

A letter to Subhash Chandra Bose*

The reproduced letter of Gandhiji to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose shows how an unpleasant situation can be handled positively

M.K. Gandhi*

Birla House, New Delhi
02.04.1939

My dear Subhash,

I have yours of 31st March as also the previous one. You are quite frank and I like your letters for the clear enunciation of your views.

The views you express seem to me to be so diametrically opposed to those of the others and my own that I do not see any possibility of bridging them. I think that such school of thought should be able to put forth its views before the country without any mixture. And if this is honestly done, I do not see why there should be any bitterness ending in civil war.

What is wrong is not the differences between us but loss of mutual respect and trust. This will be remedied by time which is the best healer. If there is real non-violence in us, there can be no civil war much less bitterness.

Taking all things into consideration, I am of opinion that you should at once form your own Cabinet fully representing your views. Formulate your programme definitely and put it before the forthcoming A.I.C.C. If the

Committee accepts the programme all will be plain-sailing and you should be enabled to prosecute it unhampered by the minority. If on the other hand your programme is not accepted you should resign and let the Committee choose its President. And you will be free to educate the country along your own lines. I tender this advice irrespective of Pandit Pant's resolution.

My prestige does not count. It has an independent value of its own. When my motive is suspected or my policy or programme rejected by the country, the prestige must go. India will rise and fall by the quality of the sum-total of her many millions. Individuals, however high they may be, are of no account except in so far as they represent the many millions. Therefore let us rule it out of consideration.

I wholly dissent from your view that the country has been never so non-violent as now. I smell violence in the air I breath. But the violence has put on a subtle form. Our mutual distrust is a bad form of violence. The widening gulf between Hindus and Mussalmans points to the same thing. I can give further illustrations.

* Reproduced from "The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi" – Vol. V

We seem to differ as to the amount of corruption in the Congress. My impression is that it is on the increase. I have been pleading for the past many months for a thorough scrutiny.

In these circumstances I see no atmosphere of non-violent mass action. An ultimatum without effective sanction is worse than useless.

But as I have told you I am an old man perhaps growing timid and over-cautions and you have youth before you and reckless optimism born of youth. I hope you are right. I am wrong. I have the firm belief that the Congress as it is today cannot deliver the goods, cannot offer civil disobedience worth the name. Therefore, if your prognosis is right, I am a back number and played out as the generalissimo of Satyagraha.

I am glad you have mentioned the little Rajkot affair. It brings into prominent relief the different angles from which we look at things. I have nothing to repent of in the steps I have taken in connection with it. I feel that it has great national importance. I have not stopped civil disobedience in the other States for the sake of Rajkot. But Rajkot opened my eyes. It showed me the way. I am not in Delhi for my

health. I am reluctantly in Delhi awaiting the Chief Justice's decision. I hold it to be my duty to be in Delhi till the steps, to be taken in due fulfillment of the Viceroy's declaration in his last wire to me are finally taken. I may not run any risk. If I invited the Paramount Power to do its duty, I was bound to be in Delhi to see that the duty was fully performed. I saw nothing wrong in the Chief Justice being appointed the interpreter of the document whose meaning was put in doubt by the Thakor Sahib. By the way, Sir Maurice will examine the document not in his capacity as Chief Justice but as a trained jurist trusted by the Viceroy. By accepting the Viceroy's nominee as Judge, I fancy I have shown both wisdom and grace and what is more important I have increased the Viceregal responsibility in the matter.

Though we have discussed sharp differences of opinion between us, I am quite sure that our private relations will not suffer in the least. If they are from the heart, as I believe they are, they will bear the strain of these differences.

Love Bapu

Nethaji Subhash Chandra Bose, pp. 62-65

