

**DAY - TO - DAY
WITH
GANDHI**

Secretary's Diary

by
Mahadev H. Desai

Vol. VIII

(*From January 3, 1926 to December 30, 1926*)

SARVA SEVA SANGH PRAKASHAN
RAJGHAT, VARANASI-1

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—Narayan M. Desai

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—Publishers

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

It is a matter of privilege for Sarva Seva Sangh to have the opportunity of publishing Mahadev Desai's Diary in Hindi as well as in English.

The relation between Gandhiji and Mahadev Desai is well known to all. Both names are immortal in the history of our national freedom movement. Mahadev Desai joined Gandhiji in 1917 and remained with him till 1942 when Mahadevbhai breathed his last in the lap of Gandhiji in Agakhan palace while in detention. It is amazing to note that Mahadevbhai regularly wrote his day-to-day diary despite his busiest routine with Gandhiji.

Gandhiji and Mahadev Desai had such an inseparable relation that they were like two bodies with one soul. Hence, Mahadev Desai's Diary means Diary of Gandhiji's activities.

While reading this Diary one feels like actually witnessing the various incidents with Gandhiji. There are authentic records of important interviews of Gandhiji with national and international leaders, side by side with excerpts from Gandhiji's most important historical as well as epic speeches. We also find here Gandhiji's typical crackling of jokes with small children,

There is no other Diary in history of this kind except that of Bosswel, the learned English writer, who has noted the events of Dr. Johnson's life in his dairy. But the difference between these two diaries lies in the difference of the life of Gandhiji and that of Dr. Johnson.

Mahadev Desai had a knack of snatching some time out of his overcrowded daily routine for some extra reading. He had enriched his diary by jotting down some references out of that

this Sermon on the Mount is with the Gita's precepts. We need not believe either that the Bible is an adaptation of the Gita or the Gita of the Bible. Nobody can claim the monopoly of inspired thoughts. The man,—wherever he be—who can purify his mind can have such thoughts. You can definitely find this in the Quran, because the Prophet had this knowledge.

“What was the situation under which this Sermon was delivered? When he was fed up with the crowds that besieged him, He fled and, going to a mountain, sat down in the midst of only his disciples. Here it was that the Sermon was given.

“The third verse teaches us complete non-possession. It reminds us of Patanjali's ‘Yoga-darshan’. We should be poor in spirit i. e. in the heart. It says that his is the kingdom of heaven whose soul is really poor, i.e. is free from pride, and who has renounced all things. There are many missionaries who say, ‘We too are poor in spirit, though we appear to possess pianoes and other paraphernalia. These outward things do not affect us. The faithful give us these gifts, but we are really poor in spirit.’” But it is a must for a man to remain poor outwardly—and not only outwardly but inwardly also. If he happens to possess wealth, he must forthwith behave as a trustee. All the wealth of King Janaka was only for the use of his subjects. It was this that assured for him *moksha* (liberation), the kingdom of heaven, as a reward of his non-possession. There should not be any deliberately cherished desire to gain this *moksha* behind a man's renunciation of his possessions. But the kingdom would be his as the inevitable result of his desireless renunciation.

“Verse—4 does not mean that a person is meek if he always sheds tears. It means one who has a hearty sympathy for the sorrows of the world. A general of Hazrat Umar lived in poverty. Hazrat sent him 500 *ashrafis* (gold coins). But at the sight of the gift, the general felt so grieved that he shed tears, so very like Mirabai who sang, ‘I weep at the sight of the world.’ He who weeps in this way will become happy.

“The word used here is ‘meek’. To whom does the world belong? To Changez Khan? To Temoorlung? No. It belongs to the poor. If everyone in this world became a Changez Khan, how could the world last for a day? In order that the world can continue, can go on living, there must always be people living in it. Hence, the world is not for those who grab, but for those who renounce. The examples of Harishchandra, of Parvati (both famous for hard austerities) are beacon-lights to guide us. Only that man can drench others in his love, who lives in the world in a meek, humble way. Such men become greater than mighty emperors by giving up the passing pleasures of the world.

“Verse 6 tells us that the man who is full of desires of various kinds is sure to meet with his doom. But the man who is hungering for self-purification will one day realize the Self. He will not suffer from the pangs of desires. Such a man alone will be filled with satisfaction. Of course, he will go on giving to the body what it needs, but only to exact work from it,—just as we feed bullocks for the same purpose. This is exactly like what Lord Krishna promises Arjuna, viz., He would bear the whole burden of the needs of a true, steadfast, devotee (Gita IX—22). Modern scientists may tell us that purity is a vain pursuit, but this Law-giver of ancient times says that that is the only thing worth striving for.

“Verse 7 affirms that he will gain God's mercy, who is himself merciful to others. It tells people “You are so full of corruptions in the mind that you require the mercy of the world for your redemption. How can you gain it without being merciful to others?”

10-10-1926.

(M. D's translation in ‘Young India’, d. 21-10-1926
of Gandhiji's article in ‘Navajivan’ d. 10-10-1926)

Is This Humanity ?

I

@ The Ahmedabad Humanitarian League has addressed me a letter from which I take the relevant portions :

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"The talk of the whole city of Ahmedabad is the destruction of 60 dogs on his mill premises at the instance of Seth.... Many a humanitarian heart is considerably agitated over the incident. When Hinduism forbids the taking of the life of any living being, when it declares it to be a sin, do you think it right to kill rabid dogs for the reason that they would bite human beings and by biting the other dogs make them also rabid? Are not, the man who actually destroys the dogs also the man at whose instance he does so, both sinners?

"A deputation of three gentlemen from our Society waited on the Seth on the 28th ultimo. He confessed in the course of the interview that he had to take the course in question to save human life. He also said, "I myself had no sleep on the night I took that decision. I met Mahatmaji the next morning and ascertained his view on the matter. He said, 'What else could be done?' Is that a fact? And if so, what does it mean?"

We hope you will express your views in the matter and set the whole controversy at rest and prevent humanitarianism from being endangered by the shocks given to it by distinguished men like the Seth. The Ahmedabad Municipality, we have heard, is soon going to have before it a resolution for the castration of stray dogs. Is it proper? Does religion sanction the castration of an animal? We should be thankful, if you would give your opinion in this matter also."

"Ahmedabad knows the name of the mill-owner, but as 'Navajivan' is being read outside Ahmedabad also, I have omitted to mention his name in accordance with my practice to avoid personalities, whilst discussing a principle. The question raised by the Humanitarian Society is an intricate one. I had been thinking of discussing the question ever since and even before the incident, but on second thoughts dropped the idea. But the letter of the Society now compels me, makes it my duty, to enter into a public discussion of the question.

I must say that my relations with millowner have been sweet and, if I may say so, friendly. He came to me and expressed his distress in having had to order destruction of the

dogs, and asked my opinion about it. He also said: "When the Government, the Municipality, and the Mahajan (group of leaders) all alike failed to guide me, I was driven to this course." I gave him the reply that the Society's letter attributes to me.

I have since thought over the matter and feel that my reply was quite proper.

Imperfect, erring, mortals as we are, there is no course open to us but the destruction of rabid dogs. At times we may be faced with the unavoidable duty of killing people.

If we persist in keeping stray dogs undisturbed, we shall soon be faced with the duty of either castrating them or killing them. A third alternative is that of having a special *pinjrapole* for dogs. When we cannot cope with all the stray cattle in the city, the very proposal of having a *pijrapole* for dogs seems to me to be chimerical.

There can be no two opinions on the fact that Hinduism regards killing a living being as sinful. I think all religions are agreed on the principle. There is generally no difficulty in determining a principle. The difficulty comes in when one proceeds to put it into practice. A principle is the expression of a perfection, and as imperfect beings like us cannot practise perfection, we devise every moment limits of its compromise in practice. So Hinduism has laid down that killing for sacrifice is no '*himsa*' (violence). This is only a half-truth, Violence will be violence for all time, and all violence is sinful. But what is inevitable is not regarded as a sin, so that the science of daily practice has not only declared the inevitable violence involved in killing for sacrifice as permissible but even regarded it as meritorious.

But unavoidable violence cannot be defined. For it changes with time, place, and person. What is regarded as excusable for one time may be inexcusable at another. The violence involved in burning fuel or coal in the depth of winter to keep the body warm may be unavoidable and, therefore, a duty for

a weak-bodied man, but fire unnecessarily lit in midsummer is clearly violence.

We recognize the duty of killing microbes by the use of disinfectants. It is violence and yet a duty. But why go even as far as that? The air in a dark closed room is full of little microbes and the introduction of light and air into it by opening it is destruction indeed. But it is ever a duty to use the finest of disinfectants—pure air.

These instances can be multiplied. The principle that applies in the instances cited applies in the matter of killing rabid dogs. To destroy a rabid dog is to commit the minimum amount of violence. A recluse, who is living in a forest and is compassion incarnate, may not destroy a rabid dog. For in his compassion he has the virtue of making it whole. But a city-dweller who is responsible for the protection of lives under his care and who does not possess the virtues of a recluse, but is capable of destroying a rabid dog, is faced with a conflict of duties. If he kills the dog he commits a sin. If he does not kill it, he commits a graver sin. So he prefers to commit the lesser one and save himself from the graver.

I believe myself to be saturated with '*ahimsa*'-non-violence. *Ahimsa* and truth are as my two lungs. I cannot live without them. But I see every moment, with more and more clearness, the immense power of *ahimsa* and the littleness of man. Even the forest-dweller cannot be entirely free from violence, in spite of his limitless compassion. With every breath he commits a certain amount of violence. The body itself is a house of slaughter and, therefore, *Moksha* and Eternal Bliss consist in perfect deliverance from the body, and therefore all pleasure, save the joy of *Moksha*, is evanescent, imperfect.

That being the case, we have to drink, in daily life, many a bitter draught of violence.

It is, therefore, a thousand pities that the question of stray dogs etc. assumes such a monstrous proportion in this sacred land of *ahimsa*. It is my firm conviction that we are propagating '*himsa*' in the name of '*ahimsa*' owing to our deep

ignorance of the great principle. It may be a sin to destroy rabid dogs and such others as are liable to catch rabies. But we are responsible, the Mahajan is responsible for the state of things. The Mahajan may not allow the dogs to stray. It is a sin, it should be a sin, to feed stray dogs, and we should save numerous dogs, if we had legislation making every stray dog liable to be shot. Even if those who feed stray dogs consented to pay a penalty for their misdirected compassion, we should be free from the curse of stray dogs.

Humanity is a noble attribute of the soul. It is not exhausted with saving a few fish or a few dogs. Such saving may even be sinful. If I have a swarm of ants in my house, the man who proceeds to feed them will be guilty of a sin. For, God has provided their grain for the ants, but the man who feeds them might destroy me and my family. The Mahajan may feel itself safe and believe that it has saved their lives by dumping dogs near my field, but it will have committed the greater sin of putting my life in danger. Humaneness is impossible without thought, discrimination, charity, fearlessness, humility and clear vision. It is no easy thing to walk on the sharp sword-edge of '*ahimsa*' in this world which is so full of '*himsa*'. Wealth does not help; anger is the enemy of '*ahimsa*', and pride is a monster that swallows it up. In this straight and narrow observance of this religion of *ahimsa*, one has often to know so-called *himsa* as the truest form of *ahimsa*.

Things in this world are not what they seem and do not seem as they really are. Or if they are seen as they are, they so appear only to a few who have perfected themselves after ages of penance. But none has yet been able to describe the reality and no one can.

16-10-1926

(Translated from M.D's manuscript diary)

In answer to Pandit Sukhlalji's question about the (preceding) article, "Is This Humanity", Gandhiji said :

"I was by no means sitting idle. My hands were full, but it is my *dharma* to cheerfully bear a burden that happens to fall upon me. When the letter (in the preceding article) came, I said to myself: "If I claim to be a believer in non-violence, and if I hope to reach the stage of its perfect implementation in this very life, I ought to answer this letter of the Jains. I discovered truth first, and then *ahimsa*. When I first became an adorer of Truth, the idea of *ahimsa* had not arisen in me. At that time I killed insects and even believed that it was right to do so. But afterwards I began gradually to feel that they were not created for man's destruction. A man who practises non-violence can never be afraid of anything that befalls him. A series of articles by me on this subject has now begun" (in '*Navajivan*')¹. Some persons came to me when I was first going to bed and discussed the question. You (Pandit Sukhlalji) too may read the whole series and then discuss the subject with me.

"I do not claim to be perfect, but I claim to know non-violence perfectly. It is like the claim of the child who says he knows the figures upto a hundred or recites all the 18 chapters of the Gita. Nobody can attain the ideal perfectly. In the same way I too have not achieved perfection. I am lax in my implementation of the ideal, but not intentionally. And there is a constant effort to become perfect. The hand of a man seven feet tall cannot reach to a height that the hand of a man of 10 feet does. But as far as my definition (of non-violence) is concerned, it is perfect.

Q: "Do you, Sir, do your national work from the standpoint of an individual believing in non-violence?"

A: "No. I separate my personal view of non-violence from my national activity. Otherwise, how could my alliance with the Ali Brothers stand? They do not accept non-violence as their *dharma*. They would, on the contrary, say that it

1. M.D. has translated these articles into English for the readers of 'Young India', (at Gandhiji's instance) and have been reproduced in this book.

is their *dharma* to beat a man who beats them. But both the Brothers accept non-violence as a matter of policy—and that also only to the extent that they may win Swaraj thereby. Their thinking does not embrace non-violence towards men. They accept non-violence simply as a wise policy. If they feel they can win Swaraj by violent means, they are not the men to be afraid of saying so.

"Hence, I do not regard my personal view on non-violence as indispensable for the life of society. For it, the non-violence which the Brothers observe can do. I would, indeed, wish that the whole world accepted my view on *ahimsa*. If it does, let alone national rule, Swaraj, we can gain universal *raj*. But I don't believe that that large number will become non-violent all at once. I am a believer in the law of '*karma*' (—A man's actions in his past births colour his thinking, action etc. and bear fruit in this). How then is it possible for the meritorious deeds of each and every one to ripen at one and the same time? But the common view of non-violence (i.e. as a good policy) may be (according to *karma*) the outcome of the average of the good deeds of all. My own view of non-violence is different from the common. A difference in implementation is bound to continue as a result of this difference in my view and the common view."

Q: "Would you, Sir, save the most ferocious beast at the cost of your life?"

A: "That is indeed my ideal—my hope. I may cherish it all the 24 hours of the day. But I must say I feel afraid of a dangerous creature—for instance of a hissing cobra. But in my mind I would (even then) feel, 'I should rather like to embrace the cobra'. The other day I saw a deadly serpent. Two persons had caught and left it. I liked the fact that it was caught. And they carried it away and left it at a lonely spot. It is a matter of shame for me that I felt afraid, but I cherish the feeling that I should not, though the fact stands that I do. All the same I cannot

say what I shall do when a particular situation faces me. With regard to my wife, for instance, I might have resolved on one thing in the morning, and my attitude would have changed in the evening. There are many similar occasions but I need not dilate upon them. You may dot the 'is' and cross the 'ts'. There have been occasions when I have put my life in danger. There is compassion in me to that extent.

"The answer to the third question is included in the first. Were I the single dweller in the Ashram, the Ashram life would have been different. People would have seen only leaves over my head. They would not have seen a single brick, but as things stand, I have made a regular village settle in the Ashram. I cannot make it observe all the *dharma*s to the extent of my liking. So I cannot observe my individual *dharma* as I conceive it, nor can I make anybody else observe it. Till that state is not achieved, I must keep patience and wait. In the Ashram also the community life and its goal are the same (*ahimsa*). But my individual thinking (on *ahimsa*) is different.

"A sacred discussion took place the other day at a meeting of the Managing Committee¹. We were formulating the aims and objects of the Ashram. The aims and objects which all inmates were to cherish are similar to what has been given in my answer to the first question. (—The objects of the Ashram resembled the average quantum of non-violence etc. to be observed by all, while individually Gandhiji cherished their higher forms.) But if all aims and objects of the Ashram were framed according to my judgement, all the inmates would have been compelled to leave the Ashram. So we fixed those aims and objects which the average inmate could cherish. But that itself created a difference between me and the Ashram. But I accepted my own ideal as worthy of pursuit by only myself.

"The same is the case with the national policy and individual *dharma*.

1. The Ashram was handed over to a Managing Committee on 24-7-1926.

"Thus *Dharma* is a difficult and complex thing. And yet it is easy also from another viewpoint. The faithful may believe that there does exist some Power. Call it God, or give it any other name, but recognize It and be firmly set in Its recognition. Our heart and mind must be fixed upon one thing only—truth and *ahimsa*. If we base our earthly life upon that foundation it will be saved from disintegration.

"If we want to conquer the enemy by means of *nirvair* (freedom from hate, i.e. love), we have to go deep into these questions. Then again there is no doubt that for society, *dharma* differs with different circumstances—and even for an individual it is so. Hence arises the fault of inconsistency between a man's past action and the present. But if anybody looks closely into the whole running chain of the man's career and thus perceives its subtle links, he would see no inconsistency in his apparently changed actions. Today perhaps I would ask somebody to kill a snake. But once I did not allow a snake that had crept on my body to be killed. And then once a snake had crept into the Ashram cow-shed and coiled itself at such a place as made it impossible to bring it out alive. I would sleep at ease if it did not come out, but others were worried. So Maganlal (Gandhiji's nephew) got it killed. That was not an inconsistent behaviour on my part. Or was it? You might say I saved my life at the cost of my principle of *ahimsa*. But in reality, there was no inconsistency, as I could have risked my life, but it was impossible to catch it and bring it out and it was my *dharma* to save the cows. However, let me say, that my nephew's killing the snake was as good or bad as my killing it.

"There is definitely a consistent chain running throughout this (my) life. All its actions are in pursuance of those principles I have stated.

"But for the nation, the behaviour pattern is different. I have talked of punishing a thief and keeping a small army for the protection of the country. But according to my concept of *ahimsa*, it is the country's *dharma* to see that it does not

have to fight with any other country. Because the world wants peace today and India is fitter than other countries to carry out this policy of peacefulness. I would have given a different advice to Afghanistan. Advices vary with the parties to which they are given. If we want to implant in our hearts the principle of universal love which is the natural outcome of non-violence, we must believe that there is sin in us also, so long as a worst sinner exists in the world. The reason is that 'no man is an island.' All creatures are interlinked. And if one link of a chain is weak, the whole chain is weak. That is the Gita-Dharma. How can you implement it, if you want to? The Gita says, so long as a soul encases itself in a body, it cannot help doing action of one kind or another. Before a soul goes beyond the confinement of a body, it has to free itself from the grip of the 'gunas'.¹ The body cannot function without the existence of the 3 *gunas* in it, hence a man who wants to gain liberation releases himself from the clutches of the 3 *gunas* to the extent that his contact with and dependence upon them decreases just as in science 'nature abhors vacuum'.

"A (geometrical) straight line is the ideal. The thinner a straight line is in breadth, the nearer it is to its strict definition. All our acts and things must manifest our ideal (as a straight line drawn on paper should show in the best way the ideal of no breadth). All things are concrete formations and when concretised they become narrowed and recede from the ideal to that extent. Even this discussion that is taking place among all of us is based on the ideal—the chain of truth and non-violence. Don't imagine that I am itching to write and speak and these articles and speeches are present experiences. It pains me when I write. But as long as I have not grown perfect, these articles may continue.² I cannot escape from the world even if I wanted to. The sayings of the Bible are

1. All life and matter possess 3 *gunas* (qualities)—*sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas* or equilibrium, activity and inertia.

2. Gandhiji thinks that a perfect man can influence the world by his thought power alone.

distorted. The principles of Mahavir (of Jainism) are twisted. In all the expositions of the Gita in Ahmedabad I see nothing but misinterpretations. Who am I when such giant souls are misconstrued? We must, therefore, bear things with patience.

"We shall have to put up with many things that may be going contrary to our ideals. Even living in a forest cannot shut you off from the world and make you detached. Science also says that a man in the clouds is subject to the same influences as we on the earth are. Wherever we go, God's power always runs after us.

"Hence, the *ahimsa* of national life with strict limitations. And hence, my statement that I would not remain in India when it does not take Swaraj by non-violent means. I said I would go to the Himalayas, but my Himalayas may also mean secluded life in the Ashram. My Ramchandra is different. My Krishna is not the wearer of a yellow silken *dhoti*. My Himalayas may be in my mind, or in the Ashram, or in the Himalayas themselves. For instance, take me as living in the Himalayas with regard to the Hindu-Muslim agitation. If I come out, may I not lose my temper against the Hindu or the Muslim? What would happen then? At present I am helpless. I have got a sovereign remedy for communal quarrels, but nobody would accept it today. But if I realize that I could not remain aloof from the quarrels by living in the Ashram or in the Himalayas, there is for me a way out to enable me to practise my principles and that is going on a fast or living in the quarters of the Bhangis (the lowest even among the untouchables).

"It is not true that in my concept of Swaraj nobody would be killing dogs, tigers, or leopards. But, certainly, we will not think of assuring our protection by having a big navy or will not arm ourselves more powerfully than Afghanistan. We shall not build up a navy out of fear from Japan. If you read the correspondence between me and Europe and America, you would be struck dumb with surprise. They (the correspondents)

are only a few. They may even be mad. But it is mad men that have brought about reforms in this world.

“I want you to join the army of truth and non-violence. That is my one goal, my one love. Hence, whether I read Ramayana or Bible’s New Testament to others, I would emphasize this same theme. And I would push into it the spinning-wheel too, somewhere in my elucidation”.

17-10-1926

Is this Humanity?

II

(Gandhiji’s second article in *Navajivan* of the above date translated into English by M. D. in *Young India* of 28-10-1926).

@ When I wrote the article on this subject, I knew that I was adding one more to my already heavy burden of troubles. But it could not be helped.

Angry letters are now pouring in. At an hour when after a hard day’s work I was about to retire to bed three friends invaded me, infringed the religion of *ahimsa* in the name of humanity, and engaged me in a discussion on it. They had come in the name of humanity. How could I refuse to see them? So I met them. One of them, I saw, betrayed anger, bitterness, and arrogance. He did not seem to me to have come with a view to getting his doubts solved. He had come rather to correct me. Everyone has a right to do so, but whoever undertakes such a mission must know my position. This friend had taken no trouble to understand my position. But he was not to blame for it. This impatience which is but a symptom of violence is to be found everywhere. The violence in this case was painful to me, as it was betrayed by an advocate of non-violence.

He claimed to be a Jain. I have made a fair study of Jainism. This visitor’s *ahimsa* was a distortion of the reality, as I have known it in Jainism. But the Jains have no monopoly of *ahimsa*. It is not the exclusive peculiarity of any

religion. Every religion is based on *ahimsa*, its application is different in different religions.

I do not think that the Jains of today practise *ahimsa* in any better way than others. I can say this because of my acquaintance with *Jains* which is so old that many take me to be a *Jain*. Mahavir was an incarnation of compassion, of *ahimsa*. How I wish his votaries were votaries also of his *ahimsa*!

Protection of little creatures is, indeed, an essential part of *ahimsa*, but it does not exhaust itself with it. Besides, protection may not always mean mere refraining from killing. Torture or participation, direct or indirect, in the unnecessary multiplication of those that must die, is *himsa*.

The multiplication of dogs is unnecessary. A roving dog without an owner is a danger to society and a swarm of them is a menace to its very existence.

If we want to keep dogs in towns or villages in a decent manner, no dog should be suffered to wander. There should be stray dogs even as we have no stray cattle. Humanitarian societies should find a religious solution of such questions.

But can we take individual charge of these roving dogs? And if we cannot, can we have a ‘*panjrapole*’ for them? If both these things are impossible, there seems to me to be no alternative except to kill them.

Connivance or putting up with the *status quo* is no *ahimsa*, there is no thought or discrimination in it. Dogs will be killed whenever they are a menace to society. I regard this as unavoidable in the life of a householder. To wait until they get rabid is not to be merciful to them. We can imagine what the dogs would wish if a meeting could be called of them, from what we would wish under the same circumstances. We will not choose to live anyhow. That many of us do so is no credit to us. A meeting of wise men will never resolve that men may treat one another as they treat rabid or stray dogs. What shall we expect of them, if there were some beings

23-10-1926

(Translated from M.D.'s manuscript diary. The date given above is the inference of the editor—Translator.)

Explaining the sentences "Protection may not always mean refraining from killing. Torture or participation, direct or indirect, in the unnecessary multiplication of those that must die," (in the above article) Gandhiji said :

"What does 'unnecessary multiplication' mean? What we do at present is to let dogs exist in a town or a village. That means we partly tame them and partly let them loose. The unnecessary multiplication of such dogs is dangerous. 'What then', some one may question, 'about the millions of men in India who carry on a miserable meaningless existence?' 'Well,' I would say, 'participation, direct or indirect, in their multiplication also is sin. You can multiply such instances. Where adultery is in vogue, it is a heinous sin to support it directly or indirectly. This idea seems to be novel. I once visited an Anathashram (orphanage), where I had a talk with its manager. About the Foundling Box there, I told him : "I do not like this idea. The innocent orphans that live here must be saved from the company of these babies." In having that Foundling Box, there is an unnecessary multiplication of prostitution. Either I would not donate any money to such an institution or would not let a Foundling Box be kept there.

"When we believe that the human species is superior to animals and when we want it to thrive without obstruction, shall we do so by killing other creatures? Certainly not. But this point has not much to do with the question of roving dogs. I have not suggested the destruction of dogs with a view to make human life safe from its enemies. I gave an immediate reply to Seth..., because I had already pondered deeply over the question. Where there was no fear of transgression of *dharma*, we acted at once. But where we have deduced a principle from that *dharma*, we may pause a little before implementing it, specially when our action goes against the prevailing mode. I did feel that the dogs had got to be destroyed,

lording it over us, as we do over our dogs? Would we not rather prefer to be killed than to be treated as dogs? We offend against dogs as a class by suffering them to stray and live on crumbs or leavings from our plates that we throw at them, and we injure our neighbours also by doing so.

I admit that there is the duty of suffering dogs to live even at the cost of one's life. But that religion is not for the householder who desires to live, who procreates, who would protect society. The householder can but practise the middle path of taking care of a few dogs.

Our domestics of today are the wild animals of yesterday. The buffalo is a domestic only in India. It is a sin to domesticate wild animals inasmuch as man does so for his selfish purposes. That he has domesticated the cow and the buffalo is not out of mercy for them, it is for his own use. He, therefore does not allow a cow or a buffalo to stray. The same duty is incumbent regarding dogs. I am, therefore, strongly of opinion that if we would practise the religion of humanity, we should have a law making it obligatory on those who would have dogs to keep them under guard, and not allow them to stray, and making all the stray dogs liable to be destroyed after a certain date.

If the Mahajan has really any mercy for the dogs, it should take possession of all the stray dogs and distribute them to those who want to keep them. It seems to me to be impossible to protect dogs as we can protect the cows.

But there is a regular science of dog—keeping which the people in the West have formulated and perfected. We should learn it from them and devise measures for the solution of our own problem. The work cannot be done without patience, wisdom and perseverance.

So much about dogs. But with *ahimsa* in its comprehensive aspect I propose to deal on another occasion.

but not in order to make human life free from thorns. Mankind, it is certain, is doomed if it makes it its principle to destroy other creatures to save its own species from danger. The beast will use its teeth and paws to secure its protection from another beast's attack. But control of the senses (of perception and action) is the *dharma* and ideal which mankind should follow. I suggested the destruction of dogs as a temporary measure that we have got to adopt in this our present stage of transition, so long as we have not reached a very high stage in the control of the senses.¹

“Sometimes it becomes one's duty to kill. For instance, suppose an enemy has cut only a half of my son's throat. It is my duty then to completely cut it off, for I must release him from his unbearable agony. Twenty years ago we had cats and dogs with us in Phoenix. A cat's skull became septic and white worms infested it. We applied many remedies, but to no effect. In a tone of despair and irritation, I was then asked what was to be done with the cat. We drowned it. There is a third example of deliberate killing. History shows that Rajputs followed the custom of *johar*. They would light a huge pyre and burn their wives to save their chastity. But there is mercy, not violence, in that act. That is violence which springs out of anger and desire to do evil to the creature killed. But in this action there is neither anger, nor desire to do evil, nor wanton destruction for its own sake, nor the murder of an enemy. Of course, blood is spilled, but we (Hindus) are never going to learn *ahimsa* in its true spirit, so long as we do not cease to be afraid of the sight of spilt-blood. There was one Baba Ramachandra who was a queer sample of man. He said: “Englishmen must not be killed, but boiling water must be poured into their throat.” Is that *ahimsa*?

I. M. D's long-hand manuscript notes are necessarily scrappy, and Gandhiji often asks his hearers 'to dot the 'is' and cross the 'ts', i. e. is very brief and leaves things to the imagination of the hearer. For both these reasons I am not sure, if I have interpreted Gandhiji correctly—Translator.

In answer to the question : “Is it true that man wants to go on living, no matter how very painful it be to do so ?”

Gandhiji said : “My experience is quite the contrary. The man who tamely submits to an intolerable situation is crazy. ‘Why did they not die rather than crawl like insects through the Crawling Lane’¹ was the universal cry of India. And we (Hindus) have imagined that dogs are sensible beings capable of true knowledge. I myself once advised people in South Africa—and my advice was acclaimed with loud cheer that it was better for the Indians there to be blown up by guns or to leave that country altogether, than to go on living under the humiliating treatment meted out to them. And there were lustful men, adulterers and murderers among those who accepted my advice and marched out of Transvaal. There were women also but, unlike you college girls here, they had not bedecked themselves in the latest fashion. They were simple illiterate women. Those people preferred death to dishonour. Harbat Singh lost his life.² He insisted on his accompanying us in the march and refused to go back home. There are also men who say, ‘Kill me, if I go mad.’ I at least am one of them. If I grow so mad as to rob the honour of a woman, do kill me. Then there is a vow called the *sanlekhana*—vow among the Jains themselves. The man who takes it binds himself down to remain without food and water for a specified number of days. If a man takes that vow, but grows mad with thirst afterwards and cries for water, it is good to let him die of thirst. There can be no talk of giving up a vow after once taking it in the case of a man of ‘knowledge’.

“Thinking over the problem of stray dogs, an entirely novel idea has struck me. But in propounding that new idea, I have not given up my principle of *ahimsa*. The new principle logically follows like a corollary, the old one of *ahimsa*. If it

1. There was a specific lane—it came later on to be nicknamed Crawling Lane in Amritsar which people were required to crawl through, and not walk through, under a Martial Law Order in the Punjab in 1919.

2. An aged Satyagrahi in the South African Struggle.

is possible, we all may domesticate dogs. But that is hardly possible. When, consequently, the dogs have grown into a terrible hardship, we shall have to kill them as an unavoidable step. When I burn *neem* leaves in my house and kill mosquitoes by its smoke, does it mean that I wish that mosquitoes may go on breeding and I go on destroying them? No. I do it as an unavoidable *himsa*.

“My solution of this question has nothing to do with what other nations would do in such cases. It would be a different matter, if I myself can save mosquitoes. If Whitemen come, destroy my jungles and thus, freeing a vast plain from mosquitoes, ask me to live there, am I a true *Vaishnava* (follower of Vishnu believes in non-violence), if I go there to stay? No. But we connive at others committing violence for our sake, because we are in a state of ignorance of the right principle of *ahimsa*. Hence, we have to commit this violence, just as we eat vegetables and green leaves as an indispensable necessity. So the principal element that makes for non-violence is mercy, pity, compassion.

“Somebody may object, ‘Should not a man cease to be so fond of his own life as to kill other creatures to preserve his own?’ This is my answer: ‘In order to keep alive the body of one creature, we should not allow the destruction of another. If the Seth.... does not fear death, if I do not fear death, you will find that the dogs’ lives will be saved. I do not do any such thing in my *Ashram* and go on putting off the question. But how long shall I go on beating them off with heavy sticks? If a surgeon’s hand shakes during an operation, what would be the plight of the patient? So let us not entrust a cowardly doctor with the treatment of the dogs. There are some men in Ahmedabad who are bold and strong. I want to see dogs in Ahmedabad also of the same stuff.”

Continuing the discourse on the New Testament Gandhiji said :

“The sentence ‘The quality of mercy is not strained’ is an

adoption of this verse No. 7. He who is merciful to others, can claim mercy for himself. “Is ‘*ahimsa* really *paramo dharma*’ (the highest *dharma*) or is it only a policy?”, the question arises, ‘Does it really supersede and cover up within itself all other *dharma*s? The word ‘*ahimsa*’ (*a* – not, *himsa* – violence) was lighted upon, when *Swami* (Mahavir Swami, the last and the latest ‘*Arhant*’ i.e. a perfected soul) saw *himsa* all round, when he saw जीवो जीवस्य जीवनम् (Life sustains itself upon some other life). By coining the word ‘*Ahimsa*’, he showed us the highest kind of spiritual practice. The Vedas discovered the word ‘*Neti*’ (– not this, not whatever man can imagine or speak about) and that is Truth. And the Vedas have shown the *Path* to attain it, namely, *ahimsa*. That *rishi* (Mahavir?) wanted to discover the quality of ‘*atman*’ (– Soul). Hence, his choice fell upon a word of a negative concept—*ahimsa*.

“The eighth verse refers to ‘the pure of heart’. That means that such a man is saturated with the spirit of ‘*sat*’ (truth or existence). The man who is pure of heart is bound to be truthful. Because Truth is God. What has been put in the *Vedas* in an implicit form has been put here in an explicit form. To the *man* who is kind and compassionate, truth is as clear as dayligh (literally, like the fruit of the *Emblic Myrobalan* in the palm of a man).

“There is nothing much to say about the ninth verse. Those who incite others to a quarrel cannot be happy. If any of you think of being a lawyer, do so with a view to bring about or keep peace.

“In the eleventh verse emphasis is to be laid on these two ‘falsely and for my sake’. That man is sure to feel happy, who is unjustly censured and whom people will spit upon, though he lives and acts in a spirit of dedication to the Lord.”

30-10-1926

Explaining V-12, Gandhiji said: “Observers of rites and rules’ does not mean those who do so with a glum face. Pharisees also observed the rules, but unwillingly—like a burden

imposed upon them. Jesus says that the injunctions must be kept not reluctantly, but very cheerfully. One must embrace poverty in fact and in spirit and, in order to cleanse the heart accept cheerfully as much suffering as falls to his lot in the wake of poverty. And why suffer so much? Because 'your reward is great in heaven'. This 'heaven'—this kingdom of heaven—is in the heart. The reward—the salary—of a servant is his service itself. When a servant demands payment for his service, he ceases to be a servant and becomes a menial. A servant of the country may expect anything else, but not money. But he must not expect even thanks. Chalmers has said: 'Duty will be merit, when debt becomes a donation.' With empty hands we are born and with empty hands we have to go. We are born in order that we may repay our debt. Debt and duty are one and the same. In this age, even that man who pays his debt is adored as a hero. But the man who pays off his debt confers no obligation upon anybody. We are indebted to *Bharatvarsha*. Whom then are we obliging by our service of our country? What does it matter if people even kill us? For, so 'did they persecute the prophets'. And does it matter at all, if in the same way people bitterly condemn you and incite others against you? I had a friend — an Englishman. When he decided to help me, he said: "I am going to help you because you are a few (in South Africa) and we are many." The man, with a majority on his side, is a bloated egotist. When everybody joins in acclaiming you, take it that there is something fishy in it. At his very first meeting, therefore, that Englishman gave me a warning: 'You will be oppressed. If you point out the disease that has affected the modern times, they will shake their heads in disapproval. But the more you are persecuted, the deeper you may go into your heart and rejoice at your suffering.'

V—13 :

"You are the salt of the earth. This world can keep up its tastefulness through your life. We get the purest air from

the sea. If it gives up the salt it has, the world would become insipid. You are the sea that produces life-giving air to the world. You must never lose your savour."

V—14, 15

"These sentences, 'You are the light of the earth etc.', have been abused also by men who belong to this creed (Christianity). When men, going out to serve others, proclaim themselves as the light of the earth, would not these 'servants' grow puffed up with vanity? But these sentences do not exhort servants to be proud and insolent. There has already been the commandment to be humble—to be poor in spirit. Streams of pity must always be flowing from the heart of the servant. But from fear of getting proud, you must not run away from the field of service. Do not carry a false sense of humility about you and never shrink from your duty of service. You must come forward and boldly declare, 'Here we are! Ready to mount the scaffold, if you wish it so.' Because it is the characteristic of the candle to consume itself and give light to others. Never therefore, avoid serving people as best as you can."

V—16

"You are going to the people as witnesses (of God's truth). People will, therefore, be believers in God from your testimony. And at the sight of your work and life, they will not pat you on the back, but bless God. You are not the light in facts, but the outer case of the Light. If you hide the Light that is within you, and do not let it shed its lustre around, you are faithless to Him—the Light within. Behave, therefore, in such a way as will make people praise God."

V—17

"Don't think that some altogether new man has descended upon the earth and that I (Jesus) have come to make a new world and new laws. I have come but to fulfil the Law that sustains the world or to complement the limitations in it made by the Prophets."

V18—

“That is the inevitable law of ‘*karma*’. Even God has not reserved for Himself the power to change His laws. The power of God is so difficult to perceive, that we can see it only from His laws. He is the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer. But that too He is within the limit of His Law, Let the Lords on the earth—mighty potentates—claim to be under the subjection of no law. God definitely is subject to that law.”

V—19

“Therefore, whosoever transgresses the laws made by God or instigates others and makes them break them, cannot keep the first rank (He will be called ‘the last’).”

V—20 to 22

“Your righteousness—purity—has got to excel that of the Pharisees. If you don’t become purer, there is no hope for the doors of heaven to open for you. It is possible for them (the Pharisees and others) to go to heaven, for they do not possess much wealth. But as you did not return with more money than were given you, you will be regarded as fools.

“Non-violence demands that you must not prod a bullock either with a sharp nail, or even with its blunt end. There are the words ‘without a cause’¹ (in V-22), but they are not to be taken as a modifying condition. Christ has used even more bitter words—than ‘*Raca*’, but perhaps it will be said that he had a reason for it. Let nobody abuse this text (and justify anger on any account). Can we, for instance, say that General Dyer² had reason for what he did and said?”

V—23 to 24

“If, when you are carrying even a little flower to a temple you remember that your brother does not speak with you

1. The sentence is : “Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of judgment”.

2. Reference to General Dyer’s massacre of unarmed men, women and children at Jallian-wala Bag in 1919, and his proud justification of the act.

because of a quarrel with you, your going to the temple without conciliating him will be regarded as hypocrisy. You must, first, beg your brother’s pardon and only then your little gift will be accepted by God. If you want to observe the rules of ‘*yama* etc.’¹, there is but this Law for you.”

V-25, 26.

“You must come to terms with your enemy at once. What you of all people must do is to settle your dispute, with him by a direct approach. That is, let alone a law court, you are not to resort to even arbitration. The laws shown here are meant for leading a man to perfection. Even though imperfect men are asked to do this thing in this imperfect world, you will find that in 95 cases out of 100, you need not resort to law or arbitration. You are not to owe anything—money or grudge—to anybody. At the time of his death, the prophet (Mohammed) suddenly remembered that he was owing a few pennies to somebody. After giving the instruction that the debt was to be paid off, the Prophet breathed his last.

‘Without cause’ (in V-22) jarred in my mind. I looked into the revised edition—Moft’s translation. Weymouth does not give the words at all, and Moft gives them only in brackets. These words are inconsistent with the *ahimsa* of Jesus.”

4-11-1926

Is This Humanity

III

(M. D’s translation of Gandhiji’s article)

@ Whilst I admit the possibility of having made a mistake in giving the opinion that the destruction by Mr. Ambalal’s order of those sixty dogs was unavoidable, I do not regret having expressed that opinion. The result so far is all to the good. We shall perhaps now understand our duty to such

1. The ‘*yamas*’ and the ‘*niyamas*’ are : Truth, *ahimsa*, *brahmacharya*, non-possession, non-stealing, contentment, purity and cleanliness, austerity, study, and surrender to God—in all 10.

animals. Much wrong has been done partly out of ignorance, partly from hypocrisy and partly for fear of public opinion. All that should now cease.

But if the good is to be maintained, a clear understanding is necessary between the readers and myself. I have received quite a pile of letters on this subject, some friendly, some sharp, and some bitter. They do not seem to have understood my attitude on the destruction of dogs by Mr. Ambalal. I have often had the misfortune to be misunderstood. In South Africa my life was in peril over an action which was quite consistent with my avowed principles but which, as was proved later, was rashly regarded as contrary to them. The so-called 'Himalayan blunder' of Bardoli¹ is a recent memory. Bombay Government very kindly imprisoned me at Yeravada and saved me the trouble of much writing by way of explaining and clearing my position. The Bardoli decision, I still hold, was not wrong. It was, on the contrary, an act of purest *ahimsa* and of invaluable service to the country. I feel just as clear about my opinion regarding the present question. I hold that the opinion is perfectly in accord with my conception of *ahimsa*.

The critics, whether friendly or hostile should bear with me. Some of the hostile critics have transgressed the limits of decorum. They have made no attempt to understand my position. It seems they cannot, for a moment, tolerate my opinion. Now they must be one of two things. They are either my teachers or they regard me as one. In the latter case they should be courteous and patient and should have faith in me and ponder over what I write. In the former case, they should be indulgent to me and try to reason with me as lovingly and patiently as they can. I teach the children under my care not by being angry with them, but I teach

1. As there were 3 outbursts of violence,—and the last was the most frightful, Gandhiji withdrew mass civil-dis-obedience. (even before launching it) at Bardoli in 1922 though he had already given an ultimatum to the Government.

them, if at all, by loving them, by allowing for their ignorance and by playing with them. I expect the same love, the same consideration and the same sportsmanlike spirit from my angry teachers. I have given my opinion with regard to the dogs with the best of motives and as a matter of duty. If I am mistaken, let the critics, who would teach me, reason with me patiently and logically. Angry and irrelevant argument will not convince me.

A gentleman called on me the other evening at a late hour. He knew that my time was completely occupied. He engaged me in a discussion, used hard and bitter language, and poured vials of wrath on me. I answered his questions in good humour and politely. He published the interview in a leaflet which he is selling. It is before me. It has crossed the limits of truth, obviously of decorum. He had neither obtained my permission to publish the interview nor showed it before publication. Does he seek to teach me in this manner? He who trifles with truth cuts at the root of *ahimsa*. He who is angry is guilty of *himsa*. How can such a man teach me *ahimsa*?

Even so the hostile critics are doing me a service. They teach me to examine myself. They afford me an opportunity to see if I am free from the reaction of anger. And when I go to the root of their anger, I find nothing but love. They have attributed me *ahimsa* as they understand it. Now they find me acting in a contrary manner and are angry with me. They once regarded me as a *mahatma* (a high soul), they were glad that my influence on the people was according to their liking. Now I am an *alpatma* (a little soul) in their opinion, my influence on the people they now regard as unwholesome and they are pained by the discovery; and as they cannot control themselves, they turn the feeling of pain into one of anger.

I do not mind this outburst of anger, as I appreciate the motive behind it. I must try to reason with them patiently, and if they would help me in my attempt, I request them to

calm their anger. I am a votary of truth and a seeker after it. If I am convinced that I am mistaken, I shall admit my mistake (as I always love to do), and shall promptly mend it. It is the word of the Scriptures that the mistakes of a votary of truth never harm anybody. That is the glorious secret of truth.

Just a word to friendly critics. I have preserved your letters. I usually reply to my correspondents individually. But the number of letters I have received this time and have been still getting is so large and they are so inordinately long that I cannot possibly reply to them individually. I cannot, I fear, make time even to acknowledge them. Some of the correspondents ask me to publish their letters in Navajivan. I hope they will not press the request. I shall try to answer all the arguments that are relevant as well as I can and hope that will satisfy them.

I bespeak the indulgence of the reader for this necessary preface. I shall now take up some of the letters before me. A friend says :

“You ask us not to feed stray dogs. But we do not invite them. They simply come. How can they be turned back ? It will be time enough when there is a plethora of them. But is there any doubt that feeding dogs cultivates the impulse of compassion and turning them away hardens our hearts ? We are all sinners. Why should we not practise what little kindness we can ?”

It is from this false feeling of compassion that we encourage *himsa* in the name of *ahimsa*. But as ignorance is no excuse before man-made law, even so is it no excuse before the divine Law.

But let us analyse the argument. We cast a morsel at the beggar come to our door and feel that we have earned some merit, but we really thereby add to the number of beggars, aggravate the evil of beggary, encourage idleness and consequently promote irreligion. This does not mean that we should starve the really deserving beggars. It is the duty of society

to support the blind and the infirm, but every one may not take the task upon himself. The head of the society, i.e. the Mahajan or the State, where it is well organized, should undertake the task and the philanthropically inclined should subscribe funds to such an institution. If the Mahajan is pure-minded and wise, it will carefully investigate the condition of beggars and protect the deserving ones. When this does not happen, i.e. when relief is indiscriminate, scoundrels disguised as beggars get the benefit of it and the poverty of the land increases.

If it is a sin on the part of an individual to undertake beggars, it is no less a sin for him to feed stray dogs. It is a false sense of compassion. It is an insult to the starving dog to throw a crumb at him. Roving dogs do not indicate the civilization or compassion of society, they betray, on the contrary, the ignorance and lethargy of its members. The lower animals are our brethren. I include among them the lion and the tiger. We do not know how to live with these carnivorous beasts and poisonous reptiles because of our ignorance. When man knows himself better, he will learn to befriend even these. Today he does not know how to befriend a man of a different religion or from a foreign country.

The dog is a faithful companion. There are numerous instances of the faithfulness of dogs and horses. But that means that we should keep them and treat them with respect, as we do our companions, and not allow them to roam about. By aggravating the evil of stray dogs we shall not be acquitting ourselves of our duty to them. But if we regard the existence of stray dogs as a shame to us, and therefore refuse to feed them, we shall be doing the dogs as a class a real service and make them happy.

What then can a human man do for stray dogs ? He should set apart a portion of his income and send it on to a society for the protection of these animals, if there be one. If such society is impossible—and I know it is very difficult even if it is not impossible—he should try to own one or more

dogs. If he cannot do so, he should give up worrying about the question of dogs and direct his humanity towards the service of other animals.

'But you are asking us to destroy them', is the question angrily or lovingly asked by others. Now, I have not suggested the extirpation of dogs as an absolute duty. I have suggested the killing of some dogs as a 'duty in distress' and under special circumstances. When the State does not care for stray dogs, nor does the Mahajan, and when one is not prepared to take care of them oneself, then, and if one regards them as a danger to society, he should kill them and relieve them of a lingering death. This is a bitter dose, I agree. But it is my innermost conviction that true love and compassion consist in taking it.

The dogs in India are today in as bad a plight as the decrepit animals and men in the land. It is my firm conviction that this sorry plight is due to our misconception of *ahimsa*. Practice of *ahimsa* cannot have as its result impotence, impoverishment, and famine. If this is a sacred land we should not see impoverishment stalking it. From this state of things some rash and impatient souls have drawn the conclusion that *ahimsa* is irreligion. But I know that it is not *ahimsa* that is wrong, it is its votaries that are wrong.

Ahimsa is the religion of a Kshatriya. Buddha was a Kshatriya, Rama and Krishna were Kshatriyas and all of them were votaries of *ahimsa*. We want to propagate *ahimsa* in their name. But today *ahimsa* has become the monopoly of timid Vaishnavas and that is why it has been besmirched. *Ahimsa* is the extreme limit of forgiveness. But forgiveness is the quality of the brave. *Ahimsa* is impossible without fearlessness.

Cows we cannot protect, dogs we kick about and belabour with sticks, their ribs are seen sticking out, and yet we are not ashamed of ourselves and raise a hue and cry when a stray dog is killed. Which of the two is better—that five thousand dogs should wander about in semi-starvation, living on dirt and excreta and drag on a miserable existence, or that fifty should

die and keep the rest in a decent condition? It is admittedly sinful always to be spurning and kicking the dogs. But it is possible that the man who kills the dogs that he cannot bear to see tortured thus, may be doing a meritorious act. Merely taking life is not always *himsa*, one may even say that there is sometimes more *himsa*, in not taking life. We must examine the position in another article.

IV

Taking life may be a duty. Let us consider this position. We do destroy as much life as we think is necessary for sustaining the body. Thus for food we take life, vegetable and other, and for health we destroy mosquitoes and the like by the use of disinfectants etc. and we do not think we are guilty of irreligion in doing so.

This is as regards one's own self. But for the sake of others, i.e., for the benefit of the species, we kill carnivorous beasts. When lions and tigers pester their villages, the villagers regard it a duty to kill them or have them killed.

Even man-slaughter¹ may be necessary in certain cases. Suppose a man runs amuck and goes furiously about with a sword in hand, and killing any one that comes his way; and no one dares to capture him alive. Any one who despatches this lunatic will earn the gratitude of the community and be regarded a benevolent man.

From the point of view of *ahimsa* it is the plain duty of every one to kill such a man. There is, indeed, one exception, if it can be so called. The *yogi* who can subdue the fury of this dangerous man may not kill him. But we are not dealing here with beings who have almost reached perfection, we are considering the duty of the society, of the ordinary erring human beings.

There may be a difference of opinion as regards the appositeness of my illustrations. But if they are inadequate, others can be easily imagined. What they are meant to show

1. See the article 'The Greatest Good of all' d. 9-12 1926

is that refraining from taking life can in no circumstances be an absolute duty.

The fact is that *ahimsa* does not simply mean non-killing. *Himsa* means causing pain to or killing any life out of anger, or from a selfish purpose, or with the intention of injuring it. Refraining from so doing is *ahimsa*.

The physician who prescribes a bitter medicine causes you pain but does no *himsa*. If he fails to prescribe a bitter medicine when it is necessary to do so, he fails in his duty of *ahimsa*. The surgeon who, from fear of causing pain to his patient, hesitates to amputate a rotten limb is guilty of *himsa*. He who refrains from killing a murderer who is about to kill his ward (when he cannot prevent him otherwise) earns no merit, but commits a sin, he practises no *ahimsa* but *himsa* out of a fatuous sense of *ahimsa*.

Let us now examine the root *ahimsa*. It is uttermost selflessness. Selflessness means complete freedom from a regard for one's body. When some sage observed man killing numberless creatures, big and small, out of a regard for his own body he was shocked at his ignorance. He pitied him for thus forgetting the deathless soul encased within the perishable body, and for thinking of the ephemeral physical pleasure in preference to the eternal bliss of the spirit. He therefrom deduced the duty of complete self-effacement. He saw that if man desired to realize himself i.e., the Truth, he could do so only being completely detached from the body, i.e., by making all other beings feel safe from him. That is the way of *ahimsa*.

A realization of this truth shows that the sin of *himsa* consists not in merely taking life, but in taking life for the sake of one's perishable body. All destruction, therefore, involved in the process of eating, drinking etc., is selfish and therefore, *himsa*. But man regards it to be unavoidable and puts up with it. But the destruction of bodies of tortured creatures being for their own peace cannot be regarded as *himsa*, or the unavoidable destruction caused for the purpose of protecting one's wards cannot be regarded as *himsa*.

This line of reasoning is liable to be most mischievously used. But that is not because the reasoning is faulty, but because of the inherent frailty of man to catch at whatever pretexts he can get to deceive himself to satisfy his selfishness or egoism. But that danger may not excuse one from defining the true nature of *ahimsa*. Thus we arrive at the following result from the foregoing :

- (1) It is impossible to sustain one's body without the destruction of other bodies to some extent.
- (2) All have to destroy some life
 - (a) for sustaining their own bodies,
 - (b) for protecting those under their care; or
 - (c) sometimes for the sake of those whose life is taken.
- (3) (a) and (b) in (2) mean *himsa* to a greater or less extent. (c) means no *himsa* and is, therefore, *ahimsa*. *Himsa* in (a) and (b) is unavoidable.
- (4) A progressive *ahimsaist* will, therefore, commit the *himsa* contained in (a) and (b) as little as possible, only when it is unavoidable, and after full and mature deliberation and having exhausted all remedies to avoid it.

The destruction of dogs that I have suggested comes under (4) and can, therefore, be resorted to only when it is unavoidable, when there is no other remedy and after mature deliberation. But I have not the slightest doubt that refraining from that destruction when it is unavoidable is worse than destruction. And, therefore, although there can be no absolute duty to kill dogs etc., it becomes a necessary duty for certain people at certain times and in certain circumstances.

I shall now try to take up one by one some of the questions that have been asked to me. Some correspondents demand personal replies, and in case I fail to do so threaten to publish their views. It is impossible for me to reach every individual correspondent by a personal reply. Those that are necessary

I shall deal with here. I have no right, nor desire, to stop people from carrying on the controversy in other papers. I may remind the correspondents, however, that threats and impatience have no place in a sober religious discussion.

A correspondent asks :

“How did you hit upon the religion of destroying dogs at the old age of 57 ? If it had occurred to you earlier than this, why were you silent so long ?”

Man proclaims a truth only when he sees it and when it is necessary, no matter even if it be in his old age. I have long recognized the duty of killing such animals within the limits laid down above, and have acted up to it on occasions. In India the villagers have long recognized the duty of destroying intruding dogs. They keep dogs who scare away intruders and kill them if they do not escape with their lives. These watch-dogs are purposely maintained with a view to protecting the village from other dogs etc., as also from thieves and robbers whom they attack fearlessly. The dogs have become a nuisance only in cities, and the best remedy is to have a law against stray dogs. That will involve the least destruction of dogs and ensure the protection of citizens.

Another correspondent asks :

“Do you expect to convince people by logical argument in a matter like that of *ahimsa* ?”

The rebuke contained in this is not without some substance. But I wanted to convince no one. Being a student and practiser of *ahimsa* I have had to give expression to my views when the occasion demanded it. I have an opinion based on experience that logic and reasoning have some place—no doubt very small—in a religious discussion.

6-11-1926 (probable date)

V-27 to 30

“This sentiment is nobler than the former. If your mind sinks into mud, what avails your outward cleanliness ? Such a man may be saved from the clutches of the law of man, but

before God he is definitely a criminal. The world has not the measure to assess the gravity of that crime. You are not *brahmacharis*, so long as you do not wash off the corruption of the mind. The guilty eye must be plucked, so that one member of the body may perish in order to save the whole body from hell. Here the whole body has the sense of the soul. Can we obey this command to the letter ? I say, if anybody plucks his eye, he is not mad in the eyes of Jesus. There certainly are such examples in history. There is a scriptural text also that supports such a step, viz., if a man does a thing he never should and if he realizes the gravity of the sin, he may commit suicide. One scripture imagines a situation in which suicide for the man is a virtue and abstinence from it a moral crime.

“But how many of us have the guts to do so ? And if we simply turn away our eyes, or close them, even then we are admired.

“Young men have been always flooding me with letters to say that their thoughts and eyes never cease to wander. Some (White) sisters in South Africa used to tell me, “We, women, fear to attend your meetings.” Fear, not of a physical touch—because if anybody made a pass at them, they would shoot him. And this woman used to wander fearlessly in the streets of Johannesburg. I asked her the cause of her shrinking. She said, “Many of your men (Indians) have the impertinence to stare at us.” But I do not thereby mean to say that Europeans generally surpass us in character. Our young men cannot close their eyes as that is their habit. The verse means one must pluck the eye of the mind. In ‘the hand must be cast off’ it means the hand of the mind. But Jesus went further and said plainly that there was nothing wrong in following the commandment even to the letter. For, these limbs must be regarded as the gravest offenders.”

V-31, 32.

“Is the wife included among ‘women’, in these verses ?” asks somebody. I say “certainly”. That Woman—the wife—is

your fellow-pilgrim, your co-partner in the performance of your *dharma*. The man who never deviates from regarding his wife as his sister wins the battle of life. But if he does not do that and looks upon his wife as one that is bound to satisfy his lust, he is a profligate. From sacramental marriages we have come down to contract marriages. Today we have turned a holy marriage into a contract at will. Moses had only said that women also must be given the freedom of divorce, but Jesus says that the wife must never be put away except for fornication. It is true indeed that in Europe a big tangled web has been woven round these words of Jesus and any amount of licence is taken.

"What I have written about child-widows has been misinterpreted. I have only said that a child-marriage can never be a marriage sanctioned by religion. Jesus also emphasises the same point. He does not talk of marriages that are forced upon the marrying parties. But among us people become butcher and slaughter their daughters. Read Tagore's "The Wreck".

V-33 to 38

"Moses contented himself by saying, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself." He gave to the world only as much as the people of his times could assimilate. There is no doubt that Moses also was a great reformer. Jesus goes further. He says, "Swear not at all". He asks, "How dare you swear when the earth does not belong to you? Not even a hair of your head is yours. You are to do everything in the spirit of dedication to God."

11-11-1926

Is This Humanity?

V

@ A friend writes a long letter mentioning his difficulties and pointing out what Jainism has to say to him, a Shrawak (a Jain house-holder), in the matter. One of his questions is :

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DAY-TO-DAY

"You say that if we can neither take individual charge of roving dogs nor have a *panjrapol* for them, the only alternative is to kill them. Does that mean that every roving dog should be killed, although it may not be rabid? Don't you agree that we leave unmolested all harmful beasts, birds, and reptiles so long as they do not actually harm us? Why should the dogs be an exception? Where is the humanity of shooting innocent dogs wherever they are found roving? How can one wishing well to all living beings do this?"

The writer has misunderstood my meaning. I would not suggest the destruction of even rabid dogs for the sake of it, much less that of innocent roving dogs. Nor have I said that these latter should be killed wherever they are found. I have only suggested legislation to that effect, so that as soon as the law is made, humane people might wake up in the matter and devise measures for the better management of stray dogs. Some of these might be owned, some might be put in quarantine. The remedy, when it is taken, will be once for all. Stray dogs do not drop down from heaven. They are a sign of the idleness, indifference, and ignorance of society. When they grow into a nuisance, it is due to our ignorance and want of compassion. A stray dog is bound to take to its heels if you do not feed him. The measure that I have suggested is actuated no less by consideration of the welfare of the dogs than by that of society. It is the duty of a humanitarian to allow no living being aimlessly to roam about. In performance of that duty it may be his duty once in a way to kill some dogs.

Here is another question :

"I agree that the dogs are sure to be killed whenever they become a menace to society. But you say, 'To wait until they get rabid is not to be merciful to them.' This means that every dog is potentially rabid and that, therefore it, should be killed as a matter of precaution. I met a friend from the *Ashram* who assured me that you did not mean this, and that you had suggested it only as a last resource when dogs had

WITH GANDHI-VIII

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become a manace. This is not clear from your articles. Will you make it clear ?”

My previous articles and my answer to the first question leave nothing to be cleared. I must explain what I mean when I say that you cannot wait on until the dog gets rabid. Every stray dog is harmful. The harm is confined to cities alone and it must stop. We do not wait until the serpent bites us. The rabies of the dog is concealed in its capacity to bite. A friend has sent me cases of hydrophobia treated in the Civil Hospital, Ahmedabad :

Period	Cases from the city	Cases from the district	Total
Jan to Dec '25	194	923	1,117
Jan to Sept '26	296	695	990

These figures must alarm every one who is interested in the welfare of the community, especially if he is a humanitarian. I admit that all the cases may not be hydrophobia. But it is difficult to say whether a dog is or is not rabid and many run in fear to the hospital because most dogs are found to be rabid afterwards. There is only one remedy to relieve them of this fear and it is not to allow dogs to roam about.

I was in England 40 years ago when effective measures were taken to stamp out rabies. There were, of course, no stray dogs there. But even for the dogs which had regular owners, an order was passed that dogs found without collars with the name and address of the owner and without muzzles would be killed. The measure was taken purely in the public interest. Practically the next day all the dogs in London were found to be with collars and muzzles. It was, therefore, necessary to kill only a very few. If any one thinks that the people in the West are innocent of humanity, he is sadly mistaken. The ideal of humanity in the West is perhaps lower, but their practice of it is very much more thorough than ours. We rest content with a lofty ideal and are slow or lazy in its practice.

We are wrapped in deep darkness, as is evident from our paupers, cattle, and other animals. They are eloquent of our irreligion rather than of religion.

Here is a third question :

“You have different definitions of religion for the individual and for society. But why should not religion in both cases be the same? The ideal ought to be the same for both. That it may be impossible to carry it out is a different matter. For even in case of the individual, only the occasion can show how far he has been able to carry out his ideal in practice. You yourself have said that your ideal is to save even a cruel animal at the risk of your life, but you could not say what you would actually do when faced by such an animal. There is no reason why society should not similarly have a lofty ideal and leave the individuals free to practise it according to their capacity.”

My definition of religion for the individual and for society is the same. The ideal must always be the same, but the practice I have conceived to be different in the case of the individual and the society. Truly speaking, practice differs in case of every individual. I do not know of two men having the same extent of the practice of *ahimsa* though their definition of *ahimsa* is the same. The extent of practice in case of society is the average of the different capacities of its members. Thus, for instance, where a section of the society is milkarian and the other fruitarian, the practice of the society extends to the use of milk and fruit.

The writer next sets out two Jain doctrines as follows :

“Jainism is based on the doctrine of *syadvada* manysidedness of reality. As is aptly said: “No absolute rule is correct; only the relative rule is the correct rule.” Which means that an act which may be described as *himsa* under certain circumstances may be *ahimsa* under other circumstances. Man should always use his discrimination in determining his conduct. There are two classes of Jains. *Sadhus* (the monks) and *Shrawaks* (the laity). Their code of conduct is thus defined:

The *Sadhu* is always non-violent. He may not eat to save himself, may not cook for himself, may not walk even a step for his own purpose—all his activity is for the welfare of the community and it should be as harmless as possible. He has to avoid the 42 infringements laid down in the Shastras. The *Sadhu* is described as *nirgrantha*, free from bonds. So far as I know, there is no *Sadhu* today who can satisfy the definition of a *Sadhu* given above.

“The Shrawak may not kill or injure any living being, except when it is essential for himself. He is a worldly man and he cannot take his humanity farther than this. So if 20 percent compassion is expected of the *Sadhu*, 1.25 percent is expected of the Shrawak. If the latter goes beyond the measure expected of him, he approaches the state of a *Sadhu*, but as a Shrawak nothing more is expected of him.”

I knew the substance of this distinction. I am quite conscious that the Jain doctrine is not contrary to the opinion I have expressed in these articles. If the Jains accept the interpretation given above, the opinion expressed by me can be deduced from it. But whether they accept it or not, I humbly submit that my opinion is capable of being, and has been, independently justified.

13-11-1926 (probable date)

V-38 to 48

“Compare these verses with Shamal Bhatta’s poem “He who gives water to you”¹. The spirit of this couplet is the same as that of these verses. Jesus’ Sermon rises to the climax of its beauty in these verses. They are the key to the life of Jesus. These expressions are the briefest commentary on *ahimsa*. He who understands *ahimsa* to mean merely refraining from taking life does not know the abc of it. If the writer of the

1. The whole couplet is :

Give a meal to him who gives you water,
Prostrate yourself a hundred times to him
Who makes a courteous bow.

scripture (Patanjali on Yoga) is right in describing the result of *ahimsa*, hatred and even natural enmity between creatures subside completely before the man established in *ahimsa*. If that is so, the meaning of *ahimsa* cannot be limited to refraining from only taking life. Millions of people may be observing *ahimsa* in that coarse sense today. But where do you see the result? From the *ahimsa* stated here, we gain deeper faith in our own religion. There is not a single expression in these verses that is ambiguous. The verses give even two or three instances (of *ahimsa*). As long as *ahimsa* does not spread into every fibre of your being, you will not be able to implement *ahimsa* to this degree in life. When a test comes, the coward will take to his heels and the brave will stand firm. He will not give way to anger or hatred, nor will he browbeat any body. Armed simply with compassion and courage, he will face the situation. How very heroic we sometimes find the spirit of women in Hindu society! They do not pit themselves against their husbands. I remember the instance of one English woman also. Her husband thrashed her. She did nothing whatever in return. Only, tears were streaming down her cheeks. All she said was, “If you want to beat me still more, here I am.” That incident turned the husband into her adorer. If this is not bemeaning yourself, this is not like crawling on the belly, when you are asked to rub your nose against the ground. The latter is done out of fear and with the inward hope that somebody may come up to help the person. But this English woman was a brave lady. She simply exhibited in an impressive form the innate power she possessed. It is only before the like of her, that *ahimsa* may dance attendance.

“Such *ahimsa* we are not able to imbibe easily and quickly. But that should not lead us to the conclusion that such feats of *ahimsa* are impossible. That conclusion forgets the fact that the potential power of the soul is boundless and infinite. It is human nature to confine one’s belief to only that which appears possible today, But all the discoveries of modern times are nothing before the discovery of this infinite power of the

soul. Which is the greatest discovery in the history of the world? To me they are only two.

“The first, of truth, or the definition of it which Shankaracharya has given, viz., Brahma is the One Truth. Mohammad said, “Allah is one” That also is a hint of the same truth. सत्यान्नास्ति परो धर्मः । (—There is no religion higher than truth). The second discovery is अहिंसा परमो धर्मः (—*ahimsa* is the highest duty).

“To me it seems that there never can be any discovery greater than these two. We are all imperfect creatures. But why should that deter us from speaking out what we feel? It is because I have experienced this kind of life (of truth and *ahimsa* ?) for many many years that I say so. I remember Wallace-Darwin’s contemporary—to have stated at the ripe age of 90 that, comparing the Western civilization with the primitive, he felt that all our modern civilization was of little account and there has been no progress whatever in morality.

“But if more sublime principles will not be discovered, how wonderful and numerous are the discoveries we make as we traverse along that path! Explorers who head towards the North and the South Poles will show courage and adventure, undoubtedly. But how high will these exploits raise the world spiritually? To me for one it seems that these adventures are not going to raise our moral calibre.

“By saying what he did in Verse 40, Jesus wished men to be *aparigrahi* (free from possession) A man may possess wealth, but only as a guardian or a trustee. What is the meaning of these sentences—‘Do not possess things,’ ‘do not beat the man who beats you’, and ‘give away whatever somebody demands from you?’ Does it mean that everyone is free to do anything he likes with your body? If we understand the words literally, we would only become fools and dupes. But the meaning of the words is different. We are, in fact, born debtors. We have much to repay and to many people. This body, that you have with you has been lent to

you for good use. Give it to anybody who wants it. And you know, I am sure, the story of that half-gold mongoose¹. Even Yudhishtir’s sacrifice could not turn the mongoose’s body into that of gold. Take these verses to mean only this much: ‘If you have food and some deserving person comes up, give it away to him.’

“Then it is said: ‘Love your enemy.’ What else should a man do, if the principle of *adwaita* (non-duality in life, matter and everything) is true ?

“What is the meaning of the idea that a man should desire to see others as himself? One must forget the separateness of one physical frame from another. This is the description of a man who has as much compassion as Ramdas (a mediaeval saint of Maharashtra) had.

“Abuse was answered by murder in the times of Moses. Hence, he curbed the urge for retaliation by giving the law of an eye for an eye. He felt that if the people of his age could observe even this much restraint; it was good for them. One must understand the difference between a permissive and an obligatory law. ‘Tooth for a tooth’ was a permissive law, not an obligatory one. Were it the latter, Jesus could not have announced these maxims, because He had come to fulfil the Law. Moses contented himself with this much, but we are his heirs. It is necessary for an heir to increase the wealth he inherits.

“That action will make you fit for the heritage you receive. You will then be the children of your Father which

1. A very pious family remained hungry for four consecutive weeks in order to feed a guest with their scant provision. A mongoose rolled over the ground wetted by the guest, when he washed his hands after his meal. Its body turned into that of gold, but only half of it, because the water spilled on the ground did not spread sufficiently to make the whole body one of gold. That mongoose rolled again on the wetted ground at the sacrifice performed by the very virtuous Yudhishtira, where he had given away princely sums in charity. But yet the half-body remained untransformed, because the renunciation of that holy but poor family was superior in merit to Yudhishtira’s sacrifice and bounties.

is in heaven. If a father trains the child in the right way, the son must be able to do what the father can. Hence, Jesus says, 'Don't you see what the Lord God does? His rain and His sun fall and shine equally on the good and the bad. You must have the attitude of equality. If you love the one who loves you, it means nothing.' 'Publicans' means those who collect the land-tax. What is the difference between you who serve the world and the publicans who are Government officers? Even the 'talati' (village officer who collects Government dues) salutes the person who salutes him. But you will be appraised as worthy to be called men, only when you salute even that man who does not salute you.

"By the use of the word 'therefore' in V-48, the chain of cause and effect has been shown. It is your ideal to be perfect and you are striving for it. If anybody wants to attain perfection, he has got to implement that ideal in life. This can be interpreted to mean also, 'You must love your enemies etc., because *ahimsa* is the one and the highest *dharma* for man'. One whose *ahimsa* has not reached perfection will always pray that it may do so. This verse means that you must be completely lost in God. If you wish to become God (to use the language of the Vedanta), you must observe *ahimsa*.

"Arguments can be advanced against this *ahimsa*. I, for one humbly say, 'Let everybody understand this principle, assimilate it, make frequent experiments in it and dedicate his life to such experiments'. If dangerous hazards have to be faced for the North Pole; we must give up our whole life for becoming perfect in imbibing this principle. We must have the power to laugh, even if somebody spits upon us. The vow of *ahimsa* is as hard to practise as a sword-dance. Truth is far away from us, without *ahimsa*, but if we have *ahimsa* at heart, we can see truth near us. I see it (truth) coming nearer and nearer day by day. Hard work and austerity and patience are required to attain Truth. Shankaracharya has shown us what amount of patience and perseverance are

needed¹. What if *kalpas* and *kalpas*² pass away in search of the Soul! But we? We may get tired after a hundred years or two! But only that man would be fed up with this pursuit, who believes that once a man dies, he ceases to exist. But that man who knows that thousands of '*kalpas*' have already gone by and the period of time he lives on the earth is but a tiny drop, can keep up his morale and continue the attempt. Peace and happiness are otherwise impossible—are but vain pursuits.

"Thus Jesus has given a definition of perfect *dharma* in these verses."

14.11.1926

A Saint's Ascension

(M. D's Gujarati article in 'Navajivan')

I had the good fortune not only of knowing the saint who shuffled off his mortal coil last week, but also of having uplifting contacts with him, off and on, for the last fifteen years. Newspapers have never mentioned his name. He has neither been the founder of a sect, nor a leader of any great movement. There are, therefore, a very few who know or recognise him as a result of their personal contact with him. But even a glimpse at his life, a momentary remembrance of him, is an exalting influence and that is what makes me think it necessary that the reader of *Navajivan* should have at least a peep into his life.

As regards his early life, I myself know hardly anything. I could get no chance to know anything from the saint himself, as he rarely opened his lips on the matter of his own career. He was born at Godhra (a town in Gujarat) in a potter's family. He himself perhaps never knew his birth-date but people guess that he must be about 75 when he gave up

1. As much patience and perseverance as a man would need to empty a sea by collecting sea-water in his palms and throwing it out.

2. Kalpa—One day of Brahma (God as the creator), which means 4,320,000,000 human years. The present is the seventh out of the 14 such aeons of this universe.

the ghost. His father was a devotee of God and sought the contact of saints and hermits. Purshottam Bhagat (the latter, an epithet meaning a devotee) must, therefore, have inherited his devotion for God from his father. Even in childhood he would eagerly serve any ascetic or *sannyasi* that he came across. One of these was an entirely naked *sannyasi*. He was a man of queer ways. He would keep away from men—he stayed in the crematorium—and content himself with whatever food he got by begging from only one or two houses. He would serve the town by dragging away and burying the carcasses of stray dogs, cats etc. that died in the streets. How could a man doing such 'dirty' work catch anybody's eye? But owing to some powerful '*sanskaras*' (natural tendencies formed from actions in past lives) the heart of Purshottam Bhagat was drawn towards him. He would not only give him unleavened bread and buttermilk when the recluse came to him, but in the monsoon would himself go to the crematorium and provide him a meal, though he had to put the bundle of food on his head and wade through waste-deep or sometimes even neck-deep water. After many months' devoted service this world-renouncing saint made Purshottam Bhagat his own, gave him spiritual knowledge by long talks given in the crematorium and finally gave him the "*Guru-mantra*" (a potent formula given by a Guru whose repeated chanting leads the disciple to Self-realization). Since then Purshottam Bhagat's outlook on life and the world was changed altogether. But nobody knows where, after giving the *mantra*, the holy man went away.

Since that day, Purshottam Bhagat began to wander like a mad man. He travelled a lot on foot and visited many places of pilgrimage. After a long long time he came back, settled in his home-town and took up his potter's ancestral profession. He was already married—in his childhood—had two or three sons also, but all of them had died in infancy. Later on, since the wife did not bear a child or bore only still-born babies, his relatives exerted overwhelming pressure and compelled him to

marry a second wife. But Bhagatji ('ji' is a term of respect) would not cast even a glance at this new wife, when she came. At this total neglect, the poor woman went back to her father's house the very next day. Since then, right up to his last moment, the Bhagatji continued to live with his first wife. After returning from his pilgrimage he lived in his own house. He was a success in his profession as he could make charming dainty earthen vessels. He spent in hymn-singing the whole time that he could spare from his work.

It is impossible to call him an educated man. His literary knowledge amounted to nothing more than his ability to read hymns and to manage somehow to write letters. When that was the limit of his academic knowledge, the reading of the *Bhagwatgita* and the *Upanishads* was out of the question. But the hymns of our saints filled up the want of his ignorance of the *Gita* and the *Upanishads*. He drank to the dregs the nectar of the hymns of *Akha* and *Pritam*. And whenever he sang any of their hymns and explained its meaning, the hearer would never fail to feel that he was enjoying the treat of an exposition of the eternal truth given in the *Gita* and the *Upanishads*.

I do not know how and when in his life the encumbrance of visitors from outside began, as he kept himself immersed in his occupation and in the hymns he repeatedly sang for himself. But one fine day, it seems, his tense soulful singing caught the eye or rather the ear, of somebody and he realized that he was listening not to a common singer, but to a powerful soul that had already realized the Reality and also had the power to guide pilgrims and erring souls. Through him this unknown Bhagat came to be recognised as a saint by a handful of men in Godhra and outside. It was thus that the unbroken serenity and seclusion of his career was disturbed and God thrust upon him the task—the mission—of scattering tranquility on many people of various places. As time passed, Sheth (—a rich man) Vasanji Khimji, himself a seeker addicted to the service of philosophers and learned men, saints and leading lights of

various religious denominations, came to know of this saint living in a far corner of Gujarat. It was he who discovered him, brought him to light and made him give up his old profession of moulding vessels from mud and take up the new one of moulding men from mud. I came in contact with the saint through my father after his new vocation had begun. During my college days I had some inkling of spiritual life through the books of Swami Vivekanand and then through them of the personality of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.¹ I found in this saint a second edition of the Paramahansa. I could understand the deep essence of the sayings of Ramakrishna Paramahansa through the words that came out of this saint's lips. Naturally, he released Sheth Vasanji Khimji from the downward pull of the lower self. But over and above that, he transformed the lives of many men and gave them solace and peace.

For at least some time I stayed with him continuously and then had his *darshan* once or twice a year. During the period of this contact, I saw him so absorbed in one incessant round of hymn-singing and talks about the Divine and so detached from the body, that I have hardly seen any body else who had attained to his state.

निर्मानमोहा जितसङ्गदोषा अर्घ्यात्मनित्या विनिवृत्तकामाः ।

द्वन्द्वं विमुक्ताः सुखदुःखसंज्ञैर्गच्छन्त्यमूढाः पदमव्ययं तत् ॥

“To that imperishable heaven those enlightened souls go, who are without pride and delusion, who have triumphed over the taints of attachment, who are in tune with the Supreme, whose passions have died, who are exempt from the pairs of opposites such as pleasure and pain.” (Gita XV—5. M.D.’S translation).

1. The Great *Hansa*, *Hansa*, i.e., the swan has been attributed the habit of sipping only the substance of milk and leaving off the water in the receptacle. A *Hansa*, therefore, means one who discriminates between the substance and the chaff and accepts only the former and, of course, substance means Reality and chaff—the worldly life.

He was, as far as I could see, the perfect embodiment of a God-man's qualities described above.

He had attained to that state by means of one-pointed devotion and he always asked others to follow that path of single-minded love for God. I am perfectly convinced that his life bore an irrefutable testimony to all the characteristics of a real devotee of God, as described in the 12th Chapter of the *Gita*. Again and again I would find that his behaviour illustrated the example of a God-lover 'who', in the words of the *Gita*, gives no trouble to the world and to whom the world causes no trouble' (M. D.'s translation of यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः । Gita XII-15). And I experienced in his speech and act the perfect realization of the following line of 'Bhakta Narasaiya' (Narasinh Mehta, a mediaeval saint of Gujarat) :

सकल लोकमां सहुने बंदे निदान करे केनी रे ।

(In praises free, to slander untrained)

His sermons were based mostly on the hymns that he would first sing. Even in casual talks, he would burst into a hymn and then elucidate it. "Our ascetics have taught us the Essence, the Reality, in a few easy but telling words : "Turn your mind's searchlight inwards, which at present is outwards. Don't go out in search of the Reality. Dive down deep into yourself. Heaven and hell are not abodes situated somewhere far away. You experience them in this your very life. If you believe, if you have the faith that moves mountains, you are a liberated soul, you are in heaven. If you don't, if you are a doubting Thomas, nothing but fetters of hell is your fate. It is this our mind that is sinful. Only destroy this mind (let ruffles, even ripples of thought completely subside in it) and you will attain the Pure, Untainted Soul and rest in bliss". As I write this, he stands before my mind's eye, repeatedly emphasising his one thing and explaining it through many stories interspersed with poems and psalms.

He had a wonderful knack of explaining in a very homely, simple style, ideas that generally appear abstruse and mysti-

fyng and hence above our heads. I have already said that he was almost innocent of literary knowledge. That was why he explained everything in the simplest way. Let me give an example or two. "What is the message of the Gita?" he would ask and then answer the question himself. "Only repeat the word 'Gita' several times and you automatically say 'tagi', 'tagi' and that is the message. I hope you understand. You get the essence of the Gita by being a 'tagi' or 'tyagi' (i.e. a renouncer). That man has known the Gita who has renounced the body-consciousness (i.e. who knows that he is the Soul and not the body). He had once startled an erudite Sanskrit scholar by his original explanation of 'moksha' (liberation). He said: "Moksha is made up of two words *mo* and *aksha* i.e. *moha* (delusion) and *kshaya* (destruction). Delusion's destruction is liberation". And once he defined sin and virtue, good and bad deeds, in this way: why make much of it? Has not Pritamdas sung: 'He who performs bad deeds by remaining raw, ('kacha'), will receive the lashes of Yama? (God of Death who judges a man after death)?' Here 'kacha' means those who do not know that they are the spirit and not the body. That means all actions impelled under the belief that the body is real and not illusory are bad acts, are sins. And every act performed and the conviction that the Soul alone is real, is a good act and virtue'. Comparing the poet and the man of knowledge (Self-realization) he once said: "The *kavi* (poet) can reach the place that the *ravi* (sun) cannot. But the *anubhavi* (the realized soul) goes beyond the limit that the *kavi* reaches". Once there came to him a Pharisee who indulged in a long dissertation on the various types of devotion and the different stages and processes of *yoga*. To him he said, "Dear friend, I know only this one simple thing: As the poet says:

दिल मां दीवो करो रे दीवो करो ।

कूडां काम क्रोध ने परहरो ॥

दिलमां . . . ॥

दया दीवल प्रेम परणायुं लावो ।
मांहे सूरतानी दीवेट बनावो ।
पछी ब्रह्म अग्नि ने चेतारो रे ॥

दिलमां . . . ॥

"Light, I say, the candle in the heart,
Throw out; I pray, bad deeds
And resentment's dart.
Put the oil of mercy
In the earthen bowl of love
Have the wick, 'at-one-ment'
And light the Brahma lamp."

"There is pitch darkness in our heart at present, let this light shine in the heart and remove the darkness, and then, devotion, knowledge, *yoga* and everything else shall be added unto you."

He was never tired of saying that the means to overcome 'I-ness' (not God, but I am the doer) or the delusion of body-consciousness, is humility--complete humility--and service. He would raise waves of laughter by his inimitable humorous style of telling the story of Gorakh and Machhandar¹ and then immediately switch on to a serious tone to point out the spiritual lesson to be drawn from it. The laughter of the audience would then at once dry up and everyone would grow silent and repent for his own littleness and unworthiness.

And then would begin the hymn:

नमिये सो तो साहब को प्यारे लगे

नमिये सो नर भारी रे ! . . .

The humble are loved by the Lord, the best

Those bent in bows grow tall as trees

And tower above the rest.

When Narad grew humble, and poor in spirit

His crooked heart was cleansed;

1. Gorakh, the disciple, weans Machchandar, the Guru, from the enjoyment of women's company.

The Brahmin bent before the Shudra
 Made his Guru a fisherman,
 For him no more the countless births
 And deaths that shackle man.

Then a *sakhi* (a couplet of a specific melody) would
 come to his mind and he would sing :

रामरस ऐसा है मेरे भाई ! . . .

His head held high, man strides on the earth,
 Filled with pride the mind ;
 A few, the wise, they choose to be
 Humble and meek and kind.
 God favours them and lifts them high
 Above the whole mankind.
 God's love is such—the drink ambrosial
 Of the uplifting kind.
 Dhruva drank it and Prahlada
 Kabira is steeped in it ;
 And yet he wishes more and more,
 You never have enough of it.

As he sang this hymn of Rama-rasa (the tasteful drink of
 God) he himself used to be so intoxicated, so deeply absorbed
 and overpowered, that I have rarely seen anybody else in such
 ecstasies. And then I had the good fortune of seeing tears
 streaming down his cheeks, as he was narrating the stories of
 Dhruva and Prahlada.

Besides, I have often watched him stopping tears of joy
 and love, that would inevitably glisten in his eyes as he sang
 the following lines of Mira :

मैं नटरी नाम की प्यासी
 निरखूँ मेरे नाथ को !

I, Thy crazy love-lorn lass
 In vain the horizon scan ;
 But wait ! I see ! I see Him now !
 —The Lord of my heart, my Man.

But he sang hymns of this sort only when the spirit moved
 him. Otherwise, in order to drive home the Truth, his
 favourite implement was the hammer of Akha :

समजण बिना रे सुख नहिं तुजने रे,
 वस्तुगति केम करी ओळखाय ? . . .

No peace for you, without knowledge gone deep;
 How else can the Self be realized ?
 No use repeating : "The Self abides in me" ;
 That will not redeem the soul.
 Say 'the sun', 'the sun' a hundred times,
 Will that end the night ?
 Darkness recedes as daylight dawns.
 When Knowledge rises within
 The end is easily gained.

A regular shower of hymns, beginning with the one given
 above would then fall on the people around. As he sang the
 following :

प्राणी प्रीछजो रे ए संत केरी सान ,
 अन्य साधन सांभळी तुं मेला कां करे कान ? . . .

"O man ! Catch the straight tips the saint gives ;
 "Why sully your ears with hearing of other means ?,

per chance his eyes would fall on a man sitting opposite who,
 like myself, was 'learned' but not 'wise' in true wisdom. He
 would then smile and say :

"O learned man ! It is love for the Divine that by itself
 carries you across the sea of the world. Learning will not
 bring you to the end of your wanderings on the earth. It is
 empty knowledge without the substance. "Jiva (the soul)
 and 'Shiva' (the Oversoul) are one my friend ! The crooked
 will not understand It."

"संतो भाई समजणकी एक बात,
 समज्या सोई नर फेर न बोल्या,
 छोड़ दिया सकल उधमात ।"

“O saints ! O friends ! What is essential is
(experiential) knowledge.

Those who caught it, became silent—did not say a
word afterwards.

They gave up all these encumbrances and worries.”

Streams of hymns would thus flow incessantly and nobody
know how the evening slipped into the midnight hour. After
singing the hymn :

“आपे आप तुं रे; हुज न मळू शेष जी” ।

“Thou art, and Thou alone, the ‘I’ does not remain.”

He would sing again and again with ecstatic delight the follow-
ing lines in it :

हुंपडछन्दो ताहरो तारे ते स्वासेस्वास
मन तुं तन तुं श्रीकमा तुज माँहें मारो वास ॥’

“I am but Thy reflection, Thy echo.

Every breath of this (‘I’) is Thou.

Thou art the mind, Thou art the body as well,

O Lord :

I dwell—I am contained—in Thee.”

He was a singer and I have heard many a good artist but
I never experienced that superb joy and that perfect subsidence
of passion, which I used to experience when I heard him
singing.

But perhaps the reader will get tired. When I begin to
think of the hymns he sang, they throng in my memory in such
quick succession, that I am swept away in the tide. Let the
reader forgive me.

My last meeting with him took place about a month and
a half ago. Immediately after his return from Bombay, he had
an attack of dysentery. When I heard that he had often passed
blood in large quantities, I went to him. Specially, only two
or three days before I went, a regular stream of blood had
fallen out. He was bed-ridden since then, but as soon as he
saw me, he sat up and kept up the sitting pose with back so
straight for an hour or an hour and a half that with all my

robust health and youth, I never sit so straight for so long.
The doctor had advised him to keep silent. He would, there-
fore, answer questions put to him in writing with a chalk piece.
I just asked him : “Why such terrible pain to you of all people
sir ?” He smiled and wrote. “There must have been too much
blood in the body. It took its natural course and left it.” “But
why such suffering even to an even serene and unperturbed
soul like you ?” somebody asked. He wrote : “I am not a
saint, not a true *bhakta* (devotee). All I can say for myself is
that I feel happy and content with whatever situation God
puts me in.” With a short pause he added : “This body is
inanimate. The One Conscious Paramatma (Oversoul) is Real.
Let Him keep this body in any condition He likes. It is His
business, not mine.”

“Strive for Self-realization during this life, this very life,
tear the bonds which the body imposes and throw them out.”
—These expressions I have repeatedly heard from him. He had
made his body a piece of wood and, after swimming across the
ocean of life on that floating raft himself, he had shown the
way to many others to do the same. Today as I go on remem-
bering him his inebriation from the deep draughts of God’s
love comes back to my mind. And which he drank as I re-
member him singing :

‘रामरस ऐसा मेरे भाई,
पिये सो अमर हो जाई ॥’

“God’ love is such—the drink ambrosial

“That makes the man immortal.”

the state of supreme bliss which that elevated soul always
enjoyed rises up vividly before my eyes. During his talk on
the traits of saints and sages, he gave a definition of the saints.
I have seen that that definition, given below, has proved true
in his case.

“शांति पमाडे तेने संत कहीए,
एना दासना दास थईने रहीए रे ।”

"He is the 'saint' who gives us 'shanti'
(peace, tranquility);

"Let us be his humblest servants."

For him it was thus a state of tranquility for all the 24 hours of the day and, for myself, I had the piece of good fortune to gain from his contact that tranquility for a while. But that is small consolation. To quote his words. "So long as your account in heaven is not squared and cancelled, so long as you are not freed from the bond of countless births and deaths, it is practically all the same whether you have or have not any contact with a saint, a hermit, or a *Guru*."

18-11-1926

Is this Humanity ?

VI

@ A friend has sent a long letter containing a number of questions and raising a number of difficulties. He has also sent me his copies of *Navajivan* with profuse marginal notes on this series of articles. Some of his questions have been already answered in these pages. Without reproducing here the rest of his questions I propose merely to give my answers.

I think I have been considering the whole question dispassionately. I do not think I could be accused of any partiality for '*himsa*' or for my own peculiar views in the matter. My partiality is all for truth, which I seek to find out through '*ahimsa*'. It is my conviction that it cannot be found out in any other way. The question in dispute for me is not whether truth is our goal or not, nor whether *ahimsa* is or is not the only way to it. There is no possibility of my ever doubting these fundamental principles. The question before me is about the practice of these principles. Everyday I see fresh aspects opening out to me. There is every possibility of my making mistakes in the practice of *ahimsa* and, though I am taking every precaution possible to avoid them, it is possible that I may err occasionally. Let not friends, therefore, impute partiality to me, when I cannot agree with them. Let them believe

me to be unconsciously in error and bear with me. I now proceed to give the answers.

1. The question to solve is not what is hydrophobia and how to treat it.

2. The municipality or the Government will find a remedy not in accordance with *ahimsa*, but with what they conceive to be public interest. The Mahajan can find the right remedy, if they are truly non-violent. Government will never subscribe to the absolute principle of non-destruction of animals (dogs in the present case). Municipalities have members belonging to different faiths and different communities. They cannot, therefore, be expected to insist on a non-violent remedy.

3. The duty of finding a non-violent remedy is the Mahajan's. It is a mistake to think that the Mahajan is blameless or helpless.

4. For the purpose of this discussion, I make no difference between a rabid dog and a man who has been amuck and is in the act of dealing death. Habitual violence is a disease. The habitually violent man goes on in his murderous career, only because he is beside himself. Both a rabid dog and a rabid man are worthy of pity. When they are found in the act of injuring others and when there is no other remedy than to take their life, it becomes a duty to do so to arrest that activity. The duty is all the greater in the case of a votary of *ahimsa*.

5. I have never meant that every one should own a dog. What I have said is that the dogs should in no case be ownerless. Not that the owned dogs will be immune, but the owners will be responsible for them, if they are diseased or get rabies.

6. The ownerless stray dogs are not innocent as lambs. They were never so. Owned dogs are generally so. The purpose of the present controversy is to make all the dogs innocuous.

7. I have never suggested that roving dogs should be killed wherever found, I have suggested enabling legislation in

the interest of the dogs themselves. That will make humanly inclined people alive to their sense of duty and they will then either own dogs or find out some other remedy and thus make the existence of stray dogs impossible. In refusing alms to the beggar the purpose is not to starve him, but to teach him self-help; to make him a man. The duty of killing dogs arises in the circumstances and to the extent I have indicated in the previous articles. To say that it is a sin to extirpate dogs is not to contradict me. For I have never expressed a contrary opinion.

8. It is idle to discuss whether Mr. Ambalal's conduct was or was not proper, or whether my opinion, about it was not correct. The public is not in full possession of the details of the incident. The broader question of *ahimsa* is the main issue, and to bring in Mr. Ambalal in the discussion is to cloud the issue.

9. The issue is : Whether in consonance with the principle of *ahimsa*, it may be a duty to kill certain dogs under certain circumstances, when no other alternative is possible? I submit that it may be, and hold that there cannot be two opinions in the matter. There may be difference as to whether particular circumstances justify the act. The consolation for a votary of *ahimsa* lies in the fact that from his standpoint such circumstances can only be rare.

10. But I can see one difference of opinion that must, for the time being, remain. In the letter under consideration, as also in many others, I see that there is an instinctive horror of killing living beings under any circumstances what-so-ever. For instance, an alternative has been suggested in the shape of confining even rebid dogs in a certain place and allowing them to die a slow death. Now my idea of compassion makes this thing impossible for me. I cannot, for a moment, bear to see a dog or for the matter any living being, helplessly suffering the torture of a slow death. I do not kill a human being thus circumstanced, because I have more hopeful remedies. I should kill a dog similarly situated, because in its case I am

without a remedy. Should my child be attacked by rabies and there was no helpful remedy to relieve his agony, I should consider it my duty to take his life. Fatalism has its limits. We leave things to fate after exhausting all the remedies. One of the remedies and the final one to relieve the agony of a tortured child is to take his life.

But I shall not labour this point. What to my mind is impotence of the votaries of *ahimsa* is an obstacle to a true understanding of this *dharma*. I hope, therefore, that those who differ from me will for the present bear with me.

So much about the thoughtful letter of a friend. I shall now deal with an angry letter.

"You have been," says the letter, "so much under the Western influence that you have learnt to think it proper to kill lower beings for the sake of man. It is better for you to confess your error and apologize to the world. You should have made up your mind in this matter after exhaustless sifting. Instead, you have passionately taken sides and discredited yourself."

This is the least offensive sentence I have picked up from letters of this type. I submit I have not formed my opinion without much deliberation. It is not an opinion I have recently formed. Neither is it hasty. One should not let his so-called greatness come in the way of the formation of opinion, otherwise he cannot arrive at truth.

I do not think that everything Western is to be rejected. I have condemned the Western civilization in no measured terms. I still do so, but it does not mean that everything Western should be rejected. I have learnt a great deal from the West and I am grateful to it. I should think myself unfortunante if contact with and literature of the West had no influence on me. But I do not think I owe my opinion about the dogs to my Western education or Western influence. The West (with the exception of a small school of thought) thinks that it is no sin to kill the lower animals for what it regards to be the benefit of man. It has, therefore, encouraged vivisec-

tion. The West does not think it wrong to commit violence of all kinds for the satisfaction of the palate. I do not subscribe to these views. According to the Western standard, it is no sin, on the contrary it is a merit, to kill animals that are no longer useful. Whereas I recognise limits at every step. I regard even the destruction of vegetable life as *himsa*. It is not the teaching of the West.

Argumentum ad hominem has no place in a discussion of principles and their practice. My opinion should be considered as they are, irrespective of whether they are derived from the West or the East. Whether they are based on truth or untruth, *himsa* or *ahimsa*, is the only thing to be considered. I firmly believe that they are based on truth and *ahimsa*.

20-11-1926 (probable date)

Continuing his discourse on the Bible Gandhiji said :

“My inability to complete the exalting sayings of Jesus pains me.¹ And I shall always remember wistfully the fact that I could not mix with you as much I wanted to.”

In elucidation of Chapter VI Gandhiji said :

“As we have our Gayatri², the Christians have their prayer. Christian parents teach this prayer to their children. If we want to teach all religions here and if prayer is the pivot round which they revolve, we must accept this prayer heartily. Let us see the circumstances under which it was made. Jesus takes His disciples to the mountain top and delivers His Sermon there. First of all the five ‘*yamas*’ have been taught. And then he shows the way to enable man to observe them, namely, that of prayer. Somebody may here raise a doubt about the need of a prayer. He may argue : “Why this—the prayer—when we believe God to be omniscient and omnipotent ?” Its

1. Gandhiji had retired from public life during nearly this whole year of 1926. At its end he left Sabarmati for Wardha on 3-12-1926. Hence, his discourses on the Bible remained incomplete.

2. An ancient Vedic *mantra* praying for Light to guide the intellect.

answer is contained in this Chapter. It describes first the common attitude and behaviour of the Jews, and then asks us to perform all our actions in a different way.

“God alone knows, not we. If anyone’s heart also has fully accepted what his intellect has (namely, God omniscient and omnipotent), there remains nothing for him to do. (Then his life itself becomes one continuous prayer or communion with God). For instance, the rose has not to make any effort to spread its fragrance. It is its natural, not a voluntary action. But for us there is a scope for choice. Our spiritual effort lies in the very fact that we are determined not to go along the path of evil. God is not so indiscreet as to give us whatever we want. He will give us according to our deserts.

“But all this is God’s angle. What is ours ? We are but senseless, imperfect sinful. What should we do ? In reply, Jesus says, “Let not yours be a prayer in name. Pray in this way.” What kind of prayer it is ? It for us, imperfect beings. God is certainly everywhere. True, He is in evil also, in stinking smell too. But when Shankaracharya talked of his high philosophy of ‘*mayavad*’ (It alone is real and all we see is illusory) the believers in the Creator, i.e. God replied : “If we talk of *maya* even at preset when we are still so imperfect, we would fall into the plight of learned fools—like the one who wondered घृताघारे पात्रं वा पात्राघारे घृतम् (whether it is the vessel that holds the *ghee* (clarified butter) or it is the *ghee* that holds the vessel).¹ We must not, therefore, rack our brains for abstruse philosophy. That is why Islam simply affirms, God is holy. Man found out the way to be virtuous and holy by attributing these qualities to God. He made his own heart the place for God to dwell in. We may interpret God as only the Good, the Beautiful, and the True. We can rightly say, ‘Hallowed be

1. The story ridicules empty learnedness. A philosopher was carrying home a pot with *ghee* in it. Being given to abstruse thinking, he asks himself the above question and in order to know the truth, he upturns the vessel with the result that he loses all the *ghee* he wanted for his food.

Thy name' only when we take His help alone and not seek anybody else's.

"Then He says : 'O Lord ! Let Thy kingdom be here also'. Then comes the prayer for the welfare of the body. "Give us this day our daily bread." Bread does not mean literally bread only. It means livelihood. 'Have no worry of any sort', He says; 'God is Razaak, i.e. one who provides us our livelihood.' 'O Lord ! Forgive me my acts.' That means forgive all my tresspasses--wrongs. We too forgive men their wrongs against us. He who is not generous and forgiving at heart has no right whatever to ask for forgiveness of his sins. But how is it that a man commits sins ? Man goes on falling a prey to temptations and if he is swept by the winds of (modern) civilization, he goes out to seek temptations. 'O Lord ! The kingdom is Thine, the power is Thine, the glory is Thine.' This is the same sentiment as expressed by the Bhagwadgita in the idea of *yagna* (sacrifice). This neat little prayer contains everything that the few letters of the Gayatri Mantra mean. What a beautiful prayer this is. Unobjectionable in every way and one whose ideas can be reproduced in the language of every religion."

From the 16th verse Jesus refers to fasting. Explaining that idea Gandhiji said : "Why should a man who fasts 'be of a sad countenance' ? He must never let anybody know that he is fasting. Disciplines for the mortification of the flesh are not to be exhibited before others. It is his heart that should fast along with the body. An aversion to food should spring up in his heart. He should think, "O Lord ! Why art Thou not visible to me ? Without Thy vision, my pondering to the flesh has no meaning. I see that wicked thoughts constantly invade my heart. They are the Kauravas.¹ They are not a hundred in number, they are thousands." He who goes

1. In the epic, the Mahabharata, Kauravas represent the forces of evil while their cousins the Pandavas represent those of good. The Kauravas are a hundred brothers in story, and the Pandavas only five, but they win in the end.

on a fast with this prayerful attitude, far from letting his face fall, will dance with joy. If the bundle of grass on my head is taken off, I shall breathe a sigh of relief and be glad. It is in order to lay down the burden on my mind that I fast—not in order that others may praise me.

"Jesus has exposed the hypocrisy of his times in these verses.

"If you pile up a treasure of material wealth, it will be of no use to you. Even the treasure of this body will prove itself useless. It is certain to be robbed by a highwayman called *Yama* (Death). Instead of making a vain effort to preserve that perishable treasure, 'lay up your treasures in heaven'. Pile up that treasure which is eternal and inexhaustible. That is the treasure which can be only increased and never decreased day by day. And it is that alone which will take us ever nearer to God.¹

Referring to the incident at Voutha² Gandhiji said :

"It is not the Policemen's business, but ours alone, to deal with such situations. If we are beaten black and blue, it does not matter. I would regard it as a good thing for us. Our first '*dharma*' is to sacrifice our lives. Those who do not wish to do it, must not go to such places. At the Boer War Indian and English (Red-Cross) troops were asked to keep themselves beyond the range of guns. The Indian Red Cross regiment was highly praised (for going even within the range and carrying away wounded soldiers). But why should one care for appreciation ? (It was after all an unjust aggressive war). The war was started owing to a 'nervous breakdown'. And

1. The exposition of the Bible ends here in M.D.'s manuscript diary. It could not be carried to the end of the Bible, as Gandhiji left Ahmedabad on 3-12-1926.

2. A small town near Ahmedabad, where a big fair is held annually, as the town is situated at the confluence of Sabarmati and her six tributaries. Some volunteers had gone there to maintain order amongst the mammoth crowds on the fair day (d. 19.11. 1926). Some people had created a row against the volunteers and the public had failed to stop the disorder.

even "The Times" commented that the people had gone crazy in waging it."

25-11-1926

Is This Humanity ?

VII

(Abridged translation by M. D.†)

@ Some of my correspondents do not seem to realize the fundamental consideration underlying my suggestion for the destruction of dogs under certain circumstances. Thus, for instance, I have not made the suggestion in a purely utilitarian spirit. The utility to society incidentally accrues from the act, but the principal consideration is the relief of the long-drawn-out agony of the creatures, whose present condition it is simply impossible for me to tolerate. In the articles in this series there have not been even the remotest suggestions that man has the right of disposal over the lower animals and that he may, therefore, kill them for his own comfort or pleasure. One of the writers betrays a strange confusion of thought when he says that the characteristic of an exalted soul is that he remains unaffected by the misery around him. He is callous, rather than exalted, who has not learnt to melt at other's woe, who has not learnt to see himself in others and others in himself. Intense longing for the happiness of others was the mother of the discovery of 'ahimsa'. And the sage who was the embodiment of compassion found his soul's delight in renouncing his own physical comfort and stopped killing for his pleasure the dumb creation about him.

A correspondent reminds me of the advice given to me by Shri Rajchandra, when I approached him with a doubt as to what I should do if a serpent threatened to bite me. Certainly his advice was that rather than kill the serpent, I should allow myself to be killed by it. But the correspondent forgets that it is not myself that is the subject-matter of the present discussion, but the welfare of society in general as also of the suffering animals. If I had approached Rajchandrabhai with

the question whether I should or should not kill a serpent writhing in agony, and whose pain I could not relieve otherwise, or whether I should or should not kill a serpent threatening to bite a child under my protection, if I could not otherwise turn the reptile away, I do not know what answer he would have given. For me the answer is clear as daylight and I have given it.

A studious correspondent confronts me with some verses from a Jain philosopher and asks if I agree with the position taken up in them. One of the verses says, 'One should not kill even beasts of prey in the belief that by killing one such, he saves the lives of many'. Another says : 'Nor should one kill them out of a compassionate feeling that if they were suffered to live longer, they might sink deeper into sin.' 'Nor', says the third verse, 'should one kill distressed creatures presuming that he would thereby shorten the length of their agony.'

To me the meaning of the verses is clear. And it is this, that a particular theory should not be the spring of action in any case. You may commit 'himsa', not in order that you thereby realize in practice a pet theory of yours, but because you are driven to it, as an imperative duty. Work which spontaneously comes to one's lot, or action without attachment, in the words of the Gita, is the duty of a seeker after *moksha*. Confine your energy to work that comes your way, I conceive the Jain philosopher to say, never seek fresh fields of activity. The verses to me define the mental attitude of detachment that should govern one's action in cases where 'himsa' seems to be imperative and unavoidable.

But I have arrived at my present views independently of any authority, though originally they have been drawn from various sources, and I submit that they are in perfect consonance with 'ahimsa', even though they may be proved to be contrary to the teaching of the philosopher.