



NEW AND OLD GLEANINGS

BY
MIRABAHEN

First Edition, November, 1949

Printed and Published by:
Jivanji Dahyabhai Desai
Navajivan Publishing House,
Ahmedabad-14



PREFACE

While looking through old papers, I have come across a few more things which should join the original Gleanings. They consist of two Aga Khan Palace Notes, two Silence-Day Notes, and accounts taken from my reports to Bapu on my interviews with Lord Halifax, Lloyd George, General Smuts, Sir Samuel Hoare and Winston Churchill, during my visit to England in 1934, and also an account of my interview with the Viceroy's Secretary, then Mr. Laithwaite, on the eve of the 1942 rebellion. These latter have, now, some historical interest, and at the same time they show the respect, and even affection, felt for Bapu by statesmen and politicians who had opposed him.

I have included also two letters of interest, one from Rabindranath Tagore and one from Aldous Huxley.

Austria, 1964

Mirabehn



CONTENTS

NEW GLEANINGS

PREFACE

- 1 AGA KHAN PALACE NOTES
- 2 SILENCE-DAY NOTES
- 3 INTERVIEWS WITH LEADING PERSONALITIES REGARDING BAPU AND INDIA
 - I. Interview with Lord Halifax
 - II. Interview with Lloyd George
 - III. Interview with General Smuts
 - IV. Interview with Sir Samuel Hoare
 - V. Interview with Winston Churchill
 - VI. Interview with the Viceroy's Secretary, Mr. Laithwaite
- 4 LETTERS
 - I. Letter from Rabindranath Tagore
 - II. Letter from Aldous Huxley

OLD GLEANINGS

PREFACE

- 1 EQUALITY OF RELIGIONS
- 2 LETTER TO ROMAIN ROLLAND
- 3 LETTER TO MADELEINE ROLLAND
- 4 LETTER TO JOHN MORRIS
- 5 LETTER TO HIS HOLINESS THE LAMA, TIBET
- 6 LETTER GIVEN TO A FRIEND LEAVING FOR CHINA
- 7 SCRAPS FROM A NOTEBOOK
- 8 AGA KHAN'S PALACE TALKS
- 9 SILENCE-DAY NOTES



1. AGA KHAN PALACE NOTES

I

[Bapu's remark at the end of this note clearly shows how it hurt him to have to say that any creature should be killed, but, at the same time, his logic and common sense compelled him to admit the necessity under certain conditions. We did not go further into the subject at that time, because I felt the pain he felt, and wanted not to prolong it. There is, however, one important point which should not be left unsaid, and that is that wholesale killing of any species of animal, bird or insect, can be very undesirable. For instance, if, in a wild area, you kill off too many leopards and tigers, the deer will greatly increase and eat up the crops, and if you kill off too many deer, the leopards and tigers will begin to prey upon the cattle seriously, because their natural food supply has been reduced. It is the same thing with birds and even with insects. Nature has a finely adjusted balance which must be carefully studied before taking any action.]

When I asked Bapu as to how we should deal with dangerous wild animals such as tigers, bears, panthers etc., and also snakes and scorpions, he said:

"It is a difficult question. If I am to give a definite answer for acting upon, I must debate it in my mind for a while."

I suggested to Bapu that it will be a question which we shall have to settle on a nation-wide scale before long, and I would ask him again after he had thought it over for two or three days. When I again asked Bapu he replied:

"If I were faced with the option of killing a tiger or a snake, or otherwise being killed by it, I would rather be killed by it than take its life. But that is a personal position, not to be put forward for adoption by others. If I had the fearless power to tame these dangerous creatures by the force of my love and my will, and could show others how to do likewise, then I should have the right to advise other people to follow my example. But I have not that power. I must, therefore, advise others to kill all creatures dangerous



to human life, such as tigers, bears etc., snakes, scorpions etc., as well as rats and other crop-destroying vermin. It should be done in the most humane way possible, and with regard to vermin, which is often the outcome of carelessness and dirt, we should try to live in such a way as not to give rise to its occurrence.”

“Then,” I replied, “this means that you are no longer satisfied with the catching of snakes, rats etc., and the turning of them loose elsewhere, as is done in Sevagram and other places.”

“That is right,” said Bapu. “If one is not prepared to live in the company of these creatures oneself, one has no right to turn them loose on other peoples’ land. For that is what it comes to. One may remove them from the Ashram, and let them go in a jungly place, but that jungly place also belongs to someone, and women and children will, as likely as not, go there to gather cow-dung and wood. Or, if it is rats one is letting loose, they will be sure to find their way to the nearest fields. One has either got to live with these creatures or destroy them. And to turn one’s own place into a vermin sanctuary is not fair on one’s neighbours either. Therefore live cleanly and carefully, and if even then, these creatures appear, they must be destroyed.”

Then I said to Bapu, “Seeing that tigers, bears etc. have got to be killed, and that, in the most humane way possible, should not some suitable person in each village be provided with a rifle?”

“That is a difficult question,” replied Bapu. “If one man may have a rifle, why not all people who are capable of handling arms. But be that as it may, if rifles are to be used, and one man is to be chosen for the job, I think he should be elected by the villagers.”

18-11-1943

[This is correct, but I am not satisfied as it appears in cold writing. — Bapu.]
(Written in pencil by Bapu)



II

I was discussing with Bapu the House of Commons March 1943 Debate on India. How it was the same old story repeated yet again, with a few more falsehoods added. Bapu began the talk quite seriously, gradually his voice became more solemn and he gesticulated with dignified air — he had begun to paraphrase the speeches with devastating humour. I burst out laughing, and so did he. A little book was lying on the bed. “This interests me much more,” he said, and forthwith began describing and reading out passages from an English Reader, Fourth Class. Still humorously, but with fullest appreciation of their worth, he took poem by poem and passage by passage. This time, from humour he changed to solemnity and drew from the little Reader a wealth of higher meaning.

The next day I was again sitting by Bapu’s bed after reading (aloud) the Viceroy’s reply to the Non-Parties Deputation, and a leader in the *Hindu* on the House of Commons Debate. All he said was, “London is going to be repeated.” I did not quite understand. “What they did with Minority groups at the Round Table Conference,” he added. “They’ll say to themselves, ‘He is sure to fast if that happens. We missed him on this occasion, but we’ll surely settle him next time.’ ” I looked in Bapu’s face; he was smiling quietly.

[Correct, 7-7-1943.] (Written in pencil by Bapu)



2. SILENCE-DAY NOTES

I

The greater the perception of Truth, the greater the approach to immortality, or, the greater the realization that I am not the mortal body, but the immortal soul, I am nearer to immortality. Hence real knowledge is immortality.

II

I had once prepared a collection of maxims for correct conduct in society and even in private. It is perhaps lying somewhere buried among my papers. But you can write out some obvious things you notice daily, and some improvement can be made in the common things.



3. INTERVIEWS WITH LEADING PERSONALITIES REGARDING BAPU AND INDIA

[In 1934 I went on a lecture tour to England and America, and the following interviews took place during the few days I was in London on my return from America before leaving for India.]

I. Interview with Lord Halifax

After a few preliminary remarks Lord Halifax asked me about the economic conditions in India, which were, at that time, steadily deteriorating. Then he asked me what the Indian peasant pictured in his mind when he spoke of Swaraj. I said, "The simple peasant, as I find him, is more apt to speak of Gandhiraj, and he will tell you how Gandhiraj will mean something more in his stomach, less taxation and a feeling of being cared for." I further explained how, in the villages, one rarely heard *Mahatma Gandhiki jay*, but *Gandhi Maharajki jay*! And I described various scenes. Lord Halifax said, "I suppose they feel he is one of them." I replied, "Yes, that is just it. They feel, 'Here is the one who knows and understands our sorrows. He shares our simplicity. He loves us and shares our thoughts and feelings.' But at the same time they feel he is great and holy." Lord Halifax seemed greatly pleased with this definition of the simple peasants' ideas. We then talked about the Harijan movement, and I told him about some of our experiences on the Harijan tour. Lord Halifax spoke of Bapu with extraordinary feeling. He said, "I am always thinking of him. I do not think there is a thing written about him that comes my way which I do not read. I think — I feel sure — that at the bottom, we are searching for the same thing, that we have the same ideal before us. I suppose the difficulty is in putting our ideals into practice. We then show different methods for reaching the same goal." This led on to some talk about the White Paper, in the course of which I said, "It is not so much a question as to whether the White Paper might, or might not be considered good, but the vital fact is that India is thoroughly disgusted with it. Therefore the constitution can only be a failure, and India will go from bad to worse." He agreed, and when I suggested that if they wanted India's goodwill, the first



essential thing was to gain Gandhiji's confidence, he replied, "Yes, I am continually telling my conservative friends the importance of this point that, without Gandhi's confidence, the confidence of India and the success of the White Paper can never be realized." When I got up to say good-bye, Lord Halifax said, "Give him lots and lots of messages, and tell him I am always thinking of him."

1-11-1934

II. Interview with Lloyd George

Unfortunately my original notes on this interview have disappeared. I can still vividly remember his rosy face crowned by snow-white hair, and his extraordinary vivacity. He had invited me down to tea at his house near Guildford. We had quite a long talk. He too was fully convinced that Bapu's confidence was the most vital point. Of all that he said about Bapu, what has clearly stuck in my mind is his reference to having met Bapu in 1931; he said, "I had always known that Mr. Gandhi was a saint, but I had never realized before that he was a statesman." During tea he gave me a long and dramatic description of the cat which had come to his house one or two days before Bapu's visit, and flatly refused to go away, and how it made straight for Bapu's lap as soon as he arrived, and lay there purring throughout the visit, after which it disappeared and was never seen again.

III. Interview with General Smuts

The old General was most friendly, and full of enthusiasm about Bapu. Regarding the retirement from Congress, he said he thought it was perhaps the greatest thing that Bapu had yet done, and added, "We shall see him becoming a greater and greater moral force." He was very emphatic about the value of the Harijan and other social work which Bapu was doing. Regarding the idea of Bapu visiting England, he said he entirely agreed that nothing of any value could be done without Bapu's confidence, and said he had been talking to Hoare and Halifax about it. Then he went into the next room and brought back a little book of his own in which he wrote some words. Giving it to me for Bapu he said, "Take Mr. Gandhi my most affectionate greetings. Tell him I am thinking



of him much, and I am doing all I can to bring about the realization of our wish to have him over here for preliminary discussions.”

2-11-1934

IV. Interview with Sir Samuel Hoare

The talk turned at once onto the question of the White Paper. I said it was not for me to express any opinion on it as such, and that my desire in seeing him was to tell him of my impression of the feeling in India, and that without India's goodwill, it would appear that nothing could be gained by forcing the constitution down her throat. He agreed in so far as anyone is bound to agree to such a statement, but he quickly made it clear that there was not the slightest chance of amending or modifying the White Paper. He then went on to say that, in his opinion, if this bill was not passed, no bill would be passed on India for at least twenty years! That if it was not passed, or, being passed was not worked, there would be an endless train of bitterness and oppression, with an increasing swing to the left in India, and to the right in England. He talked like a tired man without any elasticity of mind. I suggested the need for gaining some confidence in India, and that the best way would be to have Gandhiji over, and talk man to man with him. He appreciated the matter, but said it would not make things easier from his point of view. "In fact," he added, "I have many conservative friends who have never forgiven me for having Mr. Gandhi here to my office, and his presence in England would make the chances of the bill going through still less than they are today, and as to leading to modifications of the constitution, it would be out of the question." He then said, "You speak as if Mr. Gandhi were the only Indian who counted, but I assure you I know some Indians who foam at the mouth at the very mention of his name." I replied that I could quite believe it, but added that those sorts of Indians were not particularly influential in India. After a little further frank talk, I said I hoped he would please excuse me if I expressed anything and everything I felt, without troubling about etiquette, to which he replied, "Of course, there is no question of etiquette here." When I got up to leave he said good-bye with much friendliness, and asked me to take



his kindest regards to Bapu. I mentioned Bapu's unshakable appreciation of him, and he replied feelingly, "I know, I only wish we could have met thirty years ago. It is so difficult now with all the complications which have grown up around us. Give him my kindest regards," he repeated, "and tell him that though we have differences of policies and politics, I trust that there may never be any misunderstanding between us, and that we may always feel the same to one another as we do today."

2-11-1934

V. Interview with Winston Churchill

[I wrote requesting an interview before I sailed for America, or, if that were not possible, then perhaps on my return, before leaving for India. I give below Churchill's reply, saying he was afraid the dates would not fit. However they ultimately did, as can be seen by the account of the interview which follows.]

Letter

Chartwell,
Westerham
Kent

21st September 1934

Dear Miss Slade,

I am much obliged to you for your letter of the 10th. I very much regret that I have not found it possible to propose a meeting to you. I should have much appreciated the pleasure of a conversation with you. Although I am strongly opposed, as you probably know, to Mr. Gandhi's politics, I am a sincere admirer of the heroic efforts he is making to improve the position of the depressed classes in India.

I am going abroad on a cruise for a month on Tuesday 25th so that I fear I shall not be back in time for us to meet. Pray accept my thanks for your courtesy in proposing a meeting, and believe me,

Yours very truly,
Winston S. Churchill



Interview

He greeted me very affably, and asked me regarding my American tour, and what I had talked about. I gave him some description, and especially how the public had responded to the spiritual and moral message of Bapu. He then said, "Of course I strongly oppose Mr. Gandhi from the political standpoint, but I have the greatest admiration for his work for the moral and social uplift of his people." When I mentioned to him about the recent happenings in Bombay, and how Bapu was now in his true element as the undisputed moral leader of the country, unfettered by any political ties, Churchill caught on to this thought rather keenly. We then passed on to the question of the orthodox Hindus, the Mahasabha and this and that. And when I referred, in passing, to India as a nation, he had to have his fling — "The Indian nation does not exist. There is no such thing." I laughed, and said, "Though there may be many provinces and languages, nevertheless there is a far greater similarity of languages and customs than people, looking on from outside, could realize. All these nine years I have been living in the very heart of the Indian masses, and you must allow that I do know something of the real atmosphere." He replied, "Oh yes, I should think you must know India inside out." I said, "Then let me assure you that there is a unifying culture throughout the land, and that from North to South and from East to West, wherever you go, you find the yearning for freedom." Churchill grunted and did not say much. Later he said that he thought Mr. Gandhi was the finest man possible for moral and spiritual reform, but he would not choose him for flying the latest airship. I replied by telling him that, on the contrary, Bapu was one of the most practical people in the world, and loved to call himself a practical idealist. I then told Churchill how Lloyd George had been tremendously struck with Bapu's common sense and practical intelligence. This seemed rather to impress Churchill. Turning to the point of the constitutional bill, he said, "Well, it is coming up before Parliament, and who knows what will happen. I have done my best, now we shall see." He then pronounced something which I could not understand. I asked him to repeat it, and found he was trying to say something in Hindustani, which he translated into English and asked me to



put back into Hindustani. It was: **जो होगा सो होगा**। We had a good laugh over this brilliant effort, and he proudly said, “I have been in India once you know.” He then went on to criticise the bill and those responsible for it. “It is a ridiculous, useless thing,” he said. “It neither pleases us nor you. It falls between two stones, and what is the use of a constitution, what indeed is the meaning of it at all, if it is not backed by the people of the country for which it is meant? It is a wretched thing, this constitution. Sort of hotch-potch Western democracy with all sorts of elaborate complications. I do not want that we should be responsible for launching India on such a path. I would like to see something quite different. Something broad — a kind of fellowship of Hindus, Muslims and Christians, with a strong rule to hold it together. The Orient needs a different kind of government. You need a strong rule for the good of the people.” I asked him if he would explain more exactly what he had in mind, but he would not go into details. Then he said, “I do want to see an end to this present mess. Let us get out of it altogether rather than have this kind of thing. I would never want to be responsible for the present suggested policy.” When I pressed him again for his ideas, he answered evasively, but added, “I should deal with the matter quite differently. It needs something big.” During the conversation he several times repeated that he believed in speaking the truth— “I speak the truth. I believe in truth, pure truth. I have no use for those people who say to the Indians, ‘This is a wonderful constitution to lead you to the desired goal, etc.,’ and then say to others, ‘This is all right, we have got it all safely tied up. Do not be anxious, the Indians will not be able to do anything.’ I hate that kind of thing.” Finally, as we were saying good-bye, he said, “Take Mr. Gandhi my kind regards, and tell him I should have liked to have seen him at the time of the Round Table Conference as a moral leader, but politically it would not have done. And tell him too how great an admiration I have for his reform work.”

2-11-1934



VI. Interview with the Viceroy's Secretary, Mr. Laithwaite

[I give first the characteristic letter which I received from Mr. Laithwaite regarding my letter to Lord Linlithgow, in the course of which I said: "When the present crisis came to a head at the meeting of the Congress Working Committee in Sevagram, and in view also of the experiences I have had recently in Orissa, I felt a strong desire to meet you. I consulted Gandhiji, and he approved. That was before the main resolution of the Working Committee had been passed. After it had been passed, and after Gandhiji had held his Press Conference, he called me and said he would like me to leave the next morning for New Delhi. He then talked to me for over half an hour, pouring out his whole heart, that I might be the better able to interpret his mind to you at this most critical moment."]

Letter

The Viceroy's House,

New Delhi

17th July 1942

Dear Mirabehen,

His Excellency asks me to thank you for your letter. He would have been very glad to see you, and he is at all times glad to know Mr. Gandhi's views and feelings. But he feels sure that you will appreciate his difficulty in giving an interview to a direct representative of Mr. Gandhi, such as yourself, having regard to the conclusions of the main resolution of the Working Committee, and to the fact that Mr. Gandhi is himself, in the interviews given by him to the Press before, as H. E. understands it, you left Wardha on your present mission, stated to have described the position vis-a-vis of Government as one of "open rebellion". H. E. would much regret it, for all that, were he not to be in possession of any message or information which Mr. Gandhi should desire to convey to him: and he asks me to say that, in the circumstances, he hopes that you will feel able to convey any such information to him through me. I shall be at the



Viceroy's House all day, and, if you will be kind enough to have a telephone message sent to me, will make convenient here any time that might be most convenient to you.

Yours sincerely,

V. G. Laithwaite

Miss Mirabehn,
Birla House,
New Delhi

Interview

The interview lasted for over an hour. I talked to him fully and frankly. He seemed very anxious to gather everything, and took down almost verbatim notes in longhand, covering seven foolscap pages. In the first part of the conversation I tried to impress upon him the need for mutual understanding and contact. I could see his mind was attuned to the die-hard outlook. "But," I said, "Gandhiji is a unique man, and you have got to handle him in a unique fashion. His Excellency must draw on his imagination if he is to save the situation." The next point we touched was the anti-British feeling which was sweeping the country. He was clearly sceptical, and I said, "You are not in touch with the people; you live in an atmosphere of unreality, and it is impossible for you to know what I know." I then related to him some of my recent experiences in Orissa, and added, "If things go on as they are going, the peasants of Orissa will garland the Japanese when they arrive." After some further talk on this matter, we broached the need for immediate declaration of Independence. Laithwaite tried to appreciate my argument, but he brought up all the old bogies. I said Gandhiji was making this move out of love for England, to save India from going helplessly into the hands of the Japanese, and added, "If you do not feel you would know how to proceed to hand over Freedom to India, you should consult Gandhiji. It is he who can tell you." Finally, after a little further talk, I said, "Gandhiji is in deadly earnest. This time it will be impossible for you to hold him. No jail will contain him, no crushing will silence him. The more you crush, the more his power will spread. You are faced with two alternatives: one to



declare India's Independence, and the other to kill Gandhiji, and once you kill him, you kill for ever all hope of friendship between India and England. What are you going to do about it? You do not know the latent power lying buried in this coming move. Even we do not know the force of Gandhiji's spirit, but I can sense it, and I tell you, that if the rebellion has to burst, this Viceroy will have to face a more terrible situation than any Indian Viceroy has ever had to face before." Laithwaite began to look rather serious, and I concluded more cheerily, "I want you to try and realize that even this rebellion is a friendly gesture. Perhaps it is difficult for you to conceive of a rebellion as a friendly gesture, but with Gandhiji such a thing is possible." He replied, "After all you have told me I am more able to realize it." As we said good-bye, he begged me to explain to Gandhiji the Viceroy's difficulties over seeing me. He said, "Please make it clear to him, and be sure to show him the letter I wrote you, that he may see H. E.'s anxiety to be in possession of Mr. Gandhi's thoughts and feelings. There has always been such a cordial relationship between them."

17-7-1942

[Bapu's reaction to my report is to be found in his letter to me dated Sevagram, 21-7-1942, in which he says, *inter alia*, "I can understand and even appreciate the Viceroy's hesitation about seeing you. But your talk with L. will serve the purpose."]



4. LETTERS

I. Letter from Rabindranath Tagore

Santiniketan,

19-1-1929

Dear Mira Devi,

It has given me very great delight to find that you have entered into the spirit of Santiniketan during your short visit in this Ashram. Human life has its two aspects— one is the discipline of truth and the other is the fullness of expression. Sabarmati represents that discipline of truth, for Mahatmaji is born with the pure fire of truth — his nature is one with it. Being a poet my mission is to inspire life's fullness of expression, and I hope Santiniketan carries that ideal in all its activities. The lack of truth among our leaders — at least in Bengal — has been pitifully exhibited by our politicians in the orgies of Megalomania, the undignified display of unreality at the late Congress. It proves the greatness of Mahatmaji's message that has taken form in his Ashram. Along with it is needed the richness of mind, the illumination of life, the consciousness of the joy of existence and its manifestations in creative effort, which alone can save us from the obscurity of insignificance. According to the Upanishads the reconciliation of the contradiction between *tapasya* and *ananda* is at the root of creation, and Mahatmaji is the prophet of *tapasya* and I am the poet of *ananda*.

Yours sincerely,

(Sd.) Rabindranath Tagore



II. Letter from Aldous Huxley

740 Kings Road,
Los Angeles 46,
Cal.
22-1-1950

Dear Mira,

Thank you for your letter and the book. It was not feasible for me to go to India for the Conference,* and I had to content myself with report on it from a friend, Dr. Chakravarty. My own feeling is that peace cannot be achieved until individuals and governments turn their attention from the man-made and totally insoluble problems of power to the difficult, but perhaps soluble, problems of humanity's relation to the given material and spiritual environment— the problem of feeding and clothing a world population that is already too large and that is destined to increase 50 per cent before the end of the 20th century, and the problem of establishing right relations with the divine. Everybody is in agreement on the desire to have enough to eat; and the methods of supplying enough do not involve ideological dogmas and prejudices. Consequently there is some hope, if we concentrate on this end and these methods, of achieving something without involving ourselves in war. I see no hope along conventional political lines. The need is to get away from the home-made to the God-made — from ideology and power-politics to Nature and Spirit.

Yours sincerely,
Aldous Huxley

* The Peace Conference held in 1949-50.



OLD GLEANINGS



PREFACE

The secretarial side of Bapu's work very rarely fell to my lot. I was much more suited to personal service, and would instinctively leave the taking down of conversations, noting of letters, and such like jobs, to the other members of the party. Nevertheless I used to gather up from time to time some precious fragments, and put them away in my treasure-hoard of Bapu's letters to me. While sorting out the letters for publication* I also looked through this small collection, and it is a selection of these gleanings which are found in this little book.

I have given a few explanatory notes, and do not feel like making any further comments here. What could I add that would not be presumptuous in the face of Bapu's own clear, simple and direct words of truth?

Mira

Ashram, Pashulok,

Sept. 1, 1949.

* *Bapu's Letters to Mira* [1924-1948]



1. EQUALITY OF RELIGIONS

[During his imprisonment in Yeravda Jail, between 1930 and 1931, Bapu expounded in his letters to the Ashram week by week, the Ashram vows in some detail. The originals were in Gujarati. The Note on 'Equality of Religions' was so important that Bapu decided to translate it for me himself into English. The original manuscript in Bapu's own handwriting has been with me all these years.]

The word we have hitherto used for the 'vow' is a translation of the English expression (religious) toleration. I have never liked the word either in the original or translation. But I could not, then, think of any other at the moment of framing the rules. Kakasaheb, too, did not like the word 'toleration' He suggested 'respect for all religions'. I did not like that either. Toleration implies something wanting in the thing tolerated. Respect savours of patronage. But *Ahimsa* teaches us to cultivate equimindedness towards all religions. In terms of *Ahimsa* neither toleration nor respect are sufficient words to denote our conduct as it should be towards other religions.

No doubt admission of the equality of the other religions with one's own presupposes imperfection of the latter. Truth and *Ahimsa* do teach us to admit such imperfection. If we know the whole truth where is the need for search after truth? Possession of perfect knowledge of truth means possession of divinity. For we believe that Truth is God. It is because we do not know the whole Truth, we engage in an incessant search after it, and that is man's greatest privilege and duty.

Admission of our imperfection is thus indispensable for man's growth.

And if man is imperfect, any religion promulgated by him must be imperfect. We do not know the fully true religion, even as we do not know God. All religions are imperfect and therefore liable to necessary modifications which is the condition of growth. We should make a daily advance towards Truth, God. And if we consider all religions to be imperfect, there is no one religion higher than any other. This equimindedness does not prevent us from knowing the imperfections of the respective religions including our own,—we do not abandon our own faith because of its



imperfections, we seek to remove them. And if we have cultivated the equimindedness towards the other faiths we would not hesitate to adopt what is good in them but what may be wanting in ours. Acceptance of equality of religions necessarily prevents proselytizing.

Religions are God-given, as all truth is, but they are promulgated and interpreted by men. And since we do not know whose interpretation is the only true one, we are driven to the belief that all are both true and untrue. Interpretations are true for those who honestly believe them, otherwise for those who cannot. And, if we would give the same credit for correct judgement to the others that we claim for ourselves, we should have no difficulty in accepting the equality of all religions.

This equimindedness does not mean indifference to one's own faith. It purges one of fanaticism and makes one's love for one's own faith purer — our inner sight is opened only if we have arrived at this equimindedness. And if the inner sight is opened, we should know our own faith better than before.

Here the distinction between religion and irreligion is not abolished. In our vow we have definitely in mind the accepted faiths of the world. Their fundamentals are identical. They have all thrown up sages and saints and the process is going on even during our own generation.

Thus there is an apparent difference between the equimindedness in regard to religion and the equimindedness towards all life enjoined by the Gita. The latter is or ought to be exercised towards the good as well as the evil. We must love the wicked with the good but never wickedness.

The question naturally arises if all religions are equal where is the necessity for many? We have to do with the fact as it is. Life is surely one but the bodies are many. The various religions are bodies to the one essential Truth. The tree is one — its branches are many.



2. LETTER TO ROMAIN ROLLAND

(With the kind permission of Madeleine Rolland)

[Bapu had been pressed very hard by friends to visit Europe, in order to attend an International Youth Conference at Helsingfors. He had almost agreed, but on maturer consideration had decided not to go. People however were pressing for some representative to be sent to Europe to counteract the poisonous anti-Indian propaganda then being carried on in the Press.]

2nd May, 1926

Dear friend,

I have before me a translation by Mira, of your kind and touching letter of 17th February last. I have been anticipating your permission to make cautious use of portions of that letter without mentioning your name.

I am glad you think with me that the proper course for me was not to come to Europe this year.

With reference to India being heard in Europe, I hold the view that India will not be heard in Europe or the West until she has suffered more, and on a more extensive scale than hitherto. Hers will be a voice in the wilderness at the present moment. And I feel even the hired, and in some cases bribed, journalists of Europe will shudder to take as gospel truth all the manifest and one-sided exaggerations and falsehoods circulated by the B. G.,* if India is not represented. I feel too that this non-violent battle does not need the same kind of propaganda that a battle based on violence would. Thirdly there is the practical difficulty that you mention of finding one who can be at all heard. The only person I have in view for the moment is Andrews, since the Poet** is unavailable. Andrews will certainly be heard in the quarters that matter.



I hope you are keeping well and that God will permit you to hold out till the battle is fairly over in India.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi

* British Government.

** Rabindranath Tagore



3. LETTER TO MADELEINE ROLLAND

(With the kind permission of Madeleine Rolland)

[The first fast referred to is the fast against Ramsay Mac-Donald's Communal Award, which resulted in the Poona Pact. The contemplated second fast referred to was in sympathy with Kelappan for getting the Guruvayur temple opened to Harijans. But the fast was averted as a result of a referendum in which the people voted overwhelmingly in favour of temple-entry. See *Bapu's Letters to Mira* [1924 to 1948], pages 208 and 234.]

Yeravda Central Prison,
6th January, 1933

My dear Madeleine,

It was a great joy to receive your brief letter, especially as it recalled the precious days of communion with you all. It was like meeting members of one's family.

If the events at the time of the last fast were a miracle, as they were, it was purely God's work. I was but a very humble instrument in His hands. At no stage did I feel that I was doing anything. I simply could not do it, but when I said that it was God working through me, it was literally true, as far as my knowledge went.

But I observe from your great and good brother's telegram to Devadas that people on the Continent had not understood the contemplated second fast. I don't wonder at it. The whole conception seems to be so new, and yet it appears to me to be the logical outcome of a prayerful search after truth. There is no prayer without fasting, and fasting which is not an integral part of prayer is mere torture of the flesh, doing no good to anyone. Such fasting is an intense spiritual effort, a spiritual striving. It is a penance and a process of self-purification. True fasting generates a silent unseen force which may, if it is of requisite strength and purity, pervade all mankind. I have seen its unseen pervasive effect on a small scale but sufficiently large to know that it is a mighty force. It was in this instance an inevitable step in the prosecution of the campaign against untouchability. I would have been false to myself, to my companion Kelappan,



and to the cause of the Harijans, if I had faltered. At the present moment, however, it stands indefinitely postponed. Even now, perhaps, I have not made myself clear. It is difficult to do so. But I have no hesitation in saying that time will prove the correctness of the step, and in any case, for me, it was a call from God which I could not resist. If a further explanation is necessary, please do not hesitate to write to me.

I have been trying to find out a suitable adjective for your brother. To write of him to you as 'Mons. Rolland' or as 'your brother' sounds too prosaic and distant. To describe him as simple 'brother' sounds too familiar and does not convey adequately the existing relationship. The two words that come to me are *Rishi* or the 'Sage'. They are almost synonymous terms but not identical in meaning. Subject, therefore, to his and your approval, I am going henceforth to describe him as the *Rishi*. I hope that this letter will find him in full possession of his normal health. I am afraid one dare not hope for perfect health for him. He will not give it all that chance. It would mean concentration on physical health at the expense of concentration on his historical researches, and with him historical is also spiritual, or else he would not be a *Rishi*. Please tell the *Rishi* that some months ago I had for the first time his volumes on Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. The reading gave me great joy and enabled me more fully than before to get a measure of his love for India.

Mira and I exchange weekly letters. She is quite happy in her rest house*. She is studying Hindi, reading the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, and at the present moment she is reading Dr. Gour's work on Buddhism. She is keeping her health and making dietetic experiments. There is no restriction about her diet. She is therefore able to get what she requires. She gets also one or two papers and whatever non-political books she may need.

Mahadev Desai is with me. The two others you do not know personally.

Love to you both from us both.

Bapu

* Arthur Road Jail, Bombay.



4. LETTER TO JOHN MORRIS

[During Bapu's stay at Kingsley Hall, in East London, at the time of the Round Table Conference, he was taken by Muriel Lester to see an old working class man, in a nearby hospital, who was blind and a permanent cripple, because the old man had evinced great enthusiasm about Bapu and a burning desire to meet him.]

Yeravda Central Prison,

6th January, 1933

My dear friend John Morris,

I was much touched to receive your wonderful letter and the Christmas Card, both of which reached me in due time. I have always treasured the memory of that early morning visit to your hospital and the handshake. It was a great sight to see you so cheerful and happy, although a permanent invalid. May you retain that inward happiness till the end of your earthly days. Mira, you may know, is also in prison, but she is quite well and quite happy. She is doing a great deal of spinning and some very useful reading. I shall send your letter to her. I think that there will be no difficulty in her being allowed to receive it, and I know that she would be as pleased as I was to have it.

Devadas whom you saw* is just now touring in India in connection with untouchability work.

[The copy carries no signature]

* With his hands.



5. LETTER TO HIS HOLINESS THE LAMA, TIBET

(Translation of the original in Gujarati)

Dear friend,

I thank you for your gift. I am sorry I cannot understand your language. My desire and hope is that Tibetans should understand and follow the secret of the message of *Ahimsa* given by Buddhadeva.

Your friend,

M. K. Gandhi

As at Sabarmati, 4-5-1931

His Holiness the Lama, Tibet.



6. LETTER GIVEN TO A FRIEND LEAVING FOR CHINA

Dear friend,

You must come again whenever you like.

My message to the Chinese Students is, "Know that the deliverance of China is through *Ahimsa*, pure and unadulterated."

Yours sincerely,

M. K. Gandhi

As at Sabarmati, 4-5-1931



7. SCRAPS FROM A NOTEBOOK

[The following scraps from a Notebook, I give just as they were written down by me at the time.]

I

Question: “If we had in the world a people who practised *Ahimsa*, would they keep themselves free from being the slaves of others?”

Bapu’s Answer: “If one person can, surely a nation can. Slavery would be impossible. No man or group of men can hold any man or group of men slaves. The mind can run away. The slave-driver will say, ‘do this’, and they will do exactly the opposite. It is possible to imagine that someday all nations will become sufficiently intelligent to act, even in the mass, like they can individually today, and not get carried away with mass blindness.”

Bapu then drew a vivid picture of the violent road for India — how she might assassinate and fight and suffer reprisals till out of 30 crores only one crore would be left.

“But,” said Bapu, “I decided that that was not for me. I rehearsed all these things in my mind, but I said to myself, ‘This is the way of the Devil, not the way of God’ — the thought of these 29 crores of lives sacrificed, would ever haunt me. The fact of the one crore of giants, trained in violence, who would have the whole of India to spread themselves out in, would give me no satisfaction. I said to myself, I must take the way of non-violence and take with me even the lepers and the lunatics.

“For after all are we not all more or less lepers or more or less mad? If we were all sane we should be gods. It is because we have a screw loose that we cannot succeed in being one with God. We all have at least one small screw loose, but one small screw loose does not prevent a vessel from sailing across the sea — lunatics have the main screw loose, that is the only difference.” (Bapu in Conversation on 10-9-1937.)



II

“I would like to make still greater changes in my life, but who knows if that will come. Whatever changes I make sit gracefully on me, because they are natural to me. My mind goes in advance of my actions. I do not force myself and therefore I do not become a hypocrite.” (Bapu in Conversation on 22-9-1937.)

III

“I have found mere preaching of *Ahimsa* does not do at all. People cannot realize the unmanifest. When spirit becomes flesh, then they can see and understand it.

“*Ahimsa* is unmanifest. You have to become *Ahimsa*-made-flesh — You should live *Ahimsa*.” (Bapu in Conversation on 25-9-1937.)

IV

“Violence has no positive life. It is a negative thing. Violence can exist only where there is resistance.” (Bapu in Conversation in 1937.)

V

“Non-violence does not seize power. It does not even seek power — power accrues to it.”

“It is like the awakening of the Soul — of the people.” (Bapu in Conversation in July, 1938.)

VI

“What a dirty beast man is, and yet he hugs life and the body with all its dirt and filth!” (Bapu when spitting up some phlegm on 22-8-1939.)

VII

“I am not really made to attract educated India to myself. I do not mind, it is my limitation.” (Bapu in Conversation in 1939.)



VIII

“An intense wish takes the shape of prayer.” (Bapu in Conversation in 1939.)

IX

To a friend who said she would do her best to return to India at the end of the war. (War is hanging in the balance):

“We don’t know the meaning of ‘the end of the war’. The end of the war will mean the end of many things.” (Bapu in Conversation on 30-8-1939.)

X

“Speed is not the end of life. Man sees more, and lives more truly, by walking to his duty.” (Bapu in Conversation on 30-9-1939.)

XI

“No people who are really ready for fullest liberty can possibly be held down by any force in the world.” (Bapu in Conversation in October, 1939.)

XII

“The secret of Satyagraha lies in not tempting the wrong-doer to do wrong.” (Bapu in Conversation in October, 1939.)

XIII

“There is no such thing as subjugating a non-violent nation.” (Bapu in Conversation in October, 1939.)

XIV

“If you want to convert your opponent you must present to him his better and nobler side. Work on, round, upon that side. Do not dangle his faults before him.” (Bapu in Conversation in October, 1939.)



XV

“It is the city man who is responsible for war all over the world, never the villager.” (Bapu in Conversation.)

XVI

“Let us not think of that distant view — Let us make use of the present.” (Bapu in Conversation.)



8. AGA KHAN'S PALACE TALKS

[The following are notes, which I took down, of conversations with Bapu during our incarceration in the Aga Khan's Palace, Poona. After writing down the notes, I always showed them to Bapu who used to read them through carefully, make here and there minor corrections and then usually scribble in pencil at the end "Correct", "Good" or the like.]

|*

"One may sometimes be so placed as to feel the need to endorse a thing which one would not necessarily have initiated.

"Some things carry in them the seeds of their own frustration. One may say if large enough quantities are used it will work. Quite so; but if large enough quantities are available the thing in itself becomes unnecessary.

"Secrecy, that is, untruth, leads to nine-tenths of the world's troubles. Generally speaking what is done secretly holds in itself the latent seeds of its own destruction. What cannot be done openly is usually best left undone. This principle should not be confused with the need to keep silent where talking, etc., may lead to mischief and misunderstanding. Secrecy means withholding from the other party information or facts with the intention of deceiving him.

"Truth is God — which means that absolute Truth is, like God, incomprehensible. But when Truth manifests herself to man she comes garbed in the robes of non-violence. Truth, ungraspable, assumes comprehensible form in non-violence. Thus whilst non-violence is the manifest part of Truth, there remains, beyond the manifest, her unmanifest part.

"And even the *darshan* of Truth in her non-violence manifestation can only be attained by the man of pure detachment. Anger, greed, pride, fear, all these things draw a veil across the seeker's eyes.

"This being so, it is really only the *Rishi*, the *Tapasvi*, and the *Yogi*, who can safely handle non-violence in its apparently "violent" aspects. The ordinary man, if he must



venture far into these dangerous regions, may test himself in certain ways — in the case of his dealing with individual living beings — human or animal — he may ask himself whether he would do the same to his own child. When in doubt he may decide ‘against himself’.

“It goes without saying that even this test applies only to man in his regenerate state.”

* This whole talk refers to the 1942 movement then in progress

II

I asked Bapu how one could best help races who have an undeveloped idea of God, and suggested that one should not put before them any orthodox religion, but speak only in a very simple way of the Supreme Soul, and for the rest, serve them and strive to live according to the ideals in which one believes.

Bapu gave me a reply which I wrote down and showed him the next day. On reading it through, Bapu said to me: “When I looked through what you had written down of our conversation, I saw that I should express what I had said in a shorter and clearer manner. I have now put it in the form of aphorisms.”

The following is Bapu’s revision:

“You should not even talk of the Supreme Soul,” replied Bapu. “It is my profound conviction that Truth is self-acting. Truth, which is God, is ever present, ever working in all beings. Therefore, one should simply live one’s own life amongst them and serve them according to their needs. The three R’s have a value all their own, therefore giving that knowledge to the illiterate is a special service obligatory on those who have that knowledge. For the rest, if we have Truth in us, it will go out to them without effort, for it is self-acting. God, i.e., Truth comes to those who seek Him. If we know Him more than they (of which we can never be sure) the more will doubtless go out to them.” (Bapu to me on the evening of 29-5-1943.)

Bapu then talked to me further on the same subject:



“As a matter of fact it was only yesterday that I fully realized the value of the three R’s. In the past I have often expressed indifference to them. But yesterday it came to me that the three R’s have a unique place and value, and in serving illiterate peoples it is a vital part of one’s duty to give them this knowledge. The man who cannot read, write, or add, must remain in many ways an ignoramus. Whereas with this knowledge at his command he can reach out to further and further development. Of course, this means that when I impart the three R’s I must try to do it in such a way as to whet the man’s appetite for further knowledge. There can be no question for me of just counting heads and passing on. I do not impart this knowledge for all-round advance. If he advances materially all very well and good. Though my concern is with his spiritual development, it is through material service that I have to approach him. His body is all there, his soul is as yet unknown to him. Day by day, as he goes on accepting my material services he will become more curious about my life. He will begin to notice something more than the physical side of my life. Why do I sometimes sit in certain postures, why do I shut my eyes at times. What is it I am murmuring. When his curiosity leads him to ask me what it all means, I can explain it to him. How the information will affect him is not my concern. It is not for me to interfere with the working of the Spirit. When I am face to face with the man, in proportion as I have God’s Spirit in me will it go out to him. My purpose is not to give him my religion. My purpose is to let him see God through me if I have Him and express Him in reality in my daily doings.”

III

“Behind this tremendous work which I am putting in is the incessant prayer that not a word should slip from my pen which does not ring true or has the slightest violence in it.” (Words spoken to me by Bapu on 28-5-1942 regarding his work on the Government pamphlet.)

“Right” (in Bapu’s hand-writing.)



IV

“Satan is not a person but a principle — the Principle of Negation (of Truth). Whereas the Divinity is the Principle of Truth. It is therefore life-giving and is itself Life, God. The Principle of Negation is a dead thing, but just as a corpse may look like a living being, so does this negation deceive man, and, deluded by *Maya*, he pursues this lifeless principle, thinking it to be the thing for which to live.

“The scriptures tell us, and I believe, that the reign of untruth has to be gone through (the reign of Satan in the Bible and *Kaliyuga* in the *Puranas*) before man can again rise to *Satyayuga*. Most surely we are now passing through that period. What does it matter whether we live to see the dawn of the Age to come, or not? It is enough that we have unshakable faith, and live and strive for that end.” (Bapu on evening of 22-5-1943.)

“Good” (in Bapu’s hand-writing.)

V

While I was attending on Bapu during the last days of his twenty-one days’ fast (February 9th to March 2nd, 1943), he said to me in a very faint voice on February 27th:

“What does it matter if people try to distort the meaning of my fast?

“This fast was taken solely for service of God and in His presence. Other people may believe it or not, that does not worry me. Those against me are thinking they can make a good job of falsehood, but they are bound to fail. Truth will out — I have said everything that is to be said in my letters.*

“No fast of mine has ever had such a wonderful ending as this one is having. I do not mean what is going on in the outside world, but what is going on inside me. There is a heavenly peace.”

Bapu then murmured something more which I could not fully catch.



Something about liking to take complete silence and not troubling to answer or explain anything further — but that he must not turn down Rajaji, Munshi and others like that —

And then something about gaining the strength to fling himself against the whole world. And dying in peace and joy.

“Correct” (in Bapu’s hand-writing.)

* Letters sent by Bapu from the Aga Khan’s Palace to Lord Linlithgow.

VI

“The fundamental essential in non-violence is right thinking.

“It may be asked — ‘What is right thinking?’ Right thinking is not right contemplation or right planning, it is right conception of fundamentals. For example, ‘God is,’ is right thinking and ‘God is not’ is wrong thinking. ‘I must be honest’ is right thinking, ‘I may be dishonest,’ is wrong thinking.

“When the mind is habituated to right thinking right action follows spontaneously, but, when the mind turns to wrong thinking, wrong action will follow. And even if circumstances lead one to right action, if the mind is given to wrong thinking, the right action will be lacking in convincing force, and it will also not bring to the doer all the fruits of right action.

“Non-violence without right thinking will never carry within itself the vital power of Faith — or if you prefer — conviction. Nor will the man, who is not an habitual right-thinker, be able to depend on himself to act rightly (even if he wants to) at a given moment.”

“Correct” (Signed) Bapu

29-12-1943



9. SILENCE-DAY NOTES

I

“You cannot put off real work for amusement. Therefore you should be always ready, as they are for bombs in Europe.” (1938)

II

(Regarding the Segaon Villagers) “We have to teach these people; the way to teach is to help.” (October, 1939)

III

“Only there is no question of punishment when the defaulter himself invites penalty. Penalty then becomes penance.”

IV-V

[These two Silence-day notes belong to the last days in Delhi.

The first one was scribbled down by Bapu at the end of one of those terrific days when he had been working from morning up to about 10 o'clock at night. I had put in front of him some article for *Harijan* which had to be posted by Air Mail the next day.

The second one refers to some suggestion I had made to Bapu that I should go and see the military authorities regarding the situation then prevailing. Unfortunately I do not remember the details.]

“You should know that I am done up. The shoulders ache, the head is nowhere. I must not be troubled any further just now.”

* * *

“These are not old days. Now there are wheels within wheels. You can't do any useful service by seeing these military men except as friendly faces who will give you a warm welcome but nothing more. That is my reaction. The thing is beyond me except in my own way which has no vogue today.”

* * *

