

Out of dust he made us into men.

D. F. KARAKA

OUT OF DUST

THE PACHAIYAPPA'S COLLEGE
STAFF CLUB.
KILPAUK, P. O., MADRAS.

THACKER & CO., LTD.
BOMBAY

First Published 1940
Second Impression 1941
Third Impression 1942
Fourth Impression 1943

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Set & Printed in India by
Ranchhoddas Manchharam at Turf Printing Works,
31, Tribhovan Road, Bombay, 4.
Published by C. Murphy, Manager, Thacker & Co., Ltd.
Rampart Row, Bombay.

To Mac

. . . remembering a drive down an encircling road and the things that were left behind, remembering wistfully a design for living, which might have been the pattern of my life . . . to Mac . . . because he helps me to recapture a past which has faded with the years — the rain pattering on the boulevard, the snow falling heavily on Tom Quad and the negro voice lifted as an offering in some Montmartre shrine . . . to Mac . . . because he is aware of the compelling sincerity of our struggle for freedom—a struggle which must one day come to an end—and because he understands the inner conflict within me and appreciates shades of difference which to others are imperceptible . . . to Mac . . . because he lives in the present—in the India which wants to be strong and unafraid.



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Lead, kindly light, midst the encircling gloom,

Lead Thou me on;

The night is dark and I am far from home,

Lead Thou me on;

Keep Thou my feet, I do not ask to see

The distant scene; one step enough for me."

—*Cardinal Newman.*

PREFACE

TO WRITE ON GANDHI IS LIKE GOING ON A PILGRIMAGE. The path to the shrine has been trodden by a distinguished line of pilgrims in whose wake I follow.

With the whole mass of literature which, as bibliography, falls under the heading of *Gandhi*, it is difficult to find many details about his life, which are not already known to that host of readers who have read in turn Gandhi on himself, Andrews on Gandhi, Rolland on Gandhi, Robert Bernays and Glorney Boulton, Joseph Doke and Holmes, and that whole crowd of authors and authorettes, who have written on this one great Indian theme.

Wading through this colossal bibliographical list, I have wondered what I would find in my own book which would be different. I could not change the life of the man, nor could I at this late stage in his life profess to come in as a biographer, discovering new and illuminating details about him which have escaped the others. Nor has this been my intention. I have preferred to stick to my original purpose, which was to chronicle the events

that have led up to the new India which has grown up with me, and to find out for myself the story of my country in relation to the one man, who was most closely associated with it — a story, which though told in many books, still remains for an Indian as fascinating as ever.

My appreciation of this story is my own. The things I have found in it to interest me are often different from those which have pleased the others. I have studied it not as if it were a treatise on politics or religion or philosophy, but as a human document which has emerged from the India of my time.

The years at Oxford and in England sometimes made it difficult for me to approach India in the Indian way. Even now a simple approach does not come natural to me, and I find I have a sneaking regard for that which is subtle and sophisticated in life, as opposed to the thing I find in India, which are often simple and obvious.

There are many others like me who have this mental make-up. Of us I would say that we believe but we do not always understand, for we find ourselves torn between rival loyalties. Perhaps "loyalties" is not the appropriate word. The loyalty is only to our country and our people. But there is a perpetual conflict within us between this instinctive loyalty and the ideas we have acquired from a sophisticated western education. Perhaps with greater patience we could end this conflict. The life of the Mahatma shows what infinite patience, self-sacrifice and high-principled living is required of us if we are to do something for our people, whose backwardness is appalling, and help them to break through the illiteracy and the superstitution and the prejudice of many years.

I found it necessary, therefore, to acquaint myself first with the struggle of the Indian people and the work of Mahatma Gandhi. They are really indistinguishable. In this book, I have tried to tell myself — and those who may read the book — this story of a country struggling to be free and of a man who set it on the path to freedom. I cannot say that mine is an unbiased story. I found too early in the writing of it that I could not keep pace with Talleyrand's standard of narrative, when he said : *Je ne*

blame, ni n'accuse; je raconte. For although I can come to it with a mental aloofness and a distance that gives perspective, I come too near to it with my heart. It brings out in me that something inherently Indian, which, I was afraid, might have been washed away by the long absence from home. If only to have found that this emotional bias is still in me, I must regard this book as having been worth writing.

April 1940 D. F. KARAKA

THE PACHAIYAPPA'S COLLEGE
STAFF CLUB,
KILPAUK, P. O., MADRAS.

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I

SILHOUETTE

IT WAS AN ORDINARY MARCH EVENING, AND I HAD parked the old Buick along the drive to see the sun set over the Indian Ocean. Against the richness of the sky, I saw a dark silhouette move along the pebbled beach. A man—I judged from his nakedness, for his body was bare up to his girdled loins—short, twisted, almost deformed. It revealed a form which had bent under the burden, but which clung to him even as his shadow that trailed behind. Nobody knew who this man was, or where he had come from. He was only typical of the poverty of India —just one of the three hundred and seventy million, and it was because of the Hindu temple that stood out on the hillock across the way, with its golden dome glistening in the last rays of the setting sun, that I guessed his nakedness had some meaning and his unmarked path a possible destination.

My own imagination gave him caste, for caste seemed essential. Without it, this dark shadow across the horizon symbolized nothing. To me, therefore, he was

unmistakably a caste Hindu. His body—fragile, delicate, worn-out. One could not yet get used to the idea of the untouchable walking so near the sacred temple. But mine was a wild guess, for in the blue redness that was in the background, and in that fading twilight hour, it was difficult at that distance to recognize this form with any definite precision. Nor was this important, for with or without him, India would still go on.

The darkness fell and with it the street lights came on one by one, twinkling at first, but shining brightly as the darkness grew more and more intense. Sometimes the strong headlights of passing cars would fall on the beach below and sweep over that endless expanse of black darkness to reflect for a brief moment in the water. But the silhouette was no more to be seen and his naked form had vanished into the night.

It was a grand illusion. Yet it was, without doubt, Indian. It belonged to the India of the people—that simple, unsophisticated India of the same three hundred and seventy million. It was dark, yet there was a consciousness within me that tomorrow there would be another dawn. Half-dead as was that crippled figure of humanity that had walked like a shadow before my eyes, tomorrow there would be life, I knew. Tomorrow more upright figures would walk along that little stretch of pebbled beach. Tomorrow those heads would no longer be bowed, or those bodies bent—for the last of the crippled and the infirm was now on his way to the temple yonder across the way and God in His kindness would henceforth reflect his image in a stronger frame. India must go on.

I am trying now to pay my tribute to the one man who instilled in me this faith in the India of tomorrow. He has made me realize that there is something inherent in man and nature that supplies the urge to live in spite of shadows that have come and gone and sunsets that have faded at the other end of the world. This man is Mahatma Gandhi. His full name is Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. He is also known as Gandhiji, Mahatmaji and to some more intimate friends he is Bapu — a

father. Like the shadow across the horizon, he too has come out of nowhere to walk along the pebbled shore of India, his dark body silhouetted against the redness of a political sky, and in the darkness and the quiet that will follow, even he will have gone. Yet this India will still go on, the India which he has awakened from its slumber. It is with this realization, this answer even to "After Gandhi—what?" that I begin this somewhat simple narrative of a great countryman of mine—a little man who has played a unique role in the history of India.

The world knows him as a headliner of the first importance. Like the Attaturk in modern Turkey, like Hitler and Mussolini in their Fascist empires, like Lenin in Russia, he is reckoned as an influence that has dominated the mind and heart of one great people of the world. Unlike the dictators, who have thrown their weight all over the face of Europe, unlike the Kemal who swaggered in a top hat and striped trousers, unlike Lenin who forged Soviet history with hammer and sickle, Gandhi has been the quiet, shy, unassuming little man, loved because of his simplicity, admired by his followers because of his complete lack of affectation, and even worshipped because of the religious atmosphere which he creates.

L'etat c'est moi, he has never said. Yet without him it is impossible to understand the India of my time—the new India that awoke one morning and found its soul. His life has punctuated the history of modern India, even as Christ did the Christian era. The difference however, is that Christ has always been regarded as the Son of God and not as of the flesh. For Gandhi I claim no spark of the supernatural. I only claim that he is undoubtedly sincere. One has to concede him that, whether one agrees with his principles or not. Those who have read his life, from whatever angle it may have been written, have found in him a somewhat naive, almost childlike personality, which, though it did not impress you at first, made you at once sympathetic. He grows on you even as a familiar landscape.

Perhaps posterity may one day bestow saintliness on him. Of that I cannot judge. The Indian of tomorrow, who has never seen the living image, may find inspiration in the moral when he cannot in the man. But to me it is the man, whom I could see and touch, and who, I knew, was human, that has been the source of inspiration—a frail little man whom Monsieur Rolland saw with a thin face and rather large protruding ears, eyes that were soft and dark, his head covered with a little white cap, his body clothed in coarse white cloth, bare-footed. That is the man I too have seen. That is the man whose power I have felt in the India in which I was born and bred. I have watched him grow from a minor disturbance into a Mahatma. I have liked him, disliked him, worshipped him, criticized him, but he has always been before me —an influence I could not escape. To us he has been a great and living moral example. But for him this country of ours would still be lacking in self-respect. He has been the source of an inspired India, and to many thousands his story is not the story of a man but of an ideal. Whatever shortcomings he may have—for he is human—I feel that out of dust he has made us into men. For a young Indian like me this is a great feeling.

II

IN THE BACKGROUND

IT WAS ON THE SECOND DAY OF OCTOBER IN THE late eighteen-sixties that to the Dewan of an Indian State another son was born. It was by his fourth wife. Gandhi's father had married thrice before and thrice fate had snatched his spouse from him. Then came his last wife, Putlibai, and she bore him a daughter and three sons. Gandhi was the third son and the last child. It seems as if the destiny of the millions that were India had at last fulfilled itself when, after such persistence, it was reflected in that child Mohandas. But Gandhi was essentially of the flesh, too much the ordinary child, who was nursed at his mother's breast, and who cried as children do to make their lungs strong.

The Indian States of his childhood were, like some of the pre-war Duchies of Central Europe, steeped in an atmosphere of diplomacy and intrigue. There was something crudely barbaric about them. They retained the old theories of despotic Government, and absolute sovereignty was an idea very dear to their hearts. The

people bowed low in the presence of their ruler, worshipping him even as the Red-Indians worshipped their mighty chieftain. The royal courts of these States retained their medieval splendour. The man who succeeded in life was the one who pandered to all the warring elements, and who stood out among the common people as the most cunning of them all. That was the key-note of power, the only way to gain the favour of the ruling prince. It was in keeping with the temperament of a people who retired from the presence of their ruler without turning their backs on him, and with their hands held in the manner of begging alms. It was nothing more than an attitude of meek submission to one who, by reason of birth, had become their sovereign lord and king. Monarchy as it existed in an Indian State was not a democratic institution. It was not dependant on the will of the people. It was the embodiment of an unstable and somewhat precarious power that had fallen into the hands of a few individuals who rallied round one central figure.

The Kathiawar States were not in any way different from the others. They were independent, and their rulers had full sovereign powers over their respective territory. They were in the middle-west of India and Porbander, where Gandhi was born, was the "White City" on the Sea of Oman. The *lascars*, whom you have seen on a P. & O. boat, are of the cruder Kathiawari type. There is something deformed about their physiognomy and like aborigines they do not aspire to any great stature. They have not the manly presence of the Rajput or the Pathan, nor even the refined and chiselled features of the Kashmiri Brahmin. The Kathiawari is generally unimpressive. He is the type of Indian furthest away from all sophistication.

Even today when you see Gandhi squatting on the floor with his legs crossed, spinning at the *charkha*, with his large ears, his unsensuous mouth, his somewhat unsophisticated smile, you become conscious of the Kathiawari in him. Caste marks its children deeply, Philip Guedalla has said.

Gandhi was nurtured in no great cultural surroundings, but he has reflected in his philosophy of strict abstinence the tenets of the rigid Jain schools of Hinduism, to which he belonged. "Thou shalt not take the life of any living creature," was the first commandment, and meat-eating to the Gandhi family had always been a major sin. That was the most conspicuous feature of his environment—conspicuous to us, who look with gleaming eyes at a steak which is juicy, and a veal cutlet, which flaunts an egg and crossed anchovies on its bread-crumbed bosom. To Gandhi it was so fundamental a principle of life that it was never regarded as an abstinence until the meat-eaters were pointed out to him. But the serpent, who came in the form of a friend at school, made him taste forbidden flesh, and he fell, because he was weak and because he used to be haunted through the night by visions which were frightening. He wanted to be like those who ate meat—strong and brave and fearless. But it was not for long. When the time came for him to go to England, his mother who was then a widow, and who never knew her son had "sinned," took from him a vow to abstain from meat-eating as she thought he had always done. That vow given as vows easily are when we young men see the vision of that far-off continent of Europe, he has kept even to this day, though by now his palate has accustomed itself to a diet, which is more tasteless than even the vegetarian fare of his early days in England.

About his early youth there is nothing outstanding. At school he was abnormally mediocre. Mathematics worried him. His spelling was bad. His hand-writing was shabby and showed signs of neglect. But for a trifling incident when he refused to look over someone else's shoulder to find out the correct spelling of the word "kettle," his school days were eventless, and there was nothing in them to stamp him as a youth of any great promise. He never went to preach the gospel as Christ did, even as a comparative child. Instead, Gandhi had merely lurked in the kitchens of the palace in somewhat dubious company, acquiring gradually a taste for the meat

which his friend attempted to prepare in as palatable a fashion as he could. Nor had Gandhi's reading of books gone any further than of those strictly prescribed for his work, and he seems to have led that aimless life which, as the son of a Dewan of an Indian State, it was fit and proper to lead.

The monarchies of India laid down no high principles for their subjects to follow. They were the great heritage of leisured unemployment, carried on through the generations, alike in King and subject. Such was the tradition of the ruling princess at that time. As the son of a Prime Minister, the young Gandhi showed a greater aptitude for it than the poor man's son. Even so, there was one redeeming feature about the cult of do-nothing. It had a strong religious flavour, for as a youngster, Gandhi would sit with his legs crossed, and shaking his head in tune with the straight-jacketed rhythm of the recital, he would listen with rapt attention to the Bhagvat Gita, the Hindu Iliad with the allegory of Spenser and a suggestion of the cadence of the Old Testament. It is to this same Bhagvat Gita that he has turned for comfort on many occasions in his chequered career.

* * *

EARLY at the age of thirteen he was married to a girl chosen and approved of by his parents. Marriage then was a sort of slaughter of innocents. His brother, his cousin and Gandhi himself were sacrificed at the altar of Hymen on the same fateful day—six young children paired off in twos for the sake of convenience and on grounds of economy—children, who were about the same age as the young Gandhi. It was the right thing to do in the India of that day. I do not think these children were aware which of them had been cast in the lot as companions for life. They were married with the benediction of a religion that knew no divorce and in which Fate worked in queer ways its wonders to perform. But the die was cast and Gandhi says of his marriage: "Two innocent children were unwittingly hurling themselves into the ocean of life."

I do not question the right of Hinduism to inflict itself on the young and the innocent. You cannot question a Hindu custom any more than you can say 'why' to an English proverb. It is the perpetuation of that bond of marriage between two people, who had never given their consent to that bond, and if they had, were not in a position to do so, that is an indictment of the religion which allows such bonds to be created. Marriage then becomes nothing more than "the prospect of good clothes to wear, drum beating, marriage processions, rich dinners and a strange girl to play with." It becomes a form of sexless, companionate marriage with this difference that, when the period of probation is over, you still have to stick to your bride.

That is, I am afraid, the plight of many a Hindu husband, who has grown up to realize that he has been bound for life to a woman, not of his choice, and that there are then only two alternatives offered to him where passion or carnal desire remains unsatisfied. It is either repression and self-control, or the gloomy prospect of a local brothel. I say this of early Hindu marriage in general, with no reference to that of Gandhi. However, Gandhi's friend of his younger days, the same that made him sin by tasting forbidden meat, succeeded in leading him to the doors of the house with the red lamp. Gandhi entered. "I went into the jaws of sin, but God in His infinite mercy protected me against myself." The consciousness of right followed the moral lapse soon enough to make him leave that 'den of vice.'

I do not claim it a great virtue that a man, who later was to become the undoubted leader of a whole people, should have turned his back on an Indian brothel with its crude wooden staircase leading to a still cruder little room, where on wooden planks a little whore offered her naked body for a paltry sum of a few rupees. No great virtue at all that he withdrew from 'the jaws of sin.' It is rather the general attitude of the man towards this problem of sex, his ultimate conquest of the flesh and the vow of celibacy, which he later took, that is part of the philosophy

of Gandhi. Then one begins to understand the importance he has attached in his story to this brothel incident, which many others would have preferred to omit.

* * *

TIME marched on. The standard of moral values changed. It no longer followed that the son of a Dewan could follow in his father's footsteps. Something more than mere commonsense was necessary for success in life. The lower classes had gradually come to the fore in all competitive positions, and the father-to-son tradition did not hold good any more. Moreover, Gandhi's father was dead, and with his limited education Gandhi could hardly achieve much in competitive surroundings. India was already producing too many young men who could fill responsible positions to leave room for those who could only rely on family influence. And so in search of a hitherto unexploited field, Gandhi decided to go to London to become a barrister.

Those were the days when an Indian student attracted some attention in the English metropolis. The vision of Empire had come a little nearer to the Smiths and the Browns, but it was sufficiently elusive to keep alive their interest in the stray Indian student on his way to the Inns of Court or the School of Economics.

To send one's son to England at that time was like sending him to Pekin or Moscow. It was an uncommon adventure, which required thought and consideration. The West was to Indian parents still a wild country—wild in spite of its civilization, perhaps because of it. The ways of the West were dangerous, even though its education might have been sober, steady and fully tried. In the West they ate meat and thrived on it. Meat-eating had made them strong and the souls of the meat-eaters remained untortured. To a son of devout Hindu parents, to touch meat would be fatal and after death there would even be damnation. In the West, young men drank and gambled and slept promiscuously with women. In the West, wild orgies went on till after midnight into the early hours of the morning, and men and women spent whole nights in

Bacchic revelry. To that West one could not send one's son for an education without a certain hesitation. For what was the use of even an educated, much less of an uneducated son if he returned from England with an unclean mind, and a soul which had for ever been assigned to the spirits of evil ?

All these thoughts crossed the minds of the Gandhi elders when they considered the idea of sending Mohandas to study in England. The all-interfering caste machine, whose power was felt to some purpose in the India of that time, found an occasion to express once again that disapproval, with which it greeted all ideas which were unconventional or unorthodox. Piously they sat in conference to resolve upon this essentially personal matter, on which neither their opinion nor their judgment had been canvassed. But they sat in judgment just the same with their legs crossed, digging in between their toes to help them to think. It was their privilege to discuss the pros and cons of giving their benediction to the contemplated plan of sending the young Gandhi to England.

Caste had spoken, and when the committee of elders broke up, there was little doubt as to the unanimity of their decision. It was apparent that if Gandhi went to England, it would have to be against the expressed wishes of his community and he would run the risk of being excommunicated from the Modh Banias, the caste to which he belonged.

The opinion of the caste machine did not worry Gandhi. He had already formulated his sense of moral values, and the only opinions that mattered to him were those of his mother, who was now his only living parent, and of his uncle who, after his father's death, was regarded as the head of the family. The absence of any definite objection on their part was tantamount to an approval, though it was conditional on his taking a vow—or to be more precise three vows—and when these were solemnly administered to him, he knew he had got at least his mother's blessings. He had sworn to live a celibate life in England, never to touch drink and never to eat meat.

On an eventful fourth of September, in the company of a Junagadh lawyer and while still in his teens, he left Bombay, and his way lay West. Not much is known of this first voyage, except that it was not the Cliffs of Dover that extended the first English welcome to him, but the less picturesque and somewhat cold arm of Southampton pier. The young man was obsessed with the importance of this first visit to England, and he wore for the occasion a white flannel suit. The navvies were a little shaken at the optimism of a dark stranger, who wore summer clothes when autumn leaves were beginning to shed and when the cold north wind had already started to blow. A trifle embarrassed by his attire, he hastened to meet his Indian friend at the pier and in the excitement that followed, Gandhi picked up his friend's top hat and brushed it the wrong way. It was not a very auspicious omen. Later in life he was to ruffle the very hearts of men.

The arrival of Gandhi in a white flannel suit is not entirely without meaning. It is, of course, typical of the Indian student who arrives in England for the first time to be conspicuous by the inappropriateness of his attire, as if the sole purpose of the visit to England is to learn art, literature, commerce and as a recreation to visit the museums. But the wearing of white is understandable. White has always been regarded by Indians as something that is clean, and at the threshold of a new career it was right and fitting to wear a clean garment. There was, therefore, something symbolic about wearing white. It was intended to be a tribute to the solemnity of the occasion.

The month of September in England—especially towards the end of the month—is not very cheerful for the complete stranger. The English people, who in the normal conduct of their lives react so sensitively to the weather, become more aloof at the sight of the autumn approaching, and with the coming of winter there comes over them a gloom, which spreads over the whole countryside. To those who encounter the Anglo-Saxon temperament in this mood of depression, England is a

disappointing adventure and the absence of any warmth of feeling contrasts with those strong ties of affection which exist at home. Gandhi soon felt a longing for home and as he lay awake at nights, the memory of his people, his home and his mother haunted him.

The West had turned out as others had warned him it would—cold and feelingless. There was something strangely aloof about the English people. But he was determined to see the experiment through, and he knew he could not return to India before he was fully qualified for the Bar. About that he had made up his mind.

* * *

THE London in which Gandhi wandered was a jungle of stone. The familiar landmarks were the same as they always are for the Indian student. Vegetarian Restaurants, the Inns of Court, Thomas Cook's, Gower Street and the Indian Hostel, Chancery Lane and the district of E.C.4.

E. C. 4! Hard-bitten, cold-blooded, journalists wandered in it, moving heartlessly from one human story to another. Briefless barristers whisked round in circles from their Chambers to the Courts of Law and back again, their empty brief-cases tucked stylishly under their arms. Striped trousers shone at the seats and black coats glistened at the elbows. A provincial irksomeness had strayed into the city, and it tried to hide a threadbare existence by glorifying it into a tradition. Charing Cross, the Temple, Strand—this outskirt of the city proper, this slight excursion out of the West End, this concentration, of all the money-grabbing instincts of the community this centre of English jurisprudence and international gossip, this collection of antiquated literature which prostrated itself on pavements, this future site for the Babylons of the Empire—Charing Cross, the Temple, Strand, to which the bus tickets of the Indian student were inevitably punched. That was the locality most familiar to Gandhi in his London days.

The vow to abstain from eating meat, which he had taken, made it imperative that he should find sufficient

restaurants, which catered for vegetarians. Those were the days when Indian restaurants were scarce and what there were of the vegetarian variety were, like nudist colonies, sprinkled sparsely over the face of London. Vegetarianism was only a cult and there were not enough eccentric people to make it pay. To dine out was even for the Englishman something rare, for Londoners did not live, as they do now, in the narrow confines of a one-room flat. After the day's work, there was the home and round the family dining table they would gather to dip into the veal-and-ham pie, or to trim the joint that appeared on a silver salver. I suppose some of the Barrets still dined in Wimpole Street, and in Park Lane the blinds were drawn over many a sumptuous meal. Only the ghost of Samuel Johnson hung round the chop-houses and the *Cheddar Cheese*. Dining out was nothing more than an intellectual affectation, like the coining of epigrams and the writing of sonnets. To the young Gandhi, who tried to gorge himself on oatmeal porridge in the morning and who went hungry for lunch, a vegetarian restaurant was like the first drop of rain after the drought had parched the fields of corn.

Gandhi's attitude to vegetarianism was only one phase of his experiment with truth. It was one of the early phases. His abstinence from meat-eating had been forced on him, and though he would not break his vow, he was not yet a vegetarian by conviction. It was a form of sacrifice, the price he paid for coming to England with his mother's blessings, which were sacred to him. But at the entrance to a restaurant—in Farringdon Street—he noticed a book for sale. It was Salt's *Plea for Vegetarianism*. The conviction he was searching for came from the pages of this book, and as he put it down, he knew that 'God had come to his aid.'

This incident, trifling as it may seem, characterizes his early days in London. It shows how he regarded the West with a certain respectful adoration. When he went there, it was to emulate the West in its ways of life, and by life, Gandhi then understood merely the outer shell, not

the deep, inner something which was really vital. Clothes, dancing, playing the violin, parting of the hair, the cut of his suits—these were aspects of English life which gripped his early imagination. He was meticulously punctilious about these. He wanted to acquire that polish which is supposed to characterize the English gentleman.

A great many amongst us cannot even now visualize the great Mahatma on a dance floor, swaying to the languid strains of the waltz, which must have been in vogue at that time. But Gandhi had, like many of us, set foot on an English dance-floor. It shows how even the best amongst us have at some stage of our adolescence attempted to ape some of the sophistications of the West. Yet we would never condescend to wear a Japanese kimono or use the chop-sticks that come from China, even though these latter forms of sophistication are Oriental. But such was and still is the destiny of India that we are nearer to London than to Nanking and Tokyo.

It is then that we understand the lament of those like Paul Robeson, who deplore the neglect of the culture of the East, such as is embodied in the teachings of Buddha, and in the thought of Laotze and Confucius. It is then too that we understand why we would do better to dip earlier in life into the teachings of Mohamed, of Zarathustra, of Krishna, of Buddha and all those who made it possible for our ancestors to be priests and kings, when those of the West were dressed in sheep-skin and woad. Sometimes I wish we had more Aryan arrogance. Yet seeing what it has done to Europe, perhaps we are just as well without it. What arrogance we profess comes to us more as an afterthought, almost as an apology.

This probably explains Gandhi's late appreciation of Hindu culture. It was only when the West had failed to grip his imagination and to stimulate his senses that he took refuge in the culture of the East. Likewise his zest for the superficialities of the West gradually died down. He gave up the idea of learning to play the violin and to dance the waltz. He gave up French and elocution, and

he even left the English family, with whom he stayed, to take a small room in a cheaper district of London, where he cooked his own meals and lived on a shilling and three pence a day! He walked to save fares. There was a sudden desire in him to cultivate an earnestness of purpose, when he realized that his visit to England was primarily to study the law and not to ape the superficialities of English life.

III

THE MOULDING OF THE MAN

ABOUT THIS TIME, GANDHI FIRST BEGAN TO SHED his outer garments. By that I do not mean that he wore less clothes or that the drive to the loin-cloth stage had begun. On the contrary, his insistence on formal attire was most emphatic in his London days, and he spent several minutes before the mirror to get a correct parting for the hair. But the shroud in which his soul and his whole spirit was wrapped and which enveloped his life and thought, first began to loosen its folds and you saw him moving towards a simplicity of living.

It was in England that he first got a chance of looking at himself, of revising his purpose of life, his ideals and of formulating his plans for the future. There were, in London, no restrictions of caste, no panchayats to regulate his mode of life, no relations whose sense of morals he could offend. He lived in freedom, such as he had never experienced before and such as he knew he would not again experience on his return. Yet the liberties he took with life became less as the opportunities to take them

increased. He no longer desired self-indulgence, once self-indulgence prostrated itself so blatantly before him. It revealed to him how empty the rest of his life would be if there was nothing more in it than violin and dancing lessons, a smattering of French, and a polish of the kind which faded like cheap varnish.

It was also in English surroundings that he first realized how poorly read he was, and though throughout his life there seems to be a paucity of reading, it was in England that he took a few books in hand, and when he read them, they made an impression on him which was lasting. Seldom have we known of a man whose early reading has lasted him so long.

There always remained his affection for the Gita and often he paid a tribute to the Bible. I cannot help feeling that his real appreciation of these was acquired much later, when in his mode of life he reflected the moral of the Indian Iliad and the Christian Gospel. "The Bible," says Somerset Maugham, "is an Oriental Book. Its alien imagery has nothing to do with us. Those hyperboles, those luscious metaphors, are foreign to our genius." That was, perhaps, just why it appealed to Gandhi. In that rhythm, that powerful vocabulary, that grandiloquence, that ornamental prose, Gandhi found something Oriental after his heart, even though it was the Orientalism of a Semite people, nearer Baghdad and Jerusalem, rich, baroque, flowery, rather than an Orientalism which was Aryan, philosophical, elusive, almost mystic. The Gita and the Bible, and to some extent Ruskin and Tolstoi have always inspired him. Perhaps they were the means by which Gandhi brought out something that was within him, which later he conveyed to the people of India. It was a power he had not yet discovered. So comes the first introspective phase of his life. The Jain influence over him made him take refuge in asceticism in order to get a true perspective of himself, rather than seek an artificial outlet in self-indulgence, which might have devoured his whole being and extinguished his force.

This insight into himself resulted in something more than self-revelation. From his own example he was better able to understand the deficiency of the Indian mind. He was able to see more clearly the influences that dominated the Indian, who had no liberty of thought and expression in his country and no scope to develop whatever talent may have been latent and native in his people. The English domination was more than the conquest of territory, more than the colonization of a people. It had been for the Indian a conquest also of the mind. Body and Soul had been surrendered to the will of the conqueror. Body and Soul ! Such was the painful result of introspection, and though Gandhi continued to look into the mirror and part his hair carefully each morning, there came at first shade of doubt in his mind not strong enough to urge him on to open revolution or to any outward act of violence, but enough to make the spirit within him restless and ready for revolt. The time had not come for him to give vent to that inner urge. He was content to regard himself as a member of the British Empire, and he felt towards it a duty of obedience and respect. He believed that the things that England stood for were noble and uplifting, even though in its attitude towards India this nobility of purpose had not been reflected. This tie of friendship between Gandhi and the British was cemented by several individual acts of kindness, which meant a great deal to a young man who had strayed so far from home.

So the years rolled on, and when his name figured amongst those called to the Bar from the Inner Temple, he sighed with relief, packed his trunks and quickly returned home. It was the month of June and the height of the monsoon. The stormy home-coming was symbolic of the new life he was to begin. The outer storm was a symbol of the storm within, and as he landed on the shores of India, it was only to hear the crushing news that his mother was dead — the same woman whom he had been pining to see all through the days in England. It broke his heart to hear she was no more.

Now came the ablution. It was an ablution in more senses than one. There was the ceremonial that followed his mother's death and that which was necessary to expiate the sin of having defied the caste machine. Discretion was the better part of valour, Gandhi found like many a young Indian who has returned to India after having planned for himself a new Utopia. The familiar harbour lights of Bombay had brought back to his mind the naked reality that for the rest of his life he would have to bow to the will of his fellow men and be judged by them, until he could attain such power of greatness as would place him above caste, and above those who laid down the rules which the common herd were to follow.

Gandhi, therefore, adopted an attitude of compromise. It was a compromise with himself. He revolted against the idea of giving way to the dictates of his elders, but on the other hand there was commonsense, tact, discretion urging him to respect those on whom depended his very existence, his life, his career. The result was that whatever provocation the elders offered, Gandhi determined never to retaliate. He adopted an attitude of perfect nonchalance, a studied indifference, which was more effective than any opposition he could offer. He avoided going directly against their wishes. He preferred to keep perpetually at a distance.

Gandhi knew his limitations. His only claim to distinction was his newly acquired qualification of Barrister-at-Law — a qualification which without briefs could barely keep him in bread and water. It was a case of over-qualification, for he could neither accept the paltry sums that were offered to him, nor place himself in a position to command his price. The condition of the Indian Bar was far from healthy, and Gandhi's early struggle at the Bar was somewhat abortive.

At his brother's request and much against his own judgment, he went on one occasion to a European Officer in Rajkot to ask for a favour on his brother's behalf. Gandhi had some slight acquaintance with the man.

But Kathiawar was different from England and the Englishman-east-of-Suez was not the Englishman he had met in England. It was Gandhi's first realization of the power of the Englishman in India, his first experience of the humiliation that his countrymen suffered at the hands of their rulers. But Gandhi had brought it upon himself. He had gone to ask for a favour and courted a rebuff.

His first reaction was to proceed in a court of law against the Englishman for having ejected him bodily from the house. Hot-blooded, young, impatient and still fresh from England, he had imbibed the idea of liberty and justice and freedom, and he saw in this treatment he had received a clear case for the law. There was little doubt in his mind as to the verdict of an impartial jury. Only one fact he had overlooked, and it was a significant fact. Those whom he was accusing would be judges in their own case and there was a sacred bond among Englishmen in India to stand by each other no matter what happened. It was the loyalty on which the British Empire was founded. It was the loyalty by which it would stand or fall. Those who broke that faith, on whatever grounds, were forever branded with shame, even as a squealer in a pack of thieves is marked with the blackest cross against his name, or a scar on his face, by those whom he has let down.

Better counsel prevailed, and Gandhi's first lesson was a bitter one. It left a mark on his impressionable mind and his sensitive personality. It was humiliating to be made to pocket the insult after being insulted. What a change after the years in England where people talked of friendship and of the bonds of Empire and of the brotherhood of Man. India still had that depressing atmosphere of servitude, and righteousness never had a square deal. Intrigue and conspiracy had always triumphed. It was a disappointing place for a man with ideals. It was the lie to all that he had heard in England, for India was never intended to be free. The liberty of its subjects would never be respected and the trouble was

that the Indians themselves were content with this state of servility. It was because of all this that he accepted an invitation to go to South Africa to help an Indian firm to fight a case pending in the South African courts. The monetary side of this offer was the least attractive, but the idea of getting away from the atmosphere of India, which was choking him, appealed to him most. It was better to be an underpaid barrister in an unknown country than to be briefless and humiliated in one's own. He accepted the offer. It was the beginning of a new adventure, a new experience, and he faced it in a frock-coat and turban. It was a strange sight—stranger even than the flannel suit at Southampton pier.

The idea underlying this combination of an Indian head-dress with English clothes was typical of the attitude of Gandhi. It showed the importance he still attached to the wearing of English clothes, and lest he should offend the Indians, he adopted a compromise by wearing a turban with his frock-coat. Compromise in politics, in legislation, in education, had made the progress of India so slow. It savoured of that half-way house, which was called Dyarchy and of that 'gradual' development which is mentioned in all Government of India Acts since the days of Edwin Montagu. It is the worst of being a subject nation. One has perpetually to compromise.

* * * —

THE Indian in South Africa had long been regarded as a 'coolie.' Sometimes he was referred to as 'Sammy' even as negroes are in America. Some Indians tried to distinguish themselves from the 'coolies.' The Mohamedans would call themselves Arabs and the Parsis fell back upon their Persian ancestry. The term 'coolie' stuck to the Indian because of the large number of indentured labourers who had gone to Natal on an agreement to serve there for a period of years. It was only a variation of the old idea of serfdom, though the treatment given to these labourers was much the same.

The system of Indian indentured labour started because the Zulu refused to do manual labour for the

European colonists who were established as planters in South Africa. The white man had, therefore, to resort to Indian labour and his appeal to the Indian Government to send our Indian labourers on a contract for a term of years was sympathetically received. It was in 1860 that the first batch of Indian labourers came to the shores of Africa. It was a consignment that 'belonged to' the British Settlers in Natal.

So that it was the Government of India who gave rise to this "state of semi-slavery." (The words are not mine, but that of the historian Sir W. W. Hunter). It is an irony of circumstance in view of England's proud boast that it is responsible for the abolition of slavery. To this ill-omened arrival of the Indian in South Africa was to be traced the origin of the term 'coolie' — a term of contempt used for the Indian whatever his class or occupation or his breeding. It explained why even today a fifth-rate Englishman walking in the bazaar of any Indian town is hailed as the 'Sahib.'

There were in South Africa also 'freed' Indians. It is an ambiguous term, for this freedom only came when the period of indenture was over. Already the English colonists were trying to perpetuate this system of indenture by levying an exorbitant tax at the end of the period of contract in order that his inability to pay the tax would make the Indian sign for another period of years. And Indian labour was essential to the English colonist in order to be able to exploit the natural resources of South African soil.

The Zulu had rebelled against the idea of indentured work. He disliked the thought of working all the year round, when he could make enough by working half that time. His needs were simple. His staple food was maize and he was content to live on porridge made of crushed mealies boiled in water. He ate meat whenever he could lay hands on it; he regarded it more as prey which occasionally fell into his hands — like a brace of partridges sent to you by a friend, week-ending with his gun on the moors of Scotland. Even so, unlike the Indian, the

Zulu was a fine specimen of man. Tall, strapping, with his broad shoulders and well-developed body, he stood out far above the Indian 'coolie' who was weak and bent, and stooped. Thick lips, dilated nostrils, his face rugged in form, but strong in expression — a striking physique. Beside him the Indian stood like a dwarf. The Zulu was not just dark of colour. His skin shone with an ebony-black of which he was so proud. His curly hair was in keeping with the grotesqueness of his features. He stood out like a Gothic midst the decadent renaissance of the white colonists.

Such was the Zulu, whom the Englishman first tried to procure for the tilling of the soil. When he failed, he sent for the meek and weaker Indian. But he secured the labour he required — a sort of human beast-of-burden, whom he could push and kick and knock about. No wonder the treatment given to Gandhi by the white man was not much different from that which the dumb uncomplaining 'coolie' received.

IV

THE CAULDRON BOILS

THE FIRST UNPLEASANT INCIDENT IN SOUTH AFRICA occurred at a railway station. Gandhi had bought a first-class ticket, unaware that travelling first-class was a 'status' denied to the Indians. The strong colour prejudice could not tolerate a coloured man travelling in the same compartment with those who were white. There was, one is inclined to believe, fear of contamination.

Sensitive as I am to this one burning problem of humanity, and carried away as I often get, when talking of the colour bar, I prefer, when narrating another man's experience, to quote his version of the incident. This is how Gandhi describes what happened on that occasion:

"The train reached Maritzburg, the capital of Natal, at about 9 p.m. Bedding used to be provided at this station. A railway servant came and asked me if I wanted one. I declined and he went away. But a passenger came next and looked me up and down. He saw that I was a 'coloured' man. This disturbed him. Out he went and came in again with one or two officials. They all

kept quiet, when another official came to me and said, 'Come along, you must go to the van compartment."

'But I have a first class ticket,' I said. 'That doesn't matter,' rejoined the other. 'I tell you, you must go to the van compartment.'

'I was permitted to travel in this compartment at Durban, and I insist on going on in it.' 'No, you won't,' said the official. 'You must leave this compartment, or else I shall have to call a police constable to push you out.'

'Yes, you may,' I replied. 'I refuse to get out voluntarily.' The constable came. He took me by the hand and pushed me out. My luggage was also taken out. I refused to go to the other compartment, and the train steamed away. I went and sat in the waiting-room, keeping my handbag with me, leaving the other luggage where it was. The railway authorities had taken charge of it.

It was winter, and winter in the higher regions of South Africa can be severely cold. Maritzburg being at a high altitude, the cold was extremely bitter. My overcoat was in my luggage, but I did not dare to ask for it lest I might be insulted again, so I sat and shivered. There was no light in the room. A passenger came in about midnight and possibly wanted to talk to me. But I was in no mood to talk.

I began to think of my duty. . . ."

I suppose there will be some who will doubt the truth of this incident. There is no doubt in my mind, however. Often when I read through passages such as these, there is a burning inside of me, a mad rush of all emotions conquering the region of the brain and obscuring reason. I feel my heart thumping faster, and my breathing become so heavy that I get conscious of something happening to me, till I pull myself together and return to normality with a deep sigh. It is not a sigh of relief, but of resignation at the suspense which is unending—waiting for a day which has yet to come. How long, O God, how long!

From now the cauldron boils. This first bitter experience left a taste in Gandhi's mouth. It shattered the world of make-believe in which he had taken refuge, believing that he was a free and equal member in a great empire and that the British Commonwealth of Nations was an ideal, if not a fact, to which he could honourably aspire. He began to think how he could redress the wrong which the white man had done to his darker brother. Yet it was not a plan of revenge that he was working out in his mind. He was trying to find a way to conquer the world with love, for he was an idealist who was not always very practical. A tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye did not appeal to him as much as the turning of the other cheek, and that is why his more "passive" philosophy has taken so long to shape. He took the teachings of Christianity more seriously than the Christians did. To him the story of Christ was a timeless story and not one which had its setting solely amidst the decadence of the Roman Empire and the lust of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Others in his place would have preferred to wreak their vengeance on the flesh, to kill and destroy. Instead Gandhi carried what he regarded as the black man's burden—to save the soul of his white brother! It required patience and an infinite capacity for sacrifice. Gandhi had that patience. He was also capable of making great sacrifices. He still had some faith in humanity. He would not give up merely because he had been insulted. Some day, he thought, man would find himself. Humanity, shorn of its cloak of caste, creed, colour, religion, would discover a common level, where man could meet man on a basis of equality. His impressionable mind was yet too full of the things he had read in Ruskin and Tolstoi, too full of the kindness of individuals whom he had encountered in England. And he would not give up so early in life that faith he once had in the British and their Empire. Perhaps it was because he realized the import of his contact with ideas which had come to him only through the West. Perhaps it was

because his earliest admiration of the white man still clung on to him, and even though he could never become the genuine article, the imitation of it was to him somewhat of an achievement. On one recorded occasion he behaved in a manner which would justify this latter explanation. It was when he wrote to a station master in the Transvaal for permission to travel first-class, and asked for a reply in person at the station, because, as he put it: "....If the station master gave a written reply, he would certainly say 'No,' especially because he would have his own notion of a 'coolie' barrister. I would, therefore, appear before him in faultless English dress and talk to him and possibly persuade him to issue a first-class ticket. So I went to the station in a frock-coat and neck-tie, placed a sovereign on the counter for my fare and asked for a first-class ticket."

It is difficult to believe that this man, who later was to become the Mahatma Gandhi, could ever have reasoned like that, and were it not that I have faith in Mr. C. F. Andrews' interpretation of Gandhi's own story, I would have doubted the authenticity of this incident. The station master's reply is even more significant. "I see you are a gentleman," he said.

It reflects little to the credit of the justice of this world that a world figure should have stood at the bar of justice erected at a railway station, with an ordinary station master as sole judge, to have the verdict of being a gentleman passed on him because of his frock coat and neck-tie. There is something bitterly humiliating, something low and demeaning, something shameful, degrading, almost immoral about this episode that shakes my faith in man, my faith even in my God. There is no Nemesis except that which fulfils itself. Better to live only in the flesh and decay with it—with no mind, no heart, no soul.

Gandhi would never utter such a sentiment. The flesh was the weakness of man. He had found it a hindrance in his attempt to uplift the soul. The flesh must first be curbed, for only when removed from earthly things could he look into his own self and prepare himself

for the great spiritual ordeal that was to come. In this process of introspection, Christianity was to play a considerable part—yet not all of Christianity, for he drew upon it only in so far as it coincided with his own philosophy of life and his own individual religion. It was the Sermon on the Mount that appealed to him most. In it he saw self-mastery, self-denial, self-surrender. It was after his own ideal. But unlike the Christians he did not believe that the goal of life should be redemption from the consequences of sin. He did not want to worship the Crucifix as the Christians did in order to redeem themselves from sin. He sought rather to be redeemed from sin itself. Intellectually, therefore, Gandhi was not convinced by the fundamental theories of Christianity as preached by the Christians. But the atmosphere of Christianity always calmed his restless soul.

There is in the ceremonial of the Christian Church a dignity which one misses in the Hindu Temple, the Parsee Atash Behram or the Mohamedan Mosque. There is something rich in the cadence of the hymns and the psalms, something poetic in the prose of the Testament, something peaceful in those moments of silent prayer, all on bended knees, their hands clasped, their heads bowed —something detached in that Gothic architecture with its stained windows and its wooden apostles. This atmosphere of the Christian Church appealed to him. You could see him listening with awe to a full choir singing the *Ave Maria* of Gounod, accompanied by the soft music of Bach. It was powerful, almost breath-taking and it suited his Oriental temperament. It was in keeping with a mood in which he has often found himself. Time and again in later years at the close of prayers in his Ashram at Sabarmati, he has asked his Christian friend, C.F. Andrews to sing his favourite hymn — "*Lead, kindly light, amidst the encircling gloom.*" I am sure it was because of the atmosphere it created for him.

Gandhi drew a distinction between Christianity as understood and practised in the West and his own interpretation of it. The place he gave to Christ in his heart

was that of a mighty teacher, nothing more. He accepted Christ as a martyr, as a symbol of supreme sacrifice to which he himself aspired. But the idea that Christ was the Incarnate Son of God was to Gandhi philosophically unsound, and to his Hindu mind it was no better than a superstition. If it was only the Sermon on the Mount that Christianity stood for, he would have enlisted as a Christian. But "much of that which passes for Christianity was a negation of the Sermon on the Mount."

With this deep-rooted faith in his own interpretation of Christianity and the part which love played in it, he firmly believed that the Christian would one day come to hear again of the Gospel of Christ. Meanwhile, he was prepared to suffer the humiliation that was offered to him. He wanted to fling not mud, but the teachings of the Saviour, into the faces of those who were born Christians and who thought they were nearer to their God than the men who were born "heathens."

It was a difficult task that Gandhi had set out to perform, for the hatred of the dark skin was firmly ingrained in the white man's soul. It passed down through the generations from father to son. It was a hereditary hatred, which could only be cured by the sterilization of the species. That is, perhaps, the only real solution to the colour problem, the only way to eradicate from its roots the colour bar.

Meanwhile insult added to insult and humiliations piled up in that outpost of the Empire. Episode stacked up on episode to form a sort of pyre. There was the incident on the coach from Charlestown, where he was made to sit outside—beaten, when he refused to place himself at the coachman's feet, clinging on desperately while blows were aimed at his frail, weak body. There was the incident outside President Kruger's house, when the patrol on duty pushed and kicked him into the street because he happened to be walking on the same footpath as the soldier on duty. Yet he bore it all without a murmur, for he had made it a rule of his life never to ask for redress. The justice that Gandhi sought was not to be

found in the courts of law. It went beyond the courts. One day he knew it would come and it was a waste of time to plead for it now. He had moved far since the day he wanted to prosecute the Englishman at whose hands he had been thrown out in Rajkot.

Yet justice was not to come of its own accord. The days were over when manna used to fall from the heavens. The meek would never inherit the earth. They must be made strong, and those, who had been trodden upon, must stand up once again. Together they could help each other. Together they could make their force felt. Together the oppressed of this world could give their oppressors something to think about. Gandhi realized this early in life, and he made his first public speech at the meeting in Pretoria with a view to unite the oppressed of South Africa. His voice had cried out only in the wilderness, but even so he had achieved something, for he became conscious of the power within him to shape the lives of other men. It was the flowering of Gandhi the leader.

* * *

ONE must estimate the importance of the Englishman of that time. The white man was then on the top of the world, and the Empire stood for something that was almighty and supreme. It was a great thing to be a white member of the British Empire. It was a greater thing to know that the darker races, which had been conquered and incorporated into the Empire, lay grovelling at the white man's feet. No one questioned his superiority, and those who did, were crushed and trampled upon like obnoxious vermin which had no right to appear on the face of the earth.

Circumstances had made it possible for the Englishman to retain his alleged superiority. No opposition was offered nor was it forthcoming. No toleration was extended to those, who doubted the power and supremacy of the white man who had planted his flag on the black soil of Africa and India. The have-nots of England had migrated to the outposts of the Empire to become the

haves of India and Africa, and the class barrier, which they had found erected against them in their own country, they now transplanted on "native" soil. Only this time they put the coloured man on the other side, so that at least in the colonies they could feel they were top-dogs —a feeling which was denied to them at home.

This early contact with the white man in South Africa was responsible for the making of Gandhi the rebel. It gave him an insight into the mind of his ruler and a first-hand knowledge of the type of mentality that shaped the destiny of India, a mentality which he would have to combat in his later struggle for the liberation of the Indian people. He realized that the individuals he encountered were not worthy of the respect he felt for the Empire. Yet, he was inclined to distinguish those, who were individuals, from the conception of Empire, which he idolized. He had not given up his ideal of conquering the world by a soul-force which he was trying to acquire.

* * *

FOUR years passed, the Boer War broke out. It was one of those major disturbances which made Empire history. Someone had at last questioned the power and the might of England. Someone foolish had come forward as a target for England's imperial might. The line on the Empire chart had so long shown an upward curve. Now England's possession was endangered and the Indians of South Africa had to decide whether they should take part in this war between Britain and the Boers. In spite of the treatment they had received at the hands of Englishmen, the Indians felt that they were after all British subjects and it was as such that they had set foot on South African soil. Gandhi was the first to realize the significance of this common bond of nationality. He had a queer sense of loyalty towards his rulers. Moreover, he wanted to prove to the Englishman that the Indians could rise to the occasion in the hour of England's need.

He gathered his community around him and gave expression to his convictions. He explained the position

of the Indian without British nationality. He spoke of this opportunity to prove to the Englishman the real worth of the Indian. He spoke of such things as "allegiance" and "loyalty" and the "duty" that lay on them as subjects of the Empire. He spoke of character and self-sacrifice, and when his argument commended itself to his countrymen, he communicated his intention of helping the English by forming an Ambulance Corps. He wanted to show that if the Indians were not allowed to take active part in the war, they could at least attend to the needs of the wounded. This gesture gave rise to much sentimentality. There was the conferring of medals on the Indians and the melting of English hearts. It was all too touching for words. Watching those Indians work, one would hardly have believed that they had any grievances against the white man, or any complaints about the inferiority of their status.

The Boer War came and went. The Indians came out of it with a handful of silver medals. So also came the Black Plague and the Zulu Rebellion. "A genuine sense of loyalty," says Gandhi, "prevented me from wishing ill to the Empire." That was representative of his feelings at that time. It was much later that he summed up, in one single sentence in his autobiography, his eventual disillusionment. No single line has ever expressed so forcibly that change that has come over the Indian in his attitude to the British Empire. In that sentence Gandhi says: "But then I believed that the British Empire existed for the welfare of the World."

There is something very bitter in those two words—*But then.* They express, as nothing else in his writing has done, that disappointment within him, that first realization of his misplaced trust in the British *raj*, that shaking of his faith in the Empire. Couched in his inimitable simple style, it is in its way a most bitter condemnation, when you bear in mind the enthusiasm and the respect he once had for that same Empire. He exploded once and for all the theory of loyalty and allegiance and duty, that we as a nation are supposed to owe to our

rulers. Yet with all this, Gandhi has been the restraining influence on Indian nationalism. Were it not for Gandhi this country of ours would have made its bid for power with all the violence at its command—perhaps to be soaked in blood and littered with corpses and to return to slavery once more, perhaps to win through and later fumble to assert itself in the chaos that would inevitably have followed. Be that as it may, he threw in his lot with the British at the time of the Boer War and the Zulu Rebellion against a people who had done the Indians no harm. It was for the sake of loyalty ! It was a high price to pay for loyalty, and he emerged from the rebellion with the rank of a Sergeant-Major !

* * *

MEANWHILE in 1904 he had already launched a paper which he called *Indian Opinion*. It reflects, as *Young India* and *Navajivan* does later, a phase of Gandhi's life. It shows the growth of the Satyagraha movement as it centred round the Indians of South Africa. Originally the paper was issued from Durban. Later, when he read *Unto This Last*, Gandhi moved it to a farm on a hill thirteen miles from Durban. He called it "The Phoenix Farm." Perhaps because it was to rise on its own ashes.

Indian Opinion became the authoritative exposition of his philosophy of life — social, political, economic. It was not merely the record of the struggle of an individual, but also of the wider national struggle that centred round him. It gave him an opportunity to think if only because he had to convey his thoughts to his fellowmen through the columns of his newly formed paper.

While marching during the rebellion along the dusty stretch that led to the front, he first realized how important self-purification was, if he was to live in the spirit and not in the flesh. He began to understand the difference of purpose between the brute and man — a difference which did not exhibit itself in ordinary life to the extent to which it should. The Boer War had brought to his mind the horrors of war. The Zulu Rebellion emphasized this more clearly. It was the way of all flesh

to bring about its own downfall. We call it lust. It made Gandhi think of something, which went beyond earthly desire, which would create and not destroy, and it occurred to him then that this force, which he was trying to acquire, would only come to him when he practised continence and observed chastity.

This idea of continence he found more definitely expressed in the word *Brahmacharya*. It was the only life worth leading. It implied the mastery of thought over the flesh, the complete surrender of the self to the absolute, until the self became one with the supreme Being. Truth then began to appear in a different light, and everyday the body receded more and more into the background as the soul became something real and lifelike. It was in fact life itself — the only life. The body was merely the outer shell — the garment — the visible, tangible cover. It was the crystallization of the soul that would bring him nearer to the truth he was striving after. *Brahmacharya* implied self-denial in its most drastic form. It was *asceticism in excelsis*. Its ordinary prosaic meaning was *Celibacy*, but as understood by Gandhi it implied control of all impulse and urge that came from the flesh. It implied the complete abnegation of the sex-urge ; it insisted on a control of diet, a surrender of all sensuousness as of all sensuality. The star of Venus would have to fall from its place in the heavens. The light in someone's eyes would have to be dimmed for ever. To see, to feel, to think in terms of the flesh was denied to those who took this solemn and irrevocable vow of abstinence. It meant leaving the world behind to live a life apart from it, a life that admitted of no deflection from the path of absolute truth. Yet it was not death but life that *Brahmacharya* implied.

As soon as the Zulu rebellion was over, Gandhi discussed this idea of taking the vow of celibacy with his friends. Their response was encouraging, though they were a little hesitant of taking a vow which had such far-reaching consequences. There was no half-way-house to *Brahmacharya*. It was either a complete abnegation

of all the urges of the flesh or nothing at all. He knew the implication of the vow he was to take. He was only unaware of the difficulties which would later arise. For *Brahmacharya* was not mere physical restraint. That was only an elementary aspect of it. Complete *Brahmacharya* implied the cultivation of a mental attitude which would preclude even an impure thought. It was not enough that man should deny himself the pleasures of the world, if such denial gave rise to a desire which was more acute. It was to obliterate even the desire that this vow of celibacy was taken. It was a double purification —that of the body and of the mind. It was an essential preliminary to the satyagraha for which he was preparing, and one saw how his politics would henceforth be influenced by his philosophy. The year 1916 saw him take the final plunge to vow to lead a celibate life. It had taken him six years to achieve that strength of character to take this first step towards attaining mastery over the body.

One of the ways of attaining *Brahmacharya* was by diet-control. We eat far more than we need, and this excessive diet coupled with an indulgence in pulses and spices is not without its physical reaction. "Passion in man is generally coupled with the hankering after the pleasures of the palate." With the taking of the vow, the pleasures of the palate had to be sacrificed. Not content with being a vegetarian, he even gave up the part of his food which was not absolutely essential for the bare needs of his existence. Salt he denied himself. Even milk he refused to take. And so came into existence *Brahmacharya* as part of his design for living.

The average man thought there was something mad about the way in which he lived. But there was reason in his madness. In the new life he had planned, he could see vast possibilities of serving humanity. His attachment to the world would otherwise have stood in his way. So he gave up sharing a bed with his wife or enjoying any privacy with her. Lust, he determined, should no longer play any part in his marital relations. His idea of marriage

would have to take a different shape from that moment onwards. He saw now more clearly that there was a force in man that had its origin in the soul, and if it was rid of the hindrance which the flesh constantly put in its way, it would unfold infinite possibilities to conquer this world.

Soul-force was the real power which moved this world. It was the cause of the evolution of the species, the *elan-vital* of which Bergson spoke. It was active, positive, lifelike. It was the basis of the satyagraha, which Gandhi first evolved in South Africa and later perfected in India. It was different from the idea of passive resistance such as was understood in the West. Satyagraha, therefore, was a new word for an old force. It was to be found in the teachings of Christ. It was influenced by the thought of Tolstoi and Thoreau. Gandhi's merit lay in that he translated the teachings of Christ and the ideas of Tolstoi and Thoreau into actual practice. He demonstrated that it was really possible to fight for liberty without resorting to violence. He made the French and the Russian revolutions look small and somewhat pointless in spite of the liberty they brought to their people.

Satyagraha is derived from *Satya* which means truth and *Agraha*, which connotes insistent pursuit. I prefer to call it 'a flaming desire for truth.' This freer translation conveys more accurately the real meaning of satyagraha. But satyagraha must be more clearly defined. There is a great deal of confusion about words like 'satyagraha,' 'non-violence' and 'passive resistance.' We are inclined to use all three indiscriminately without trying to differentiate between them. Satyagraha, as understood by Gandhi, is not a passive but an active resistance, which depends for its force not upon violence but on love, faith and sacrifice. Satyagraha is non-violent, but it is not *passive* resistance. Often it has been confused with passive resistance, which implies surrender, because this world cannot conceive of a resistance which is active and at the same time non-violent. This concep-

tion is based on the fallacy that those who do not return force by force are not resisting. Satyagraha has led to the discovery of this fallacy. Yet let no one make the mistake that satyagraha was the last refuge of a coward, for as between cowardice and violence in Gandhian philosophy, it was violence that had preference. "I would risk violence a thousand times rather than emasculation of the race," Gandhi says, "but I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness more manly than punishment...abstinence is forgiveness only when there is power to punish; it is meaningless when it pretends to proceed from a helpless creature. "Satyagraha, therefore, is not quiet suffering. It is conscious and deliberate suffering, brought upon oneself of one's own free will and choice and with the consciousness of its strength and power. And when Gandhi speaks of strength and power, it is not measured in terms of armies and navies and air forces and all such physical manifestations of strength. The soul of a nation can perish in spite of a million armed men. But it is when the soul is indomitable and cannot be crushed by all the physical force that is brought to bear upon it, that you have the true test of a man, a nation and even of the world. For man is distinguished from the brute by his soul, and Satyagraha, therefore, is the active, non-violent resistance of his soul. And that Satyagraha should be the basis of his philosophy of life, of his politics and of his religion occurred to Gandhi in his early South African days, when he saw the brute force of man exhibit itself so blatantly in the Boer war and the Zulu rebellion. The ghastly spectacle of innocent men and women being blown up into little bits of raw flesh, that were strewn over that very same earth of which they were born, was enough to convince him that in non-violence would be found the only solution to the problems of this world. Only that way would lasting peace come to man.

Non-violence had its roots in Hindu religion. It was known as *Ahimsa*. The Jains had interpreted it from one particular angle. It was to be found in their refusal to

take life in any form. But as such it had only a negative aspect. Out of it Gandhi evolved a technique which formed the basis of his Satyagraha. So that Satyagraha is the application of the doctrine of non-violence.

This doctrine of *Ahimsa*, which Gandhi has called 'the rule and the breath of his life,' is difficult to reconcile with all that he has said and done. His recruitment of volunteers for the Great War, his desire to destroy the monkeys which were a nuisance in his Ashram, his willingness to end the suffering of a calf that was in pain by killing it, are inconsistent with that ideal standpoint which he has so often taken. He has said in defence of himself that non-violence must adapt itself to individual requirements. But if that were true, it would be exempting civilization from the crime of slaughtering the million living that now lie cold on the fields of Flanders. It would even justify the *lathi* charges that have been directed on harmless crowds in the name of law and order. It would help to defend the Dyer incident, Jallianwalla Baug and the Crawling Order, and Gandhi would not like to let non-violence adapt itself so freely. This is, therefore, one of the fundamental points on which it is difficult to reconcile all that Gandhi has said with what he has done. Rightly has he said: "Non-violence works in a most mysterious way." But this seeming inconsistency is only from the ideal standpoint, which aims at being so logical that it neglects the element of human nature from all its calculations and which attempts to reduce *Ahimsa* to a mathematical science. It does not in any way diminish the power and might of the movement, which is based on it, and which has been used to great effect in circumstances in which others would have resorted to violence and force. For even from the point of view of practical politics, satyagraha has been the greatest weapon in the hands of a non-violent peace-loving nation against whom the force of might has been tried. This satyagraha, therefore, which had its germ in the Jain idea of *Ahimsa*, was later to give India its partial freedom and to bring

a powerful imperialist power to respect a nation, whose limbs it could tear asunder, but whose soul it could never crush.

* * *

ONE of the early influences in Gandhi's life was Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. He read this book on a railway journey. When he laid it down he learnt something which he had never known before. It was the importance of living a life of labour, and by labour was meant manual labour — as of the tiller of the soil, or of a handicraftsman. Gandhi acted on the new lesson he had learnt. He rallied the men of *Indian Opinion* around him, and when he had convinced them of his faith in the teaching of Ruskin, he arranged to transplant the whole press to that farm in Phoenix, on which the labourers could live and work as for an ideal rather than for monetary gain.

The early struggle at Phoenix provides a fascinating study for anyone who wishes to follow the ascetic strain in Gandhi. It was a sort of back-to-God and back-to-nature idea that found expression in a back-to-the-soil movement. The difficulties that faced this gallant band of workers, who were struggling desperately to bring out their first edition of *Indian Opinion* on time, were a test of their courage and their faith. Man-power had to be resorted to when the machine suddenly stopped functioning at the eleventh hour. All night they worked — the carpenters, the handicraftsmen, the whole colony that had taken the plunge with Gandhi and landed on the farm at Phoenix. Dawn arrived and with it their efforts were rewarded. By some miracle the machine began to work again, as if it had rested during the night. No one could give a satisfactory explanation for this turn of fate. It only helped to cement their faith in their leader and in his judgment. Phoenix is, therefore, important as an example of his experiments with truth.

It was experience like this that made him feel that God was preparing him for a greater struggle. He felt the strength of faith. He saw a vision of the future, when his courage and his power of leadership would be more

severely tested. There was no doubt that here was a man whose personality drew other men towards him. The bitter humiliation he had experienced would mellow when success came to him. The odds were overwhelmingly against him, and yet he knew that in some higher courts of justice he would one day plead the cause of millions of dark, oppressed people and that justice would at last fulfil its purpose. To that day he dedicated himself, his life, his whole career.

In the meantime something happened to prove the worth of his purification of the self. He felt that some superior force was urging him to greater things. The hymn of Newman echoed in his ears, *Lead Thou Me On*, he kept repeating to himself, and he believed that God had heard his prayer. The Transvaal Government announced in a *Gazette* Extraordinary that there would be compulsory registration for Indians in South Africa. As Glorney Boulton put it: "The Indian was to receive the treatment accorded in England to a convict released on licence." To consider this iniquitous legislation the Indians met in an old theatre in Johannesburg, and that night, when an old Mohamedan swore 'by God' that he would never submit to the ordinance, Gandhi took the lead and brought the Satyagraha oath into existence. A great deal of significance was attached to an oath taken in the name of God. It was different from other abstract resolutions, which had not the same binding force as an oath in the name of God — a distinction, which reflected the psychology of the Indian mind. With the declaration to the effect that they would resist the "Black" Act, Gandhi took the matter up with Lord Elgin, then at the Colonial Office. He was successful in so far as Elgin disallowed the Act. But the Transvaal was soon to receive responsible government and they could then bring the Act into existence on their own initiative, and Elgin added, it would then receive the Royal assent. A few months later when the new Parliament was elected in the Transvaal, it passed at a

single sitting the "Black" Ordinance which was to come into effect within a few months.

The eventful day was July 1, and the first satyagraha movement was launched. Picketing began outside the permit offices, and so successful was the disobedience campaign that only five hundred out of thirteen thousand Indians registered. Perplexed at this new resistance that was offered to them, the government made a symbolic arrest of an insignificant individual. He was given a cell in the European ward and extended all facilities. Yet when he was released he became almost a martyr, and the government soon realized that his arrest was a mistake and they now set about to get at the real leaders. They felt that they were being forced to act, and more arrests were made. Orders were given to those convicted to leave the Transvaal by a specific date. This was an ideal state of affairs for the satyagrahis. It opened up more possibilities of disobedience. The order was defied and arrests had again to be made and sentences of imprisonment were passed on Gandhi and others. It was Gandhi's first experience of prison which he had so often courted.

His Majesty's prisons were at that time not the caravansaries, which they later became, when in India the great leaders of the Congress rested there between one non-co-operation movement and another. Prison was a sordid detail in a man's life and martyrdom had not yet been associated with it. On the contrary it stood for something that was low and depraved. Those who entered the stone walls never could hold up their heads again. There was a moral branding from which no inmate, however innocent, could escape. It was a degradation of the self, if only because of the atmosphere with which the prisoner had come into contact. The time was still far away when people flocked to gaols to uphold a mere principle. That mental attitude towards prison had not yet been adopted. It was to be life of suffering and hardship for Gandhi. Yet he bore it with patience, because capacity to suffer was a true test of his creed of satyagraha. What a farce it would have become if the chief apostle of satyagraha

lost faith in his creed. At the same time, his eyes were opened to the realities of prison life. He had spoken of courting gaol with so much bravado but now he knew what he was to expect when he defied the law.

It was not a pleasant prospect to share a cell with some of the worst inmates that the prison could boast of. It was nauseating to have to watch these fallen specimens of humanity slaking their lust in the filth of each other's bodies. It was frightening to live amidst those who were condemned for the most hideous crimes and who still had murder in their eyes. Yet now that he was there, this infliction, which he had brought upon himself, was preferable to the ignominy of a surrender, and General Smuts and his government were just waiting for Gandhi to surrender. It soon became apparent to those in office that the Indians meant what they said, when they swore to disobey the 'Black' Act. It was not just a form of bravado that would die down if firmly handled. It was more serious than that, and the government thought it advisable to negotiate for terms.

Satyagraha had fulfilled itself. The dress-rehearsal, complete with the imprisonment scene, had been successfully staged, and all that now remained for the actors was to take their bow on the opening night.

As a result of the settlement, Gandhi became a free man, but General Smuts secured an assurance from him that he would register voluntarily and urge others to follow his example. Gandhi promised. Those, who followed him, were a little sceptical about the honesty of purpose of their leader. Had he, they asked, been bought over so cheaply and so soon? The tide of popularity turned and Gandhi found himself the victim of a cruel attack on his person. But nothing could make him flinch from his promise to the General. From his sick bed he signed his name and gave his thumb impression to the authorities and kept his part of the bargain in that 'Gentleman's agreement.' The registration officers sat back and laughed at the thumb prints which had piled up before them. Voluntarily given! The "Black"

Act still remained in force. Trickery, crudely so called, had triumphed over truth and honesty, while battered and broken Gandhi lay in the home of an English missionary, Joseph Doke, having made himself the laughing stock of those who had carefully planned this idea of getting the signatures and thumb impressions on false pretences. Now they announced that the "Black Act" was to remain in the blue books for yet a while.

It has been said that you can do almost anything with a bayonet except sit on it. The South African government had not realized that. To sit back on those certificates, obtained by fraud and deception, was not so easy. A certificate of identification was useless unless the Indian carried it on himself. The last trump was, therefore, still in Indian hands. Under the peaceful shadow of a mosque in Johannesburg, the Indians met again. This time they were resolute in their purpose, firmer in their course of action, and, slightly more spectacular. A real cauldron boiled in their midst, passions were inflamed and in the melting pot, which was only glowing with the embers, the certificates of registration fell one by one, till they lit up in one blazing fire — cauldron, embers, passion and all. The Government once more had to come to terms with Indian opinion in South Africa. And the struggle in South Africa ended. Gandhi had learnt some very important lessons. When he came to South Africa it was only as a briefless barrister. Now he was the acknowledged leader of twenty thousand Indians, with whom he had experimented in his search for truth.

During these days of the Satyagraha movement, some arrangement had to be made in order to provide for the wives and children of the men who were serving their term of imprisonment. It was difficult to give individual financial help to all of them, nor was it possible for these families to exist when the breadwinner was behind bars. To remedy this, Gandhi collected the various families on a farm, named by him after Tolstoi. The idea underlying Tolstoi farm, which was well over a thousand acres, was not merely to provide a sanctuary for those who were tempo-

rarily homeless. He wanted to teach his flock discipline, necessary for the progress of a movement such as he was planning. He wanted them to think and feel and live as he himself did. The lesson of his life would come nearer to them if they saw him live it from day to day. That was the purpose behind this farm on which a thousand trees grew, and where nature had run wild and bountiful. Midst these surroundings, the weak became strong and labour became a sort of tonic to those who had shunned it before. Tolstoi farm was a success. It was in its way the predecessor of the Ashram which he was later to found in India.

Yet all this was merely the early experiment. South Africa was never more than the background of Gandhi's life — the forging house of his philosophy of life. What happened in South Africa is only important because of what followed in India. To lead and to guide twenty thousand Indians can hardly be regarded as establishing a claim to world recognition. To lead three hundred and seventy millions is a very different affair.

V

A PAUSE FOR WILLINGDON

THE SCENE SHIFTS. THE INDIAN PATRIOT, GOKHALE, who had helped Gandhi with his advice and who was responsible for drawing India's attention to the happenings in South Africa, had gone to England and had sent word to Gandhi to join him there. So Gandhi sailed for Europe to find, as he entered the English Channel, that war had broken out in Europe and that England was embroiled in a first class major encounter, from which it could not possibly extricate itself till the bitter end. On August 6th, he landed at Southampton. It was two days after Sir Edward Gray had broken the important news to the English people that England would stand by her word, plighted to Belgium by a treaty which guaranteed its neutrality. The sudden happenings of August 1914 upset the plans of Gokhale and Gandhi.

Gandhi, who was now recognized as a "leader" among Indians, could not look upon the outbreak of the War with indifference, when it was certain that his own countrymen would be called upon to help the "Mother" country in the

hour of its greatest need. Gandhi's contribution to the War, it must be said at the outset, was negligible. The formation of a volunteer corps and recruitment for it, were a very minor achievement, when you bear in mind the contribution of other individuals to that same world war. As you pass through London and Paris today, you cannot help paying a silent tribute to the Cenotaph in Whitehall, or the Arc de Triomphe with its eternal flame burning over the tomb of the unknown soldier. Then you begin to measure sacrifice in terms of the millions dead. In comparison with all this, we cannot seriously speak of Gandhi's contribution to the war. Materially it was a minute contribution. The volunteer corps which he organized and recruited was to be counted only in the hundreds. Nor could Gandhi be allowed to take the credit or blame of throwing a million Indian troops into the vortex of that bloody war. For that he was not responsible. It was rather his mental attitude towards the war that was so astonishing in view of his former struggle against the white oppression in South Africa. There was also his deep-rooted conviction against the taking of human life, his belief in *Ahimsa*, his jain philosophy, against which he went to do his best and to give his moral support to an Empire, which he believed was fighting for democracy, for the freedom of humanity, for honour and self-respect — all those things which made an immediate appeal to the heart of man. There were so many other attitudes he could have adopted. He could have joined the ranks of conscientious objectors. He could have refrained from recruiting Indians on the ground that it was another man's war. He could have caused deadlocks to add to England's embarrassment at that time. He could have taken advantage of England's position to brew trouble in India so that when England's energy was at its lowest, he could proceed with the struggle for India's freedom and the odds would have been greatly in his favour. One must view these possibilities in order to appreciate the character of the man. One must also consider the power of forgiveness in a man who

went to help that same Empire, which had so bitterly humiliated him, and appreciate the irony and the humour of his receiving the Kaiser-I-Hind medal for his humane work during the War at the hands of a government who were later to send him to several long terms of imprisonment. It gives us an idea of that immense faith which Gandhi still had in the Empire, and enables us to appreciate the force of his later non-co-operation movements. It is only as a psychological study that his attitude in the great War is important, for towards the end of that same year, he was taken ill and, when pleurisy set in, he was advised to return to a warmer climate and he came back to India. On his arrival Gokhale, who had returned before him, brought him a message that the Governor of Bombay, Lord Willingdon, would like to meet him.

I pause for a moment to view the living incarnation of British rule, embodied in the noble Marquis of Willingdon, then a very ordinary peer of the realm. A long face, chisselled features, a large forehead, well-groomed, tall, strapping. Always immaculately turned out, whether in uniform or mufti, whether in Jodhpurs ready for an afternoon's polo or in his old-fashioned frock-coat and grey topper driving in state to attend the big meeting of the Turf Club.

Lord Willingdon was a great showman. He belonged to that school of diplomacy, which believed that the British rule in India centred as much round that galaxy of sepoys who decked themselves out in red and gold outside Government House as on the edicts and ordinances that periodically emerged from the headquarters of the Government. He was a Tory by blood and in politics. He was a class-conscious, self-conscious, blue-blooded squire, who had emerged from the seclusion of his masion house to save his class from the onslaught of socialism and the bourgeoisie. He was picked out early in life as a staunch defender of the vested interests of the British ruling classes. Willingdon had gripped the imagination of the Indian early in his tenure of office. He knew the Indian's failing for pomp and show and he took an almost patro-

nizing interest in the affairs of India. He had a flair for doing the sort of things which appealed to that stagnant Indian mind which was steeped in the hero-worship of the Englishman. He would leave Government House open for inspection during the months he went to the hills and the queue, that filed past his dressing-room, would look with awe upon the pairs of shoes which stood there, brilliantly polished, perfectly dusted, bright and shining — a tribute to their wearer and to the polish that characterized everything connected with his name.

He had the ideal partner in his wife. Like him she was well-bred and came from the best of the English landed gentry. The stock she came from was alpha-double-plus. They made the perfect pair for holding the position of being the first gentleman and lady of the province over which they were sent to rule. They had not been long in India when Indian society knew that mauve was her ladyship's favourite colour and that a brown and white shoe appealed to the noble lord. Clubs, societies, hospitals, playgrounds, institutions, roads were named after them. "Willingdon" was the hall-mark of friendship between the ruling classes of England and the 'haves' of India. Titled Indian gentlemen were proud to show the portrait of Their Excellencies, which had been given to them. On it, with a flourish, sprawled the signature of the Willingdons. Carefully framed in silver, it would stand prominently in their drawing-rooms, on some carved Cashmere walnut-wood table on which nothing else dared to stand. On such terms of endearment were the lords of England with the knights of Bombay.

Lady Willingdon liked the homage which rich Indians paid to her. She liked it when glamorous Oriental women, decked in jewels worth thousands of pounds, curtsied low as they entered the inner precincts of Government House. She liked it too when Indian princes, sovereigns in name, bowed to her. It flattered her vanity. Perhaps it was because of her influence that throughout their regime—in Bombay, in Madras, and in Delhi as Viceroy — her husband did not alter in his

attitude towards the Indians — a marked pose of friendliness. For in the history of the British rule in India, Lady Willingdon must be reckoned as an influence not to be overlooked. The A.D.C.'s of her regime have clicked more heels and stood more rigidly to attention than at any other time. Sometimes one wondered how different was this exhibition of the power of the raj from reality.

To such a Government House, Gandhi went "to be received" by His Excellency. That was the correct term. Or was he "received in audience" ? One might just as well have made a record of one's voice and sent it to His Excellency. So formal were these visits of Indians to Government House. Gandhi was an interesting stranger. The Government were aware of his activities in South Africa. He was a person who had to be carefully watched. But curiosity prevailed upon Lord Willingdon and he wanted to see for himself what sort of an Indian this was, who had created so many obstacles for the white man in South Africa and had questioned the undoubted might of the British rule.

A shrewd diplomat, well-mannered and courteous to the point of saturation, Lord Willingdon did the noble gesture of showing his desire to meet Gandhi. The conversation that day as narrated by Gandhi is important, for years later, when Gandhi wanted to meet this same Lord Willingdon, then recently appointed Viceroy of India, the reception he met with was a little different from that which he got in Bombay. "I ask one thing of you," Lord Willingdon said in 1914, "I would like you to come and see me whenever you propose to take any steps regarding the Government... You may come to me whenever you like and you will see that Government does not wilfully do anything wrong." How well spoken were those lines in that perfect diction that marked every speech of his. Gandhi replied : "It is that faith that sustains me."

And remember that when we come to Willingdon, the Viceroy.

After this tete-a-tete with Willingdon, Gandhi went to Poona. And Gokhale died. It was a great blow to

Gandhi. No one in the whole galaxy of Indian leaders had impressed Gandhi so much — not even the great Tilak, who had come nearer to the masses. As Gandhi said, Tilak was like the Himalayas — great, lofty, unapproachable; Gokhale was like the holy Ganges in which one could confidently take a plunge. Now Gokhale had gone and a greater responsibility had fallen on Gandhi's shoulders. But other personal problems occupied his mind. He began to take decisive steps to shape the conduct of his life. He discarded the sacred thread of Hinduism because the untouchables who were his fellow-religionists were deprived of that privilege. He was adamant in his decision to discard this external symbol of his religion. But the other — the tuft of hair in the middle of the head — he allowed to grow again because, as he put it, he saw no harm in it. Yet what really pre-occupied him was the establishment of a new sanctuary on the lines of the Phoenix and the Tolstoi farms, where he could sit back and ponder on the problems of India, surrounded by those of his followers, who had seen him through his South African struggle, and those new ones he was gradually to acquire.

It was in Ahmedabad — not far from the smoke of the textile mills, which were turning out cloth from cotton, that he found a suitable spot for an Ashram after his heart. He made it clear to those caste Hindus, who had given him the necessary monetary help, that he would take the first opportunity of admitting the untouchable to this Ashram if he was a man worthy of being admitted. With such an ominous proclamation of equality Sabarmati Ashram was started. From it were later to be despatched some of the greatest political documents of our time.

Gandhi had promised Gokhale that he would start no political movement in India until he had travelled widely through the country and had understood the needs of the masses. The great cities of Bombay and Calcutta were far removed from the real India that lay secluded from the onslaught of western civilization. India was

basically a conglomeration of little villages. The conception of provinces and a federation was a sophistication that came much later. The real India most of us had never seen — we, who talked glibly of Empires, of swaraj, of democracy, of republics. We were content to read reports of insignificant happenings that appeared every morning in the bourgeois papers to which we faithfully subscribed. No one doubted for a moment a single word of what appeared in their columns. No one paused to think that these papers were run by Europeans, whose purpose it was to draw a picture of the happenings in India to suit England's Imperialist policy. The security of the raj was the *sine qua non* without which their gigantic press machines would never rotate. Those of us who learnt how to read and write, found at the end of our education that we had little now to learn except that our fellow men were steeped in illiteracy and that we were unfit even to ask for the right to govern ourselves. That was what English journalism, which had migrated to India, had done for us. As we propped up our morning paper and glanced through its editorials, written in English by Englishmen, we wondered how anyone could possibly doubt that the British connection had been to our advantage. The British raj stood at its zenith and those institutions, which were exclusively European, were like the Holy Land upon which no one but the privileged could tread.

Yet all this was only in the big cities. Deeper in the heart of India, the picture that presented itself to Gandhi was even more grim and depressing. His dominant feeling at entering rural India was that stagnation had set in the mind of the people. Energy seemed to have died within them, and life moved only in terms of time, measured by hours, days, months, years. Otherwise the masses had not progressed at all. Their condition had remained the same from generation to generation. Their existence was negative, for they lived through the allotted span of years measuring their success or failure in life in terms of the things that did not happen to them. Were they any more in debt than their fathers? Were

there any more early deaths in their family? How often did disease take them to the jaws of death? Were there more famines in their time? Were there more droughts and floods and earthquakes?

All this they reviewed when on their death-bed they lay surveying in those brief moments the whole course of their lives. About other things they had learnt to be blissfully ignorant. They never questioned the tax that was levied on their land and their chattels. They never asked whom the government represented and whether the levying of a tax was legal or not. They had learnt to bear and bear patiently the suffering that was inflicted on them. They were content to look upon the individual, who collected the tax, as the symbol of majesty and government. "If the sahib was ill and needed a visit to the hills, the tenants had to pay a special tax called *paparhi*. If he needed a horse or an elephant or a motor car, the tenants must bear the cost and pay special taxes, known as *ghorahi*, *hathiahi*, and *hawahi*." These dues were reminiscent of those levied in feudal England at the time of the Norman Conquest, and which disappeared by the thirteenth century. The irony of it was that they were to be found in the India for our time. It was still part of the law of the land to which the poor peasantry had perforce to subscribe.

It was not one solitary tax that acted to India's detriment. The whole system of government was calculated to promote England's Imperialist policy rather than advance the welfare of the Indian masses. The distribution of Indian revenues was in the hands of a bureaucracy, which was largely English and whose business it was to see that "Imperial Defence" was first cared for, even if "Education" lagged far behind. India paid to glorify the prestige of the Empire. Rumours circulated about a growing mortality, about an increase in disease and a corresponding decline in the health of the country. But, said the editorials of our morning paper, they were false-rumours, started by the mischievous, who were jealous of the peace and prosperity which reigned within the raj.

How could we in the face of what we read every morning in cold print believe these "false" rumours? So we had moved on from year to year with the voice of the Congress faintly echoing the anguished cry of the masses.

All this Gandhi watched and his eyes reflected the agonies of those who uncomplainingly suffered. It did not take him long to realize that the problem of India was different to that of South Africa. There it was to secure an equality of status for the coloured man that Gandhi had fought. But India wanted a change in the fundamental ideas of government. It was not the sort of change that could be effected in a single day. It would take years to awaken the people from their heavy slumber and to get them to shake off their lethargy. That was the problem of India as it presented itself to this "wizard," who had arrived after performing some astonishing feats in South Africa.

VI

CONGRESS - WAR - MONTAGU

A FEEBLE EFFORT HAD BEEN MADE TO CONCENTRATE the energies of India into one single effort and to direct Indian public opinion into some definite channel. A body had been in existence for many years, which claimed to express organized political opinion in India. Its full name was the Indian National Congress, though it was more commonly referred to as "The Congress." It was inaugurated on 28th December 1885, when in the fine building of the Sanscrit College at Poona, a man, by name, W. C. Bonnerjee, took his seat on the raised dais as the first President of the Congress and delivered his address. It was an Englishman, by name Hume, a Companion of the Order of the Bath, who first thought it would be of advantage to the country if leading Indian politicians could be brought together once a year to discuss *social* matters and "be upon friendly footing with each other." No wonder the Order of the Bath is now so sparingly given.