

हिंदू धर्म म्हणजे काय?

जॉबकार्ड

पहिली आवृत्ती 1994

वतीने

हिस्टॉरिकल रिसर्चइंडियन कौन्सिल
ऑफ

नॅशनल बुक ट्रस्ट, इंडिया

द्वारे प्रकाशित

द संचालक, नॅशनल बुक ट्रस्ट, इंडिया

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प्रस्तावना

प्रसंगीमहात्मा गांधी यांच्या १२th व्या जयंतीनिमित्त, विस्तीर्ण समुदायासमोर हिंदू धर्माबद्दल समृद्ध समजावून मला आनंद झाला. या निवडीमध्ये समाविष्ट केलेले लेख मुख्यतः गांधीजीनीयांच्या योगदानावरून काढले आहेत *यंग इंडिया*, *हरिजन* आणि *नवजीवन* हिंदी आणि गुजराती या दोन्ही भाषांमध्ये. परंतु ही योगदाने वेगवेगळ्या प्रसंगी लिहिली गेली असली तरी, हिंदु धर्माचे असे चित्र आहे ज्याला समृद्धी, व्यापकता आणि मानवी अस्तित्वाच्या अस्तित्वातील पेचप्रसंगाची संवेदनशीलता यापेक्षा पुढे जाणे कठीण आहे.

'हिंदू धर्म काय आहे' या विषयावर महात्मा यांचे प्रतिबिंब कोणत्याही वेळी अमूल्य ठरतील. तथापि, माझा असा विश्वास आहे की सध्याच्या काळात ते विशेषतः संबंधित आहेत.

ही निवड घडवताना नेहरू संग्रहालयात माझे सहकारी आणि त्याचे उपसंचालक डॉ. हरिदेव शर्मा यांनी माझे खूप सहकार्य केले. भारतीय ऐतिहासिक संशोधन परिषदेच्या वतीने अल्पावधीतच या पुस्तकाचे प्रकाशन हाती घेतल्याबद्दल मी नॅशनल बुक ट्रस्टकडे गंभीरपणे पाहत आहे.

रवींदर कुमार

अध्यक्ष

भारतीय ऐतिहासिक संशोधन परिषदेचे

26 एप्रिल 1994

नवी दिल्ली

1. हिंदुत्व म्हणजे काय?

हिंदुधर्माचे हे भाग्य किंवा दुर्दैव आहे की याची अधिकृत पंथ नाही. कोणत्याही गैरसमजांपासून स्वतःचे रक्षण करण्यासाठी मी म्हणालो की सत्य आणि अहिंसा ही माझी पंथ आहे. जर मला हिंदू धर्माची व्याख्या करण्यास सांगितले गेले तर मी इतकेच म्हणावे: अहिंसेच्या मार्गाने सत्याचा शोध घ्या. एखादा माणूस देवावरही विश्वास ठेवत नाही आणि तरीही तो स्वतःला हिंदू म्हणू शकतो. हिंदुत्व हा सत्यानंतरचा अथक प्रयत्न आहे आणि आज जर तो वाढीचा, निष्क्रीय, वाढीचा बेजबाबदार झाला असेल तर आपण थकलो आहोत; आणि थकवा संपताच, जगावर हिंदू धर्म फुटेल आणि कदाचित आधी माहित नसेल. अर्थात, म्हणून सर्व धर्मांमध्ये हिंदू धर्म सर्वात सहनशील आहे. त्याची पंथ सर्व-आलिंगन देणारी आहे.

यंग इंडिया, 24 एप्रिल 1924

2. हिंदू धर्मात सैतान आहे का?

माझ्या मते हिंदू धर्माचे सौंदर्य सर्वसमावेशकतेमध्ये आहे. ईश्वरी लेखकाने *महाभारताच्या स्पष्टीकृत* जे आपल्या महानसांगितले ते हिंदू धर्माबद्दलही तितकेच खरे आहे. इतर कोणत्याही धर्मात जे पदार्थ आहेत ते हिंदू धर्मात नेहमीच आढळतात. आणि त्यात जे काही नाही ते अनिश्चित किंवा अनावश्यक आहे.

यंग इंडिया, 17 सप्टेंबर 1925

3. डब्ल्यूएचवाय मी हिंदू आहे?

एक अमेरिकन मित्र जो स्वतःला भारताचा आजीवन मित्रलिहितात:

बनतो, तेजसे हिंदू धर्म हा पूर्वेकडील प्रमुख धर्मांपैकी एक आहे आणि जसे आपण ख्रिस्ती आणि हिंदू धर्माचा अभ्यास केला आहे आणि त्या अभ्यासाच्या आधारे जाहीर केले आहे की तुम्ही हिंदू आहात, मी तुम्हाला या निवडीसाठी आपली कारणे देण्यास अनुकूलता दर्शवितो की नाही हे विचारण्यास मी निघालो. हिंदूंना आणि ख्रिश्चनांना सुद्धा हे समजते की मनुष्याची मुख्य गरज आहे की त्यांनी देवाला ओळखले पाहिजे आणि त्याची उपासना आत्म्याने व सत्याने केली पाहिजे. ख्रिस्त हा देवाचा साक्षात्कार आहे असा विश्वास बाळगून अमेरिकेच्या ख्रिश्चनांनी आपल्या हजारो पुत्र-मुलींना ख्रिस्ताविषयी भारतातील लोकांना सांगण्यासाठी भारतात पाठवले आहे. त्या बदल्यात तुम्ही दयाळूपणे आम्हाला हिंदू धर्माचे स्पष्टीकरण द्याल आणि ख्रिस्ताच्या शिकवणीशी हिंदू धर्माची तुलना कराल का? या कृपेबद्दल मी मनापासून आभारी आहे मी इंग्रजी आणि अमेरिकन मिशनर्यांना हे सांगण्यासाठी अनेक मिशनरी सभामध्ये भाषण केले आहे की जर त्यांनी ख्रिस्ताबद्दल 'सांगणे' टाळले असते आणि जर त्यांनी पर्वतावरच्या सरमनने त्यांच्यावर बजावलेली जीवनशैली जगली असती तर त्यांच्यावर शंका न घेता त्यांचे कौतुक केले असते तिच्या मुलांमध्ये राहून त्यांच्या उपस्थितीचा थेट फायदा हे मत ठेवून मी अमेरिकन मित्रांना 'परतावा' या मार्गाने हिंदू धर्माबद्दल काहीही सांगू शकत नाही. लोकांचा विश्वास इतरांना सांगत असल्याचा माझा विश्वास नाही, विशेषतः धर्मांतर करण्यासाठी. विश्वास सांगणे कबूल करत नाही. तो जगला पाहिजे आणि मग तो स्वतःची प्रसारित होईल.

किंवा मी माझ्या स्वतःच्या जीवनाशिवाय हिंदू धर्माचे स्पष्टीकरण करण्यास मला योग्य मानत नाही. आणि जर मी माझ्या लिखित शब्दाद्वारे हिंदू धर्माचा अर्थ लावला नाही तर मी ख्रिस्ती धर्माशी तुलना करू शकत नाही.

मला फक्त शक्य आहे म्हणून मी शक्य तितक्या थोडक्यात सांगणे, मी हिंदू का आहे.

मी हिंदू कुटुंबात जन्मलेल्या आनुवंशिकतेच्या प्रभावाप्रमाणे करतो यावर विश्वास ठेवून मी एक हिंदू आहे. मी माझ्या नैतिकतेने किंवा माझ्या आध्यात्मिक वाढीशी विसंगत आढळल्यास मला ते नाकारले पाहिजे. परीक्षेच्या वेळी मला हे ज्ञात असलेल्या सर्व धर्मांपैकी सर्वात सहनशील असल्याचे आढळले आहे. मतदानापासूनचे त्याचे स्वातंत्र्य मला जबरदस्तीने आवाहन करते कारण यामुळे मतदाराला आत्म-अभिव्यक्तीची सर्वात मोठी संधी मिळते. हा एकमेव धर्म नसून त्या श्रद्धेच्या अनुयायांना केवळ इतर सर्व धर्मांचा आदर करण्यास सक्षम करते, परंतु इतर धर्मांमध्ये जे चांगले आहे त्याची प्रशंसा करण्यास आणि त्यास आत्मसात करण्यास देखील ते सक्षम करते. अहिंसा हा सर्व धर्मांमध्ये सामान्य आहे, परंतु हिंदू धर्मात याला सर्वाधिक अभिव्यक्ती व उपयोग आढळला आहे. (मी जैन किंवा बौद्ध धर्म हिंदू धर्मापेक्षा वेगळा मानत नाही.) हिंदू धर्म केवळ सर्व मानवी जीवनावर नाही तर सर्व जगातील एकतेवर विश्वास ठेवतो. गायीची त्याची उपासना, माझ्या मते, मानवतावादाच्या उत्क्रांतीत त्याचे अनन्य योगदान आहे. हे एकात्मतेवरील विश्वासाचे आणि म्हणूनच, संपूर्ण जीवनातील पवित्रतेचे व्यावहारिक अनुप्रयोग आहे. स्थलांतरातील महान श्रद्धा हा त्या विश्वासाचा थेट परिणाम आहे. शेवटीकायद्याचा *वर्णश्रमाच्या* शोध हा सत्याच्या अविरत शोधाचा एक भव्य परिणाम आहे. गाय-उपासना आणि सध्याच्या कल्पना, हे सांगण्याखेरीज या लेखात मी येथे रेखाटलेल्या अत्यावश्यक गोष्टींच्या परिभाषांनी ओझे लावू नये *वर्णश्रमाच्या* माझ्या मते मूळ काय आहेत याचे एक व्यंगचित्र आहे. या सर्व अगदी थोडक्यात रेखाटनेत मी हिंदू धर्माची उत्कृष्ट वैशिष्ट्ये असल्याचे मला नमूद केले आहे जे मला त्याच्या तुकड्यात ठेवतात.

तरुण भारत, 20 ऑक्टोबर 1927

4. Hinduism

मीअसल्याने माझा हक्क दावा *Sanatani* हिंदू आहे, आणि अजून जे सामान्यतः हिंदू नाव, मी दुर्लक्ष केले जाते गोष्टी आहेत. मला असे नसल्यास इच्छा *सनातानी* हिंदू किंवा इतर कोणी म्हणण्याची माझी नाही. म्हणूनच अर्थ स्पष्टपणे स्पष्टपणे सांगण्याची मला एकदा गरज आहे *सनातन* हिंदू धर्माचा हा शब्द *सनातन* मीत्याच्या नैसर्गिक अर्थाने वापरतो. मी स्वतः कॉल *Sanatani* हिंदू कारण,

1. मी विश्वास *वेद*, *उपनिषदे*, *पुराणे* आणि हिंदू शास्त्राच्या नाव नाही, आणि त्या सर्व म्हणून मी *एन अवतार* आणि पुनर्जन्म;
2. मी विश्वास ठेवतो *वर्णस्वर्ग धर्मावर* एका अर्थाने, माझ्या मते, काटेकोरपणे *वैदिक* परंतु सध्याच्या लोकप्रिय आणि असभ्य अर्थाने नाही;
3. गायीच्या लोकप्रियतेपेक्षा मोठ्या प्रमाणात अर्थाने संरक्षण करण्यावर माझा विश्वास आहे;
4. मी मूर्तीपूजनाला नाकारत नाही.

वाचकांनी लक्षात घ्यावे की मीसंदर्भात हेतुपुरस्सर *दैवी* मूळ हा शब्द वापरण्यास टाळले आहे *वेद* किंवा इतर कोणत्याही शास्त्राच्या. कारण मी एकमेव देवत्वावर विश्वास ठेवत नाही *वेदांच्या*. माझा विश्वास आहे की बायबल, कुराण आणि इंग्रिड अवेस्ता वेदांइतकेच ईश्वरी प्रेरणा आहेत. हिंदू धर्मग्रंथांवरील माझ्या विश्वासामुळे मला प्रत्येक शब्द आणि प्रत्येक श्लोक ईश्वरी प्रेरणा म्हणून स्वीकारण्याची आवश्यकता नाही. किंवा या अद्भुत पुस्तकांबद्दल मला स्वतःहून काही ज्ञान असल्याचा दावाही मी करत नाही. परंतु मी धर्मग्रंथांच्या आवश्यक शिक्षणाचे सत्य जाणून घेण्याचा आणि अनुभवण्याचा दावा करतो. मी कोणत्याही विवेचनास बंधनकारक असणार नाही, तथापि हे कदाचित असू शकते, कारण ते तर्कशास्त्र किंवा नैतिकदृष्ट्या प्रतिकूल आहे. मी सध्याच्यांच्या दाव्याला (त्यांनी असे काही पुढे केले असल्यास) पुष्कळ *शंकराचार्य* आणि *शास्त्री ठामपणे म्हटले* हिंदू धर्मग्रंथांचे योग्य स्पष्टीकरण देण्यासाठी आहे. याउलट माझा असा विश्वास आहे की या पुस्तकांबद्दल आपले सध्याचे ज्ञान अत्यंत अराजक स्थितीत आहे. मी हिंदू *पहोरिझम*वर स्पष्टपणे विश्वास ठेवतो, की झालेल्या कोणीही खरोखर ओळखत *शास्त्रांना* निष्पाप (मध्ये परिपूर्णत्व प्राप्त नाही *अहिंसा*), सत्य (*सत्य*) आणि आत्मसंयम (*ब्रह्मचर्य*) आणि ज्याने सर्व संपत्ती किंवा संपत्तीचा त्याग केला नाही. मी संस्था *गुरुविश्वास*, पण या युगात एकन जाणे आवश्यक *गुरूला* खोपरिपूर्ण पवित्रता व परिपूर्ण शिक्षण संयोजन शोधण्यासाठी एक दुर्मिळ गोष्ट आहे कारण, आहे. पण एखाद्याच्या धर्माचे सत्य जाणून घेताना निराश होण्याची गरज नाही, कारण हिंदू धर्माची मूलभूत तत्त्वे, प्रत्येक महान धर्माप्रमाणेच, बदलण्यायोग्य नसतात आणि सहज समजतात. प्रत्येक हिंदू देवावर आणि त्याच्या एकतेवर, पुनर्जन्म आणि तारणावर विश्वास ठेवतो.

मी माझ्या स्वतःच्या बायकोपेक्षा हिंदू धर्माबद्दलच्या माझ्या भावनांविषयी अधिक वर्णन करू शकत नाही. जगातील इतर स्त्री जशी करू शकत नाही तशीच ती मला हलवते. तिचा कोणताही दोष नाही असे नाही. माझ्याकडे पाहण्यापेक्षा तिच्याकडे बरेच काही आहे असे म्हणण्याची माझी हिम्मत आहे. पण अविभाज्य बंधनाची भावना तिथे आहे. तरीही मला हिंदू धर्मातील सर्व दोष आणि मर्यादा आहेत आणि त्याबद्दल मला वाटते. संगीत म्हणून मला काहीही आवडले नाही *गीतेचे* किंवा *रामायण* तुलसीदास यांनी. हिंदू धर्मातील फक्त दोनच पुस्तके मला माहित असतील असे म्हणतात. जेव्हा मी कल्पनारम्य झालो तेव्हा मी माझा शेवटचा श्वास घेत होतो *गीता* ही माझी सांत्वन होती. मला सर्व महान हिंदू धर्मस्थळांमध्ये आज चालू असलेले उपगुण मला माहित आहे, परंतु त्यांचे अकल्पनीय अपयश असूनही माझे त्यांच्यावर प्रेम आहे. मी त्यांच्यात रस घेतो आणि मी हे घेत नाही. मी मधून मधून सुधारक आहे. परंतु माझा उत्साह मला हिंदू धर्माच्या कोणत्याही आवश्यक गोष्टी नाकारण्यासाठी कधीच घेत नाही. मी म्हटलेले आहे की मी मूर्तिपूजेला नाकारत नाही. एक

मूर्ती मला छापला कोणत्याही भावना जागृत नाही. पण मला वाटते की मूर्तिपूजा हा मानवी स्वभावाचा एक भाग आहे. आम्ही प्रतीकवाद नंतर हँकर. एखाद्या चर्चमध्ये इतरत्रापेक्षा जास्त संगीत का असावे? प्रतिमा उपासना करण्यास मदत करतात. कोणताही हिंदू देवताला प्रतिमा मानत नाही. मी मूर्तिपूजेला पाप मानत नाही.

यावरून हे स्पष्ट झाले आहे की हिंदू धर्म हा एकमेव धर्म नाही. त्यामध्ये जगातील सर्व संदेष्ट्यांच्या उपासनेसाठी जागा आहे. हा शब्द सामान्य अर्थाने मिशनरी धर्म नाही. यात काही शंका नाही की त्याने अनेक गोळ्या आपल्या गोठ्यात सामावून घेतल्या आहेत, परंतु हे शोषण उत्क्रांतीकारी अभेद्य वर्ण आहे. हिंदू त्याच्या स्वतः च्या विश्वास किंवात्यानुसार देवाची उपासना प्रत्येकाला *धर्मसांगते*, आणि म्हणून ती सर्व धर्म शांतता राहतात.

माझी हिंदू धर्माची संकल्पना असल्याने, मी कधीही अस्पृश्यतेशी जुळवून घेऊ शकलो नाही. मी नेहमीच हा एक उत्साहीपणा मानला आहे. हे खरं आहे की ते पिढ्यान्पिढ्या आपल्या स्वाधीन केले गेले आहे, परंतु आजही अनेक वाईट प्रथा आहेत. मुलींना आभासी वेश्या व्यवसायासाठी समर्पित करणे हा हिंदू धर्माचा एक भाग होता याचा मला विचार करायला लाज वाटली पाहिजे. तरीही भारतातील बऱ्याच भागात हिंदूंचा हा सराव आहे. मी काळीला बक sacrifice्यांचा बळी देणे आणि त्यास हिंदू धर्माचा एक भाग मानू नका, ही सकारात्मक भावना आहे. हिंदू धर्म ही युगांची वाढ आहे. हिंदूत्व हेच नाव परदेशी लोकांनी हिंदुस्थानच्या लोकांच्या धर्माला दिले. यात काही शंका नव्हती धर्माच्या नावाखाली अर्पण केलेल्या प्राण्यांच्या बलिदानाची. पण हा धर्म नाही, हिंदू धर्म इतका कमी आहे. आणि तसंच मलाही असं वाटतं की जेव्हा जेव्हा गोरक्षण हा आपल्या पूर्वजांवरील विश्वासाचा एक लेख बनला, तेव्हा गोमांस खाण्यास कायम राहिलेल्यांना बहिष्कृत केले गेले. नागरी कलह तीव्र असावा. सामाजिक बहिष्कार केवळ recalcitrants वर लागू करण्यात आला नाही, परंतु त्यांच्या पापाबद्दल त्यांच्या मुलांनादेखील शिक्षा देण्यात आली. ज्या अभ्यासाचे मूळ उद्दीष्ट चांगल्या हेतूने होते, त्याचा उपयोग अजून कठोर झाला आणि आपल्या पवित्र पुस्तकांमध्येही या श्लोकाचा अभ्यास केला गेला आणि त्या अभ्यासाला संपूर्णपणे अपात्र व कमी औचित्य प्राप्त झाले. माझा सिद्धांत बरोबर आहे की नाही, अस्पृश्यता तर्कशक्ती आणि दया, प्रेम किंवा प्रीती यांच्या प्रतिकूल आहे. गायीची उपासना स्थापित करणारा एखादा धर्म मानवाचा क्रूर आणि अमानुष बहिष्कार शक्यतो करू शकत नाही किंवा तोंड देऊ शकत नाही. आणि दडपलेल्या वर्गांना नकारण्याऐवजी मी तुकडे तुकडे होण्यास सामग्री असावी. अस्पृश्यतेचे डाग टिकवून ठेवून हिंदूंनी आपल्या उदात्त धर्माची बदनामी होऊ दिली तर हिंदूंना कधीही स्वातंत्र्य मिळणार नाही व ते मिळणारच नाही. आणि मला जीवनापेक्षा हिंदू धर्म अधिक प्रिय आहे, म्हणून डाग माझ्यासाठी एक असह्य ओझे बनले आहेत. आपल्या वंशातील पाचव्या वर्गाला समान आधारावर सहवासाचा अधिकार नाकारून आपण देवाला नाकारू नये.

यंग इंडिया, October ऑक्टोबर १ 21 २१ रोजी

5. सनातन हिंदूGandhi्या

[त्यांच्या वार्ताहरांवर हिंदुत्ववादाची टीका करणागांधीजींनी गांधीजींनी लिहिले:]

मी वाणीवादी नाही. म्हणून मीसमजून घेण्याचा प्रयत्न करतो *आत्मा* जगाच्या विविध शास्त्रांचा. मीसत्य आणि कसोटी *अहिंसाचीवापरतो* स्पष्टीकरणासाठी या शास्त्रांनी दिलेली. मी या चाचणीशी विसंगत काय आहे ते नाकारतो आणि मी जे काही सुसंगत आहे ते योग्य आहे. कहाणी *शूद्राची* रामचंद्रांनी धाडस केल्याबद्दल *वेद* मी शिकण्याचे एक प्रक्षेप म्हणून नाकारली. आणि कोणत्याही घटनांमध्ये, मी रामाची पूजा करतो, जो माझ्या संकल्पनेचा परिपूर्ण प्राणी आहे, एखाद्या ऐतिहासिक व्यक्तीची सत्यता नाही ज्याचे जीवन नवीन ऐतिहासिक शोध आणि संशोधनाच्या प्रगतीमुळे बदलू शकते. इतिहासाच्या रामाशी तुळशीदास काही देणे-घेणे नव्हते. ऐतिहासिक कसोटीनुसार त्याचा *रामायण* भंगारात ढीग बसू शकेल. अध्यात्मिक अनुभव म्हणून त्यांचे पुस्तक किमान माझ्यासाठी तरी जवळजवळ अतुलनीय आहे. आणि म्हणून प्रकाशित झालेल्या बऱ्याच आवृत्त्यांमध्ये सापडलेल्या प्रत्येक शब्दाची मी शपथ घेत नाही *मगसुद्धारामायण*, तुळशीदास. पुस्तकात चालणारी ही भावना आहे जी मला जादू करते. मी स्वतःनिषेधाचे सदस्यता घेऊ शकत नाही *शूद्रांवरील* शिक्षण घेत असलेल्या *वेदांचे* खरंच, माझ्या मते, सध्याच्या क्षणी आम्ही सर्व मुख्यत्वे *शूद्र आहेत*, जोपर्यंत आपण सर्फ आहेत. ज्ञान कोणत्याही वर्गाचा किंवा विभागाचा अधिकार असू शकत नाही. परंतु प्राथमिक प्रशिक्षण घेतल्याशिवाय उच्च किंवा सूक्ष्म सत्यांची आत्मसात करणाऱ्या लोकांची अशक्यता मी कल्पना करू शकतो, ज्यांनी प्राथमिक तयारी केली नाही अशा लोकांमध्येही उंचवट्यावरील दुर्मिळ वातावरणाचा श्वास घेण्यास अगदीच अयोग्य आहे किंवा ज्यांचे प्राथमिक प्रशिक्षण सोपे नाही आहे. उच्च भूमिती किंवा बीजगणित समजण्यास किंवा आत्मसात करण्यासाठी गणित अयोग्य आहे. शेवटी, मी काही निरोगी अधिवेशनांवर विश्वास ठेवतो. पठाराभोवती एक अधिवेशन आहे *गायत्रीच्या*. अधिवेशन असे आहे की ते केवळ निर्दिष्ट केलेल्या वेळी व विहित पद्धतीने केलेल्या ओहोटीनंतरच केले पाहिजे. मी त्या नियमावली विश्वास, आणि मी त्यांना सुसंगत वर्षे गेल्या मी नंतर संत अनुसरण केले आहे, आणि म्हणून नेहमी शकत नाही म्हणून स्वतः समाधानी आहे म्हणून *Dwadashakshara मंत्र* सूत्र *Bhagawata* किंवा तुलसीदास आणि अजूनही सोपे पासून काही *गीता* आणि इतर कामे आणि *bhajan* काही *'प्राकृतनिवडी*. हे माझे रोजचे आध्यात्मिक भोजन आहेत - माझे *गायत्री*. ते मला दररोज सर्व शांतता आणि समाधान देतात.

यंग इंडिया, २ August ऑगस्ट १ 25

6. २. काही आक्षेपांची उत्तरे

मला सर्वत्र स्पिनिंग व्हील पहायचे आहे, कारण मला सर्वत्र चापळवाद दिसतो. जोपर्यंत आम्ही भारताचे सांगाडे खायला घालत नाही, तोपर्यंत त्यांच्यासाठी धर्मात काही अर्थ आहे काय? ते आज गुरांचे जीवन जगत आहेत आणि त्यासाठी आपण जबाबदार आहोत. स्पिनिंग व्हील आमच्यासाठी प्रायश्चित्त आहे. धर्म ही असहायतांची सेवा आहे. असहाय्य आणि त्रस्त लोकांच्या रूपात भगवंताने स्वतःला स्वतः कडे प्रकट केले. परंतु आपण आपल्या कपाळाच्या चिन्हे असूनही, त्यांचा अर्थात ईश्वराकडे दुर्लक्ष करीत नाही. देव आहे आणि नाही *वेदांमध्ये*. जो आत्म्याचे वाचन करतो तो *वेदांच्या* त्यामध्ये देवाला पाहतो. पत्र सुरकुतली तो *वेद* एक आहे. *Vedia-a* literalist नरसिंह मेहता खरंच जपमाप्याचे गुणगान गातात आणि जिथे जिथे तिथे दिले जाते तिथे कौतुकाचा सन्मान केला जातो. पण त्याच Narasinha गायली आहेत:

काय लाभ घ्यावा *tilaka* आणि *तुलसी* आहे, काय लाभ घ्यावा आहे जपमाळ आणि नाव muttering, व्याकरणाची अर्थ काय लाभ घ्यावा *वेदलावणे*, अक्षरे प्रभुत्व काय लाभ घ्यावा आहे आहे? हे सर्व पोट भरण्यासाठीची साधने आहेत आणि करण्यास मदत केल्याशिवाय काहीही नाही *परब्रह्म साकार*.

मणी *मुसलमान* त्याच्या *तस्बीह*चे आणि *जपमाळातील* मोजतो ख्रिश्चन. परंतु त्यांचेतर ते स्वतः ला धर्मात *तस्बीह* सापांच्या *चाव्याद्वारे* अडचणीत सापडलेल्या *व्यक्तीकडे* पडल्याचे *समजतील* आणि जपमाळ त्यांना जाण्यापासून रोखत असत. केवळ ज्ञान *वेदांचे* आपल्याबनवू शकत नाही *ब्रह्मलाम्हणून* अध्यात्मिक गुरू. जर ते केले असते तर मॅक्स मुलर एक झाला असता. *ब्राह्मण* कोण आज धर्म समजले आहे नक्कीच देईल *वैदिक* दुय्यम स्थान शिकत आणि हातमाग चाक धर्म प्रसार, त्याच्या उपाशी असतांना अब्जावधि गावात लाखो उपासमार आराम आणि नंतर फक्त, आणि नाही तोपर्यंत, स्वतःपराभूत *वैदिक* अभ्यास.

मी बहुतेक धर्मांच्या प्रथेपेक्षा कताईला श्रेष्ठ मानतो आहे. परंतु याचा अर्थ असा नाही की नंतरचे लोक सोडून द्यावे. माझा एवढाच अर्थ आहे की ज्या *धर्माचे* पालन सर्व धर्मांच्या अनुयायांनी केले पाहिजे ते त्यांच्यापेक्षा जास्त आहे आणि म्हणूनच मी म्हणतो की *ब्राह्मण* हा एक उत्तम *ब्राह्मण* आहे, *मुसलमान* चांगला *मुसलमान* आहे, *वैष्णव* चांगला *वैष्णव* आहे, जर त्याने चाक चालू केले तर सेवेचा आत्मा.

जर मला माझ्या पलंगावर चाक फिरविणे शक्य झाले असेल आणि जर मला असे वाटले की ते देवावर माझे लक्ष केंद्रित करण्यास मदत करेल तर मी नक्की जप बाजूला ठेवून चाक फिरवीन. जर मी चाक फिरवण्याइतके सामर्थ्यवान असेल आणि मला मणी मोजणे किंवा चाक फिरविणे या दरम्यान निवड करणे आवश्यक असेल तर मी चाकांच्या बाजूने निश्चितपणे निर्णय घेईन, ते माझे जपमाळ बनवेल, जोपर्यंत मला दारिद्र्य व उपासमार सापडेल जमीन. मी अशा काळाची वाट पाहत आहे जेव्हा रामाच्या नावाची पुनरावृत्ती करणे देखील अडथळा ठरेल. जेव्हा मला कळले की रामा भाषणेदेखील ओलांडत आहेत, तेव्हा मला नाव पुन्हा सांगण्याची गरज नाही. स्पिनिंग व्हील, जपमाळ आणि *रामानमा* माझ्या सर्व गोष्टी सारख्याच आहेत. ते त्याच शेवटचे पालन करतात, ते मला सेवेचा धर्म शिकवतात. मी *अहिंसेचा* *अहिंसा* च्या *अवलंब* सेवेच्या धर्माचा सराव केल्याशिवाय अभ्यास करू शकत नाही आणि धर्माचा केल्याशिवाय मला सत्य सापडत नाही. आणि सत्याशिवाय दुसरा कोणताही धर्म नाही. सत्य म्हणजे राम, नारायण, *ईश्वर*, *खुदा*, अल्लाह, देव. [नरसिंह म्हणतात त्याप्रमाणे, 'सोन्याला मारहाण करण्याचे वेगवेगळे आकार वेगवेगळे नावे व रूप देतात; पण शेवटी तो सर्व सोने आहे.']

यंग इंडिया, 14 ऑगस्ट 1924,

7. द काँग्रेस आणि केल्यानंतर.

धर्माच्या नावाखाली आम्ही हिंदू बाह्य आठवण एक आकारण स्तोम माजवणे केले आणि खात पीत एक प्रश्न फक्त करून दर्जा धर्म आहे ब्राह्मणवाद त्याच्या अतुलनीय स्थानास त्याच्या स्वः तज्ञतेसाठी, आतील शुद्धतेसाठी, तीव्र तपस्यासाठी ओ हे सर्व ज्ञानाने प्रकाशित आहे. जर ते पदार्थ आणि मानवी संपर्काच्या अध्यात्मिक प्रभावांना अयोग्य महत्त्व देत असतील तर ते नशिबात आहेत. आम्ही आतून परीक्षांमध्ये आणि प्रलोभनांमध्ये असूनही आपण अगदी अस्पृश्य आणि दुर्दैवी विचारांच्या प्रवाहांमुळे स्पर्श करून प्रदूषित झालेले आहोत म्हणून आपण आपल्या अभिमानाने आपण ज्यांच्याशी सहसा संपर्क साधतो त्याचा प्रभाव अतिशयोक्ती करू नये. अज्ञानीपणे आणि बऱ्याचदा अहंकाराने आमचे निकृष्ट दर्जाचे मानतात. सर्वशक्तिमान देवाच्या सिंहासनासमोर आपण जे खाल्ले किंवा कोणाद्वारे स्पर्श केला याचा नव्हे तर आपण कोणाची सेवा केली व कसे केले याने आमचा न्याय होईल. आपण संकटात असलेल्या एका माणसाची सेवा करत असतानासुद्धा आपण देवाला अनुकूल आहोत. खराब आणि उत्तेजक किंवा घाणेरडे पदार्थ आपण टाळलेच पाहिजे कारण आपण खराब संपर्क टाळला पाहिजे. परंतु या उत्सवांना त्यांच्या महत्त्वानुसार सर्व प्रमाणात स्थान देऊ नये. आम्ही फसवणूक, ढोंगीपणा आणि वाईट दुर्गुणांसाठी मुखपृष्ठ म्हणून विशिष्ट पदार्थांपासून दूर राहण्याचे साहस करू शकत नाही. गळून पडलेल्या किंवा गलिच्छ भावाची सेवा करण्यास नकार देण्याची आमची हिम्मत नाही कारण कदाचित त्याचा संपर्क आपल्या आध्यात्मिक वाढीस हानी पोहोचवू शकेल.

यंग इंडिया, 5 जानेवारी 1922

8. माझे मिशन

मी संदेष्ट्यांच्या शर्यतीत त्याच श्वासात उल्लेख करणे मला योग्य मानत नाही. मी सत्यानंतर नम्र साधक आहे. मी स्वतः लामिळविण्यासाठी अधीर झालो आहे मोक्ष जाणवण्यास, या अस्तित्वात. माझ्या आत्म्यास देहाच्या गुलामगिरीतून मुक्त करण्याचे प्रशिक्षण देण्यासाठी माझी राष्ट्रीय सेवा आहे. अशा प्रकारे विचार केल्यास माझी सेवा पूर्णपणे स्वार्थी मानली जाऊ शकते. मला पृथ्वीच्या नाश झालेल्या राज्याची इच्छा नाही. मी असलेल्या स्वर्गाच्या राज्यासाठी प्रयत्न करीत आहे मोक्ष. माझा शेवट मिळविण्यासाठी मला एखाद्या गुहेचा आश्रय घेणे आवश्यक नाही. मी माझ्याबद्दल एक गोष्ट ठेवतो, जर मला ते माहित असेल तर. गुहेत राहणारे हवेमध्ये किल्ले बांधू शकतात तर जनकसारख्या राजवाड्यात राहण्यासाठी वाड्या नसतात. विचारांच्या पंखांवर जगभर फिरणारी गुहा-रहिवासी शांतता नसते. एखादा जनक 'आडमुठेपणा आणि परिस्थिती' मध्ये राहत असला तरी शांती समजू शकते कारण ती समजून घेत नाही. माझ्यासाठी तारणासाठीचा मार्ग हा माझ्या देशाची आणि मानवतेच्या सेवेसाठी अविरत प्रयत्न करत आहे.

मी आयुष्यातल्या प्रत्येक गोष्टीसह स्वतः ला ओळखू इच्छित आहे. भाषेत गीतेच्यामला मित्र आणि शत्रू दोघांसमवेत शांतीने राहायचे आहे. तरीसुद्धा मुसलमान किंवा ख्रिश्चन किंवा हिंदू माझा तिरस्कार करतात आणि माझा द्वेष करतात. मला माझ्या पत्नीवर आणि मुलाचा तिरस्कार वाटला तरी मी त्याच्यावर प्रेम करतो आणि त्याच्यावर प्रेम करतो आणि त्याची सेवा करतो. म्हणूनच माझे देशप्रेम माझ्यासाठी चिरंतन स्वातंत्र्य आणि शांतीच्या भूमीकडे प्रवास करण्याचा एक टप्पा आहे. अशा प्रकारे हे पाहिले जाईल की माझ्यासाठी कोणतेही धर्म विरहित राजकारण नाही. ते धर्म राखतात. राजकारणाने धर्माचा नाश केला पाहिजे हा मृत्यूचा सापळा आहे कारण ते आत्म्याला मारतात.

यंग इंडिया, April एप्रिल १ 24

9. २. हिंदू-मुस्लिम तणाव त्याचे कारणे आणि उपचार

माझ्या मते ख्रिस्ती धर्मात किंवा इस्लाममध्ये थोड्या प्रमाणात समजल्या गेलेल्या हिंदू धर्मात धर्मसिद्धांतासारखी कोणतीही गोष्ट नाही. आर्य समाजाने ख्रिस्ती लोकांच्या प्रचाराची योजना आखली. आधुनिक पद्धत मला अपील करीत नाही. हे चांगल्यापेक्षा अधिक नुकसान केले आहे. निर्मात्या आणि स्वतः दरम्यान निर्मळ मनाची बाब मानली गेली असली, तरी ती स्वार्थी वृत्तीला अपील करणारी बनली आहे. आर्य समाज उपदेशक इतका आनंदी नसतो जेव्हा तो इतर धर्माची निंदा करीत असतो. माझी हिंदू वृत्ती मला सांगते की सर्व धर्म कमी-जास्त प्रमाणात सत्य आहेत. सर्व एकाच देवाकडून पुढे जातात परंतु सर्व अपरिपूर्ण मानवी इन्स्ट्रुमेंटॅलिटी असतात. वास्तविक *shuddhi* चळवळ प्रत्येक जण त्याच्या किंवा तिच्या स्वतः विश्वास परिपूर्ण येथे आगमन प्रयत्न असणे आवश्यक आहे. अशा योजनेत पात्र ही एकमात्र परीक्षा असेल. एका डब्यातून दुसऱ्या डब्यातून जाण्याचा काय उपयोग आहे, जर याचा अर्थ नैतिक वाढ होत नसेल तर? घातलेल्या असणे आवश्यक आहे देवाचे सेवा रूपांतरित करण्याचा प्रयत्न अर्थ काय (*shuddhi* किंवा *tabligh* की) माझ्या आहेत ज्यांना पट दररोज *denying God* आहेत ते त्यांच्या कृत्यांनी तेव्हा आहे? 'फिजीशियन, स्वतःला बरे करा' हे सांसारिक गोष्टीपेक्षा धार्मिक गोष्टींमध्ये अधिक सत्य आहे. पण ही माझी मते आहेत. जर आर्य समाजवाद्यांना त्यांचा विवेकाचा हाक आहे असे वाटत असेल तर त्यांना आंदोलन करण्याचा पूर्ण अधिकार आहे. असा बर्निंग कॉल वेळेची मर्यादा, अनुभवाची धनादेश ओळखत नाही. जर हिंदू-मुस्लिम ऐक्य धोक्यात आले आहे कारण आर्य समाज उपदेशक किंवा मुसलमान उपदेशक आतल्या आवाहनाचे पालन करण्याच्या आपल्या श्रद्धेचा उपदेश करतात तर ते ऐक्य केवळ तीव्रतेचे असते. अशा चळवळींमुळे आपण का गोंधळले जावे?

केवळ ते अस्सल असले पाहिजेत. जर मालकांना हिंदूंच्या गोठ्यात परत यायचे असेल तर त्यांना जेव्हा आवडेल तेव्हा तसे करण्याचा त्यांचा पूर्ण अधिकार होता. परंतु अशा धर्मप्रसाराची परवानगी दिली जाऊ शकत नाही ज्यामुळे इतर धर्मांना त्रास होईल. त्यासाठी सहनशीलतेचे दुर्लक्ष होईल. अशा प्रचाराचा सामना करण्याचा सर्वात चांगला मार्ग म्हणजे जाहीरपणे निषेध करणे.

यंग इंडिया, 29 मे 1924

10. हिंदू काय करू शकतात?

बहुसंख्य मुसलमान आणि हिंदू समान 'साठा' चे असले तरी धार्मिक वातावरणाने त्यांना वेगळे केले आहे. माझा विश्वास आहे आणि माझ्या लक्षात आले आहे की विचारांमुळे माणसाची वैशिष्ट्ये तसेच चारित्र्य बदलतात.

शीख हे वस्तुस्थितीचे सर्वात अलिकडील उदाहरण आहे. मुसलमान सामान्यतः अल्पसंख्यांक असल्याने एक वर्ग धमकी म्हणून विकसित झाला आहे. शिवाय, ताजी परंपरेचा वारस असल्याने तो तुलनात्मकदृष्ट्या नवीन प्रणालीची कुवत दाखवते. जरी माझ्या मते कुराणात अहिंसेला प्रमुख स्थान आहे, तेराशे वर्षांच्या साम्राज्यवादी विस्ताराने मुसलमानांचे सैनिक शरीर बनविले आहे. म्हणून ते आक्रमक असतात. गुंडगिरी म्हणजे आक्रमक मनोवृत्तीचा नैसर्गिक बहिष्कार. हिंदुमध्ये अनेक वर्षे जुनी संस्कृती आहे. तो मूलतः अहिंसक आहे. अलीकडील दोन अजूनही अनुभवत असलेल्या अनुभवातून त्यांची सभ्यता पार झाली आहे. या शब्दाच्या आधुनिक अर्थाने जर हिंदू धर्म नेहमी साम्राज्यवादी असेल तर त्याने आपल्या साम्राज्यवादाचे उदाहरण केले आहे आणि मुद्दाम किंवा निश्चितच दिले आहे. अहिंसक आत्म्याच्या वर्चस्वामुळे शस्त्राचा वापर लहान अल्पसंख्याकांपुरता मर्यादित आहे जो अत्यंत अध्यात्मिक, विद्वान आणि निःस्वार्थ अशा नागरी सत्तेच्या अधीन असायला हवा. म्हणून हिंदू म्हणून लढायला सुसज्ज नाहीत. परंतु त्यांचे आध्यात्मिक प्रशिक्षण टिकवून न ठेवता, त्यांनी शस्त्राचा प्रभावी पर्याय वापरण्यास विसरला आहे, आणि त्यांचा उपयोग माहित नाही किंवा त्यांना योग्यता नाही, ते भयानक किंवा भ्याडपणाच्या मर्यादेपर्यंत सभ्य झाले आहेत. हा दुर्गुण म्हणजे कोमलतेचा एक नैसर्गिक उत्साहीपणा. हे मत ठेवून, मला असे वाटत नाही की हिंदू अनन्यता, निस्संदेह वाईटच आहे, हिंदू धाडसाबरोबर बरेच काही आहे. म्हणूनच माझामाझा अविश्वास *आखाड्यांवरील* बचाव करण्याचे साधन म्हणून. मी त्यांना शारीरिक संस्कृतीसाठी पुरस्कार देतो परंतु स्वतःची बचावासाठी मी आध्यात्मिक संस्कृती पुनर्संचयित करेन. सर्वात उत्तम आणि चिरस्थायी आत्म-संरक्षण म्हणजे आत्म-शुद्धीकरण. आज आपल्याला त्रास देणाऱ्या भीतीमुळे मी पाय उचलण्यास नकार देतो. जर हिंदूंनी स्वतःवर विश्वास ठेवला असेल आणि त्यांच्या परंपरेनुसार काम केले असेल तर त्यांना गुंडगिरीची भीती बाळगण्याचे कारण नाही. ज्या क्षणी ते वास्तविक आध्यात्मिक प्रशिक्षण परत घेतात त्या क्षणी मुसलमान प्रतिसाद देईल. तो त्याला मदत करू शकत नाही. जर मी तरुण हिंदूंच्या समूहांवर स्वतःवर विश्वास ठेवू शकतो आणि म्हणूनच मुसलमानांवर विश्वास ठेवू शकतो, तर बँड दुर्बल लोकांसाठी ढाल होईल. ते (तरुण हिंदू) न मारता कसे मरतात हे शिकवतील. मला दुसरा कोणताही मार्ग माहित नाही. जेव्हा आमच्या पूर्वजांना आजूबाजूचे त्रास दिसले तेव्हा ते *तपस्या*-शुद्धीकरणासाठी गेले. त्यांना देहाची असहायता कळली आणि त्यांनी त्यांच्या असहायतेत त्यांनी निर्मात्यास त्यांचा आवाहन पाळण्यास भाग पाडल्याशिवाय प्रार्थना केली. 'होय,' माझा हिंदू मित्र म्हणतो, 'पण नंतर देवाने एखाद्यालापाठवले वेल्ड शस्त्रासाठी.' मला उत्तर देण्याचे सत्य नाकारण्याशी संबंधित नाही. मी मित्राला एवढेच सांगतो की हिंदू म्हणून तो या कारणाकडे दुर्लक्ष करू शकत नाही आणि निकाल सुरक्षित करू शकत नाही. आपण पुरेकेल्यावर संघर्ष करण्याची वेळ येईल *तपस्या*. आम्ही पुरेशी शुद्ध आहोत?

मी विचारू. अस्पृश्यतेच्या पापासाठी आपण इच्छुक तपश्चर्या केल्या आहेत का? आपले धार्मिक उपदेशक जे असले पाहिजे ते सर्व आहेत का? आम्ही हवेवर मारतो आहोत जेव्हा आपण फक्त मुसलमान आचरणात छिद्र उचलण्यावर आपले लक्ष केंद्रित करतो.

11. आजचा

हिंदुत्व हिंदू धर्म हा एक सजीव जीव आहे जो वाढीस क्षीण होण्यास कारणीभूत आहे आणि निसर्गाच्या नियमांच्या अधीन आहे. एक आणि मुळात अविभाज्य ते असंख्य शाखा असलेल्या विस्तीर्ण झाडामध्ये वाढले आहे. हंगामातील बदलांचा त्याचा परिणाम होतो. त्याचे शरद andतू आणि उन्हाळा, हिवाळा आणि वसंत .तु आहे. तो पाऊस पोषण आणि फळ देण्यासदेखील देतो. ते शास्त्रवचनांवर आधारित आहे आणि नाही. त्याचा अधिकार एका पुस्तकातून काढला जात नाही. *गीता* हे जागतिक मान्यता आहे, पण तरीही तो एकमेव मार्ग दाखवते. याचा सानुकूलवर फारसा परिणाम झाला नाही. हिंदू धर्म हा गंगा शुद्ध आहे आणि त्याच्या उगमस्थानावर निर्विघ्न आहे, परंतु त्या मार्गाने घेतलेल्या अशुद्धतेचा अभ्यास करतो. जरी गंगाप्रमाणेच त्याचा संपूर्ण परिणाम होतो. हे प्रत्येक प्रांतात एक प्रांतीय स्वरूप घेते, परंतु अंतर्गत पदार्थ सर्वत्र कायम ठेवला जातो. प्रथा धर्म नाही. प्रथा बदलू शकतात, परंतु धर्म अप्रत्यक्ष राहिल.

हिंदू धर्माची शुद्धता त्याच्या मतदारांच्या आत्म संयमांवर अवलंबून असते. जेव्हा जेव्हा त्यांचा धर्म धोक्यात आला असेल तेव्हा हिंदूंनी कठोर तपश्चर्या केली, धोक्याची कारणे शोधून काढली आणि त्यांच्याशी लढा देण्यासाठी उपाय योजले. *शास्त्रांमध्ये* कधीही वाढत आहेत. *उपनिषदे, Smritis, पुराणात, आणि Itihasas* एक आणि त्याच वेळी उद्भवू नाही. प्रत्येक विशिष्ट कालावधीच्या आवश्यक वस्तूंमधून वाढला आणि म्हणूनच ते एकमेकांशी संघर्ष करतात असे दिसते. ही पुस्तके चिरंतन सत्यांना पुन्हा नव्याने प्रतिबिंबित करत नाहीत परंतु पुस्तके कोणत्या काळाच्या आहेत याचा अभ्यास कसा केला गेला ते दर्शविते. एखाद्या विशिष्ट कालावधीत एक चांगली प्रॅक्टिस, जर दुसऱ्या ठिकाणी आंधळेपणाने पुनरावृत्ती झाली तर लोक निराशेच्या झोतात जातील. कारण प्राणी-यज्ञाची प्रथा एकाच वेळी प्राप्त झाली होती, तर आज आपण त्याचे पुनरुज्जीवन करू का? कारण एके काळी आम्ही गोमांस खात असे, आता आपणही तसे करू का? कारण एके काळी आपण चोरांचे हात-पाय तोडून टाकत होतो, आज आपण हे बर्बरपणा पुन्हा जिवंत करू का? आपण बहुभुज पुन्हा चालू करू का? आपण बाल-विवाह पुनरुज्जीवित करू का? आम्ही मानवतेचा एक भाग एक दिवस टाकून दिल्याने आपण आज त्यांच्या वंशजांना आउटसॅकेट म्हणून ब्रँड करू का?

हिंदू धर्म स्थिर आहे. ज्ञान अमर्याद आहे आणि म्हणूनच सत्याचा वापर देखील. दररोज आपण सामर्थ्याबद्दल आपल्या ज्ञानात भर *आत्म्याच्या घालत* आहोत आणि आपण असे करत राहू. नवीन अनुभव आपल्याला नवीन कर्तव्य शिकवतो, परंतु सत्य नेहमी सारखेच असते. हे संपूर्णपणे कोणाला माहित आहे? *वेद* सत्य प्रतिनिधित्व करतात, ते असीम आहेत. पण त्यांच्या सर्वांना कोण ओळखतो? आजनावाने जे काही *वेदांच्या घडते* ते म्हणजे वास्तविक *वेदहावा-* ज्ञानाच्या पुस्तकाचा भाग देखील नाही. आणि आपल्याकडे असलेल्या काही पुस्तकांचा संपूर्ण अर्थ कोणाला माहिती आहे? या असीम गुंतागुंत सोडण्याऐवजी आमच्या *ages* मधील आम्हाला एक गोष्ट शिकण्यास शिकवले: 'जशी स्वः तशी आहे तशीच विश्वाबरोबर'. हे विश्व स्कॅन करणे शक्य नाही, कारण ते स्वतःचे स्कॅन करित आहे. स्वतः ला जाणून घ्या आणि आपल्याला विश्वाची माहिती आहे. पण *presupposes* आत स्वतःच्या अगदी ज्ञान *striving-* नाही फक्त निरंतर पण शुद्ध अखंड, आणि शुद्ध प्रयत्न त्याच्या यामधून सराव अवलंबून असतात शुद्ध अंत, *presupposes yamas*¹ आणि *niyamas*. अर्थात *सर्वात महत्वाचे* आणि *प्रासंगिक* गुण

ही कृती देवाच्या कृपेशिवाय शक्य नाही जी विश्वासाने आणि भक्तीला भासवते. या तुलसीदासगौरव प्राप्त गाणे गात *Ramanama* का, कीलेखक *Bhagawata* शिकवले *Dwadashakshara मंत्र (ओम नमो Bhagawate Vasudevaya)* आहे. तो *माझ्यामतेसनातानी* हिंदू आहे जो हापुन्हा सांगू शकतो *मंत्र* मनापासून. अखो² the³ षीनीबाकी सर्व हा अथांग खड्डा² म्हटल्याप्रमाणे आहे.

युरोपियन लोक आपल्या शिष्टाचारांचा आणि रूढींचा अभ्यास करतात. परंतु त्यांचा एक टीका करणारा अभ्यास हा भक्ताचा अभ्यास नाही. त्यांचा 'अभ्यास' मला धर्म शिकवू शकत नाही.

हिंदू धर्मात खाणे आणि न खाणे यांचा समावेश नाही. सत्य आणि अहिंसा यांचे अचूक पालन केल्याने त्याचे कर्नल योग्य आचरणात असते. बरेच लोक मांस खात आहेत, परंतु करुणा आणि सत्याचे मुख्य गुण पाळत आहेत आणि देवाच्या भीतीने जगतात, मांसापासून दूर न राहणाऱ्या ढोंगी लोकांपेक्षा श्रेष्ठ हिंदू आहे. आणि ज्यांचे डोळे गोमांस-खाणे किंवा मांस खाणे या हिंसाचाराच्या सत्याकडे वळले आहेत आणि म्हणूनच ज्याने त्यांना नाकारले आहे, ज्याला 'माणूस आणि पक्षी आणि पशू दोघेही' आवडतात, ते आपल्या पूजनीय आहेत. त्याने देवाला पाहिले आणि ओळखले. तो त्याचा सर्वश्रेष्ठ भक्त आहे. तो मानवजातीचा शिक्षक आहे.

हिंदू धर्म आणि त्यांचे सर्व धर्म संतुलनात तोलले जात आहेत. शाश्वत सत्य एक आहे. देवसुद्धा एक आहे. आपल्यातील प्रत्येकाने परस्परविरोधी पंथ आणि चालीरिती स्पष्टपणे पाळल्या पाहिजेत आणि सत्याच्या सरळ मार्गावर जाऊ. तरच आपण खरा हिंदू होऊ. अनेकस्वतःलादेतात *सनातनिस* पृथ्वीवर. देव निवडलेल्यांपैकी किती जणांना माहित आहे? जे लोक त्याची इच्छा पूर्ण करतात आणि देवाची कृपा करतात त्यांच्यावर अवलंबून राहतात, जे फक्त 'राम रामा' करतात त्यांच्यावर नव्हे.

Young India, 8 April 1926

12. The Hydra-headed Monster

The stories told in the *Puranas* are some of them most dangerous, if we do not know their bearing on the present conditions. The *shastras* would be death-traps if we were to regulate our conduct according to every detail given in them or according to that of the characters therein described. They help us only to define and argue out fundamental principles. If some well-known character in religious books sinned against God or man, is that a warrant for our repeating the sin? It is enough for us to be told, once for all, that Truth is the only thing that matters in the world, that Truth is God. It is irrelevant to be told that even Yudhishtira was betrayed into an untruth. It is more relevant/for us to know that when he spoke an untruth, he had to suffer for it that very moment and that his great name in no way protected him from punishment. Similarly, it is irrelevant for us to be told that Adishankara avoided a *chandala*. It is enough for us to know that a religion that teaches us to treat all that lives as we treat ourselves, cannot possibly countenance the inhuman treatment of a single creature, let alone a whole class of perfectly innocent human beings.

Moreover we have not even all the facts before us to judge what Adishankara did or did not do. Still less, do we know the meaning of the word *chandala* where it occurs. It has admittedly many meanings, one of which is a sinner. But if all sinners are to be regarded as untouchables, it is very much to be feared that we should all, not excluding the Pandit¹ himself, be under the ban of untouchability. That untouchability is an old institution, nobody has ever denied. But, if it is an evil, it cannot be defended on the ground of its antiquity.

13. Tulsidas

Several friends on various occasions have addressed to me criticisms regarding my attitude towards the *Tulsi- Ramayana*. The substance of their criticisms is as follows: You have described the *Ramayana* as the best, of books, but we have never been able to reconcile ourselves with your view. Do not you see how *Tulsidas* has disparaged womankind, defended Rama's unchivalrous ambush on Vali, praised Vibhishan for betrayal of his country, and described Rama as an *avatara* in spite of his gross injustice to Sita? What beauty do you find in a book like this? Or do you think that the poetic beauty of the book compensates for everything else? If it is so then we venture to suggest that you have no qualifications for the task. I admit that if we take the criticisms of every point individually they will be found difficult to refute and the whole of the *Ramayana* can, in this manner, be easily condemned. But that can be said of almost everything and everybody. There is a story related about a celebrated artist that in order to answer his critics he put his picture in a show window and invited visitors to indicate their opinion by marking the spot they did not like. The result was that there was hardly any portion that was not covered by the critics' marks.

As a matter of fact, however, the picture was a masterpiece of art. Indeed even the *Vedas*, the Bible and the Quran have not been exempt from condemnation. In order to arrive at a proper estimate of a book it must be judged as a whole. So much for external criticism. The internal test of a book consists in finding out what effect it has produced on the majority of its readers. Judged by either method the position of the *Ramayana* as a book *par excellence* remains unassailable. This, however, does not mean that it is absolutely faultless. But it is claimed on behalf of the *Ramayana* that it has given peace to millions, has given faith to those who had it not, and is even today serving as a healing balm to thousands who are burnt by the fire of unbelief. Every page of it is overflowing with devotion. It is a veritable mine of spiritual experience.

It is true that the *Ramayana* is sometimes used by evil-minded persons to support their evil practices. But that is no proof of evil in the *Ramayana*. I admit that Tulsidas has, unintentionally as I think, done injustice to womankind. In this, as in several other respects also, he has failed to rise above the prevailing notions of his age. In other words Tulsidas was not a reformer; he was only a prince among devotees. The faults of the *Ramayana* are less a reflection on Tulsidas than a reflection on the age in which he lived.

What should be the attitude of the reformer regarding the position of women or towards Tulsidas under such circumstances? Can he derive no help whatever from Tulsidas? The reply is emphatically 'he can'. In spite of disparaging remarks about women in the *Ramayana* it should not be forgotten that in it Tulsidas has presented to the world his matchless picture of Sita. Where would Rama be without Sita? We find a host of other ennobling figures like Kausalya, Sumitra etc. -in the *Ramayana*. We bow our head in reverence before/the faith and devotion of Shabari and Ahalya. Ravana was a monster but Mandodari was a *sati*. In my opinion these instances go to prove that Tulsidas was no reviler of women by conviction. On the contrary, so far as his convictions went, he had only reverence for them. So much for Tulsidas's attitude towards women.

In the matter of the killing of Vali, however, there is room for two opinions. In Vibhishan I can find no fault. Vibhishan offered Satyagraha against his brother. His example teaches us that it is a travesty of patriotism to sympathize with or try to conceal the faults of one's rulers or country, and to oppose them is the truest patriotism. By helping Rama Vibhishan rendered the truest service to his country. The treatment of Sita by Rama does not denote heartlessness. It is a proof of a duel between kingly duty and a husband's love for wife.

To the sceptics who feel honest doubts in connection with the *Ramayana*, I would suggest that they should not accept anybody's interpretations mechanically. They should leave out such portions about which they feel doubtful. Nothing contrary to truth and *ahimsa* need be condoned. It would be sheer perversity to argue that because in our opinion Rama practised deception, we too may do likewise. The proper thing to do would be to believe that Rama was incapable of practising deception. As the Gita says, 'There is nothing in the world that is entirely free from fault.' Let us, therefore, like the fabled swan who rejects the water and takes only the milk, learn to treasure only the good and reject the evil in everything. Nothing and no one is perfect but God.

Young India, 31 October 1929

14. Weekly Letter (Other Questions)

[Gandhiji's conversation with Mr. Basil Mathews who was curious to know if Gandhiji followed any spiritual practices and what special reading he had found helpful:]

Gandhiji: I am a stranger to *yogic* practices. The practice I follow is a practice I learnt in my childhood from my nurse. I was afraid of ghosts. She used to say to me: 'There are no ghosts, but if you are afraid, repeat *Ramanama*.' What I learnt in my childhood has become a huge thing in my mental firmament. It is a sun that has brightened my darkest hour. A Christian may find the same solace from the repetition of the name of Jesus and a Muslim from the name of Allah. All these things have the same implications and they produce identical results under identical circumstances. Only the repetition must not be a lip expression, but part of your very being.

About helpful readings, we have regular readings of the *Bhagawadgita* and we have now reached a stage when we finish the *Gita* every week by having readings of appointed chapters every morning. Then we have hymns from the various saints of India, and we therein include hymns from the Christian hymn-book. As Khansaheb is with us, we have readings from the Quran also. We believe in the equality of all religions. I derive the greatest consolation from my reading of Tulsidas's *Ramayana*. I have also derived solace from the New Testament and the Quran. I don't approach them with a critical mind. They are to me as important as the *Bhagawadgita*, though everything in the former may not appeal to me—everything in the Epistles of Paul for instance—nor everything in Tulsidas. The *Gita* is a pure religious discourse given without any embellishment. It simply describes the progress of the pilgrim soul towards the Supreme Goal. Therefore there is no question of selection.

Mr. Mathews: You are really a Protestant.

Gandhiji: I do not know what I am or am not, Mr. Hodge will call me a Presbyterian!

Mr. Mathews: Where do you find the seat of authority?

Gandhiji: It lies here (pointing to his breast). I exercise my judgment about every scripture, including the *Gita*. I cannot let a scriptural text supersede my reason. Whilst I believe that the principal books are inspired, they suffer from a process of double distillation. Firstly, they come through a human prophet, and then through the commentaries of interpreters. Nothing in them comes from God directly. Mathew may give one version of one text, and John may give another. I cannot surrender my reason whilst I subscribe to divine revelation. And above all, 'the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life.' But you must not misunderstand my position. I believe in Faith also, in things where Reason has no place, eg the existence of God. No argument can move me from that faith, and like that little girl who repeated against all reason 'yet we are seven', I would like to repeat, on being baffled in argument by a very superior intellect, 'Yet there is God'.

Harijan, 5 December 1936

15. Weekly Letter

(A talk with Rao Bhadur Rajah)

In the purest type of Hinduism a *brahmana*, an ant, an elephant and a dog-eater (*shwapacha*) are of the same status. And because our philosophy is so high, and we have failed to live up to it, that very philosophy today stinks in our nostrils. Hinduism insists on the brotherhood not only of all mankind but of all that lives. It is a conception which makes one giddy, but we have to work up to it. The moment we have restored real living equality between man and man, we shall be able to establish equality between man and the whole creation. When that day comes we shall have peace on earth and goodwill to men.

Harijan, 28 March 1936

16. Weekly Letter

(The Golden Key)

For the first time at the public meeting in Quilon, Gandhiji summed up the credal belief of Hinduism in an *Upanishadic mantra*, and thereafter at every meeting gave lucid and simple commentaries on the numerous implications of that all-comprehensive *mantra*. The pure exposition without much of a commentary was given on the previous day at Quilon and is reproduced below: Let me for a few moments consider what Hinduism consists of, what it is that has fired so many saints about whom we have historical record. Why has it contributed so many philosophers to the world? What is it in Hinduism that has so enthused its devotees for centuries? Did they see untouchability in Hinduism and still enthuse over it? In the midst of my struggle against untouchability I have been asked by several workers as to the essence of Hinduism. We have no simple *Kalma*, they said, that we find in Islam, nor have we John 3.16 of the Bible.

Have we or have we not something that will answer the demands of the most philosophic among the Hindus or the most matter-of-fact among them? Some have said, and not without good reason, the *Gayatri* answers that purpose. I have perhaps recited the *Gayatri mantra* a thousand times, having understood the meaning of it. But still it seems to, me that it did not answer the whole of my aspirations. Then as you are aware I have, for years past, been swearing by the *Bhagawadgita*, and have said that it answers all my difficulties and has been my *kamadhenu*, my guide, my 'open sesame', on hundreds of moments of doubts and difficulty. I can-I not recall a single occasion when it has failed me, I But it is not a book that I can place before the whole of this audience. It requires a prayerful study before the *kamadhenu* yields the rich milk she holds in her udders.

But I have fixed upon one *mantra* that I am going to recite to you, as containing the whole essence of Hinduism. Many of you, I think, know the *Ishopanishad*. I read it years ago with translation and

commentary. I learnt it by heart in Yeravda Jail. But it did not then captivate me, as it has done during the past few months, and I have now come to the final conclusion that if all the *Upanishads* and I all the other scriptures happened all of a sudden to be reduced to ashes, and if only the first verse in the *Ishopanishad*

were left intact in the memory of Hindus, Hinduism would live for ever. Now this *mantra* divides itself in four parts. The first part is

It means, as I would translate, all this that we see in this great Universe is pervaded by God.

Then come the second and third parts which read together, as I read them: divide these into two and translate them thus: Renounce it and enjoy it.

There is another rendering which means the same thing, though: Enjoy what He gives you. Even so you can divide it into two parts. Then follows the final and most important part,

which means: Do not covet anybody's wealth or possession. All the other *mantras* of

that ancient *Upanishad* are a commentary or an attempt to give us the full meaning of the first *mantra*. As I read the *mantra* in the light of the *Gita* or the *Gita* in the light of the *mantra* I find that the *Gita* is a commentary on this *mantra*. It seems to me to satisfy the cravings of the socialist and the communist, of the philosopher and the economist. I venture to suggest to all who do not belong to the Hindu faith that it satisfies their cravings also. And if it is true—and I hold it to be true—you need not take anything in Hinduism which is inconsistent with or contrary to the meaning of this *mantra*. What more can a man in the street want to learn than this, that the one God and Creator and Master of all that lives pervades the Universe? The three other parts of the *mantra* follow directly from the first. If you believe that God pervades everything that He has created, you must believe that you cannot enjoy anything that is not given by Him. And seeing that He is the Creator of His numberless children, it follows that you cannot covet anybody's possession. If you think that you are one of His numerous creatures, it behoves you to renounce everything and lay it at His feet. That means that the act of renunciation of everything is not a mere physical renunciation but represents a second or new birth. It is a deliberate act, not done in ignorance. It is therefore a regeneration. And then since he who holds the body must eat and drink and clothe himself, he must naturally seek all that he needs from Him. And he gets it as a natural reward of that renunciation. As if this was not enough the *mantra* closes with this magnificent thought:

Do not covet anybody's possession. The moment you carry out these precepts you become a wise citizen of the world living at peace with all that lives, it satisfies one's highest aspirations on this earth and hereafter. It is this *mantra* that Gandhiji described at another meeting as the golden key for the solution of all the difficulties and doubts that may assail one's heart. Remember that one verse of the *Ishopanishad* and forget all about the other scriptures. You can of course drown yourselves and be suffocated in the ocean of scriptures. They are good for the learned if they will be humble and wise, but for the ordinary man in the street nothing but this *mantra* is necessary to carry him across the ocean: 'God the Ruler pervades all there is in this Universe. Therefore renounce and dedicate all to Him, and then enjoy or use the portion that may fall to thy lot. Never covet anybody's possession.

Harijan, 30 January 1937

17. The Haripad Speech¹

At this meeting I would love to detain you for a few minutes on the message of Hinduism I gave to the meeting in Quilon last night. I ventured at that meeting to say that the whole of Hinduism could be summed up in the first verse of the *Ishopanishad*.

Those who know a little bit of Sanskrit will find that there is nothing abstruse there that you find in other *Vedic mantras*, and its meaning is simply this: All that there is in this Universe, great or small, including the tiniest atom, is pervaded by God, known as Creator or Lord. *Isha* means the Ruler, and He who is the Creator naturally by very right becomes the Ruler too. And here in this verse the seer has chosen no other epithet for the Deity but that of the Ruler, and he has excepted nothing from His jurisdiction. He says everything that we see is pervaded by the Deity, and from that naturally the other parts of the *mantra* follow.

Thus he says, 'Renounce everything,' ie everything that is on this Universe, the whole of the Universe, and not only this tiny globe of ours, renounce it. He asks us to renounce it as | we are such insignificant atoms that if we had any idea of possession it would seem ludicrous. And then, says the *rishi*, the reward of the renunciation is भजीथाः, ie enjoyment of all

you need. But there is a meaning in the word translated 'enjoy', which may as well be translated as 'use', 'eat' etc. It signifies, therefore, that you may not take more than necessary for your growth. Hence this enjoyment or use is limited by two conditions. One is the act of renunciation or, as the

author of the *Bhagawata* would say, enjoy in the spirit of all to God). And every day in the morning every one who believes in the *Bhagawata Dharma* has to dedicate his thoughts, words and deeds to Krishna, and not until he has performed that daily act of renunciation or dedication has he the right of touching anything or drinking even a cup of water. And when a man has performed that act of renunciation and dedication, he derives from that act the right of eating, drinking, clothing and housing himself to the extent necessary for his daily life.

Therefore take it as you like, either in the sense that the enjoyment or use is the reward of renunciation, or that the renunciation is the condition of enjoyment, renunciation is essential for our very existence, for our soul. And as if that condition given in the *mantra* was incomplete, the *rishi* hastened to complete it by adding: 'Do not covet what belongs to another.' Now I suggest to you that the whole of the philosophy or religion found in any part of the world is contained in this *mantra*, and it excludes everything contrary to it. According to the canons of interpretation, anything that is inconsistent with *Shruti*—and *Ishopanishad* is a *Shruti*— is to be rejected altogether.

Temples Purified

Now I should like to apply this *mantra* to present-day conditions. If all that there is in the Universe is pervaded by God, that is to say, if the *brahmana* and the *bhangi*, the learned man and the scavenger, the Ezhava and the pariah, no matter what caste they belong to —if all these are pervaded by Lord God, in the light of this *mantra*, there is none that is high and none that is low, all are absolutely equal, equal because all are the creatures of that Creator. And this is not a

philosophical thing to be dished out to *brahmanas* or *kshatriyas*, but it enunciates an eternal truth which admits of no reduction, no palliation. Therefore the Maharajah himself and the Maharani are not one whit superior to the lowliest being in Travancore. We are all creatures and servants of one God. If the Maharajah is the first among equals, as he is, he is so not by right of over lordship, but by right of service. And therefore how nice, how noble it is that every Maharajah is called *Padmanabhadhas!*² Therefore when I told you that the Maharajah or the Maharani were not one whit superior to any one of us, I told you what was the actual truth accepted by their Highnesses themselves. And if that is so, how can anyone here dare to arrogate superiority to himself or herself over any other human being? I tell you, therefore, that if this *mantra* holds good, if there is any man or woman here who believes that the temples are defiled by those called *a varnas*, that person I declare would be guilty of a grave sin. I tell you that the Proclamation has purified our temples of the taint that had attached to them.

I would like the *mantra* I have recited to be enshrined in the hearts of all our men and women and children, and if this contains, as I hold, the essence of Hinduism, it should be inscribed on the portals of every temple. Don't you then think that we should be belying that *mantra* at every step if we excluded anyone from those temples? Therefore if you will prove yourself deserving of the gracious Proclamation and if you will be loyal to yourself and to those who preside over your destinies, you will carry out the letter and spirit of this Proclamation. From the date of the Proclamation the Travancore temples, which as I once said were not abodes of God, have become abodes of God, since no one who used to be regarded as untouchable is any more to be excluded from them. I therefore hope and pray that throughout Travancore there may be no man or woman who will abstain from going to the temples for the reason that they have been opened to those who were regarded as *pariahs* of society.

Harijan, 30 January 1937

18. From the Kottayam Speech

The *mantra* describes God as the Creator, the Ruler, and the Lord. The seer to whom this *mantra* or verse was revealed was not satisfied with the magnificent statement that God was to be found everywhere. But he went further and said: 'Since God pervades everything nothing belongs to you, not even your own body. God is the undisputed, unchallengeable Master of everything you possess' And so when a person who calls himself a Hindu goes through the process of regeneration or a second birth, as Christians would call it, he has to perform a dedication or renunciation of all that he has in ignorance called his own property. And then when he has performed this act of dedication or renunciation, he is told that he will win a reward in the shape of God taking good care of what he will require for food, clothing or housing.

Therefore the condition of enjoyment or use of the necessities of life is their dedication or renunciation. And that dedication or renunciation has got to be done from day to day, lest we may in this busy world forget the central fact of life. And to crown all, the seer says: 'Covet not anybody's riches.' I suggest to you that the truth that is embedded in this very short *mantra* is calculated to satisfy the highest cravings of every human being—whether they have reference to this world or to the next. I have in my search of the scriptures of the world found nothing to add to this *mantra*. Looking back upon all the little I have read of the scriptures—it is precious little I confess—I feel that everything good in all the scriptures is derived from this *mantra*. If it is universal brotherhood—not only brotherhood of all human beings, but of all living beings—I find it in this *mantra*. If it is unshakable faith in the Lord and Master —and all the adjectives you can think of—I find it in this *mantra*. If it is the idea of complete surrender to God and of the faith that He will supply all that I need then again I say I find it in this *mantra*. Since He pervades every fibre of my being and of all of you, I derive from it the doctrine of equality of all creatures on earth and it should satisfy the cravings of all philosophical communists. This *mantra* tells me that I cannot hold as mine anything that belongs to God, and if my life and that of all who believe in this *mantra* has to be a life of perfect dedication, it follows that it will have to be a life of continual service of our fellow creatures.

This, I say, is my faith and should be the faith of all who call themselves Hindus. And I venture to suggest to my Christian and Mussulman friends that they will find nothing more in their scriptures if they will search them.

I do not wish to hide from you the fact that I am not unaware of many superstitions that go under the name of Hinduism. I am most painfully conscious of all the superstitions that are to be found masquerading as Hinduism, and I have no hesitation to call a spade a spade. I have not hesitated to describe untouchability as the greatest of these superstitions. But in spite of them all, I remain a Hindu. For I do not believe that these superstitions form part of Hinduism. The very canons of interpretation laid down by Hinduism teach me that whatever is inconsistent with the truth I have expounded to you and which is hidden in the *mantra* I have named, must be summarily rejected as not belonging to Hinduism.

Harijan, 30 January 1937

19. Yajna or Sacrifice

Yajna means an act directed to the welfare of others, done without desiring any return for it, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature. 'Act' here must be taken in its widest sense, and includes thought and word, as well as deed. 'Others' embraces not only humanity, but all life. Therefore, and also from the standpoint of *ahimsa*, it is not a *yajna* to sacrifice lower animals even with a view to the service of humanity. It does not matter that animal sacrifice is alleged to find a place in the *Vedas*. It is enough for us that such sacrifice cannot stand the fundamental tests of Truth and Non-violence. I readily admit my incompetence in *Vedic* scholarship. But the incompetence, so far as this subject is concerned, does not worry me, because even if the practice of animal sacrifice be proved to have been a feature of *Vedic* society, it can form no precedent for a votary of *ahimsa*.

Again a primary sacrifice must be an act, which conduces the most to the welfare of the greatest number in the widest area, and which can be performed by the largest number of men and women with the least trouble. It will not therefore, be a *yajna*, much less a *mahayajna*, to wish or to do ill to any one else, even in order to serve a so-called higher interest. And the *Gita* teaches, and experience testifies, that all action that cannot come under the category of *yajna* promotes bondage.

The world cannot subsist for a single moment without *yajna* in this sense, and therefore the *Gita*, after having dealt with true wisdom in the second chapter, takes up in the third the means of attaining it, and declares in so many words, that *yajna* came with the Creation itself. This body, therefore, has been given us, only in order that we may serve all creation with it. And, therefore, says the *Gita*, he who eats without offering *yajna* eats stolen food. Every single act of one who would lead a life of purity should be in the nature of *yajna*. *Yajna* having come to us with our birth, we are debtors all our lives, and thus forever bound to serve the universe. And even as a bondsman receives food, clothing and so on from the master whom he serves, so should we gratefully accept such gifts as may be assigned to us by the Lord of the universe. What we receive must be called a gift; for as debtors we are entitled to no consideration for the discharge of our obligations. Therefore we may not blame the Master, if we fail to get it. Our body is His to be cherished or cast away according to His will. This is not a matter for complaint or even pity; on the contrary, it is natural and even a pleasant and desirable state, if only we realize our proper place in God's scheme. We do indeed need strong faith, if we would experience this supreme bliss. "Do not worry in the least about yourself, leave all worry to God." —this appears to be the commandment in all religions.

This need not frighten any one. He who devotes himself to service with a clear conscience will day by day grasp the necessity for it in greater measure, and will continually grow richer in faith. The path of service can hardly be trodden by one, who is not prepared to renounce self-interest, and to recognize the conditions of his birth. Consciously or unconsciously every one of us does render some service or other. If we cultivate the habit of doing this service deliberately, our desire for service will steadily grow stronger, and will make not only for our own happiness, but that of the world at large.

* * *

Again, not only the good, but all of us are bound to place our resources at the disposal of humanity. And if such is the law, as evidently it is, indulgence ceases to hold a place in life and gives way to renunciation. The duty of renunciation differentiates mankind from the beast.

Some object, that life thus understood becomes dull and devoid of art, and leaves no room for the householder. But renunciation here does not mean abandoning the world and retiring into the forest. The spirit of renunciation should rule all the activities of life. A householder does not cease to be one if he regards life as a duty rather than as an indulgence. A merchant, who operates in the sacrificial spirit, will have crores passing through his hands, but he will, if he follows the law, use his abilities for service. He will therefore not cheat or speculate, will lead a simple life, will not injure a living soul and will lose millions rather than harm anybody. ! Let no one run away with the idea that this type of merchant exists only in my imagination. Fortunately for the world, it does exist in the West as well as in the East.

It is true, such merchants may be counted on one's fingers' ends, but the type ceases to be imaginary, as soon as even one living specimen can be found to answer to it. No doubt such sacrificers obtain their livelihood by their work. But livelihood is not their objective, but only a by-product of their vocation. A life of sacrifice is the pinnacle of art, and is full of true joy. *Yajna* is not *yajna* if one feels it to be burdensome or annoying. Self-indulgence leads to destruction, and renunciation to immortality. Joy has no independent existence. It depends upon our attitude to life. One man will enjoy theatrical scenery, another the ever new scenes which unfold themselves in the sky. Joy, therefore, is a matter of individual and national education. We shall relish things which we have been taught to relish as children. And illustrations can be easily cited of different national tastes.

Again, many sacrificers imagine that they are free to receive from the people everything they need, and many things they do not need, because they are rendering disinterested service. Directly this idea sways a man, he ceases to be a servant, and becomes a tyrant over the people.

One who would serve will not waste a thought upon his own comforts, which he leaves to be attended to or neglected by his Master on high. He will not therefore encumber himself with everything that comes his way; he will take only what he strictly needs and leave the rest. He will be calm, free from anger and unruffled in mind even if he finds himself inconvenienced. His service, like virtue, is its own reward, and he will rest content with it.

Again, one dare not be negligent in service, or be behindhand with it. He, who thinks that one must be diligent only in one's personal business, and unpaid public business may be done in any way and at any time one chooses, has still to learn the very rudiments of the science of sacrifice. Voluntary service of others demands the best of which one is capable, and must take precedence over service of self. In fact, the pure devotee consecrates himself to the service of humanity without any reservation whatever.

From Yeravda Martdir, Chapter XIV-XV

20. Brahman Non-Brahman Question

What we see today is not pure Hinduism, but often a parody of it. Otherwise it would require no pleading from me in its behalf, but would speak for itself, even as if I was absolutely pure I would not need to speak to you. God does not speak with His tongue, and man in the measure that he comes near God becomes like God. Hinduism teaches me that my body is a limitation of the power of the soul within.

Just as in the West they have made wonderful discoveries in things material, similarly Hinduism has made still more marvellous discoveries in things of religion, of the spirit, of the soul. But we have no eye for these great and fine discoveries. We are dazzled by the material progress that Western science has made. I am not enamoured of that progress. In fact, it almost seems as though God in His wisdom had prevented India from progressing along those lines, so that it might fulfil its special mission of resisting the onrush of materialism.

After all, there is something in Hinduism that has kept it alive up till now. It has witnessed the fall of Babylonian, Syrian, Persian and Egyptian civilizations. Cast a look around you. Where is Rome and Greece? Can you find today anywhere the Italy of Gibbon, or rather the ancient Rome, for Rome was Italy? Go to Greece. Where is the world-famous Attic civilization? Then come to India, let one go through the most ancient records and then look round you and you would be constrained to say, 'Yes, I see here ancient India still living.' True, there are dung heaps, too, here and there, but there are rich treasures buried under them. And the reason why it has survived is that the end which Hinduism set before it was not development along material but spiritual lines.

Among its many contributions the idea of man's identity with the dumb creation is a unique one. To me cow-worship is a great idea which is capable of expansion. The freedom of Hinduism from the modern proselytization is also to me a precious thing. It needs no preaching. It says, 'Live the life.' It is my business, it is your business to live the life, and then we will leave its influence on ages. Then take its contribution in men: Ramanuja, Chaitanya, Ramakrishna, not to speak of the more modern names, have left their impression on Hinduism. Hinduism is by no means a spent force or a dead religion.

Then there is the contribution of the four *ashramas*, again a unique contribution. There is nothing like it in the whole world. The Catholics have the order of celibates corresponding to *brahmacharis*, but not as an institution, whereas in India every boy had to go through the first *ashrama*. What a grand conception it was! Today our eyes are dirty, thoughts dirtier and bodies dirtiest of all, because we are denying Hinduism.

There is yet another thing I have not mentioned. Max Muller said forty years ago that it was dawning on Europe that transmigration is not a theory, but a fact. Well, it is entirely the contribution of Hinduism.

Today *varnashramadharm*a and Hinduism are misrepresented and denied by its voters. The remedy is not destruction, but correction. Let us reproduce in ourselves the true Hindu spirit, and then ask whether it satisfies the soul or not.

21. God and Congress

To me God is Truth and Love: God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. For in His boundless love God permits the atheist to live. He is the searcher of hearts: He transcends speech and reason. He knows us and our hearts better than we do ourselves. He does not take us at our word for He knows that we often do not mean it, some knowingly and others unknowingly. He is a personal God to those who need His personal presence. He is embodied to those who need His touch. He is the purest essence. He simply Is to those who have faith. He is all things to all men. He is in us and yet above and beyond us.

One may banish the word 'God' from the Congress but one has no power to banish the Thing itself. What is a solemn affirmation, if it is not the same thing as in the name of God? And surely conscience is but a poor and laborious paraphrase of the simple combination of three letters called God. He cannot cease to be because hideous immoralities or inhuman brutalities are committed in His name. He is long suffering. He is patient but He is also terrible. He is the most exacting personage in the world and the world to come. He metes out the same measure to us as we mete out to our neighbours—men and brutes. With Him ignorance is no excuse. And withal He is ever forgiving for He always gives us the chance to repent. He is the greatest democrat the world knows, for He leaves us 'unfettered' to make our own choice between evil and good. He is the greatest tyrant ever known, for He often dashes the cup from our lips and under cover of free will leaves us a margin—so wholly inadequate as to provide only mirth for Himself at our expense. Therefore it is that Hinduism calls it all His sport—*Lila*, or calls it all an illusion—*Maya*. We are not, He alone Is. And if we will be, we must eternally sing His praise and do His will. Let us dance to the tune of His *bansi*—flute, and all would be well.

Young India, 5 March 1925

22. Advaitism and God

[In answer to a friend's question, Gandhiji wrote:]

I am an *advaitist* and yet I can support *dvaitism* (dualism). The world is changing every moment, and is therefore unreal, it has no permanent existence. But though it is constantly changing, it has a something about it which persists and it is therefore to that extent real. I have therefore no objection to calling it real and unreal, and thus being called an *anekantavadi* or a *syadvadi*. But my *syadvada* is not the *syadvada* of the learned, it is peculiarly my own. I cannot engage in a debate with them. It has been my experience that I am always true from my point of view, and am often wrong from the point of view of my honest critics. I know that we are both right from our respective points of view. And this knowledge saves me from attributing motives to my opponents or critics. The seven blind men who gave seven different descriptions of the elephant were all right from their respective points of view, and wrong from the point of view of one another, and right and wrong from the point of view of the man who knew the elephant. I very much like this doctrine of the manyness of reality. It is this doctrine that has taught me to judge a Mussulman from his own standpoint and a Christian from his. Formerly I used to resent the ignorance of my opponents. Today I can love them because I am gifted with the eye to see myself as others see me and vice versa. I want to take the whole world in the embrace of my love. My *anekantavada* is the result of the twin doctrine of *satya* and *ahimsa*.

I talk of God exactly as I believe Him to be. I believe Him to be creative as well as non-creative. This too is the result of my acceptance of the doctrine of the manyness of reality. From the platform of the Jains I prove the non-creative aspect of God, and from that of Ramanuja the creative aspect. As a matter of fact we are all thinking of the Unthinkable, describing the Indescribable, seeking to know the Unknown, and that is why our speech falters, is inadequate and even often contradictory. That is why the *Vedas* describe *Brahman* as 'not this', 'not this'. But if He or It is not this, He or It is. If we exist, if our parents and their parents have existed, then it is proper to believe in the Parent of the whole creation. If He is not, we are nowhere. And that is why all of us with one voice call one God differently as *Paramatma*, *Ishwara*, *Shiva*, *Vishnu*, *Rama*, *Allah*, *Khuda*, *Dada* *Hormuzda*, *Jehova*, *God*, and an infinite variety of names. He is one and yet many; He is smaller than an atom, and bigger than the Himalayas. He is contained even in a drop of the ocean, and yet not even the seven seas can compass Him. Reason is powerless to know Him. He is beyond the reach or grasp of reason. But I need not labour the point. Faith is essential in this matter. My logic can make and unmake innumerable hypotheses. An atheist might floor me in a debate. But my faith runs so very much faster than my reason that I can challenge the whole world and say, 'God is, was and ever shall be.'

But those who want to deny His existence are at liberty to do so. He is merciful and compassionate. He is not an earthly king needing an army to make us accept His sway. He allows us freedom, and yet His compassion commands obedience to His will. But if any one of us disdain to bow to His will, He says: 'So be it. My sun will shine no less for thee, my clouds will rain no less for thee. I need not force thee to accept my sway.' Of such a God let the ignorant dispute the existence. I am one of the millions of wise men who believe in Him and am never tired of bowing to Him and singing His glory.

Young India, 21 January 1926

23. God Is

There is an indefinable mysterious Power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. It is this unseen Power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses.

But it is impossible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent. Even in ordinary affairs we know that people do not know who rules or why, and how he rules. And yet they know that there is a power that certainly rules. In my tour last year in Mysore I met many poor villagers and I found upon inquiry that they did not know who ruled Mysore. They simply said some god ruled it. If the knowledge of these poor people was so limited about their ruler I who am infinitely lesser than God, than they than their ruler, need not be surprised if I do not realize the presence of God the King of kings. Nevertheless I do feel as the poor villagers felt about Mysore that there is orderliness in the Universe, there is an unalterable Law governing everything and every being that exists or lives. It is not a blind law; for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings, and thanks to the marvellous researches of Sir JC Bose, it can now be proved that even matter is life. That Law then which governs all life is God. Law and the Lawgiver are one. I may not deny the Law or the Law-giver, because I know so little about It or Him. Even as my denial or ignorance of the existence of an earthly power will avail me nothing, so will not my denial of God and His Law liberate me from its operation; whereas humble and mute acceptance of divine authority makes life's journey easier even as the acceptance of earthly rule makes life under it easier.

I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever changing, ever dying, there is underlying all that change a living power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and recreates. That informing power or spirit is God. And since nothing else I see merely through the senses can or will persist, He alone is.

And is this power benevolent or malevolent? I see it is purely benevolent. For I can see that in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists. Hence I gather that God is Life, Truth, Light. He is Love. He is the Supreme Good.

But He is no God who merely satisfies the intellect, if He ever does. God to be God must rule the heart and transform it. He must express Himself in every smallest act of His votary. This can only be done through a definite realization more real than the five senses can ever produce. Sense perceptions can be, often are, false and deceptive, however real they may appear to us. Where there is realization outside the senses it is infallible. It is proved not by extraneous evidence but in the transformed conduct and character of those who have felt the real presence of God within.

Such testimony is to be found in the experiences of an unbroken line of prophets and sages in all countries and climes; To reject this evidence is to deny myself.

This realization is preceded by an immovable faith. He who would in his own person test the fact of "God's presence can do so by a living faith. And since faith itself cannot be proved by extraneous evidence, the safest course is to believe in the moral government of the world and therefore in the

supremacy of the moral law, the law of truth and love. Exercise of faith will be the safest where there is a clear determination summarily to reject all that is contrary to Truth and Love.

I cannot account for the existence of evil by any rational method. To want to do so is to be coequal with God. I am therefore humble enough to recognize evil as such. And I call God long suffering and patient precisely because He permits evil in the world. I know that He has no evil. He is the author of it and yet untouched by it.

I know too that I shall never know God if I do not wrestle with and against evil even at the cost of life itself. I am fortified in the belief by my own humble and limited experience. The purer I try to become, the nearer I feel to be to God. How much more should I be, when my faith is not a mere apology as it is today but has become as immovable as the Himalayas and as white and bright as the snows on their peaks? Meanwhile I invite the correspondent to pray with Newman who sang from experience:

Lead, kindly Light, amid 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.

Young India, 11 October 1928

24. Letter from Europe

[Replying to a question asked of him at a meeting in Switzerland on his way back from the Round Table Conference in London, Gandhiji said:]

You have asked me why I consider that God is Truth. In my early youth I was taught to repeat what in Hindu scriptures are known as one thousand names of God. But these one thousand names of God were by no means exhaustive. We believe—and I think it is the truth—that God has as many names as there are creatures and, therefore, we also say that God is nameless and since God has many forms we also consider Him formless, and since He speaks to us through many tongues we consider Him to be speechless and so on. And so when I came to study Islam I found that Islam too had many names for God. I would say with those who say God is Love, God is Love. But deep down in me I used to say that though God may be love, God is Truth, above all. If it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description of God, I have come to the conclusion that for myself, God is Truth. But two years ago I went a step further and said that Truth is God. You will see the fine distinction between the two statements, viz. that God is Truth and Truth is God. And I came to that conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after Truth which began nearly fifty years ago. I then found that the nearest approach to Truth was through love. But I also found that love has many meanings in the English language at least and that human love in the sense of passion could become a degrading thing also. I found too that love in the sense of *ahimsa* had only a limited number of votaries in the world. But I never found a double meaning in connection with truth and even atheists had not demurred to the necessity or power of truth. But in their passion for discovering truth the atheists have not hesitated to deny the very existence of God—from their own point of view rightly. And it was because of this reasoning that I saw that rather than say that God is Truth I should say that Truth is God, I recall the name of Charles Bradlaugh who delighted to call himself an atheist, but knowing as I do something of him, I would never regard him as an atheist. I would call him a God-fearing man, though I know that he would reject the claim. His face would redden if I would say "Mr. Bradlaugh, you are a truth-fearing man, and so a God-fearing man." I would automatically disarm his criticism by saying that Truth is God, as I have disarmed criticisms of many a young man. Add to this the great difficulty that millions have taken the name of God and in His name committed nameless atrocities. Not that scientists very often do not commit cruelties in the name of truth. I know how in the name of truth and science inhuman cruelties are perpetrated on animals when men perform vivisection. There are thus a number of difficulties in the way, no matter how you describe God. But the human mind is a limited thing, and you have to labour under limitations when you think of a being or entity who is beyond the power of man to grasp.

And then we have another thing in Hindu philosophy, viz. God alone is and nothing else exists, and the same truth you find emphasized and exemplified in the *Kalma* of Islam. There you find it clearly stated—that God alone is and nothing else exists. In fact the Sanskrit word for Truth is a word which literally means that which exists—*Sat*. For these and several other reasons that I can give you I have come to the conclusion that the definition, 'Truth is God', gives me the greatest satisfaction. And when you want to find Truth as God the only inevitable means is Love, ie non-violence, and since I

believe that ultimately the means and the end are convertible terms, I should not hesitate to say that God is Love.

'What then is Truth?'

A difficult question, (said Gandhiji), but I have solved it for myself by saying that it is what the voice within tells you. How, then, you ask, different people think of different and contrary truths? Well, seeing that the human mind works through innumerable media and that the evolution of the human mind is not the same for all, it follows that what may be truth for one may be untruth for another, and hence those who have made these experiments have come to the conclusion that there are certain conditions to be observed in making those experiments. Just as for conducting scientific experiments there is an indispensable scientific course of instruction, in the same way strict preliminary discipline is necessary to qualify a person to make experiments in the spiritual realm. Everyone should, therefore, realize his limitations before he speaks of his inner voice. Therefore we have the belief based upon experience, that those who would make individual search after truth as God, must go through several vows, as for instance, the vow of truth, the vow of *brahmacharya* (purity)—for you cannot possibly divide your love for Truth and God with anything else— the vow of non-violence, of poverty and non-possession. Unless you impose on yourselves the five vows you may not embark on the experiment at all.

There are several other conditions prescribed, but I must not take you through all of them. Suffice it to say that those who have made these experiments know that it is not proper for everyone to claim to hear the voice of conscience, and it is because we have at the present moment everybody claiming the right of conscience without going through any discipline whatsoever and there is so much untruth being delivered to a bewildered world, all that I can, in true humility, present to you is that truth is not to be found by anybody who has not got an abundant sense of humility. If you would swim on the bosom of the ocean of Truth you must reduce yourself to a zero. Further than this I cannot go along this fascinating path.

Young India, 31 December 1931

25. Approach Temples in Faith

[During the course of his speech delivered at Trivandrum in connection with Travancore Temple Entry Proclamation Celebrations, Gandhiji said:]

In the days of my youth I went to many temples with the faith and devotion with which my parents had fired me. But of late years I have not been visiting temples, and ever since I have been engaged in anti-untouchability work, I have refrained from going to temples unless they were open to every one called untouchable. So what I saw this morning at the temple dawned upon me with the same newness with which it must have dawned upon so many *avarna* Hindus who must have gone to the temple after the Proclamation. In imagination my mind travelled back to the prehistoric centuries when temples began to convey the message of God in stone and metal. I saw quite clearly that the priest who was interpreting each figure in his own Hindi did not want to tell me that each of those figures was God. But without giving me that particular interpretation he made me realize that these temples were so many bridges between the Unseen, Invisible and Indefinable God and ourselves who are infinitesimal drops in the Infinite Ocean.

We the human family are not all philosophers. We are of the earth very earthy, and we are not satisfied with contemplating the Invisible God. Somehow or other we want something which we can touch, something which we can see, something before which we can kneel down. It does not matter whether it is a book, or an empty stone building, or a stone building inhabited by numerous figures. A book will satisfy some, an empty building will satisfy some others, and many others will not be satisfied unless they see something inhabiting these empty buildings. Then I ask you to approach these temples not as if they represented a body of superstitions. If you will approach these temples with faith in them, you will know that each time you visit them you will come away from them purified, and with your faith more and more in the living God.

Harijan, 23 January 1937

26. The Meaning of the Gita

A friend puts forward the following poser:

The controversy about the teaching of the Gita— whether it is *himsa* (violence) or *ahimsa* (non-violence)—will, it seems, go on for a long time. It is one thing what meaning we read in the *Gita*, or rather we want to read in the *Gita*; it is another what meaning is furnished by an unbiased reading of it. The question, therefore, does not present much difficulty to one who implicitly accepts *ahimsa* as the eternal principle of life. He will say that the *Gita* is acceptable to him only if it teaches *ahimsa*. A grand book like the *Gita* could, for him, inculcate nothing grander than the eternal religious principle of *ahimsa*. If it did not it would cease to be his unerring guide. It would still be worthy of his high regard, but not an infallible authority. In the first chapter we find Arjuna laying down his weapons, under the influence of *ahimsa*, and ready to die at the hands of the Kauravas. He conjures up a vision of the disaster and the sin involved in *himsa*. He is overcome with ennui and in fear and trembling exclaims: 'Oh what a mighty sin we are up to!'

Shri Krishna catches him in that mood and tells him: 'Enough of this high philosophy; No one kills .or is killed. The soul is immortal and the body must perish. Fight then the fight that has come to thee as a matter of duty. Victory or defeat is no concern of thine. Acquit thyself of thy task.' In the eleventh chapter the Lord presents a panoramic vision of the Universe and says: 'I am *Kala*, the Destroyer of the worlds, the Ancient of Days; I am here engaged in My task of destruction of the worlds. Kill thou those already killed by Me. Give not thyself up to grief.'

Himsa and *ahimsa* are equal before God. But for man what is God's message? Is it this: 'Fight; for thou art sure to foil thy enemies in the field'? If the *Gita* teaches *ahimsa* the first and the eleventh chapters are not consistent with the rest, at any rate do not support the *ahimsa* theory. I wish you could find time to resolve my doubt. The question put is eternal and every one who has studied the *Gita* must needs find out his own solution. And although I am going to offer mine, I know that ultimately one is guided not by the intellect but by the heart. The heart accepts a conclusion for which the intellect subsequently finds the reasoning. Argument follows conviction. Man often finds reasons in support of whatever he does or wants to do.

I shall therefore appreciate the position of those who are unable to accept my interpretation of the *Gita*. All I need do is to indicate how I reached my meaning, and what canons of interpretation I have followed in arriving at it. Mine is but to fight for my meaning, no matter whether I win or lose.

My first acquaintance with the *Gita* was in 1889, when I was almost twenty. I had not then much of an inkling of the principle of *ahimsa*. One of the lines of the Gujarati poet, Shamalbhatta, had taught me the principle of winning even the enemy with love, and that teaching had gone deep into me. But I had not deduced the eternal principle of non-violence from it. It did not, for instance, cover all animal life. I had, before this, tasted meat whilst in India. I thought it a duty to kill venomous reptiles like the snake. It is my conviction today that even venomous creatures may not be killed] by a believer in *ahimsa*. I believed in those days in preparing ourselves for a fight with the English. I often'

repeated a Gujarati poet's famous doggerel: 'What wonder if Britain rules!' etc. My meat-eating was as a first step to qualify myself for the fight with the English. Such was my position before I proceeded to England, and there I escaped meat-eating etc. because of my determination to follow unto death the promises I had given to my mother. My love for truth has saved me from many a pitfall.

Now whilst in England my contact with two English friends made me read the *Gita*. I say 'made me read', because it was not of my own desire that I read it. But when these two friends asked me to read the *Gita* with them, I was ashamed of my ignorance. The knowledge of my total ignorance of my scriptures pained me. Pride, I think, was at the bottom of this feeling. My knowledge of Sanskrit was not enough to enable me to understand all the verses of the *Gita* unaided. The friends, of course, were quite innocent of Sanskrit. They placed before me Sir Edwin Arnold's magnificent rendering of the *Gita*. I devoured the contents from cover to cover and was entranced by it. The last nineteen verses of the second chapter have since been inscribed on the tablet of my heart. They contain for me all knowledge. The truths they teach are the 'eternal verities'. There is reasoning in them but they represent realized knowledge.

I have since read many translations and many commentaries, have argued and reasoned to my heart's content but the impression that the first reading gave me has never been effaced. Those verses are the key to the interpretation of the *Gita*. I would even advise rejection of the verses that may seem to be in conflict with them. But a humble student need reject nothing. He will simply say: 'It is the limitation of my own intellect that I cannot resolve this inconsistency. I might be able to do so in the time to come.' That is how he will plead with himself and with others.

A prayerful study and experience are essential for a correct interpretation of the scriptures. The injunction that a *shudra* may not study the scriptures is not entirely without meaning. A *shudra* means a spiritually uncultured, ignorant man. He is more likely than not to misinterpret the *Vedas* and other scriptures. Every one cannot solve an algebraic equation. Some preliminary study is a *sine qua non*. How ill would the grand truth 'I am *Brahman*' lie in the mouth of a man steeped in sin! To what ignoble purposes would he turn it! What a distortion it would suffer at his hands!

A man therefore who would interpret the scriptures must have the spiritual discipline. He must practise the *yamas* and *niyamas*—the eternal guides of conduct. A superficial practice thereof is useless. The *shastras* have enjoined the necessity of a *guru*. But a *guru* being rare these days, a study of modern books inculcating *bhakti* has been suggested by the sages. Those who are lacking in *bhakti*, lacking in faith, are ill-qualified to interpret the scriptures. The learned may draw an elaborately learned interpretation out of them, but that will not be the true interpretation. Only the experienced will arrive at the true interpretation of the scriptures.

But even for the inexperienced there are certain canons. That interpretation is not true which conflicts With Truth. To one who doubts even Truth, the scriptures have no meaning. No one can contend with him. There is danger for the man who has failed to find *ahimsa* in the scriptures, but he is not doomed. Truth—*Sat*— is positive; non-violence is negative. Truth stands for the fact, non-violence negatives the fact. And yet nonviolence is the highest religion. Truth is self-evident; non-violence is its maturest fruit. It is contained in Truth, but as it is not self-evident a man may seek to interpret the *shastras*, without accepting it. But his acceptance of Truth is sure to lead him to the acceptance of non-violence.

Renunciation of the flesh is essential for realizing Truth. The sage who realized Truth found non-violence out of the violence raging all about him and said: Violence is unreal, non-violence is real. Realization of Truth is impossible without non-violence. *Brahmacharya* (celibacy), *asteya* (non-stealing), *aparigraha* (non-possession) are means to achieve *ahimsa*. *Ahimsa* is the soul of Truth. Man is mere animal without it. A seeker after Truth will realize all this in his search for Truth and he will then have no difficulty in the interpretation of the *shastras*.

Another canon of interpretation is to scan not the letter but to examine the spirit. Tulsidas's *Ramayana* is a notable book because it is informed with the spirit of purity, pity and piety. There is a verse in it which brackets drums, *shudras*, fools and women together as fit to be beaten. A man who cites that verse to beat his wife is doomed to perdition. Rama did not only not beat his wife, but never even sought to displease her. Tulsidas simply inserted in his poem a proverb current in his days, little dreaming that there would be brutes justifying beating of their wives on the authority of the verse. But assuming that Tulsidas himself followed a custom which was prevalent in his days and beat his wife, what then? The beating was still wrong. But the *Ramayana* was not written to justify beating of wives by their husbands. It was written to depict Rama, the perfect man, and Sita the ideal wife, and Bharata the ideal of a devoted brother. Any justification incidentally met with therein of vicious customs should therefore be rejected. Tulsidas did not write his priceless epic to teach geography, and any wrong geography that we happen to come across in *Ramayana* should be summarily rejected.

Let us examine the *Gita* in the light of these observations. Self-realization and its means is the theme of the *Gita*, the fight between two armies being but the occasion to expound the theme. You might, if you like, say that the Poet himself was not against war or violence and hence he did not hesitate to press the occasion of a war into service. But a reading of the *Mahabharata* has given me an altogether different impression. The poet Vyasa has demonstrated the futility of war by means of that epic of wonderful beauty. What, he asks, if the Kauravas were vanquished? And what if the Pandavas won? How many were left of the victors and what was their lot? What an end Mother Kunti came to? And where are the Yadawas today?

Where the description of the fight and justification of violence are not the subject-matter of the epic, it is quite wrong to emphasize those aspects. And if it is difficult to reconcile certain verses with the teaching of non-violence, it is far more difficult to set the whole of the *Gita* in the framework of violence.

The poet when he writes is not conscious of all the interpretations his composition is capable of. The beauty of poetry is that the creation transcends the poet. The Truth that he reaches in the highest flights of his fancy is often not to be met with in his life. The life story of many a poet thus belies his poetry. That the central teaching of the *Gita* is not *himsa* but *ahimsa* is amply demonstrated by the subject begun in the second chapter and summarized in the concluding 18th chapter. The treatment in the other chapters also supports the position. *Himsa* is impossible without anger, without attachment, without hatred, and the *Gita* strives to carry us to the state beyond *sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*, a state that excludes anger, hatred etc. But I can even now picture to my mind Arjuna's eyes red with anger every time he drew the bow to the end of his ear.

It was not in a spirit of *ahimsa* that Arjuna refused' to go to battle. He had fought many a battle before. Only this time he was overcome with false pity. He fought shy of killing his own kith and kin.

Arjuna never discussed the problem of killing his kith and kin. Arjuna never discussed the problem of killing as such. He did not say he would kill no one, even if he regarded him as wicked. Shri Krishna knows every one's innermost thoughts and he saw through the temporary infatuation of Arjuna. He therefore told him: "Thou hast already done the killing. Thou canst not all at once argue thyself into non-violence. Finish what thou hast already begun.' If a passenger going in a Scotch Express gets suddenly sick of travelling and jumps out of it, he is guilty of suicide. He has not learnt the futility of travelling or travelling by a railway train. Similar was the case with Arjuna. Non-violent Krishna could give Arjuna no other advice. But to say that the *Gita* teaches violence or justifies war, because advice to kill was given a particular occasion, is as wrong as to say that *himsa* is the law of life, because a certain amount of it is inevitable in daily life. To one who reads the spirit of the *Gita*, it teaches the secret of non-violence, the secret of realizing the self through the physical body.

And who are Dhritarashtra and Yudhishtira and Arjuna? Who is Krishna? Were they all historical characters? And does the *Gita* describe them as such? Is it true that Arjuna suddenly stops in the midst of the fight and puts the question to Krishna, and Krishna repeats the whole of the *Gita* before him? And which is that *Gita*—*the Gita* that Arjuna forgot after having exclaimed that his infatuation was gone and which he requested Krishna to sing again, but which he could not, and which therefore he gave in the form of *Anugita*?

I regard Duryodhana and his party as the baser impulses in man, and Arjuna and his party as the higher impulses. The field of battle is our own body. An eternal battle is going on between the two camps and the Poet Seer has vividly described it. Krishna is the Dweller within, ever whispering in a pure heart. Like the watch the heart needs the winding of purity, or the Dweller ceases to speak.

Not that actual physical battle is out of the question. To those who are innocent of non-violence, the *Gita* does not teach a lesson of despair. He who fears, who saves his skin, who yields to his passions, must fight the physical battle whether he will or no; but that is not his *dharma*. *Dharma* is one and one only. *Ahimsa* means *moksha*, and *moksha* is the realization of Truth. There is no room here for cowardice. *Himsa* will go on eternally in this strange world. The *Gita* shows the way out of it. But it also shows that escape out of cowardice and despair is not the way. Better far than cowardice is killing and being killed in battle.

If the meaning of the verses quoted by the correspondent is not still clear, I must confess my inability to make it so. Is it agreed that that the Almighty God is the Creator, Protector and Destroyer and ought to be such? And if He creates, He has undoubtedly the right to destroy. And yet He does not destroy because He does not create. His law is that whatever is born must die, and in that lies His mercy. His laws are immutable. Where should we all be if He changed them capriciously?

Young India, 12 November 1925

27. Krishna Janmashtami

[The following is a summary of a speech delivered by Gandhiji at Arsikere in Mysore State:]

We do not know what Shri Krishna's life means for us, we do not read the *Gita*, we make no attempt to teach it to our children. The *Gita* is such a transcendental book that men of every creed, age and clime may read it with respect, and find in it the principles of their respective religions. If we thought of Krishna on every *Janmashtami* day and read the *Gita* and resolved to follow its teachings, we should not be in our present sorry plight. Shri Krishna served the people all his life, he was a real servant of the people. He could have led the hosts at Kurukshetra, but he preferred to be Arjuna's charioteer. His whole life was one unbroken *Gita* of *karma*. He refused proud Duryodhana's sweets and preferred humble Vidura's spinach. As a child he was a cowherd and we still know him by the name of Gopala. But we, his worshippers, have neglected the cow today, the Adi-Karnatakas slaughter cows and eat beef, and our infants and invalids have to go without cow's milk. Krishna knew no sleep or idleness.

He kept sleepless vigil of the world, we his posterity have become indolent and forgotten the use of our hands. In the *Bhagawadgita* Lord Krishna has shown the path of *bhakti*— which means the path of *karma*. Lokamanya Tilak has shown that whether we desire to be *bhaktas* or *jnanis*, *karma* is the only way; but the *karma* should not be for self but for others. Action for one's own self binds, action for the sake of others delivers from bondage. What can be the altruistic action which can be universally done, by Hindus, Mussulmans, Christians, by men, women and children? I have tried to demonstrate that spinning alone is that sacrificial act, for that alone can make us do something in God's name, something for the poorest, something that can infuse activity in their idle limbs. Lord Krishna has also taught that to be a true *bhakta* we should make no difference between a *brahmana* and a scavenger. If that is true there can be no place for untouchability in Hinduism. If you are still hugging that superstition you can cleanse yourself by getting rid of it on this the sacred day of Krishna's birth. He who swears by the *Gita* may know no distinction between Hindu and Mussulman, for Lord Krishna has declared that he who adores God in a true spirit by whatsoever name adores Him. The path of *bhakti*, *karma*, love as expounded in the *Gita*, leaves no room for the despising of man by man.

Young India, 1 September 1927

28. The Message of the Gita

1. Even in 1888-89, when I first became acquainted with the *Gita*, I felt that it was not a historical work, but that under the guise of physical warfare, it described the duel that perpetually went on in the hearts of mankind, and that physical warfare was brought in merely to make the description of the internal duel more alluring. This preliminary intuition became more confirmed on a closer study of religion and the *Gita*. A study of the *Mahabharata* gave it added confirmation. I do not regard the *Mahabharata* as a historical work in the accepted sense. The *Adiparva* contains powerful evidence in support of my opinion. By ascribing to the chief actors superhuman or subhuman origins, the great Vyasa made short work of the history of kings and their peoples. The persons therein described may be historical, but the author of the *Mahabharata* has used them merely to drive home his religious theme.
2. The author of the *Mahabharata* has not established the necessity of physical warfare; on the contrary he has proved its futility. He has made the victors shed tears of sorrow and repentance, and has left them nothing but a legacy of miseries.
3. In this great work the *Gita* is the crown. Its second chapter, instead of teaching the rules of physical warfare, tells us how a perfected man is to be known. In the characteristics of the perfected man of the *Gita*, I do not see any to correspond to physical warfare. Its whole design is inconsistent with the rules of conduct governing the relations between warring parties.
4. Krishna of the *Gita* is perfection and right knowledge personified; but the picture is imaginary. That does not mean that Krishna, the adored of his people, never lived. But perfection is imagined. The idea of a perfect incarnation is an after growth.
5. In Hinduism, incarnation is ascribed to one who has performed some extraordinary service of mankind. All embodied life is in reality an incarnation of God, but it is not usual to consider every living being an incarnation. Future generations pay this homage to one who, in his own generation, has been extraordinarily religious in his conduct. I can see nothing wrong in this procedure; it takes nothing from God's greatness, and there is no violence done to Truth. There is an Urdu saying which means, "Adam is not God but he is a spark of the Divine." And therefore he who is the most religiously behaved has most of the divine spark in him. It is in accordance with this train of thought that Krishna enjoys, in Hinduism, the status of the most perfect incarnation.
6. This belief in incarnation is a testimony of man's lofty spiritual ambition. Man is not at peace with himself till he has become like unto God. The endeavour to reach this state is the supreme, the only ambition worth having. And this is self-realization. This self-realization is the subject of the *Gita*, as it is of all scriptures. But its author surely did not write it to establish that doctrine. The object of the *Gita* appears to me to be that of showing the most excellent way to attain self-realization. That which is to be found, more or less clearly, spread out here and there in Hindu religious books, has been brought out in the clearest possible language in the *Gita* even at the risk of repetition.

7. That matchless remedy is renunciation of the fruits of action.
8. This is the centre round which the *Gita* is woven. This renunciation is the central sun, round which devotion, knowledge and the rest revolve like planets. The body has been likened to a prison. There must be action where there is body. Not one embodied being is exempted from labour. And yet all religions proclaim that it is possible for man, by treating the body as the temple of God, to attain freedom. Every action is tainted, be it ever so trivial. How can the body be made the temple of God? In other words how can one be free from action, ie from the taint of sin? "By desireless action; by renouncing the fruits of action; by dedicating all activities to God, ie by surrendering oneself to Him body and soul."
9. But desirelessness or renunciation does not come for the mere talking about it. It is not attained by an intellectual feat. It is attainable only by a constant heart-churn. Right knowledge is necessary for attaining renunciation. Learned men possess a knowledge of a kind. They may recite the *Vedas* from memory, yet they may be steeped in self-indulgence. In order that knowledge may not run riot, the author of the *Gita* has insisted on devotion accompanying it and has given it the first place. Knowledge without devotion will be like a misfire. Therefore, says the *Gita*, "Have devotion, and knowledge will follow." This devotion is not mere lip-worship, it is a wrestling with death. Hence the *Gita's* assessment of the devotee's qualities is similar to that of the sage's.
10. Thus the devotion required by the *Gita* is no softhearted effusiveness. It certainly is not blind faith. The devotion of the *Gita* has the least to do with externals. A devotee may use, if he likes, rosaries, forehead marks, make offerings, but these things are no test of his devotion. He is the devotee who is jealous of none, who is a fount of mercy, who is without egotism, who is selfless, who treats alike cold and heat, happiness and misery, who is ever forgiving, who is always contented, whose resolutions are firm, who has dedicated mind and soul to God, who causes no dread, who is not afraid of others, who is free from exultation, sorrow and fear, who is pure, who is versed in action and yet remains unaffected by it, who renounces all fruit, good or bad, who treats friend and foe alike, who is untouched by respect or disrespect, who is not puffed up by praise, who does not go under when people speak ill of him, who loves silence and" solitude, who has a disciplined reason. Such devotion is inconsistent with the existence at the same time of strong attachments.
11. We thus see, that to be a real devotee is to realize oneself. Self-realization is not something apart. One rupee can purchase for us poison or nectar, but knowledge or devotion cannot buy us either salvation or bondage. These are not media of exchange. They are themselves the thing we want. In other words if the means and the end are not identical, they are almost so. The extreme of means is salvation. Salvation of the *Gita* is perfect peace.
12. But such knowledge and devotion, to be true, have to stand the test of renunciation of fruits of action. Mere knowledge of right and wrong will not make one fit for salvation. According to common notions, a mere learned man will pass as a *pandit*. He need not perform any service. He will regard it as bondage even to lift a little *lota*. Where one test of knowledge is non-liability for service, there is no room for such mundane work as the lifting of a *lota*.
13. Or take *bhakti*. The popular notion of *bhakti* is soft-heartedness, telling beads and the like and disdaining to do even a loving service, lest the telling of beads etc. might be interrupted. This

bhakta therefore leaves the rosary only for eating, drinking and the like, never for grinding corn or nursing patients.

14. But the *Gita* says: "No one has attained his goal without action. Even men like Janaka attained salvation through action. If even I were lazily to cease working, the world would perish. How much more necessary then for the people at large to engage in action?"
15. While on the one hand it is beyond dispute that all action binds, on the other hand it is equally true that all living beings have to do some work whether they will or no. Here all activity, whether mental or physical, is to be included in the term action. Then how is one to be free from the bondage of action, even though he may be acting? The manner in which the *Gita* has solved the problem is, to my knowledge, unique. The *Gita* says: "Do your allotted work but renounce its fruit—be detached and work—have no desire for reward and work." This is the unmistakable teaching of the *Gita*. He who gives up action falls. He who gives up only the reward rises. But renunciation of fruit in no way means indifference to the result. In regard to every action one must know the result that is expected to follow, the means there to, and the capacity for it. He, who, being thus equipped, is without desire for the result, and is yet wholly engrossed in the due fulfilment of the task before him, is said to have renounced the fruits of his action.
16. Again, let no one consider renunciation to mean want of fruit for the renouncer. The *Gita* reading does not warrant such a meaning. Renunciation means absence of hankering after fruit. As a matter of fact, he who renounces reaps a thousandfold. The renunciation of the *Gita* is the acid test of faith. He who is ever brooding over the result often loses nerve in the performance of his duty. He becomes impatient and then gives vent to anger and begins to do unworthy things; he jumps from action to action, never remaining faithful to any. He who broods over results is like a man given to objects of senses; he is ever distracted, he says goodbye to all scruples, everything is right in his estimation and he therefore resorts to means fair and foul to attain his end.
17. From the bitter experiences of desire for fruit the author of the *Gita* discovered the path of renunciation of fruit, and put it before the world in the most convincing manner. The common belief is that religion is always opposed to material good. "One cannot act religiously in mercantile and such other matters. There is no place for religion in such pursuits; religion is only for attainment of salvation," we hear many worldly-wise people say. In my opinion the author of the *Gita* has dispelled this delusion. He has drawn no line of demarcation between salvation and worldly pursuits. On the contrary, he has shown that religion must rule even our worldly pursuits. I have felt that the *Gita* teaches us that what cannot be followed out in day-to-day practice cannot be called religion. Thus, according to the *Gita*, all acts that are incapable of being performed without attachment are taboo. This golden rule saves mankind from many a pitfall. According to this interpretation murder, lying, dissoluteness and the like must be regarded as sinful and therefore taboo. Man's life then becomes simple, and from that simpleness springs peace.
18. Thinking along these lines, I have felt that in trying to enforce in one's life the central teaching of the *Gita*, one is bound to follow truth and *ahimsa*. When there is no desire for fruit, there is no temptation for untruth or *himsa*. Take any instance of untruth or violence, and it will be found that at its back was the desire to attain the cherished end. But it may be freely admitted that the *Gita* was not written to establish *ahimsa*. It was an accepted and primary duty even before the *Gita* age. The *Gita* had to deliver the message of renunciation of fruit. This is clearly brought out as early as the second chapter.

19. But if the *Gita* believed in *ahimsa* or it was included in desirelessness, why did the author take a warlike illustration? When the *Gita* was written, although people believed in *ahimsa*, wars were not only not taboo, but nobody observed the contradiction between them and *ahimsa*.
20. In assessing the implications of renunciation of fruit, we are not required to probe the mind of the author of the *Gita* as to his limitations of *ahimsa* and the like. Because a poet puts a particular truth before the world, it does not necessarily follow that he has known or worked out all its great consequences, or that having done so, he is able always to express them fully. In this perhaps lies the greatness of the poem and the poet. A poet's meaning is limitless. Like man, the meaning of great writings suffers evolution. On examining the history of languages, we notice that the meaning of important words has changed or expanded. This is true of the *Gita*. The author has himself extended the meanings of some of the current words. We are able to discover this even on a superficial examination. It is possible that in the age prior to that of the *Gita*, offering of animals in sacrifice was permissible. But there is not a trace of it in the sacrifice in the *Gita* sense. In the *Gita* continuous concentration on God is the king of sacrifices. The third chapter seems to show that sacrifice chiefly means body-labour for service. The third and the fourth chapters read together will give us other meanings for sacrifice but never animal-sacrifice. Similarly the meaning of the word *sannyasa* undergone, in the *Gita*, a transformation. The *sannyasa* of the *Gita* will not tolerate complete cessation of all activity. The *sannyasa* of the *Gita* is all work and yet no work. Thus the author of the *Gita* by extending meanings of words has taught us to imitate him. Let it be granted, that according to the letter of the *Gita* it is possible to say that warfare is consistent with renunciation of fruit. But after 40 years' unremitting endeavour fully to enforce the teaching of the *Gita* in my own life, I have, in all humility, felt that perfect renunciation is impossible without perfect observance of *ahimsa* in every shape and form.
21. The *Gita* is not an aphoristic work; it is a great religious poem. The deeper you dive into it, the richer the meanings you get. It being meant for the people at large, there is pleasing repetition. With every age the important words will carry new and expanding meanings. But its central teaching will never vary. The seeker is at liberty to extract from this treasure any meaning he likes so as to enable him to enforce in his life the central teaching.
22. Nor is the *Gita* a collection of Do's and Don'ts. What is lawful for one may be unlawful for another. What may be permissible at one time, or in one place, may not be so at another time, and in another place. Desire for fruit is the only universal prohibition. Desirelessness is obligatory.
23. The *Gita* has sung the praises of knowledge, but it is beyond the mere intellect; it is essentially addressed to the heart and capable of being understood by the heart. Therefore the *Gita* is not for those who have no faith. The author makes Krishna say:

Do not entrust this treasure to him who is without sacrifice, without devotion, without the desire for this teaching and who denies Me. On the other hand those who will give this precious treasure to My devotees will by the fact of this service assuredly reach Me. And those who, being free from malice, will with faith absorb this teaching, shall, having attained freedom, live where people of true merit go after death.

29. From Yeravda Mandir

[The following are the two discourses sent by Gandhiji to members of his Ashram at Sabarmati, from Yeravda Jail:]

I

I run to my Mother *Gita* whenever I find myself in difficulties and up to now she has never failed to comfort me. It is possible that those who are getting comfort from the *Gita*, may get greater help, and see something altogether new, if they come to know the way in which I understand it from day to day.

This day I feel like giving a summary of the twelfth II chapter. It is *Bhaktiyoga* — realization of God through devotion. At the time of marriage we ask the bridal couple to learn this chapter by heart and meditate upon it, as one of the five sacrifices to be performed. Without devotion, action and knowledge are cold and dry, and may even become shackles. So, with the heart full of love, let us approach this meditation on the *Gita*.

Arjuna asks of the Lord: "Which is the better of the two, the devotee who worships the Manifest or the one who worships the Unmanifest?" The Lord says in reply: j "Those who meditate on the Manifest in full faith, and lose themselves in Me, those faithful ones are My devotees. But those who worship the Unmanifest, and who, in order to do so, restrain all their senses, look upon and serve all alike, regarding none as high or low, those also realize Me."

So it cannot be affirmed that one is superior to the other. But it may be counted as impossible for an embodied being fully to comprehend and adore the Unmanifest. The Unmanifest is attributeless, and is I beyond the reach of human vision. Therefore all embodied beings, consciously or unconsciously, are devotees of the Manifest.

"So," saith the Lord, "let thy mind be merged in My Universal Body, which has form. Offer thy all at His feet. But if thou canst not do this, practise the restraint of the passions of thy mind. By observing *yama* and *niyama* with the help of *pranayama*, *asana* and other practices, bring the mind under control. If thou canst not do thus, then perform all thy works with this in mind: that whatever work thou undertakest, that thou dost for My sake. Thus thy worldly infatuations and attachments will fade away, and gradually thou wilt become stainless and pure. The fountain of love will rise in thee. But if thou canst not do even this, then renounce the fruit of all thy actions; yearn no more after the fruits of thy work. Ever do that work which falls to thy lot. Man cannot be a master over the fruits of his work. The fruit of work appears only after causes have combined to form it. Therefore be thou only the instrument. Do not regard as superior or inferior any of these four methods which I have shown unto thee. Whatever, in them, is suitable for thee, that make thou use of in thy practice of devotion.

"It seems that the path of hearing, meditating and comprehending, may be easier than the path of *yama*, *niyama*, *pranayama* and *asana*, to which I have referred; easier than that may be

concentration and worship; and again easier than concentration may be renunciation of the fruits of works. The same method cannot be equally easy for everyone; some may have to turn for help to all these methods. They are certainly intermixed. In any case thou wishest to be a devotee. Achieve that goal by whatever method thou canst. My part is simply to tell thee whom to count a true devotee.

A devotee hates no one; bears no grudge against any one; befriends all creatures; is merciful to all. To accomplish this he eliminates all personal attachments; his ego is dissolved and he becomes as nothing; for him grief and happiness are one; he forgives those who trespass against himself, as he hungers for forgiveness from the world for his own faults; he dwells in contentment; he is firm in his good resolves; he surrenders to Me his mind, his intellect, his all. He never causes in other beings trouble or fear, himself knowing no trouble or fear through others My devotee is free from joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain. He has no desires, he is pure, skilful and wise. He has renounced all ambitious undertakings. He stands by his resolves, renouncing their good or bad fruit; he remains unconcerned. Such a one knows not enemies or friends, is beyond honour or disgrace.

"In peace and silence, contented with whatever may come his way, he lives inwardly as if alone, and always remains calm no matter what may be going around him. One who lives in this manner, full of faith, he is My 'beloved devotee'."

Young India, 13 November 1930

30. Gita Reciters

The readers of the *Harijan* know what the *Gita* means to me. I have always regarded the learning by heart of such books as the *Gita* a very desirable thing. But I was never able to learn all the chapters of the *Gita* by heart myself though I made several attempts at it. I know I am very stupid at memorizing. So whenever I meet any one who knows the *Gita* by heart, he or she commands my respect. I have already met two such during the Tamilnad tour—a gentleman at Madura and a lady at Devakotta. The gentleman at Madura is a merchant unknown to fame; and the lady is Parvatibai, a daughter of the late Justice Sadashiva Iyer, who during his lifetime instituted an annual prize for the person who could best recite the *Gita* from memory. I would like, however, the reciters to realize that the mere recitation is not an end in itself. It should be an aid to the contemplation and assimilation of the meaning and the message of the *Gita*. By patience even a parrot can be taught to recite it by heart. But he would be no wiser for the recitation. The reciter of the *Gita* should be what its author expects him to be — a *yogi* in its broad sense. It demands from its votaries balance in every thought, word and deed and a perfect correspondence between the three. He whose speech and action do not accord with his thoughts is a humbug or a hypocrite.

Harijan, 2 February 1934

31. The Gita Ideal

[Addressing the inmates of the Sabarmati Ashram, Gandhiji said:]

I am a devotee of the *Gita* and a firm believer in the inexorable law of *karma*. Even the least little tripping or stumbling is not without its cause and I have wondered why one who has tried to follow the *Gita* in thought, word and deed should have any ailment. The doctors have assured me that this trouble of high blood-pressure is entirely the result of mental strain and worry. If that is true, it is likely that I have been unnecessarily worrying myself, unnecessarily fretting and secretly harbouring passions like anger, lust, etc. The fact that any event or incident should disturb my mental equilibrium, in spite of my serious efforts, means not that the *Gita* ideal is defective but that my devotion to it is defective. The *Gita* ideal is true for all time, my understanding of it and observance of it is full of flaws.

Harijan, 29 February 1936

The goal ever recedes from us. The greater the progress, the greater the recognition of our unworthiness. Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment. Full effort is full victory.

Young India, 9 March 1922

32. Non-Violence

When a person claims to be non-violent, he is expected not to be angry with one who has injured him. He will not wish him harm; he will wish him well; he will not swear at him; he will not cause him any physical hurt. He will put up with all the injury to which he is subjected by the wrongdoer. Thus non-violence is complete innocence. Complete non-violence is complete absence of ill-will against all that lives. It therefore embraces even sub-human life not excluding noxious insects or beasts. They have not been created to feed our destructive propensities. If we only knew the mind of the Creator, we should find their proper place in His creation. Non-violence is therefore in its active form goodwill towards all life. It is pure love. I read it in the Hindu Scriptures, in the Bible, in the Quran.

Non-violence is a perfect state. It is a goal towards which all mankind moves naturally though unconsciously. Man does not become divine when he personifies innocence in himself. Only then does he become truly man. In our present state we are partly men and partly beasts and in our ignorance and even arrogance say that we truly fulfil the purpose of our species, when we deliver blow for blow and develop the measure of anger required for the purpose. We pretend to believe that retaliation is the law of our being, whereas in every scripture we find that retaliation is nowhere obligatory but only permissible. It is restraint that is obligatory. Retaliation is indulgence requiring elaborate regulating. Restraint is the law of our being. For, highest perfection is unattainable without highest restraint. Suffering is thus the badge of the human tribe.

33. Hindu-Muslim Tension Its Causes and Cure

My claim to Hinduism has been rejected by some, because I believe and advocate non-violence in its extreme form. They say that I am a Christian in disguise. I have been even seriously told that I am distorting the meaning of the *Gita*, when I ascribe to that great poem the teaching of unadulterated non-violence. Some of my Hindu friends tell me that killing is a duty enjoined by the *Gita* under certain circumstances. A very learned *shastri* only the other day scornfully rejected my interpretation of the *Gita* and said that there was no warrant for the opinion held by some commentators that the *Gita* represented the eternal duel between the forces of evil and good, and inculcated the duty of eradicating evil within us without hesitation, without tenderness.

I state these opinions against non-violence in detail, because it is necessary to understand them, if we would understand the solution I have to offer.

What I see around me today is, therefore, a reaction against the spread of non-violence. I feel the wave of violence coming. The Hindu-Muslim tension is an acute phase of this tiredness.

I must be dismissed out of consideration. My religion is a matter solely between my Maker and myself. If I am a Hindu, I cannot cease to be one even though I may be disowned by the whole of the Hindu population. I do however suggest that non-violence is the end of all religions.

But I have never presented to India that extreme form of non-violence, if only because I do not regard myself fit enough to redeliver that ancient message. Though my intellect has fully understood and grasped it, it has not as yet become part of my whole being. My strength lies in my asking people to do nothing that I have not tried repeatedly in my own life. I am then asking my countrymen today to adopt non-violence as their final creed, only for the purpose of regulating the relations between the different races, and for the purpose of attaining Swaraj. Hindus and Mussulmans, Christians, Sikhs and Parsis must not settle their differences by resort to violence, and the means for the attainment of Swaraj must be non-violent. This I venture to place before India, not as a weapon of the weak, but of the strong. Hindus and Mussulmans prate about no compulsion in religion. What is it but compulsion, if Hindus will kill a Mussulman for saving a cow? It is like wanting to convert a Mussulman to Hinduism by force. And similarly what is it but compulsion, if Mussulmans seek to prevent by force Hindus from playing music before mosques? Virtue lies in being absorbed in one's prayers in the presence of din and noise. We shall both be voted irreligious savages by posterity if we continue to make a futile attempt to compel one another to respect our religious wishes. Again, a nation of three hundred million people should be ashamed to have to resort to force to bring to book one hundred thousand Englishmen. To convert them, or, if you will, even to drive them out of the country, we need, not force of arms, but force of will. If we have not the latter, we shall never get the former. If we develop the force of will we shall find that we do not need the force of arms.

Acceptance of non-violence, therefore, for the purposes mentioned by me, is the most natural and the most necessary condition of our national existence. It will teach us to husband our corporate

physical strength for a better purpose, instead of dissipating it, as now, in a useless fratricidal strife, in which each party is exhausted after the effort. And every armed rebellion must be an insane act unless it is backed by the nation. But almost any item of non-co-operation fully backed by the nation can achieve the aim without shedding a single drop of blood.

Young India, 29 May 1924

34. No Conversion Permissible

The English press cuttings contain among many delightful items the news that Miss Slade, known in the Ashram as Mirabai, has embraced Hinduism. I may say that she has not. I hope that she is a better Christian than when four years ago she came to the Ashram. She is not a girl of tender age. She is past thirty and has travelled all alone in Egypt, Persia and Europe befriending trees and animals. I have had the privilege of having under me Mussulman, Parsi and Christian minors. Never was Hinduism put before them for their acceptance. They were encouraged and induced to respect and read their own scriptures. It is with pleasure that I can recall instances of men and women, boys and girls having been induced to know and love their faiths better than they did before if they were also encouraged to study the other faiths with sympathy and respect. We have in the Ashram today several faiths represented. No proselytizing is practised or permitted. We recognize that all these faiths are true and divinely inspired, and all have suffered through the necessarily imperfect handling of imperfect men. Miss Slade bears not a Hindu name but an Indian name. And this was done at her instance and for convenience.

Young India, 20 February 1

35. Equality of Religions

There is in Hinduism room enough for Jesus, as there is for Mohammed, Zoroaster and Moses. For me the different religions are beautiful flowers from the same garden, or they are branches of the same majestic tree. Therefore they are equally true, though being received and interpreted through human instruments equally imperfect. It is impossible for me to reconcile myself to the idea of conversion after the style that goes on in India and elsewhere today. It is an error which is perhaps the greatest impediment to the world's progress; towards peace. "Warring creeds" is a blasphemous expression.

And it fitly describes the state of things in India, the mother, as I believe her to be, of Religion or religions. If she is truly the mother, the motherhood is on trial. Why should a Christian want to convert a Hindu to Christianity and vice versa? Why should he not be satisfied if the Hindu is a good or godly man? If the morals of a man are a matter of no concern, the form of worship in a particular manner in a church, a mosque or a temple is an empty formula; it may even be a hindrance to individual or social growth, and insistences on a particular form or repetition of a credo may be a potent cause of violent quarrels leading to bloodshed and ending in utter disbelief in Religion, ie God Himself.

Harijan, 30 January 1937

36. Equality of Religions

CF Andrews: "What would you say to a man who after considerable thought and prayer said that he could not have his peace and salvation except by becoming a Christian?"

Gandhiji: "I would say if a non-Christian (say a Hindu) came to a Christian and made that statement, he should ask him to become a good Hindu rather than find goodness in change of faith."

CFA: "I cannot in this go the whole length with you, though you know my own position. I discarded the position that there is no salvation except through Christ long ago. But supposing the Oxford Group Movement people changed the life of your son, and he felt like being converted, what would you say?"

Gandhiji: "I would say that the Oxford Group may change the lives of as many as they like, but not their religion. They can draw their attention to the best in their respective religions and change their lives by asking them to live according to them. There came to me a man, the son of *brahmana* parents, who said his reading of your book had led him to embrace Christianity. I asked him if he thought that the religion of his forefathers was wrong. He said, 'No.' Then I said: 'Is there any difficulty about your accepting the Bible as one of the great religious books of the world and Christ as one of the great teachers?' I said to him that you had never through your books asked Indians to take up the Bible and embrace Christianity, and that he had misread your book—unless of course your position is like that of the late M. Mahomed Ali's, viz. that 'a believing Mussulman, however bad his life, is better than a good Hindu'."

CFA: "I do not accept M. Mahomed Ali's position at all. But, I do say that if a person really needs a change of faith I should not stand in his way."

Gandhiji: "But don't you see that you do not even give him a chance? You do not even cross-examine him. Supposing a Christian came to me and said he was captivated by a reading of the *Bhagawata* and so wanted to declare himself a Hindu, I should say him: 'No. What the *Bhagawata* offers the Bible also offers. You have not yet made the attempt to find it out. Make the attempt and be a good Christian.'"

CFA: "I don't know. If someone earnestly says that he will become a good Christian, I should say, 'You may become one', though you know that I have in my own life strongly dissuaded ardent enthusiasts who came to me. I said to them, 'Certainly not on *my* account will you do anything of the kind.' But human nature does require a concrete faith."

Gandhiji: "If a person wants to believe in the Bible let him say so, but why should he discard his own religion? This proselytization will mean no peace in the world. Religion is a very personal matter. We should by living the life according to our lights share the best with one another, thus adding to the sum total of human effort to reach God."

"Consider," continued Gandhiji, "whether you are going to accept the position of mutual toleration or of equality of all religions. My position is that all the great religions are fundamentally equal. We must have innate respect for other religions as we have for our own. Mind you, not mutual toleration, but equal respect."

Harijan, 28 November 1936

37. Attitude of Christian Missions to Hinduism

My fear is that though Christian friends nowadays do not say or admit that Hindu religion is untrue, they must harbour in the breasts the belief that Hinduism is an error and that Christianity as they believe it is the only true religion. Without some such thing it is not possible to understand, much less to appreciate, the CMS appeal¹ from which I reproduced in these columns some revealing extracts the other day. One could understand the attack on untouchability and many other errors that have crept into Hindu life. And if they would help us to get rid of the admitted abuses and purify our religion, they would do helpful constructive work which would be gratefully accepted. But so far as one can understand the present effort, it is to uproot Hinduism from-very foundation and replace it by another faith. It is like an attempt to destroy a house which though badly in want of repair appears to the dweller quite decent and habitable. No wonder he welcomes those who show him how to repair it and even offer to do so themselves. But he would most decidedly resist those who sought to destroy that house that had served well with him and his ancestors for ages, unless he, the dweller, was convinced that the house was beyond repair and unfit for human habitation. If the Christian world entertains that opinion about the Hindu house, 'Parliament of Religions' and 'International Fellowship' are empty phrases. For both the terms presuppose equality of status, a common platform. There cannot be a common platform as between inferiors and superiors, or the enlightened and unenlightened, the regenerate and the unregenerate, the high-born and the low-born, the caste-man and the outcaste. My comparison may be defective, may even sound offensive. My reasoning may be unsound. But my proposition stands.

Harijan, 13 March 1937

¹ The appeal issued by the Church Missionary Society of England, die extracts wherefrom were reproduced in the *Harijan* issue of 26 December 1936.

38. Equality of Religions

Mr. Keithahn who was here the other day was not quite sure what was at the back of Gandhiji's mind when he said that all religions were not only true but equal. Scientifically, he felt, it was hardly correct to say that all religions are equal. People would make comparisons between animists and theists. "I would say," said Mr. Keithahn, "it is no use comparing religions. They are different ways. Do you think we can explain the thing in different terms?"

"You are right when you say that it is impossible to compare them. But the deduction from it is that they are equal. All men are born free and equal, but one is much stronger or weaker than another physically and mentally. Therefore, superficially there is no equality between the two. But there is an essential equality. In our nakedness God is not going to think of me as Gandhi and you as Keithahn. And what are we in this mighty universe?"

We are less than atoms, and as between atoms there is no use asking which is smaller and which is bigger. Inherently we are equal. The differences of race and skin, of mind and body, and of climate and nation are transitory. In the same way, essentially, all religions are equal. If you read the Quran, you must read it with the eye of the Muslim; if you read the Bible, you must read it with the eye of the Christian; if you read the *Gita* you must read it with the eye of a Hindu. Where is the use of scanning details and then holding up a religion to ridicule? Take the very first chapter of Genesis or of Matthew. We read a long pedigree and then at the end we are told Jesus was born of a virgin. You come up against a blind wall. But I must read it all with the eye of a Christian."

"Then," said Mr. Keithahn, "even in our Bible, there is the question of Moses and Jesus. We must hold them to be equal?"

"Yes," said Gandhiji. "All prophets are equal. It is a horizontal plain."

"If we think in terms of Einstein's Relativity all are equal. But I cannot happily express the equality."

"That is why I say they are equally true and equally imperfect. The finer the line you draw, the nearer it approaches Euclid's true straight line, but it never is the true straight line. The tree of Religion is the same, there is not that physical equality between the branches. They are all growing, and the person who belongs to the growing branch must not gloat over it and say, 'Mine is the superior one.' None is superior, none is inferior, to the other."

Harijan, 13 March 1937

39. Gandhiji and the Suppressed Classes

I have always claimed to be a *Sanatani* Hindu. It is not that I am quite innocent of the scriptures. I am not a profound scholar of Sanskrit. I have read the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* only in translation. Naturally therefore mine is not a scholarly study of them. My knowledge of them is in no way profound, but I have studied them as I should do as a Hindu and I claim to have grasped their true spirit. By the time I had reached the age of 21, I had studied other religions also.

There was a time when I was wavering between Hinduism and Christianity. When I recovered my balance of mind, I felt that to me salvation was possible only through the Hindu religion and my faith in Hinduism grew deeper and more enlightened.

But even then I believed that untouchability was no part of Hinduism; and that, if it was, such Hinduism was not for me.

True, Hinduism does not regard untouchability as a sin. I do not want to enter into any controversy regarding the interpretation of the *shastras*. It might be difficult for me to establish my point by quoting authorities from the *Bhagwata* or the *Manusmriti*. But I claim to have understood the spirit of Hinduism. Hinduism has sinned in giving sanction to untouchability. It has degraded us, made us the pariahs of the Empire. Even the Mussulmans caught the sinful contagion from us, and in South Africa, in East Africa and in Canada the Mussulmans no less than the Hindus came to be regarded as pariahs. All this evil has resulted from the sin of untouchability.

Young India, 27 April 1921

40. The Sin of Untouchability

Untouchability is not a sanction of religion, it is a device of Satan. The devil has always quoted scriptures. But scriptures cannot transcend reason and truth. They are intended to purify reason and illuminate truth. I am not going to burn a spotless horse because the *Vedas* are reported to have advised, tolerated, or sanctioned the sacrifice. For me the *Vedas* are divine and unwritten. 'The letter killeth.' It is the spirit that gives light. And the spirit of the *Vedas* is purity, truth, innocence, chastity, humility, simplicity, forgiveness, godliness, and all that makes a man or woman noble and brave. There is neither nobility nor bravery in treating the great and uncomplaining scavengers of the nation as worse than dogs to be despised and spat upon.

Young India, 19 January 1921

41. Weekly Letter

My views on untouchability are not the product of my Western education. I had formed them long before I went to England, and long before I studied the scriptures, and in an atmosphere which was by no means favourable to those views. For I was born in an orthodox Vaishnava family and yet ever since I reached the year of discretion I have firmly held my uncompromising views in the matter, which later comparative study of Hinduism and experience have only confirmed. How in face of the fact that no scriptural text mentions a fifth *varna*, and in face of the express injunction of the *Gita* to regard a *brahmana* and a *bhangi* as equals, we persist in maintaining this deep blot on Hinduism, I cannot understand. Regarding a *brahmana* and a *bhangi* as equals does not mean that you will not accord to a true *brahmana* the reverence that is due to him, but that the *brahmana* and the *bhangi* are equally entitled to our service, that we accord to the *bhangi* the same rights of sending his children to public schools, of visiting public temples, of the use of public wells, etc., on the same basis as these rights are enjoyed by any other Hindu.

Young India, 17 February 1927

42. The Thousand Headed Monster

A correspondent asks: "Do you think that sins of touch and sight are of Vedic origin?"

Though I cannot speak with authority based on first-hand knowledge, I have full confidence in the purity of the *Vedas*, and therefore have no hesitation in asserting that the sins of touch and sight have no support in the *Vedas*. I would however add, that no matter what is credited with *Vedic* origin if it is repugnant to the moral sense, it must be summarily rejected as contrary to the spirit of the *Vedas*, and perhaps what is more, as contrary to fundamental ethics.

The next four questions may be condensed as follows:

"Don't you think that the *karmakanda* is based upon a knowledge of the laws of magnetism, and that the rules regarding touch and sight, birth pollution and death pollution are intended for the purification of the mind?"

In so far as they are so intended, they have a certain relative value; but the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Puranas* and all the other *shastras* as also the other religions of the world proclaim in no uncertain terms, that purification of the mind is an inward process, and that the magnetism produced by the interaction of physical bodies is nothing compared to the other subtle magnetism of mind upon mind, and the outward purificatory rites become soul-destroying, when they result in making man arrogate to himself superiority over fellow human beings and in making him treat them virtually as beasts or even less.

Rules have to appeal to reason and must never be allowed to crush the spirit within. The rules about untouchability have been demonstrated and can be demonstrated to be injurious to the growth of the spirit, and they are wholly contrary to all that is best and noblest in Hinduism.

Young India, 3 October 1929

43. Dr. Ambedkar's Indictment

The readers will recall the fact that Dr. Ambedkar was to have presided last May at the annual conference of the Jat-Pat-Torak Mandal of Lahore. But the conference itself was cancelled because Dr. Ambedkar's address was found by the Reception Committee to be unacceptable.

Dr. Ambedkar was not going to be beaten by the Reception Committee. He has answered their rejection of him by publishing the address at his own expense. He has priced it at 8 annas. I would suggest a reduction to 2 annas or at least 4 annas.

No reformer can ignore the address. The orthodox will gain by reading it. This is not to say that the address is not open to objection. It has to be read if only because it is open to serious objection. Dr. Ambedkar is a challenge to Hinduism. Brought up as a Hindu, educated by a Hindu potentate, he has become so disgusted with the so-called *savarna* Hindus for the treatment that he and his family have received at their hands that he proposes to leave not only them but the very religion that is his and their common heritage. He has transferred to that religion his disgust against a part of its professors.

But this is not to be wondered at. After all one can only judge a system or an institution by the conduct of its representatives. What is more, Dr. Ambedkar found that the vast majority of *savarna* Hindus had not only conducted themselves inhumanly against those of their fellow religionists whom they classed as untouchables, but they had based their conduct on the authority of their scriptures, and when he began to search, then he had found ample warrant for their belief in untouchability and all its implications. The author of the address has quoted chapter and verse in proof of his threefold indictment—inhuman conduct itself, the unabashed justification for it on the part of the perpetrators, and the subsequent discovery that the justification was warranted by their scriptures.

Harijan, 11 July 1936