

Gandhi Katha

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THE CAMPHOR LAMPS (KAPOORNA DIVA)

When someone in Bengal requested a message from Gandhiji, he said four words in Bengali: '*Amar Jivani Amar Vani*'- My life is my message. That means, he wished that his message should be found in his work and practice, rather than just in words. The purpose of presenting incidents of Gandhiji's life here, in the form of a '*Gandhi Katha*', is to focus on several scattered incidents of his life in order to introduce ourselves to the manifestation of different levels of greatness of his life. Each of these incidents represents and brings out various powerful aspects of his grand personality. Each incident is a camphor lamp. It would be worth the effort if such a lamp provides and creates a special vision of the magnificent and beautiful life image of Gandhiji, which he generated and carved out from each and every moment of his life, before it extinguishes.

One may try to arrange these incidents, as those of fearlessness, truthfulness, Ahimsa, and so on, thus arranged together in different groups. But, a single incident may cover fearlessness and Ahimsa both. That is why they are not divided in such groups here. Incidents can also be given in chronological order. But, then a question might be raised in our mind that, why in between incidents of few years are missing. So such order is again not necessary, because, it is not our purpose here to give complete chronology of his life. Hence, they are presented here as they were being written and published in '*Sanskriti*', in the anniversary year 1969 of Gandhiji, from January to October.

Gandhiji, in his life was always extremely keen on ascertaining the facts and details of any event and happening. Therefore, I have made best of my efforts to check out the facts in each and every case.

I have used Bapu's own writings for choosing the incidents. In addition to that, I have used 'Madevbhai's Diary' parts 1-9, the books of Ravjibhai Patel, books of Kakasaheb Kalelker and Manuben Gandhi, '*Jivannu Paroth*' by Prabhudas Gandhi, 'Reminiscences' of Ramdas Gandhi, and 'Gandhiji and Rashtriya Pravrutti' by Shankarlal Banker. I am grateful to all these authors. Thanks are also due to the publisher of Gandhiji's books- the Navajivan Prakashan Mandir and also the other publishers of the books by Mahadevbhai and Manuben. Also, some incidents I have received from some individuals. For this, I would like to express my special thanks to Smt Vijyaben Pancholi, Smt Prabhavati Narayan and Smt Madalsa Narayan.

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(1)

Little Mohan was very scared of going alone in the dark. He would imagine ghosts coming from one direction, thieves from the other and serpents from the third.

Once, he had to go out alone in the dark. But, how could it be possible? He was very timid. Their house maid Rambha, was standing just by his side. She told Mohan quietly, "Mohan, why are you so scared? Whether it is dark or whatever, just recite the Rama Nama and go ahead; no one can do any harm to you whatsoever. Mohan was soon convinced and he went forward. From that very moment Mohan not only repeated the Rama Nama all the time, but it carved out a permanent place in his heart.

Rama Nama made him so fearless that, later he showed the forty crore Indians and also the whole humanity, the way to live fearlessly. Even at the last moment of his life, Rama Nama was there on his lips.

(2)

Sevagram ashram had just started. Children would come from nearby villages to learn spinning and carding and they earned some money too by the evening. They would come in the morning and go back in the evening. Once, before going to sleep Gandhiji asked Vijya, "What happens about the afternoon meal for those children?"

Vijya used to go to the well every afternoon, to wash a bucket of clothes of Ba, Bapu and herself. The children also used to come there around the same time at the bank of the well for their meal. So, she knew about their meals and sometimes she would even ask them: What is there for meal today? Children would answer: Bhakhari- shak (wheat flour cake and vegetable). Vijya informed all these to Bapu in detail.

Bapu asked, "Do we have extra butter milk?"

Vijya answered, "Yes."

Bapu immediately said, "Then serve Butter milk to those children from tomorrow."

Vijya accepted this responsibility.

After three days, Bapu asked Vijya before going to bed: "Vijya, are you giving Butter milk to children?"

Vijya replied, "Bapu, I forgot that. I am sorry."

Bapu just hesitated a bit, and then told her with affection, "No, You have not forgotten. You are not forgetful. You do all my work very meticulously. When I go for my walk, the sandals are nicely cleaned and arranged. Stick is also kept in its place. Your nature is not of the kind to forget things. But, shall I tell you? You do all my work, and you never forget anything, that is because I am a 'Mahatma', is it not? We always tend to do the work of big people properly. But, these are small, strange children and so we forget their work. But, let me tell you that it does not matter if you forget my work. If you do their work with extra care and attention, that will give me the utmost satisfaction."

(3)

A boy was roaming around in Sevagram Ashram. Vijya saw him and asked his whereabouts. The boy said, 'My name is Somo. I have lived in Sabarmati ashram earlier. Now I want to stay here in this ashram.'

Vijya took him to Bapu. Bapu recognised him. He was a Harijan boy. Bapu told Vijya to let him stay at the Ashram, and instructed her to give him some work and to look after him.

Somo had come from the Faizpur Congress session directly, having absolutely nothing with him. He was merely wearing a half Pant and Bandi (jacket): that's all he had. Vijya arranged for his meal and one carpet to sleep. Mother Kasturba provided a blanket for a cover.

It was Sunday. Bapu would observe silence from Sunday night till the evening of Monday. At night, before going to bed, Bapu gestured with his hand indicating height of a small boy and thus asked the details of Somo. He shook his head, moved his eyes, and through bodily gestures wanted to know how he was. Vijya detailed Bapu with all the arrangements. She tried to convince Bapu about his well being. But Bapu put her hand on her shoulder and suggested, "let us go there". He would not be satisfied otherwise! He had to verify for himself the comfort of the little child, so he would personally go and check. They went and saw that Somo was peacefully sleeping in the Verandah, comfortably covering himself. Bapu took Vijya inside the room and stood near a bundle hanging on the wall. He then instructed her to take it and open the same, again through his gesture. Then he sat down and started searching for something. The bundle contained old and used loin-clothes of Bapu. He took a heap of folded clothes and got up. Then he went to Verandah and removed the cover from his face. Somo was fast asleep. Bapu lifted his head, placed a pillow of folded clothes below the head of the child, covered him again properly and then he went to sleep.

Somo was fast asleep. He was under the care and comfort of the Mahatma, who had showered his affection in the form of the pillow.

(4)

In 1922, Gandhiji was sentenced to six years imprisonment by the British Government. He told in the court that I am ready for the highest possible punishment. What is a crime according to the Government is nothing else but only my duty towards humanity. I have just acted accordingly.

The news of Gandhiji's statement and the penalty he demanded, reached all corners of the country. On hearing the news, a Muslim watchman residing in a remote village of Bengal wept. A revolutionary named Shri Datt, who lived in his building, asked the reason of his crying.

The watchman had the Bengali news paper in his hand, in which the news of Gandhiji's case had appeared. He told Datt that a person of my own caste has been severely punished. It is six years of jail, he is an old man of 53 years, see this paper.

It was mentioned in the news paper that, Gandhiji described his job as a weaver and farmer. The Muslim watchman was a weaver by caste. He was deeply touched therefore, that someone of his own has been punished.

Shri Datt writes in his reminiscences, 'How do we call ourselves revolutionary? It is only Gandhiji who is a revolutionary in a true sense and not us. He has become one with the whole nation. Gandhiji's utterance as weaver and farmer must have reached throughout the nation. Crores of people must have felt as if someone of their own has been jailed. Only he, who has established the contact with the masses, having identified with them, can free the nation. I sincerely bow to this true revolutionary.'

(5)

Once, on observing Bapu without any Kurta, a young pupil asked, "Bapu, why are you not wearing any kurta on yourself?"

Bapu stated, "Where do I have any money for that?"

To this the pupil asked, "Alright, I will tell my mother to stitch one for you. Then, you will wear it, isn't it?"

Bapu: "But how many will your mother stitch?"

Pupil: "How many do you want?"

One....two.....three....?"

Bapu: "Am I just alone? Can I wear it just myself?"

Pupil: "Of course, you should not wear it alone. How many people you want it for?"

Bapu: "Well, I have some forty crore of siblings. Will your mother stitch for all of them? In fact, only thereafter I can take my own turn."

The little child was now really puzzled. The Innocent kid wanted to offer a cloth to Bapu with a deep affection, but Bapu initiated his tender heart into a universal vision, to view the entire world as one family.

(6)

Despite so many heavy engagements, Bapu used to go for a daily walk without fail for an hour in the morning. He even expressed his dislike, though respectfully, towards his political Guru Gopalkrishna Gokhale, who did not go for a walk and who generally kept an indifferent health.

When he went out for his walks from the Ashram, many people often accompanied him. If someone would want to meet and specially talk to him, Gandhiji would sometimes give an appointment of early morning and while walking he would also talk to them.

Of course, children had always the first right on Bapu and he would even playfully prank with them. Once, a mischievous child asked Bapu, "Bapu can I ask one thing?" Bapu said yes, so he just came forward and looking at him asked, "Does Ahimsa mean not to hurt anybody?" He had asked the question in a serious tone. Bapu said, "Correct."

The child soon grabbed the chance and asked: "Then, when you pinch us on our cheeks laughingly, would that be called Himsa (violence) or Ahimsa (non-violence)?"

Bapu said: "Wait, you naughty boy! And Bapu caught up with him and pinched him hard. Then all children started laughing, and all clapped with shouted, "Hey, look we irritated Bapu! We peeved Bapu!"

But, in all that laughter, the one which was heard loudest was that of Bapu.

(7)

Once Gandhiji had lodged in a very rich man's house. It was the time for evening prayers. Many people had gathered for the same. Now it was time to start the prayer. Gandhiji instructed to switch off the lights. The switch of electric lamp was just above the owner of the house, where he was sitting. As was his habit, the owner called out his servant loudly to do the job.

But, what happened then? Gandhiji instantly got up, switched off the light and the prayer then started.

As usual, there was a question-answer session following the prayer. Someone questioned about spinning work. In reply, Gandhiji said referring to Bhagawad Gita that, those who do not perform their duty, devoting their acts to almighty, are thieves.

After the prayer, people dispersed. Somebody pushed the corner table and a decorated vase rolled down and the glass broke into pieces.

Oh, but what is this? The landlord himself has reached there running, and has started picking up and collecting the broken glass. Where has the habit of calling the servant disappeared? What a change in a moment?

It was the practice of his great guest, which had made this magic change possible.

(8)

As soon as the school closed, the little Mohan would hurry back home. He was always afraid, 'lest someone should poke fun at me'. To be at school at the stroke of the hour, and to run back home as soon as the school closed-- that was his routine. He used to be very shy and avoided talking to anybody. He had no friends at all.

He always respected his teachers and never tried to deceive them. Once, there was an exam during his high school. Education Inspector Giles had come for

inspection of the school. He gave the students five words to write. Mohan misspelled the word 'Kettle'. The teacher warned him with the point of his boot. But, he would not be warned. It was beyond his imagination to believe that the teacher wanted him to copy the correct word from his neighbor's slate. For, he had thought that the teacher was there in fact to supervise the students against copying.

All the students spelt all five words correctly and it was only Mohan who proved to be stupid. The teacher later tried to explain his stupidity to him. But, Mohan says, 'It did not affect me the least. I could never learn to copy from others.'

(9)

While Gandhiji was on travel, he visited one ashram school. It was raining and so the children got late for school in the morning. Gandhiji had to proceed elsewhere. So, he could spend only a few minutes with the children.

Gandhiji started talking to them, "All of you spin and wear Khadi. But, tell me now, how many of you always speak truth only and never tell a lie?"

Few children raised their hands. Gandhiji then asked the second question, "Well, now how many of you often speak lies?"

Two children soon raised their hands.

Then three.....

Then four.....

And later, lots of hands and hands were seen. Almost all hands were up.

Gandhiji told them, "There is always a hope for them who know and accept that, they frequently lie. But, it is very difficult for them who believe they never lie. I wish success to both."

(10)

Somebody put forward an autograph book before Gandhiji to get his signature. He flapped the pages. At a place Gandhiji saw about sixteen signatures of the great cricketers of the M.C.C. team of the world in a row. He put down his signature in the same row at the end.

In a way, He too was a great player, right?

Once, the Nawab of Patoudi, a great cricket player of India at that time, had gone to see Gandhiji. Gandhiji told him that, they both would play a cricket match and that he had decided to challenge him.

The Nawab of Patoudi said, "I have one condition. After the match is over, you permit me to challenge you in politics." Gandhiji readily agreed to that.

The Nawab then said with a serious face, "See, I am sure, you will give me a solid defeat in cricket. But, all the same, I am fully confident that I will give you a big defeat in politics. Gandhiji burst into laughter like a child and patting him on back, he said, "Nawab saheb, you have already clean-boldded me right away!"

(11)

Head Master Gimi of Alfred High, Rajkot, had made games and gymnastics compulsory for upper class students. Earlier, Mohan disliked it and never took part in any games. But, now he had to join in as it was made compulsory for all.

One day, the Head Master called him, "Why were you absent on Saturday?"

Mohan told that he had come but there was nobody on the play ground at that time.

Head Master shouted, "Why did you come late?"

Mohan clarified that, he had no watch and it was a cloudy day. So, he could not know the time.

It is obvious that, the Head Master would have thought that all these are mere excuses. He fined Mohan two Annas for this.

Mohan was deeply pained and told himself, "I am convicted of lying. I am not wrong. But how was I to prove my innocence? There was no way."

He cried in deep anguish.

But, that day the young Mohan resolved that, a man of truth must also not be careless. The principle, which Mohan derived that day from the play ground, stood him in good stead all his life.

(12)

Gandhiji used to get up early in the morning. He would then wash his face and brush his teeth with a *datun*. He would finish all jobs with only a small jug of water.

Once, observing this, his colleague Mohanlal Pandya asked, "Bapu, why are you so miserly with the use of water, when the whole of Sabarmati river is flowing just next to our Ashram?"

Gandhiji asked him a question, "Tell me first, do you find my face properly cleaned?"

Pandyaji answered, "Yes, it is."

Gandhiji: "Then what does it matter? You use jugs and jugs of water. But, you just wet your hands and apply on your face, while I wash my face properly with water. So, this amount of water is quite sufficient for me."

Pandyaji: "But, any way the river is full of water."

Gandhiji: "For whom the river water is flowing? Is it only for me?"

Pandyaji: "It is for all. It is also for us...."

Gandhiji: "That is correct. The river water is for all; for the birds, animals, insects, and men and not only for me. I can use only that quantity, which is required by me. But, I have no right to use more than what is really my need. From a collective property, could we take more than what is needed?"

(13)

Once, on seeing a colleague coming with a big chunk of earth, Gandhiji asked, "Why did you bring this?"

Colleague: "To clean a jug."

Gandhiji: "But then why such a big chunk of clay?"

"It was there, so I brought it."

"Are you going to wash it with all? What will you do with the remaining earth?"

"Just as it was lying there, so it will stay here."

"But, there it was in its own place. Here it will create unnecessary garbage. The first mistake you then make is that of creating garbage here and the second is you do not cultivate the habit of thinking about how you should live your life."

The colleague then turned into a deep thought. He realised that life of a great man is actually the sum of many small details. Gandhiji explained his own definition of garbage to him. Even if a log of gold, lying arbitrarily anywhere in the house, other than its own place in the treasury, it is called a garbage. Anything, which is not in its own place, is garbage.

(14)

Little Mohan was always ready in the service of his mother. His mother, Putalibai, was a saintly woman. She would not have her meals without her daily prayers. She would have only one meal during the Chaturmas (the four monsoon months). It was easy for her to take the hardest of the vows, and then to keep them without flinching. Even an illness was not allowed to interrupt the observance of a vow. To keep two or three fasts in a sequence was nothing to her.

During one Chaturmas, she vowed not to have food without seeing the Sun. Small children would stand outside, staring at the sky, waiting to announce the appearance of the sun to mother, so that she could have her food. But, as we

know, at times the Sun is hardly seen in the rainy seasons. At its sudden appearance, young Mohan would run and rush to announce it to her mother.

She would then run out to see the Sun, but by that time the Sun God would again disappear! Mohan, with other children, would be then disappointed. But, his mother would say cheerfully, "It does not matter. May be it is not in my destiny to have food today."

She would then return inside cheerfully, to attend to the innumerable rounds of her other duties and household chores.

The ascetic life of a saintly mother left an indelible impression on the young Mohan's heart. The first lessons of a religious life that he received were from his mother. Thus the mother became his first guru in his practice of a sincere and joyful ascetic life.

(15)

In South Africa, Bapuji established the Phoenix ashram and there he also ran a school for the children. His effort and purpose behind this was to provide true education and not the false one, to the children.

His method of giving marks in examinations was always unique. Even though they were all students of the same class and the questions asked to them were also similar, the children who wrote the better answer would get less mark, and others who wrote not so good ones would get more marks.

Due to this method of Bapuji, children would get quite confused. Bapuji would explain to them his method and logic in detail and would also provide the proper understanding: "I do not want to measure that some students are cleverer than the others. But, what I really want to know is, how far each student has improved from where he was standing before. If a clever student keeps comparing himself with a stupid student and shows off his arrogance, then his intelligence will be blunted. He will then put in less effort in his study; and he, who does not progress

in study, will ultimately deteriorate for sure. So, I will give more marks to only those who are meticulous and work really hard and who improve constantly.”

Bapuji always kept a watchful eye on a student securing more marks to see whether he is continuously progressing or not. If he keeps boasting about securing more marks than the other less bright students, then what good it will make of him? All these ideas, he constantly tried to impress upon them. And the loving Bapu was always ready to pat the back of a student who obtained better marks next time than before and made a progress.

What Bapu really wanted to explain was this. We are not in a competition with others to show ourselves higher or lower than others. The main thing is to observe how much progress has been made from where we were before. That is true education. Bapu explained this idea to all by making a small, but very important change in the education system.

(16)

In the Phoenix school, the children were asked to write an essay. The subject was: ‘Who was the first Satyagrahi?’

Some of them thought that, Thumbi Naidu was the first satyagrahi, because he had played an outstanding role in the struggle of South Africa.

Some other thought: No..No.. the first satyagrahi should be Bapuji himself. Yet others justified Naranswami as the first satyagrahi, who had died in banishment. The essays were checked and returned to the children. They also received the certificate as ‘okay’.

But, Bapuji in fact failed them all. They all started pondering. Then, who would be the first such satyagrahi?

Then Bapuji told everybody: “The first satyagrahi was not our Thambi Naidu, but the great Bhakta Prahalad.”

That means in other words, Bapuji was not saying anything new. He was just following the great Satyagrahis, who had been there before him.

Bapuji always emphasised all his life: "I do not have to say anything new. Satya (Truth) and Ahimsa (non-violence) are as old as Himalayas. However, he certainly demonstrated them in his own life and in the present context of human life, by practicing and living Satya and Ahimsa in his own behavior and every action. That was no doubt remarkably unique and original about him.

(17)

Once, on seeing Prabhavati searching for something in the dustbin papers, mother Kasturba asked, "Bahen, what are you doing?"

Prabhavati: "Ba, I am trying to find out a small green paper."

Ba: "What is this paper about, that you are putting so much effort to find it? Is that about some important writing?"

Prabhavati: "No, it is just a small green paper to stop the lantern light coming directly into the eyes. It is Bapu's paper. I dropped it somewhere while cleaning the lantern. I think it could be here, somewhere in the dust bin, so I am trying to find out."

Ba straightaway went to Bapu. She had all the right to fight with him. She soon took on Bapuji, saying, "What is this? Why are you troubling the poor little girl unnecessarily? She has been searching and searching for such a small piece of paper for quite some time!"

Bapu: "It is true that the paper is small. But, that does not mean that, it was useless. It was extremely useful in its own place. Why should it be thrown away or lost? It should be found out and kept back in its place. Let her find it. It is a good thing only to do that."

At last, Prabhavati found the paper and it was again put back in its own place. That made the whole atmosphere all the more pleasant and light.

(18)

In the company of a friend, little Mohan and his elder brother fell victim to meat-eating. Actually, Mohan did not want to eat meat for the sake of taste or fondness. But, he wanted to be physically strong by eating meat in order to expel the British from our country and to be free.

He was from a staunch Vaishnava family. He ate the meat but, it seemed to him the whole night as if a live goat were bleating inside him. Still this experiment went on for about a year. But not more than half a dozen meat-feasts took place.

Whenever he had this feast, dinner at home was out of question and he had to lie to his mother, "I have no appetite today." This lying to his mother was gnawing at his heart. Deceiving and lying to father and mother seemed to him even worse than not eating meat. He thought that when they are no more and I have found my freedom, I will then eat meat openly. But until that moment arrives I will abstain from it. This decision he communicated to his friend and thus got rid of meat-eating.

In another incident, a relative and Mohan became fond of smoking. So they started collecting stumps of cigarettes and enjoyed emitting clouds of smoke from their mouths. The stumps, however, were not always available, and also they could not emit much smoke either. So they began to steal coppers from servant's pocket money in order to buy the Bidi (Indian cigarettes).

Somehow they managed for a few weeks on these stolen coppers. In the meantime, they heard that the stalks of a certain plant were porous and could be smoked like cigarettes. So they tried that also for smoking. But they were far from being satisfied with all these. It became unbearable for them that they should be unable to do anything without the elders' permission. At last, in sheer disgust, they decided to commit suicide! They heard that Dhatura seeds were an effective poison. So, they went to the temple, had a darshan (glimpse) of the God, and then looked for a lonely corner. But courage failed them. The idea of suicide was

finally dismissed. They went to the temple to compose themselves and then returned back home.

Mohan's devotion towards his father and his insistence that he should not deceive his father saved him from the evil of theft. His meat-eating brother had run into a debt of about twenty-five rupees. How to pay this debt became really a question for them. His brother had on his arm an armlet of solid gold. So, a bit of gold was clipped out of it and the debt was cleared.

But this then became more than Mohan could actually bear and he resolved never to steal again. But this was not sufficient. He made up his mind to confess his guilt to his father. But he did not dare to speak to him. Not that he was afraid of his father beating him. But he was afraid of the pain that he should cause him. But he felt that there could not be a cleansing without a clean confession. He wrote a note in which, not only did he confess his guilt, but also asked for adequate punishment for it. He pleaded his father not to punish himself for his offence. In the same note Mohan also pledged never to steal in future.

He was trembling as he handed over the note to his father. He read it through and the pearl-drops from his eyes trickled down his cheeks, wetting the paper. For a moment he closed his eyes and then he tore away the note. He had sat up to read it. He again lay down.

Mohan also cried. In older years, he wrote, "Those pearl-drops of love pierced me, cleansed my heart, and washed my sin away. Only he who has experienced such love can know what it is... This was for me, an object-lesson in Ahimsa.....I know that my confession made my father feel absolutely safe about me and increased his affection for me beyond measure."

(19)

Ba's health deteriorated. She was earlier saved with great difficulty. Once again the disease relapsed. When other cures failed, Gandhiji thought of nature cure and pleaded Ba to give up salt and pulses. He made her read material on the subject and explained also related writings of known people to support his belief. But, Ba was adamant.

She just spoke out unintentionally, "Even YOU will not give up salt and pulses, if you are told to do so."

Listening to that Bapu felt bad, but at the same time he also felt happy to find that this is the right chance and occasion for him to express his love towards her.

He straight away told, "Alright, I am giving up salt and pulses from now, for a year. Whether you leave it or not is another matter!"

Ba repented a lot and exclaimed, "Please forgive me. I just spoke out despite knowing your nature. Now I will not eat salt and pulses. But, you please withdraw your statement. It's a very hard punishment to me!"

Bapu: "It is very nice if you leave salt and pulses. I am sure you will get benefit only by that. But, the pledge once taken, I cannot change. I will surely get the benefit of it and it will also help you to remain steadfast on your decision."

Ba: "You are very stubborn. You do not listen to anybody."

Ba then wept a lot and kept quite.

But, Bapu found the key to Satyagraha from this incident, which took place between the husband and wife. It is a device of Satyagraha to reach out to the heart of the other person through love and sacrifice and to help him achieve beneficial transformation in life.

That is why Bapu said about this incident: "I consider it as one of the sweet memories of my life."

(20)

August 15, 1947. It was the day of India's independence. The British power, that ruled over the seven seas and whose sun never set, departed from India peacefully. The Indians took the reign of power in own hands.

Where was the Father of the Nation on this historic day? What was he doing on the day of celebration, the one who perhaps contributed the most to bring about this day? The independence was achieved, but there was still much work to be done. There was no communal harmony. He was the father of the nation and so he stood by his countrymen in their misery.

Communal riots had broken out in Calcutta. So, he wanted to be there, amongst the people. He went and stood right there, in the middle of the communal fire.

Where did he sleep on the night of independence? Belia Ghat was one of the poorest and very dangerous areas of Calcutta. Being a helper and a 'Beli' (saver) of the poor, Bapu decided to stay there in a small house.

Bapu's bed was made on a wooden plank (pat) and all others slept on the floor, spreading whatever they found handy.

When Bapu noticed this, he said, "All of you are sleeping on the floor and I sleep on this 'Chatra Palang' (royal bed). How is it possible? That is not proper; I will also sleep on the floor."

It was as though the bed was prickling Bapu and the bed was like a "chhatra palang" to him! He was satisfied only when he slept on the floor with all.

When the Indians were celebrating freedom in Delhi, the capital of India, and throughout the country, Bapu, the father of the nation, sat in a hut like the poorest of the poor people. Through his act and his example, he showed what remained to be done.

(21)

After returning from England, young Mohandas had to struggle to find a source of livelihood, because he could not succeed in his law practice. He was good at drafting applications. He even increased his efforts. He could get such work in abundance, but without any money, and it could not provide a living. He could not stand up and make arguments in the court, which he found to be difficult. So, he was compelled to find some other job.

He believed that he was good at English and so he could be a teacher in some school. He was ready to take up a job as an English teacher for the matric class, so that it could at least provide him some income.

One day, he saw an advertisement in the newspaper seeking an English teacher for an hour daily in some high school. The salary was Rs. 75. Mohandas applied for this post. He was called for a personal meeting. Young barrister was very enthusiastic to be a teacher. But when the principal knew that he was not a B.A., he felt sorry and told him to go. The young man tried to convince the principal.

Mohandas: "But, I have passed matriculation examination of London. Latin was my second language."

Principal: "That is true. But we want a graduate."

Thus he was proved ineligible for this post. Despite his being a Barrister he was ready to accept any honest job like a teacher. It was his humility, simplicity and practicality, behind which the seeds of his being a teacher of the whole humanity were laid.

(22)

When Ba and Bapu were jailed in Aga Khan Palace, their colleagues and also the jail superintendent Mr Kateli used to play Carrom with the 75 years old Ba. Everybody would try to make Ba win. Sometimes Bapu would also watch the game and would even play his turn.

They had also planned to play outdoor games to get some exercise. Monsoon had started so the jail officer arranged for table-tennis in one of the rooms. They all decided to get this game inaugurated by Ba and Bapu. Ba and Bapu both stood with rackets in their hands like players. After many years Bapu would have caught the racket in his hands.

Ba had to take her turn first.

Bapu told: "Be careful!"

Ba: "See! Do not cheat!"

Bapuji: "I have always been defeated by you, and to get defeated by you, gives me immense pleasure."

Everybody burst into laughter.

Bapu told everybody, "If men admit even some defeat from women, then the double benefit of women's power can be acquired and many riddles of our society would be solved on its own accord....."

Then again turning towards Ba he said, "I achieve many successes only being defeated by you. It is because of your company that I appear honourable."

Everybody was delighted to see this couple, who had been victorious by admitting defeat to each another.

(23)

Gandhiji was like a waterfall of work. It was as if he was like the giant Niagara waterfalls.

But, all the same, he had developed a tremendous capacity to take rest during his busy schedules. Whenever he felt tired, he could immediately go to sleep for a few minutes and he would again wake up fresh for further work.

It was his habit to finish some work even as he slept. For example, after having his massage, Gandhiji would sleep in a water tub and Manuben would use this time for his shaving. But, Manuben would feel hesitant thinking that, Bapu hardly finds some time to rest and shaving would disturb his sleep. So, she would stop it.

But, Bapu was very alert in extracting work from others. He explained to Manuben, "Even if I am sleeping, you should continue your work, only then can I sleep more and along with that, my work is also done. But, you have not learnt that yet and so I have to suffer the results. I have to remain awake to stimulate you to continue this work.

Manuben: "Bapuji, you are amazing! When you are very tired, you just rest for five, seven minutes and even then you insist me to continue shaving. This is too much! Moreover, you say that then only you are able to sleep without any anxiety. What an amazing power to sleep!"

Bapu: "As far as I can sleep in this manner, I have no worry. But, the day I lose this power, you should understand that my fall is close by. In such a situation I would know that it is a result of some pretension within myself and the Rama nama is not in my heart. But as far as God has bestowed this power upon me, I am not bothered. So, having faith in God, you should also continue your work. He is generous to all and never does any harm to anyone. It is only we people who harm ourselves and then we blame the God for our deeds."

(24)

Deshbandhu Das was in Darjeeling, and was unwell. Gandhiji went there to inquire after his health. On his return journey, he had to catch the Dhaka Mail, to attend a function at Nawabganj. But, it had so happened on the way that, some part of the rock had collapsed on the railway track. This created such a situation that, Gandhiji might miss the Dhaka Mail. But not to reach on time was not something Gandhiji could ever afford.

One colleague then suggested going by a special train. Gandhiji immediately welcomed it, saying, "Just as I am strict in following my timings meticulously with the Viceroy, in the same strict manner I should be punctual in keeping the time given to the people."

The special train fare of Rs. 1,140 had to be paid, but he remained present at that particular function on time, amongst his countrymen.

(25)

When Gandhiji was in Champaran in Bihar, he entrusted the work of opening and running the schools in nearby villages to many volunteers.

One day he asked Kasturba, "Why not you too start a school here for the children?"

Kasturba said, "What will I do opening a school here? Shall I teach them in Gujarati? I do not know their language. How can I even talk to them?"

Gandhiji replied, "The very first lesson in children's education is that of cleanliness. You just bring together farmers' children. Check their eyes and teeth. Give them bath. Inculcate in them the habits of cleanliness. This education is not a bit less important. You can begin it from today itself. And Ba commenced her school.

(26)

A cook, in Yeravada jail, had a pet cat and it had two kittens. Many times, the cat would come and sit wrapping itself around Gandhiji's open and soft legs. Now kittens also started coming with their mother.

Once, the cat came with her kittens. One kitten started playing. It would come running to catch the tail of its mother as if it was a mouse. It would then catch the tail in its mouth. The cat would pull back its tail or get angry and even bite. In this way their play would go on. At that time Bapu was reading Ruskin's book. He stopped reading to watch this game.

Gradually, the kittens got mixed with Bapu very well. They would sit in Bapu's lap at a prayer time, would play with everybody and at meal time they would jump around, meowing all the time.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel would just tease the kitten. He would cover the kitten with a semi-dome shaped metallic net, used for covering the food. Being trapped the kitten would get puzzled.

One day the kitten got very scared. It pushed the metal net with its head and took it all the way to the Verandah and then escaped from underneath.

Everybody was impressed by its wit. But, the kitten was still in panic. Bapu felt pity on it.

Then, the kitten went little far and made the preparation for a nature call. It dug up the land to make a pit and after finishing the task, again covered the pit with the earth. But, then it found that the earth was not enough, so it went to another place. There, the kitten finished that task. Another kitten helped it to cover the pit.

On seeing the kitten's keenness for cleanliness, Bapu said, "Flowers should be showered on the kitten from the sky."

Even Miraben (Ms.Slade) could not stop herself from mentioning this in her letter about cleanliness education.

She wrote: "We have two nice kittens here. They learn a lesson from their mother's silent practice. Their mother is always present before them all the time. The main and important thing is only practice."

(27)

Gandhiji and his colleagues Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Mahadev Desai were in Yeravada jail. They used to pray at four o'clock in the morning. Then, it was their routine to have lemon and honey water. Boiling water was poured on lemon juice and honey. Then they had to wait till it got cool. In this duration, they would read something. Gandhiji would then cover the hot water with a cloth.

One day he asked, "Mahadev, do you know why I cover the water? There are so many tiny insects in the air, and they might just fall in the water. The cloth saves this happening."

On hearing this, Vallabhbhai could not stop himself saying, "This is too much of the Ahimsa, we cannot practice it up to this extent!"

Gandhiji then replied with a smile, "Well, Ahimsa cannot be practiced, but how about cleanliness?"

(28)

Once, a discussion started in the Yeravada jail, on how the proverb '*Sangharyo Sap Pan Kamno*' (Even a snake in one's collection can be of use) came into being.

First, Bapu told a story: "A snake appeared in the house of an old lady. People killed the snake. The old woman kept the snake on the roof of her house instead of throwing it away. At that time, one eagle was flying in the sky and it had brought a pearl necklace from somewhere. It saw the snake and considering it more valuable than the necklace, threw the necklace on the roof and picked up the snake!" Thus the old woman received the pearl necklace for storing the snake!"

Then Sardar Patel told another story: A snake appeared at a Bania's (merchant) place. There was no one to kill it. The Bania did not dare to kill it, and nobody liked to kill the reptile. So, he covered the snake with a utensil. That night, the thieves broke into his house and thinking that, there must be something valuable below the utensil, lifted the same. The snake immediately bit them. Thus, they received the death for the theft.

One can say that everybody told a story in their own characteristic manner.

(29)

In Johannesburg, Gandhiji would get up early, offer his prayers, sometimes would grind the wheat, light the stove and place the kettle to warm the water.

The toilet buckets of the house were being cleaned in a six to ten feet high tank. The water from bathing and cleaning accumulated in the tank. Once in a

week, a troop of Blacks from the municipality would come with a big iron tank, pulled by two horses, to empty this water tank of the house.

After the cleaning work was over, the Blacks would get themselves cleaned and in cold days would come shivering to Gandhiji due to lack of enough woolen clothes.

It was Gandhiji's routine to pour hot tea, made by him, in their tumblers.

While enjoying the hot tea, they would express their thanks and gratitude to Gandhiji and at the same time they would raise their left hand and say in the Zulu language:

"`Kos Baba fezlu' - ` God is up there in the heaven', but we get assurance of His presence in this hot tea offered by you."

(30)

When the American missionary Dr John Mott visited Mahatma Gandhi at his Sevagram Ashram in central India, he asked him, "What have been the most creative experiences in your life?"

Gandhiji replied, "Such experiences are in multitude. But as you put the question to me, I recall one experience that changed the course of my life."

Then he related the Meritzburg incident.

He was a young barrister of twenty-four at that time. He was not successful in Mumbai as a lawyer. In the meantime, an offer came from Dada Abdulla & Co. to help their case in South Africa. So, he went to Durban. After a week he was sent to Pretoria by Abdulla Sheth.

A first class ticket was booked for him and he boarded the train. The train reached Maritzburg, the capital of Natal, at about nine in the evening. Another white passenger entered the compartment. He hesitated on seeing the presence of a 'coloured' man. He went out and summoned one or two railway officials. They did not say anything. Then, another official came in. He ordered barrister Gandhi to go to the van compartment.

“But I have a first class ticket,” said Gandhi.

“That does not matter. I tell you to go to the van compartment.”

“I tell you, I was permitted to travel in this compartment at Durban and I insist on going on in it.”

“No, you won’t,” said the official. “You must leave this compartment or else I shall have to call a police constable to push you out.”

“Yes, you may. I refuse to get out voluntarily,” young Gandhi replied with firmness.

The constable came. He took him by the hand and pushed him out. He refused to go to the other compartment and the train left.

Gandhi then went and sat in the waiting room, keeping his hand bag with him and leaving the other luggage where it was. The railway authorities had taken charge of it.

It was winter and the winter in the higher region of South Africa is severely cold. His overcoat was in the luggage. But Gandhi did not dare to ask for it. What if he should be insulted again? So, he sat and shivered. He began to think of his duty. “Should I fight for my rights or go back to India? Or should I go on to Pretoria without minding the insults and return to India after finishing the case? It would be cowardice to run back to India without fulfilling my obligation. The hardship to which I was subjected was superficial, only a symptom of the deep disease of colour prejudice. I should try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process.”

He then decided to take the next available train to Pretoria.

Gandhiji told to Dr Mott, “Now the creative experience comes here. I was afraid for my very life. I entered the dark waiting-room. There was a white man in the room. I was afraid of him. What was my duty, I asked myself. Should I go back to India, or should I go forward, with God as my helper, and face whatever was in store for me? I decided to stay and suffer. My active non -violence began from that date.”

Jawaharlal Nehru believed that fearlessness was his greatest virtue. Actually, Nehru himself was fearless, so why not would he appreciate it? But, according to him, Gandhiji's fearlessness was so tremendous that it went on to the people and atmosphere around him too and made them less afraid.

The root of Gandhiji's fearlessness was in his universal love for all. A man fears a man. But, he who feels the presence of no one else, other than the Almighty Rama, will not fear others. On the contrary, a flow of love will be released from his heart towards the others.

In that cold night, the fear of timid young Gandhi disappeared as his active love for humanity took charge of his heart. The wonderful qualities of a total sacrifice, to suffer for others were born in his heart. No one was his enemy then and he had spite for none. At that very moment the potent weapon of Satyagraha was born.

(31)

One day, after the evening prayer, a unique conversation took place between Kasturba and Gandhiji in the Phoenix Ashram, regarding their household.. The South African Government had declared all the marriages, performed according to the Hindu, Muslim or Parsee rites, illegal under a new law.

Bapu said, "Are you listening? You are not my married wife from today."

Ba answered, "How could you talk like this? You keep finding new notions every day!"

Bapu then said, "I do not say this, General Smuts says. According to the new law of his Government, our Hindu, Muslim and Parsee marriages, which are not registered according to Christian rites, have become illegal, and therefore our wives have become mistresses!"

Ba said, "Did he say so? How could he think that way?"

Gandhiji said, "But, what will you all women do now?"

Ba replied, "What can we do?"

Gandhiji asked, "Why? You also should fight as we men fight. You also get ready to go to jail for the sake of your reputation."

Ba questioned, "How can ladies go to jail?"

Gandhiji said, "Why not? Whatever happiness and sorrow the men suffer, why can't women endure the same? Sitaji went to forest after Rama, Taramati after Harishchandra, and Damyanti after Nal. They all suffered infinite grievances."

Ba told with a smile, "You want to send me to the jail right? Only that is left now! But, would the jail food suit me? Would they permit me to have fruits?"

Gandhiji said, "If they don't, till that time you fast."

Ba said, "The way you showed me is to die."

Gandhiji then burst into laughter and said, "If you die in the jail, I will worship you like Jagadamba (Mother Goddess)."

Kasturba announced her resolution, "Put my name first in all the Satyagrahis."

And, in fact, Ba was really in the forefront of the first troop of sixteen Satyagrahis.

The fortunate Ba passed away in Bapu's lap during their imprisonment in the Aga Khan Palace on February 22, 1944. That was at the time of the 'Quit India' movement of 1942. Even Gandhiji, who had cultivated extreme detachment, wept and dropped a couple of tear-pearls at the time of Ba's passing away.

(32)

Many men were shot dead during the Satyagraha in South Africa. After the struggle, the widows of the diseased came to see Gandhiji at Seth Parsee Rustamji's place. Gandhiji got up, went to them and bowed to them. The ladies broke down in front of him.

Gandhiji tried to console them and said, "Mothers, please do not cry. If your husband had died suffering long illnesses, the world would not have known anything about them. They are really fortunate to be the victims of firing and they died for the sake of the country."

One lady was inconsolable and was crying holding Gandhiji's leg. Her tears were falling down on Gandhiji's leg. He consoled her with broken heart and then said in a firm voice with compassion, "Your sorrow is unbearable for me; and it can subside only when even I should die with the bullets of the Government. This plight can end only when my wife also faces the same situation as that of yours.

Gandhiji's transparent and heartfelt identification brought them solace.

(33)

Gandhiji had established the 'Satyagraha Ashram' at the banks of the river Sabarmati and he would direct all his activities from there. One of the ashram workers, who did the shopping for the ashram, was stealing the money by showing incorrect account of two and half annas, instead of two annas. The fraud came to the notice of Gandhiji's two colleagues and then the news travelled to Gandhiji.

Gandhiji called him. First he did not admit, but later he confessed. Gandhiji was deeply shocked because he was a close colleague of him since the time of Natal in South Africa.

Gandhiji deeply pondered over the matter. "How can we call this ashram a 'Satyagraha Ashram'? Some untruth must be hidden within me, which I have not been able to remove so far," he thought.

He gathered his colleagues. Some, who were away, were also called. He poured out his agony before them. External prestige was of no value to him against the truth. It was generally felt that the change in the name of the ashram from 'Satyagraha Ashram' to 'Udyog Mandir' might diminish its prestige in the eyes of the world. But, we should refrain from bearing a wrong title. There were strong arguments.

Ultimately, it was unanimously decided that the place near the bank of the river, where the prayer was performed, would be called 'Satyagraha Ashram', and the remaining area would be called 'Udyog Mandir' and at a later stage, when it acquires its eligibility, it can be named again 'Satyagraha Ashram'.

(34)

Gandhiji was travelling in Noakhali to pacify the communal violence. On January 30, 1947, exactly a year before his assassination, he reached a village where the goat milk was unavailable. So, coconut milk was given to him as a substitute to the goat milk. This caused problem and he suffered from dysentery and was feeling very weak.

After going to the toilet in the evening, he started perspiring a lot and he was also frequently yawning. Manuben was with him. She feared that he might become unconscious. Therefore, she held him. She wiped away the sweat and made him sleep with the help of some other person.

Manuben immediately wrote a detailed letter to Dr. Sushila Nayar. Within a short while, Bapu opened his eyes. He told Manuben: "I did not like your calling the other person for a support, but you are still young and therefore I forgive you. In such a time one should repeat the Rama Nama with full devotion. Even I was repeating the same. Now, do not inform anybody about this illness, not even to Sushila. Only Rama is my true doctor. As long as He wishes to derive some work from me, He would keep me alive, and otherwise He would take me away."

Manuben was startled. She tore away the letter. Bapu understood the matter. He asked, "Oh, you had already written a letter as well?"

Manuben said, "Yes."

So he again told: "Today God has saved you and me. Sushila would have rushed here leaving her work incomplete in the village and therefore, God would have become angry with you and me."

(35)

This incident occurred when Gandhiji was practicing law in Johannesburg in South Africa. The office was three miles from the house. Once, Gandhiji's companion Mr. Polak told Gandhiji's thirteen year old son Manilal to bring a book home from the office. Manilal forgot to do so. The news reached Gandhiji.

Gandhiji went to Manilal and told him softly, but with firmness, "The night is dark, the path is difficult, coming and going is about six miles. Still, because you had committed, you have to bring the book from the office for Mr. Polak."

On hearing this, Ba and all the other family members got worried. Questions were also raised as to why Bapu should insist in this manner.

An office companion, Kalyanjibhai told, "I will bring the book or let me go with Manilal."

Gandhiji accepted the second option. The thirteen year old son brought the book for Mr. Polak even at that late night. A father, who was tender than a flower, but also harder than a rock, meticulously took care that his son would accomplish the work that he had accepted and promised.

(36)

In Noakhali, Gandhiji was travelling on foot to pacify the communal violence. He would reach from one village to the other the next morning at 7o'clock. Then, he would finish some writing and have his bath. He would use no soap for bathing, but a rough stone was used; this was given to him by Miraben many years ago.

After reaching a particular village, as she was preparing for Gandhiji's bath, Manuben found that the stone was missing. She informed Bapu, that it must have been left in the weaver's house where they had stayed yesterday. Now what was to be done?

Bapu just pondered for a while, and then said: "You should yourself go and find and get that stone back. You should go alone. Once you will do like this, you will not make mistake again."

Manuben: "Shall I take some volunteer with me?"

Bapu questioned: "Why?"

In Noakhali, all that area was filled with forests of coconut and betel nut trees. A stranger would get lost almost certainly. Also, how could one go alone through such a lonely road? And what one would do, if some hooligans created trouble on the way? Many such thoughts quickly passed through little Manu's mind who was hardly fifteen or sixteen at the time. She did not stop to answer the 'Why' asked by Bapu, and just left in anger. She merely followed the foot marks, which were made earlier when they came here and she managed to reach that village.

She found even that weaver's house. There was an old lady in the house. She had not preserved that valuable stone, but had thrown it away, considering it as some useless stone. Manu searched it out with great trouble. Her joy knew no bounds.

She had started at half past six in the morning and finally returned at one o'clock in the afternoon. The distance was some fifteen miles. She was terribly hungry also. Her anger still had not subsided. She went to Bapu straight, threw the stone in his lap and broke down.

Bapu's affectionate voice was heard: "It was your ordeal on the pretext of the stone. I am happy that you have passed through it. The stone has been my companion and friend for last twenty five years. Whether I go to the jail or in the palace, it has always remained and moved with me. Any carelessness in the form that many such stones will be found, is not good.

There was a true utterance that came out of today's experience, from Manuben's heart: "Bapuji, it was for the first time today that I recited the Rama Nama with a true heart and strong fervour.

Bapuji told: "I want to make the women fearless. Actually speaking, it was not only your ordeal, but even mine.

Perhaps, the real ordeal was that of the God that day. Hardly any devotee would have put God on such a big trial. Truly, the reputation of the Almighty was saved that day.

(37)

In the Phoenix ashram, everyone, big and small, observed food restraints. No spices were used in the food and some even observed the vow of eating food without salt.

Once, a student found one shilling on his way to the station and some other person found a coin of three penny from a party he attended. Then some day, Gandhiji happened to go to Johannesburg for some work. At that time, a class teacher ordered Pakoda (fried snacks) for one shilling, and paintings for three pennies, and distributed to all to eat and enjoy.

When Gandhiji arrived, he came to know about this. He talked to that lady teacher. Then he started strolling between the house and the press, while talking to one student on this matter. Similarly, he also talked to other students. At last, he took his son Devadas with him to talk.

Ashramites were very anxious and were standing around, waiting for them to come back. After a while news arrived that Bapu slapped. First, it seemed that he would have slapped Devadas. But, later it was clarified that he had given five slaps to himself.

He ate in the afternoon. But, in the evening he did not. He gave up even water.

After the evening prayer, he started talking in a very painful voice: "Even the water has become like poison to me. It is extremely heart breaking to know that even children can deceive their father to such an extent. When I could not control myself, I have inflicted five slaps on myself. It is better to beat myself than

others. Without that, it will not be realised that, how this kind of behavior pains me.

Then Bapu told about Devadas's confession and consolation of not repeating his mistake again. However, he added that the children are still hiding the truth. They all tell different things. No one is ready to tell the truth. His life would be totally useless, if the lie still persists. Then he announced his decision that, he would not even have a grain of food or a drop of water unless the children reveal the truth on their own. What is better than to die in the pursuit of truth! And he told everybody that, they should celebrate the day, if his death comes in this manner.

The next day Bapu had to go out of station. Thirsty and hungry, he walked all the way to the station. They all accompanied him silently. The anxious lady teacher finally confessed everything at the station.

The train arrived. They all requested Bapu: Now, after reaching there, please go straight to Sheth Rustamji's place to have a meal there and only thereafter proceed further.

Bapuji said with peaceful and cheerful mind, "The truth has been found and that is my food."

(38)

In Yeravada jail, prisoners were posted as warders to guard and serve Gandhiji.

Warder Adan belonged to Somaliland. He was sentenced to ten years of imprisonment for abdicating the British army during the First World War. He had been transferred here from the Aden jail. He could read Kuran with difficulty. But, he would keep reading the Ayats of Kuran in his spare time. He became a fan of Gandhiji. Gandhiji filed a number of applications for his release or transfer to the Aden jail again, on his behalf.

One day, he brought a fresh 'Times' news paper with great trouble. How the sight of a newspaper was ever possible in the jail? He happily went to Gandhiji and presented the paper to him.

Gandhiji would observe each and every rule of the jail religiously. If the rules were unjust, he would inform the authority and would fight against it. But he would never violate the smallest of the small rule of the jail.

He asked Adan, "Adan, what is this?"

'Maharaj, it's a newspaper, fresh newspaper. See, I have brought it for you.'

'I cannot see this newspaper. It is against the law. You take it back.'

Adan felt bad. He was disappointed.

He spoke, "Everybody wants to see the paper. I have brought it with such a great difficulty."

Gandhiji explained to him, "I understand everything. But, it is against the rule. That is why I cannot see it. You take it back and burn it, otherwise I will have to report.

Adan got very confused. He left from there with the paper. He started thinking. He went to Gandhiji's colleague and said: "Maharaj says, it is against the law. Whose laws? The Government is rascal. Why to care for this Government's laws? But, Gandhiji is a religious person. He does not listen to me. You please explain to him."

The colleague told him, "Gandhiji never listens to such a thing. On the contrary, he would get annoyed."

Even then, Adan could not convince himself. He again went to Gandhiji quietly in slow steps, and talked, "You are a great man, you are religious person. You are not going to see the paper for yourself. But, I have been here for quite a long time. Please tell me, if there is any news from my country in there?"

Listening to him Gandhiji smiled. He could see Adan's trick to make him read the paper anyhow. But, seeing his insistence, Gandhiji did not want to displease him, and he then read out the news related to Somaliland's war and something else to him.

Adan came out and started telling with a childlike giggle, "Look, Gandhiji saw the paper. Look, how I persuaded him!"

Whom shall we praise? The one, who could deviate the saint from the observance of the rule with the force of his love or the one who subjected himself to love and affection, instead of sticking to the rule rigidly?

(39)

For Gandhiji, only practice was his speech. When someone in Bengal requested a message from Gandhiji, he wrote for them in Bengali that, '*Amar jivani amar vani*' - My life is my message.

After he returned to India from South Africa, when Gandhiji went to the jail for the first time, he used to get up at four o'clock in the morning and worked throughout the day like a farmer of our country. He used to do physical labour daily for six hours, which included four hours of spinning and two hours of carding. This was in order to identify himself with the masses who earn their living with the sweat of the brow.

When Shri Shankarlal Banker, a close colleague of Gandhiji, was jailed with him, Gandhiji immediately set a time-table for his routine in the jail and Shankarlal also used to spin for two hours.

Now, it was the time for Banker to get released. In a way, Bapu had given a totally new life to Banker with his own company in the jail. So, Banker was talking to Gandhiji regarding the change in his life due to Gandhiji's motherly love and care.

Listening to him Gandhiji told him, "If you feel that you have been benefited in your life with my company in the jail, do talk to the people about the life here in the jail when you go out."

Banker replied, "Certainly, I will definitely tell this to everybody, and I am sure that they will also definitely gain out of it."

Gandhiji instantly questioned, "Do you know what people will tell on listening to that talk?"

Banker replied, "I have not thought of it."

Gandhiji had very good understanding of human nature and its weaknesses. He knew that our people are indeed expert in putting great people on the shelf, instead of actually following them.

Bapu said, "See, I tell you. They will just say that, Gandhiji is the Mahatma. Only he can live such a life. How can we follow him?"

Banker was now convinced. He said, "That is correct. People do think that way and they will exactly say like this."

Bapu said: "Then, what will you tell them about it?"

Shankarlalbai said, "I have not given any thought to it, so what can I say?"

Bapu told him, "If someone tells you like that, then please tell them that I was not born Mahatma. There were many deficiencies in me and I had been endeavouring constantly and carefully to remove them. Even as a Bania becomes rich, collecting even half and half paisa, similarly, I kept cultivating good virtues and today the situation is, people call me a Mahatma, although, I am still far away from that position. So, it's a highway for everybody and everyone can progress, if one thinks and tries in this direction with faith and firmness."

(40)

The jail warder Adan was handicapped, with one hand. But, he would join Gandhiji in his work of spinning and carding with great effort and resoluteness. He had become an expert in making slivers and was very enthusiastic about that work.

Gandhiji's eyes started paining after a few months of spinning and the doctor advised him to give rest to his eyes. But, how could Gandhiji listen to it?

Adan was very miserable. He started explaining to Gandhiji that now he should stop or reduce working.

After listening to him Gandhiji said, "See, Adan, the sun rises regularly and gives light to the whole world. It never stops working. Then why should we leave our work?"

What would poor Adan say? He merely kept quiet, but he was worried about Gandhiji's health. After some days Gandhiji's health deteriorated and he reduced his food. He used to have four pieces of Roti, but now he told Adan to give him only two.

Adan kept staring at Gandhiji, and then quietly said, "Maharaj, the Sun God does not leave the rule, then how can you also reduce the Roti?" Gandhiji just could not stop laughing, listening to Adan's argument.

Gandhiji writes, "I will always cherish his love as one of my most invaluable reminiscences."

(41)

After his arrival from South Africa, Gandhiji was travelling with some of his colleagues by train. Of course, they were all travelling in the third class. On seeing the dirty toilet of the third class compartment, Gandhiji put forward a proposal before his colleagues to clean it.

But, the water tank in the train was empty and the group had only a jug of water to spare.

Gandhiji picked up a news paper and said: "Let us go. I will show you how the toilet can be cleaned with the help of a paper and only with a jug of water."

And then he cleaned the dirt with his hands and gave a lesson of cleanliness to them.

(42)

In the Yeravada jail, Shankarlalbai Banker, a close associate of Gandhiji used to wash Gandhiji's clothes. One day, Gandhiji told him, "You need not wash my clothes, I will do that myself."

Shankarlalbai asked, "Is it the case that the clothes are not washed properly or is there any shortcoming?"

Gandhiji told him with an air of satisfaction, "They are washed properly. But, I think the soap is being consumed excessively. I can use this amount of soap for almost double the number of days."

Shankarlalbai assured him, "I shall now use the soap economically."

He thought that, it is okay if some more soap is consumed, but the clothes should be clean and bright. Now, he gained an insight of the economy Gandhiji was thinking about.

There must be an imaginative power, which must always work behind an insight of economy.

One morning Gandhiji said, "Shankarlal, Do not light the grate today. There is no need to warm up the water."

Shankarlalbai asked, "Why?"

Gandhiji replied, "We keep a lantern in the room at night. The idea just clicked to my mind that if I keep a jug of water on the lantern, then by the morning, the water will get warmed up. I tried that and the experiment is successful. The water is warm enough for me to drink."

Shankarlalbai felt a bit offended. He said, "Aren't you doing this, because you think that I have to take trouble to light the grate early in the morning? I feel that I am unable to give you satisfaction from my work."

Gandhiji replied, "You were preparing things very well. But, it was just an experiment that I wanted to try. I wanted to see how it works if water is being warmed on a lantern. That much coal would be saved. There is nothing to be offended about in that."

(43)

Gandhiji asked his colleague Shri Shankarlal Banker in Yeravada jail, "Have you read Bhagvad Gita?"

Shakaralal replied: "I had read it during my student days. At present I do not have much recollection of it."

Gandhiji asked the second question, "Have you read it in Sanskrit?"

Banker answered: "No, the second language for me was French. So, I have no familiarity with Sanskrit."

Gandhiji retorted, "Gita must be read in Sanskrit only. That much of Sanskrit can be learnt quite easily."

Banker said, "It is difficult to learn Sanskrit at this age."

Gandhiji undertook the responsibility and said: "It is not difficult at all. I can teach you."

Gandhiji used to consider himself a teacher. There was a driver in South Africa and it was possible for him to get a better salary if he could learn English. Gandhiji used to walk a few miles there and teach him English.

After that, the '*Margopadeshika*' of Bhandarkar was obtained in the jail, and a systematic plan of study followed. Gandhiji then made Banker finish the whole book, devoting one hour of time daily.

Gandhiji told Banker, "This much knowledge of Sanskrit is enough to be able to read Gita."

Then, the study of Gita began. While reading it, Bapu paid a lot of attention to pronunciation of 'rhasva' and 'dirgha' (that is, shorter and longer matras). Within few days, the reading of Gita was completed.

Bapu told Shankarlal, "Now you should read one chapter of it daily."

But Shankarlalbai was a man of modern times.

He said, "Why? now I have understood the whole Gita by reading it properly with you. Then what is the need to read it again daily?"

Bapu replied, "This is the kind of book, which is worth reading daily. You will find new truths and meanings from it every day."

Shankarlalbai still looked a bit doubtful. So, Gandhiji asked him, "How many friends do you have?"

He replied, "I have many friends."

Gandhiji further asked, "How many of them are such who can really help you in the time of your difficulty?"

Banker then started thinking deeply and then candidly answered, "None of them are the like. Perhaps, some may help and some may not. In the recent times, one cannot say anything about friends."

Gandhiji then linked his talk with this candid confession of Banker and said: "It is also the same situation with the books. We may read many books, but are they going to help us in the time of our difficulty? A book which would help us in our difficulty is a true book. Gita is one such book."

(44)

One morning Gandhiji was talking to his colleague, "Today. I could not sleep till late night."

'Why?'

Gandhiji, "When I went to sleep, after sometime I heard some sound from the fence on the rear side. When I looked there, I saw what looked like a mouth of a Serpent."

'The warder sleeps outside. You could have called him.'

Gandhiji replied, "I understand that too. But, if I had called him, he would have called others and they would have killed the serpent. Instead, I thought that, if the serpent comes inside and bites me, let it bite but I will not call the warder. But, later, I thought that if it comes inside and bites me, whatever would have happened to me, let it happen. But, suppose it went out again after biting me and

if it was poisonous and bit the warder also, then he would have also died. So, I asked myself, what would be my duty in such a situation? If I don't tell, warder's life is in danger and if I tell then warder will kill it."

"Then what happened?"

Gandhiji said, "I was confused. But, in the meantime, the moon rose in the sky and the brightness of moonlight spread over the fence. I could then see that it was not the neck of a serpent, but that of a lizard. Thereafter, I went to sleep."

The colleague then asked, what is wrong in killing a poisonous animal like snake!

Gandhiji described to him the details of a conversation which he had with Shrimad Rajchandra, and what he had told him long ago. Just as we love our own life, likewise the animals also love their own. Therefore, true Ahimsa suggests that, let it happen which is bound to happen to us, but we should not kill even the animals.

(45)

German architect Hermann Kallenbach got attracted towards Gandhiji's lifestyle and became his lifelong friend. When Gandhiji was to be released from the jail for the second time, Kallenbach bought a brand new car to receive Gandhiji and stood near the jail gate to welcome him.

Gandhiji came out from the jail and met everybody. Then, Kallenbach requested Gandhiji to get into the car.

Gandhiji asked, "Whose car is this?"

"It's mine. I have just purchased it and then came here directly."

Gandhiji asked, "Why did you purchase it?"

Kallenbach was discouraged a bit.

He hesitantly said, "Just to pick you up."

Gandhiji right away demanded of his friend, "You must immediately put this car for auction. Why should you have this kind of attachment for me? I am not going to sit in that. I shall stand here, until you return after leaving the car.

Kallenbach immediately went to put the car at the auction headquarters. Gandhiji and all others who had come to receive him were standing at the jail gate until Kallenbach returned back; after he was back, everybody went together on foot to the lodge.

(46)

Gandhiji was travelling in Orissa to raise funds for Khadi work. Once, while he was sitting at a meeting, a very old lady came there. Her hair was like white sliver. She was bent at her back. She fought with the volunteers and came in to see Gandhiji, saying "I wish to have your glimpse." She bowed to Gandhiji and then she took out an Adadhi (half Anna) from her *oti* (a knot at the end of her cloth), placed it near Gandhiji's leg and then quietly went away.

Gandhiji held it instantly and pushed it into his *oti*. Sheth Jamanalal Bajaj, who was keeping all the accounts, sat by Gandhiji's side.

He told Gandhiji, "Hand over that Adadhi to me."

Gandhiji retorted, "That I cannot give to you."

To this Jamanalalji said, "I collect all the cheques of thousands of the Charkha Sangh, and you do not trust me for this Adadhi?"

Gandhiji replied, "Its value is more than thousands of rupees. It is not a big thing for a man to donate thousand rupees out of lakhs of rupees he possesses. But, this poor old woman, dressed in tattered clothes, how generous it was on her part! The Adadhi given by her is more than crores."

(47)

In Verulam, about eleven miles from the Phoenix Ashram, a temple of Laxminarayan was built from the money donated by a well-to-do Indian. Gandhiji was invited to inaugurate this temple and he accepted this invitation due to their affection.

The organisers insisted that all ashramites should also come with Gandhiji. They said that railway fare would be provided for all. They even assured that they had enough funding for all these purposes.

Gandhiji's method was always unique and different. He told them with a smile, "Well, you can give us the railway fare. However, let me tell you that we will take the railway fare from you, but we will walk down to reach here. The savings would be credited in the account of the organisation.

Arrangement was made at the station to welcome Gandhiji. So, it was decided that Gandhiji alone would catch the train just one stop before the Verulam station.

The temple was inaugurated very well. People's joy found no boundary. But, it was a temple of Laxminarayan and the Laxmi created a problem for Gandhiji. The silver lock and key of the inauguration ceremony was presented to Gandhiji and along with that, a copy of Bhagvad Gita (a religious scripture), framed with a golden metal sheet, was also given to him.

Gandhiji poured out his heart before the public. "The silver lock and the key and the gold framed Gita, which you have given to me has added to my worry. Where would I keep them? In fact, it is as if the diamond was framed with tin. The Gita itself is a shining jewel. How come an inanimate object like gold is going to add to its beauty? Now, I cannot keep this Gita with me. I will be burdened to take care of it, so that it is not stolen by somebody. The Gita teaches detachment to us and you pushed me into an attachment! But, I have now become an expert. I will find my way out."

Gandhiji credited the income received from that silver and gold in the account of the Phoenix ashram and became even lighter than before.

(48)

In 1922, when Gandhiji was in Yeravada jail, the jail superintendent Major Johns felt that the floor of the house where Gandhiji was accommodated, was low and that is why it was rather humid. So, he thought of shifting Gandhiji to the place, where European prisoners were kept. The floor of that building was high. It had a verandah and nice compound with flowers. Major Johns put forward proposal for a shift, Gandhiji agreed to his proposal and the place was changed.

In the evening, Gandhiji spoke to his colleague Shankerlal Banker, "We should go back to our old rooms. We have not done the right thing to come here. The superintendent has the power to transfer the prisoners, but in my case he may not be having such a power. My place would have been decided by the Government and he cannot change it. He has certainly made a mistake and if the government comes to know of this, he would be in trouble. It is my duty to save him."

When this matter was put forward to the superintendent, he was not convinced right away. He stated that as the superintendent, he had full authority and if the Government did not like his work and interfered, he would resign.

Gandhiji told him, "You have such an authority as you talk about, but that is only regarding the general prisoners. That authority actually may not be there in my case. So, you may move us to our previous place."

Both were adamant on their own belief. At the end Gandhiji told him, "I can understand your feelings and I also appreciate it. It is better if we only know and find out what the Government is willing to do. So, for the time being, you can take us back and you should talk to the Home Minister. If you find our doubt to be baseless, then again you can take us back."

Major John was happy on such a proposal from Gandhiji, and he transferred them to the old place.

He then came back after three-four days. He started thanking Gandhiji for his far-sightedness and the kind care that he showed for him, and said, "What you were saying came out to be true. It has been decided by the Government to keep you in the same place as earlier. If I had kept you there in the new place without consulting the Government, I would have definitely been in trouble. In a way, I am also a rigid person and if the Government had violated my decision, I would have had to resign. I am very grateful to you for your right advice."

(49)

When Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was released from jail in late 1934, Gandhiji called him to Wardha to take rest. He came to Wardha with his children and stayed there at Jamanalal Bajaj's place. They would all go to Bapu at prayer time.

Then came Bapu's birthday. Bapu told them to stay back for the meal.

After the meal, Khansaheb's son Gani told Bapu, "I felt very happy coming here today. I thought that today is Bapu's birthday, so we will get the feasts of various dishes like Pulav and Murgi (chicken) and all to eat. But, see, today also there is the same pumpkin as usual; in addition, today only boiled pumpkin is being served!"

Listening to that Gandhiji burst into laughter.

Then he took Khansaheb aside and said, "See, these are children. We should give them the food, what they like. We will get them meat and eggs."

Khansaheb told Bapu, "Bapu, they are just doing it for fun. Wherever we go, they eat just the same food whatever our host takes. If you will give them something else, even so, they won't touch it."

Just as Khansaheb denied for some other food to be cooked, the children also did the same thing.

(50)

Gandhiji was travelling with Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in the villages of Bihar after post-partition riots of the country.

Some Muslim refugees came to Bapu. They said, "Gandhiji, what can we do? There is so much violence, killing and insecurity all around here!"

Gandhiji told them, "I can teach you only a lesson of bravery. You should go back to your respective homes."

Terrified, they asked, "How is it possible for us? What is the guarantee of our not being massacred?"

Gandhiji uttered, "What guarantee can I give you? But, if any of you have been slaughtered, the Hindu will have to pay its price with Gandhi's life. Only that much guarantee I can give you."

Gandhiji's words instilled courage in them and they then returned to their respective homes.

Gandhiji then mentioned this talk that he had with the refugees, in his evening prayer. "I have assured the Muslims of this place that if any of them has been killed, the Hindus of Bihar will have to pay the price with the life of Gandhi."

These were not simply plain and empty words from Gandhiji's mouth, which were rushing towards the listener's hearts. In fact, they were full of compassion and identification with the listeners. The effect of the same was to subside the hostility, by engulfing their hearts and minds in its own flow.

(51)

After returning from South Africa, Gandhiji had lodged at his barrister friend Jivanlal's place in Ahmedabad. The thought of establishing the Ashram in Ahmedabad only was continuously going on in his mind. The form and path of the

struggle for the country's service had not yet clearly emerged and crystallised in his mind.

One evening, his friend Jivanlal came home and told him jovially, "Gandhi, your fame has started spreading all around!"

Then he told Gandhiji in detail, "Today, one of my barrister friends met me. He was coming, walking through the Ellis Bridge. At that time two people were talking, going little ahead of him. One of them was our cook. He was telling his friend that, someone has come to our place from South Africa. He requires about ten or twelve bananas in the breakfast. The whole day, he just sits idle. He says that he is a barrister. But, he is not doing any work at all. Just see, Gandhi, we have now started adding to your fame!"

And the barrister friend candidly burst into laughter. Gandhiji also joined him.

But, then Gandhiji suddenly became serious and told: "In a way he is correct, I am not doing any job here. But, shall I tell you, what am I doing at every moment all these days? As some commander constantly thinks, standing in front of the antagonist's castle, that which pebble or stone has to be removed in order to make a hole, so that he can intrude the whole army inside the castle, similarly, I am constantly pondering over the same matter that where to make a hole in the strong castle of power of the British Empire."

And, after some time, Gandhiji started his Ashram, near Ellis Bridge, in the house given by his barrister friend Jivanlal.

(52)

Gandhi, the man of action, had recently come back from South Africa. He had started his Ashram in Kocharab in Ahmedabad and had devoted himself to the service of the nation.

A local barrister came to Gandhiji to get some work in the service of the nation. At that time Gandhiji was busy cleaning the cereal in the kitchen.

Gandhiji welcomed the barrister guest, spread a carpet on the floor and told, "Please sit."

The barrister was dressed in coat and pantaloon. He remained standing and spoke, "Well, I have not come here to sit. I want some work. I have come to the Ashram

in the hope that you will give me some suitable work."

Gandhiji said, "It's a matter of great pleasure."

Saying so, Gandhiji placed a small pile of the cereal before him and said: "Please clean it properly, so that no granules of stones are left."

The barrister was astonished and taken aback. According to his culture, the work of cleaning the cereals was that of servants and women.

He hesitantly said, "Do I have to clean the cereal?"

Gandhiji replied, "Yes, at present I have only this work to offer."

The Barrister did not lack wit. He soon understood that, this leader was of a different kind, who does not make any distinction between small and big work. He just wants to see that all Indians, small or big, are eager and equipped to do any kind of work.

In the presence of Gandhiji, as the barrister went on cleaning the cereal, at the same time he was inspired to move away rigid concepts and wrong thinking from his own life as well.

(53)

Once, an important session of the executive council of All India Congress Committee was going on in the Sabarmati ashram. Suddenly one ashramite came running, shouting, "Oh, I am dying! Something is happening in my stomach!"

Gandhiji soon got up and went to him. He took him aside, made him lie down and started curing him, trying to understand what had happened. After sometime, when he returned to the session of the executive council, which was made up of

eminent leaders, someone jokingly commented, "How Bapu pampers such a mad person at an important time!"

Bapu quietly said, "Who else are going to come to me except the mad? Since he came to me, therefore he is my family member. A family member has the first right on me here."

(54)

Gandhiji was extremely particular about punctuality. Tilak Maharaj got half an hour late at the Godhara Political Conference. On that occasion Gandhiji said, "Swaraj would come half an hour late."

He would take all precautions in advance to stick to his scheduled. A case was prosecuted against him in Champaran. The time was fixed to reach at 11 o'clock. The horse cart was arranged for his reaching there. Gandhiji said that the horse cart must come at half past ten. His colleagues said that the horse cart would not take half an hour to reach there. Why should it be called so early? Gandhiji was quick to reply, "If it does not arrive here at 10:30 then what? I should have that much of spare time on hand so that I can walk down to court if necessary."

He was always extra careful regarding keeping his time, and would not allow it to be interrupted by some unexpected happening or the general negligence of our people.

(55)

Gujarati Sahitya Parishad meeting was held under the Presidentship of Gandhiji at the Prembhai hall in Ahmedabad. The hall was over crowded. Gandhiji started his speech. There was noise 'Mike!' 'Mike!' from the audience.

Gandhiji stated, "Remain silent and hear. It will be heard. Can you hear me now?"

One worker, standing at the extreme behind, leaning the wall said, "No, it is not heard!"

Gandhiji, "Then how could you hear this and reply?"

There was a wave of laughter in the hall. The laughter subsided and left behind a pleasant silence.

(56)

Before Independence, Gandhiji visited East-West frontier provinces. There he was a guest of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, a beloved leader of the Khudai Khidamatgars, who was also known as the 'Sarhad na Gandhi', that is, the 'Frontier Gandhi'.

The watchmen, equipped with weapons were settled near the place where Gandhiji had to sleep at night. It was only as a safety measure. Gandhiji noticed this.

He asked Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, "What is this?"

"Bapu, this is just to drive away the intruders."

How would Gandhiji be satisfied with the answer? He said, "I do not want these watchmen."

He told this quietly, but with firmness. There was no scope for further arguments. Weapons were taken away from the watchmen. Only then did he sleep.

The news travelled fast throughout the province: Just look! How remarkable this man is. He has such faith in God that he does not even need or care for weapon.

(57)

In the summer of 1947, Gandhiji was moving in Bihar to subside the communal violence. From Bihar he went to Delhi. In those days his food intake was reduced considerably.

One morning, Manuben Gandhi gave a full glass of mango juice at the time of meal to Gandhiji.

Bapu asked, "First check out and tell me. What is the price of these mangoes?"

Manuben thought Bapu is simply joking.

So, she got herself busy with the work of duplicating the papers. But, after sometime she noticed that Bapu did not have it, so she told him to have the mango juice.

Bapu said, "I thought that you would first ask the price of the mangoes on your own. Even though these mangoes have been gifted to us, you should first ask the price before offering these to me. That you did not do. Moreover, even after my telling so, you did not check out the price. I have heard that a single piece of mango costs ten annas. I can survive without eating this fruit. Such costly fruits do not increase blood in my body. On the contrary, it reduces my blood. In such a time of terrible high prices and distress, you have given me a full glass of juice of four mangoes. That costs two rupees and fifty paise per glass. How can I take that?"

In the meantime, two refugee women came with their children to meet Gandhiji. Bapuji soon gave away that mango juice to these two children to drink, in two different bowls. That gave him immense satisfaction.

He then told Manuben, "God is helping me. This is a graphic example of that fact. God sent these children to me and also they are exactly like the ones I had wished. Just look, how generous is the God!"

(58)

When Gandhiji went to London to attend the Round Table conference, King George V (also called Pancham George in India) had arranged a dinner party for all members.

The viceroy, Sir Samuel Hoare was worried about inviting Gandhiji. His first worry was, would the king meet such a rebel? And the second was, even if they meet, Gandhiji's dressing won't look appropriate at the party. He talked to the King. The King first expressed his anger saying, "What? Why should I invite that rebel Fakir, who has been responsible for the attack on my loyal officers?" After sometime, he again displayed his dislike for that 'small man with open knees and without proper dressing.' But, finally it was decided that, Gandhiji should be invited without putting any condition regarding his dress.

The viceroy had taken charge of presenting Gandhiji at the right moment before the King, at the dinner party hosted by the latter. It was not difficult to identify Gandhiji from the crowd due to his pure white Khaddar clothes. He took Gandhiji to meet the King and introduced. It was a difficult moment. It was not possible for the King to forget Gandhiji's rebellion. During the last whole year, Gandhiji had launched a powerful Satyagraha movement in India.

But, once they started talking, it all went on quite smoothly. The King was sympathetic and Gandhiji's manners were also unquestionable. But, during their conversation, when the King's eyes once set on Gandhiji's open knees for a moment, his heart started beating rapidly.

Now, their conversation was gradually proceeding towards the end. King George Pancham was quite aware of his responsibility. At the time of farewell, he warned Gandhiji: "Remember, Mr. Gandhi, I won't tolerate any attack on my empire."

The viceroy became very tense. It looked like as if the war of words would start or what?

But Gandhiji's gentleness took the situation under control. He answered, "My Majesty, I should not drag myself into a political dispute with you after having enjoyed the hospitality of my Highness."

And they took each other's leave in a friendly atmosphere.

The viceroy was stunned. "How one was a very noble King and the other was the great statesman! The men who are above worldliness, possess the superb worldly manners," he thought.

(59)

When Gandhiji went to London to attend the Round Table Conference in 1931, all his attempts failed to convince the British statesmen. Churchill even refused to see him. At that time, General Smuts, who was considered to be 'the wisest man of the British Empire', had expressed his good will superbly towards Gandhiji. He invited Gandhiji to his place with lot of affection.

When General Smuts was a ruler of South Africa, Gandhiji had launched his Satyagraha movements against him and made him feel exasperated. Finally he acquired justice from him for the Indian community residing in South Africa. General Smuts, a staunch opponent of Gandhiji, became the best admirer and friend of him.

He took Gandhiji near a cupboard in his house in London, and showing him one thing, he asked, "What is this? Could you recall anything?"

Gandhiji kept looking at it. It was a pair of shoes. He had himself made that pair of shoes and sent it as a gift to General Smuts, when he was his prisoner last time in the jail of South Africa.

When Gandhiji was in the jail in South Africa, the Government's dealing with him was not good, despite his being a barrister and even when his behaviour was extremely polite. In the beginning he was locked up in a very narrow room. Only some light came from the ventilator above, that was all. There was no stool to sit. So, he had to stand and read. He did his labour work in jail with strict discipline.

He was made to wear handcuffs while going to other places from the jail and even that he tolerated. The toilet was not convenient and the food was also a problem. Gandhiji never even desired to get any extra facilities as compared to his fellow Indian prisoners. Gradually, he also got some possible changes done.

In the beginning he too found the prison term difficult. But, he shed away that feeling. He heard his inner voice that, if General Smuts wants him to surrender by putting him in such uncomfortable condition, that was never to happen.

He had been to jail many times by 1914. When he was in the jail last time, he had prepared a pair of shoes with his own hands. After his release, he sent them as a present, through Miss Sonya Shleshin, to his 'opponent' General Smuts.

General Smuts later writes, "I have worn that pair of shoes during many summers, although I always felt that I do not deserve to put my feet into the shoes of such a great man."

(60)

In Bihar, a mother had lost her son in the freedom struggle. Bapu went to her place, bowed to her and stood before her with folded hands. Then he started saying: "Mother, this is your son, who is standing before you. Just put your hand on his head and bless him that he sacrifices his life in the service of the nation."

Then, it so occurred as if the prayer emerged from the heart of a mother for the Mahatma, who was standing before her.

She said, "Son, be immortal."

The wish that Bapu had made from a pure heart indeed came true. The oblation of Bapu's life was also given in the welfare of humanity.

The Mother's – Bharat Mata's prayer and blessings will always be heard for his sincere sacrifice: "Beta, Amar Raho!"
