

## XVII

## NEO MAULANA

IN the middle of April 1921 when I was allowed by my medical advisers to leave my bed, they admonished me not to walk more than two furlongs a day, to lie down for rest as much as possible and not to undertake long night journeys. But the marriage of Pandit Motilal Nehru's daughter was to be celebrated in the beginning of May and all the Hindu and Muslim leaders were to be there. I could not absent myself and therefore went to Delhi first, from which place I started for Allahabad. I broke journey at Cawnpore and I mention this because I spoke there in a public meeting and exhorted non-violent non-co-operators not to nurse the thought of getting Swarajya within 12 months because disappointment may be followed by a reaction which would prostrate the whole nation for scores of years. I asked them to fight the battle of freedom to the very end and make proper preparations for it.

The next day I left for Allahabad by the Punjab Howrah Mail. Maulana Muhammad Ali was also travelling by the same train and I got in his compartment. Our talk centered round the topic of the day. Sir William Vincent (then Home Member of the Government of India) had repeated from his safe place in the Legislative Assembly that he had documentary proofs shewing that Mr. Muhammed Ali was corresponding with

the Kabul Government against the British. During that very period a second class leader of the moderate liberal party—because all of them were leaders; there were no followers—told me that a letter intercepted by the C. I. D. was actually shewn to Dr. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru purporting to have been written by Mr. Muhammad Ali. I gave the whole thing in the Press and challenged the Government to publish a *facsimile* of the same in the papers so that the public might have an occasion to judge whether the letter was in the handwriting of Mr. Muhammad Ali at all. On his enquiring about the language in which the letter in dispute was written, I told him that it was alleged to be in Persian. Mr. Muhammad Ali exclaimed—"Then it could not be written by me. I am not only innocent of Arabic but cannot write a letter in correct Persian, Urdu poet though I am some worth." I could not then understand how a man, innocent of Arabic and the Persian languages both, could obtain the degree of Maulana, but the riddle was solved when I read the following in the open letter addressed to Musalmans by the late Maulana Abdul Bari of Lucknow, the declared Murshid of the Ali Brothers. At page 35 he wrote :—"The diploma (*sanad*) of Maulana, which has been awarded to brother Maulana Muhammad Ali from Firangi Mahal was given on account of his discharge of duties of Tabligh (Conversions). In the Amritsar (Congress) Meeting, when all the topmost Hindu leaders were present, he gave the message of Islam by name to each one of them and moreover he gave the message of Islam to the Viceroy and through Lord Chelmsford to King George V. This was the duty of

the Real Ulema (learned). When he (Muhammad Ali) discharged this duty on a grand scale, then from this place (Firangi Mahal) this title of exalted office was presented to him."

It is a different matter, altogether, whether Mr. Muhammad Ali did really give the Message of Islam to every topmost Hindu leader at Amritsar; but when I asked Pandits Nehru and Malaviya, the late lamented Deshbandhu C. R. Das and Mr. C. Vijayaraghavachariar and others, they denied having been addressed on this subject by the neo Maulana. But these might have no place among the topmost Hindu leaders in the eyes of this Maulana. I, therefore, enquired of Mahatma Gandhi and he too denied having been personally approached by brother Muhammad Ali with this message.

Apologising to my readers for this digression which is by the way, I come to the point again. Maulana Muhammad Ali complained about political leaders taking him to task for sending a wire to the Sultan of Kabul urging him not to make peace with the British Government. I, too, urged that it was not a wise step that he had taken. He kept quiet at the time but when we reached the Anand Bhavan (Pandit Nehru's palace), brother Muhammad Ali took me aside and taking out a paper from his hand-bag, gave a draft of a telegram to me to read. What was my astonishment when I saw the draft of the selfsame telegram in the peculiar handwriting of the Father of the non-violent non-co-operation movement!

Mahatma Gandhi reached Anand Bhavan on the next morning. It was his day of Maunvrata. When I went to see him, he handed over to me a letter and a telegram

which he had received from Pandit Malaviyaji. The purport of the letter was that Lord Reading was a very good man in fact a saint and he appeared to be ready to give all the Reforms which the Indians wanted; so brother Gandhi should make haste to go to Simla to have an interview with him (Lord Reading). The telegram simply urged the necessity of Gandhiji's going to Simla with a loving threat that Malaviyaji would have to leave the cool breeze of Simla for the burning heat of Allahabad if he did not assent to go to Simla.

I told Gandhiji not to go without consulting the Working Committee of the Congress, which had been called for the next evening. The reasons which I then gave to dissuade Gandhiji from going to see Lord Reading need not be repeated here. They were repeated by Babu Ramananda Chatterji in the Modern Review.

Then came brother Andrews from Simla the same afternoon and after embracing me, gave such a glowing account of his interview with the late Lord Chief Justice of Great Britain that all present were charmed. But I began a heartless cross-examination which elicited the fact that the astute diplomat had been reading the simple heart of the man of faith like an open book while keeping his own heart and mind completely closed to the eyes of his interviewer. Well, I gave my warning and my duty was discharged. Mahatmaji could not pay the least attention to my warning because he had full faith in his invincibility and as regards consulting the Working Committee he never thought of it. Mahatmaji went to Simla, he was made to sign a typed letter, addressed to the Private Secretary asking for an interview with the Viceroy

and actually met Lord Reading. The upshot of that meeting is known all over the world. The astute diplomat took every advantage of the Saint's sincerity and simplicity and if Gandhiji's trial of truthfulness and the preservation of the sanctity of vow appeared with resplendent brightness, the actual mundane trophies of war remained in the hands of the man of the world.

This was, perhaps, the fourth Himalayan blunder which Mahatma Gandhi committed by putting the All Brothers in an awkward position and there were slight signs of revulsion of feelings among the followers when another stroke of policy captured the imagination of the Indian masses. Overlooking the three conditions for obtaining Swarajya within 12 months, the great Mahatma proposed to get Swarajya to the impatient Indian masses within three months if one crore (ten millions) of rupees were collected, one crore of 4 anna-paying members were enrolled and 20 lakhs of charkas were distributed up to the end of June 1921.

This proposal of Gandhiji was passed by the A. I. C. C. at Bezwada on 21st March 1921 in preference to several plausible proposals put forward by other leaders. Not only this but the new National flag, with Charkha as its chief emblem, was also accepted at Bezwada.

I raised a strong protest against this despotic dictatorship in the columns of *Hindi Shraddha*, a translation of which I give below :—"The thinking portion of Indians are puzzled to see that whatever proposal Gandhiji puts forward is literally accepted. Babu Bipin Chandra Pal presided over the Bengal Provincial Political Conference. In that Conference Bipin Babu defined Swarajya accord-

ing to his own conviction as "full responsible Government on Dominion lines within the Empire." Such a howl was raised on this that the President had to leave the Pandal. The Press also took him to task for defining the word Swarajya at length, when the Congress had left it for the Indian Nation to decide and define. But after that the following has appeared in the *Young India* in its issue of 6th April, 1921 :—"A friend from South Africa writes to say that several Europeans, there, are prepared to help the struggle for Swarajya, but they want to be assured on certain points. As the points raised are of general importance, I gladly deal with them here.

"Does Mr. Gandhi's Swaraj mean sovereign independence or full responsible Government within the Empire on dominion lines?"

"I should certainly be satisfied with full responsible Government on Dominion lines, if the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs are redressed. India cannot remain within the Empire if the latter cannot redress the two wrongs; for full responsible Government will have no meaning for India if she cannot refuse to give pensions to Officers who have wronged her or if she cannot secure a settlement of the Khilafat terms. England then becomes an 'Enemy country' for India."

"If this was the opinion of Mahatma Gandhi at Nagpur, then I cannot understand why he did not agree with Pandit Malaviya. And if he has changed his opinion since then, he ought to consider whether it was proper for him to express this change without getting it passed by the coming session. For three full months I waited to see whether any of those, who raised a hue and cry

against Bipin Babu, would protest against Mahatmaji. And even those papers, that published this note (of Gandhiji), did not comment upon it.

"At Bezwada Mahatmaji got the Indian National Flag passed by the A.I.C.C. and I learn from "the Independent" that the flag with charkha emblem will be unfurled at Allahabad at the time of the District Congress Committee meeting."

At the end I again protested against this despotic Dictatorship with double force.

By the 30th of June 1921, more than one crore of Rupees had been collected for the Tilak Swarajya Fund, I am sure a crore of 4 anna paying members were enlisted and although no actual list could be prepared, about 20 lakhs of charkhas were distributed. But when the 30th of September came, there was no sign of Swarajya. The reply of Mahatmaji was : this was only a disciplinary measure to judge whether the country was prepared for Swarajya or not. Actual Swarajya would come by and bye.

## XVIII

### PROBLEM OF UNTOUCHABILITY

THE sinews of war having been collected, a meeting of the A.I.C.C. was called at Lucknow for devising measures in order to utilize the same. Before the Committee met Gandhiji discussed the position of the Working Committee in Young India dated 29th June. He said that the Working Committee should consist of members who were actuated with a single motive. There was no room for opposition parties nor for difference of opinion. If any of its members could not see his way to work with others, he ought to resign. Gandhiji raised this discussion for the reason that when the sinews of war were ready there ought not to remain any obstacles in the way of workers.

I supported Mahatma Gandhiji with the following remarks :—"Mahatmaji will naturally be the President of the Working Committee, the rest, 14 members, must be such as are the devoted followers of Mahatmaji in all respects—in the words of Ali brothers who should be ready to bow down before their general without the least objection. Although at the present moment, while the illiterate masses consider Gandhiji to be the incarnation of God, the educated people have taken him to be the Congress personified, yet the individual who has infused new spiritual life in the country and promises to obtain for you Swarajya within 12 months, ought to be given