

till you reach South Africa. And now that Vasant<sup>1</sup> had come over you don't have to worry about Akola. It is certainly regrettable that Vasant and Kanti do not wear khadi but can we make all, or even a few, into replicas of ourselves? Besides, but for our capacity for self-deception the world would come to a standstill. We should therefore be more than satisfied if all live according to their own fancies but within certain limits. We should be satisfied if both of them preserve their health and participate in voluntary work as much as they can.

*Blessings from*  
BAPU

SUSHILABEHN GANDHI  
NANABHAI MASHRUWALA'S HOUSE  
AKOLA

From a copy of the Gujarati: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

### 352. LETTER TO RAMDAS GANDHI

DASPARA,  
*January 10, 1947*

CHI. RAMDAS,

I got your letter. I do believe that you will prove worthy of your responsibility. It will be enough if you maintain your health. Don't at all worry about me. I am not starving. I allow myself the necessary facilities and also get them wherever I go. Manu has taken up a lot of work and I expect her to take upon herself further responsibilities as the days pass. I have asked her to write about her sharing the bed with me. I am dictating this letter after getting up at 3 o'clock. I am also preparing to introduce changes in this programme. I am still surrounded by darkness. I have no doubt whatever that it indicates a flaw somewhere in my method. Take it as though I had confined myself to this place to detect that flaw. It must lie somewhere in my practice of ahimsa. Could it be that I am nurturing only weakness in the name of non-violence! Weakness can take a number of forms, but it is meaningless to plunge into a discussion about it. That alone is true which we realize by experience. You may not therefore bother with it but try to do your own work as best as you can. That is enough for me. Kanu seems to be making good progress. He is gradually

<sup>1</sup> Wife of Kanti Mashruwala, addressee's brother

maturing. He must get rid of the cold; and I believe he will. I had a long letter from Nimu<sup>1</sup> but now I shall not write to her. She should content herself with the understanding that a letter to you is [also] to her. If she attended to all her work there and still maintained her health, I would consider that she was doing my work.

From a copy of the Gujarati: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

353. LETTER TO KANAM GANDHI

[January 10, 1947]<sup>2</sup>

CHI. KANU,

I have your nice letter. I am keen on writing to you but I must restrain myself. It will soon be 4 o'clock and I must brush my teeth and wash. Get rid of the cold. Did you not learn that from Vinoba? Learn to do *pranayama*<sup>3</sup>. Learn a few yogic exercises also and find out the right diet for you. The result of your examination will surely be in your favour as you are so energetic and also growing in wisdom. May God grant you long life.

From a copy of the Gujarati: Pyarelal Papers. Courtesy: Pyarelal

354. LETTER TO G. V. MAVALANKAR

FATEHPUR,

January 10, 1947

BHAI MAVALANKAR,

I am sure you don't expect a letter from me but I may as well drop you a postcard. According to my definition I would regard you and Kaka as Gujaratis and nothing else. Therefore the question of Gujarati and non-Gujarati has no relevance for me. I have written to Kaka that he can implement his suggestion if the Sardar is fully agreeable to it. There are other things also about which I will say nothing just now. Since I am inextricably caught up here you will have to see to the work of the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial

<sup>1</sup> Addressee's wife, Nirmala Gandhi

<sup>2</sup> In the source the letter appears below the one of this date addressed to Ramdas Gandhi; *vide* the preceding item.

<sup>3</sup> Yogic breathing exercises

#### 495. TALK WITH BRITISH ARMY OFFICERS<sup>1</sup>

February 1, 1947

Gandhiji laughingly said that journalists<sup>2</sup> were dangerous people and he was saying so as a journalist himself. Gandhiji also humorously said that Australia had not only become the whiteman's preserve for the present but also, it appeared, for posterity. Gandhiji said that India was, in that respect, too hospitable.

*Hindustan Standard*, 3-2-1947

#### 496. SPEECH AT PRAYER MEETING<sup>3</sup>

AMISHAPARA,

February 1, 1947

Gandhiji drew the attention of the audience to the fact that the universal law applicable to all meetings was that the visitors should be perfectly still and observe silence no matter how vast the audience was.

Yesterday evening a Maulvi had wanted to speak for a short time. Gandhiji had sensed what he wanted to say. He therefore, contrary to his wont, allowed him to speak for the five minutes which he wanted by the watch. The Maulvi took no more than three minutes but said what he had wanted to say. He resented Gandhiji's remark on the *purdah* system in vogue in Bengal as according to him, Gandhiji had no right to speak on the Islamic Law.

Gandhiji thought this was a narrow view of religion. He claimed the right to study and interpret the message of Islam. Gandhiji said that throughout his long life he had had the privilege of mixing with many. Muslims in and out of India but he had nowhere heard anybody say that. Denouncing the system of *purdah*, which varied from country to country, Gandhiji said that he was certain it had little to do with the Koran. He was not inclined to believe that Islam was so susceptible to damage as to be confined within a narrow space beyond other people's view. Gandhiji was sure that it was contrary to Islamic teaching.

The Maulvi had further resented coupling of the name of Rama, a mere young king, with Rahim, name of God; similarly of Krishna with Karim. Gandhiji said this was a narrow view of Islam. This erroneous view had emanated from his wrong notion that Rama and Krishna were names of ordinary human beings. Man worshipped the same God under different names and the Koran was not opposed to it. Rama and

<sup>1</sup> Eight British Army officers met Gandhiji in the afternoon to convey their good wishes on his peace mission in Noakhali.

<sup>2</sup> One of the officers was a young Australian, who introduced himself as a journalist.

<sup>3</sup> The reports in the various sources have been collated.

Krishna were names of God and there was no bar in worshipping God as such, it certainly did not offend Islam. Islam was not a creed to be preserved in a box. It was open to mankind to examine it and accept or reject its tenets. He hoped that this narrow view was not shared by the Muslims of Bengal or India.

Purity of heart was the criterion of a religious man but persons who looted other people's properties, killed fellow-beings and took God's name at the same time were irreligious. In this connection Gandhiji wanted to draw the attention of the audience to the work. Dr. Sushila Nayyar was doing in Changirgaon. She wanted to go to Sevagram to attend to the hospital for whose management she was responsible, but her Muslim patients would not let her go till they were restored to health. She had also mentioned that in the village those, who had shared in the loot of October last were of their own accord bringing back some of the looted property. He was of opinion that this was a happy omen. If the infection spread, the courts would have no work to do so far as public loot was concerned. He for one would ask Government to waive the right of prosecution if the looted property was returned. But he said the return must be sincere and full, whether by the guilty one or the public, and not a mere token to avoid prosecution. What he aimed at was a change of heart and not a truce superimposed by the military or the police. A popular ministry could not impose its will on the people. Gandhiji said :

I shall most gladly leave Noakhali when I am certain that all are acting with amity and sincerity, but I shall lay down my life here for the fulfilment of my mission.

Gandhiji then answered the following question :

You have asked rich men to be trustees. Is it implied that they should give up private ownership of their property and create out of it a trust valid in the eyes of the law and managed democratically? How will the successor of the present incumbent be determined on his demise?

In answer Gandhiji said that he adhered to the position taken by him years ago that everything belonged to God and was from God. Therefore it was for His people as a whole, not for a particular individual. When an individual had more than his proportionate portion he became a trustee of that portion for God's people.

God who was all-powerful had no need to store. He created from day to day. Hence men also should in theory live day to day and not stock things. If this truth was imbibed by the people generally, it would become legalized and trusteeship would become a legalized institution. He wished it became a gift from India to the world. Then there would be no exploitation and no reserves as in Australia and other countries for white men and their posterity. In these distinctions lay the seeds of a war more virulent than the last two. As to the successor, the trustee in office would have the right to nominate his successor subject to legal sanction.

Gandhiji referred to “small-talks, whispers and innuendos” going round of which he had become aware. He was already in the midst of so much suspicion and distrust, he told the gathering, that he did not want his most innocent acts to be misunderstood and misrepresented. He had his granddaughter with him. She shared the same bed with him. The Prophet had discounted eunuchs who became such by an operation. But he welcomed eunuchs made such through prayer by God. His was that aspiration. It was in the spirit of God’s eunuch that he had approached what he considered was his duty. It was an integral part of the *yajna* he was performing and he invited them to bless the effort. He knew that his action had excited criticism even among his friends. But a duty could not be shirked even for the sake of the most intimate friends.

*Harijan*, 23-2-1947; *Hindustan Standard*, 3-2-1947. and *Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase*, Vol. I, Book II, pp. 219-20

497. LETTER TO VALLABHBHAI PATEL

AMISHAPARA,  
February [1/2]<sup>1</sup> 1947

CHI. VALLABHBHAI,

Please go through this letter.

Frydman<sup>2</sup> is the same as Bharatanand; Please see if you can grant him Indian citizenship.

\* \* \*

I want you not to be unhappy. Please leave me in the hands of God.

Blessings from  
BAPU

[From Gujarati]

*Bapu's Patro-2: Sardar Vallabhbhaine*, p. 347

<sup>1</sup> Gandhiji was at Amishapara on February 1 and 2. The source however has “4”, obviously a slip.

<sup>2</sup> Maurice Frydman, a Polish engineer who came to Sevagram in 1938; the inventor of *dhanush takli*.