

# YOUNG INDIA

1924-1926

BY MAHATMA GANDHI

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*By* MAHATMA GANDHI

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

*By* RAJENDRA PRASAD

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S. GANESAN,

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## INTRODUCTION

*The Civil Disobedience Committee and after.*—In the Introduction to *Young India* 1919-1922 a narrative of events during the period of the Non-co-operation movement up to 31st August, 1922 was given. The circumstances leading to the appointment of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee were detailed. The Enquiry Committee after a tour through the country and after recording evidence regarding its preparedness or otherwise for Civil Disobedience came to the unanimous conclusion that the country was not prepared to embark upon general Mass Civil Disobedience but recommended that Provincial Congress Committees be authorised to sanction Civil Disobedience of a limited character on certain conditions. It was also of opinion, unanimously, that it was desirable to seek election to Municipalities, District and Local Boards with a view to facilitating the constructive programme, that aggressive propaganda against Government schools and colleges or law courts should not be carried out and that organisation of labour should be taken in hand. There were also recommendations for giving to individuals full freedom to exercise the right within legal limits of private defence and for boycott of British goods. These last recommendations were not unanimous but unlike the recommendations regarding the lifting of the ban on legislative bodies they did not cause much controversy. The Committee was divided equally on the question of entry into the Councils. One set led by Pandit Motilal Nehru held that Non-co-operators should contest the election to the Councils on the issue of the redress of the Bengal and Khilafat wrongs and immediate Swaraj and in the case of their being returned in a majority large enough to prevent a quorum, they should after taking their seats leave the Council Chamber in a body and take no part in the proceedings, attending occasionally only

for the purpose of preventing vacancies. In case they had a majority they were to oppose every measure of the Government including the Budget and only move resolutions for the redress of the aforesaid wrongs and the attainment of immediate Swaraj. In case of being returned in a minority they were to leave the Council Chamber without causing vacancies. The other party led by Mr. C. Rajgopalachari was of opinion that there should be no change in the programme of the Congress in respect of the boycott of the Councils. Deshabandhu C. R. Das who had been, in the meanwhile, released from jail agreed with the recommendations of Pandit Motilal Nehru.

*The Congress and Council Entry.*—The publication of the Report led to a very prolonged controversy. The All India Congress Committee met in Calcutta on the 20th November, 1922 under the presidency of Deshabandhu Das to consider the report and after a discussion extending over several days ultimately postponed the consideration of the question regarding Council Entry to the next session of the Congress. The Congress met in December at Gaya under the presidency of Deshabandhu Das and the principal question which engaged its attention was naturally the question of Council Entry. The Congress on account of the interest which had been created in the controversy was very largely attended and continued its sessions for five days. It is sufficient to state that it turned down the resolution in favour of Council Entry and maintained the boycott of Councils by a large majority. It is remarkable that in spite of the fact that the most influential and trusted leaders like Deshabandhu Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Hakim Ajmal Khan lent their powerful support in favour of a change in the original programme by removing the ban on Council Entry, the Congress refused under the advice of a comparatively younger and less known leader Shriji C. Rajagopalachari to countenance any weakening in it.

The controversy, however, did not end with the session of the Congress. Deshabandhu Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru and

others formed a Party of those who favoured Council Entry named the Congress-Khilafat-Swarajya Party which came subsequently to be known simply as the Swarajya Party. In the programme of that Party the item which occupied the most prominent place was of course the one relating to Council Entry. It was stated that the party would set up candidates for seats in the Legislative Councils and the Assembly and on being elected they would present on behalf of the country its legitimate demands for acceptance and fulfilment by the Government within a reasonable time. In case the demands were not granted the party would adopt a policy of uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction with a view to make government by the Councils impossible and that in no case would any member of the Party accept office. Other items related to the capture of Municipal, District and Local Boards, organisation of Labour, boycott of British goods, formation of a Federation of Asiatic countries and according support of the party to the constructive programme of the Congress regarding Swadeshi, Khaddar, temperance, untouchability, National education and settlement of disputes by arbitration. Deshabhandhu Das finding himself in a minority in the Congress felt it his duty to tender resignation of his office as President of the Congress and of the All India Congress Committee. The All India Committee, however, did not accept the resignation. As a result of the difference on the Council question the Congress was divided sharply into two different parties which came to be known as the No-change Party which wanted to stick to the programme of the boycott of Councils and the Pro-change or the Swarajya party.

*The Special Congress at Delhi.*—The history of the following nine months is a history of barren controversy and futile attempts at compromises between the pro-changers and no-changers relieved only by one heroic effort at Nagpur under the lead of Seth Jarnalal Bajaj to save and uphold the honour of the National Flag by Satyagraha. This Satyagraha had its origin at Jubbulpore but found its full

play at Nagpur where the Government had prohibited procession with National Flags within the Civil lines. After a struggle of about two months or more in which nearly two thousand persons including Seth Jammalal Bajaj disobeyed the order, courted, and were given, various terms of imprisonment, it came to an honourable close when the Government permitted a large procession to pass through the prohibited area without taking any steps to enforce obedience to its orders.

A special session of the Congress was called to meet at Delhi on the 15th of September, 1923. Moulana Mohamad Ali had in the meantime been released from jail. Mr. Rajagopalachari who had been leading the No-change Party in his absence withdrew himself into the back ground leaving the leadership to Moulana Mohamad Ali. The special Congress met under the presidency of Moulana Abul Kalam Azad and under the guidance of Moulana Mohamad Ali representing the No-change group and Deshabhandhu Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru leading the Swarajya Party passed a resolution according liberty to such Congressmen as had no religious or other conscientious objection to stand as candidates and exercise their right of voting at the ensuing council elections. Thus the Swarajya Party found its way clear to enter the Councils. It is necessary to mention in passing that since the incarceration of Mahatma Gandhi serious differences leading to riots and bloodshed had arisen between the Hindus and the Mussalmans. This is not the place to enter into an examination of the causes which created discord where harmony had existed and which led the two communities to shed each other's blood instead of commingling it in common sacrifice as they had done at Jallianwalla Bagh and during the memorable fight offered by the nation in 1921 which according to Lord Llyod, the Governor of Bombay, had led Indians almost within an ace of winning victory against the mighty British Government. The Hindu-Muslim riots have now become a common feature and even today in August 1927 the incubus is sitting tight on the breast of a prostrate nation. With the close of the Council controversy at Delhi and increas-

ing differences between the Hindu and the Mussalman and a general sense of tiredness among a large body of workers for any effective forward programme, more and more attention came to be given to the work in Councils.

*The Rise of the Swarajists.*—The Delhi special Congress was soon followed by election to the Legislatures and the Swarajya Party set up its candidates to contest the elections and it succeeded remarkably well in the Central Provinces and Bengal. It also captured a substantial number of seats in the Legislative Assembly and in other Councils. In December 1923 the Congress met at Cocanada under the Presidentship of Moulana Mahomed Ali and practically reaffirmed the resolution regarding council entry passed in the Special session at Delhi. The year 1924 opened with the Swarajya Party in the Provincial Legislatures and the Legislative Assembly organising and consolidating its strength in combination with other Nationalist groups and preparing for a fight against the Government in the Councils. The country was, however, convulsed with the news of the serious illness of Mahatma Gandhi in Yarvada Jail, his removal to hospital and operation on him for appendicitis. Some very anxious days were passed but the patient recovered and the Government did not send him back to jail but gave him an unconditional release. In the Assembly the Swarajists were able with the help of other groups to throw out the Finance Bill which however was restored by the Viceroy in virtue of the special powers which he possesses to over-ride the decisions of the Assembly. In the Central Provinces the Council threw out the Budget and practically made the continuance of the ministry under the reformed constitution impossible. The Government, however, could not be made impossible as the constitution reserved ample powers to the Governor to run the administration without the ministers. The Governor in the exercise of such powers practically withdrew the reforms from operation in the Central Provinces. A similar contingency occurred later on in Bengal and in exercise of similar powers the Government

killed the Reforms there also. The work of the Swarajya Party, led as they were with tact and firmness, was creditable and they achieved whatever could be achieved by their tactics under the constitution. But the constitution reserved to the Government the powers of veto and certification and went on using those powers much to the discomfiture of those who had hoped that Government by certification and veto could not last long. We know now that it had lasted at least four years under the reformed constitution and even in small matters of detail where some respect could easily have been shown to the wishes of the Legislature the Government has remained adamant. This is not the place to give a detailed history of the work of the Swarajya Party in Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Councils. It must be said to their credit that they fought and fought well and tried as best as they could with the members they had at their back to carry on obstruction, but the Constitution left very little room for obstruction and obstruction in a legislature is nothing but co-operation looked at from a different angle of vision.

*Mahatma Gandhi's Release.*—Mahatma Gandhi's recovery and release were naturally hailed with great rejoicing all over the country. People wanted a lead from him. After a long period of convalescence and after anxious conversation with the leaders of the Swarajya Party, Mahatma Gandhi issued a statement reiterating his faith in the original Non-co-operation programme including the boycott of Councils but at the same time recognising the sincerity of those who differed from him on the council question and calling upon those who agreed with him to concentrate their attention on the constructive programme sketched out by him before his incarceration. This statement was followed by another emphasising the need of strengthening the Congress organisation by insisting on having only those on the Congress Executive who not only believed in but also carried out in their own persons the boycott of Government titles, Government educational institutions, Government Law Courts and

Government Councils and who further gave practical demonstration of their adherence to the constructive programme as, for example, by spinning. A meeting of the All India Congress Committee was held in June 1924 at Ahmedabad and the suggestions of Mahatma Gandhi were discussed at great length. The attitude of the Swarajya Party was that it was an attempt on his part to exclude them from the Congress executive. He succeeded in getting the resolutions which he proposed passed through the Committee with a majority. But with characteristic generosity he declared that although he was in a majority he was really in a minority and he ultimately had a resolution passed which was in the nature of a compromise with the Swarajya Party. The meeting ended in gloom and Mahatma Gandhi was pained beyond measure to see the disruption of the great movement which he had led—a disruption which had been wrought about as much by those who had thrown out his programme during his absence as by the inactivity, disorganisation and demoralisation of those who yet professed to follow him. A resolution which opened his eyes to the situation more than ever before was the one relating to the murder of an Englishman, Mr. Day, in Calcutta by a Bengalee youth who confessed that he had intended to murder not Day who was innocent but the Commissioner of Police for his activity against the Revolutionary Party. Mahatma Gandhi was in favour of condemning such political murders as opposed to the creed of non-violence which had been accepted by the Congress. The resolution of condemnation was passed by the All India Congress Committee but the discussion which preceded the vote showed the extent to which a considerable number of the members differed from Mahatma Gandhi in their belief in the creed of Non-violence. He at one time expressed a desire to withdraw from the Congress and to organise the country independently according to his own ideas but he ultimately rejected this and continued to work within the Congress. His subsequent conduct had been one of gradual withdrawing from the active politics of the Congress and intensive concentra-



tion on the constructive programme, particularly hand-spinning. His endeavour has been to keep himself in the background without in any way weakening the Congress or the Swarajya Party.

*Hindu-Muslim Tension.*—The Ahmedabad meeting was preceded and followed by serious Hindu-Muslim riots in many places, the most harrowing amongst them being at Kohat. Mahatma Gandhi tried his best to stem the rising tide and ultimately on the 18th of September, 1924, he began a twenty-one days' fast at Delhi as a penance for Hindu-Muslim quarrels and made an appeal for unity. This created a great sensation and a Unity Conference was immediately called which was attended not only by Hindu and Mussalman delegates but also by the Metropolitan of India and by the representatives of other communities. It continued its deliberations for several days and passed several resolutions laying down principles of toleration and detailed instructions regarding composition of differences arising out of observance of rites by members of different communities. If only the resolutions had been acted upon by all concerned the history of India during the last three years could have been differently written. But alas! the wave of reconciliation which the memorable fast had caused was short lived and India became once again the playground of conflicting gusts of communal passions which resulted in numerous riots all over the country. To-day one feels as if walking upon a powder magazine and no place can be said to be safe from the risks of a communal upheaval. The worst passions have been roused by the preachings and propaganda of a class of unscrupulous men. To the frenzy of a religious homicide Swami Shradhanand, one of the most devoted and unselfish workers and most loved and respected leaders of the Hindus fell a victim in December, 1926 in circumstances of most cowardly treachery while lying in his sick-bed.

*The Suspension of Non-co-operation.*—The fast was shortly followed by what was nothing short of a revival of the Rowlatt

Act in the form of an Ordinance issued by Lord Reading on the 25th October authorising arrest and detention without warrant or trial of persons on mere suspicion and it was quickly acted upon by the arrest of a large number of persons in Bengal including Mr. Subas Chandra Bose who was then the Chief Executive officer of the Calcutta Corporation. Many of them are still in Jail suffering all kinds of ill-treatment like common felons. Mr. Subas Chandra Bose has recently been released on account of serious illness. One effect of this ordinance was to combine all parties in its condemnation. There was a Pact between Mahatma Gandhi and Swarajists whereby it was recommended to the Congress which was to be held in the following December at Belgaum that in order to bring about unity amongst all parties the programme of Non-co-operation as a National Programme should be suspended except in regard to the boycott of foreign cloth. It was also recommended that the Congress work be divided into different departments, and the Swarajya Party be treated as the department for work in the Council. Hand-spinning and wearing of hand-spun and hand-woven Khaddar at Congress functions was to be made a qualification for Congress membership. The Congress which met at Belgaum in December was presided over by Mahatma Gandhi and a resolution practically confirming the Pact and formally suspending the programme of Non-co-operation as the National Programme was passed by it. The Swaraj Party with its Council Programme became the predominant party in the Congress and its subsequent history is the history of controversy between two sections of its members, one insisting on obstruction within the Legislatures and non-acceptance of offices within the gift of the Government such as ministerships and the other demanding a logical extension of the principle and policy which had led them out of boycott into the Councils. The other Party which has come to be known as the Responsive Co-operation Party and is led by the Maharashtra group under Mr. N.C. Kelkar insists upon the acceptance of offices also wherever necessary and useful to advance the Nationalist cause.

The Congress which met in December 1925 at Cawnpore witnessed a clear-cut division between the orthodox Swarajists and the Responsive Co-operationists. The Swaraj Party in the course of the year lost its great leader Deshabandhu C. R. Das who expired on 16th June, 1925 at Darjeeling casting a gloom all over the country. Pandit Motilal Nehru who succeeded to the leadership of the Party was able to carry the country with him and induced the Congress at Cawnpore in spite of influential opposition of the Responsivist group to take over the responsibility of running election and laying down the programme of work in Councils. The elections to the Legislatures which thus took place in 1926 were contested not only by Independents and Liberals but also by two antagonistic groups among Congressmen, the one representing the Swaraj Party which had for all practical purposes merged in the Congress and the other representing the Responsivists. The result has been that while the Congress group has succeeded in many places it is nowhere strong enough by itself to carry out effective obstruction or to prevent the formation of Ministry. The Responsivists too are not strong enough to form a Ministry of their own unaided but they have formed a Ministry in Central Provinces in combination with other groups. It is yet too early to pass any judgment on their achievements. The Congress which met in December 1926 at Gauhati practically endorsed the Swarajist programme for work in the Councils.

*The Khilafat Question.*—In bringing to a close this short history of Non-co-operation movement—its causes, progress and effects, it is necessary to mention that the Khilafat question which along with the redress of the Punjab wrongs and the attainment of Swaraj had been one of its immediate causes, was after a good deal of diplomatic moves, manoeuvres and negotiations ultimately set at rest by the victory of the Turks against the Greeks which enabled the Turks to establish a strong republic under Mustapha Kemal Pasha with its capital at Angora after the deposition of the Sultan and the abolition of the Khilafat. The

holy places of Islam at Hedjas have also passed out of the control of non-Muslims or their proteges by the victories of Sultan Ibn Saud against Sherif Huzain who during the Great War had revolted against the Khalifa and had joined the allies.

*Satyagraha as a Practical Weapon.*—This narrative will not be complete without a brief reference to some instances of practical application of Satyagraha, which is the flower and fruit of Non-co-operation to the solution of our pressing problems. The Sikhs being dissatisfied with the condition of their religious institutions known as Gurudwaras which had large endowments started an intensive propaganda for their reform. That campaign consisted in the capture of the Gurudwaras by the Reformed Party known as Akalis and brought them into collision with the Government which supported established Mahants. The Akalis offered Satyagraha and with singular adherence to non-violence suffered not only imprisonment in their thousands and for long terms, confiscation of property and even shooting but also undescrivable horrors at the hands of the Police who mercilessly beat them until they were left unconscious at the places allotted to them for Satyagraha. The Akali struggle exhibits the strength of their faith in the justice of their cause, a deeply religious conviction, a perfectly disciplined organisation, a grim determination to suffer without retaliating and the ultimate triumph of their cause. It shall ever shine as a memorable application of the principles of Satyagraha and its unflinching effect.

No less striking applications of the same principle were seen at Vykom in South India and in the Borsad Taluka in Gujerat. The Vykom Satyagraha was started for removing the restrictions imposed upon the so-called un-touchables prohibiting them from walking along certain roads near temples. The Volunteers who came from all strata of society carried out the struggle and ultimately succeeded in getting the road opened but not before they had undergone considerable suffering. The Borsad Satyagraha was a practical essay in non-payment of taxes by the inhabitants of a whole Taluka comprising about a

hundred villages. A free-booter was at large committing dacoity and loot and the police were unable to capture him. On the pretext that the residents of these villages were sheltering him an additional Police Force was posted and the costs for its maintenance amounting to about two and a half lakhs were ordered to be realised from the inhabitants. They refused to pay the unjust imposition and the Government, being unable to realise it by sequestration and sale of the property of the inhabitants among whom none could be found to purchase them at auction sales held for the purpose or even to remove them to a place where they could be sold, was compelled to withdraw the imposition.

Even to-day Satyagraha is being resorted to in two distant places on two distinct issues. At Patukhali in Eastern Bengal Hindus have been carrying on Satyagraha by courting imprisonment for more than a year to enforce their right to play music on public roads and take religious processions past mosques. At Nagpur, in the Central Provinces, Satyagraha is resorted to for getting a repeal of the "lawless laws" under which a large number of Bengalis are detained in jails without trial or charge in any law court under orders of the Executive Government. The form this Satyagraha is taking is to disobey the Arms Act by carrying arms without license.

*Back to the Constructive Programme.*—With the formal suspension of the Non-co-operation programme Non-co-operation may be said to have waned; but it is alive and the spirit is seen working in different directions. Satyagraha has come to stay: only observance of the very strict rules within which alone it can be worked successfully and effectively is not yet as widely understood as it should be. The Non-co-operation movement came like a huge flood of the Ganges carrying everything before it. It came quickly but it disappeared also quickly, principally because its basic principles and their implications were not fully grasped. There is no doubt that it carried along with it a great deal of filth also but that could not be avoided, and to-day after seeing it rise and subside

one feels that while it has thrown on the surface much that was unhealthy and dirty it has left behind it a silt which is the very salt of the earth and has given to the Indian soil a fertility that was never there at any time during the British occupation of India. The shoots arising out of the soil made so fertile are seen in thousands of homes which had become desolate in the shape of little spinning wheels. They are being carefully tended by Mahatma Gandhi who started an association known as the All India Spinners Association in 1925 for the purpose of developing hand-spinning unhampered by changes in political opinions and yet as an integral part of the Congress which claims to represent not only the rich and the middle classes but also the very poorest of the land. These young shoots are being watered by the sweat and sacrifice of hundreds of men and women all over the country who are giving all their time to the revival of this ancient and vital handicraft of India. They are prospering under the sunshine of the smile of the people who are coming to realise more and more that the economic salvation of a country like India where 80 p. c. of the population lives on agriculture alone can be found only through a cottage industry which can supply them a commodity universally in demand and which can at the same time be worked by the people in their off-hours without giving up their agricultural work. The progress that has been made in reviving this ancient handicraft is recorded in the pages of *Young India* from week to week, and considering the difficulties in its way, the competition it has to face against cheaper mill made cloth—Indian and foreign, the general apathy and in some cases even, open hostility it has to contest against the progress has been truly marvellous and gives ample cause for hope for its future.

*A Critical Phase.*—While these lines are being written, India is passing through a most critical phase of depression. The Hindu-Muslim tension is deep and wide-spread. There are numerous parties and groups in the political field pulling in all possible directions. The Government has been

consolidating its power in the legislatures by winning over the weaker and more "reasonable" members and has not been over scrupulous in showing its strength against popular demands. But dark as the horizon is, it is not without its silver lining.

Efforts are being made to solve the apparently insoluble Hindu-Muslim problem. The question in its political aspect is sought to be solved on the basis of an understanding abrogating separate electorate for Mussalmans on certain conditions and safeguarding the political rights of minorities. The religious differences are sought to be solved on the basis of the resolutions which were unanimously adopted by delegates of all communities at the Unity Conference at Delhi during Mahatma Gandhi's fast. Unity amongst political parties is sought to be brought about by recognising that in spite of differences in respect of details and methods, all are agreed on the fundamental question of the attainment of Swaraj by India and that even in the matter of methods of work in the Councils and in the country it should not be impossible for the parties to adjust their differences and evolve a common programme of work, now that non-co-operation has been suspended by the Congress.

Whatever form that common programme may take, it must be based on a clear recognition of the bed-rock fact that Indians can win their way to freedom only by service and sacrifice. India, weak, divided, disorganised and demoralised, cannot attain and retain Swaraj. India, pure, strong, united, organised and determined, cannot be kept from Swaraj in spite of the best and the worst that England can do against her. The aim of *Young India* has been to build up that strength, purity, unity, organisation and determination, and may it continue under Mahatma Gandhi to inspire the nation and lead it to victory!

27th August, 1927

RAJENDRA PRASAD.

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In this the second volume of *Young India*, Mahatma Gandhi's writings in his journal from the years 1924 to 1926 have, with his permission and blessings, been collected, edited and brought together in book form on the lines adopted in the first volume.

The period to which these articles relate was one of grave trial for the Non-co-operation Movement; many who joined it in the first flush of enthusiasm wavered; several broke away from it; a few turned definitely hostile. This revolt, on the part of not a few who had proclaimed themselves to be his followers, from the hard discipline which his method of securing national salvation involves, was, of course, a disappointment to Mahatma Gandhi: but, as the writings embodied in this volume will show, he stands unnerved by these developments and unshaken in his faith in Satyagraha; in the need, however hard it be, for the upliftment of the masses by conscious striving on the part of the classes; and in those trying tasks such as the universalisation of the use of the spinning wheel by which alone, he holds, national solidarity may be secured and national prosperity promoted.



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## PREFATORY NOTE TO THE FIRST VOLUME

WITH the incarceration of Mahatma Gandhi, his writings in *Young India* have passed beyond the pale of polemical politics and entered the realm of the "classic" literature. Far more than their practical value to India, at present or hereafter, is their value to the world at large, embodying in them a philosophy of life and practical conduct elaborated by the experience of the lifetime of a soul which will undoubtedly rank in history as that of one of the world's greatest of men.

A few isolated articles are all that have so far been published in book form and the need for a systematic collection of *all* the articles, numbering hundreds, and their presentation in a carefully edited form, is the justification for this publication. The task of editing has not been easy. To have arranged the articles in a wholly chronological order would perhaps have been preferred by the few close followers of *Young India* who till recently have been comparatively few. On the other hand, the by far more numerous lay readers who pay serious and systematic attention to the writings for the first time—and their number is bound to grow—prefer, as experience proves, a logical arrangement. A wholly logical arrangement would, however, have required an amount of editing which would have been incompatible with the publisher's desire not to tamper with the original in any way. The result is a compromise whereby while the articles are sorted and grouped under ten sections, so as to facilitate the study of particular subjects, they are, within these sections, arranged exactly as they appeared in *Young India*. In all cases, where to have given the whole article would only have been unduly burdening the book, the articles have been carefully summarised and given as footnotes in appropriate places. As far as possible, even observations by the way, though on topics of but momentary interest, have

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wherever they are in the nature of valuable *obiter dicta*, been also included. All endeavour has thus been made to give in this one volume the valuable writings of Mahatmaji and others in *Young India* from the date of its first publication in Ahmedabad, 1919 to the date of his imprisonment in 1922. Throughout, the writings have been approached as an earnest and reverent student in search solely of Truth would have done, so that the collection might be a reliable account of the Mahatmaji's views to all who desire seriously to study them.

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