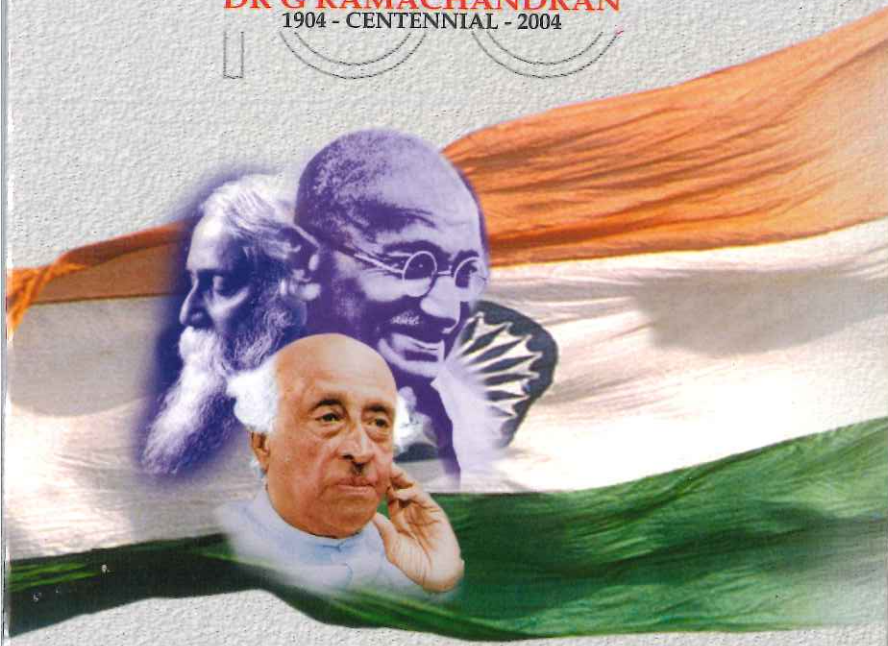


VOLUME IV

DESIKOTTAMA
DR G RAMACHANDRAN
1904 - CENTENNIAL - 2004



THE MAN GANDHI
By
G. RAMACHANDRAN

Edited by
N. RADHAKRISHNAN
&
SISTER MYTHILI

THE MAN, GANDHI



THE MAN, GANDHI
BY
G. RAMACHANDRAN

Edited by
N. RADHAKRISHNAN
&
SISTER MYTHILI



MADHAVIMANDIRAM LOKSEVA TRUST
NEYYATTINKARA - 629 121,
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM DISTRICT, KERALA

English
THE MAN, GANDHI BY G. RAMACHANDRAN

Edited by
**N. Radhakrishnan &
Sister Mythili**

First Published
October 2005

Price: Rs. 100/-

Printed and Published by
Sister Mythili
Managing Trustee
Madhavi Mandiram Loka Seva Trust
Neyyattinkara - 629 121,
Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

Copyright © 2005 - Sister Mythili

Printed at
Harikrishnans, Ph : 0471-2725205

CONTENTS

Part I

Preface	i
Introduction	iii
Foreword	vii
The Man, Gandhi	9

Part II

Foreword	63
Preface	65
Gandhi anecdotes The 'incurable' Andrews	67
Gandhiji and a blind woman	72
Gandhiji and a superstition	76
Gandhiji and an innocent lie!	80
Gandhiji and a coffee-drinker	83
Gandhiji and Kasturba	87
Gandhiji and punctuality	92
Gandhiji and the zamindar	95
Gandhiji and the torn dhoti	98
Gandhiji and a threat	101

Gandhiji and the school-master	105
Gandhiji and the 'bridal chamber'	108
Gandhiji and the altered programme	111
Gandhiji and the Chinese youth	115
Gandhiji, an artist on his own	119
Bapu and 'the revolutionary'	123

PREFACE

This volume, fourth in the series of 24 volume birth centenary tributes to Dr. G. Ramachandran, has two parts. While Part One is an 'insider's' analysis of Gandhi's work and contribution to humanity, Part Two deals with a few of the most revealing anecdotes young Ramachandran gathered when he was an inmate at Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram.

What this volume contains has great historical value. Originally published under the titles, *A sheaf of Gandhi Anecdotes* (1945) and *Gandhi, the Man* (1947), these two book-lets have emerged as very important publications in the whole range of literature on Gandhi. *The Gandhi Anecdotes* became instant success since there was hardly anything in 1947 that dealt with the lighter side of Gandhi. Researchers and writers started reproducing these anecdotes, which in course of time, got into the main body of Gandhi literature without any reference to the original writer. Much worse, many of them were even distorted and torn out context to prove a point or two by speakers and writers over the years. Once 'in a jocular tone' Ramachandranji after reading a piece on Gandhi written by a professor of a leading

university that bears Gandhi's name said, "Oh, no, this is not what happened and this is not what was alluded in my anecdotes". Well, such things always happen and Ramchandranji was not the first victim of such 'transfer of imaginative kite-flying'. Plagiarism has no limits and intellectual dishonesty is as old an intellectual exercise. In the case of much-written about celebrities, this has always been happening.

Ramchandranji's observations in *The Man, Gandhi*, if read in the historical setting, will offer great insights into Gandhi's mind and his evolving personality. Beginning with young Ramchandran's first meeting with Gandhi during Gandhi's historic 21-day fast to promote Hindu-Muslim unity in Delhi in 1924 when the former was just a young man of twenty years old, Ramchandran's picture of Gandhi is a live Gandhi and not 'a deity to be worshipped'. That this young man from an obscure part of Trivandrum city in the erstwhile Travancore could become the 'lucky lad', to interview Gandhi on Gandhi's views on such crucial aspects as Science, technology, beauty and art still remains a privilege reserved for the 'greatest'. Ramchandranji will be remembered as long as Gandhi will be read or researched into.

Neelakantam
7TH October 2005

N. Radhakrishnan

INTRODUCTION

Dr G. Ramchandran, the patriarchal figure of the glorious Gandhian Revolution has been acclaimed as a versatile genius. There is hardly any field of creative endeavour where the indelible impression of this venerable personality has not been left. As a student of Gurudev Tagore, young Ramchandran acquired great insights into music, painting and other arts while Mahatma Gandhi bestowed on this young disciple not only affectionate guidance but trained him in rural development, Khadi village industries and instructed him to continue the Gandhian Revolution of rural re-construction through education and service of the villages which Ramchandran did with astonishing success when he and his distinguished wife, Dr Soundram started the Gandhigram Complex of institutions in Tamilnadu in 1947. The Gandhigram Rural Institute has grown itself into a great centre of educational experiment and to Dr Ramchandran goes the credit for having guided its early period as the founder Vice-Chancellor.

It was in recognition of his outstanding work in rural India for the cause of village uplift, removal of untouchability, housing, sanitation, spread of literacy and village industries that he was nominated to the Upper

House of Indian Parliament (Rajya Sabha) and it is history now how Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Smt. Indira Gandhi with whom Ramachandran worked closely admired his intellectual prowess. As a Professor of Philosophy at the Jamia Milia Islamia along with Dr. Zakir Husain, who later became the President of India, Dr. Ramachandran led an uncompromising campaign on secularist ideals in independent India.

Dr. Ramachandran's effort to infuse realism and creativity in the functioning of the various premier Gandhian Institutions and organisations in India won him all round admiration. As author and editor of several authentic books on Gandhi and Gandhian movement he rendered signal service and he is remembered in many circles as a silver-tongued orator.

This volume contains two seminal writings of Ramachandraji. Part One : *The Man, Gandhi*, published in 1947 when Gandhi was alive and Part Two : Sixteen true anecdotes on Gandhi, published in 1945. These booklets had gone out of prints. We are happy to put these two related books in one volume and present before the discerning readers as our offering during the birth centenary of this great disciple of Gandhi.

Sister Mythili

N. Radhakrishnan

PART - I

THE MAN, GANDHI

FOREWORD

This little book was first written in 1947. The first edition came out under "Gandhi Era Publications." Mahatma Gandhi was alive then and the world rang with the greatness of his name. His character and personality grew from year to year. He was one of those immortals who added to their stature by living dynamically every moment, taking from life and action all that they could give to complete their place in history. It was not therefore possible to write about Gandhi with any pretence to finality. Gandhi had already become immortal in history and yet his greatest achievement came later. That was why all those who wrote about him had to rocken with something imponderable and to go about their business in a spirt of humility. That was what I tried to do in this book-let in 1947.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan had written a fairly long introduction to the book-let at the time. Let me now quote only a few sentences from that introduction :-

"The common man resents war and does not wish to engage in the fiendish task of blowing up women and children into pulp. We require today the re-education of man. The goal of all true culture is to make men like and dislike rightly. National patriotisms and the rancorous partisanship of social and economic doctrine which can be as intolerant and perhaps more dangerous than even

national egotism require to be superseded by a love for humanity. The outlawry of war should be taken out of the realm of ideal dreams. In this great task, Gandhiji's doctrine of the beauty of truth and the power of love can be of immense assistance."

I have changed nothing in what I wrote in 1947. I would only point out a prophesy I indulged in towards the end of my booklet. Please remember Gandhi was alive then and in the fullness of his Karmayoga. And yet I had the temerity to write :-

"He has lived greatly and those who know him know also that he will someday die even more greatly. Such a man as Gandhi can never die an ordinary death. Like Christ he will some day die on his own Cross. The Cross in the world today is bound to be different from the one on which Christ gave up his earthly life. But Christ was not defeated on His Cross. Gandhi will also not be defeated on his Cross".

Eminent friends remembered with wonder my prophecy when Mahatma Gandhi fell dead before the bullets of an assassin and wrote to me expressing their fervent surprise.

Above everything else my intention was to make clear that Gandhi was just a man but the greatest man the world has ever known. He was not a God and never claimed to be a God. What he proved was that it was possible for man to become Godly.

Madhavi Mandiram
Neyyattinkara - 695 121
South Kerala.

G. Ramachandran

THE MAN, GANDHI

A woman's first impressions of a man will always be interesting. But when that woman is as keen-minded a person as Millie Graham Polak and when the man concerned is Gandhi, then the impressions might well be illuminating. It was on the 30th of December 1905 that Mrs. Polak had her first impressions of Gandhiji at the Jeppe Railway station, Johannesburg, South Africa. In 1905 Gandhiji had not become the Mahatma. He was then a flourishing attorney, being a Barrister-at-Law in Johannesburg. Of that first meeting Mrs. Polak has written: "My first impression of Mr. Gandhi was of medium-sized man, rather slenderly built, skin not very dark, mouth rather heavy lipped, a small dark moustache, and the kindest eyes in the world, that seemed to light up from within when he spoke. His eyes were his most remarkable features and were like the lamps of his soul; one could read so much from them. His voice was soft, musical and almost boyishly fresh." This was over forty years ago. Since then during these forty years and over Mr. Gandhi the Attorney of Johannesburg has walked a long way over interminable paths which have taken him from greatness to greatness. Today he is undoubtedly acclaimed as the greatest man in the modern world, one

whose name is more familiar to the common man in all the countries of the world than that of any other living person.

It would be fascinating to compare the impressions of many of those keen minds who have met Gandhi in the present times with Mrs. Polak's impressions of forty years ago. There is for instance the impressions of the Rev. J.H. Holmes. Rev. Holmes crossed the Atlantic in 1931 from New York to London to meet Gandhiji during the second Round Table Conference which Gandhi attended as the sole representative of the Indian National Congress. Earlier in his writings and speeches Rev. Holmes had painted Gandhiji as an ugly man with long ears and a sharp and drooping nose and with a mouth which extended too much across the face. He had himself gathered these impressions from other Europeans and Americans who had met Gandhiji and written or spoken about him. But after meeting Gandhiji personally in London in 1931 Rev. Holmes painted a different picture. He said that Gandhiji in his loin cloth looked more a king than many kings in their royal robes. There was, he said about Gandhiji, an unconscious air of royalty which was all the more significant because it was unconscious and because it came from some sense of profound dignity of calmness from the inner sources of his being. Looking at him the observer too became calm and a sense of quiet dignity took possession of him. Rev. Holmes added that as he

listened to Gandhiji speaking to him the instant conviction came to him that every word came from the depth of truth. When Gandhiji spoke there was never any attempt to conceal himself or his meaning. On the contrary every word seemed to say, here I am, just as I am, without any reservation whatsoever. Rev. Holmes had long admired Gandhiji and studied his writings and interpreted them magnificently to the American public. In a sense therefore his first meeting with his hero in London in 1931 was a crucial one for him. It is a great tribute to any hero in similar circumstances to say he survived such a meeting. Rev. Holmes made it absolutely clear that the Gandhi he met in the flesh and in the blood was greater than the Gandhi of his dreams. Curiously Shri. C. Rajagopalachari writing about Gandhiji in October 1945 conveys the very same impression: "If there is any man with whom familiarity does not lessen but continually increases respect and love, it is Gandhiji. It may be true of all truly great men, but in my personal experience I have found it true of Gandhiji. The more you move and work with him, the more you love and admire him".

It was in June 1942 that Louis Fischer, the well-known American Journalist, met Gandhiji. He spent a week in Sevagram and had many talks with Gandhiji. His impressions of Gandhiji are those of another American eleven years after those of Rev. Holmes in London in 1931. Here is a paragraph from Louis Fischer: "Part of

the pleasure of intimate intellectual contact with Gandhiji is that he really opens his mind and allows the interviewer to see how the machine inside works. When most people talk they try to bring their ideas out in final perfect form so that they are least exposed to attack. Not so with Gandhi. He gives immediate expression to each step in his thinking. It is as though a writer were to publish the first draft of his story, and then the second draft and ultimately third and last draft. Readers might protest and claim that the plot had been changed, that the popular lover had been transformed into a villain and so forth. Gandhi would not listen to such protests. He would say, yes I changed my mind. Actually he thinks aloud and the entire processes is for the record. This confuses some people and impels others to say he contradicts himself or that he is a hypocrite. Gandhi does not care. Many Indians and Englishmen in India, when I interviewed them, cautioned me that their words were not for publication. Gandhi never worried about what I would write about him or how I would quote him. He did not talk *at* me; he talked *to* me. I spent many hours with Mohamad Ali Jinnah, the President of the Muslim League of India. He is a brilliant parliamentarian, a skilled debater, and an incorruptible politician. But he talked at me. He was trying to convince me. When I put a question to him I felt as though it has turned on a phonograph record. I had heard it all before or could have read it in the literature he gave me. But when I asked Gandhiji something, I felt that I

had started a creative process. I could see and hear his mind work. With Jinnah I could only hear the needle scratch the phonograph record. Jinnah gave me nothing but his conclusions. But I could follow Gandhi as he moved to a conclusion. He is, therefore, much more exciting than Jinnah. If you strike right with Gandhi you open a new pocket of thought. An interview with him is a voyage of discovery and he himself is sometimes surprised at the things he says."

Mrs. Polak, like the observant woman she was, wrote of Gandhiji's size and colour and mouth and eyes. Rev. Holmes had told us of the kingly dignity and the inner calm of Gandhiji. Louis Fischer was charmed with him as a rich subject for interview. Rev. Doak, a British clergyman, has also written that the soulful and kindly eyes of Gandhiji were the most striking features of his physical personality. No one knew Gandhiji better than the late Mahadev Desai. Louis Fischer once told him, "All these days I have been listening carefully to Gandhi and recording his words, reading them, thinking about them and trying to fathom the source of Gandhi's great influence. I have come to the conclusion, tentatively, that the chief reason for that influence is Gandhi's passions." Mahadev Desai looked startled and said to Louis Fischer that he was absolutely right. Fischer then shot a question at Desai, taking advantage of his concurrence, "But what is the root of his passion?" Desai's reply was full of meaning: "This passion in Gandhiji is the sublimation of

all the passions that flesh is heir to." Fischer again asked, "Is it the sublimation of sex?" Desai answered, "Not only sex, but the power of anger and all personal ambition. Gandhiji can admit that he is wrong. He can chastise himself and take the blame for the mistakes of others, as when he called off a Civil Disobedience Movement because it became violent. Gandhiji is under his own complete control. That generates the tremendous energy and passion within him." So this man Gandhi, king-like in his dignity, calm with an inner serenity which never fails him, his words always gentle and kindly and his eyes shining with the soul of generosity has in him the volcano of passion according to Mahadev Desai and it is this power of passion in him which gives Gandhiji his tremendous energy and his incalculable hold on the minds and loyalty of millions of human beings. How is this possible? How can the power of passion and the strength of calmness co-exist in the same human personality? The present writer has on a previous occasion written: "Gandhiji possesses at once the softness of the rose petal and the hardness of steel." Perhaps this characterisation of his personality caught Gandhiji's eyes sometime, because a little later he himself wrote of the doctrine of Satyagraha as combining within itself "the softness of a rose petal and the hardness of steel." Evidently therefore Gandhiji himself did not disapprove of the above characterisation. Gandhiji is nothing if not the embodiment of Satyagraha. He can be tender as a mother or as a

lover. He can also be hard like a saint or a dictator. The softness in him is his unfailing and deep humaneness. It is the sky of his mind and the horizon of all his acts. The hardness in him is not accidental, but is a deliberate creation of his own experience and understanding, and it is called into action every time the inexorable challenge of hard facts confronts him. Gandhiji while he is on the one hand full of the gentleness of thought, word and deed is on the other unbending, unyielding, terribly impatient of all evil and wrong doing and even relentless once the passion to launch into action against evil takes possession of him. It is this soul of Gandhi, meek and yet mighty, which has year by year, perhaps hour by hour, moulded the lines of his face making the eyes kindly like a mother's and the mouth firm and hard like a dictator's.

II

I have read a bit of all that has been written about Gandhiji. I have long lived in touch with him, knowing him personally from day to day. I have worked under him directly for now nearly twenty years. I wish therefore to state something from my own personal experiences with him. Obviously there are certain matters too sacred for public writing. These I shall keep apart. I shall only touch upon some of those things very necessary for the understanding of Gandhi the man.

Let me recall my own first meeting with him. The year was 1924 Gandhiji had started his fast of 21 days on behalf of Hindu-Muslim unity. The fast took place in Delhi in a house called "Dilkush." I was then a student in the Viswa Bharathi at Santiniketan. My professor Mr. C.F. Andrews had hurried to Delhi on hearing the news of Gandhiji's fast. In fact an urgent and very long telegram from Maulana Mohamed Ali had summoned him to Delhi to help him during the days of Gandhiji's fast. All of us in Santiniketan, students and teachers and Gurudev Tagore himself, were profoundly perturbed and anxious. The students held a meeting and resolved to depute me to go to Delhi to help Mr. C.F. Andrews in his work of

looking after Gandhiji during his fast. I reached Delhi on the evening of the 3rd day of the fast. I had not till then met Gandhiji and I was only a lad of less than 20 years of age. It was going to be my first meeting with Gandhiji who for years already had taken the place of the greatest of all heroes in my mind. I can never forget the scenes I witnessed at the Delhi Railway station and around "Dilkush". The station was full of Congress volunteers dressed in their white khadi jubbis and Gandhi caps. They were there to receive the stream of important men and women pouring into Delhi to attend the Hindu-Muslim Unity Conference. A crowd of several thousand silent men and women were sitting or standing in the open spaces round "Dilkush". Numerous cars were coming and going. Mr. Andrews, who knew of my coming was also silent as he received me and showed me the corner of his room where I was to stay. Mr. Andrews was the chief "chowkidar" at the foot of the stairs in "Dilkush" which led up to Gandhiji's room on the upper floor, carefully and vigilantly regulating the coming and going of visitors. It is not my purpose here to tell the story of the great fast. I wish to relate only the story of my first meeting with Gandhiji. Mr. C.F. Andrews took me up to the room in which Gandhiji lay fasting. It was a quiet afternoon. Several persons had gone up to Gandhiji's room before I entered it. I saw them all sitting on carpets on the floor around a cot. The Ali brothers were there. There was the tall and gaunt figure of the late Swami

Shradhanandhaji sitting erect near the bed. I remember also some Sikh faces with a tense expression on them. The late Desa Bandhu Chittaranjan Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru were talking in a quiet tone. But my eyes fastened on the central figure of Gandhiji. He was sitting propped up against a pile of cushions on bed and he was spinning silently. He looked thin and emaciated, specially in the face. His whole body was wrapped up in long white khadi. He was listening and even smiling occasionally. The contour of his head struck me. It was undoubtedly an intellectual head, looked at from the side. Looked at from the front his face suddenly ceased to be that of an intellectual; it was the face of a saint at once meek and mighty. I was the kindly eyes of which I had read, and the firm-set mouth of which too I had been told. The upper lip was pressed tight on the lower one and the grimness of the closed mouth relaxed wonderfully when a smile came and went. The whole of Gandhiji's personality appeared well knit and yet somehow elastic. He was nodding continually as he listened carefully and quietly to what was being told him. He appeared to be wonderful listener. Gandhiji struck me as an artist of nods and gestures. There was a rhythm and grace about his nods and gestures which gave him a unique distinction. I think it is in the family and I have come across these gestures and nods in his sons and grandsons. Gandhiji must have inherited it all from quite an aristocratic family background. I remained in the same room with him for

only a quarter of an hour. I was started by the reverence and love so abundantly shown him by all those present in the room and those in the room included the tallest and the greatest in India at the time. He received their reverence and love with a quiet and unconscious dignity which was a revelation to me. When he spoke he spoke so low as to be almost inaudible. But the clear resonance of his voice reached me and thrilled me. A little later Mr. Andrews led me up to him and introduced me to him, saying that I was one of his dearest students come to help him from Santiniketan. As I bowed to him, he stopped spinning for a moment and stroked me twice on my bowed back and when I straightened myself I looked into a face wreathed in a broad and soulful smile. He asked me a question or two. His smile completely took away my sense of awe in his presence. His kindly eyes made me feel entirely at ease I had read so much of the "Mahatma" and my head had been filled with visions and dreams about a great prophet. But as I stood in front of him I felt I was simply in the presence of a fellowman. He was simple with the simplicity of all true greatness in man. I knew at once why everyone called him "Bapu". He was simply a man and a father to you and the whole expression on his face seemed to say: "Don't you worry. I am just a man like you. Meet me as man to man. My heart is open, come in and take your place in it." I came away from that meeting with a simple and glorious lightness of heart as though I had met a kindly friend,

meeting whom I left deeply chastened and uplifted. I have met him again and again during the last 20 years. But this first impression of his essential humaneness has persisted without a break through all these many years of close contact with him.

Before I returned to Santiniketan a few days after the successful termination of the fast. I had a number of opportunities to see, hear and know Gandhiji. It is impossible here to cover all my experiences during those privileged days. But next to his humaneness the one quality in him that filled me with wonder was his capacity for the most unaffected and hilarious laughter. One could scarcely talk with him for a few minutes without his cracking some neat joke or other and his bursting into uproarious laughter. This capacity of his to laugh even in the midst of the most trying situations is I think, one of the main secrets of his vitality and perpetual youthfulness. It is quite likely that he will live up to 125 years, as he wants to, if only this quality of laughter remains with him unimpaired. I remember specially two occasions during the days in "Dilkush". One day, when the warm water for Gandhiji's bath was taken up to him, he suddenly discovered something in the water, and started laughing in his usual full-hearted manner. Mr. Andrews ran up to see what was the matter. I heard Gandhiji say something, laughing all the time, and the next I heard was Mr. Andrews joining in the laughter. I slipped upstairs too. Someone who used to make the morning tea for Mr.

Andrews had by mistake dropped some tea leaves into Gandhiji's bath water. Since the water was quite hot it took on the red and yellow colour of the best Brook Bond brand of tea Gandhiji's charming joke then was, "Someone is punishing me for giving up tea long ago! If I won't drink tea I must bathe in tea!" Ultimately the joke was traced to Ramdas Gandhi, Gandhiji's third son who was then with us. What laughter there was at his expense! Another day someone brought the usual morning tea tray to Mr. Andrews. After pouring out the milk and tea and what was his horror to see the sugar becoming a gummy paste inside the cup. He scrutinised the sugar pot and found in it good supply of *atta* (Indian wheat flour). Mr. Andrews roared with laughter and ran up to Gandhiji's room and how uproariously Bapu too joined in the laughter, specially when it was found out that Ramdas Gandhi was again the unconscious culprit. Later on, as I knew Gandhiji more and more, I have sometimes wondered if Gandhiji could have survived many of the terrible ordeals through which he has passed, if he had not possessed this quality for laughter.

Another lasting impression of those days was Gandhiji's care for the sick. During the 21 days of Gandhiji's fast all those around him had very hard work to do. It was a time of great strain for those in charge of the arrangements. The result was quite a number of them fell ill. Though Gandhiji was fasting and his strength appeared to be slowly ebbing away, and he could hardly

He would speak after the 7th day of the fast he insisted on being given detailed reports concerning the health of those who were sick. He would also give minute instructions about their care and diet. I heard him once say to Mr. Andrews, "Please keep an eye ons food. I am afraid he over eats. Please also see he takes every night a little ginger with salt."

I must now give what was to me the most illuminating experience during the days in "Dilkush" concerning Gandhiji. I think it was the 13th day of his fast. Apart from his ascending weakness due to starvation some serious complication had set in. Dr. M.A. Ansari and his medical colleagues who were in charge of Gandhiji's health were apparently greatly upset. I think they wanted Gandhiji to take some form of sugar and since his heart was growing very weak they insisted on his stopping his daily half hour of spinning. Gandhiji said he was under a vow to fast for 21 days and hence he could not take any form of sugar which was food. Regarding spinning he said he would rather die than give up what was to him his most sacred "yagna". The Doctors were angry and they all came downstairs and argued with Mr. Andrews and then they all went up again to argue with Gandhiji. Andrews did his best to effect a compromise and failed. Gandhiji whose physical vitality had obviously reached the lowest watermark before a complete breakdown, quietly but adamantly stuck to his guns. He told the doctors and Mr. Andrews to place their

trust in God adding that if God needed him for His service He would see him through the ordeal. He chided his Muslim Doctor and his Christian "Chowkidar" for their little faith. He pleaded with them to bear with him for another day and to join their prayers to his that God might come to the rescue. The Doctors agreed to wait for another 24 hours before enforcing their remedies. The next 24 hours were the most anxious in "Dilkush." I don't think anybody slept that night. The Doctors arrived the next day in full strength. An examination followed. To everybody's utter astonishment the dangerous complication of the previous day had completely disappeared. But Gandhiji was still very weak and the Doctors insisted that he should not spin for the rest of the days of the fast. Gandhiji put up his back again and refused to obey. His half hour's spinning was a daily sacrament symbolising his personal identification with the toiling millions of India. He called Andrews near him and in a low voice explained his position. He ended by saying, "Let the Doctors take my pulse now and then let me have my charkha. I will do my spinning for the half hour and let them test my pulse afterwards. I promise you, spinning in the spirit in which I do it, will only improve my pulse." What could anyone say in reply to such a declaration of faith? The Doctors had to agree. Gandhiji who could hardly sit was propped up against the usual pile of pillows and the spinning wheel was put in front of him. Silent and with lowered eyes Gandhiji quietly spun

for half an hour and then stopped. The anxious doctors laid him to rest on his back in his bed and then took his pulse and his blood pressure. Both had improved. Mr. C.F. Andrews was deeply moved and repeated to me at least a dozen times that day. "Bapu is indeed a man of prayer. He is a man of God." I do not pretend to analyse or explain what happened. All I know is that I discovered even in 1924 during the days of the fast that Gandhiji could draw upon some hidden but sure sources of inner strength and no one will understand him who does not reckon with this inner power in him. It also came to me with an overwhelming sense of conviction that the charkha was for Gandhiji the centre of all his services to India and there through to humanity. One is free to accept or reject that Gandhian philosophy and method of the charkha, but to accept Gandhi and reject that charkha will be like accepting Christ and rejecting the Cross. The Cross varies from age to age. In this era in India Gandhiji presents the charkha as the uttermost symbol of the great atonement which the educated, the rich and the exploiting classes have to make to the dispossessed and exploited masses in the villages of India. Gandhiji and his charkha philosophy and methods will stand or fall together. He knows this more than anyone else. That was why he sat up to spin when his pulse was sinking. He wanted to show that the charkha was dearer to him than life itself. By a supreme act of faith he showed that spinning improved the pulse. This further showed that the charkha

was for him the symbol of the new life which should pour into the ruined and shattered villages of his country, numbering over seven hundred thousand.

The last privilege I had in "Dilkush" was a long discussion with Gandhiji on the place of machinery in life, the institution of marriage and the problem of beauty. Coming from Santiniketan as I did, my mind was very full and critical concerning these subjects. Gandhiji must have given me nearly three hours to discuss these subjects with me. Shri. Mahadev Desai took down all my questions and Gandhiji's answers with the discussion that followed and published them later in *Young India* under the title "A morning with Gandhiji." This discussion as it appeared under the above title has since then been included in various books dealing with the life and work of Gandhiji. It appears in four chapters at the beginning of a volume entitled "To the Students" by Gandhiji and published by Anand T. Hingorani at the *Kitabistan*, Allahabad. The curious might look into these chapters for a full study of the discussion. What I want to bring out here are some of the characteristics of Gandhiji as revealed in the discussion. Once he is convinced you are an earnest enquirer he never loses his gentle patience with any question he is asked. He never beats about the bush. He has the uncanny knack of putting his finger on the central issue in any discussion. While he will never offend any one in a discussion, he would state his point of view with a ruthlessness which is characteristic of his logic. While

he will yield nothing in regard to a point on which he has a clear conviction, he will labour hard to find your point of view. He will even go out of his way to give his opponent in a discussion points to clarify and strengthen the other view. This he is able to do because he himself is crystal clear in regard to his own view and he is not at all perturbed at the thought that his position might be upset. He is hard as a flint in regard to his own convictions but he freely allows you and even encourages you to hold the opposite view, if you have also sincere convictions about it. That is why Louis Fischer has testified: "He did not merely give his opinions. He revealed himself. He even supplied one with ammunition against himself." When I discussed the problem of beauty in this world with him I found that he could be extremely subtle and that his mind was as agile as it was profound. He could clothe the deepest thoughts in very simple phrases. He never took any wordy advantage over you in a discussion. All the time he wanted you to understand him, and even more, that he should understand you. The clarity of his mind is simply astonishing, I think this is so because he would never pass an opinion on anything that he did not fully know or understand. If he did not know a thing he would never pretend he knew it. He would just tell you he knew nothing about it and ask you to explain it to him. Did he not confess while he was in London for the Round Table Conference that he had never heard of such a person as Charlie Chaplin in all his life ! But, where he

has clear experience and conviction, he can expound his position with matchless if also disarming logic. I discovered that in any discussion he treated the opposite party with superb respect. It did not matter whether you were poet Rabindranath Tagore or Jawaharlal Nehru or an unknown student or an ordinary Congress volunteer. Once he consented to discuss with anyone, he treated everyone with equal respect in an argument. Not only in a discussion but in every thing else I have never yet met a man who is more free from any trace of the thought of the high and the low among his fellowmen as Gandhiji. I have known Gandhiji giving time to talk with common and unknown people, quietly and unhurriedly, while the so-called mighty men of the world have had to wait outside his door till their time came. When left "Dilkush" a few days after the fast was over, I went away with such an understanding of the life and mission of Gandhiji that, ever since I have given my life to the service of my people along lines laid down by him. I went to him a humble and unknown student full of worship and idealism. Such a state of mind is apt to lead one very often to folly. He lifted me from the rut of personal worship and gave me a vision of what he stood for. The better one knows Gandhiji the more fully one is apt to transfer his loyalty from personality to the cause. Within a few days I realised that the cause was greater than the man; also that the greatness of the man was he incarnated in himself the cause. If he could do this with me within the space of a few days, pouring

himself, so to say, into the life of another as humble as myself. I wondered into how many thousand of such lives in India he has poured himself, thus recreating himself in the lives of others, so that the cause for which he stands has found myriad minds and limbs for its furtherance. Was it not Gokhale who said that Gandhi knew how to mould heroes out of clay? This he is able to do, because he himself is a hero in the highest sense of the word. But there is nothing mystic or mysterious in the heroism he embodies. It is a heroism every line and feature of which the least of us can see and understand. His life, his thoughts, emotions and achievements are like the pages of an open book which, all who care to, can read. He thus becomes a challenge not only in himself but for others. No one can plead he is a god and that therefore what he does others cannot. His essential greatness is that he not merely walks on the high and adventurous ways but he shows every moment how others can walk with him on the same exalted path.

III

There is a startling question that can be asked about Gandhiji. Is he of the East or of the West? Ordinarily no one will think of asking such a question. Because ordinarily the idea will undoubtedly be that Gandhiji is of the East. Most people will say, who can doubt Gandhiji is of the East. Look at him, his thin, emaciated and ascetic figure dressed only in a loin cloth. Look at the food he eats, milk and honey, green leaves and fruits. For nearly forty years now has he not lived under a vow of celibacy? Is he not an incorrigible opponent of every method of artificial birth control, holding fast to the idea that the only form of birth control permissible is through self-control? And then look at his fasts and prayers. Listen to his talk of spiritualising politics, in the present modern setting in which you see on every side the never-ending struggles of power politics. He is against modern machinery in industry and he has put all his weight on the side of handicrafts in the villages. He will have no textile mills for he would, if he could, replace them by the "primitive" spinning wheel in every cottage home in India. The whole of his life and work are dedicated to promote non-violence in a world seething with violence of every kind. He applied non-

violence as a solution not only in private and individual life but has sought to apply it in national and international affairs. How can such a man ever be anything but the ever-lasting and unmistakable human types of the East? And so the judgement is passed that Gandhi is of the East, drawing all the nourishment for his personality from the soil of the East, growing fully into the stature of the man which the East alone can produce aspring and struggling towards those ends which the East alone has cherished and contributing more than any other man to the building up of a world which the East alone can understand. Such a judgement will easily appear to be correct and final. Such a judgement has thus become widely accepted. But it will be greatly worth while to look into this matter more closely, to study the facts more carefully and to arrive at a deeper understanding of all that constitutes Gandhi, the Man. Such an analysis will not be easy. Such an analysis will not only include a study of Gandhiji's life and personality but also of the background, cultural and spiritual of the East and the West. It might be said also that there is no such thing as the East and the West, but only one common humanity throughout the world and therefore Gandhi is in no sense specially of the East or the West but that he is simply the type of the superman arising from the background of the universal man. Therefore to arrive at a full understanding of Gandhi, the Man is a most difficult and even tantalising task.

When we generally speak of the East and the West we always accept as fundamental certain characteristics pertaining to each. These characteristics of the East and the West can ultimately be made to melt into a common crucible of universal humanity. Nevertheless looking at the differences in terms of measurable time and history they will possess a certain validity which will be undeniable. It will be impossible to consider here all the different characteristics in their historical perspective. We can only touch upon some of them in the present study.

The East has never completely lost the quality of faith. When something deep moves in the heart of the East, it will inevitably be inspired by a profound faith as opposed to what might be called calculable reasoning. That is why all great religions have come out of the East. Faith need not and should not be equated to any process of contemplation only or to potential quietism. On the contrary it is faith that can move mountains. The West on the other hand seems always to be uncertain of faith. It has throughout many centuries sought for and obtained a life of unceasing change and motion. It has striven more after reason than faith. Reason divorced from faith has led the West to mighty triumphs in the field of material discovery and acquisition. This is not to say that the East is either wholly dedicated to faith without knowing the meaning of reason or that the West is wholly dedicated to reason without some faint glimmerings of the meaning

of faith. The emphasis in the East has however been on faith and the emphasis in the West has however been on scientific reason. Reason without the depth of faith has produced a material civilisation which has spread its power over the earth giving it the wonderful dynamics of motion and growth and change. The Western world thus continually presents the spectacle of ceaseless activity, struggle and strife. On the other hand faith without the ever-present corrective of reason has often led the East to an other-worldliness weakening its grip on the earth.

Ultimately all the apparent differences, which are in no sense final or unalterable, arise from this main difference. If the West is scientific, the East is religious. One is generally analytical and the other often synthetic. One is continually making new discoveries and the other clings steadfastly to certain eternal values. One struggles for power and possession and the other strives for peace and harmony. But the spirit of discovery and the meaning of eternal values need not necessarily be contradictory. The dynamics of activism and the peace of harmony are also not eternally opposed to each other. The world is perhaps marching towards values which are dynamic and therefore growing and at the same time eternal in their validity. We are also realising that peace cannot be a dead peace but a living one and that harmony is not achieved by allround compromise but only through the organic reconciliation of what appears to be opposites.

As against Gandhiji's asceticism in food and clothes, his opposition to large-scale centralised industrial production of material goods, etc., it is necessary to discover the deeper traits in him. He is certainly not a man of faith alone. There are in the whole world few more convinced votaries of reason than he. He has always called himself a *Sanathani* Hindu and yet he has repeated times without number that whatever in the Vedas or in the other Hindu scriptures conflicts with reason should be summarily rejected. He has also always objected to others looking up to him as to a god in absolute faith. He has always challenged not only his critics but his admirers and followers not to accept anything he has said or done without questioning. Like the Buddha he has said. "Take nothing from me because I have said so or done so. Reason with me and accept only what is acceptable to your reason. Reject nothing from me because you do not like me. Equally accept nothing from one because you love me. Your reason alone should be the judge. "While he is thus a convinced votary of reason no man has understood as he has the power that faith can give. That is why so often in his life, when after much reasoning with himself and others he has failed to see the light in the midst of terrible difficulties, he has always been ready to take what he has himself called "a plunge into the dark." Gandhiji as a votary of reason has always walked with reason all the way it can go, but at the point where reason stops he has taken up the staff of faith and rushed

ahead. No man of reason alone would have done many of the things that Gandhiji has done. His fast for Hindu-Muslim unity and his fast for altering the Communal Award of Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, the British Premier, are instances to show how faith can carry him forward long after reason has stopped behind. Gandhi thus combines in himself the glory of reason and the power of faith. To Gandhi reason is a friend and guide up to a point: beyond that point however faith is his everlasting and unfailing comrade. In this matter therefore Gandhi is a synthesis of the East and the West.

The East despises time. It tends to live in timelessness in things big and small. This life itself is only a tiny link in an endless chain of lives. There is no hurry therefore for anything. What one fails to achieve in the life here and now, can be achieved in the lives to come. Whatever happens here and now the soul marches eternally through all defeats and triumphs to the final victory of absorption into the everlasting God. The saints of the East have seldom regulated their lives by clocks and watches. The sun-rise and the sun-set were watches enough. The minutes and the hours never mattered. Gandhi too is undoubtedly a saint born in the East. But the watch is his inseparable companion. Even his false teeth he uses only when he eats, he puts them away after his food: but his watch is with him night and day. It was Lord Lothian who has left on record the fact that Gandhi was the only man he met in Asia who courteously

showed him the watch to indicate that the interview with him as per the time fixed was over. Gandhi's punctuality and time sense are famous. He will arrive at a meeting as the clock strikes the very hour or indicates the very minute at which he is expected. There have been occasions when the motor-cars in which Gandhiji was travelling to keep up his appointments have broken down on the way and he has jumped out and run the remaining distance to keep to time. His watch, tied to a thin white chord of home-spun thread which is all the time round his neck like a chain, is tucked into a little pocket at the waist in his loin cloth. Every item of his day's work is strictly regulated by his watch. And yet this very same Gandhi has once said. "The Satyagrahi has eternity in front of him or her." He meant that the seeker after truth need never feel defeated for want of time. Provided one was really seeking the truth, time can never run against one ultimately. Here too we thus see the East and the West mingling in Gandhi. Gandhi's is a life superbly regulated by the time sense and yet in his quest after truth he is unhurried with an innate sense of eternity.

It is now well recognised that Gandhiji's greatness is that he has uplifted great masses of the common people from the rut of helplessness, inaction and humiliation under foreign rule in India. He has uplifted them and made them fight as they have never fought before against injustice and exploitation. He has made them fight not in the old violent way but in the new non-violent way. In such a

fight the fighter ennobles not only himself but his opponent. Satyagraha is a method of fight by the oppressed and exploited against the oppressor and exploiter in which both sides emerge from the struggle equally purified and uplifted. It is thus a fight in which there is no waste of the human spirit. It would have been impossible for Gandhiji to have trained millions of people for such a fight spread now over a quarter of a century if he had not mastered some supreme technique of mass organisation and mass action. And yet in a certain sense Gandhiji is a supreme individualist who has declared that his aim of creating a new world social order can be furthered more by one perfect satyagrahi than by an army of those whose understanding of Satyagraha is imperfect. He has thus raised quality far above quantity. The question then arises, how has Gandhi the supreme individualist become the undisputed leader of millions of common people in one of the biggest and most long drawn battles known in the history of the struggle for human freedom? Here again Gandhi combines in himself the search for perfection of the individual soul, which is so Eastern, with the striving to organise the masses for collective action which has so conspicuously distinguished the history of the West. In this there is no contradiction for Gandhi. It is only by directing the whole of the human mind towards an ideal of perfection that the masses are trained to acquire a measure of those qualities which can knit them together for collective non-violent action. Equality it is

only when the masses are knit together for non-violent action that the stage is set for the evolution of those who can become perfect Satyagrahis. If an ideal of perfection is necessary to set the tone and the pace for the masses, a non-violent mass atmosphere is the imperative condition for the development of the perfect Satyagrahi. It is thus that Gandhi the saint becomes also Gandhi the leader of a whole people. Gandhi thus once again appears as a point of unity between the East and the West.

In this connection it will be profitable to compare Gandhi with some of the other great personalities in modern India. The first name that occurs to the student of contemporary events in India is that of the great poet Rabindranath Tagore. He too, like Gandhi, had broken through the shell of his national environment and impressed his personality upon the thought and imagination of the whole world. Gandhi and Tagore are the two names in India which are known throughout the world. Tagore had travelled widely in his life time visiting almost every country in Asia and in Europe and crossing the Atlantic more than once to North and South Americas. Tagore was no ascetic. He was a supreme artist. His contact with the world was more on the artistic than on the ethical plane. He was perhaps more honoured in Europe and in America than in Asia. Westerners found themselves entirely at home with him personally and with his outlook and philosophy. Externally Tagore's own life conformed more to the Western pattern than to the

Eastern. If one met Tagore it was easy to get the impression of some great European philosopher or poet or prophet, though Tagore always expressed his inmost soul only in the Bengalee language and was best at home in the world of Sanskrit literature. His physical presence and his clothes also gave him the appearance of some great European. But at heart he was more an Easterner than Gandhi with all his asceticism. Every fibre of Tagore's being was Eastern. In spite of every external factor to the contrary Tagore remained till the end more an Easterner than Gandhi. Gandhi is not wholly or even fundamentally an Easterner. In England and even more in South Africa he came up against the West and absorbed so much of the West into his personality that he has never since been wholly an Easterner. The substance of the East in him has been transmuted into a new alloy, not only by his personal contact with the West but also by his mental allegiance to Tolstoy and Ruskin and to some of the Western interpreters of Christianity. Christ was an Easterner but much of Christianity is Western. If you watch Gandhi carefully you cannot fail to detect in him many traits of character which are quite Western. If you watch him eating and if you are not deceived by his ascetic face and simple pots and pans from which he eats his food with his wooden spoon, the careful eye can at once detect how like a Westerner scrupulously used to his fork and spoon, he eats his food. If you watch him in company, specially of woman, you can at once detect

how like a cultured Westerner is his deportment. Gandhiji's ideas of cleanliness are also those of the scientific. West and yet not wholly so. Here too he is a rare synthesis of Eastern and Western traditions. He scrupulously observes the principles of "Jhoota" in which the Hindus specialise. He will not touch food which other lips have touched nor will he allow others to take the food which his lips have touched. In his individual cleanliness he is quite Eastern, but where collective cleanliness is concerned he is absolutely Western. His passion for individual and group cleanliness is tireless and exacting. This passion he must have absorbed mostly from the West.

All personality is an integrated unity. Gandhiji's personality looked at from the point of view of such an integration will appear more and more as a synthesis of Eastern and Western qualities. That is why he is an ascetic and yet so much a man of the world, dealing with every kind of earthly matter affecting the well-being of his people. That is why he is a saint dedicated to the search of the uttermost truth and yet the leader of millions in their struggle for freedom and self-expression. His eyes are undoubtedly fixed on the far-away vision of a perfected humanity but his feet can pick their way with extraordinary care through the facts and data of everyday life. He has called himself, and justly, a "practical idealist." He has also said that he has met many religious men, in India particularly, who were politicians in disguise, but he himself though a politician was in reality and in

heart a religious man. This verdict of his upon himself is a true one. Behind and beneath all his political and social endeavour to uplift mankind is his unwavering search for the ultimate truth, his quest for self-perfection and his burning passion to see God face to face. No one, who fails to grasp the truly religious incentive at the centre of his life, will ever be able to understand fully the personality of Gandhi, his thoughts or his work. There is no doubt Gandhi's personality is a many-sided one with some apparent contradictions. Luckily for us however, Gandhi personally reconciles in himself all these contradictions, rising high above them and giving us the resplendent vision of the man in him.

There is another comparison which can enrich the understanding of Gandhi which is a comparison between Gandhi and Nehru. Nehru is essentially Western. Even the Kashmiri stock from which he comes belongs to the same Aryan group to which many Europeans belong. Nehru's education also was Western. In fact he has himself testified that when he returned from Cambridge he was more an Englishman than an Indian. Nehru's politics and outlook are Western and the Westerner understands him immediately. But Gandhi is a challenge and enigma to the Western politicians. For Nehru, politics itself has become a religion with him. But Gandhi has stood for the spiritualisation of politics. While Gandhi had astonishing shrewdness and no one can beat him in political negotiation, he is really not technically a politician.

One wonders whether he has ever read a treatise on politics or on social economy. Nehru is very well read, Gandhi's strength in politics is derived alike from his character and from his profound experience of human nature, specially of the common man in India. Character combined with understanding makes Gandhi irresistible even as a political force. He understands India as no other man does and India understands him as it understands no other man does and India understands him as it understands no other man. Such a mutual understanding is the foundation upon which Gandhi's matchless hold on the mind of the masses in India rests. But understanding alone could not have made him such a dynamic leader. That leadership is derived from the power accruing from his character. His character is not simply a personal factor with him. It is a tremendous phenomenon which links him organically with the masses of the people. It is no joke to say Gandhi has practically no private life as that term is generally understood. His life has become the symbol and the token of the life of his people. His character therefore furnishes the true key to his leadership. Before he calls any man or woman to do a thing he does it himself. In every work for his people he is the first worker. He leads because he has laid it down as an unalterable law for himself that he should call other to follow him only where he has actually led. This is not any kind of tactics with him. This he does not do in order to enhance his chances of success. It is the law of his

being, the texture of his character. Both when Nehru burns he burns himself up. That is why he today looks older than Gandhi though he is less than sixty and Gandhi nearing eighty. Looking at Gandhi and Nehru sitting together Gandhi still looks latent with the perpetual energy of youth while Nehru looks worn out, haggard and older. Gandhi conserves his energy, letting it flow out like lava only when he deliberately chooses to do so. Nehru is continually burning up his energy in a life of high tension of body and mind. Gandhi's strength comes from the conquest of calmness. Nehru's is derived from the dynamic moods of agitation and motion. Nehru himself has confessed to a sense of amazement looking at Gandhi and wondering from what hidden springs the man draws his incalculable strength of personality and character. No two people can differ more in most things than Gandhi and Nehru. Gandhi is truly a man of religion. Nehru has no need for religion. His outlook is scientific and modern. Gandhi can draw from the power of faith the strength to go on in the face of every conceivable difficulty and opposition. Nehru is also one of the bravest of men but where he finds himself checkmated he often looks to Gandhi for inspiration and guidance. Nehru is quick and impatient and Gandhi calm and swift when they take up the challenge of action. It is one of the miracles in the India of today that Gandhi and Nehru are the best of comrades fighting the same great battle for the freedom of India and the world with the same weapons even while

they differ so much. It is generally thought that Gandhi has greatly influenced Nehru. This is no doubt true. But what is equally true is that Nehru too has influenced Gandhi. That is how truly great men influence each other. If it is a privilege to influence another, it is equally so to be influenced by another, when both are great personalities. The weak and the futile neither influence nor are influenced. Some day some careful historian of the present times in India will record that the comradeship between Gandhi and Nehru was one of the cardinal factors in the shaping of India's destiny.

IV

A few snap-shots of Gandhiji in his daily life and work might at this stage help to reveal the man in him a little more.

When I went to live in the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmathi in 1926 I had great good luck in that Gandhiji had decided to stay in the Ashram uninterruptedly for the whole year. Usually this never happened. Though the Satyagraha Ashram was Gandhiji's home he was seldom in it, as most of the time he would be touring the country. He is a great traveller and perhaps no Indian has ever travelled so often, so long and so much up and down India as Gandhiji. There is not a district in any of the various provinces of India which he has not visited. 1926 was therefore a lucky year for all those who were resident in the Satyagraha Ashram.

There is one unforgettable picture that comes to me from days. Every morning and evening Gandhiji went out for fairly long walks. Some of the Ashram inmates and many of the Ashram children used to accompany him in these walks. Indeed it was one of their greatest delight to do so, specially for the children. These children

used to keep pace with Gandhiji by running with him most of the time as he walked with his usual long strides. While the elder people used to keep behind Gandhiji during these walks, the little ones scampered about his legs like so many kittens or puppies. The children took the greatest liberties with him and he used to thoroughly enjoy it. He would shout and laugh with them and as they made faces at him he would do the same thing in return. He would crack endless jokes with them and so right through the walk it was all fun and frolic. One day as I was looking for the party returning from a walk, I heard a great shouting in the distance and a good bit of dust arose from the road as Gandhiji and the children came on at a quicker pace than usual. At first I could not make out what was happening. As the party came nearer I saw before me nothing less than a human idyll of laughter and happiness. All the children in the company were divided into two parties, one on each side of Gandhiji and they were holding in their hands his long bamboo walking stick. Gandhiji himself was seated precariously on the middle of the nearest children. They were carrying him and filling the air with their laughter and Gandhiji himself was laughing away for all he was worth, and shouting "Quicker, Quicker." At the time Gandhiji was fifty-seven or fifty-eight years of age and he had already become the world-famous Mahatma.

Even today when Gandhiji goes for his walks he likes nothing like the company of little girls and boys. I

think he chooses this company deliberately. His daily walks are among the best of his few relaxations and during such times the little ones give him that fresh touch of life which can rejuvenate a man. One of the secrets of Gandhiji's perpetual youthfulness is that he surrounds himself wherever possible with little girls and boys with whom he himself is free with the freedom of childhood. Gandhiji has many little "sweet-hearts" throughout India and even when he is not busy he would answer their little innocent letters, giving them fun for fun and happiness for happiness. Some of these girls and boys who have grown up have treasured these letters of Gandhiji and if someone would collect and publish them they would prove to be a veritable treasure of his humaneness.

Gandhiji has throughout his life shown the way towards a religious outlook in which reason reigns supreme but without putting faith out of court. The only thing taboo in it is superstition of any kind. The highest religious teaching must stand the test of reason and experience, though neither reason nor experience can throw away the strength and the vision that faith can give. With Gandhi faith is neither blind nor the prop of the weak. Faith for him takes a man further than reason and only the strongest can lift it up as the staff with which they can walk along the most difficult of life's pathways. The more one studies Gandhi the more one is apt to wonder how he can reconcile in himself some of those human characteristics which appear so utterly

contradictory. But it is of the essence of the man in him that he does effect such an astonishing reconciliation within himself. It might even be said that these contradictions appear as such only when you know him at one exclusive point or other. But when you know him at all points and understand him in the totality of his personality and character, these contradictions completely disappear and there emerges before our view a great human person in no way cut off from the commonality of mankind nor set apart as some ununderstandable or fantastic creature, but full of the warm and rich emotions of life, capable of reacting vitally to all the varied tones and shades of this earthly life.

V

It was one evening in the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmathi. The evening prayer was over and as was then usual with him, Gandhiji went straight to his bed. He slept then as always now in the open except in the rains. His cot was in the court-yard in front of his cottage and from it one could see the Sabarmati river with its glittering sandbanks in the moonlight. I was asking Gandhiji some of my questions regarding the technique of non-violence. He was reclining on his pillows but suddenly he sat up to say, "I am not infallible. I have made many mistakes. I still might make many mistakes. But one thing I have never done consciously; of that I am absolutely certain. I have never consciously told a lie or acted a lie. Everything about me might be wrong in the critic's eye but even my worst enemy dare not question that I am a man of truth." When I today remember the context in which Gandhiji said this and the manner in which he said it I recapture once again the picture of an imperishable memory. His voice was vibrant with emotion and his eyes were full of a clear light. And this ultimately is the truth about Gandhiji, that whatever he is or is not, he is beyond every question a truthful man. Rationalists, so called, have often mocked

at him whenever he has said that he was acting in accordance with the dictates of an inner voice. That voice is nothing less nor anything more than the voice of his conscience. The greatest tribute that can be paid to Gandhiji is that he has never consciously betrayed his own conscience. Of how many leaders in the world today, whose names fill the world with their renown, can it be said that they too never betray their conscience? Some months ago Mr. Stewart Gelder of the *News Chronicle* stayed for a few days in Sevagram. We were once having an animated discussion on the practicability of non-violence. We were sitting on a verandah of the Guest House in Sevagram from where we could see Gandhiji through the open window of his cottage room. Mr. Gelder suddenly got up, walked up and down a little excitedly and pointing his finger at the figure of Gandhi said to me. "You in India can talk of non-violence and truth thanks to that old man sitting there. We in Europe dare not today talk of truth or non-violence. We can only talk of diplomacy and violence. That man there is the only man who has lived through the war without giving up his principles. I sometimes think he would let even his country perish rather than forego his principles of truth and non-violence." I then told him what Gandhiji had said to me years ago on the banks of the Sabarmathi. Mr. Gelder's comment was again characteristic. "I tell you Ramachandran what the old boy said to you about himself was the absolute truth."

The conscience of Gandhi today stands out as verily the conscience of mankind. As in everything else what Gandhi stands for is nothing personal. He either symbolises the finest aspirations of man or nothing. Truth is for him the ultimate goal, and non-violence the only way to it. It is on these two eternal verities that the whole of Gandhi's life, thought and work are founded. Truth is for Gandhi not an abstraction but the living and dynamic substance of all vital life. Truth is what the highest conscience of man seeks for in order that the life of man on earth is lifted on to a level of exalted honour, integrity and gentleness. Non-violence is no negative virtue but a positive one challenging every man and woman to regulate his or her conduct by principles of mutual love, trust and freedom. Viewed in this manner, truth and non-violence encompass all the great virtues that the saints have dreamt of, as well as the high modern urge to go out into the very midst of life and to accomplish, not individually but collectively, great and revolutionary tasks to remould the whole of life on a new and a more glorious pattern. If Gandhi's conscience stands today for the conscience of mankind it is because Gandhi has made himself more one with mankind than any leader in any country or at any time in human history. It is a constant phrase on Gandhiji's lips that any one who aspires to lead or serve mankind truly must identify himself or herself completely with the life of the common man of the world. If a world-wide vote were taken today as to which leader in all the

world represents more truly than any other the common man of the earth, there would undoubtedly be an overwhelming vote for Gandhi.

For Gandhi, his personal identification, in everything that matters, with the life of the common man is not a matter of politics, as with Socialists and Communists, but one of conscience. That is why he never waits for others to do a thing or for the conditions around him to change before he would change. Every change for which he stands for remoulding the social order he brings on himself as the first step in his programme. If he wants to change the whole of the caste system in India, then the first step is that he himself completely gives up caste and adopts an "untouchable" girl as his own daughter, who grows up along with his children and grandchildren without the slightest idea of a caste distinction anywhere in his own household. If he wants to change the whole of the present economic order in India, which has led to the ruination of over seven lacs of villages by going back to village industries in preference to large-scale and capitalistic machine industry, then the first step is that he himself becomes a spinner and weaver using only village made articles. If he wants to launch out on a nation-wide struggle for freedom against British Imperialism on non-violent lines then the primary step is that he offers himself voluntarily as the first innocent victim to the brute force of the British. It is only after he has plunged into the struggle and after inviting upon himself

the utmost suffering that the call will go out to the millions of his countrymen to follow in his wake. If he wants the fullest economic justice to be given to all men and women by the abolition of capitalism and private property, the inevitable first step is once again that he himself before all others must divest himself of all that pertains to capitalism and private property. It is this supreme characteristic of Gandhiji that mirrors his absolute sense of truthfulness. For any man or woman to go to Gandhiji without fully realising that he is a very hard and unbending man of truth will be like someone going up against a wall of granite taking it to be of soft earth or sand.

Gandhi's conception of truth is not however that of the fanatic or of the man who will not see the other point of view. It is here that his non-violence comes into play. But for his non-violence Gandhiji might easily have been a fanatic or a dictator. But non-violence excludes every idea of fanaticism or dictatorship. This does not mean non-violence has no substance of strength in it. Non-violence as preached and practised by Gandhiji has no trace of weakness anywhere about it. Non-violence is not non-resistance, on the contrary non-violence is a challenge to resist every evil and every injustice; only, the resistance should be wholly on non-violent line. Again, non-violence is not to be equated to a personal or individual virtue. Its application has to be universal. Social, national and even international conflicts have to be raised to a non-violent level before all such conflicts can

ultimately cease. The whole of Gandhiji's life and work is the constant practice of such non-violence. He has himself defined non-violence as love in action. Therefore when it is said, as it can truthfully be said of Gandhiji, that the whole of his life and work is one continuous and deliberate practice of non-violence, then the meaning can only be this, that the whole of his life and work is dedicated to the task of making the dynamics of love act and react interminably among all men and women. Gandhiji thus rises far above the pre-occupations of a politician or even of a statesman however great. He thus becomes not merely the arch liberator of the Indian people but the path finder of a better life for all. His place is thus among the prophets of humanity with this difference perhaps, that even as a prophet he has never deserted this earthly life in favour of Paradise but has sought to convert the life here and now into a godly pattern.

Is not Gandhi a great visionary? Many of his critics have called him a visionary. Most of them have meant that he lives with his head in the clouds. Every fact of Gandhi's life and work however is contrary to such a cheap judgement. And yet Gandhi is undoubtedly a great visionary but not in the sense that he keeps his head in the clouds. No, very definitely and emphatically not in that sense. Gandhiji has not only vitalised the Indian National Congress, making it into a mighty instrument of battle against British Imperialism, he has also built up great national organisations working among millions of the

common people in India. The All India Spinners' Association. The All India Village Industries Association, The Harijan Sevak Sangh, The Hindustani Talimi Sangh, The Hindustani Prachara Sabha and The Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust are mighty national institutions, which he has organised and built up for the service of the common man in India. If any other individual had built up even one of these, he would be entitled to an immortal place in Indian History. There are thousands of whole-time workers who labour day in and day out to organise the Indian masses for a better, happier and more prosperous existence. Among these are many of the finest servants of mankind. Behind the political power of the Indian National Congress is the combined strength of all these organisations with their innumerable branches in rural India. It is these organisations that have built up true mass contact between the people and Congress leadership. All this work has come to be compendiously known as Constructive Work. It is Gandhiji who personally guides these organisations and the extraordinary care with which he often sits over every detail of their work including their accounts will convince any sane critic that, Gandhiji is most certainly not a man who lives merely with his head in the clouds. His feet are firmly planted on the earth and there are few shrewder men in India than he. At the political table he is a matchless negotiator. One British Prime Minister at least has testified that "Gndhi knows the trick of making the

most extraordinary demands in the quietest voice." In every-day affairs also Gandhiji is an uncommonly shrewd person and it is almost impossible for anyone to impose upon him or hoodwink him. In this respect he is the typical "Bania". Indeed if Gandhiji had not inherited the Bania tradition in his blood he might simply have been a pious saint. If he had turned his attention and conviction to business Gandhiji might simply have been a pious saint. If he had turned his attention and conviction to business Gandhiji might easily have built up enterprises bigger than those of the Tatas and the Birlas. Thank God he turned his life in the direction of the service of mankind and the liberation of the common man. It is too late in the day for any one to call Gandhi merely a visionary. Here too Gandhiji has given us a truthful judgement upon himself. He has called himself "a practical idealist." The history of India of the last quarter of a century is the history of the achievements of his practical idealism. He has put courage and heart into millions in India. He has made them get up from their knees and look the world in the face. He has inspired confidence and self-reliance even among the "poorest, the lowliest and the lost" in India. Not only that, he has shown the downright way to canalise their new aspirations and energies. He has created a new mind and trained that new mind to realise itself in practical action in every sphere of our national resurgence. He has raised the level of human character in India as only the Buddha could twenty-five centuries

ago. More than that, he has set the pattern and the mould for such uplifted human character to put itself into, compelling by the sweetness and majesty of his own personal example millions of human beings to put themselves into the stream of such a process. The whole of this achievement has become possible because of the character and personality of Gandhi, in other words because of the "man" Gandhi. That is why the world has to salute one who is more than a saint, more than a leader of his people's liberation, more than even the Mahatma or the Superman of this century. What the world has to salute more than all is Gandhi the man, because it is the man Gandhi who has put the impress of his character and personality in the mind and in the life of myriads of men and women.

VI

Gandhiji is in many ways a simple man. He is unique only in this that he fearlessly lives the truth as he knows the truth. More, he enables countless men and women, often totally unknown, to live according to his own high pattern. This he does without any earthly authority or power. He is not the head of any State nor will he ever consent to be one. He has become a mighty moral force behind the new State in India and is increasingly becoming such a force in international affairs. He has not set up a new religion nor will he ever do so. He has gathered into himself the finest contributions of all religious thought and striving, thus producing a new spiritual synthesis of the utmost significance for the future of a universal human culture. He is not an ascetic who has turned away from life. On the contrary he has drawn the utmost strength from the best in asceticism to bind himself more fully with the life of the common people. Moreover he has kept alive in himself deathlessly and in the midst of the most terrible trials and difficulties the ineffable spirit of laughter. Few people can laugh as he can and few people can infect others with laughter as he can. He is not a narrow-minded and cheerless saint. His

tolerance is wide as the sky and deep as the ocean. No saint has ever taken care of his bodily health as this saint of India. To him all ill-health of the body is fatal to the growth of the spirit. That is why he has nurtured his body on such food as can give the utmost vitality. If such food has been simple it is in consonance with the latest and most scientific discoveries in the realm of dietetics. His daily walks and massages, his careful timings of food and rest, etc., will astonish anyone of the old-world type of ascetics. He has shut out nothing from his physical life except what would take away from it the undying strength to battle for the freedom of India and of the common man throughout the world. And his life is like an open book. There are in it no hidden chapters. He has kept it deliberately open, as the only way of truthful life and in order that all those who care to can read it and profit by it. He is today nearing his eightieth year and yet the simple and pure discipline of his life has been so real that those who see him today at his work can only marvel at the abundant vitality of his body and mind. He has looked after his body and he has looked after his spirit in such a way that each seems to lend unending strength to the other. If his actual achievements till now in the regeneration of his people along manifold lines fills the mind with wonder, it can safely be prophesied that his greatest achievement is yet to come. He has lived greatly and those who know him know that he will some day die even more greatly. Such a man as Gandhi can never die

an ordinary death. Like Christ he will some day die on his own Cross. The cross in the world today is bound to be a different cross to the one on which Christ gave up his earthly life. Even as these lines are being written Gandhi has turned away from all politics. He is treading the path of a unique pilgrimage, so unique that none dare prophesy today where it will lead him and India. In one of the inaccessible villages of East Bengal ravaged by the fires of human hatred and anger he has pitched his humble tent. While political leaders are finding out ways and means of strengthening their respective positions, he has taken upon himself the burden of rebuilding the foundation upon which alone every party and every group in this country must ultimately depend for strength and succour. Many great calls have come to Gandhiji to which he has responded fearlessly and nobly. Perhaps the greatest of all calls has come to him now, to test the power of non-violence for cementing the unity between the Hindu and the Muslim, who are today locked in an inextricable embrace of hate and violence. This problem of Hindu Muslim unity, as it has developed in India has a significance for the whole world. And what stares the world in the face today is the spectre of a colossal racial war which might burn up the whole of mankind in its insatiable fire. If Gandhi wins in East Bengal he will win throughout the world. Will Gandhi win or perish in East Bengal? Whether he wins or perishes one thing is certain, he will have blazed a trail which will stand as an

everlasting monument of the triumph of good over evil. In one sense he can only win and he must win. In a cause like the present in East Bengal there can be no defeat for a man like Gandhi. Christ was not defeated on the Cross. Gandhi will not be defeated in East Bengal.

Let us be grateful that Gandhi the man is still with us, breathing this earthly air that we too breathe, striving with us to achieve those ends which are dear to us, treading the path which all of us can tread, even the least amongst us, if only we care to, and above all, giving us the example of a life in which our past and our future stand reconciled, as also many of those claims of the present which appear so contradictory and conflicting.

PART - II

GANDHI ANECDOTES

FOREWORD

If there is any man with whom familiarity does not lessen but continually increased respect and love, it is Gandhiji. It may be true of all truly great men, but in my personal experience. I have found it true of Gandhiji. The more you move and work with him, the more you love and admire him.

The author of this book of anecdotes is a lover and not merely an admirer. Love is not blind as the stupid saying goes. On the contrary it is only love that sees.

Gandhiji is surrounded by admirers but not all of them have a sense of humour and the capacity to write for modern readers who have stomachs only for light fare. The public should be very grateful for this sheaf of true anecdotes. There is a demand for anecdotes and if some one does not supply true stories, legends will grow and fill the field.

Madras
Oct. 28, 1945

C. Rajagopalachari

PREFACE

Most of these little anecdotes were gathered some years ago and preserved carefully in my notebook. While in prison as a political convict in 1942-3, it gave me great joy to rewrite them in the present form. I long hesitated to publish them. I thought they were perhaps too intimate and personal glimpses of Gandhiji. I have now, however, put aside my hesitation in the hope that these glimpses might help some-what to reveal Gandhiji as he really is, more than ordinary biographical detail.

Some of these anecdotes were gathered from my own personal experience and some from friends close to Gandhiji.

Sewagram, Wardha

6-9-45

G. Ramachandran

GANDHI ANECDOTES

THE 'INCORRIGIBLE' ANDREWS

Gandhiji is a rare combination of exquisite gentleness and unbreakable hardness. His mind possesses at once the softness of a rose petal and the sternness of steel. The late Mr. C.F. Andrews was in some ways a perfect contrast to Gandhiji. It was not in him ever to be stern or hard. Sometimes his generosity outran his wisdom.

It was some time in 1926, Andrews was staying with Gandhiji in the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati. Now and again he liked nothing better than to come and take rest with Gandhiji, cutting out all public engagements and doing only what writing pleased him. On this occasion when he was in the Satyagraha Ashram, a Congress worker from a district in South India arrived at Sabarmati. He was a young man and was in sore trouble. He had held the office of Secretary to his District Committee. A large sum of money had come into his hands for Congress work in his district and he like a good Secretary, had spent it all most generously on the various items of work entrusted to him. There had been only one little flaw. He had not kept anything like proper accounts much less issued receipts or obtained vouchers. The consequence of it all was he had to account for nearly one thousand rupees to this committee or find that amount for them.

He was astounded when he was called upon either to submit accounts or make good the amount. He had certainly not taken a penny for himself. The whole money had been spent on Congress work. There was no doubt at all about this. He admitted he should have kept regular accounts, but where was the question even so of finding one thousand rupees for the committee, or for anybody else for that matter? He was nobody's paid servant. He had undertaken the work of Secretary of the District Congress as a pure labour of love and that after resigning his post as a teacher in the local High School. In the midst of his perplexity he suddenly made up his mind he would go to Gandhiji, tell him everything and ask for protection from an ungrateful Committee!

Gandhiji heard the whole story patiently. Andrews was seated by his side listening to the piteous recital of the troubled and indignant District Secretary. Gandhiji gently but persistently asked him several searching questions and had the position fully elucidated. There was no doubt that the young man had not misappropriated any money. He was guilty only in that he had not maintained proper accounts.

"What do you expect me to do for you?" asked Gandhiji.

The young man wanted Gandhiji to write to his District Committee asking them to exonerate him. Andrews was all sympathy, but there was a hard look on

Gandhiji's face.

No, I shall write no such letters, said Gandhiji. On the contrary I have no doubt your conduct was inexcusable. Every pie of public funds is a sacred trust. You can never be too careful with such a trust. To me every such pie unaccounted for is a pie misappropriated. Proper account keeping is for a public worker not merely a matter of rupees and annas, but part of his character. You must be able even now to get most of the accounts in writing and procure the necessary vouchers. Otherwise your Committee has a perfect right to demand the money from you. If necessary you should sell any property or other possessions you may have to discharge such a debt.

The young man was shocked to his depths. He had never been in the Mahatma's presence before. He had expected saintly sympathy and compliance. He broke down and wept like a child.

Andrews was very much disturbed. He began reasoning with Gandhiji that this was not the way to deal with a 'repentant' young man.

'Yes, I want him to repent', said Gandhiji and he can repent only by full self-correction. Mere mental repentance will be of no avail. The test of repentance is the setting right of the wrong done. In the present case his Committee is right in demanding full accounts or the entire sum. He is a Congressman. He is educated. That he took no salary and was doing the work voluntarily

only adds to his responsibility. On him, as on every single Congressman rests the fair name of the Congress. No he must go back at once, raise the money and pay back every pie. It is only after that I can be of any help to him.

Then there arose another difficulty. The young man had not enough money to pay the railway fare back home. He needed at least thirty-five rupees for this.

Andrews heart melted. 'Well, Babu, let us give him that sum, and let him get back home as quickly as he can and raise the money'.

'No', came Gandhiji's clear voice again, 'from where can I or you give him thirty-five rupees? We are both peniiless. We could only take the money from public funds entrusted to our care. To do that would be wholly wrong. If he has no money he must walk back home in easy stages. He is already in debt to his Committee. He should not add to it by borrowing from us. And who knows if he is really going to do the right thing. His first act of atonement must be to resist the temptation to borrow or to ask for any more money.'

Andrews was now frankly put out. He said it was nonsense for Gandhiji to suggest that the young man should walk back to his distant home. But Gandhiji was adamant, and the young man had to leave after supper and a night's rest in the Ashram.

Gandhiji's last words were, 'Go home, act right, and then write to me. God bless you: I expect to hear from you soon.'

But Deenabandhu Andrews characteristically figured in the last scene again. He offered to walk with the young man to the Sabarmati Station, a mile away from the Ashram.

At the railway station Andrews drew out of his pocket thirty-five rupees that he had, in the meantime, procured from a friend, and thrust the money into the young man's hands, and then saw him off.

Back at the Ashram, he went straight to Gandhiji and said with a smile, 'Babu, I have a confession to make'.

Gandhiji quickly interrupted him with a laugh and said, 'Yes-I know-you must have paid money to that young man. Don't I know you? You are incorrigible'.

Mr. C.F. Andrews joined heartily in the laughter like a schoolboy discovered in some act of innocent mischief.

GANDHIJI AND A BLIND WOMAN

Gandhiji has some traits of character that are quite Western. One should not forget that in England as a student, and in South Africa, as a lawyer, and public worker, he came into close contact with Europeans of all sorts. He is unsentimental even while he is capable of profound sympathy for those in suffering.

Once there came to the Satyagraha Ashram in Sabarmati a blind woman. She was a middle aged Tamilian. She had just the one red-and-yellow saree she wore. She possessed absolutely nothing else. She arrived on an afternoon - how exactly none could say. The Ashram inmates only knew she was there seated quietly on the verandah of the weaving shed. Beggars are strictly disallowed in the Ashram precincts. She was immediately questioned as to her business in the Ashram. She was a cool hand though.

Don't you see I am blind? she asked.

She was reported to Sri. Maganlal Gandhi, the Ashram Manager, who was a stern upholder of all Ashram rules.

He went to her and said, 'Sister, we can do nothing for you. You must go away'.

He found in a moment that he had caught a Tartar in this Tamil woman.

Go away? What! Is this Mahatma Gandhi's Ashram or some police station? I am starving. I want food. I have no home; I want shelter in this Ashram. Who are you? Where is Gandhiji?

For once in his life someone was talking back to Sri. Maganlal! But he was a good man. He reasoned with her. He told her Gandhiji was very busy, that the Ashram never entertained a beggar, that every one in this Ashram had to work eight hours a day for his food, that her place was in some 'Home for the Blind', and that he would send her to the one in the city near by. She let him finish. And then she had her say. If Gandhiji was busy, she not, she could not work, and she certainly was not going away anywhere just yet. Sri. Maganlal had to admit he was beaten. Later he informed Gandhiji.

Gandhiji, after a brief conversation with her said, 'Let her stay for the night. Give her food and a place to sleep in. We shall see what we can do with her in the morning'.

Next morning Gandhiji told her, 'You will be taught spinning. Even the blind can spin beautifully. I shall give you time. After that you will get only what you earn through the spinning wheel. You can stay here on that condition, and you will be looked after'.

She looked sullen and displeased. But she was taught spinning. She learnt the art quickly in three days. But before the week was out she refused to spin any more. She liked to pick her way about the Ashram. She was restless and would obey no instructions. She began to quarrel with people in the Ashram and abuse them in choice Tamil or in broken Hindustani. Gandhiji tried to calm her down twice or thrice but with only temporary success. She went from bad to worse, would do no work and became frightfully quarrelsome. Then on the tenth day, Gandhiji gave her an ultimatum.

He summoned her and said in quite and firm accents. 'I have decided you must leave tomorrow morning. I shall have a letter ready for the Superintendent of the "Home for the Blind" in the city. You must go there. If you wish I shall send a worker along with you to the home'.

She lost her temper. 'Are you really a Mahatma? Who said you were a Mahatma? You would drive a poor blind woman away - would you?'

Gandhiji was unmoved. Next morning, after prayers, he asked her to leave. She flatly refused. Gandhiji's stenographer, also a Tamilian was asked to escort her. She stormed at this fellow-Tamilian. She would not allow him to come near her or take her hand to lead her away.

Then came Gandhiji's unruffled voice. 'All right I shall lead her out myself. Explain to her I am going to take her hand and walk with her to the gate'.

When she was told this, she suddenly quietened down. Gandhiji quickly went up to her, took her by the hand and walked with her to the gates of the Ashram. She walked beside him meek and subdued.

At the gates he spoke to her gently, 'Be a good woman in the Home. They will take every care of you. God bless you!'

He then asked the Tamilian friend to accompany her. This person returned after a time with a strange story. After proceeding a little distance she had turned upon him asking him to keep Gandhiji's letter to the Superintendent for himself, adding that she needed nobody's help. She had then walked briskly away. Latter on, it became known that she was not stark blind as she had pretended to be, and that she was not a good character.

GANDHIJI AND A SUPERSTITION

Gandhiji is undoubtedly a religious man. He is equally a man of reason. He reconciles facts and reason in some spontaneous manner all his own. Such a reconciliation is possible for him because he realizes with utter clarity that faith and reason have both alike their limitations and possibilities. And these limitations and possibilities he has discovered fully and vitally, not from books but from the difficult mines of human experience. If you have seen Gandhiji at prayers, and fascination with which he listens to stories from the Ramayana or the Mahabharata, you are likely to make the mistake of imagining that he cannot be wholly free from religious superstition. No rationalist, however, could be more free than he from any kind of superstition. When it is said, as can be said with absolute justice, that he has never tolerated any superstition about his own person, then it is clear beyond the shadow of a doubt how uncompromising is his rationalism. For there are rationalists who wish to destroy every superstition except the ones that gather round their own persons. They destroy no doubt superstitions they do not like, but they create ones that suit them. This is so particularly among modern political 'rationalists'. But Gandhiji is not one of them.

It was in 1924, during Gandhiji's 21-day fast in Delhi on behalf of Hindu-Mulsim unity, that a revealing incident occurred. The late C.F. Andres was then the gentle but unrelenting 'chowkidar' on guard at the foot of the stairs leading to the room in 'Dilkush' in which Gandhiji lay fasting. Doctors had advised complete rest for Gandhiji, who was fast losing his strength. There was even a day when his life was in danger. It was perhaps on the 13th day of the fast that a man and a woman from a distant village arrived at 'Dilkush' to have darshan of the fasting Mahatma. They were only two among many thousands of people, who besieged the gates of 'Dilkush'. But these two, by judicious but most persistent efforts and broken through the cordon of volunteers at the gates but at the foot of the stairs they were confronted by the smiling but implacable Mr. Andrews.

'Why have you thrust yourselves like this friends?' he asked. 'You cannot go up and disturb Gandhiji. He is weak and needs absolute rest. So please pray for him and go quietly away.'

But the peasant and his wife would not budge an inch. They looked travel-stained and weary. The woman carried in her hands a shining brass pot with sewn leaves covering its mouth. Their story was strange and thrilling. Lying ill in their hut in a far-away village was their only son. He was very ill indeed, and for all the skill of the village physician, was fast sinking. And then they

conceived the idea of fetching a pot of water from the village well to wash 'Mahatmaji's holy feet' with, and of carrying it back as a sovereign medicine for their boy to drink! Eyes shining with faith, and voices tremulous with emotion, they pleaded with Mr. Andrews to allow them to go up to Gandhiji for just one moment that they might carry out their design. But the 'chowkidar' had hardened his heart and was bent on obeying the Doctor's instructions to the letter. He told them it was impossible to allow them to see Gandhiji. Both sides were unyielding. The village couple clinched the issue by quietly squatting at the foot of the stairs, declaring they would not leave unless they had seen Gandhiji. A friend saved the situation by suggesting that the matter be referred to Gandhiji and that the couple must go away at once if Gandhiji himself sent word he was too weak and tired to allow anyone to see him.

'Yes,' agreed the couple, but stipulated that Gandhiji must be told about our poor ailing son and our mission'.

'That I shall', said Mr. Andrews as he went up.

He was absolutely sure that Gandhiji would not allow his feet to be washed to make medicine for the sick! He would assuredly disallow such a visit. But Mr. Andrews had reckoned without his host. After hearing the whole story, Gandhiji, who had become very weak indeed that day, made a sign to Mr. Andrews to allow them to come up. Mr. Andrews remonstrated with

Gandhiji, who said to him in a feeble voice that he wanted them to come up, that he might 'cure them of their superstition'.

And so they were taken up and asked to sit besides Gandhiji. Then Gandhiji, in his slow, weak but clear accents, gave them a bit of his mind. Did they believe in God? If they did, how could they insult God by transferring their faith to a mere man? And then, did they not know that it was absolutely degrading to him (as it was to them) to have his feet washed, that the dirtied water might be used as medicine? How could they be so ignorant of the most elementary laws of health and hygiene? He spoke to them for almost quarter of an hour. They were abashed and stricken with shame. He made them empty their pot. His final words were that they should trust in God and fetch a doctor for their son. They went away happy and smiling; they had got more than they had bargained for—they had learnt an unforgettable lesson. Never again would they mix up religion and the medical Science. They would not degrade God by dragging Him down to the level of cheap magic. Mr. Andrews pleasantly chaffed them. They chaffed back like gladhearted children who now knew better as they went out the crowd surrounded them, wanting to know what luck they had. And they held forth on what Gandhiji had said. Who knows but that the little seed of reason thus sown multiplied a thousand fold by being passed from mouth to mouth endlessly!

GANDHIJI AND AN INNOCENT LIE!

Gandhiji can never tolerate a lie. Unlike intellectual high-brows who will say they can tolerate a scoundrel but not a fool, he will bear with a fool sometimes, but never with a liar. In this Satyagraha Ashram he had set up very exacting standards of rectitude, and even children had to conform to them.

This little event happened in 1926. A certain young man who had just passed out of the University had come to stay at the Ashram. Gandhiji, as a first step, in his Ashram course, had prescribed three month's expert scavenging for him. The young fellow was fond of children, and he became a general favourite with them. One day he started having some fun with a little Ashram girl. She was only eight years of age. This little girl was trying to snatch a big round yellow lemon that he held temptingly before her. He led her a perfect dance, and she screamed with laughter as she jumped about in vain attempts to get at the golden fruit. The child, however, suddenly grew tired of the game and burst into tears. The young man who was taking the lemon to a patient in the Ashram had to find a way out; he made as if he were throwing the lemon away into the Sabarmati river and deftly thrust it into his pocket.

The child quickly brightened up and inquired. 'Now, what will happen to the lemon in the river?' She wanted to run out into the shallow water and look for it.

But the young man said, 'No, it is drowned.'

In a moment they were friends again and walked off together to the patients' room. On the way as the young man pulled out his handkerchief, the lemon rolled out on to the ground. But to his astonishment the little girl, instead of dashing to seize the lemon stood rooted to the spot looking at him with childish indignation.

She said, 'So you told me a lie! You hid the lemon in your pocket and told me that you threw it into the river. All right, I will tell Bapu you are a liar.'

And with that she marched away. She went straight to Gandhiji, who was at work in his room over-looking the river, and unburdened the story of the lie to him. Gandhiji promised her he would look into the matter.

Later in the evening after prayers Gandhiji spoke to the young man. The latter related the story, taking care to justify himself on the score that the whole thing had been pure fun.

Gandhiji too enjoyed the joke, but he said smilingly, 'you had better be warned, young man. Let the children have no lies even in fun. What is begun in fun may continue as an easy habit with children, and once they take lies lightly, then the thing will become serious.'

But the matter did not end there. The young man like most University graduates, was argumentative. He discussed the ethics of 'lies' uttered in pure fun with a number of members of the Ashram. There was a subdued controversy among the teachers of the Ashram school. Someone asked, if innocent lies were to be taboo, how could one tell children fairy tales or even stories from the Ramayana or the Mahabharata. Kaka Kalelkar got wind of the controversy and clinched the issue in his characteristic way.

He said, 'Do not mix up the question of lies in daily life with mythology and legend. If University graduates will think more and talk less, they will see at once that it is better to tell no lie to a child and to accustom children to speak the truth in everything.'

GANDHIJI AND A COFFEE-DRINKER

Gandhiji is a first-class nurse to the sick. Where he picked up nursing is a mystery. He certainly did not pass through a nursing school. As in many other things, when nursing became necessary to him in life he learned it the hard way of experience. In the Ashram at Sabarmati all sick persons came directly under his eye and care. Doctors were, of course, consulted, but the care of the sick Gandhiji arranged in person. It was a joke, especially among young people in the Ashram, that if you wanted to see Gandhiji every day and talk to him and hear him crack jokes you had only to be ill and get into bed! For Gandhiji visited the sick every day, spent a few minutes at every bed-side, himself saw to things carefully and never failed to crack a joke or two with the patient. There was no day too busy for this interlude.

There was once a young lad who went down with dysentery. He had done his best to get to terms with the hard Ashram dietary, but failed. He was an inveterate addict to coffee. But in the Ashram there was no coffee for him-coffee was taboo. In good time he got rid of his dysentery, and was convalescing. Gandhiji visited him for a few minutes every day during his usual rounds. Those few minutes were like a tonic to the poor lad.

During his convalescence he pined for a cup of honest coffee. One day he was lying on his back dreaming of that glorious rich-brown beverage to which he was accustomed in his distant South Indian home. Just then he heard the welcome click-click of the wooden sandals of Gandhiji approaching. A minute later, he entered with his never-failing smile and cheering word.

He looked at the lad and said: 'Now you are decidedly better. You must be getting your appetite back. What would you like to eat? Ah! some good uppuma or thosai?'

Gandhiji evidently knew all about the lad's partiality for these two good old items of the South Indian menu. Gandhiji was laughing. The youngster had a sudden brain-wave.

'Could I have a cup of coffee?' he blurted out.

Gandhiji answered with a peel of laughter - 'Oh, you unrepentant sinner, that is what you want! And then seeing the disturbed look on the lad's face, he added: 'You certainly shall have your cup of coffee. Yes, light coffee will soothe your stomach. And what will you have with the coffee? I don't think we can make uppuma or thosai but warm toast would go well with coffee. I shall send you a tray.'

With that, and a kind parting word, Gandhiji left the room. The lad lay waiting. He could not believe his

good luck. Coffee in Sabarmati Ashram! And Gandhiji himself offering to send it in to him! Well, the 'Old Governor' was no fanatic, he was a dear, thought the grateful and expectant lad.

Gandhiji's cottage was at the other end of the Ashram, a good way across the road. The lad could imagine what would happen. Gandhiji would go to Kasturba in her kitchen and ask to coffee and toast. But it was an untimely hour. The kitchen would be closed. Ba herself would be taking her rest. Had he caused Gandhiji too much botheration? Some twenty minutes passed. Hark! What was that sound? The click-click of Gandhiji's wooden sandals again. Why was Gandhiji coming back? Had the coffee been called off as an after-thought? His heart sank with-in him. But there was Gandhiji carrying a tray covered with a white khadi napkin. The lad was dazed. What had really happened?

Gandhiji was speaking 'Now, here is your coffee and toast. And, mind you, I made the coffee myself. Now, like a good South Indian, will you certify I can make good coffee?'

'But', whispered the lad, 'why did you not ask someone else to bring this in to me? I am so very sorry I put you to this trouble.'

'Now, now', said Gandhiji, 'do not ruin your coffee. Cold coffee is bad coffee. You see Ba was resting, and

I did not care to disturb her.' And then brusquely, 'Well I shall leave now. Someone will come for the tray.' With that off he went.

The coffee was light, but excellent. The lad sipped as if it were nectar. But he was troubled. His mind's eye saw Gandhiji opening the kitchen, lighting the stove, making the coffee and toast, and carrying it in to him all in order not to disturb others at that untimely hour. He was over-whelmed.

There was always some coffee and tea kept in Kasturba's Kitchen for guests, tea specially for Mr. Andrews, and coffee specially for Rajagopalachariar from Madras!

GANDHIJI AND KASTURBA

Gandhiji's iron will is well known. He is gentle but inflexible. The nearer one is to Gandhiji the more ruthless the discipline imposed on one. That is why perhaps Gandhiji is most ruthless with himself. Gandhiji is never intolerant. Not only does he not resent opposition, but he actually encourages it. And yet people shrink from opposing him because they trust him more than they trust themselves. But in the Satyagraha Ashram there was one person who was an exception to this rule. That person was the one nearest to him, his own wife. In the Ashram she was always called Ba, meaning 'mother'. In the Satyagraha Ashram she was a little, imperious old lady with flashing eyes, sharp voice and firm-set lips. When she chose she could be very sweet; she could also be hard and unbending. She ruled her part of the Gandhiji cottage, including the kitchen, with an iron hand. But, dear soul, she had a heavy job on her hands. She had to cook for and feed, besides her own great husband and grand-children, some twenty other inmates of the Ashram. These twenty were her burden, allotted out of some two hundred inmates, who were divided among the different kitchens in the Ashram. In her own kitchen she was no mere supervisor. She was the chief cook. There were of

course, others to help her, but the main burden fell on her. In those days she was vigorous and active, and a dynamic force to be reckoned with. Her energy was prodigious, so was her temper too, sometimes. It was not easy to serve as an assistant in her kitchen. She was a most exacting mistress. She herself was regular to the minute and worked tirelessly. She made her assistants follow her excellent example. If they were one bit lazy or careless, out they went. Once a young lad from Travancore was posted as her assistant in the kitchen. He found it a tough job, but he made good progress and gave Ba great satisfaction. Ba and he got on smoothly together. Gandhiji, who always unobtrusively kept an eye on the kitchen department did not fail to compliment the young man more than once. Gandhiji knew the 'politics' of his kitchen quite as well as he did the politics of India!

There was one matter on which Ba would sometimes clash with Bapu. Gandhiji used to be somewhat nervous on these occasions. Justice was on Ba's side. There would often be a crowd of unexpected guests at the Ashram then the 'political capital' of India. These guests would be distributed among the various kitchens. But Ba always got more than her fair share of the guests. It was when she had several such guests suddenly put on to her without any notice that she would sometimes let her temper fly-though strictly in private. Gandhiji on such occasions would be very humble and tactful. He was then a little afraid of Ba.

One day this happened again just after Ba and her young assistant had washed up after lunch and closed the kitchen. Ba was very tired - who would not be? Maybe, she was a little indisposed. She went and lay down in her room. Gandhiji quickly approached the kitchen and beckoned to the young man, who was himself about to leave. He spoke in a whisper not to disturb Ba in the adjoining room. A number of guests, he announced, were to arrive in an hour, very distinguished guests, among whom was the late Pandit Motilal Nehru. Gandhiji wanted lunch to be prepared for them.

He put a finger to his lips as he glanced at Ba's room. Do not disturb her. Summon Kusum, light the fire, chop the vegetables and knead the flour for the *chapaties*. Send for Ba only when she is needed. And mind you, do not irritate her. You will deserve a prize if Ba does not go for me!

He had the look of some innocent conspirator. He was a little nervous lest Ba should wake up suddenly and burst upon him.

The young assistant and Kusum opened the kitchen noiselessly. The fires were lit, the vegetables chopped and the flour kneaded. And then, as ill-luck would have it, a brass plate crashed to the floor. The din woke up Ba. She thought the Ashram cat was up to some mischief in the kitchen and rushed in. The sight that greeted her

eyes astounded her. She demanded to know what it was all about. There was a sharp edge to her voice. Kusum and the young lad explained gently.

‘Why did you not send for me?’ she demanded. ‘You think I cannot manage this extra work?’

‘No Ba’, explained the young man again, ‘we intended to summon you when everything was ready.’

Ba’s English was always little uncertain and the young man knew little Gujarati.

With a sweet smile she answered in her quaint English: ‘You also tired much. Why you think you can work more and I can do no extra work?’

It was all smooth sailing thereafter.

But Ba was shrewder than one thought. She knew Ganhiji had arranged the whole thing. At night after prayers, when all the guests had left she faced Gandhiji unexpectedly. She stood before him, arms akimbo, and a mischievous light in her eyes.

‘Why did you ask them to do the work without me? You think I am such a bag of lazy-bones?’

Gandhiji replied with an answering twinkle. ‘Don’t you know. Bad I am afraid of you on such occasions?’

Ba gave out a quite peal of incredulous laughter as if to say, ‘what! you afraid of me!’

And yet that was the truth. Gandhiji is afraid of none perhaps. But if he was afraid of anyone, may be, he was a tiny bit afraid of the little indomitable woman who was his wife.

GANDHIJI AND PUNCTUALITY

It was once in Chidambaram that Gandhiji dodged an unruly crowd and made good his escape in order to keep an engagement. In a sense crowds have been the curse of Gandhiji's life. They have never allowed him peace. They follow some remorseless law of motion, of gravitation towards him, the moment they catch sight of him. Gandhiji has had some hair-breadth escape from enthusiastic but frantic crowds who in their eagerness to gaze on him and do him honour would have all but trampled him to death.

It was altogether a bad day at Chidambaram. Gandhiji was driving to the Annamalai University, where he was to address the University Union. Seated by his side in the car was Dr. T.S.S. Rajan. Half a mile or so from the University a dense crowd had collected in one of the town's narrow streets, awaiting Gandhiji's car. There were two other cars following close behind with other members of the party. The crowd held up Gandhiji's car. Gandhiji asked what the matter was. The spokesmen for the crowd came up to explain. He and his friends had planned a feast at which high-caste Brahmins would sit with the Harijans. The feast, arranged in honour of Gandhiji's visit to Chidambaram, was even then in

progress in a big pandal built specially for the purpose, just a stone's throw away. They pleaded with Gandhiji to alight for a moment, just to look in at the dinner. Gandhiji turned to Dr. Rajan and asked when they were due at the University. Dr. Rajan answered that they had only another ten minutes left. Gandhiji inquired whether this dinner was included in his programme for the day, and learnt that it was not. Gandhiji requested Dr. Rajan to explain to the crowd that he had an engagement to keep in the next ten minutes and that this interruption was an unauthorized item. But the crowd would accept no excuses, and insisted on Gandhiji's alighting, if only for a minute. Dr. Rajan got into a lively argument with the crowd. Gandhiji who had sized up the temper of the crowd, meanwhile, quietly slipped out of the car by the other door to make a dash for the University building. For a moment the crowd did not realize what was happening. They were having it out with Dr. Rajan, who they thought was the real culprit. That was Gandhiji's chance. He soon managed to get clear of the crowd. One of the cars behind shot forward, picked him up and sped him towards the University. The crowd then saw their bird escaping and surged forward, shouting the accustomed slogan. 'Mahatma Gandhi-ki-Jai.' But the car that had picked up Gandhiji had got clear Gandhiji looked back and waved his hands like a merry schoolboy who had escaped from some tight corner. But the last he saw of Dr. Rajan was not a very edifying spectacle from

the point of view of non-violence. The crowd was venting its wrath on Dr. Rajan, who had to make vigorous use of his fists to extricate himself from an infuriated mob! Gandhiji had no time to adjudicate between the claims of violence and non-violence. He drove away in a cloud of dust. He was not more than a minute late at the meeting of the University Union. The first words he uttered were of apology for the delay.

Gandhiji and his watch are inseparable companions. Punctuality with him ranks high among the virtues.

GANDHIJI AND THE ZAMINDAR

It has been Gandhiji's experience to be the guest of a most starting variety of persons. 'The seminaked Fakir' has often been the guest of Rajas, zamindars, and millionaires; it is only rarely, as in the Harijan Colony at Delhi, that he is fortunate enough to live among the ordinary workers and the poor people. But Gandhiji is unruffled, wherever he might be. He will put up with ostentation and magnificence with a detachment that, curiously enough, goes unnoticed by those who offer him such hospitality. The secret is that Gandhiji hides his detachment under a cloak of the most disarming good humour and charm.

Once during a tour of Bengal, Gandhiji happened to be the guest of a big Zamindar. It was a palatial mansion, with liveried servants running hither and thither at the master's commands, issued in a loud and strident voice.

The evening prayers were held on the terrace. These prayers are like a Durbar to which crowds flock. They come mostly to have *darshan* of Gandhiji; the prayers are often merely an excuse that gives them the chance to gaze on his saintly face. This evening there

was a very large gathering of men and women. They squeezed themselves into every nook and corner of the terrace. When all were seated, Gandhiji came out on the terrace with his host, and the two sat beside the wall right at the back. It is a custom with Gandhiji to have the lights switched off before prayers.

So, very softly, Gandhiji said: 'Lights off, please.'

The switch happened to be just above the host's head, where he sat on the carpet heavy and stolid. Would he bestir himself to comply with the Mahatma's behest? Certainly not! He should as usual for one of his servants.

Then an amazing thing happened, Gandhiji lightly sprang to his feet and, before the astonished zamindar could realize what was happening, he had quietly switched the lights off and sat down again. Gandhiji then gave the word for the prayers to begin. A number of people noticed the little incident.

The prayers came to an end. Then, as often happens on such occasions, people began to ply Gandhiji with questions on all manner of subjects connected with Congress work. Someone asked a question about spinning. Gandhiji in answer dwelt at length on the disinclination among the educated and the wealthy to perform any sort of manual labour. He referred to the teaching of the Gita that he who ate his food without labouring for it was a thief. There were many more questions and answers.

Then something astonishing occurred. As the crowd was dispersing someone upset a little table, and a china vase on it crashed to the floor. With an athlete's agility the zamindar jumped up and started clearing up the broken fragments. Had he suddenly forgotten that he had servants at his beck and call? Two of them rushed up, only to witness the bewildering spectacle of their master on his knees! He had taken the gentle unspoken hint of his exalted guest. Gandhiji who had left the terrace, did not see the miracle! But his example and the few words he had spoken on the dignity of manual labour had gone home.

GANDHIJI AND THE TORN DHOTI

This story belongs to one of Gandhiji's Tamilnad tours. Gandhiji has said that next to the Punjab it is in Tamilnad he draws the biggest crowds. The Tamilians just adore him. The train was steaming into Virudhunagar. The station was already visible in the distance, besieged by a huge multitude. Gandhiji woke up from a little nap in his third class compartment. He has the rare trick of snatching ten-to-fifteen minutes' naps on his journeys, which are very often crowded with public meetings. He jumbled to his feet tightening his little loin cloth round his waist.

One of his party caught sight of a fair-sized tear in his loin cloth, and said to Gandhiji: 'We are almost at the station. You have hardly a minute to change.'

'Why change?' queried Gandhiji as he buickly stepped into the bathroom to step out again a moment later. There was no longer a tear in the loin cloth. He had worn his dhoti the other way about. As he swiftly gathered up his spectacles, watch and other personal belongings the train pulled up at the platform. As he was about to alight he turned with a smile to the member of his party who had spoken to him and remarked: 'There was a

time when as a student in London I took ten minutes to dress my hair. Now I only need half a minute for my entire toilet.' Then he stepped out and was ready for the reception.

It was during this tour that Gandhiji perfected his technique of snatching ten-and-fifteen minutes' naps in a speeding motor car. He did the tour in a 'Master Buick' placed at his disposal by a Madras automobile firm. In the seat at the rear there was a contraption like a tiny bed on which he would curl up and go to sleep. He addressed five or six public meetings a day on the question of Harijan emancipation.

As the car drove him from one meeting to the next, he would ask Dr. T.S.S. Rajan, who was in charge of the tour - 'Well, Rajan, what is the next item, a ten-minute or fifteen minute nap?'

'Oh, what a luxury!' Gandhiji would remark, and the next moment he would be fast asleep as the Buick, to the steady roar of its engine, tore up mile after mile. It was a miracle how Gandhiji would wake up right to the minute as the car pulled up at the next halt. He would arise refreshed and step straight on to the platform at the next place of meeting. Legend has it that Napoleon used to sleep on horseback. The Napoleon of India's non-violent struggle not only slept in a speeding motor car, but to an exact schedule between mammoth public meetings. And make no mistake about it, he did not merely

rest himself during these famous little naps; he slept as they say, like a log of wood!

GANDHIJI AND A THREAT

Gandhiji exhibits a keen sense of realism in his daily dealings with the men and women around him. He does not generally formulate long-range ideas. Except on fundamentals, his ideas formulate themselves in response to events and conditions. Even when he has theories, he continually tests them on the touchstone of daily experience. If a theory does not stand the test of experience, he ponders over it again, readily changing his mind when reason demands it. For him theory and experience must proceed together. They are the two sides of the same coin.

Suicide is generally considered a terrible sin, and rightly so. Human life is a priceless gift, and no one has the right to throw it away, even if it be one's own. But Gandhiji has said that sometimes there might arise occasions when suicide becomes an inescapable moral duty. This saying of Gandhiji once led to a tragi-comedy in the Ashram.

A certain member of the Ashram suddenly seemed to have discovered that he was a great sinner. Once the discovery had been made, his self-condemnation mounted steadily until it reached fever-heat. He was of a

somewhat hysterical nature, though normally he was a quiet, timid sort of fellow. Overwhelmed by the thought that he, an inmate of Gandhiji's Ashrams should be such a sinner, he convinced himself he was unworthy to live in the Ashram, or even to live at all. He decided to commit suicide, to inflict upon himself the final punishment. He wrote a parting letter to his wife, with whom he was constantly quarrelling, left it where it would certainly catch her eye and went to bed. As chance would have it, the unhappy woman saw the letter that very night. She had long known that her 'lord and master' was somewhat of a fool, though like a good Indian wife she had kept this 'disloyal' thought to herself. But now she took fright. She ran to Gandhiji. Gandhiji sent for the man at once. He obeyed the summons and appeared before Gandhiji a little hysterical and brimming over with repentance. He poured out to Gandhiji a piteous tale of his sin and his conviction that he was unworthy to live. Gandhiji, who knew the man well, his utter weakness and timidity listened to him with infinite patience and agreed that he had sinned.

'But, why kill yourself?' he asked. 'Live, perform atonement, purify yourself and grow into a better man.'

'No, no,' the wretched man cried out. 'I must punish myself. I have deceived you and many others. There is no hope for me. I must die.'

One or two friends joined in. One of them said

Gandhiji should put an end to this folly and ban the suicide. At this, the 'sinner' became inconsolable.

Gandhiji seemed to reflect a moment and then remarked: 'All right. Now go home. Think it over' again I am sure you should not take your life. I can give you an alternative programme of active atonement and correction. But if after deep thought, you should come to me tomorrow and still hold fast to your intention, then I will reconsider the matter.'

'Oh, let me die, allow me to die,' wailed the penitent.

Gandhiji cut him short. 'Well, go now. You know my mind. You are absolutely free to choose for yourself.'

The party broke up. The man walked away in great agitation.

Gandhiji turned to the trembling wife and soothed her fears. 'There is no need for you to worry. He will not kill himself. You had better sleep some where here tonight, so that there will be none to fuss over him at home.'

The night passed. Late next morning, the hapless man was ushered into Gandhiji's presence.

Gandhiji raised a mild laugh by saying: 'So you are still with us. Good. Come in and sit down.'

Later, this person submitted to the course of hard work and discipline prescribed by Gandhiji to wash away

his sins. He is now prospering and doing excellent work.

Gandhiji was sure the man was too timid to kill himself and much too excited to be perused against suicide. To have prohibited it straightaway would only have sharpened his hysterical determination to kill himself. Of course. Gandhiji took a risk, but he knew his man.

GANDHIJI AND THE SCHOOL-MASTER

Gandhiji is a good school-master. He could have found little time though for that kind of job.

There was a school attached to Sabarmati Ashram, where in deference to Ashram traditions, no caning was ever permitted. The teachers were not even allowed to sport a cane in the classrooms. It was the pride of the school that it was run on the principle of non-violence. But underneath this placidity and self-satisfaction things sometimes went wrong. The teachers, not infrequently, found themselves sorely tempted to give some incorrigible boy or girl a good thrashing. After all, boys will be boys and girls will be girls! There was, not unnaturally fun and mischief and juvenile impertinence. The teacher has yet to be found who can swallow downright impertinence from a defiant scholar. All the usual non-violent dodges that the poor teachers knew were tried in order to put a stop to this. But it just wouldn't be quelled that way. The teachers were unwilling, however, to confess that non-violence had failed. Some of the children, smelt out the joke and enjoyed it immensely. At last one or two of the teachers made up their minds to place all the facts before Gandhiji, for finally all difficulties went to Gandhiji, even simple matters that could be settled by the exercise of

ordinary commonsense. But this was indeed an extraordinary problem. So there was a meeting of the teachers in Gandhiji's room. Well, the whole matter was thrashed out. But the outcome of the deliberations was a surprise for everybody. Gandhiji advised the teachers that there were only two things they could do. If in any specific instance a teacher had done his utmost to effect correction through non-violent methods, but without avail, then, if he honestly believed that violence would succeed, he must employ the cane without being sentimental about it. Otherwise, if the teachers agreed that caning might be only a temporary solution and that ultimately it would do more harm than good, then his duty was to do all he could by non-violent means and, if he failed, resign his post. One teacher stuck to his guns. He said he had exercised endless patience and tried every non-violent artifice possible in the case of one particular boy, but it had been to no purpose. He thought a sound thrashing would do him good, Gandhiji knew the teacher well. He promptly replied he would permit the teacher to go ahead with the experiment. Some of the idealists were shocked. Gandhiji had compromised with non-violence. It was unbelievable. But the teacher did go ahead. He gave a good caning. This was wholly revolutionary in the Satyagraha Ashram! But the particular boy, in the teacher's opinion, improved. Gandhiji said nothing. He kept his thoughts to himself. Some weeks later, the teacher confessed to Gandhiji that he had tried caning

more than once, but that the temporary improvement had proved illusory, and that he now faced a more hardened boy. But the experiment was not over. The teacher went back to the methods of 'non-violence' with increased conviction. He put more heart into it than before. He bestowed special attention on the boy, without once resorting to the cane. The boy reacted splendidly to this renewed kindness and showed rapid improvement. There were some cynics however who remarked archly that the canings had in truth done more towards reforming the youngster than all the subsequent kindness! But Gandhiji, than whom there is no greater apostle of non-violence, knew better.

GANDHIJI AND THE 'BRIDAL CHAMBER'

Everybody in Santiniketan was on tiptoe of expectancy. Students and teachers, men and women, and even the great poet Rabindranath Tagore (Gurudev) shared in the excitement. Gandhiji, accompanied by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was arriving on a three-day visit. The guest house was soon set in readiness. Student volunteers were enrolled to maintain order, as the peace and tranquillity of Santiniketan (the very 'abode of peace') would surely be invaded by crowds from the villages around. The reception was to be held at Gurudev's beautiful little cottage. After the reception Gandhiji would be taken to the guest house in procession, with boys and girls chanting the soulstirring melodies of Santiniketan. One room in the guest house was set apart for Bapu, and the students of Santiniketan's renowned 'Kala Bhavan,' artists all, who learnt at the feet of the great Nandalal Bose set about decorating it. And what a thing of enchanting loveliness they made of it! They used only simple little things—green ferns, flowers, painted mud-vases, hand-printed khadi. But the beauty of it all took one's breath away.

Gandhiji arrived early one morning. With Bapu were Jawaharlal, Mahadev Desai and Satish Babu of

Khadi Pratisthan. The reception at the Poet's cottage was an impressive ceremony, in the ancient Vedic style, as is the custom at Santiniketan. Gurudev himself smeared Gandhiji's forehead with sandal paste and kum-kum and embraced his guest. The women sounded the *lulu lulu*. After this ceremony, the Poet himself conducted the party to the guest house, and they were shown into their different apartments. Gurudev led Gandhiji to the room set apart for him. Bapu stepped across the threshold, took one glance at the resplendent decorations and burst into peal a of laughter.

'What is all this?' he demanded. 'Why bring me to this bridal chamber?'

Gurudev joined in the joke. 'Please remember you are in the abode of a poet,' he said.

Gandhiji would not give in. 'Well, where then is the bride?' he queried with irrespressible merriment.

There were ladies present; did they blush, one wonders.

But the Poet's answer was prompt: 'Santiniketan, the ever young queen of our hearts, welcomes you.'

'But surely she would hardly care to look twice at the old toothless pauper that I am!

'No,' rejoined Gurudev. 'Our Queen has loved Truth and worshipped it unreservedly all these long years.'

'So,' said Babu, 'there is hope even for the toothless old man?' With a few more pleasantries Gurudev left his distinguished guests to settle down to rest.

Early next morning the Post strolled to the guest house with all a host's anxiety and solicitude for his visitor's comfort. He found they had long been up. Gandhiji and party had performed their accustomed prayers at 4-30 in the morning. The whole camp was now busy. Satish Babu was demonstrating to a group of boys and girls how to card cotton with a hand-bow. The hum of the bow was music to the ears of Gurudev.

'Are you trying to put the Ashram girls and their sisters to shame?'. Gurudev asked Satish Babu.

Shri Mahadev Desai was teaching spinnings to another bunch of youngsters.

The Poet passed on to Babu's room. What a sight, alas, met his eyes! All the adornments thrown helter-skelter. The cot had been dragged out into the open terrace, for Gandhiji always sleeps under the open sky. The vases and ferns had been pushed into a corner to make room for spinning wheels and a heap of files. Now it was Gurudev's turn to laugh.

'Hare Ram - Hare Ram', he cried in mock horror. 'Where is the bridal chamber gone to? The bride-groom I see is here, but is the poor little bride fled?'

Gandhiji, as he stood up to receive Gurudev, said with an answering burst of merriment, 'But, I warned you, the bride would not care to look at an old toothless man!'

It was all such glorious fun, this thrust and counter-thrust: one might imagine the gods themselves evesdropping.

GANDHIJI AND THE ALTERED PROGRAMME

Vast crowds lined the road leading to Subba Raman's house in Madura City, where Gandhiji was expected to arrive from Virudhunagar early that evening. This was during the Mahatma's Harijan tour of the Tamilnad. He was expected to stay in Madura for a day and then go to Devakottah. Gandhiji and his party arrived in the city hours later than scheduled. His car had suffered breakdown. And when at last he arrived to the sound of the citizens, frantic cheering, he was woefully tired. He wished to retire almost immediately, but, as was the custom with him, he asked to see the programme for the next day. He was looking through it when Shri. A. Rangaswami Iyyengar, President of the Devakottah Harijan Sevak Sangh, was announced Gandhiji was due to visit Devakottah, after a day's stay in Madura. Shri. Iyyengar came to acquaint Gandhiji with details of the Devakottah programme and to get back at once. He was immediately taken to Gandhiji. Shri. Iyyengar had himself contributed Rs. 1,000 to the Harijan Uplift Fund.

This pleased Gandhiji very much indeed, and he remarked with a grin: 'So your Harijan purse at Devakottah must be a big one to be worthy of your own gift!'

Then, while on the point of retiring, he observed: 'I wish I could get another day's rest here. This tour has been a great strain.'

Thereupon, Shri Iyyengar was moved by a generous impulse. Ranganna, as he was familiarly known, was large-hearted to a fault, and Gandhiji's look of fatigue distressed him.

'Do, please, take an extra day's rest after your Madura engagements. We shall have the Devakottah programme put off for day.'

Gandhiji was astonished. 'Could you really do that? Would it not upset all your plans for the day? Do not spare me. It is true I am exhausted, but even so, I shall be ready for you immediately after Madhura.' And then with a mischievous laugh he added: 'You would do well not to indulge me.'

But Shri. Iyyengar assured Gandhiji that a day's delay would be of little consequence, and insisted on his taking the rest he needed so badly. Gandhiji thankfully accepted the offer and retired. Shri Rangaswami hurried back to Devakottah.

Early next morning, as Gandhiji was seated at his breakfast, a small group of excited people were ushered into his presence. They were Devakottah citizens who wished to impress on Gandhiji that the plans drawn up for Devakottah could not be put off save at serious

inconvenience to their fellow-citizens. Gandhiji's face registered great amusement.

'But where is your kind President who granted me a day's holiday?' he asked. 'Have you crucified him?'

This sally provoked great merriment.

'I did not ask to be let off for the day,' said Gandhiji. Your President noticed that I looked very tired and offered me a day's holiday. I knew it was wrong to take advantage of his generosity. If you had sent me a less generous and more resolute President this mistake would not have occurred.'

There was more laughter all round.

Gandhiji stuck to the original programme for Devakottah; he arrived at the public meeting punctual to the minute. He received a magnificent purse for the Harijan Fund. Thanking the people in return, he referred to the incident at Madura.

'Your generous gift is matched only by the generosity of your President - remember he gave me a day's holiday! I wonder if included in this purse is compensation for that holiday which your deputation annulled.'

The crowd answered this good-humoured thrust with uproarious laughter and Gandhiji, to the delight of everyone, joined in.

GANDHIJI AND THE CHINESE YOUTH

Some time in 1925 a young Chinese student came out to India. He had heard of Tagore and Gandhi. He was himself a poet and writer of considerable promise. He joined Tagore's Visva-Bharathi at Santiniketan, and there won very instant popularity. Just when things seemed to prosper, however, great trouble befell him. He was suspected of being a spy. He was watched. This upset him so much that he decided to quit. But whither could he go in a strange country? He wrote to Gandhiji who was then in Calcutta, collecting funds for the Deshabandhu Chitta Ranjan Das Memorial. He had appealed for ten lakhs of rupees and was getting it too. The young Chinese received a prompt reply from Mahadev Desai, Gandhiji's Secretary, asking him to come up to Calcutta and meet Gandhiji. The youth wasted no time and was soon standing in Gandhiji's presence.

Bapu looked him straight in the eye: but there was great kindness in his voice as he asked, 'The people at Santiniketan are my good friends-they always welcome people of other nations. Why did they suspect you? Are you a spy?'

The young Chinese answered with impressice

candour: 'They are good people: I like Santiniketan. They must have been misled about me. But I am deeply hurt by their suspicions. I am not a spy. I am only a student anxious to study India.'

'I accept your word,' said Bapu. Shall I stand guarantee for you and send you back to Santiniketan? They would respect my pledge for your personal integrity.'

He had taken stock of the youth and liked him. The young Chinese was deeply moved, his eyes filled with tears.

'Please let me stay with you,' he begged impulsively. 'Let me enter your Ashram so that I can be with you.'

'But,' said Gandhiji with his neverfailing smile, 'my Ashram is a harder place than Santiniketan. You would have to do hard physical work in addition to your studies.'

'The Chinese are accustomed to hard work, and I am not afraid,' was the ready answer.

Gandhiji then assented, and as he could not pronounce the youth's Chinese name offered him the choice of two Indian names for use in the Ashram. The youth chose 'Shanthi,' and during all the years of his sojourn in India, he was known as Shanti. Shanti joined Sabarmati Ashram, where as earlier at Santiniketan he soon became a favourite with everyone. He had the heart of a child and was full of fun. Little children was

particularly fond of him for he could make endless toys for them almost out of nothing!

He was allotted the task of fetching water for the kitchen and washing clothes. Of course he picked up spinning in no time; for the Chinese are deft with their fingers. As the months passed a subtle change came over him. He began to work harder. There was no task he would not do - he even joined the scavenging squad. He also studied Gandhiji's writings carefully. Then one day he sat down to write. He wrote page after page and the pile before him mounted steadily. What was he setting on paper, labouring night and day? At long last he had finished; he neatly put the pages in order, pinned them up and marched into Gandhiji's room.

Gandhiji was greatly surprised. He knew in a flash that Shanti was passing through a spiritual crisis. 'I see your manuscript is a very long one. But I shall find time to read it. But don't start your fast until I have studied what you have written. A fast is a solemn privilege and one has to be worthy of it. Let me first find out what you need and what you seek.'

Gandhiji found time to read the manuscript and was moved by the frank confessions of the young Chinese in whom Ashram life had quickened the impulse of introspection, penitence and self-correction. He sent for Shanti, talked to him kindly and with profound understanding and compassion. He permitted the fast,

and Shanti for ten days subsisted only on water. It is a terrible ordeal for a Chinese to undertake, for he is by nature a lover of food. But Shanti held on bravely. Gandhiji visited him every day and spent with him fifteen to twenty minutes in talk with him. What exactly passed between them during these daily conversations, one does not know. But Shanti seemed radiantly happy. Gandhiji must indeed, have impressed upon Shanti the real meaning and value of virtue and the sanctity of vows. Gandhiji has always held that no vow should be taken except when the strain is born of spontaneous and overwhelming conviction. Vows taken lightly in a moment of emotion are worse than useless. At the end of the ten days fast. Shanti did take certain vows but he did so with his eyes open. The vows were written down in duplicate copies and signed by Shanti. Gandhiji signed as witness. One copy Gandhiji kept for himself and the other Shanti took away with him. Shanti always said afterwards he left like a man who had left a terrible burden behind.

Later Shanti went back to Chins. He edited a newspaper. As editor he always signed himself 'Shanti.' His ambition was to interpret Gandhiji to China.

GANDHIJI, AN ARTIST ON HIS OWN

Gandhiji was returning from his evening walk in Sevagram. As usual some of us walked behind him. As we turned a corner where was situated the Khadi Mahavidyalaya, we saw a large number of students going ahead towards the Ashram prayer grounds. I suddenly remembered that we were only a few minutes behind the prayer bell. Gandhiji pulled out his watch and increased the speed of his stride. I saw some annoyance on his face and I heard him whisper to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur who was walking by his side. "You see our students going to the evening prayer. They are not marching in line but in confused rands." By the time we reached the prayer-ground and Gandhiji went into his cottage to wash and tidy up before coming to the prayer, the students had all settled in their places, waiting for the evening prayers to begin. Gandhiji quickly walked in and sat in his place and the prayers began. Gandhiji always sat with closed eyes during prayer, his head slightly bent to the right. Nothing showing on his face except reverential calm and serenity. Usually after the prayers Gandhiji would say a few words to the assembled worshippers. This time he referred to the students who had a little earlier marched ahead of him without any discipline and making a lot of noise and

raising a considerable amount of dust. Let me summarise what he said:

“We are all non-violent soldiers or under training to become such. We may not imitate the army in a number of things. But I have always been fascinated by their discipline and their capacity to act like one man when necessary. I have always loved to see soldiers on the march. They cultivate a rhythm of movement and the sound of their tread is like some music on the ground, sounding in unison with the cadence of the band. As non-violent soldiers we should emulate this example of the army. Let us learn to walk in serried ranks and let our marching feet produce the rhythm.”

I listened in amazement. Here was Gandhiji asking for the rhythm of marching feet! He spoke not only of discipline but the beauty of motion. In the days that followed I watched the same students marching in the manner Gandhiji had wanted. Silhouetted against the evening sky with its sunset clouds, it struck me that the marching students made a remarkable picture.

I was to have another lesson soon after in Gandhiji's ideas of art and life. He rejected the idea of art for art's sake. Poet Rabindranath Tagore had taught the concept of art for art's sake in the *Visvabharati*. Gandhiji, leaning towards Tolstoy, wanted art for life. The second story in this connection is even more illuminating than the first one.

Gandhiji was sitting and writing some notes in his tiny drawing room in his Sevagram Cottage. It was a mud of considerable elegance but very simple. As he sat writing, he heard a noise from behind, which disturbed him. He told Rajkumari Amrit Kaur who was sitting near him engaged in her secretarial work. “Someone is putting a nail into the wall in the next room. I am afraid he is doing it all wrong. The sound of the hammer is unrhythmic and I hear the patter of the mud plaster which is coming down. Please find out who is doing this.” The culprit was no other than “P”, well known for his awkward movements and ways of doing such things. He called P and giving a broad smile told him. “I knew you would be the culprit. You are hitting your nail the wrong way and perhaps bending it and tearing the mud plaster of the wall. If you use your hammer rhythmically you will get better results. I wish to hear the rhythm of the hammer on the nail. This is how beauty and work must go together”. I went round and had imagined. A thin long nail had bent sideways and some of the mud plaster of the wall had come down. No one else was disturbed except Gandhiji by what had happened. Just as his eyes wanted to capture the rhythm of the marching feet of students, his ears sought to capture the music of a hammer driving a nail into a wall! I wondered again. Gandhiji had told me long ago that he was no artist but only a simple, plain man. He of course admired the beauty of nature in its myriad forms and tones and shades. He loved the

star-filled sky and the lengthening shadows of the evening. I realised that Gandhiji might not paint nor write poetry but he wanted the whole of life to be artistic and beautiful in a simple way. For him life was the test of all art. It is also not easy to forget the magic realms which music and poetry and painting and dance have opened before the eyes of man as he has journeyed from civilisation to civilisation and culture to culture.

BAPU AND 'THE REVOLUTIONARY'

He joined us on the verandah of the guest house at Sevagram. There is a corner of that verandah that is a particular favourite with the Ashram inmates. There we often sit in solemn conclave deliberating on more things under the sun than are easily dreamt of. It was on an occasion like this that he came into our midst. He hailed from one of the provinces and was a person of considerable reputation. Hardly was he seated amongst us than with characteristic vigour, he butted into the conversation.

'In our province,' he declaimed, 'we don't worship Gandhiji as God. Oh, no!'

An impressive pause.

'We look upon him as a leader - and just this moment we are discontented with the lead he has given.'

He had plenty of other things to say and say them he did with much show of conviction. What else could we do but look profoundly impressed? He was in the Ashram for a frank talk with Bapu, he asserted, and to discuss important matters with him. We looked more impressed still and he beamed with pleasure.

'In our province, we are all revolutionaries.' There was a challenge in his voice as he delivered himself of this sentiment. 'We are in a hurry to capture power.'

In the context his meaning was plain as a pikestaff. Bapu was not 'revolutionary' enough for him. Bapu was much too slow in this business of winning India's independence.

His interview with Bapu had been fixed for the afternoon. We watched with amusement how he got into a mighty flutter as the hour drew nigh. For the fire-eating revolutionary he claimed to be, he was a shade too timid as he entered Bapu's little mud hut at Sevagram. He remained with Bapu for nearly an hour.

We met him again in our accustomed corner of the verandah late that evening. He had attended Gandhiji's evening prayer and strolled straight across to join us. What a change has been wrought on him! Gone was his swagger and noisy self-assertion. As he sat silent amidst us we sought to draw him out.

'How did you fare with Bapu?' one of us asked. 'Did you tell him how he was losing favour in your province?'

He was now strangely a little apologetic.

'You know what fools we can be,' he said.

We were not a little perplexed. 'What is it?' one

of us ventured to query.

He turned to gaze in the direction of Bapu's little hut, where a little lamp burned illuminating the saintly little figure bent over some files.

'Nothing,' he replied, 'but that little man is the only true revolutionary in our country. We spend ourselves in talking and shouting-and he acts. He compelled me in a few quiet words to come down to the hard earth of realities. He is our supreme realist.'

He looked excited. For all our inward 'amusement, we put up a brave show of being some what excited too.

He spoke little after that. He listened patiently to all that we had to say. It was clear that he was doing some hard thinking. A wholesome sign indeed, we thought, as we turned in for the night.



I have had many sincere and loyal men working with me during my long life. Shri. G. Ramachandran was one of the most if not the most sincere and whole hearted of them all. This whole heartedness is in his very nature.

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

(Statesman and first Indian Governor General)

Printing is aided by :
The Office of the Commissioner
For Khadi & Village Industries
Mumbai
Through State Office, Kerala