

19. SAFDAR

Time : 1922 A.D.

IT was a small but handsome bungalow. On one side of the large compound was a rose-bed, bright with scarlet and pink blossoms. Another side was laid out as a small badminton court, covered with green grass which it was pleasant simply to feel under one's feet. At another corner stood a summer-house overgrown with creepers, while at the back of the bungalow was an open verandah, where Safdar Jang, the barrister, often sat in the evenings.

Green creepers clung to the walls. Safdar had seen a house at Oxford with walls hung like this, and he had been very particular about having creepers hung here.

There was a garage for two cars in the compound. Safdar Jang's mode of living, and the atmosphere of his bungalow, were an exact copy of the English style. His half dozen servants were trained on precisely the same lines as if they had been employed by some English official. They wore the same red waist-band, the same stiffer-tied turban with their master's initials on a metal badge. Safdar preferred European food to any other, and had three cooks to provide him with it.

Just as Safdar lived like a Sahib, an English gentleman, his wife Sakina was always addressed by the servants as 'Mem Sahib.' Her eyebrows, with all unnecessary hairs plucked out, were thin curving lines, darkened still further by pencilling. She was in the habit of using lipstick every quarter of an hour. But she never acquired a taste for European dress.

Last year, in 1920, when Safdar had visited England with his wife for the first time, he had wanted Sakina to wear frock, but she would not consent. Those they met in England, however, both men and women, admired her dress, as well as her looks, so much that Safdar did not regret her refusal. The couple were both so light in complexion that in Europe they were always taken for Italians.

It was now the cold season of 1921. Like all other towns of upper India, Lucknow found this the pleasantest time of the year. To-day, on his return from the Courts, Safdar took his seat on a cane chair on the verandah at the back of the house. His looks were unusually grave as he sat with a small table before him on which lay two or three books and a note-book. Three other

chairs stood vacant near him. He wore a well-pressed English suit of the finest quality.

The expression on his clean-shaven face made it clear that the Sahib was occupied with serious thoughts to-day, and at such times his servants took care not to come near him. He seldom lost his temper, but he had made his servants understand that on such occasions he preferred to be left alone.

Evening drew on, but Safdar remained seated. A servant brought a table-lamp with a long wire and put it beside him. A voice could be heard at the house, and at Safdar's enquiry the man told him that Master Shankar Singh had called but was going away. Safdar at once ordered him to run and bring the visitor.

Shankar Singh was a man of thirty or thirty-two, but marks of old age were already visible in his face. He wore a black coat buttoned up to the neck, black trousers, and a round felt cap; his dark moustache was thick and drooping. There was nothing to suggest that he was in the prime of his youth, though his flashing eyes revealed a vigorous mind.

As soon as he appeared, Safdar got up to shake hands. "Shankar," he exclaimed, giving him a chair, "you were going away without seeing me?"

"Excuse me, brother; I thought you must be sitting alone because you were buried in some work."

"Even when I am buried in my law files I can always find a few minutes for you, and to-day you see there are no files in front of me."

Safdar had the deepest affection for Shankar Singh. There was no one whom he considered a closer friend. From the time when they entered the fourth class in the school at Saidpur to the day when they took their B.A. at Lucknow, they had always been fellow-students. Both had been bright students: sometimes one got a few marks more in an examination, sometimes the other, but this close rivalry had never bred ill-feeling or estrangement between them. Their friendship was aided by the fact that both were Gautam Rajputs, though one of their families had remained Hindu while the other had turned Muslim. Ten generations ago both had been Hindu, and they had, moreover a common ancestor. Their families still met in the clan reunions held on special occasions, Safdar was the only son of his father, and Shankar had helped him to forget that he had no brother. Shankar was the younger by six months.

These were accidental factors, but in addition to them Shankar possessed qualities which explained the love and respect felt by the real gentleman, Safdar for his plain, simple friend. The latter was good-humoured, but did not know how to flatter. The result was that in spite of his first-class M.A. degree he had become a

mere assistant-master in a government school. Had he given them the slightest encouragement, others would have pulled strings for him, and he would by now have been headmaster of a high school. It seemed as if he was quite willing to remain an assistant-master for the rest of his life. Only once had he called on his friends for assistance, when he was being transferred away from Lucknow. With all his gentleness, he had a strong sense of self-respect, which Safdar appreciated. The intimacy that had begun when they were twelve years old was as firm as ever now when twenty years had gone by.

They had discussed a few casual topics when Sakina joined them, wearing a light green dress with a red bodice. Shankar got up, saying "Good evening, sister-in-law."

"Good evening," returned Sakina with a smile. There had been a time when she, the well-educated daughter of a wealthy knight, had disapproved of her husband's friendship with this rustic-looking school-teacher. She had been free of purdah even in her father's house, so there was no obstacle to her meeting Shankar. But for the first six months she used to frown when she saw Shankar, quite at his ease, walking side by side with Safdar. In the end, however, she had to own to her husband that Shankar was well worthy of their affection and esteem.

By now she came to feel quite like a real sister-in-law towards him. She had chosen to avoid having children, but from time to time she had Shankar's children to stay with her. For his part, Shankar had experienced in the past six years the favour of the god whose name he bore; there was always some new infant in his family. Observing her husband's thoughtfulness during the past week, Sakina had grown rather nervous, and she was very glad of Shankar's visit, for she knew that he was the very man to cheer Safdar up. She glanced at the visitor, remarking;

"You can't be in any hurry tonight. How would you like some chocolate pudding I have made myself?"

"No need to ask!"

"First I must know whether you're staying—one never knows when you may vanish."

"That isn't fair! Can you think of any time when I haven't obeyed your commands?"

"I'm not talking about disobedience. But keeping away, so as to escape getting any commands, is also an offence!"

"Well, here I am, ready to listen to orders from my commander."

"All right," said Sakina. "I'm leaving you now, you must stay for dinner and eat the pudding."

She ran away, and the two men's conversation took a graver turn.

"Shankar," said Safdar. "we are positively entering on a new revolutionary period. I think this is the first time since 1857 that India has begun to shake to her foundations."

"You mean—this political agitation?"

"That is a very mild phrase, Shankar! When Congress was founded in 1885, when it was only a doll for retired English Civil Servants to play with—even then its Christmas entertainment lectures and bottle-parties were dubbed 'agitation.' If you want to call *that* agitation, I should say that we are passing now from agitation to revolution."

"Why—because Gandhiji has collected ten million rupees for Tilak's Independence Fund and started to raise a great clamour for independence?"

"No single individual can give birth to a revolution, or a revolutionary agitation. Such a tremendous upheaval as it brings is beyond the power of a great man, or half a dozen great men, to stir up. When I think about the origin of this unrest that we see, this is the conclusion I come to: You know the leaders of the 1857 rebellion were broken down feudal lords. By the way, our Lucknow was one of its centres, in fact, the English annexation of Lucknow was one of its immediate causes. But the struggle was waged at the cost of the common people's lives. It failed because of certain weaknesses on our side, and after its suppression the English carried out severe reprisals. Well, what I mean to say is that since 1857 this is the first time that the common people are joining in the struggle for independence. Tell me yourself, as a student of Indian history,—can you think of any other agitation in which the *people* have taken part like this?"

"We have had the Nagpur session of Congress and the Calcutta session, and I have seen for myself the excitement you speak of in the villages—it is quite astounding. I agree. But even after such a storm, when here in Lucknow there have been so many bonfires of foreign cloth, *you* have not been affected in the least, and now you talk as if you were a man in the thick of a revolutionary outburst!"

"You're right, my dear fellow. Yes, the flood is trying to wash my feet away from under me. I don't consider it any small, local affair; it is obviously linked with a very widespread upheaval. In any epoch the strongest revolutionary force sweeps the people along with it."

"You start from 1857, Safdar!—you *are* making a thorough job of it!"

"Shall I go on?"

"I'd like to listen. The pudding is getting ready and tomorrow is Sunday. Very well, let someone be sent to let my family know that I'm staying here in Lucknow, eating Sakina's pudding and

snoring. . . . Now I'm at your disposal, I can listen all night."

"Shankar, Oxford would have been twice as pleasant for me if only you had been there too! Well, all foreign students of politics would agree with me that in this and the last century all the transformations in English politics were brought about by the international situation, by the circumstances of the other nations of the world; and when we look into the causes of this world-situation, they are mainly economic. After the thrashing we got in 1857, our country went to sleep, or at any rate the pace of its development was so sluggish that it was as good as asleep. But other nations were undergoing great changes. Italy achieved her national union in 1860, after being broken into fragments ever since the Roman Empire; and in Mazzini and Garibaldi she gave our own young men models to imitate. The Germans who were able to destroy the Roman Empire but unable to unite among themselves, succeeded in forming a united state under Prussia's leadership—partially in 1866, and almost completely in 1871 after defeating France. The events of 1866 were of world importance, and when Germany went on to crush such a strong Power as France and plant her banners at Paris and Versailles, England and Russia began to watch Berlin with alarm. And that is only the international problem; there was still more alarm at the Commune set up by the Paris workers and kept going for a little more than six weeks; that proved that workmen as well as aristocrats or businessmen could run a government."

"You think all this has a connection with political events in India?"

"Yes, and besides, it has a marked effect on whatever policies our English rulers adopt in India. When such a formidable state as Germany arose in Europe, France's enmity with England faded away, because she was in danger from Germany. Needless to say, our capitalist rulers were gravely alarmed by the Paris Commune, dead though it soon was, and by the federation of all the German states except Austria into a nation that was far from dead. And now other changes are taking place. The English evolved after 1670 from merchants into big capitalists, and made a monopoly of competitive trade by seizing every opportunity of making profits in everything from buying raw material to working it up and reselling it. Merchant capital makes only a single profit, by taking manufactured goods from one place and selling them in another, but industrial capital makes a profit at every stage—profit in buying cotton, profit in cleaning and packing it, profit in railing and shipping it, profit in spinning and weaving it into cloth in Manchester mills, profit in shipping and railing the cloth

back.—just compare all that with the profit of a merchant selling hand-made goods.”

“It is far higher, certainly.”

“In 1871, at Versailles, victorious Germany proclaimed William I, King of Prussia, as German Kaiser (Emperor). Next year, the grasping English capitalists, the Tories, proclaimed a imperialism of their own, through the Jewish Premier Disraeli. It was no mere verbal declaration, but an announcement of something very real. Factories had grown so huge that they needed a protected market, a market where there could be no fear of competition from French or German goods, because it would be strictly monopoly. Also capital accumulation had gone so far that it needed a protected field of investment. And all this meant that England must exert close control over other lands. This was the real meaning of Disraeli's word ‘Imperialism.’ India answered both needs. The shortest and cheapest route from Europe to India was the Suez Canal, opened in 1869. In 1875 Disraeli bought by telegraph, from the Khedive of Egypt, 177,000 shares worth four million pounds. This was the next step in the policy of imperialism. Then in 1877, on the first of January, a Darbar was held at Delhi, and Queen Victoria was proclaimed the Empress. In this way Disraeli's government ‘carried imperialism so far that even when Gladstone, the father of the Liberal Party took office, he could not alter the policy laid down by Disraeli.’”

“We are still teaching our students that Queen Victoria conferred a great favour on India by accepting the title of Empress, or Kaiser-i-Hind.”

“And that was just the same title as the King of Prussia had accepted six years before, remember—the name of ‘Caesar’ had come into demand. It was a word that had lost its value since the fall of Rome, and now suddenly its market value had gone up again!”

“I wonder if there is some significance in the Latin word Caesar being employed only for India, and the word Empress being used in English instead.”

“May be. Well, with that word, in 1871, we entered the epoch of imperialism. England came first; then defeated France, now a republic, began to recover, and in 1881 occupied Tunis and set to work at empire building. And Germany too, in 1884, full of its new factories and capitalists, was ready to demand colonies and attempt to found an empire.”

“How is this connected with the development of British policy in India, then?”

“When new inventions are always being improved upon and factories expanding and creating fresh capital, there must be leadership to enable them to make profits. Disraeli's cabinet

provided it between 1874 and 1880, and from then till 1892 there were Gladstone's Liberal governments which could not get away from the path Disraeli had marked out. Of course, some fig leaf had to be found to hide the naked tyranny of capitalist imperialism, so that the public should not take alarm. So Disraeli played his 'Empress of India' comedy and the Liberals had to go him one better liberality. They did it with their Irish Home Rule Bill, but the Irish question remains in the same state to this day. We took advantage of this liberalism, we, respectable Indians, when we started our Congress movement in 1885. Congress was born, in fact, as the spiritual child of the Liberal Party, and it cherished the same faith for a whole generation. But between 1895 and 1905 the Tories enjoyed another decade of power in England, and sent out worthy sons of Toryism like Elgin and Curzon. They tried to strengthen the bonds of imperialism, though the result was not what they expected."

"You are thinking of the movement led by 'Lal, Bal and Pal,' then?" (Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipinchandra Pal).

"They and their movements were only reflection of what was happening. When Japan defeated Russia in 1905, she enrolled herself among the Great Powers and brought a new awakening to Asia. Curzon's Partition of Bengal and the Japanese victory combined to incite the Indian youth far beyond vague speeches from Congress platforms. Indians learned again, after half a century, how to die for India. We were helped a great deal by the example of the martyrs of Ireland and Russia. So it would be a mistake to seek only inside India for the causes of what is happening."

"Yes, no doubt, all parts of the world are interlinked, of course."

"Well Shankar: the strength of any revolutionary agitation depends on two factors—how much guidance is provided by international circumstances and precedents, and how far the most revolutionary class in the country take part in it. I have said something about the first of these dynamic factors. The other is the banding together of the workers and peasants. Only men who are prepared to face the cost of defeat can take part in a revolutionary struggle. A man who has to fear the loss of Sakina and her lipstick, or a house like this or a family estate, cannot be a soldier of the revolution. So I say it is only the common people who can carry it out."

"I agree."

"You know what a ferment is working among these common people now. Just think what direction the international

situation is pushing them in. The Great War kindled a huge conflagration. It was the outcome of imperialism, it arose from the holding or seizing of reserved markets for capital and manufactures. Germany wanted new colonies, but the world had already been shared out ; so she came into collision with the colony-owners, England and France. Germany failed, but at the same time a new enemy arose to break in on the dream of imperialism : communism, the idea of producing goods not for profit but to bless and enrich humanity. Machines are improved, factories expanded, more goods are produced, requiring wider markets. Besides, people must have money in their pockets to buy those goods, which means that all employees must be drawing regular wages. When there is too little money in their pockets, some of the goods cannot be sold, they pile up in shops and ware-houses ; the market is dull. Then production has to be curtailed, factories have to be closed, workers thrown out of work, and there is less money available for buying goods. Then how can people buy anything—how can the factories be kept running ? Communism tells us to give up the idea of profit, treat the whole country or the whole world as one family, and produce whatever it requires. Let each individual work in proportion to his strength and be given the means of subsistence according to his needs ; except the pay should be by work so long as there are not enough machines and skilled workers to produce as much as is wanted. All this can only be done when land and factories cease to be owned by private individual, and all the means of production are owned by the public, as if by one big family.”

“It’s a beautiful theory ! ”

“No mere theory any longer, Shankar ! In November, 1917, a Communist government was set up in Russia over one sixth of the earth. The capitalist world is still trying to extinguish that sole hope of humanity, but Soviet rule has withstood its first bloody test. In Hungary Soviet rule was overthrown after six months with the help of French and American capital, in 1919. But the workers’ and peasants’ government in Russia has given a great lead to the world to-day, and the same forces that created it are at work in every country. As soon as the war was over, why were the British in such a hurry to pass the Rowlatt Act ? They wanted to damp down the revolutionary energy that was filling the world. Think—if that energy had not been rolling into every nook and corner, threatening to transform the world, the British would not have passed the Rowlatt Act ; if there had been no Act, Gandhi would not have given a call to the people to rise against it ; if there had been no call, the fires that have damped down since 1857 would not have blazed up again to-day.

You see what I meant by saying that we are definitely entering a new epoch of revolutions."

"Then you consider Gandhi a revolutionary leader? How can you think that of a man who follows in the steps of moderate leaders like Gokhale?"

"I don't call every action or idea of Gandhi revolutionary. I call his work revolutionary in so far as he has tried to rouse the common people who form the potential revolutionary force. His religious vapourings—especially about the Khilafat movement—I regard as reactionary humbug. I think his notion of abandoning machinery and returning to the past is also an effort to put the clock back and the same applies to his talk of closing down schools and colleges."

"God bless you, Safdar! I was beginning to hold my breath, when you went on praising Gandhi! I was wondering whether you too were going to tell me that schools and colleges are the Devil's workshops!"

"Our methods of teaching may have many faults; but our modern schools and colleges put us in touch with science, and without science human life to-day is impossible. Whenever we get our freedom, science will have a special part to play. Population is growing day by day and its future welfare will depend on science, to give up science and go backwards would be suicide. To close our schools and colleges and open spinning and weaving centres instead would take us straight back into the Dark Ages. But to appeal to students to become revolutionaries is not a bad thing—you must admit that, Shankar."

"Oh, yes! And what about other kinds of boycott?"

"Boycotting the law-courts is all right; it is a means of showing our foreign rulers our strength and our discontent. And the boycott of British goods is a slap in the face to British capitalists, and helps native enterprise."

"Safdar, I see you have moved pretty far already!"

"Not yet, but I want to."

"You want to?"

"Tell me first: are we passing through a revolutionary epoch, or are we not?"

"My dear Safdar, I have been asking you a lot of questions, just to draw you out. But the moment I heard of the Russian Revolution, I began to hunt high and low for communist literature and study it, and still more to think about my own problems from the communist point of view. I believe that this is the way to happiness for India and for the world. I have only been held back by uncertainty as to whether Gandhi's non-co-operation could fulfil its grand object or not; but when you made me think of the people just now as the backbone of revolution, my uncertainty

vanished. I don't believe that Gandhi is capable of organising a revolution, Safdar, to speak frankly, but I do believe the people can do it. In 1857 the fallen feudalists got a lot of our people behind them with their nonsense of greased cartridges and 'religion in danger', but to-day the people are more interested in questions of bread and butter. I think this agitation is right, the revolutionary slogan is right, and even if Gandhi later on returns to his original role, he will not be able to turn the current of revolution."

"That is why I have decided to join in the struggle and become—a non-co-operator."

"You are in such a hurry?"

"If I had been in a hurry I should have plunged in long ago. I have only come to a decision after thinking it over for a long time, and now after learning *your* opinion."

While Safdar, gravely and thoughtfully, was saying this, Shankar's glance wandered away.

"My friend", Safdar went on, finding him silent, "you must be thinking about your 'Sister-in-law' and the lipstick and silk dress and velvet slippers, or about this house and the servants. I shan't put any pressure on Sakina; she must choose what sort of life she likes. She has her own property and this house, and lands and money. These things have no charm for me. Let her follow her own inclinations."

"I wasn't thinking about her or you, I was thinking about myself. The stumbling-block in my own mind has disappeared. Come! We shall tread the path of revolution together, like two brothers!"

"Shankar," returned his friend, with glistening eyes, "I used to long for you at Oxford; now I shall be quite happy even if I have to climb the scaffold."

Sakina came to call them to dinner, and their conference ended.

[2]

FROM this evening Sakina found her husband much more cheerful; she thought it was just the pleasure of a chat with Shankar that had done it. For Safdar, the hardest task was to inform Sakina of his decision. He himself had been brought in a sheltered home, but he had lived in the countryside and been touched by the sight of naked misery; he was confident that he would come through the ordeal he was throwing himself into. Her case was different. She had grown up in a wealthy home in the city, and one could say of her as the poet says of Sita—"She did not touch the hard earth even with her foot."

On Sunday, he could not summon up courage. Next day, at the High Court he told a few close friends of his intention, and then he had to face the necessity of an explanation with Sakina.

In the evening he sent out for the best champagne to be had in Lucknow. Sakina supposed that some other friends must be coming, but when dinner was over and he told the servant to open the champagne, she was somewhat puzzled.

Safdar put a glass of wine to her lips and said: "Sakina, my dear this is the last favour you will ever do me."

"You mean—you are giving up wine?"

"Yes, wine and many other things—but not *you*. From now on you will be my wine: thinking of your beautiful face will be my only intoxication." He saw distress in her face, and went on—"Let us drink this champagne together, dear there is something else we must talk about."

Sakina had no taste for wine, though Safdar had recited many a quatrain of Omar Khayyam over her glass.

The servants withdrew and she came and sat on the sofa near Safdar, nervous as if feeling a premonition of ill-luck. Safdar put his cards on the table.

"Sakina", he began, "I have taken a serious decision—though I admit I was wrong in not asking your opinion beforehand. You will understand why I did it from what I am going to tell you. To put it in a nutshell—I am going to join in the national struggle."

The words fell on her ears like a thunderbolt, it was easy to see; she could not open her mouth to answer.

"But dear", he added, as she remained silent, "you have had a sheltered life from your cradle; I don't want to drag *you* into hardship."

She felt as if a fresh dagger had pierced her heart, and made her forget the first shock. Her self-respect awoke suddenly and made her exclaim:

"Dearest! Did you really think me so fond of ease and comfort as to want to sit on a sofa and watch you going into hardship? If I have really loved you, Safdar, my love will give me strength to go with you anywhere. I have used a lot of lipstick, and wasted a lot of my time in dressing and powdering, and never tried to gain a knowledge of the hard side of life, but Safdar, you are everything to me. I don't want to be a burden to you, I mean that I want to stay with you, you must be my guide in our new life just as you have been in our old one."

Safdar had not expected this, though he knew that Sakina was quite strong-willed.

"Well", he resumed, "I am not accepting any new briefs, and I am handing over some of the cases I have to other lawyers. I hope to get myself free from the courts during this week. There

is something else I must tell you ; Shankar is taking the plunge along with me."

"Shankar !" she repeated in surprise.

"He is a jewel, Sakina ! He would go to the end of the world with me. I was always thinking of him at Oxford."

"But he is making a bigger sacrifice, Safdar !"

"He has chosen a life of self-sacrifice for himself, and on principle he has never budged from it. Otherwise he could have been a good lawyer ; or he could have got a better job in his own department."

"I was very sorry when his two children died, but now I suppose it is good that he is burdened with only the two others, instead of four."

"How is Champa likely to take the news, Sakina ?"

"She will agree blindly ; it was she who taught me how to love you."

"We must make some arrangements for our new life."

"I have had no time to think about it, as you said yourself. You tell me what we should do."

"We had better give all our servants two months wages as a present and get rid of them, except for Mangar and our nurse Sharifan, as she is from our own village."

"Yes, good."

"We shall have to sell both the cars."

"Very well."

"And give away or auction all our furniture except a couple of beds and a few chairs."

"Yes."

"We'll go and live in our aunt's house on Latouche Road, and rent this bungalow."

"All right."

"There's nothing else I can think of."

"My clothes—and your English suits ?"

"I am going in for Gandhi's non-co-operation—is that what you are thinking of ? I'm not in favour of burning them, especially when so many bonfires of English clothes have been made already. But I'm having a shirt and pair of trousers of hand-made cloth got ready ; I shall have them by the day after tomorrow."

"What about me ? You've grown very selfish !"

"Will you be able to wear a clumsy dress of hand-woven cloth ?"

"I will come with you to the end of the world."

"What will you do with these clothes ?"

"I don't know."

"If they were auctioned off you could use the money to buy clothes for the poor. I'll try and give them away for you."

[3]

PEOPLE were soon chattering about Safdar, the rising barrister, and the great sacrifice he had made, though he himself felt that Shankar was the one who deserved credit. All through October and November Safdar was able to go about appealing to the public, often accompanied by Sakina or Shankar. His interest lay chiefly in the countryside, for he had more confidence in the peasants and village workers than in the educated townfolk. But within a week he realised that the rustics could understand barely a quarter of his high-flown Urdu speeches. Shankar from the beginning had addressed them in their own dialect, and when Safdar saw the effect he made he set himself to master the Oudh dialect. At first too many literary words crept into his vocabulary, but by hard efforts and with Shankar's help he made himself at home in the idiom before two months were over, recalling many words he had forgotten, and learning new ones. Then the villagers thronged to listen enthralled to everything he said.

In the first week of December, 1920, Safdar and Shankar, with many other political workers, were sentenced to a year's imprisonment, and found themselves in Faizabad Jail. Their wives, who were not arrested, continued the work.

In jail Safdar followed the Congress rule of spinning for an hour each day. Those who knew how critical he was of Gandhi in his political views laughed at him and his spinning-wheel.

"I know", he would answer, "that the boycott of British cloth is a political weapon, and also that at present our country cannot produce enough cloth for itself, so we must help to produce more, but as soon as our mills begin to manufacture sufficient cloth, I shan't be in favour of going on with the spinning-wheel."

Too many of the political prisoners were sitting idle. They believed in Gandhi's promise of Home Rule within a year, and thought that by going to jail they had done their duty in full. So far, the Gandhian creed had not been spoiled by extravagance, cant and humbug; so it could be said that among the Non-Cooperation prisoners the majority were honest patriots. Still the two friends were astonished to find that scarcely any of them was at pains to increase his political knowledge. Many spent their time reciting the *Ramayana*, the *Gita* or the *Koran*; they told their beads and recited their prayers. Others wasted all their time at cards or chess.

One day Safdar met the learned Vinayak Prasad, an influential Gandhi-ite. Shankar was with them. Vinayak declared that Gandhi's use of the doctrine of non-violence was a great discovery, and that it was a most useful weapon.

"It may be useful in the present circumstances", Safdar answered, "but non-violence is not the road to success by itself. In this world animals which are perfect non-violent usually fall a prey to others."

"Yes, animals, but in human beings non-violence creates a miraculous power."

"I see no evidence of that in political history."

"How can there be evidence, when the discovery is something so new?"

"Not so new", remarked Shankar. "It was preached by Buddha and Mahavira and several other religious leaders."

"Not as a political theory."

"If its political utility has increased, it is only because to-day civilisation has spread somewhat and people think it shocking when they read in their newspapers of unarmed crowds being fired on. You see what the firing by the British at Jallianwala Bagh has led to."

"You think that our non-violent non-cooperation is not enough to bring us freedom?"

"First you tell me what you mean by freedom."

"You have joined the struggle for freedom yourself—what do you understand by it?"

"The rule of the toilers and no one else."

"So in your freedom there are to be no rights for students, merchants or landlords who have given body and soul and wealth to the cause, who have borne hardships and gone to jail?"

"In the first place, you see that our merchants and landlords have no time to spare from forming loyalist committees; how could the poor creatures begin coming to jail? And if any of them *have* come, they ought not to think of their own interests as something apart from those of the workers."

Shankar and Safdar used to study from books together, and discuss the economic and social problems of the country. Few of the others wanted to listen to them first. But when midnight of December 31, 1921, came and went and the prison-gates remained shut, many despaired. And when Gandhi learned of the burning of some policemen at Chauri Chaura by a resentful, excited mob, and called off the movement, many were forced to think seriously. Some of them later on came to accept the view of Safdar and Shankar, that the true revolutionary force lay in the people, not in Gandhi's brain; and that Gandhi, by showing lack of confidence in the people's strength, had proved himself an obstacle to the revolution.

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