

The Indian National Congress 1934-36

*Being the resolutions passed by the Congress, the All India
Congress Committee and the Working Committee during
the period between May, 1934 and April, 1936*

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This volume is the eighth in the series containing the resolutions passed by the Congress, the All India Congress Committee and the Working Committee covering the period between May 1934, when the Congress was reorganised after the suspension of the last civil disobedience movement, and April 1936. The last volume published covered the period of 1929. In 1930 there was the salt Satyagrah and the Congress was under ban and no volume could be published. After a brief prelude the civil disobedience movement started again in 1932. This came to a close with the suspension of the movement in May 1934. There has been no publication covering this period of four and a half years. Efforts are being made to collect all the resolutions passed by the Congress, the All India Congress Committee and the Working Committee covering this period. Meanwhile the volume is being sent out for the convenience of all those who participate and take interest in Congress activities.

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APPENDIX 1

GANDHIJI'S STATEMENT

(Dated Patna, April 7, 1934)

This statement was drafted by me on my day of silence at Saharsa, that is, Easter Monday, 22nd instant. I passed it on to Rajendra Babu and then it was circulated among the friends who were present. The original draft has undergone considerable revision. It is also abridged. But in essence it remains as it was on Monday. I regret that I have not been able to show it to all friends and colleagues with whom I would have been delighted to share it. But as I had no doubt whatsoever about the soundness of my decision and as I knew that the civil resistance of some friends was imminent, I was not prepared to take the risk of delaying publication by waiting for the opinion of friends. The decision and every word of the statement are in answer to intense introspection, searching of the heart and waiting upon God. The decision carries with it reflection upon no single individual. It is a humble admission of my own limitations and a due sense of the tremendous responsibility that I have carried on my shoulders all these long years.

This statement owes its inspiration to a personal chat with the inmates and associates of the Satyagraha Ashram who had just come out of prison and whom, at Rajendra Babu's instance, I had sent to Bihar. More especially is it due to a revealing information I got in the course of a conversation about a valued companion of long standing who was found reluctant to perform the full prison task and preferring his private studies to the allotted task. This was undoubtedly contrary to the rules of Satyagraha. More than the imperfection of the friend, whom I love more than ever, it brought home to me my own imperfection. The friend said he had thought that I was aware of his weakness. I was blind. Blindness in a leader is unpardonable. I saw at

once that I must for the time being remain the sole representative of civil resistance in action.

During the informal conference week at Poona in July last I had stated that, while many individual civil resisters would be welcome, even one was sufficient to keep alive the message of Satyagraha. Now after much searching of the heart I have arrived at the conclusion that in the present circumstances only one and that myself and no other should, for the time being, bear the responsibility of civil resistance, if it is to succeed as a means of achieving Purna Swaraj.

I feel that the masses have not received the full message of Satyagraha owing to its adulteration in the process of transmission. It has become clear to me that spiritual instruments suffer in their potency when their use is taught through non-spiritual media. Spiritual messages are self-propagating. The reaction of the masses throughout the Harijan tour has been the latest forcible illustration of what I mean. The splendid response of the masses has been spontaneous. The workers themselves were amazed at the attendance and the fervour of vast masses whom they had never reached.

Satyagraha is a purely spiritual weapon. It may be used for what appear to be mundane ends and through men and women who do not understand its spirituality, provided the director knows that the weapon is spiritual. Everyone cannot use surgical instruments. Many may use them if there is an expert behind them directing their use. I claim to be a Satyagraha expert in the making. I have need to be far more careful than the expert surgeon who is complete master of his science. I am still a humble searcher. The very nature of the science of Satyagraha precludes the student from seeing more than the step immediately in front of him.

The introspection prompted by the conversation with the Ashram inmates has led me to the conclusion that I must advise all Congressmen to suspend civil resistance for Swaraj as distinguished from specific grievances. They should leave it to me alone. It should be resumed by others in my lifetime only under my direction, unless one arises claiming to know the science better than I do and inspires confidence. I give this opinion as the author and initiator of

Satyagraha. Henceforth, therefore, all who have been impelled to civil resistance for Swaraj under my advice, directly given or indirectly inferred, will please desist from civil resistance. I am quite convinced that this is the best course in the interests of India's fight for freedom.

I am deadly in earnest about this greatest of weapons at the disposal of mankind. It is claimed for Satyagraha that it is a complete substitute for violence or war. It is designed, therefore, to reach the hearts both of the so-called "terrorists" and the rulers who seek to root out the "terrorists" by emasculating the whole nation. But the indifferent civil resistance of many, grand as it has been in its results, has not touched the hearts either of the "terrorists" or the rulers as a class. Unadulterated Satyagraha must touch the hearts of both. To test the truth of the proposition, Satyagraha needs to be confined to one qualified person at a time. The trial has never been made. It must be made now.

Let me caution the reader against mistaking Satyagraha for mere civil resistance. It covers much more than civil resistance. It means relentless search for Truth and the Power that such a search gives to the searcher can only be pursued by strictly non-violent means.

What are the civil resisters thus freed to do? If they are to be ready for the call whenever it comes, they must learn the art and the beauty of self-denial and voluntary poverty. They must engage themselves in nation-building activities, the spread of Khaddar through personal hand-spinning and hand-weaving, the spread of communal unity of hearts by irreproachable personal conduct towards one another in every walk of life, the banishing of untouchability in every shape or form in one's own person, the spread of total abstinence from intoxicating drinks and drugs by personal contact with individual addicts and generally by cultivating personal purity. These are services which provide maintenance on a poor man's scale. Those for whom the poor man's scale is not feasible should find place in small unorganised industries of national importance which give better wages. Let it be understood that civil resistance is for those who know and perform the duty of voluntary

obedience to law and authority.

It is hardly necessary to say that in issuing this statement I am in no way usurping the function of the Congress. Mine is mere advice to those who look to me for guidance in matters of Satyagraha.

APPENDIX 2

GANDHIJI'S STATEMENT

Wardhaganj, September 17.

Mahatma Gandhi issued the following statement to the Press:—

“The rumour that I had contemplated severing all physical connection with the Congress was true. However, for the considerations urged by my friends who had come to Wardha during the meetings of the Working Committee and Parliamentary Board last week, I agreed with them that it might be safer for me to leave the Congress, if at all, after the forthcoming session. There was an intermediate course, suggested by Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant and Mr. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, of remaining in the Congress without participating in active administration of the organisation, but both Sirdar Vallabhbhai Patel and Moulana Abul Kalam Azad strongly disapproved of that course. Sirdar Vallabhbhai had agreed with me that the time had arrived for me to retire from the Congress, but many others would not endorse that view. After due consideration of all the pros and cons, I have adopted the safe and prudent course of postponing the final step at least till after the meeting of the Congress session in October. One attractive idea behind the insistence on postponement was that it would enable me to test the accuracy of my impression that a very large body of Congress intelligentsia were tired of my method and views, and programme based upon them, that I was a hindrance rather than a help to the natural growth of the Congress, that, instead of remaining the most democratic and representative organisation, it was dominated by my personality, that in it there was no free play of reason.

“If I am to test the truth or otherwise of my impression, naturally, I must put before the public the reasons on which my impression is based, and my own proposals based thereon.

Congressmen might vote on them and thus clearly register their opinion.

"I must try to do this as briefly as I can. It has appeared to me that there is a growing and vital difference of outlook between many Congressmen and myself. I seem to be going in a direction just the opposite of what many of the most intellectual Congressmen would gladly and enthusiastically take if they were not hampered by their unexampled loyalty to me. No leader can expect greater loyalty and devotion than I have received from intellectually-minded Congressmen, even when they have protested and signified their disapproval of the policies I have laid before the Congress. For me any more to draw upon this loyalty and devotion is to put undue strain upon them. Their loyalty cannot blind my eyes to what appear to me to be fundamental differences between the Congress intelligentsia and me.

"Let me state them. I put the spinning-wheel and khadi in the forefront. Hand-spinning by Congress intelligentsia has all but disappeared. The general body of them have no faith in it and yet, if I could carry their reason with me, I would substitute the four-anna franchise by personal, daily hand-spinning. The khadi clause of the Congress Constitution has been almost a dead letter from the beginning and Congressmen have not been wanting who have reminded me that I am responsible for the hypocrisy and evasion about the working of the khadi clause. I ought to have realized that it was not passed out of deep conviction, but largely out of personal loyalty to me. I must own that there is considerable force in the argument. Nevertheless my conviction is growing that if India is to win Complete Independence in terms of the toiling millions and through unadulterated non-violence, the spinning-wheel and khadi have to be as natural to the educated few as to the partially unemployed and semi-starved millions who, for not using their hands for the purpose for which nature has endowed man with them, have become almost like beasts of burden. The spinning-wheel is thus an emblem of human dignity and equality in the truest sense of the term. It is the handmaid of agriculture. It is the Nation's second lung. We are perishing because we are using only one lung, yet only a few Congressmen

have a living faith in the India-wide potency of the wheel. The removal of the khadi clause in the Constitution would mean removal of the living link between the Congress and millions whom it has from its inception sought to represent, and yet if it remains, it has to be rigidly enforced. But it cannot be, if a substantial majority of Congressmen have no living faith in it.

"Take again the Parliamentary Board. Though the author of Non-co-operation, I am convinced that in the present circumstances of the country and in the absence of any general scheme of civil resistance, a Parliamentary Party within the Congress is a necessary part of any programme that may be framed by the Congress, but there are sharp differences of opinion among us on that point. The force with which I urged the programme at the All-India Congress Committee meeting in Patna, I know, oppressed many of our best colleagues, but they hesitated to act according to their own conviction. Upto a point, suppression of one's views in favour of those of another, considered superior in wisdom or experience, is virtuous and desirable for healthy growth of organisation; it becomes a terrible oppression when one is called upon to repeat the performance from day to day. Though I have never wished any such untoward result, I cannot conceal from me or the public the tragic fact that such has been my own experience. Many have despaired of resisting me. This is a humiliating revelation to a born democrat,—I make that claim of complete identification with the poorest of mankind, an intense longing to live no better than they and a corresponding conscious effort to approach that level to the best one's ability can entitle one to make it.

"I have welcomed the formation of the Socialist group. Many of them are respected and self-sacrificing co-workers. With all this, I have fundamental differences with them on the programme published in their authorized pamphlets. But I would not, by reason of the moral pressure I may be able to exert, suppress the spread of ideas propounded in their literature. I may not interfere with the free expression of those ideas, however distasteful some of them may be to me. If they gain ascendancy in the Congress, as they well may, I cannot remain in the Congress. For, to be in active opposi-

tion should be unthinkable. Though identified with many organizations during a long period of public service, I have never accepted that position.

"Then there is the policy advocated by some in regard to the States which is wholly in difference from what I have advised. I have given many an anxious hour to the question but I have not been able to alter my view.

"Even on untouchability, my method of approach is perhaps different from that of many, if not of most Congressmen. For me, it is a deeply religious and moral issue. Many think that it was a profound error for me to have disturbed the course of the civil resistance struggle by taking up the question in the manner, and at the time, I did. I feel that I would have been untrue to myself if I had taken any other course.

"Last of all, take non-violence. After 14 years of trial, it still remains a policy with the majority of Congressmen, whereas it is a fundamental creed with me. That congressmen do not still regard non-violence as a creed is no fault of theirs. It is undoubtedly my faulty presentation and, still more, the faulty execution that are responsible for this failure. I have no consciousness of faulty presentation or execution, but it is the only possible inference from the fact that it has not yet become an integral part of the lives of Congressmen.

"And if there is uncertainty about non-violence, there must be still more about civil resistance. In spite of my 27 years of study and practice of the doctrine, I cannot claim to know all about it. The field of research is necessarily limited, as occasions for civil resistance in a man's life must not be frequent. It can only come after voluntary obedience to authority, whether of parents, teachers or other elders, religious or secular. There need be no wonder that, as the only expert, however imperfect, among us, I should have come to the conclusion that it should, for some time to come, be limited only to me. This was necessary in order to minimise the errors and mischief proceeding from them, as also to explore its hidden possibilities, but again for no fault of the Congressmen. It has been increasingly difficult for me to carry the reason of fellow Congressmen with me in all the resolutions recently passed on the subject, whilst they have

generously voted for them.

“Even the memory of the sense of oppression which they experienced at the time of voting, without an intelligent belief in these resolutions, oppresses me just as much as they were oppressed. They and I must be free from this oppression if we are at all to grow in pursuit of what we believe to be the common goal. Hence it is necessary for all concerned to act freely and boldly according to their convictions.

“I have, in my Patna statement recommending suspension of civil resistance, drawn attention to the failure of civil resistance to achieve two obvious results. If we had the full non-violent spirit in us, it should have been self-evident and should not have escaped the notice of the Government. Their Ordinances were certainly not warranted by any of the misdeeds done by or imputed to us. They were undoubtedly intended to break our spirit anyhow. But it would be wrong if we contended that civil desisters were above reapproach. If we are non-violent through and through, our non-violence would have been self-evident. Nor were we able to show to the terrorists that we had greater faith in our non-violence than they in their violence. On the contrary, many of us made them feel that we had the same spirit of violence in our breasts that they had. Only, we did not believe in deeds of violence. The terrorists rightly argued that if the spirit of violence was common to both, the policy of doing or not doing violence was a matter of opinion. I need not repeat what I have said before, that the country has made great strides towards non-violence indeed and that many have exhibited great courage and self-sacrifice. All I want to say is that ours has not been unadulterated non-violence in thought, word and deed. It is now my paramount duty to devise ways and means of showing demonstrably to the Government and the terrorists the efficacy of non-violence as a means of achieving the right thing, including freedom in every sense of the term.

“For this experiment to which my life is dedicated, I need complete detachment and absolute freedom of action. Satyagraha, of which civil resistance is but a part, is to me the universal law of life. Satya, in truth, is my God. I can

only search Him through non-violence and in no other way. And the freedom of my country, as of the world, is surely included in the search for Truth. I cannot suspend this search for anything in this world or another. I have entered the political life in pursuit of this search, and if it cannot carry the reason as well as the heart of educated Congressmen when I say that this search necessarily includes Complete Independence and many other things which may be part of Truth, it is plain I should work single-handed, in the implicit faith that what I fail to make clear to my countrymen to-day shall be clear to them some day of itself; or, if God wills it, through some apt word He may put in my mouth or some apt work which He may prompt me to do in matters of such tremendous importance. A mechanical vote or a grudging assent is wholly inadequate, if not injurious to the cause itself.

"I have referred to the common goal but I have begun to doubt if all Congressmen understand the same thing by the expression 'Complete Independence.' I want for India Complete Independence in the full English sense of that English expression. For me Purna Swaraj has an infinitely larger meaning than 'Complete Independence' but even Purna Swaraj is not self-explained. No one word or compound expression will give us a meaning which all can understand. Hence, on several occasions I have given several definitions of Swaraj. I hold that they are all hopelessly incomplete even when put together, but I do not wish to labour on it.

"My mention of the difficulty if not the impossibility of giving a complete definition leads me to another serious point of difference between many Congressmen and myself. I have always said, since 1903, that means and end are convertible terms and that, therefore, where the means are various and even contradictory the end must be different and even contradictory. We have always control over the means and never on the end. But we may not bother about its content if we all employ identical means with identical connotation for them. It will be admitted that many Congressmen do not admit this (to me) obvious truth. They believe that the end justifies the means, whatever they may be.

"It is the sum-total of these differences which has steri-

lised the existing Congress programme, because members who have their lip-assent to it without believing in it, have naturally failed to reduce it to practice and yet I have no other programme save the Congress programme now before the country, that is, untouchability, Hindu-Muslim unity, total prohibition, hand-spinning with khadi cent per cent Swadeshi, in the sense of the revival of Village Industries and general re-organisation of the seven lakhs of villages, ought to give all satisfaction that one's love of one's country may demand. Personally I would like to bury myself in an Indian village, preferably in a Frontier village. If the Khudai Khidmatgars are truly non-violent, they will contribute the largest share to the promotion of the non-violent spirit and of Hindu-Muslim unity. For, if they are non-violent in thought, word and deed, and are lovers of Hindu-Muslim unity, surely through them we should see the accomplishment of the two things we need most in this land. The Afghan menace which we dread so much should then be a thing of the past. I am, therefore, yearning to test the truth for myself of the claim that they have imbibed the spirit of non-violence and are believers, in the heart, of unity of Hindus, Mussalmans and others. I should like also personally to deliver the message of the spinning-wheel to them in this and various such other ways. I would love to serve the Congress in my own humble manner, whether I am in or outside it.

"I have reserved to the last reference to the growing corruption in our ranks. I have already said enough about it in public. In spite of all I have said, the Congress still remains in my estimation the most powerful and the most representative organisation in the country. It has a history of uninterrupted noble service and self-sacrifice, and from its inception it has weathered storms as no other institution has done. It has commanded a measure of self-sacrifice of which any country would be proud. It holds to-day the largest number of devoted men and women of unimpeachable character. If I must leave this organisation, I shall not do so without a wrench and I should do it only when I am convinced that being outside I would serve it, *i.e.*, the country, better than by being in it.

"I propose to test the feeling of the Congress on all the

points I have touched by placing before the Subjects Committee certain resolutions giving effect to the views enunciated above. The first amendment I would propose is to replace the words 'legitimate and peaceful' by 'truthful and non-violent.' I should not have done so but for the furore of opposition which was raised against the utterly innocent use by me of the two adjectives in the place of 'legitimate and peaceful.' If Congressmen really believe in the necessity of truthfulness and non-violence for the attainment of our goal, they should have no hesitation about accepting the unequivocal adjectives.

"The second amendment would be to replace the four anna franchise by the delivery by every member to a Congress depot of 2,000 rounds (one round equal to four feet) per month of well-twisted even yarn of not less than 15 counts spun by himself or herself. The arguments for and against need not be repeated here. If we are to be a truly democratic body representing even the lowest paid labour, we cannot do it better than by devising a simple labour franchise. Hand-spinning is by common consent the lowest paid labour and yet the most dignified. It is the nearest approach to adult franchise within the means of almost every one who is willing to labour for the sake of the country for half an hour daily. Is it too much to expect the intelligentsia and the propertied classes to recognise the dignity of labour, irrespective of the material benefit it brings? Is not labour, like learning, its own reward? If we are true servants of the masses, we would take pride in spinning for their sakes. I recall what the late Maulana Mohammad Ali used to repeat from many a platform. As the sword was the symbol of brute force and might, he would say, the wheel or the *takli* was the symbol of non-violence, service and humility. When the wheel was accepted as part of the national flag it was surely implied that the spinning-wheel would hum in every household. If Congressmen do not believe in the message of the wheel, we must remove it from the national flag, and khaddar from the Constitution. It is intolerable that there should be unashamed fraud in the observance of the khaddar clause.

"The third amendment I should propose would be that no one shall be entitled to vote at any Congress election whose

name has not been on the Congress register continuously for six months without default, and who has not been a habitual wearer wholly of khaddar for that period. A great difficulty has been experienced in the working of the khaddar clause. It can be easily avoided by giving powers, subject to appeal to the President of the Congress and to the chairmen of respective committees, to decide the question whether a particular voter is or is not a habitual wearer wholly of khaddar within the meaning of the Constitution. No one is to be considered such a wearer who, at the time of voting, is not manifestly wholly clad in khaddar. But no rule, however carefully and strictly worded, can produce satisfactory results if a large number do not voluntarily carry it out.

"Experience has shown that the Congress is an unwieldy organisation, even with 6,000 delegates. In practice, the full number has never attended the Congress, and when the Congress register nowhere contains a truly representative list, the delegation can hardly be claimed to be a reality. I would, therefore, have an amendment reducing the number to not more than 1,000 delegates nor more than one delegate per every thousand voters. To have the full number of delegates would mean one million voters, not an over-ambitious hope in a country having a population of 315 millions. The Congress would, by this amendment, gain in substance what it may lose in the show of numbers. The spectacular part of the session would be kept intact by making ample provision for visitors, but Reception Committees will be spared the wholly unnecessary anxiety of having to provide accommodation for an unwieldy number of delegates. Let us recognise the fact that the Congress enjoys a prestige, democratic in character and influence, not by the number of delegates and visitors it has drawn to its annual functions but by the ever-increasing amount of service it has rendered. Western democracy is on its trial. If it has already proved a failure, may it be reserved to India to evolve the true science of democracy by giving a visible demonstration of its buttress. Corruption and hypocrisy ought not to be the inevitable products of democracy, as they undoubtedly are to-day. Nor is bulk a true test of democracy. True democracy is not inconsistent with a few persons representing the spirit, the hope and the aspirations of those whom they claim to repre-

sent. I hold that democracy cannot be evolved by forcible methods. The spirit of democracy cannot be imposed from without. It has to come from within.

"I have mentioned here only the principal amendments I should propose in the Constitution. There would be other resolutions bringing out clearly the points I have touched upon in the foregoing paras. I do not need to burden this statement with them.

"My fear is that even the amendments I have named will hardly commend themselves to the large number of Congressmen who will attend the Congress. Nevertheless, if I am to guide the policy of the Congress, I hold them and the resolutions in keeping with the spirit of this statement to be essential for the earliest attainment of our goal. No voluntary organisation can succeed in its purpose without its resolutions and policies being carried out whole-heartedly by its members, and no leader can give a good account of himself if his lead is not faithfully, ungrudgingly and intelligently followed; and this is truest of a leader who has no resource at his disposal but what truth and non-violence can supply. It follows, therefore, that there is no room for compromise in the essentials of the programme I have endeavoured to adumbrate in these paras. Let the Congressmen, therefore, examine it dispassionately and on its merits. They must eliminate me from their consideration and give effect to the dictates of their reason."

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