

APPENDIX—IV

GANDHI-VALLABHBHAI MEETING ON EVE OF POONA-PACT

On September 6, 1932 in Yervada Jail the discussion proceeded on these lines :

“Vallabhbhai Patel : What do you think will these people (British Government) do ?

Gandhiji : I still feel that they will release me on or before 19th. It will be the limit of wickedness if they let me fast, let no one know about it and then say that I did what I as a prisoner ought not to have done, and that they could do nothing about it. I do not say that they cannot go that far, only then they will find it necessary. And they certainly are not the people to go farther than it is necessary.

V. Patel : Then what will you do ?

Gandhiji : The fast cannot commence on 20th. We cannot stick to the 20th.”

V. Patel : Does it mean then that we have got time till the new Constitution is drawn up ? or that you can give a longer notice to the people and the Government ?

Gandhiji : Yes, but that depends on how much the people will allow me to do after I get out. I cannot tell what the situation will be. I may have no idea of the kind of letter I may have to write. But I shall have to consider every party—the Hindu Society, the *Antyajas*, the Government, the Muslims. It will be necessary for the Hindus to hold meetings along with the *Antyajas* at every place and reject this thing. The

Government has done this thing as a Christian Government and hence I shall have to tell both the Government and the Christians the same thing that as Christians they cannot do this thing. Let our *Swaraj* come into being, then they may influence the *Antyajias* in any way they like, but they should not divide us today. I had said this to the Muslims even in England. I shall say the same thing here also. I shall explain to the Hindu Society that now the *Antyajias* have no choice but to turn Muslims or Christians.

Mahadev Desai : Among the people who will come also be the Christian friends and they will say to you that before accusing the Government, you should accuse your self. Why does Hindu society regard the *Antyajias* as Untouchables ?

Gandhiji : That is upto me to explain. That is not difficult thing. We can say to them : “Allow us to settle our problems ourselves, why do you interfere ? After we have set about managing our own affairs, you may do what you like. Why do you divide us and then argue over things ? To-day the *Antyajias* have either to turn to Muslims or to you. The question of women is similar to that of *Antyajias*. But women are not Untouchables. Even if they wish to become Untouchables, men will go and sit on their beds. They cannot be separated from even by having a separate electorate. To-day the *Antyajias* have been separated permanently. What would be the outcome of it ? There

would be internal strife. There are people like ... He would collect bad characters in the community and get them to attack Hindus, poison wells and do other things.”¹

Bapuji wrote a letter to H. S. L., Polak in which he gave clear account of the circumstances leading to the fast. This is what he wrote :

“You seemed to have missed the very core of the fast. You have to go back to my speech at the Minorities Committee. It was not a prepared speech. The end of it came irresistibly. The fast was an inevitable result of that solemn declaration. I little knew how that declaration was to find fulfilment. I say that the declaration was from God and so was the fulfilment. If it was so, all argument is useless. If it was a hallucination, friends who believe it to be such are bound to drive home the truth to me with all the love and persistence they can summon to their assistance.

“Everything that happened since confirms me in the opinion that the fast was a God-given trust. Not the Premier but Sir Samuel Hoare through whom the message of the fast had necessarily to go. But if you had followed all the statements I have made and even my letter to the Premier you would have seen that the fast was addressed to the millions who had faith in me, and who had surrounded me with their undying affection whenever I went to their midst. They understood the fast with all its implications without any argument. For them, the political part of it was trivial; internal reform was everything.

“You ask why it was not administered ten years ago. The answer is; God did not call me to. He comes to wake you up when you least expect him. His ways are not our ways. You will, of course, believe me when I say that I had then the same capacity for sacrifices that I seem to have now.”²

¹ : Government of India, The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi, Vol. 11, Pp. 457-458.

²: *ibid*, volume LI, Pp. 252-253.

All the above reprinted, Busi Dr ; Pp. 188-190.