

# The Indian States' Problem

M. K. GANDHI



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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The volume that is now presented to the public marks another addition to the series of collections of Gandhiji's writings and utterances on various subjects, and contains all that he has said or written on the Indian States' problem during the last twentyfive years. Part II contains full texts of important documents referred to by Gandhiji, and also writings of others which are supplementary to his own and which were originally published with his approval. The arrangement of the articles in chronological order possesses an obvious advantage in that it enables the reader to study the various stages of the evolution of Gandhiji's views in their proper historical perspective and in relation to the situations and events with which he had occasion to deal from time to time. The book thus becomes, to some extent, a history of the movement in so far as it was guided by Gandhiji, and several of the events have become like so many landmarks in the movement for responsible government in Indian India, which essentially is part of the larger struggle for Indian freedom. The interest of the book, however, is not confined to the merely historical, because all that Gandhiji has said on this subject as well as others emanates from a ceaseless pursuit of those cardinal principles to the search and furtherance of which his life is dedicated, and which provide the springs of all his actions and form the basis of the guidance he has offered to the country all these years. The subject with which this collection deals is still a

live question, and those who are trying to tackle it will find much in the following pages which can illumine their path for a long time to come.

We regret to say the book has been in the press for a very long time. But the delay has been compensated for by the fact that we have been able to make the collection complete by adding Part III which contains all his recent writings till the time that the publication of *Harijan* was suspended in November last.

His latest pronouncement on the subject is contained in his brief foreword to Shri Pyarelal Nayar's articles on *The Status of Indian Princes*, and represents his final word on the subject. The warning therein given to the participators in the triple sin will remain for all time. Here are those words:

*"The following seven chapters are a result of Pyarelal's deep study of the status of the Princes of India. They should have been published in pamphlet form long ago, and would have been but for my preoccupation. The writer is himself behind gaol walls. Therefore they are being published as they were written. They are an evergreen. They give to the busy public worker or student, in a compact form, an idea of the status of the Princes of whom there are nearly six hundred. The chief merit of the pamphlet is that it contains nothing but what is taken from authentic records. The existence of this gigantic autocracy is the greatest disproof of British democracy, and is a credit neither to the Princes nor to the unhappy people who have to live under this undiluted autocracy. It is no credit to the Princes that they allow themselves powers which no human being, conscious of his dignity, should possess. It is no credit to the people who have mutely suffered the loss of elementary human*

*freedom. And it is perhaps the greatest blot on British rule in India. But we are too near the event to realize the falsity called "Princes' India" or "Indian India". The system will break under its own intolerable weight. My humble non-violent effort is to induce all the three parties to wash the triple sin. Even one of them can take the decisive step and it will affect all. But it will be glorious if the three together realize the enormity of the sin and by a combined effort wash it."*

15-3-1941

# CONTENTS

## PART I

### *Gandhiji's Writings and Utterances*

1. Lord Curzon's Durbar . . . . .	3
2. "Strip Yourselves of Jewellery" . . . . .	5
3. Kathiawad Political Conference . . . . .	7
4. Rulers and Ruled . . . . .	29
5. I Cry to Conquer . . . . .	37
6. My Incapacity . . . . .	42
7. 'Alwar Atrocities' . . . . .	47
8. Kathiawad Political Conference . . . . .	49
9. From R. T. C. Speeches . . . . .	54
10. Kelkar-Gandhi Correspondence . . . . .	60
11. 'Matters of Agreement' . . . . .	67
12. The A. I. C. C. . . . .	69
13. The States Resolution . . . . .	72
14. Price for Gaining Liberty . . . . .	76
15. The States . . . . .	79
16. The Tragedy in Travancore . . . . .	82
17. The States and Responsibility . . . . .	86
18. Non-intervention . . . . .	92
19. The Travancore Situation . . . . .	94
20. A Correction . . . . .	96
21. To Travancore Students . . . . .	97
22. The Travancore Amnesty . . . . .	98
23. Aundh Reforms . . . . .	99
24. States and the People . . . . .	101
25. A Caution . . . . .	105
26. Advice to Travancore State Congress . . . . .	106
27. Rajkot . . . . .	108
28. Aundh Constitution . . . . .	111

29. Travancore . . . . .	113
30. The Ban on Jamnalalji . . . . .	117
31. 'Most Unfortunate' . . . . .	121
32. Jaipur . . . . .	122
33. Violence v. Non-violence . . . . .	124
34. The States . . . . .	128
35. Congress and States . . . . .	131
36. Why the Withdrawal . . . . .	136
37. Rajkot . . . . .	141
38. Rajkot and Jaipur . . . . .	145
39. "Kicks and Kisses" . . . . .	147
40. Why Kasturba Gandhi? . . . . .	152
41. "Not a War of Words" . . . . .	154
42. Jaipur . . . . .	157
43. "Barbarous Behaviour" . . . . .	162
44. Untruth in Newspapers . . . . .	164
45. Travancore . . . . .	167
46. Hyderabad . . . . .	170
47. The Ethics of It . . . . .	172
48. Mewar . . . . .	173
49. Not Guilty . . . . .	176
50. My Apology . . . . .	179
51. Jaipur . . . . .	181
52. Travancore Again . . . . .	182
53. Lawless Limbdi . . . . .	185
54. Question of Honour . . . . .	190
55. Rajkot Events . . . . .	196
56. A Mischievous Suggestion . . . . .	201
57. The Fiery Ordeal . . . . .	204
58. "A Good Ending" . . . . .	223
59. Its Meaning . . . . .	229
60. To the People of Rajkot—I . . . . .	230
61. To the People of Rajkot—II . . . . .	232
62. Travancore . . . . .	237
63. Fasting . . . . .	239



64. Read the Signs . . . . .	241
65. Requisite Qualifications . . . . .	244
66. Jaipur Civil Disobedience . . . . .	246
67. Suspend Civil Disobedience . . . . .	248
68. Suspension should Continue . . . . .	251
69. The States . . . . .	254
70. Repression in Travancore . . . . .	257
71. Have I Erred? . . . . .	258
72. Rajkot Events . . . . .	262
73. The Tragedy of Talcher . . . . .	275
74. Unhappy Travancore . . . . .	278
75. I Am Defeated . . . . .	282
76. Popular Violence in Ramdurg . . . . .	287
77. Jaipur Prisoners . . . . .	290
78. Heart-Searching . . . . .	292
79. The New Technique . . . . .	297
80. Confession and Repentance . . . . .	303
81. Talcher Again . . . . .	307
82. New Light . . . . .	309
83. New Technique in Action . . . . .	315
84. Leaders must Lead . . . . .	320
85. Jaipur Again . . . . .	321
86. How Far? . . . . .	323
87. Its Implications . . . . .	327
88. "Rajkot—Was it a Betrayal?" . . . . .	331
89. Non-violence v. Violence . . . . .	333
90. Jaipur . . . . .	339
91. To The Princes . . . . .	342
92. A Repudiation . . . . .	347
93. Minority Administration . . . . .	349
94. Lesson of Dharni . . . . .	354
95. Confederation of Small States . . . . .	357
96. The Arya Samaj! . . . . .	359
97. Plea for Voluntary Federation . . . . .	361
98. Limbdi . . . . .	364

99. A Maharaja's Threat . . . . .	367
100. Sirohi . . . . .	376
101. Jaipur Satyagraha . . . . .	378
102. Narsingharh . . . . .	380
103. Unfortunate People of Travancore . . . . .	382
104. Tweedledum and Tweedledee . . . . .	386
105. Princes and Paramount Power . . . . .	389
106. Travancore Again . . . . .	390
107. Rajkot Reforms . . . . .	397

## PART II

*Important Documents  
and  
Others' Writings*

1. Haripura Congress Resolution regarding States . . . . .	401
2. The Mysore Settlement . . . . .	404
3. Working Committee's Resolution . . . . .	409
4. Working Committee's Resolutions . . . . .	411
5. A. I. C. C. Resolution . . . . .	412
6. Working Committee's Resolution . . . . .	414
7. The Jaipur State Authorities' Notification . . . . .	416
8. Jamnalalji's Letter . . . . .	417
9. "Cold-blooded Breach of a Solemn Covenant" . . . . .	421
10. Reign of Repression in Rajkot . . . . .	447
11. Travancore Bulletins . . . . .	453
12. Paramountcy and Non-intervention (Pyarelal) . . . . .	465
13. Civil Resistance Suspended (V. J. Patel) . . . . .	472
14. A God-given Fast (M. D.) . . . . .	473
15. Ordeal by Fire (C. F. Andrews) . . . . .	476
16. Tripuri Resolution . . . . .	479
17. The Fast in the Foreign Press (M. D.) . . . . .	481
18. More about the Fast (M. D.) . . . . .	485
19. The Rajkot Fast . . . . .	489
20. The States Today . . . . .	540
21. The Rajkot Award . . . . .	547

22. The Way of Satyagraha (Pyarelal)	560
23. Rajkot Correspondence	563
24. Confusion Worse Confounded (Harekrushna Mahtab)	565
25. A Momentous Decision (M. D.)	573
26. The Decision and After (M. D.)	582
27. My Rajkot Speech (M. D.)	612
28. Kathiawad States (R. L. H.)	618
29. No Inquiry! (M. D.)	624

## PART III

*Gandhiji's Recent Writings*

1. The Princes	629
2. Rajkot Reforms	632
3. A Wise Step	633
4. Princes in Democratic India	634
5. Sirohi	635
6. Princes	636
7. State Praja Mandals	638
8. The Princes	639
9. Jaipur State Praja Mandal	640
10. Repression in Jodhpur	641
11. A One-sided Inquiry	644
12. Peace in Sirohi	647
13. Mysore Lawyers	648
14. Mysore Justice	654
15. Travancore	656
16. Travancore	659
17. Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar's Extravagances	664
18. Aundh	665
19. Travancore	668
20. Indian States and Congress Activity	671
21. Hyderabad	672
22. Jaipur	676
23. The Princes	677
Index	679

## INDEX

## INDEX

- ACHUTHAN, 659,662,668-9  
 Ahimsa, *See* Non-violence  
 Ahmed, Sultan, 54-5  
 Aiyar, C. P. Ramaswami,  
     82-4, 113, 183, 241-2, 315,  
     385,391-4,656-9,661-2,664  
 Alwar, 45,47  
 Ambedkar, Dr., 54  
 Amrit Kaur, Rajkumari, 114,  
     182,380  
 Amulakh Amichand, 188  
 Anada, P. P., 210, 236, 266,  
     273,423,441  
 Ansorge, 566  
 Ari, 191  
 Arundale, G. S., 515  
 Aryasamaj, 171,359-60,528  
 Aspinall, Col., 437,496  
 Atal, A., 149  
 Aundh, 99, 100, 111-2, 316,  
     651,665-7  
 Azad, Abul Kalam, 359  
 BAJAJ, Jamnalal, 47,104,117-  
     20, 122, 131, 132, 156-7,  
     159-63,177,179-81, 290-1,  
     300, 321, 339-40, 378, 411,  
     417,420,640,676  
 Banker, S., 380,499  
 Baroda, 134-5,467-8  
 Bazalgette, R. L., 121,128  
 Bhagmal, 351  
 Bhagwanlal Harakhchand,188  
 Bhatt, Gokulbhai, 376-7,647  
 Bhatt, Manishanker, 8  
 Bhavnagar, 618-20  
 Bhojwala, 422  
 Bikaner, 148,469  
 Birchell, 536  
 Birla, G. D., 517  
*Bombay Chronicle, The*, 201  
 Bose, S., 201-3,490,539  
 Bradlaugh, J., 604  
 Brailsford, H. N., 57  
 Butler Committee Report, 621  
 CADELL, P., 108,172,176,421-  
     2,429-31,431-6,438-40, 446  
 Canning, Lord, 466-7  
 Chamba, 349-50  
 Chattopadhyaya, Kamala-  
     devi, 83  
 Cherian, A., 167  
 Chhotalal, 186  
 Chhotani, Mian, 597  
 Christ, Jesus, 483  
 Chudgar, P. L., 157,159-61  
 Cochin, 620  
 Communal unity, 27,226,603  
 Confederation, 357-8, 361-3,  
     618-23, *See also* Federation  
 Congress and States, *See*  
     States and Congress  
 Cow-preservation, 46  
 Curzon, Lord, 3  
 Cutch, 320,347-8,618-9,622  
 DADABHAI Naoroji, 54  
 Dada Haji Valimohmed, 441  
 Dalhousie, Lord, 466  
 Daly, C. K., 438, 496-7

- Damodardas, 105  
 Dasappa, H. C., 648-50, 654-5  
 Dave, Kevalram Mavji, 32  
 Desai, Bhaktiba, 187  
 Desai, Bhulabhai, 517, 648  
 Desai, Gopaldas, 189  
 Desai, Mahadev, 327, 477-8,  
 492, 510, 514, 517, 564, 588,  
 644  
 Deo, S., 191-3  
 Deshpande, G. B., 191-3, 287  
 Dharni, 350-1, 353-4  
 Dharamnarain, 149  
 Dharmendrasinh, 214, 264,  
 421, 427-8, 431, 434, 436,  
 440-1, 452, 550, 552  
 Dhebar, U. N., 210-1, 236,  
 423, 443, 445, 493-4, 519,  
 564, 612-3, 632  
 Dhenkanal, 103, 128, 413  
 Dhorajiwala, 31  
 Dhrangadhra, 619  
 Dhrol, 619  
 Divakar, R. R., 287  
 Doddameti, 191, 193  
 Doshi, R. M., 236  
 Durlabhji Umedchand, 188  
 Dyer, General, 84  
 FASTING, A METHOD, 205-7, 223,  
 259, 483-4, 487-8, 514-5  
 Fatemamad Ahmed, 452, 493  
 Federation, 56, 7, 201-3, 361-3,  
 384, 540-1, 545-6 See also  
 Confederation  
 GADHDAWALA, M., 198, 219,  
 500, 589  
 Gaekwar, Malhar Rao, 467  
 Gajjar, D. J., 423, 441  
 Gandhi, B., 188  
 Gandhi, Devadas, 478  
 Gandhi, J. K., 266, 273, 423  
 Gandhi, K., 505  
 Gandhi, Kasturba, 152-3, 491,  
 498, 506, 509-10, 512-4, 516,  
 563, 579, 582, 586  
 Gandhi, N., 509, 616  
 Gandhi, P., 505  
 Gandhiji -and Jaipur, 417;  
 -and Mysore, 405; -and  
 Rajkot, 472, 560-2, 573-  
 617; -and States, 150;  
 -and Travancore, 456-7,  
 668; -correspondence with  
 B. St. John, 159-61; -Co-  
 rrespondence with E. C.  
 Gibson, 213, 220-2; -Co-  
 rrespondence with First  
 Member Rajkot, 196-8; -  
 Correspondence with N.C.  
 Kelkar, 60-6; -Correspon-  
 dence with Thakore Saheb  
 Rajkot, 209-14, 216-7, 262-  
 7, 563; -Correspondence  
 with Virawala, 564; Fast  
 at Rajkot, 204-29, 473-9,  
 481-539; -Letter to A.  
 Sheth, 67; -Maharaja of  
 Patiala's Letter to, 370-5  
 Gavin Jones, 55  
 George, K. C., 656-7, 662  
 Gibson, E. C., 212-3, 220, 222,  
 284, 292, 297, 304, 311, 434-  
 5, 437-40, 495, 500, 504,  
 506, 510-1, 514, 518, 578  
 Gilder, Dr., 490, 492, 507, 516-7  
 Gokhale, G. K., 3

- Gondal, 31  
 Govind Das, 499  
 Gregory, Major, 276  
 Gupta, G. S., 360  
 Gwyer Award, 262-8, 270, 272, 282, 298, 303-6, 310-2, 331-2, 538, 547-59, 573-80, 582-7, 594, 612-6, *See also* Gwyer, M.  
 Gwyer, M., 260 1, 538-9, 547, 559, 574, 579, 591-94, 599  
*See also* Gwyer Award  
 Gyan Nath, Raja, 676  
 HAKSAR, K., 149  
 Halifax, Lord, *See* Irwin  
 Hannesey, Major, 275-6, 307-8, 566-8  
 Hardikar, N. S., 287  
 Hardinge, Lord, 4, 5, 471  
*Harijan*, 96, 131, 136, 164-5, 190, 327, 331, 347, 375, 389, 476, 481, 489, 503, 506, 509, 526, 604, 609, 618, 629, 668-9  
*Harijansewak*, 375  
 Harrison, Agatha, 507-8, 511-2, 514, 517, 519, 521, 530, 536, 567  
 Harvey, 149  
 Heptubhai Abdulali, 441  
 Higginbotham, Sam, 6  
*Hind Swaraj*, 301  
 Hindu Mahasabha, 171  
*Hindu, The*, 87, 648, 661, 663  
*Hindustan Times, The*, 179-80  
 Hitler, 385, 536  
 Holkar, Hari Rao, 468  
 Hunter, Justice, 669  
 Hydari, A., 89  
 Hyderabad, 42-44, 89, 90, 105, 170-1, 359-60, 412, 528, 633, 672-5  
 IDAR, 619  
 Irwin (Halifax), Lord, 260  
 Ismail, M., 76-7, 670  
 Iyer, Nagesvara, 644-5, 648  
 JADEJA, J. D., 441  
 Jaiprakash, 639  
 Jaipur, 117-20, 122-3, 129, 146, 156-63, 176-81, 246-7, 290-1, 321-2, 325, 378-9, 411, 416-20, 526-7, 533-4, 640, 676  
 Jamkhandi, 411  
 Jamnagar, 32  
 Jasani, N., 198, 219-20  
 Jeychand Valji, 187  
 Jobanputra, J., 421, 436, 438, 450  
 Jodhpur, 641-3  
 Joshi, G. B., 266, 274, 445  
 Joshi, J. H., 210, 236, 266, 274  
 Junagadh, 522, 619-20  
 KANABUR, 191  
 Kashmir, 413, 470  
 Katju, K. N., 664  
 Kaujalgi, H. S., 287  
 Kelkar, N. C., 64, 66-7  
 Kesavan, C., 457  
 Khadi, 15-7, 24-5, 40, 140, 246-7, 278, 300-1, 598  
 Kherie, M. A. A., 117  
 Khwaja, Abdul Majid, 603  
 Korah, 251  
 Koshi, M. G., 279  
 Kripalani, Acharya, 407

- LALCHAND, 188  
 Limbdi, 186-9, 364-6, 522, 619,  
     624-6  
 Linlithgow, Lord, 260, 540, 621  
 Lothian, 376  
 MACDONALD, R., 207  
 Madhav Rao, T., 379  
 Magadi, 287  
 Mahomed, Prophet, 483-4  
 Mahtab, H., 273-4, 307, 566-8,  
     572  
 Malaviya, Madan Mohan, 4,  
     42-3  
 Malaviya, P. D., 266, 273,  
     423, 441  
*Manchester Guardian, The*,  
     201-2, 482  
 Mandan, M., 264-5, 269  
 Mansa, 411  
 Mansukhlal, Bhai, 8  
 Mashruwala, K. G., 297, 376-7,  
     604  
 Mathooradas Tricumji, 507  
 McGregor, 149  
 Meherally, Y., 347-8  
 Mehta, Dr. Jivraj, 490, 492,  
     507, 516-7, 519  
 Mewar, 166, 173-5  
 Minto, Lord, 150  
 Miraj, 411  
 Misra, P., 301  
 Modi, P., 188  
 Modi, S. V., 210, 236  
 Montagu, E., 30  
*Morning Post, The*, 482  
 Morvi, 619-20  
 Mridulaben, 512-3, 516, 518.  
 Mulraj, 320  
 Munawalli, 191-3, 287  
 Munshi, K. M., 649  
 Muslim League, 201, 603  
 Mysore, 70, 76-8, 86, 404-8, 468,  
     607, 644-6, 648-50, 654-5  
 NARSINGHGARH, 380-1  
*Navajivan*, 15, 35  
 Nawanagar, 619-20  
 Nayyar, Dr. Sushila, 499, 507,  
     509-10, 518  
 Nehru, J., 369, 533, 609-10  
 Nebru, Motilal, 606  
*News Chronicle, The*, 482  
*New York Times, The*, 536  
 Nilgiri, 411  
 Non-violence, 88, 97, 124-7,  
     245-7, 293-6, 298-300, 302,  
     333-8, 344, 425, 501, 522,  
     525-6, 536-8, 575, 588-9,  
     600-3, 608, 639. *See also*  
     Ahimsa  
*Non-violent Coercion (Case)*,  
     608  
 Northbrook, Lord, 471  
 O'DWYER, M., 32  
 Orissa States, 121, 125-7  
 Oudh, 471  
 PALITANA, 619  
 Pant, Appasaheb, 651, 665,  
     667  
 Pant, G. B., 538  
 Paramount Power, *See*  
     Princes  
 Patel, M. C., 421, 423, 436,  
     438, 441, 444, 450, 551, 553-4  
 Patel, Maniben, 512-3, 516,  
     518



- Patel, Sardar Vallabhbhai, 105, 108, 113, 141-42, 145, 147, 150, 154-5, 172, 176, 191-2, 197-8, 200, 213, 215-6, 221, 229, 260, 262-73, 282, 285, 296, 305, 361, 407, 421, 426-7, 433-42, 446-50, 472, 479, 485, 490-1, 503, 511, 530, 535, 539, 547-56, 558, 560-1, 564, 574-5, 578, 609-10
- Patiala, 367-75, 467
- Patil, K. S., 191
- Pattani, A., 437, 510
- Pearson, 514, 518
- Phillipose, J., 248, 251, 257, 315, 391, 527
- Pillai, A. Thanu, 241, 313, 385, 391, 453
- Pillai, C. K. P., 94, 96, 453
- Pillai, E. R., 278
- Pillai, K., 251
- Pillai, K. K., 251
- Pillai, K. M. B., 278
- Pillai, M. N. P., 656, 662
- Pillai, N. S., 252
- Pillai, S., 455
- Porbandar, 619
- Princes, -and Paramount Power, 57-9, 102-3, 177, 241-2, 307-8, 337-8, 350, 352, 389, 465-71, 511-2, 519-21, 543-4, 578-9, 590-1, 629-30, 651, 664, 677; -and people, 20-3, 33-6, 40-1, 49-53, 62-5, 149-51, 168, 336, 467-71; -at Curzon's durbar, 3; -at Hindu University, 4, 5; -their administration, 15, 541-6; -their autocratic powers, 385; -their extravagance, 3-5, 13; -their future, 225, 629, 634, 636-7, 639, 650-3, 672-4; -their visits to Europe, 12. See also States
- Purushottamdas, Sir, 492
- Pyarelal, 189, 327, 573, 623, 664
- RADHANPUR, 619
- Rajagopalachari, C., 69, 649
- Rajas, See Princes
- Rajkot, 90, 105, 108-10, 115, 129, 134, 141-5, 152-7, 172, 176-8, 196-200, 204-36, 258-74, 282-6, 292-9, 303-6, 309-14, 323-7, 331-2, 397-8, 421-52, 472-9, 481-539, 547-64, 573-617, 619, 632
- Rolland, Romain, 45
- Ramachandran, G., 114, 182-3, 241, 278, 455-6, 460, 656-7, 661-3, 663-9
- Ramdurg, 190-5, 287-9, 411
- Ramesam, Justice, 670
- Rampur, 620
- Ranga, Prof., 128
- Ranpur, 127-8
- Reilly, D., 654-5
- Ripon, Marquis of, 468
- Robertson, 149
- Round Table Conference, 54, 56
- Roy, B., 503
- SALAR JANG, 379

- Santhanam, K., 659,662  
 Sastri, V. S. Srinivasa, 85  
 Satyagraha, 21,44,170,243-5,  
 254-6, 295, 328-30, 501-3,  
 524, 527-30, 533-4, 583-5,  
 592-3,603-4  
 Sebastain, P. J., 457,668-9  
 Shah, J., 236  
 Shankar, R., 278  
 Shauka: Ali, 31,34  
 Sheth, A., 68  
 Shukla, V. M., 210,266,274,  
 309,423,443,445,613  
 Sikar, 411  
 Sinha, Lord, 30,301  
 Sirohi, 376-7,635,647  
 Sitaramayya, B. Pattabhi,  
 201-2  
 Smuts, General, 293  
*Spectator, The*, 487  
 St. John, B., 131,157-61  
*Star, The*, 482  
 States, -and British India, 10,  
 55,241, 361-2, 636-7; -and  
 Congress, 8,9,47-8, 54,60-  
 75, 79, 92-3, 103-4; 132-3,  
 143-4;147-8, 164-5, 194-5,  
 242, 288-9, 328-9, 344-6;  
 352-6,369-70,401-3,406-15,  
 425,479-80,630-1,633,638,  
 651-3,671, 673-4,677;-and  
 minimum demand, 342-4;  
 -and Paramount Power,  
*See Princes*; -and people,  
*See Princes*; ideal of, 19;  
 under Swaraj, 9, 232-6.  
*See also Princes*  
*Statesman, The*, 166,333  
 Subrahmonier. E. R., 454  
 TAGORE, R., 476-7  
 Talcher, 128,144,166, 275-7,  
 307-8,413,565-72,609  
 Tank, M. M., 441  
 Tapubha, 188  
 Thakar, M., 188  
 Thakkar Bapa, 128,166,275-6  
 Thakkar, Dr., 516-7  
 Thangal, K. S., 278  
*The Indian States and Princes*  
 (Macmunn), 619  
*The Protected Princes of*  
*India* (Lee Warner), 465  
 Thoreau, 365  
 Tilak, Lokamanya, 30  
*Times of India, The*, 131,590  
*Times, The*, 481-2  
 Travancore, 82-8, 94-8, 106-  
 7, 113-6, 130, 136-40,  
 167-9,182-5,237-8,241,248-  
 53,257,278-81,315-9,382-8,  
 390-6,412,453-64,527,532-  
 4,594,599, 605-7, 609,656-  
 64,668-70  
*Tribune, The*, 618  
 UNTOUCHABILITY, 18,26,39  
 Upadhyaya, H., 526  
 Vaidya, K., 380  
 Vaidya, M. P., 173  
 Vala, 41!  
 Valeravala, 422  
 Valiji Abdulalli, 423  
 Variava, Dr., 507,510,517  
 Varma, M., 173-4  
 Velayudhan, V. K., 656,662

- Verghese, P. J., 257,280  
 Verghese, T. M., 94,315,386,  
 656-7  
 Vijayaben, 509  
 Viravala, Durbar, 208, 210,  
 228,283-6,293-7,303-5,309,  
 311-13,397,422-5,433,437,  
 440,445,475,493-4,498-9,  
 503-4,508,515,522,526,  
 535,548,564,573-80,582,  
 584,587-9,594,612-3,615,  
 617  
 Vithalgadh, 522  
 WADHER, B. W., 265,273  
 Wadhwan, 619  
 Wankaner, 619  
 Wells, H. G., 674  
 Williams, R., 201-3  
 Winterton, Earl, 101-2  
 Yadavindra Singh, 375  
 Yalgi, 190  
 Young, F. S., 162,179,417  
*Young India*, 15, 35, 43, 45,  
 302  
 ZETLAND, Lord, 511