

### IN HIS OWN WORDS

**THE** last phase of Mahatma's life was full of pathetic developments. Communal riots in different parts of India and wide divided among a sizeable number of Hindus and Muslims had bitterly shaken him. To calm the communal frenzy he shuttled from one place to another. Brutal incidents at Noakhali, Calcutta, Bihar, Delhi and Punjab were frustrating for him. And at the same time changed attitude of his lieutenants was so hurting that he had lost his urge to live.

During that trying period (1947) he reached Patna on 5<sup>th</sup> March from Calcutta. August 8<sup>th</sup> 1947, was last day of his journey to Bihar, which started on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1917. Day to day narration of his 1947 tour is published in Gujarati and Hindi versions of Manu Gandhi's Diary, 'Bihar Ki Quami Aag Main', Collected Work of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 87,88,89, Harijan and Pyare Lal's 'Last Phase'.

### Some pages are reproduced here

#### Discussion with Rajendra Prasad and Bihar Ministers

5<sup>th</sup> March 1947

We should make a public confession of our mistake. No commission of enquiry has been appointed to date. If we are not quick about the matter it will lose its effect. If we do not appoint a commission, we shall be held to have admitted the League's case.

The Chief Minister, Shrikrishna Sinha, expressed the fear that the League would make political capital out of it. Gandhiji admitted that that was not improbable. But justice never paused to consider if it would be exploited.

[Gandhiji:] My sixty years' experience has taught me nothing if not that. That is also the lesson of my three months of travail in Noakhali. I was groping in the dark but I said just what seemed to me to be the truth. Those who regarded me as their enemy could exploit it. But I had faith that sooner rather than later they would see their mistake. Be that as it may, my only strength lies in my ahimsa. The same applies to you also. If you grasp that, you will get over your fear and, undaunted by extraneous considerations, do justice.

Again and again Gandhiji tried to clear his old friend of unmerited suspicion<sup>1</sup>. Dr. Mahmud's letter which had brought him to Bihar was in reply to his (Gandhiji's) peremptory inquires; the Doctor had not acted disloyally towards his colleagues. Dr. Rajendra Prasad explained that there was really no difference. The Bihar Minister were never opposed to Gandhiji's coming earlier. But they had judged that the situation might call for the employment of drastic measures; how could they call Gandhiji in that context? The Chief Minister put in that they had never tried to "minimize" the atrocities.

Gandhiji : From what I have been hearing, it seems to me that the Bihar massacre was like the Jallianwala Bagh massacre<sup>2</sup>. Dr. Mahmud's wife today brought some Muslim women to me. I had no reply to their tears.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad ..... repeated what he had already told Gandhiji that many Biharis thought that they had done well.

Gandhiji replied that it was to save them from that sin that he had come. He had told Nawab Ismail<sup>3</sup> that he would “do or die” in Bihar.

Rajendra Prasad : I have full faith we shall succeed. Give us orders.

Gandhiji : In Champaran nobody ordered anybody<sup>4</sup>. It was spontaneous loyalty. You saw the miracle. If that happens here, we shall win over even the League.

**Mahatma Gandhi – The last Phase, Vol. I, Bk. II, pp. 258-9  
Collected work – Vol. 87, 42, 43**

### **Speech at Prayer Meeting**

**Patna, 5<sup>th</sup> March 1947**

Gandhiji apologized for having come in a motor-car instead of walking to the prayer meeting. This was, he said, a reflection on the Biharis who should know the art of welcoming people in a quite and dignified manner instead of the present embarrassing manner. They should have had consideration for his old age, he said, and spared him the shouts, however well-meant they were but which were too much for his ears.

He complimented the vast audience on their exemplary silence, but expressing his regret over their half- hearted participation in chanting the Ramdhun, he said :

An earnest prayer is very effective. If God is a Power, which indeed He is, then people must pray. Devotees of every religion pray according to their practices in their respective places of worship. It would be more beneficial if all of them prayed together in a common congregation.

It would be terrible if people shout ‘Victory of India’ and work for her annihilation. Such action will bring no glory to India. If we wish victory for India, we ought to work to that end. If we merely repeat ‘Jai Hind’ or ‘Sitaram’ without the appropriate sentiments it would be mere parrot-like repetition. Please do not think that I do not want victory for India. In fact I have stacked everything I possess for the sake of bringing glory to India.

1. **Dr. Syed Mahmud had incurred the displeasure of his colleagues by inviting Gandhiji to Bihar without consulting them.**
2. **At Amritsar on April 13,1919**
3. **Muslim League Member in Bihar Assembly**
4. **Champaran Satyagraha 1917**

I am visiting Bihar after many years. It is not as though I did not wish to come earlier. It was Bihar that made me know to the whole of India. No one knew me earlier. I had almost become a Negro after staying in Africa for twenty long years. Then I came to Champaran and the entire country woke up. Earlier I did not even know the location of Champaran; but when I arrived here I felt as if I had know the people of Bihar for centuries and they too seemed to know me.

This Bihar of ours has today committed a heinous crime. The atrocities perpetrated on a handful of Muslims have no parallel, so say the Muslims, in the annals of history. I too have read some history. I know that the world has witnessed greater brutality by man on man. But it is no use repeating them here. We must not compete in doing evil and that too against whom? Those who cry for avenging Noakhali in Bihar do not know the meaning of vengeance. It is manliness to return barbarism for barbarism? We ought to overcome violence by love.

At present I have no evidence to say that Congressmen have committed these crimes. Tomorrow I may have to admit so. I must, however, say that Bihar has sullied the fair name of India. When I heard in Noakhali the reports of atrocities committed in Bihar, I decided to undertake a fast. It had been reported to me that some Congressmen had a hand in these crimes. It would be wrong even today to say that there was not a single Congressman involved in the mad upheaval. In India the Congress has to accept the responsibility for the misdeeds of all communities and all individuals. I had claimed in London on your behalf that the Congress represented the whole of India by right of service. Hence any sin committed by India comes to the door of the Congress. You who are listening to me may not have done any evil, yet you have to accept the responsibility. I have become hard-hearted now. I have not come here to shed tears or to make you cry. I would rather wish to steel your hearts. I could make you cry if I chose. But I do not wish to do so. We should not disown responsibility by saying that our hands are clean. India consists of many communities. We have the tribal people among us. We are responsible for them as well. If we disown responsibility for them, we have no right to claim that India belongs to us.

The way to achieve independence consists in all Indians saying with one voice that unless they gave to the whole world all that was good in them, their survival would be meaningless. Are we going to complete in [making] atom bombs? Are we going to match barbarism with even more barbarous acts? India has placed before the world as new weapon. I adopted the way of non-violence in 1920-21. We have been insisting that we will attain independence through non-violence. I do not claim that all Indians have accepted non-violence as a matter of creed. But even when we accept anything as a matter of policy, it becomes our duty to act upon it.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad told me today that some people believed that the Bihar riots had arrested the crimes in Noakhali, otherwise Hindus everywhere would have suffered a similar fact. This is not correct. If Hindus had to suffer similar atrocities everywhere I would say that they were a cowardly lot. Who can frighten a person who has shed all fear? While touring in Bengal I used to tell the people that Hindus as well as Muslims of Noakhali had admitted that the miscreant was a coward and the victim who feared him a greater coward. Those who are under the illusion that Bihar has saved other people by committing these barbarities are talking nonsense. This is not the way to attain freedom. If Muslims believe that they would annihilate the Hindus or if Hindus believe that they would annihilate the Muslims, I should like to ask them what they would gain there by? Muslims will not serve Islam if they annihilate the Hindus; rather they would thereby destroy Islam. And if the Hindus believe that they would be able to annihilate Islam it means that they would be annihilating Hindu dharma.

I consider myself a follower of Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and every other religion because I am true Hindu. All religions are equal and they are founded on the same faith. Various religions are like different leaves on the same tree, with slight differences in shades and shapes. Scriptures have said that one who condemns other religions condemns one's own religion. I consider myself a representative of all the true religions.

We should not gloat over the massacre of Muslims by Bihar Hindus. There can be no greater shame for India. Dr. Syed Mahmud told me that this had brought humiliation to him and all Congressmen. He wrote to me to come and see the madness in which the people of Bihar, who claim to follow me, were indulging and asked me to stop their madness. Earlier I had wondered, what I could do by coming here but Dr. Mahmud's letter compelled me to come here. The Hindus of Bihar have committed a grave sin. They will raise the head of Bihar much higher if they do honest reparations, greater in magnitude than their crimes. There is an English saying : "The greater the sin, the greater the saint." I went to Noakhali with the determination to do or die. I have come here with the same resolve. If our thoughts are not right our actions are bound to go wrong. As soon as there is an opportunity, we commit a crime. Why should all of us not unite? After all we are servants of the same God, by whatever name we may call Him. We may call him Rama or Rahim, Krishna or Karim.

I had also been summoned to Delhi. 'Come here', they said, 'what are you doing in Noakhali? We need you here.' But I did not leave Noakhali. But when I received Dr. Mahmud's letter regarding Bihar, I came over here. Muslim Leaguers used to abuse me and say 'go to Bihar'. It had no effect on me. But how could I ignore Dr. Mahmud's appeal? I felt that I would become worthless if I did not go to Bihar even now. When I came and saw the conditions here I realized that we had, indeed, committed a great sin here. It is our duty to atone for our sin and do reparations. Those who have committed these misdeeds have done great harm to India. Those who think that this massacre in Bihar has saved India are really mad. This is not the way to free India; God grant us wisdom as Manubehn has just now sung before you:

Ishwar Allah Teray Naam  
Sab ko Sanmati day Bhagwan

Gandhi Dukhe Dilki Pukar – I, pp. 1-6, and Harijan, 23-3-1947  
Collected work of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 87, pp 45-46

### Speech at Prayer meeting

Patna 6<sup>th</sup> March 1947

Gandhiji began his post-prayer address by complimenting the audience as well as Bari Saheb, the President of the Provincial Congress Committee and his comrades for the orderliness which had been successfully maintained during the evening. While the *Ramdhun* was being sung there were some beats out of time. His advise was that they should practise more until both the tune and the time were in perfect unison.

A note had been handed to him reminding him that Holi was on the following day and people would like to hear his opinion as to how it ought to be celebrated. Gandhiji began by saying that he had no doubt in his mind that a religious ceremony like the Holi should never be marked by wild revelry, but by a disciplined effort to put oneself in communion with God.

Holi will be celebrated tomorrow. If we wish to celebrate it in a religious spirit, we must meet and greet each and every Muslim in the true spirit. With our overflowing love we should reassure the Muslims that the Hindus are their brothers and that there can be no difference between us.

Dr. Mahmud is a Congress Muslim; but I have been meeting Muslims belonging to the League too. We meet one another with great affection and talk in the most friendly manner. Houses of Muslims have been burnt down and their fathers, brothers, sons, innocent children, womenfolk and friends have been done to death. We should not disclaim responsibility for these acts by saying that some other people are responsible for them. Whoever might have actually done it, we cannot escape the responsibility. Muslims say that they live in great terror here. Hindus in Noakhali also used to say that they lived in terror of the Muslims.

We should not terrorize each other. If at all, we should overawe each other with our love and affection. Some Muslim friends say that the Ministry here may allot some houses or lands to the Muslims under political compulsion. But this will not do much good so long as the Hindus and Muslims do not sincerely love or trust each other. They say that Hindus and Muslims have been living together here for centuries, used to refer to one another as paternal or maternal uncles and attend wedding and funeral ceremonies. Today, however, they have turned into sworn enemies. How could the Muslims live here if this enmity persisted? I had to hang my head in shame when I heard this from Muslim friends.

I have heard that Hindus here start shouting and threatening when they see Muslims. They raise the slogans of Jai Hind and Vande Mataram. It is all very well to shout slogans; but we must make sure that they do not terrorize, or intimidate or upset other people. We are guilty of a great sin. Do we intend to announce through our slogans that we are proud of these acts? Or that we regard them as right actions? Hindus in Noakhali were also afraid of the slogan Allah O Akbar raised by Muslims. The slogan merely means 'God is Great' and no one need be afraid of this slogan. But when slogans are used for a wrong purpose, their meanings too are misunderstood and they become curses instead of boons.

*Jai Hind* does not mean victory of Hindus and defeat for Muslims. But now a days the Muslims take it in that light because we have put it to wrong use and threatened them with it. When we hear the slogans shouted by another person we think that the other fellow is preparing for a fight, and we also start getting ready for it. If we go on fighting like this and wrack vengeance for one place upon another, rivers of blood will flow all over India and still the spirit of vengeance will not subside. Hindus should behave so unaffectionate that even if a Muslim child comes into their midst, they should wash and clean him, dress him well and shower him with such love that the child should feel entirely at home. Only when this happens will Muslims realize that Hindus have become their friends.

Gandhiji was firmly of the opinion that this could never be our fate if we were determined to have it otherwise. His hope lay more in women who, he had ever maintained, were the living embodiment of ahimsa and of self-sacrifice, without which ahimsa could never be a reality. Gandhiji wanted everyone to celebrate the Holi in such a manner that every single Muslim felt that the Hindus had not only repented what had been done to them but had also gathered love for them to an extent which outdid their previous sentiments. If the Holi was marked by this revival of the old friendly relations then indeed it would be a truly religious celebration.

A gentleman remarked to me that they had always regarded Hindus as a very noble people, incapable of kidnapping anyone's wife or daughter, since it was immoral and barbarous to do so. But the Hindus had stooped to such things. Many Muslim girls are missing. That gentleman also stated that it was difficult to tell the exact number of such girls, because whole families were

missing. Muslims think that many of their girls have been forcibly kept in Hindu houses. “If we say this”, these friends say, “no one will pay any heed; but if you make an earnest appeal, it may produce a serious response.”

I had made a similar appeal to Muslims in Noakhali and I repeat it here to the Hindus. If any Muslim girl is held by any Hindu, he should realise her. If he is afraid of returning her to the court or to the Police Station, let him take her to Dr. Mahmud or to his wife or to me or to Dr. Rajendra Prasad. I can assure the abductors that no harm will come to them, if they approach me. In fact, they should not be afraid of suffering punishment for their crime. He is brave who confesses his crime and is prepared to suffer due punishment.

Another thing which the gentlemen told me was that the Muslims were afraid that the Hindus did not want the Muslim refugees to return to their homes. I have heard the same story in Noakhali from Hindus and now I am hearing it from the Muslims in Bihar. Our behaviour should be so exemplary that even if an Englishman lives amidst us we should not let him feel that we are his enemies.

I repeat here what I said in Noakhali. As long as the Hindus and Muslims together do not assure me that their hearts have been cleansed and that I could leave them without any anxiety, I will not leave this place. I shall continue to stay here as long as the Muslims do not come to me and reassure me that the Hindus have become better than what they were in the past. I used the word ‘better’ on purpose. In a way, all of us are filled with evil intension. But every heart which has evil traits also possesses noble impulses. And now we have to overcome our evil traits with our nobler qualities.

You should contribute liberally to the funds raised for Muslim victims. But more than giving money, you have to cleanse your hearts. We have to win over the hearts of Muslims. We must realize that politics leads to all sorts of things. But even Muslim Leaguers have conceded that had Jawaharlal not arrive in Bihar the fate of Muslims would have been much worse. They have undertaken to tell the whole world that some Hindu Congress men have at the risk of their lives save the Muslim Leaguers.

**Gandhi Dukhe Dilki Pukar – I, pp 9-12, and Harijan, 23-03-1947  
Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 87, pp 97, 48, 49, 50**

### **Speech at the prayer meeting**

**Patna March 7<sup>th</sup> 1947**

Gandhiji began his address this evening by saying that just before starting for the prayer-ground he had taken a brief rest.

Today also I was wondering all the time whether we have realized that we had committed a great crime, a sin, and whether we had atoned for it. All my waking hours during the day have been spent in listening to all reports brought in by many Muslim and Hindu friends. All of them narrated the grievous wrongs done by us. None of them has been able to assure me that things have now settled down to complete normalcy. While I experienced the impact of these reports on me, I also wondered about the nature and intensity of the impact which these crimes and atrocities must have produced on the hearts of those who witnessed them.

The ideal of the sthitaprajna (man of steadfast wisdom) described in the second chapter of the Gita was always before him and he was ceaseless in his efforts to reach that ideal. Whatever others might say of him, he knew he was yet far from it. When one really reaches such a state, his very thought becomes charged with a power which transforms those around him. But where was that power in him now? He could only say that he was a common mortal, made of the same clay of which others were made, only ceaselessly striving to attain the lofty ideal which the Gita held before all mankind.

While speaking yesterday, I had quoted an English proverb. It means the greater the sinner, the greater the saint he becomes if he really repents and decides to reform himself. Bihar has committed a monstrous sin. It must now make reparations of the same magnitude and become nobler. Bihar is a land where the verses of the Ramayana are always on the lips of the people. I have moved widely in Bihar and I know the people here very intimately. They live a simple life and their voice ever rings with the music of the Ramayana. Their misdeeds are of terrible proportions; but their capability for making reparations is also equally great. I have been a witness of this. Then why should they not confess their sins and atone for them? I do not know whether my voice does reach the people who have actually committed these crimes. Those who are sitting here in the audience and who had no hand in these crimes may also wonder how people could go berserk. I don't know whether or not I shall be able to reach those people who had done wrong to their Muslim brethren. But I want to reach them. They are unlettered; they do not read what appears in newspapers. I think I must go to their homes and stay with them.

I have heard that these people shouted Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai while carrying out the massacre. I do not consider myself a Mahatma. But I cannot understand how people who consider me a Mahatma dragged in my name for committing such heinous crimes. I learnt of these terrible riots in Bihar while I was trekking the villages in Noakhali and attempting to unite the hearts of Hindus and Muslims. Now that I have come to Bihar, I think I must visit the scenes of actual massacre. I have not yet decided whether I should go to these places by car or whether I should travel there as in Noakhali, on foot. In any case, I must make myself heard by those people whom my words do not reach and, even when they do reach, they do so in a distorted form.

I said it yesterday and I repeat today that all those Hindus who kidnapped Muslim women should return them. I am staying at the house of Dr. Mahmud. It will indeed be a brave thing if the miscreants come forward and openly confess their sins and are prepared to undergo due punishment. But if such courage is lacking, they can at least restore the girls to me without any fear of harm coming to them. I shall not hand them over to the police.

There was however one thing more he would like them to do. It had been reported that property worth about a crore of rupees had been looted or destroyed. It did not matter what the exact figure was. For, if a man was deprived of a couple of rupees when he had only that amount it meant that he had lost his all.

It is the duty of everyone who has looted the properties of Muslims to return the stolen goods. Many families have been completely wiped off. But some of their relatives may be alive. And even if no one is left behind, the return of stolen goods will convince the Muslims that the Hindus have undergone a change of heart and they will begin to trust the Hindus.

I shall once again appeal to you that those of you, who have understood my message, should certainly co-operate in this noble work and convey my message to the culprits. I can say nothing

more at present. But I have resolved to go to each and every affected village and to strive to reach the ears of every man.

**Gandhiji Ke Dukhe Dilki Pukar – I, pp. 6-8, and Harijan, 23-03-1947  
Collected work of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 87, pp 51-52**

### Speech at Prayer Meeting

Patna, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1947

Gandhiji said at the prayer meeting that he hoped the audience would forgive him for speaking always and exclusively on the them which had brought him to Bihar. It had become his duty to listen to the tales of woe that the Muslim sufferers unfolded before him from day to day. One of them had come to him and complained that even so recently as two days ago, things were pilfered from the Muslim houses. If such was the case it was most unfortunate and it betrayed a lack of the spirit of repentance without which there was no possibility of concord between the two communities in Bihar, indeed, in the whole of India.

Whenever any new matter comes to my knowledge in connection with the work I have undertaken these days, I state it frankly before the public. Yesterday I referred to one matter. Today I heard something more about it. I shall report it to you frankly. “We had imagined that your arrival would put a stop to all mischief,” I was told, “but it is now four days since you came here and yet the mischief goes on unabated.” I am witnessing here what I saw in Noakhali. No one should say: “Why should we not do what they are doing there? We are in a greater majority here.” Even if we have been wronged does it mean that we should try to compete with each other in goodaism?

We behave decently not for the sake of anyone else. An English scholar has said that one who does good deeds only performs his duty. If we do a good deed, we do nothing extraordinary. We do only what we ought to, and we shall be failing in our duty if we do not do so.

We have our newspapers here. It is their duty and that of the Chief Minister to remind the people constantly that they have committed a shameful crime, that Hindus and Muslims have to live together and all of us are Indians. Every one of us is equally guilty of what anyone of us has done. We can achieve freedom only if we act in this spirit.

Riots are raging in the Punjab. The administration in that province is being run under Article 93. This is no fault of the British that it is under the Governor’s rule. They have to run the government as long as they are here and no one else is prepared to undertake the responsibility. It is India’s misfortune that we cannot co-operate amongst ourselves and act unitedly. It would be wrong for a Bihari to excuse himself on the plea that others have perpetrated greater crimes. Let us admit that we are the greater sinners. Only then can we hope to reform ourselves.

Let us try to tread the straight path. I have received a telegram from a Hindu brother. It says that I must not condemn the Hindus in Bihar. It warns me that due to my influence over them I may mislead them and prevent them from taking revenge. Look at the cheek of this gentleman who is trying to teach me my duty! He calls himself a Hindus but does not like one. I claim to be a sanatani Hindu and therefore represent the best things of all the religion created for the worship of God. Every one of you, if you are honest, must feel likewise. We have committed a dirty crime and I have come here to cleanse the dirt and brighten the image of Hinduism. Am I going to flinch

from my duty if someone beats me up or abuses me for doing it? It is my duty to speak out the truth and if I withhold it, I shall be disloyal to Hindus, to Muslims and to India. I shall therefore advise you not to listen to those who incite and misguide you.

I wish to tell you one thing more. It is now four days that I have been here. I have been collecting money for Harijans every day and I have already collected a lot. But today an idea crossed my mind. The Hindus in Bihar have committed a grave error, they have been very unjust to Muslims. Hence they should do their duty by contributing to a fund for the relief of Muslims by way of repentance. No one should think that he need not lift his little finger since there is already a Congress ministry with a Congress majority here, which will do every thing that needs to be done. The ministers have to work under great stress in making use of public finances. You should realize that this is your responsibility. If you donate money to me, you will be giving it to a miser who has been on this job for a past sixty years. I have collected lakhs of rupees; but no one can say that I misappropriated the funds. Otherwise no one would have entrusted his money to me. I shall therefore appeal to you to donate the money not for my use, not for any other cause, but for the sake of the Muslim sufferers. Give with an open heart. A wealthy landlord has promised to give land as well as money for the Muslims. He will look after all the Muslims who would be placed under his care. Many more people should come forward with such offers.

I did not beg for money in Noakhali because I received unsought about three lakh rupees. Today I thought I should hold out the begging bowl here and awaken the conscience of the people. I should take everyone's help. What can I do by myself? And this is indeed your work; I can only remind you of your duty. I cannot perform your duty. Hence you must contribute generously to the Bihar fund. A Muslim child must feel entirely safe in a Hindu locality and the Muslims should be convinced of this change of heart. A friend came to me and asserted that there was a time in Bihar when Hindus and Muslims lived together and called each other uncles. Today it is no longer like that. We must atone for this.

**Gandhiji Ke Dukhe Dilki Pukar – I, pp. 13-6, and Harijan, 30.03.1947  
Collected work of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 87, pp 55,56,57**

### **Interview to United press of India**

**Patna, March 9<sup>th</sup> 1947**

When the United Press of India's special representative read out a message from New Delhi regarding Mahatma's contemplated fast, Gandhiji burst out laughing and said:

Of course, there is just a little bit of truth in it.

But he strongly disapproved of the practice of making a mountain out of a molehill.

Gandhiji told him that there was no present intention of fasting but circumstances might arise of which he had no present knowledge, which might compel him to undertake a fast.

**The Indian Nation, 10-03-1947  
Collected work of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 87, p. 57**

### Discussion with Binodanad Jha

March, 9th, 1947

Binodanand Jha protested that the Government was falsely accused of slowness in dealing with the situation. Immediately after the riots broke out, the Chief Minister had sent him to Gaya and then to Bhagalpur. The disturbances were the result of a “joint conspiracy” between the political opponents of the Congress, .... and the British officials in the services. In proof he produced a pamphlet issued by the Hindu Mahasabha and another by the zamindars. Still another pamphlet asked people to organize themselves and take revenge for Bengal as the Congress seemed to be unconcerned about the insult to Hindu women in Noakhali and Calcutta. In Bhagalpur, the Minister complained, the disturbances were precipitated by the Muslim League’s propaganda. It was they who after getting the Muslims to congregate in large numbers had set the ball rolling. The Government had information that the arms they had allowed for Muslim defence had reached the Muslim National Guards.

Gandhiji: I am against the giving of arms.

After the riots, the Minister continued, the League had deliberately implicated important Hindus. The League did not want things to settle down.

Gandhi : In the same way in Noakhali the Muslims complained that the Hindus were accusing wrong persons. I told them we should not be afraid of false cases. But we should not hide true ones. I do not want a single criminal to remain unpunished. The people should themselves come forward and confess their faults.

Jha : It was all a reaction against the happenings in Bengal.

Gandhi : We should not allow anything to deflect us from doing our duty.

**Mahatma Gandhi – The Last Phase, Vol. I, Bk., II, pp. 263-4  
Collected work of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 87, p. 58**

### Discussion with P.C.C. Members

Patna, March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1947

Gandhiji told them that the more he heard of the Government spokesman’s apologia, the more he felt the need for turning the searchlight inward. He wondered if behind his earlier determination to stay on in Noakhali was not “sheer obstinacy” on his part.

One Member : Tell us how we can wash off our sin. What are your orders?

Gandhiji replied that he was ever averse to issuing orders. In Noakhali he could not. In Bihar he could but did not want to. The very nature of the work precluded it. What he wanted was to awaken their conscience and win their reasoned co-operation. Since the advent of power, Congressmen had forgotten the path of duty. In a way Muslims had come to believe Jinnah’s charge that the Congress did not belong to all, that the Muslims that were with the Congress were there as mere puppets of the Congress with an axe to grind to the detriment and ruin of Islam. If

the Hindus were sincere and brave, even the few Muslims that were with them could give the lie to that calumny and enable the Muslims masses to see that they were being misled, and perhaps save them from being so misled.

He had served Bihar before. He had now come to them on what might be his last pilgrimage. If he died striving there, he would have done his duty. All things hung on truth, courage and knowledge. If none of these virtues was there, the future was dark indeed for Bihar and for India.

The Congressman got up to say that some Congress had taken part in the riot. He was interrupted by another Congressman who emphatically declared that no congressman had taken any part in the riot. Gandhiji felt hurt. The gentleman, he cut in, did not seem to know what he was talking about. Even their own colleagues had admitted that some Congressmen had taken part [in the riot]. If their confession was half-hearted they would not gain anything by it. He had said enough. They were all responsible people. They should search their hearts.

The Chief Minister explained the genesis of the trouble and how his Government had tried to do all they could before, during and after the outbreak. They were caught unprepared. The Governor was absent. The Chief Secretary and the Inspector-General of Police, both Englishmen, had let them down. British officers were having their revenge for 1942. He was sure, the inquiry would fully vindicate the Bihar Government. Of course, they could not act with the strength of Pandit Nehru, who gave a thorough shaking to the officers. If it could be proved that the Government had intentionally allowed a single Muslim to be killed, said Chief Minister, they would have no right to remain in office.

Then, put in Gandhiji, it had to be admitted that there had been lack of foresight. They should not bring in the Governor or the English officers. The popular Ministers had to act as if the Governor did not exist. Granting that they (the Ministers) had not been guilty of any wilful neglect of duty, still something was owing for what had actually happened. That needed intelligence, courage and purity of heart. Never had he been confronted with such a stupendous task in his life. Everything turned on what he could do with Bihar and the Biharis. If he succeeded in Bihar, India would be saved, the situation in the Punjab would be controlled and the Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan would come into their own.

**Mahatma Gandhi – The Last Phase, Vol. I, Bk. II, pp. 264-5**  
**Collected work of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 87, p. 59,60**

### Speech at Prayer meeting

Patna March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1947

It is good that I have one day of silence in the week. How beautiful it would be if everyone could spend at least a few hours in the day in silent introspection if it were not possible for them to spend a whole day in complete silence. If people were accustomed to such spiritual exercise, then their hands could never have been stained by deeds which have actually taken place in Bihar. But this is not the occasion for dilating upon the benefits of the practice of silence.

Today I wish to indicate in brief the duty of those who did not personally participate in the shameful killings which took place in this province. Their first duty is to purify their own thoughts. When thoughts are not pure, one's actions can never be purified. Pure action can never

come from imitation. If one tries to become good by merely imitating the good conduct of others, such conduct never succeeds in radiating any influence upon others; because it is after all not the true stuff. But one whose heart has become really pure along with his actions, can at once sense the true character of the thoughts which influence the behaviour of his neighbours. When thoughts and actions have both become pure there can be no repetition of the deeds which have marred the fair face of Bihar. But the world never progress in a straight line. The thoughts and actions of men never follow a parallel and uniform course. For all men these two can never be completely purified at any single point of time.

Therefore, I would wish to indicate this evening only that ideal of duty, which the workers should keep before themselves. If workers are available in sufficiently large numbers, it should be their first duty to explain clearly to the miscreants the full consequence of their misdeeds. It should be explained to the wrongdoers that such deeds can never be of any good to them personally, nor can they serve the cause of Hinduism or that of the country in general. It should be explained to them that they have not been able to serve those whom they intended to serve. They should also be induced to come forward and make a clean breast of their misdeeds before the public. They should also restore looted property and abducted women to the proper quarters.

A change of heart can never be brought about by law. It can only be affected through conversion of one's thought. When that is accomplished, there is no longer any need of compulsive laws.

I had asked you to help in the relief of Muslim brothers and sisters who have suffered during the last riots. Yesterday you did not come prepared for that purpose. I expect of you today to contribute to your fullest extent in this noble cause.

**The Indian Nation, 11-03-1947**

**Collected work of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 87, pp. 60,61**

### **Last day at Patna – 8<sup>th</sup> August 1947. From here proceeded to Calcutta**

**Patna, August 8th 1947**

Gandhiji began his speech by saying that he was sorry that he could not come to Bihar earlier. But even in Delhi and other places he worked for Bihar and Noakhali. His 'do-or-die' determination was guiding him in all spheres, and for the fulfilment of that determination he was going to Noakhali.

He must reach Noakhali two or three days before August 15<sup>th</sup> as the people there were extremely nervous, although he knew that nothing was going to happen. Unnecessary panic did not help anybody and if people were brave and god-fearing it did not matter if they lost their lives. He was going to Noakhali to allay panic.

He did not know what God had ordained and he also could not say what the Government would do. To him the whole of India was his country and he could not reconcile himself to the idea of partition in water-tight compartments. He wanted to live both in Hindustan and Pakistan and both were his homelands. Similar was the case with Jinnah Saheb. Muslim had got Pakistan. Now it was incumbent on the people of both Hindustan and Pakistan to live like good human beings and bring peace to the country.

Gandhiji warned the Hindus of Bihar never to think of repeating their crime of last year and said that they should help in rehabilitating all the refugees who were returning from Bengal. Love was the highest virtue and they should cultivate it for all. He hoped that he would be able to proclaim from Noakhali that Hindus and Muslims were forgetting their past and were living in brotherly feeling for each other.

The 15<sup>th</sup> is the day of our trial. Observe a fast on that day. Every one should do his duty. No one should create any disturbance. The independence we are going to get is not of the kind we can celebrate by having illuminations. We do not have food grains, clothes, ghee or oil. So where is the need for celebration? On that day we have to fast, play the Charkha, and pray to God. We did not have illumination on April 6<sup>th</sup>, did we? Did not we celebrate the declaration of that day by fasting from April 6<sup>th</sup> to April 13<sup>th</sup>? Moreover that day was better than today's independence. Brothers did not quarrel between themselves as they do now. Everyone could freely go to temples or mosques.

Mahatma Gandhi expressed his desire to return to Bihar after three weeks stay in Noakhali and said that on his return he would stay in Bihar for about a fortnight.

**The Hindustan Standard, 09-08-1947  
Collected work of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 89, pp. 18,19**