his death. We had cut down our expenditure greatly, but still it was far more than we could afford. And yet it was difficult to reduce it further, so long as we lived in that house of ours. We were not keeping a car because that was beyond our means, and also because, at any moment, it could be attached by Government. Faced by financial difficulties, I was diverted by the large mail of begging letters that I received. (The censor passed the lot on.) There was a general and very erroneous impression, especially in South India, that I was a wealthy person.

Soon after my release my younger sister, Krishna, got engaged to be married and I was anxious to have the wedding early, before my enforced departure took place. Krishna herself had come out of prison a few months earlier after serving out a year.

As soon as my mother's health permitted it, I went to Poona
to see Gandhiji. I was happy to see him again and to find that, though weak, he was making good progress. We had long talks. It was obvious that we differed considerably in our outlook on life and politics and economics, but I was grateful to him for the generous way in which he tried to come as far as he could to meet my viewpoint. Our correspondence, subsequently published, dealt with some of the wider issues that filled my mind, and though they were referred to in vague language, the general drift was clear. I was happy to have Gandhiji’s declaration that there must be a de-vesting of vested interests, though he laid stress that this should be by conversion, not compulsion. As some of his methods of conversion are not far removed, to my thinking, from courteous and considerate compulsion, the difference did not seem to me very great. I had the feeling with him then, as before, that though he might be averse to considering vague theories, the logic of facts would take him, step by step, to the inevitability of fundamental social changes. He was a curious phenomenon—a person of the type of a medieval Catholic saint, as Mr. Verrier Elwin has called him—and at the same time a practical leader with his pulse always on the Indian peasantry. Which way he might turn in a crisis it was difficult to say, but whichever way it was, it would make a difference. He might go the wrong way, according to our thinking, but it would always be a straight way. It was good to work with him, but if necessity arose then different roads would have to be followed.

For the present, I thought then, this question did not arise. We were in the middle of our national struggle and civil disobedience was still the programme in theory, of the Congress, although it had been restricted to individuals. We must carry on as we are and try to spread socialistic ideas among the people, and especially among the more politically-conscious Congress workers, so that when the time came for another declaration of policy we might be ready for a notable advance. Meanwhile, Congress was an unlawful organisation, and the British Government was trying to crush it. We had to meet that attack.

The principal problem which faced Gandhiji was a personal one. What was he to do himself? He was in a tangle. If he went to gaol again the same question of Harijan privileges would arise and, presumably, the Government would not give in, and he would fast again. Would the same round be repeated? He refused to submit to such a cat-and-mouse policy, and said that if he fasted again for those privileges, the fast
would continue even though he was released. That meant a fast to death.

The second possible course before him was not to court imprisonment during the year of his sentence (ten and a half months of this remained still) and devote himself to Harijan work. But at the same time he would meet Congress workers and advise them when necessary.

A third possibility he suggested to me was that he should retire from the Congress altogether for a while, and leave it in the hands of the "younger generation," as he put it.

The first course, ending, as it seemed, in his death by starvation, was impossible for any one of us to recommend. The third seemed very undesirable when the Congress was an illegal body. It would either result in the immediate withdrawal of civil disobedience and all forms of direct action and a going back to legality and constitutional activity, or to a Congress, outlawed and isolated, now even from Gandhiji, being crushed still further by Government. Besides, there was no question of any group taking possession of an illegal organisation which could not meet and discuss any policy. By a process of exclusion we arrived thus at the second course of action suggested by him. Most of us disliked it, and we knew that it would give a heavy blow to the remains of civil disobedience. If the leader had himself retired from the fight, it was not likely that many enthusiastic Congress workers would jump into the fire. But there seemed no other way out of the tangle, and Gandhiji made his announcement accordingly.

We agreed, Gandhiji and I, though perhaps for different reasons, that the time was not yet for a withdrawal of civil disobedience and we must carry on even at a low-ebb. For the rest, I wanted to turn people's attention to socialistic doctrines and the world situation.

I spent a few days in Bombay on my way back. I was fortunate in catching Udai Shankar there and seeing his dancing. This was an unexpected treat which I enjoyed greatly. Theatres, music, cinema, talkies, radio and broadcasting—all this had been beyond my reach for many years, for even during my intervals of freedom I was too engrossed in other activities. I have only been once to a talkie so far, and the great names of cinema stars are names only to me. I have missed the theatre especially, and I have often read with envy of new productions in foreign countries. In northern India, even when I was out of gaol, there was little opportunity of seeing good plays, for there were hardly any within reach. I believe the Bengali,
Gujrati and Marathi drama has made some progress; not so the Hindustani stage, which is, or was (for I do not know the latest developments) terribly crude and inartistic. I am told most of the Indian films, both silent and talkies, do not err on the side of artistry. They are usually operettes or melodramas, drawing upon some theme from old Indian history or mythology.

I suppose they supply what is most appreciated by the city people. The contrast between these crude and painful shows and the still surviving artistry of the folk-song and -dance, and even village drama, is very marked. In Bengal, in Gujrat and in the south, one discovers sometimes, with a shock of pleasant surprise, how fundamentally, and yet unconsciously, artistic the mass of the village people are. Not so the middle classes; they seem to have lost their roots and have no aesthetic tradition to cling to. They glory in cheap and horrid prints made in bulk in Germany and Austria, and sometimes even rise to Ravi Varma’s pictures. The harmonium is their favourite instrument. (I live in hope that one of the earliest acts of the Swaraj government will be to ban this awful instrument.) But perhaps the height of painful incongruity and violation of all artistic codes is met with in the houses of most big taluqadars in Lucknow or elsewhere. They have money to spend and a desire to show off, and they do so; and the people who visit them are the pained witnesses of the fulfilment of this desire.

Recently there has been an artistic awakening, led by the brilliant Tagore family, and its influence is already apparent all over India. But how can any art flourish widely when the people of the country are hampered and restricted and suppressed at every turn and live in an atmosphere of fear?

In Bombay I met many friends and comrades, some only recently out of prison. The socialistic element was strong there, and there was much resentment at recent happenings in the upper ranks of the Congress. Gandhiji was severely criticised for his metaphysical outlook applied to politics. With much of the criticism I was in agreement, but I was quite clear that, situated as we were, we had little choice in the matter and had to carry on. Any attempt to withdraw civil disobedience would have brought no relief to us, for the Government’s offensive would continue and all effective work would inevitably lead to prison. Our national movement had arrived at a stage when it had to be suppressed by Government, or it would impose its will on the British Government. This meant that it had arrived at a stage when it was always likely to be declared illegal and, as a
movement, it could not go back even if civil disobedience was withdrawn. The continuance of disobedience made little difference in practice, but it was an act of moral defiance which had value. It was easier to spread new ideas during a struggle than it would be when the struggle was wound-up for the time being, and demoralisation ensued. The only alternative to the struggle was a compromising attitude to the British authority and constitutional action in the councils.

It was a difficult position, and the choice was not an easy one. I appreciated the mental conflicts of my colleagues, for I had myself had to face them. But I found there, as I have found elsewhere in India, some people who wanted to make high socialistic doctrine a refuge for inaction. It was a little irritating to find people, who did little themselves, criticise others who had shouldered the burden in the heat and dust of the fray, as reactionaries. These parlour Socialists are especially hard on Gandhiji as the arch-reactionary, and advance arguments which in logic, leave little to be desired. But the little fact remains that this ‘reactionary’ knows India, understands India, almost is peasant India, and has shaken up India as no so-called revolutionary has done. Even his latest Harijan activities have gently but irresistibly undermined orthodox Hinduism and shaken it to its foundations. The whole tribe of the Orthodox have ranged themselves against him, and consider him their most dangerous enemy, although he continues to treat them with all gentleness and courtesy. In his own peculiar way he has a knack of releasing powerful forces which spread out, like ripples on the water’s surface, and affect millions. Reactionary or revolutionary, he has changed the face of India, given pride and character to a cringing and demoralised people, built up strength and consciousness in the masses, and made the Indian problem a world problem. Quite apart from the objectives aimed at and its metaphysical implications, the method of non-violent non-co-operation or civil resistance is a unique and powerful contribution of his to India and the world, and there can be no doubt that it has been peculiarly suited to Indian conditions.

I think it is right that we should encourage honest criticism, and have as much public discussion of our problems as possible. It is unfortunate that Gandhiji’s dominating position has to some extent prevented this discussion. There was always a tendency to rely on him and to leave the decision to him. This is obviously wrong, and the nation can only advance by reasoned acceptance of objectives and methods, and a co-operation and
discipline based on them and not on blind obedience. No one, however great he may be, should be above criticism. But when criticism becomes a mere refuge for inaction there is something wrong with it. For socialists to indulge in this kind of thing is to invite condemnation from the public, for the masses judge by acts. "He who denies the sharp tasks of to-day," says Lenin, "in the name of dreams about soft tasks of the future becomes an opportunist. Theoretically it means to fail to base oneself on the developments now going on in real life, to detach oneself from them in the name of dreams."

Socialists and communists in India are largely nurtured on literature dealing with the industrial proletariat. In some selected areas, like Bombay or near Calcutta, large numbers of factory workers abound, but for the rest India remains agricultural, and the Indian problem cannot be disposed of, or treated effectively, in terms of the industrial workers. Nationalism and rural economy are the dominating considerations, and European socialism seldom deals with these. Pre-war conditions in Russia were a much nearer approach to India, but there again the most extraordinary and unusual occurrences took place, and it is absurd to expect a repetition of these anywhere else. I do believe that the philosophy of communism helps us to understand and analyse existing conditions in any country, and further indicates the road to future progress. But it is doing violence and injustice to that philosophy to apply it blindfold and without due regard to facts and conditions.

Life is anyhow a complex affair, and the conflicts and contradictions of life sometimes make one despair a little. It is not surprising that people should differ, or even that comrades with a common approach to problems should draw different conclusions. But a person who tries to hide his own weakness in high-sounding phrases and noble principles is apt to be suspect. A person who tries to save himself from prison by giving undertakings and assurances to the Government, or by other dubious conduct, and then has the temerity to criticise others, is likely to injure the cause he espouses.

Bombay being a vast cosmopolitan city had all manner of people. One prominent citizen, however, showed a perfectly remarkable catholicity in his political, economic, social and religious outlook. As a Labour leader, he was a Socialist; in politics generally he called himself a Democrat; he was a favourite of the Hindu Sabha and he promised to protect old religious and social customs and prevent the legislature from interfering; at election-time he became the nominee of the
Sanatanists, those high priests at the shrine of the ancient mysteries. Not finding this varied and diverting career exhausting enough, he utilised his superfluous energy in criticising Congress and condemning Gandhiji as reactionary. In co-operation with a few others he started a Congress Democratic Party, which incidentally had nothing to do with democracy, and was connected with Congress only in so far as it attacked that august body. Searching for fresh fields to conquer, he then attended the Geneva Labour Conference as a Labour delegate. One might almost think that he was qualifying for the Prime Ministership of a ‘National’ Government after the English fashion.

Few people can have had the advantage of such a varied outlook and activities. And yet among the critics of the Congress there were many who had experimented in various fields, and who kept a finger in many a pie. A few of these called themselves socialists, and they gave a bad name to socialism.
THE LIBERAL OUTLOOK

During my visit to Poona to see Gandhiji, I accompanied him one evening to the Servants of India Society’s home. For an hour or so questions were put to him on political matters by some of the members of the Society, and he answered them. Mr. Srinivasa Sastri, the President of the Society, was not there, nor was Pandit Hriday Nath Kunzru, probably the ablest of the other members, but some senior members were present. A few of us who were present on the occasion listened with growing amazement, for the questions related to the most trivial of happenings. Mostly they dealt with Gandhiji’s old request for an interview with the Viceroy and the Viceroy’s refusal. Was this the only important subject they could think of in a world full of problems, and when their own country was carrying on a hard struggle for freedom and hundreds of organisations were outlawed? There was the agrarian crisis and the industrial depression causing widespread unemployment. There were the dreadful happenings in Bengal and the Frontier and in other parts of India, the suppression of freedom of thought and speech and writing and assembly; and so many other national and international problems. But the questions were limited to unimportant happenings, and the possible reactions of the Viceroy and the Government of India to an approach by Gandhiji.

I had a strong feeling as if I had entered a monastery, the inhabitants of which had long been cut off from effective contact with the outside world. And yet our friends were active politicians, able men with long records of public service and sacrifice. They formed, with a few others, the real backbone of the Liberal Party. The rest of the Party was a vague, amorphous lot of people, who wanted occasionally to have the sensation of being connected with political activities. Some of these, especially in Bombay and Madras, were indistinguishable from Government officials.

The questions that a country puts are a measure of that country’s political development. Often the failure of that country is due to the fact that it has not put the right question to itself. Our wasting our time and energy and tempers over the communal distribution of seats, or our forming parties on
the Communal Award and carrying on a sterile controversy about it to the exclusion of vital problems, is a measure of our political backwardness. In the same way the questions that were put to Gandhiji that day in the Servants of India Society's home mirrored the strange mental state of that Society and of the Liberal Party. They seemed to have no political or economic principles, no wide outlook, and their politics seemed to be of the parlour or court variety—what high officials would do or would not do.

One is apt to be misled by the name 'Liberal Party'. The word elsewhere, and especially in England, stood for a certain economic policy—free trade and laissez-faire, etc.—and a certain ideology of individual freedom and civil liberties. The English Liberal tradition was based on economic foundations. The desire for freedom in trade and to be rid of the King's monopolies and arbitrary taxation, led to the desire for political liberty. The Indian Liberals have no such background. They do not believe in free trade, being almost all protectionists, and they attach little importance to civil liberties as recent events have shown. Their close contacts with and general support of the semi-feudal and autocratic Indian States, where even the beginnings of democracy and personal freedom are non-existent, also distinguish them from the European type of Liberal. Indeed the Indian Liberals are not liberal at all in any sense of the word, or at most they are liberal only in spots and patches. What they exactly are it is difficult to say, for they have no firm positive basis of ideas, and, though small in numbers, differ from one another. They are strong only in negation. They see error everywhere and attempt to avoid it, and hope that in doing so they will find the truth. Truth for them indeed always lies between two extremes. By criticising everything they consider extreme, they experience the feeling of being virtuous and moderate and good. This method helps them in avoiding painful and difficult processes of thought and in having to put forward constructive ideas. Capitalism, some of them vaguely feel, has not wholly succeeded in Europe, and is in trouble; on the other hand socialism is obviously bad, because it attacks vested interests. Probably some mystic solution will be found in the future, some half-way house, and meanwhile vested interests should be protected. If there was an argument as to whether the earth was flat or round, probably they would condemn both these extreme views and suggest tentatively that it might be square or elliptical.

Over trivial and unimportant matters they grow quite excited,