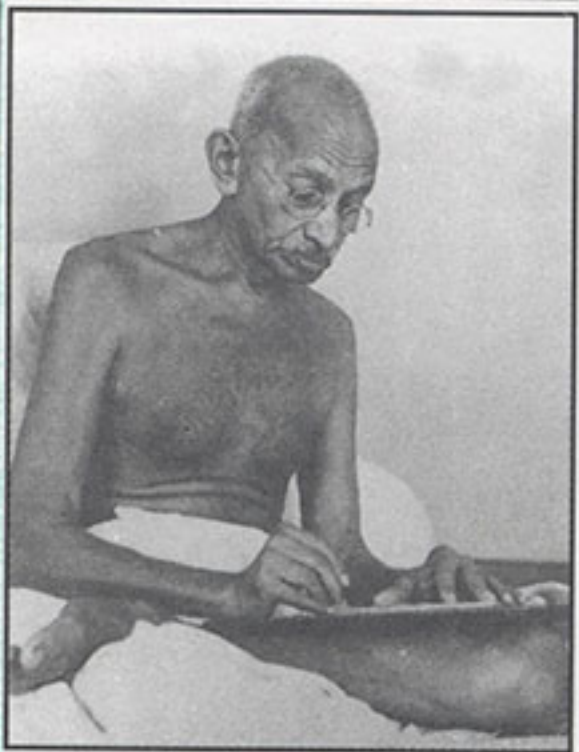
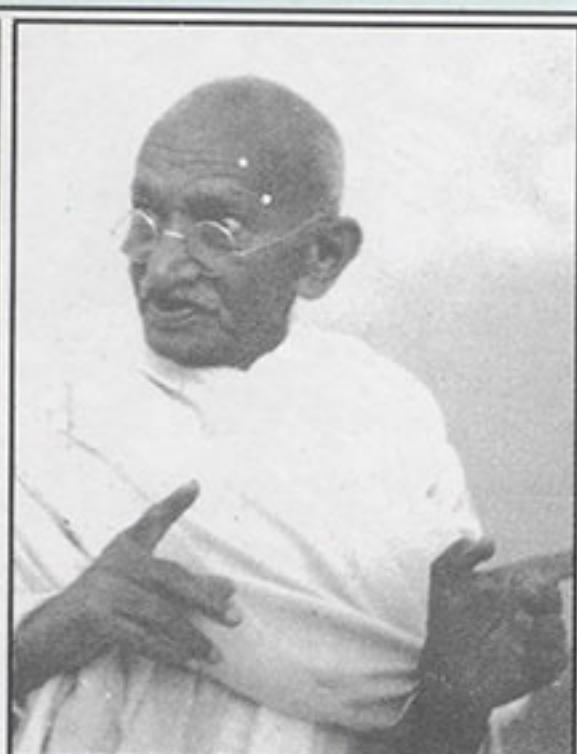


Gandhi in Anecdotes

RAVINDRA VARMA



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FOREWORD

Ravindra Varma is a learned scholar, who has been running the Institute of Gandhian Studies at Gopuri, Wardha for several years. He has been introducing the youth, especially the college students and postgraduates to the life and message of Gandhiji. I have had the privilege of addressing a number of such audiences at his Institute in Gopuri, and I have also heard him there and in other places talking about Gandhiji. His knowledge and study of Gandhian ideology is deep, and to the best of my knowledge he has been trying his level best to live according to the Gandhian ideology. This gives depth to whatever he says or writes.

He has written three books on Gandhiji or I might say that he has written one book which is divided into three parts. Part one gives a narrative of Gandhiji's life story describing a shy mediocre student at Rajkot, who goes to England and comes back as a Barrister.

Circumstances take him to South Africa. He goes as a young man to earn money, and to find name and fame, and also to see a new country. This first book describes Gandhiji's struggle to establish himself in which he makes outstanding success as a lawyer. As a seeker of truth, and full of love for the oppressed Indians and black population in the midst of racial prejudice, he has to fight and overcome many hurdles to preserve the self-respect of Indians and also to serve the blacks in every way he can. He also serves the whites during the Boer War.

His fight against colour prejudice starts from the day of his arrival in South Africa and continues throughout his stay in that country. Discovery of the mighty weapon of Satyagraha which can enable the downtrodden and the weak also to stand up for their own rights, is the first great achievement which makes the shy young man a great leader. He shows to the Indians the way of fighting prejudice by bringing about a change of heart among the oppressors through self-suffering. His experiments and his studies in non-violence lead him to establish his first Ashram at Phoenix.

He fought many battles against racism. His struggle was based on truth and non-violence, and he worked to bring about a change of heart among the oppressors who were the white rulers in South Africa.

He had gone to South Africa for one year, but he was there for almost 25 years, and at last left in 1914 after signing an agreement with General Smuts, the Prime Minister of South Africa, which ensured minimum justice for the Indians in that country.

The First World War started while he was nearing England where he had gone to meet Gopal Krishna Gokhale his political Guru, who in the meantime had gone to France. He returned to India early in 1915. In England he got Pleurisy. The cold climate did not suit him.

Gandhiji landed at Bombay in mid-January 1915 with Kasturba, and had a rousing reception. His reputation had reached India before him. He decided to go to Pune to meet Gopal Krishna Gokhale and from there he went to Shanti Niketan where his party had arrived in the meantime from South Africa. He introduced many healthy changes in self-help at Shanti Niketan.

Gokhale's death soon afterwards led to Gandhiji founding the Satyagraha Ashram at Ahmedabad from where he spread the message of Satyagraha and provided leadership for the struggle, first in Bihar for justice to Indian Indigo planters and then in Khera and Bardoli regarding land revenue, and finally for India's freedom struggle.

It was a new way of fighting for justice, and for one's rights in which the physically weak could have as much opportunity to show their valour as the physically and intellectually strong. High and low, rich and poor, men and women all joined him, and a new moral and spiritual awakening was seen in India which finally led to the end of foreign rule in India.

But unfortunately the British agreed to the partition of India before they quit India, which resulted in endless suffering to millions of people in India and Pakistan. If the last Viceroy Lord Mountbatten had listened to Gandhiji's advice, and the British had left India to Indians, or God and Indians were allowed to settle the Hindu-Muslim question by themselves, history might have been quite different. Much suffering and blood shed could have been avoided. But Mountbatten wanted to be the hero, who solved the Indian problem, and the result was the dead line of 15th August 1947. Partition of India became a reality, and the creation of Pakistan with mass migration led to bloody riots and terrible suffering for millions on both sides.

Gandhiji stood like a beacon light bringing peace and sanity wherever he went. Instances of his work in Calcutta, Noakhali and Bihar illustrated his ability to bring about change of heart

among the fighting Hindus and Muslims through his own self-suffering, and establishment of peace between the two communities.

His effectiveness, and total dedication to peace and non-violence to bring about sanity and change of heart among the fighting Hindus and Muslims through his own self-suffering, was not acceptable to certain communal-minded Hindu sections, and as a result of that Gandhiji became the victim of the three bullets of Godse while on his way to prayers on 30th January 1948. With God's name on his lips he made a perfect exit and thus ended a perfect life.

The youth of India will greatly benefit by reading Ravindra Varma's book which is in three parts — Part- I gives the narrative of Gandhiji's life. Part-II consists of a series of anecdotes from Gandhiji's life. Part-III concentrates on his philosophy of life, the development of his concept of Satyagraha based on truth and nonviolence as the law of life. The discovery of Satyagraha provided the remedy to the weak and strong alike to fight injustice and get back their legitimate rights from the oppressor without causing bitterness or enmity. Satyagraha he showed, leads to winning over the opponent so that he willingly gives up the path of injustice," and mutual differences are settled by change of heart.

Gandhiji's death of January 30th, 1948, shocked the whole world and sanity prevailed in India for quite some time. There were no reprisals or killings by Hindus or Muslims of one another as was feared. His martyrdom made India and Pakistan to turn the search light inward at that time.

Gandhiji's teachings, however, are still to become a part and parcel of India's way of thinking and solving the problems of communalism, poverty and unemployment. The downtrodden are still to get justice, and peace and prosperity have yet to reach all. We need opportunities for development for all and there has to be an end to the exploitation of the weak by the strong.

We have a long way to go to eradicate poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and exploitation. We can do so only by going back to Gandhiji's message of Satyagraha and sustainable development by using human hands and tools to supplement their strength.

May God give us the wisdom to choose the right path. Pursuit of power by itself is not going to end our problems. Pursuit of service of the weak by the strong and putting an end to corruption and exploitation of the weak by the strong with a firm hand alone can and will do

so. Similarly we must avoid machines which make human hands mere cogs in the machine and take away all joy of creativity which is the reward of making things with one's own hands making use of tools where necessary. Gandhiji's favourite example was the Singer Sewing machine which takes away drudgery but not the joy of creativity.

A study of Gandhiji's message can show us the right path, and Ravindra Varma's three books can prove very helpful to the youth of India. I have narrated above the message of the 1st book. Book 3 concentrates on the implications and application of Gandhian technique and the ideology of Satyagraha, non-violence, non-cooperation and the importance of bringing about change of heart in the opponent through self-suffering.

Book 2 narrates several anecdotes that illustrate the way Bapu dealt with problems, which are very interesting.

I congratulate Ravindra Varma for the service he has rendered to the younger generation in India by writing these three books and hope they will be widely read and their message understood and accepted by our people.

Sevagram June 19, 2000

Dr. Sushila Nayar

PREFACE

On more than one occasion, when Gandhi was insistently asked for a message, he replied. "My life is my message." That was an invitation to the questioner, or anyone who wanted to understand Gandhi's philosophy, to look at the way Gandhi responded to the situations that he faced in his life, and learn from the way he acted and reacted. Gandhi wanted his questioner to know that every act of his was a conscious act, a conscious step to discover and practise Truth and Non-Violence.

His life was transparent. Most of it was under public gaze. An observer could see what Gandhi did; read what he wrote or said. But he had no means of knowing what was going on in Gandhi's mind, while he was awake or sleeping or dreaming. Gandhi made up for this, and ensured total transparency by writing in meticulous detail about what he thought, and what he saw in his dreams. In the life of such a human being, therefore, every moment carried its own message, and was a significant anecdote in itself.

It is often said that anecdotes throw more light on the life and message of great men and women, than the most eloquent and incisive of analyses. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of anecdotes can be picked up from the life of Gandhi. Each of them will throw light on one aspect of his personality or another. Some of the incidents that I have chosen are from his days in South Africa; some from his days in the United Kingdom, and others from the days in India. I have picked up these incidents or anecdotes, in the hope that they will bring out some of the aspects of Gandhi's many-splendoured and unique personality. I will be happy if they serve this purpose.

It is very difficult to decide what to choose, and what to omit. In making the choice, many anecdotes relating to well-known public occasions have been omitted since they find mention in most biographies of Gandhi. The least that one can do, therefore, is to request the reader to turn to a biography as well.

I owe an apology to the reader on two counts. Firstly, I have not rewritten all the anecdotes in my own words. Some have been rewritten or introduced with a brief outline of the context in which the incident occurred. In other cases, I have excerpted the words of the persons who have recounted the anecdotes, since I thought that authenticity and eye-witness

narration should not be diluted by a second recounting. This has resulted in the absence of uniformity in style. This is the second count on which the reader is entitled to an apology.

Ravindra Varma

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to all those who have helped me to present this book to the reader: above all, to Navajivan Publishing House for permitting me to draw on their publications for the quotations that I have used; to my sons Gautam Varma and Harshawardhan Varma, to Ms. Maya Joshi, Shri S. K. Bandhopadhyaya, Secretary of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and Ms. Anshu Priya for going through the manuscript and suggesting improvements; and to Shri Venu and Sivan and Ms. R. Chuingamphy for typing the manuscripts and preparing the text for the publisher.

Ravindra Varma

1. SERVANT OF THE PEOPLE

Everyday the post brought hundreds of letters addressed to Gandhi. They came from all parts of India, and the world. To ignore a letter was against the strict code he enforced on himself. He was a servant of the people, and it was his duty to answer their queries, and give them whatever help he could. Every letter had to be answered promptly. The practice therefore was to distribute the letters among his assistants so that replies might be drafted and placed before him for approval or amendment. "Sometimes he would pick out for us, letters containing knotty conundrums and himself check the replies", recalled Mr. Pyarelal Nayyar, one of the principal secretaries who served Gandhi for many years. "He deprecated airiness or dialectical tricks in replies, wanted answers to be straight, clear and to the point." "They must squarely meet the correspondent's difficulty." But in case of disputatious correspondents who wrote only to lay traps, he appreciated a clever, diplomatic reply or even a good retort, provided it was free from sting. Any reply of more than five or ten lines was rejected and cast to the waste paper basket. The address was no less minutely scrutinized. Not to know or not to be able to find with the help of the Bradshaw (Railway Time Table) and the Post and Telegraph guide, the exact location of an out of the way place in India was regarded as a culpable failure. Vagueness about train timings or the exact time it took for the post to reach its destination by a particular route was another cardinal sin. Deciphering bad hand-writing provided another test in perseverance, and resourcefulness; — when the name of the place in an address baffled all efforts at decipherment he recommended plagiarizing the illegible handwriting as closely as possible, and on another occasion suggested that the addressee's signature should be cut out from the original letter and pasted on to the address cover."

Source: Pyarelal Nayyar — *Gandhi*

2. TRACING A MISSING LETTER

On one occasion, a letter that Gandhi wanted could not be found. According to Agatha Harrison, "This was not surprising, considering the mountainous correspondence that engulfed us each day, and the inadequate staff to cope with it. After many hours of search, I suggested (to Gandhi's Secretary, Pyarelal) we give it up. But Pyarelal replied: "It will have to be found; you cannot give that answer to Mahatmaji." And sure enough, after two days' search it was found.

Source: Agatha Harrison, *Gandhi As We Know Him*, Chandra Shanker Shukla, (Vora)

3. GANDHI'S MEMORY

Gandhi's memory was phenomenal. I have never seen such ability to remember. We remember what happened a little while ago; but he could remember what happened fifty years ago as though it had happened a few hours ago, in the morning of the day. He could remember the colour of the coat or tie which a person was wearing when he met him 50 years ago, what he was wearing, what he talked about. He could recall these details at any time. Thousands of people met him, but if he fixed his eyes on the face of a person who interviewed him, he would never forget his name. Then, even if he met him after decades, at the slightest hint, he would remember the name and all else, and recount what the subject of their discussion was. I used to feel astonished at the number of names, the number of faces, the number of persons he could remember.

Free adaptation of pp. 139, 140, B. K. Chandiwalla, *Mere Bapu*

4. ENDLESS QUESTIONS

Gandhi's doors were open to all. Yet there was some need to control visitors. Some came to seek his help to find employment; some to seek his help to settle disputes between husband and wife; some with the domestic problems of their families; some with tenant- owner problems. There was a theft in somebody's house; somebody's perishable produce was rotting because the railways could not provide a wagon. Somebody's child was untraced; somebody had lost all his belongings. Some came to present their woes, some with the agony of having witnessed the torture of their mothers or wives. Thousands used to come to him with their sorrows, but there was hardly anyone who returned without feeling better and lighter.

During the interviews, Gandhi had to deal with such a variety of problems that we were astonished at the way he dealt with all these subjects and questions in detail, and with such understanding. Sometimes the subject would be the sky, the next moment the talk would be about hell. Gandhi had hardly returned from an important interview with the Viceroy when someone sitting before him began talking about a feud in the family, — that a husband could not pull on with the wife. Some one would seek advice on whom should one marry; some one on how one could make both ends meet with his or her meagre income; some one would raise problems of the traders; some one would ask how to make good 'gur' (molasses) from the palm; some one would enquire about the nutritive value of vegetables and pulses; some one would want to know about nature cure. Sometimes it would be an ambassador talking about the affairs of his country; sometimes it would be a scientist talking about the secrets of the atom; sometimes it would be about the devastation that nuclear weapons could or would cause. Gandhi not merely sat through all these, but was totally tuned to the subject and the person presenting the problem or seeking advice. ...

We often wondered whether he was an encyclopedia.

Based on B. K. Chandiwalla, *Mere Bapu*. pp. 138. 139

5. ENDLESS INTERVIEWS

The Partition of India was followed by unprecedented carnage in both areas. Millions of families were uprooted, and had to wend their way across the frontier to seek security, and start their lives afresh, having lost or left their all behind. Many families had suffered the trauma of losing husbands or parents or wives or children. Many women had been raped or abducted. Surviving members had to cope and try to trace the missing, and live in conditions of abject deprivation and agony.

When Gandhi arrived in Delhi from Bengal, his sole desire was to cool passions, console those in dire distress, enable people on both sides, in both communities, to rediscover their humanness and return to a life of sanity and rehabilitation. There was no end to the number of people who wanted to reach him, tell him their tales of woe and suffering, and seek solace from him.

Brij Kishan Chandiwalla of Delhi, one of his long term associates, records how Gandhi coped with this demand on his time and attention. When Gandhi was in Delhi during his last visit, Chandiwalla was given the difficult responsibility of regulating his interviews, and requests for interviews. In Chandiwalla's words:

"Ordinarily, the time fixed for interviews was between two and four in the afternoon, but those days there were so many importunate requests for interviews that on some days there was an interview every fifteen minutes. When Bapuji felt the effect of fatigue, he would say, 'Shall I now give up all other work and devote all my time to interviews?'

"I would say: Then, shall I postpone all today's interviews to another day?' He would immediately reply: 'No. Why should those who have already come go back? Let them come and meet me'.

"What can one say of the tales of woe that were brought to him? There are only 24 hours in the day, but everyone wanted to meet him, and would insist on me, 'Give us one minute.' I would reply, 'Brother, one minute will be exhausted even in walking up to him and taking your seat before him. Have some pity on that man. Give him time to breathe'. But only the one who suffers knows the pain of suffering. He would tell me, 'We have only been pushed around or pushed out from other places. We have only had to face disappointment. We too

do not want to trouble our Bapu (father), but now we have no way left but to try and seek solace from him.' What reply could I give to this? I cannot recount the number of those who would get rough with me or abuse me, or show their anger or threaten to do a sit down Satyagraha till they were allowed to meet Bapu. But there were cases that had to go before him, that he could not be kept in the dark about. Then I would go and stand before him in silence. He would lift his head and ask: 'Braj Kishan, do you want to say something?'

'Yes, this is a case...'

'All right, bring him in'.

"Interviews would go on. The time allotted would be exhausted. How could I intercept? I would look at his face again and again, in the hope of drawing his attention. But he would be deeply and utterly engrossed. Ultimately the 15-minute interview would drag on till half an hour was over.

"Immediately Gandhi would enquire, 'How many remain now?'

'Many', I would say.

'Then, why didn't you intervene and stop me from going on?'

"What reply could I give? I would only ask: 'Shall I fix some other time for others?'

"No, no. let them also come. I will try and complete somehow.'

"And the interviews would go on. Whoever came, went back satisfied. When the caller felt he had more to say, Gandhi would tell him with great affection, 'Come again. Ask Brij Mohan to fix some time'.

"Bapu used to get up at 3.30 a.m. He would brush at once. Even at that time, as he got through his chores, some colleagues would start talking. Prayer started at 3.40 and went on till 4. As soon as prayer was over, Gandhi would sit down for his work. On some days, interviews would take up this time as well. Then he would take a short nap, and go for a walk. The morning and evening walks were reserved for special interviews. After the walk he would get massaged, and have his bath. Sometimes he would grant interviews even while he was getting massaged, or in his tub. Then would follow his lunch. There too he would get through interviews. Normally, he would sit down for his day's work after lunch, but on some days interviews would go on. The time fixed in the daily schedule was from two in the afternoon.

Interviews would go on till four, and he would get through his spinning in the meanwhile. He would eat his evening meal at four p.m. but sometimes interviews would go on right up to the prayer, at 5 p.m. and then go on till 10 or 11, in the night. Even then people used to complain that they could not get an interview. Gandhiji used to get tired, and say: There is a mountain of papers on the table. How many letters are awaiting reply? When will I be able to write? When can I find time to think? These interviews leave me with no time.'

"I would then ask: 'Shall I then stop them (for a time)?'

"Gandhi would reply: 'No. After all, I am here only for these people. If I can give them some solace, I will be happy.' "

Source: Based on B.K. Chandiwalla — *Mere Bapu*, pp. 135-136, 138. 139

6. POWER OF CONCENTRATION

When Gandhi was rescued after the murderous assault that Mir Alam and his friends had launched on him, in South Africa, he was taken to the house of the Rev. Doke. He spent some weeks there waiting for his injuries to heal. When he was better, he moved back to the small house in which his colleagues, the Polaks were living. He was still very weak. Mrs. Polak records that "During the early days of his convalescence he developed the power, which he afterwards retained, of being able to fall asleep while at work, just where he sat, and after a very few moments to awaken refreshed and without any break in his continuity of thought." Mrs. Polak says: "I have sat in the room while he was dictating to his Secretary ... and quite suddenly the voice ceased, and the eyes closed. The Secretary and I would sit still; then equally suddenly Mr. Gandhi's eyes would open again, and the voice would continue dictating from the very point that it had stopped. I never remember his asking, 'Where was I? Or 'What was I saying?'

Source: Millie Graham Polak — *Gandhi The Man* (Vora)

7. TIME AND ORDERLINESS

Gandhi wanted to jot something down, and was looking for the pencil that he had kept on his desk. He could not find it where he had left it. He was a little annoyed, and called his Secretary, Pyarelal. It was pointed out that the pencil was on the left side of the desk. Gandhi always used to keep it on the right side, possibly because it was with the right hand that Gandhi generally used to write. When Gandhi was alone, one of his assistants, Ram Narayan Chaudhari asked Gandhi why he was annoyed because he could not find the pencil on the right side where he looked for it. Wasn't it too small a matter? Gandhi was serious. He replied, "There must be orderliness in one's life. If the sun, moon and earth do not observe their laws, the entire universe would collapse. Every minute of mine is scheduled for certain duties. If I do not find my things in their proper place, much of my time would be wasted, much inconvenience would be caused, and my work would suffer much. My near ones should bear these things in mind."

Source: *Bapu As I Saw Him*, Ram Narayan Chaudhari

8. THE VALUE OF A MINUTE

"I was sitting with a watch on my wrist just opposite to him. He asked me what the time was. I looked at my watch, and told him it was five o'clock. He also saw my watch through (the corner of) his spectacles and noticed that there was still, one minute to five. Even looking at a watch for time was not a trivial thing for him. He would not do that in a cursory way. But in this case it was not lack of proper observation on my part. I had also noted that there was one minute to five. Only I did not attach much value to that minute. He stopped writing and exclaimed: 'Is it five?' I replied with a guilty conscience: 'No, Bapu, it is one minute to five.' 'Well, Kanti,' he said, 'what is the use of keeping a wrist watch? You have no value of time. Do you know how many days or months thirty crores of minutes would make? What a colossal waste of time it would mean for our poor country? It seems you have not even understood why I talk of *charkha*. Again, you don't respect truth as you know it. Would it have cost more energy to say: 'It is one minute to five,' than to say: 'It is five o'clock?' "

Kantilal Harilal Gandhi: *Reminiscences of Gandhiji* Ed. C.S. Shukla: p. 95

9. THE LAST BELL

Punctuality was strictly enforced in Gandhi's Ashram at Sabarmati. The rules laid it down that after the last bell for prayer was sounded, the gates that provided entry to the prayer ground would be closed. No one who came late would be admitted. One day Gandhi was busy with some visitors, and started for the prayer ground a second late. The last bell sounded as he crossed the gate. One of his feet was inside, and the other was out. The person who was in charge of closing the gate waited for an extra second or quarter of a minute to let Gandhi in before the gate was closed. So Gandhi was not locked out. But Gandhi was full of remorse. At the end of the prayer, he said, "I have been a defaulter today. Though most of my body was inside, yet, one foot remained outside. So the gate keeper ought not to have shown me favour. I also should have stayed out. However, I was moved by the thought that so many of you would be waiting for me. But such consideration should not be shown to anyone except a sick person or his attendant, nor should one accept such preferential treatment." But from that day, the practice of locking the gates to the prayer ground was discontinued.

Source: Ramanarayan Chaudhury. *Bapu As I saw Him*, p. 98 - Navajivan, 1959

10. TIME IS PRECIOUS

One day Gandhi had to be at the Gujarat Vidyapith (the national university he had established) to attend a meeting of the Senate. He was perhaps to be picked up by a vehicle. But it did not arrive on time. When Gandhi found that he might get late for the meeting, he started walking from the Ashram (Sabarmati) to the Vidyapith. It was quite some distance. In those days, only an occasional vehicle used the road. So there was hardly any chance of his being able to get a lift in some vehicle. But he walked on. At a little distance along the road, he saw a Khadi-clad man coming on his bicycle, going along the road that led to the Vidyapith. Gandhi explained his urgent need to the cyclist, and asked him to get down and hand over the cycle to him. The young man promptly handed over the cycle to Gandhi. Now, Gandhi had not ridden a cycle ever since he left South Africa. That was many years ago. But Gandhi was not daunted by the prospect of tilting over. He pedalled away, clad in his short dhoti, as though he was cycling to 'breast' the ribbon with his bare breast. His colleagues who were waiting outside the Vidyapith to receive him and take him into the Senate Hall were astonished at the sight of the Mahatma arriving on a bike. But Gandhi did arrive on time.

Source: Kaka Saheb Kalelkar: *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*

11. DELAYING SWARAJ

In 1917 the first meeting of the Gujarat Political Conference met at Godhra (Gujarat). Gandhi arrived on the dot of time as was his habit. The great Lokmanya Tilak had also been invited to the Conference. The Lokmanya arrived a little late. Gandhi received the Lokmanya with great respect and all the deference due to a national leader. But Gandhi could not desist from commenting that the Lokmanya was half an hour late, and if Swaraj was delayed by half an hour, he would have to bear the blame for it.

Source: Kaka Saheb Kalelkar: *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*

12. THE LUXURY OF A NAP

Gandhi believed in keeping account of every minute of his day. He kept a mental account, while his Secretaries and colleagues kept a written account. His days were full. There was no difference whether he was at the Ashram or on one of his whirlwind tours. While on tour, he had also to take rest and regulate his sleep to ensure that the hectic journeys, stops, meetings and thronging crowds that clamoured for his *darshan* did not tell on his health. So he developed the habit of taking a nap whenever he could.

When he was touring the State of Tamil Nadu to campaign against untouchability, he had to cover many miles to go from one meeting to another. He was travelling in a car, and had to use the time in between meetings to make up his sleep. As he left the place of a meeting and got into the car he would ask Dr. Rajan who was in charge of the tour, "Well, Rajan, what is the next item, a ten-minute or fifteen minute nap?" Sometimes Dr. Rajan would reply, "Well, Bapu, the next item is a real good thirty minutes' nap."

Gandhi would exclaim, "What a luxury", and within moments, would be fast asleep, curled up on the back seat of the car. He would wake up, punctual to the minute, as the car came to a halt at the venue of the next meeting. He would calmly climb up the platform as alert and charismatic as ever.

Source: *A Sheaf of Gandhi Anecdotes* — G. Ramachandran

13. HALF-A-MINUTE FOR THE TOILET

In the course of his country-wide campaign against untouchability, Gandhi was touring the State of Tamil Nadu. As his train approached the station of Virudhunagar, one of his colleagues gently and hesitantly pointed to a big tear in the short dhoti that Gandhi was wearing. One of the entourage said that though the station was approaching and the huge crowds waiting at the station could be seen, there was perhaps time enough to¹ change. Gandhi said: "Why change," and disappeared into the bath-room of the third class compartment (of the train) in which he was travelling. Almost instantly he came out with a smile, and pointed out that the tear had disappeared. He had turned the sides over, and

worn the dhoti with the lower side taken to the hip. He quickly collected his bag and spectacles, and was about to disembark on to the platform when he turned round and addressed the member of the entourage who had pointed out the tear: "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."

Source: *Sheaf of Gandhi Anecdotes* — G. Ramachandran

14. MINUTEST DETAILS

Gandhi's meticulousness extended to the minutest of details. His close associates had to be constantly mindful of these minute details. Mr. Pyarelal recalls the schooling that he received soon after he joined Gandhi: "Moisture on the outside of a glass must be wiped before handing it to anyone; after washing one's hands do not push open a door with them while serving meals; before offering a cup of milk it must be stirred with a spoon to bring to the surface any foreign matter lying at the bottom; the rationale and importance of dotting the i's and crossing the t's in a manuscript to make it legible; how to make a bed, how to clean a commode, how to scan a newspaper thoroughly in the shortest time — these were some of the little things that I had to learn within the next few days.... Call for facts, do not speculate in the void. It is waste of mental energy, a sign of laziness. Do not cite epigrams churned out by others, distrust them, think for yourself. Thought is more precious than language, and judgement most precious of all. If the judgement is faulty everything else is worth nothing."

"In the wake of these came other lessons. First was a delicate consideration for the convenience of the hosts. Being late at meals he regarded as inexcusable *himsa* (violence). At the same time to succumb to the attention of the fond and over-generous hosts he regarded as a sign of weakness of character.... He always expected us to remember, in the midst of the overflowing kindness and hospitality that surrounded us everywhere, that India was a poor country where millions did not enjoy even three square meals. But to be squeamish about freely using milk and even costly fruit when it was available, he no less regarded as a sign of perverse and unhealthy kink in the mind."

Source: Pyarelal — *Gandhiji As I Saw Him*, Chadra Shanker Shukla

15. UNFAILING COURTESY

Horace G. Alexander was at Gandhi's Ashram at Sabarmati, and had walked with him to the prayer ground. When the prayer was over, there was a roll- call of the members of the Ashram, and each one reported on the quantity of yarn that he or she had spun on the Charkha. Horace happened to notice thus: "While the names were being called out and the record of the week's events read, Mr. Gandhi enjoyed himself stretching out his hand as if to touch one or two small infants who were running about near him; and when he did catch them they crowed with joy. I found it hard to feel that I was looking at one of the great souls who has shaken the world. He has not the 'presence' of Tagore. Perhaps he could show it, but he prefers to keep his great soul veiled behind his marvellous humility. So what you see is a man full of human emotions: very quick to understand, with a genius for giving and inspiring trust. His eyes have, indeed, a beautiful expression, and when he comes to the point of something he is saying he looks at you with a quick glance that is very direct; his eyes seem to say: 'Just that is what I mean; I hope you see.' His face has the look of one who has undergone much spiritual conflict; but in his expression there is peace that comes to those who have overcome.

"Mr. Desai, Mr. Gandhi's secretary, a very fine man, kindly arranged for me to have a talk with him at four the next afternoon. Needless to say I was impatient for the hour to come, and looked at my watch a good many times. But, having been in the East for some months, I thought it more polite to arrive five minutes late. When I appeared Mr. Desai looked into Mr. Gandhi's room, and then said to me: 'Do you mind waiting for a few minutes? He is not quite ready for you.' That did not surprise me. What are ten or fifteen minutes to those who dwell in eternity?

"But when I did go in his first words told me that he was no son of the East in the matter of time. 'I am sorry to have kept you waiting,' he said, 'but at two minutes to four I asked if you had come, and when I found that you had not, I thought I had better have my milk (he is on a very strict and plain diet) so as to save time and "give us more time for a good talk.' Two minutes to four, indeed! And to save time! But there was not a suggestion of impatience in

his tone of voice; just a simple, friendly explanation of his seeming lack of punctuality and of immediate hospitality to the invited guest."

Source: *Gandhi As We Know Him*, Horace G. Alexander, pp. 69-70

16. GANDHI'S MODESTY

It is well known that doctors who practise Homoeopathy have many questions to ask of their patients. They have to know symptoms, and likes and dislikes, and a host of other details about the patient, and sometimes even about the patient's parents and their parents. On one occasion a homoeopathic physician who was recommended by a friend met Gandhi to diagnose his ailments and prescribe remedies.

The physician started: "When and what did your father die of?" Gandhi replied: "He had had a fall, developed fistula, and died at the age of 65." The physician continued: "What did your mother die of?"

Gandhi: "She became a widow and died of a broken heart." Seeing a bottle of jaggery (molasses) on Gandhi's table, the physician asked: "Do you like sweet things or pungent?" "I think you like sweets," he added. Gandhi: "I have a sweet tooth but I could gorge myself with *bhajias* and fritters." Physician: "No one likes only sweets." Gandhi: "Don't say that. I have known Brahmins who will take huge *laddus* (sweet balls) by the dozen without any *bhajias*."

Physician: "What about your memory?" Gandhi: "As rotten as you can imagine. I have lost the memory for details. I often envied my friends who could roll out whole poems after reading them once." Gandhi added: "If you can give me that gift, I shall become your unpaid advertising agent." Physician: "God alone can give these gifts, Mahatmaji."

Physician: "Do you remember the occasion when years ago you visited the Mission Hospital at Hardwar? It was I who took you round." Gandhi: "Yes, I remember visiting the Hospital at Hardwar." Physician: "Then your memory is quite good." Gandhi: "No, I have a very poor memory, and I do not remember you at all."

The physician then proceeded to put down his observations, and gave the note to Gandhi for verification. The note read: "Temperament very intelligent, given to philosophic and religious

studies...." Gandhi put a big question mark before the data on temperament. Physician: "Is it all right?" Gandhi: "How should I know?"

Dr. B.C. Roy, who was a colleague in the struggle for freedom and also one of Gandhi's personal physicians, added: "To these you should add one more, i.e. the habit to question any allegations of virtue."

The physician smiled and said: "That is modesty." Gandhi: "Modesty has never been my weakness."

Source: Sushila Nayyar in *Chandra Shanker Shukla*

17. DO IT YOURSELF

Once, when Gandhi was in Calcutta, he was staying in a newly built house of an educational society. A young associate had been detailed to look after him and serve him. In the morning when Gandhi stepped out with a mug, soap and towel for his bath, the young man rushed to Gandhi and asked to be permitted to carry the soap, mug and towel to the bathroom. Gandhi quietly told him that what he was carrying was not too heavy. The worker then requested that he be allowed to wash Gandhi's soiled clothes. Gandhi declined, saying, "I do it myself everyday."

Source: Ram Narayan Chaudhari - *Bapu As I Saw Him*

18. UNBROKEN CONTINUOUS AWARENESS

He would change the wooden sandals that he wore only when the impression that his feet made on them became too apparent a depression. If the soles of his slippers (chappals) got worn out, he would get them re-soled, and continue to use them, instead of throwing them away. He never used soap on his body, but used to rub himself clean with a wet towel. He used to get through his shave while soaking himself in the bath tub, and did not use a mirror or brush and cream or soap. He used to get his hair clipped by one of his attendants while he was cleaning and soaking his feet in water after his morning walks. He used to cut his nails himself, with the help of a pair of scissors. He did not have much time to spend on such chores.

He never used a fountain pen; he used a holder and nib, and even if someone offered a pen when he (Gandhi) had to sign a document in a hurry, he never accepted the pen. He had a small ink-pot which went with him even on his tours. He used to empty the ink into a bottle, and close it firmly so that it might not leak or spill while travelling. When he reached his destination, he used to transfer the ink back into the ink-pot. He had a container in which he used to carry his pen, pencil, knife, scissors, thread and needle and such other small but essential items. This used to be kept in the bag that he always carried with him. The bag that contained all these and essential papers, writing equipment, some essential books including the Gita, the book of Ashram prayers, and the like was known as his office. All other baggage could be left behind or carried separately, but not this bag. Whether he was travelling by train or car, the bag was always with him. As soon as he settled down in the train or the car in which he was travelling, he would take the bag and its contents, and start working. Much of his writing was done while travelling, and the movement of the train or the car did not affect him very much. He would continue writing. When his right hand began to feel the strain, he would shift the pen or pencil to his left hand, and start writing with it. The only time he got to do some reading in later life, was when he sat for a while on his commode. Every day he used to spin on the *Charkha* (spinning wheel). It was part of his daily routine. Even when he was fasting, he would sit up and spin if he felt he had the strength to sit up in bed. He could spin with either hand.

He was constantly experimenting with his diet. He believed that food and drink were only meant to keep the human being alive and healthy, not to please or indulge the palate or taste buds. He wanted that the process of preparing one's food should take only the shortest possible time. To ensure this as also to keep one's diet wholesome and conducive to health, he conducted many experiments with uncooked or raw food. He had given up chillies and condiments very soon after he entered public life. He used to give up salt every now and then. Often he did without cooked bread or chapatti, and confined himself to boiled or steamed vegetables, goat's milk and fruits, and lemon and honey. He was also in the habit of drinking hot water with lime and honey. He took 'gur' or molasses to maintain the level of energy he needed. If he felt fatigue while talking to visitors, he would munch a piece of 'gur' to recover. His body was almost like a fine balance. Any little deviation from what was normal practice registered itself. He put great store by the state of his tongue. If it had an unhealthy look, he immediately made alterations in his diet or took an enema. He was keen to keep his stomach in good order. He used to take quite some time over his meal, chewing every morsel. He did not want to load his stomach with the work that his teeth had to do. He was mindful about his weight, and saw that there was no significant fluctuation.

Often interviews went on while he was eating, and so he would take a long time over his meal. But when the time came for the next item on his schedule for the day, he would leave his meal unfinished and move to the next work on hand. On days on which he had a heavy schedule, he would sometimes save time by opting for liquid food which he could drink without chewing.

He always used to drink boiled water that had been cooled and poured into a bottle that was kept by his side. He used to gargle with water from the same bottle. He used hot water for his bath all through the year, but he used cold water to rinse his mouth.

He was extremely concerned with cleanliness. One could say it was almost an obsession with him. "Once, I (B.K. Chandiwalla) accompanied Gandhi on one of his tours. I was given the responsibility to oversee the cooking and serving of his meals. This was my first opportunity to help him at close quarters. I filled a glass with milk and kept it on his table. I had not cleaned the glass after pouring milk into it. Some milk had spilled and was stuck on the outer surface. The glass left a mark on the table, seeing this Bapu (Gandhi) spoke to me at length on the need for cleanliness. He could not bear even a trace of carelessness about cleanliness.

Even the smallest detail would not escape his attention. Even a slight splash that left a mark on his clothes or the absence of a pillow case on the pillow or a mark of oil on the pillow case would draw his attention, and he would ask that the cloth be immediately washed. If the tub had not been scrubbed clean it will draw his attention. While holding a glass of water, if a finger had touched the water, it would not escape his attention. If someone had inadvertently trodden on the towel that had been spread on the floor near his bath tub, he would immediately enquire how someone had walked over it with dirty feet. If his fork or spoon had not been cleaned and polished properly he would not miss making an enquiry about it. One day there was some dust stuck between the prongs of the fork. He drew my attention to it immediately. If he got up from his seat and walked about, when he returned to his seat, he used to wipe his feet clean before sitting on the seat again.... He was as much concerned about simplicity as he was about cleanliness. Once he was on tour in Bihar. There he saw a woman dressed in torn and dirty clothes. He remarked that he could understand poverty but not lack of cleanliness. "Why does she not bathe, and wear another set of clothes and wash the ones she is wearing," he asked. But then he came to know that the woman had no spare set of clothes. She took Ba (Kasturba Gandhi, Gandhi's wife) to her house, and asked her how she could secure another set of clothes when she was so poor. When Gandhi came to know of this from Ba he was dumbfounded. He knew the poverty in Indian villages, but did not know that it had reached such depth. A few days after this incident, he took to wearing a loin cloth (short dhoti) and shawl.

There was hardly anything that he considered useless. A tiny bit of paper, a pin, a torn handkerchief or towel — all these were as dear to him as a few millions of rupees would be to a capitalist. If any little thing was missing he would leave no one at peace, and he would himself not be at peace, till the missing article had been found or the reason for its disappearance traced. There would almost be a minor or major storm in the Camp, and everyone would be on tenterhooks till the storm blew over.

Once he was reading a book. The front page had come off. The person who cleaned the room and the table had seen it loose and thrown it into the waste paper basket. When I entered the room I found that everyone was on tenterhooks, and the one who had cleaned the room was standing with a look of guilt in his face. When I enquired I heard that everyone had been

keyed up till the paper was found. When his hand-kerchief was not to be found in its place or when the stump of pencil was missing the peace would be agog.

Once, when he was in Maganwadi (Wardha) he brought a piece of soap that he had found lying in water, outside the toilette, and then he gave us a talk on how our country was poor, and we could not afford such waste and carelessness. It is well known that he never threw away a used envelope or telegraph form that was blank on the reverse. He would collect these and convert them into scribbling pads, to be used on the day of his silence, or to write drafts of his articles and important letters, or, sometimes, to write notes to be left for others, or sent to them. He would spread old newspapers on the floor and use them to mitigate the effect of the cold floor. Once a typist bought some files from the market. Bapu (Gandhi) told him that he could have used old newspapers to provide the cover.

He always took care to see that he sat upright. He believed that it was harmful to sit with a stoop.

He was in the habit of going for a brisk walk, for half an hour in the morning, and in the evening. Even if his work kept him at the desk or in a meeting till nine in the evening, he would get up for his brisk walk as soon as the work got over.

He had profound concern for all his colleagues, for all those who were around.... I (Brij Krishna Chandiwalla) used to sleep near him. On two nights I got late because of the load of work I had to clear. It was nearly midnight when I reached my bed. I walked tip toe ensuring that I made no sound to disturb him or wake him up. But he did notice. In the morning he asked me: "How is it that you were so late in the night?" He used to ask me to go to bed early. He kept track of how those who were around him ate, slept, took rest and so on. If anyone fell ill, he had to be more concerned with its effect on Bapu, since as soon as Bapu came to know that someone was not well, he would ignore his own comforts and health, and attend to the needs of his colleague who was ill. To fall ill was to add to the burden on Bapu, and the work that he would attend to. He wanted to be fully informed about what was wrong with the patient, what were his or her complaints. However heavy his work, he used to go and look up the patient and attend to his needs at least once a day. Once Kidwai (Saheb) fell from his car, was injured and admitted in the hospital. Bapu went to the hospital to call on

him. In the same way, he went to see Rajendra Babu (Dr. Rajendra Prasad, who later, became the President of India). He went to see Horace Alexander in the hospital....

His life was an open book. He had no secrets. Whatever you wanted to know you could ask him.

He was always quick to acknowledge his mistakes. He never tried to hide them. On the other hand, he would make a public admission, and try to make amends — by penance when he considered it necessary.

Source: *Mere Bapu* — in Hindi by Brij Krishna Chandiwal

19. A GREAT YOGI

Mr. Pyarelal Nayyar, one of Gandhi's principal secretaries who worked with him for many years, recalls what he noticed of Gandhi's habits of work. "During the days that followed I noticed several things. One was Gandhiji's marvellous capacity to go on working day after day with only three or four hours' sleep — sometimes without any sleep at all. The second was his precision and thoroughness in the minutest details. The third was his meticulous regard for cleanliness and neatness, and impatience with slovenliness in any shape or form — in thinking, writing diaries, daily life. The fourth was the military discipline and clock-work regularity which he enforced in his own case, and expected from those around him. The fifth was his habit of doing everything, so far as possible, himself. If he wanted a paper to be looked up or a spittoon to be brought to him, he preferred to do it himself, even mended his own clothes. He preferred writing himself to dictating. One day, I actually counted 56 letters which he had written in his own hand. Each one of these he re-read from the date line to the final detail of the address before handing them for dispatch. At the end of it he was so exhausted that pressing his throbbing temples between his two hands he lay himself down on the hard floor just where he was sitting, without even caring to spread the bedding against which he was leaning. He simply pushed it aside."

Source: Pyarelal Nayyar: *Gandhi As I Saw Him*, Chandra Shanker Shukla

20. I AM NOT A MAHATMA

The Indian National Congress met at Nagpur in December, 1920. By then it had become customary to refer to Gandhi as 'Mahatma' Gandhi. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, who later became the founder of Pakistan, spoke on a resolution. He spoke in English. In the course of his speech, he referred to Gandhi as Mr. Gandhi, and not Mahatma Gandhi. Maulana Mohammad Ali, a famous Muslim divine and leader of the Khilafat Movement, objected to this, and requested Mr. Jinnah to refer to Gandhi as Mahatma. Many delegates also shouted and asked Jinnah to say Mahatma Gandhi. As Jinnah persisted, a section of the audience started shouting 'Sit down'. The venerable President of the Congress, Shri Vijayaraghavachari then requested Jinnah to respect the sentiments of the audience. Still Jinnah persisted. Gandhi then stood up and said: "I am not a Mahatma. I am an ordinary man. By coercing Jinnah Saheb to a particular choice of word, you are not doing me honour. We cannot win real freedom by forcing our views, upon others. As long as there is nothing objectionable or derogatory in a man's language he is at liberty to think or say whatever he likes about others." This pacified the delegates.

Source: R. N. Chaudhari. *Bapu As I Saw Him*, pp. 15-16 (1959)

21. GANDHI WEANS AN INFANT

On one occasion, when Gandhi was released from a term of imprisonment in South Africa, he found that one of his close associates, Ms. Millie Graham Polak, was not well. The Polaks were members of the spiritual community that he was building around his '*Sadhana*'. When Gandhi wanted to know the reason for her being so ill, Mrs. Polak said that she could not get proper sleep at night because of insomnia. One of the contributory causes was also the trouble she was facing in weaning her eight-month old baby.

Gandhi asked: "If someone could take the baby for a few nights, do you think you could sleep?"

Mrs. Polak said she did not know, but it was getting too much for her. "Will you trust me with the baby?" Gandhi asked. "But what can you do?" asked Millie Polak. "If you will trust him to me, I believe I could help to wean him. I am sure I could coax him to sleep away from you."

Millie concented to allow Gandhi to try. It was agreed that when he came back home from a meeting he would take the child from her.

Gandhi arrived around one o'clock at night. He took the baby from its cot near the mother, and took it to his room to sleep on a little mattress on the floor beside his own. He had a jug of water and a glass beside him, if the child should seem thirsty. The household settled down to sleep, and for about five hours not a sound was heard to break the restful quiet of the night, the baby sleeping throughout without a whimper.

The experiment continued every night for about two weeks. Every night the baby slept easily near Gandhi, by which time the weaning was complete, and the baby went back to the mother's room.

Source: Millie Graham Polak — *Mr. Gandhi The Man*, p.77

22. MAKING SPACE FOR OTHERS

Gandhi was to leave his Ashram at Wardha to go to Bengal. Two third class compartments had been reserved for him and his entourage. When he came to the station, he found that his party could be accommodated in one compartment, and two compartments were not necessary. So he called his grandnephew who was looking after the arrangements for the journey, and asked him to vacate one of the compartments. Kanu replied that both the compartments had been reserved for the party, and the reservation charges had been paid. Gandhi's answer was: "That does not matter. We are going to Bengal for the service of the poor and starving millions. It does not behove us to enjoy comforts on the train." Then he pointed to the over-crowding in other compartments. How could he occupy more space than was necessary? "Travelling third with so much of reserved accommodation would be a criminal joke." The whole party moved to one compartment, and the other was vacated for other passengers.

Source: Shriman Narayan Chadra Shanker Shukla

23. TO SERVE, NOT TO BE ON VIEW

"At the many banquets and receptions given, from time to time, to prominent visitors and actual or prospective champions of the cause, Gandhi's role was invariably that of the menial, the helper in the kitchen, the waiter upon the guests, never in the 'front row', never coming into the limelight, always identifying himself with the 'least of these', the humblest and lowliest, even as he does today with the Harijans. If ever any man dignified and truly interpreted the word 'servant', it was he."

Source: Recollections of L. W. Ritch as told in Chandra Shanker Shukla – Incidents

24. CLEANING UP IS MY PROFESSION

Even for Noakhali, it had been an exceptionally dewy night, and the narrow footpath by which Gandhiji was to proceed had been rendered extremely slippery when on the morning of 19th January he left Badalkot for Atakara. Twice Col. Jiwan Singh, accustomed to difficult marches, lost his foothold and rolled over. Everybody enjoyed the fun as his giant figure sprawled at full length on the ground. Laughingly Gandhi offered him the end of his walking stick to pull himself up the slippery slope.

The footpath was narrow so that the party could walk on it only in single file. All of a sudden the column came to a dead-stop. Gandhi was removing excreta from the footpath with the help of some dry leaves. The footpath had again been dirtied by some Muslim urchins.

"Why did you not let me do it? Why do you put us to shame like this?" Manu asked.

Gandhi laughed: "You little know the joy it gives me to do such things."

Lots of village people had stood complacently by while Gandhi was engaged in cleaning the footpath. Manu felt annoyed. Gandhi noticed her annoyance. "You will see," he remarked, "from tomorrow they wouldn't let me clean the footpath myself. I have already given them an object lesson. They now see that scavenging is not derogatory."

"I have no doubt they will clean the footpath tomorrow," Manu replied, "but suppose they give it up as soon as your back is turned,...What then?"

"I will send you out for inspection. If the path is still dirty, I shall clean it myself. Cleaning up, in the widest sense of the term, is my profession."

Source: Pyarelal — *The Last Phase*

25. VIGIL AGAINST STRAY DOGS

Leaders from different parts of the country had assembled at Gandhi's Ashram on the eve of the Civil Disobedience Campaign. Lala Lajpatrai of Punjab, Vitthalbhai Patel, and others were among the visitors. Both Lala Lajpatrai and Vitthalbhai Patel, sat down for their meal at the Ashram. But there were a number of stray dogs around. They made it impossible for anyone to eat in peace. So when Lalaji sat down to lunch, Mahatmaji stood guard preventing the dogs from coming near. "During his recent tour round the country, I was an eye-witness of the homage and almost royal honours paid to Mahatmaji by the people at large. And now when I saw him busily engaged in the task of driving away the Ashram dogs, I compared the (two) pictures in my mind, and to me it seemed that both were equally appropriate."

Based on: Krishan Das — *Seven Months with Gandhi*, Navjivan

26. A CUP OF COFFEE FOR THE PATIENT

It was a joke that one heard frequently in Gandhi's Ashrams. If you want to meet Gandhi everyday, and have a few great moments with him you should fall ill, and be in the sick ward or hospital of the Ashram. It was an old habit of Gandhi to go everyday to the sickroom of the Ashram and spend a few minutes with every patient, chatting, supervising, prescribing or administering treatment and so on. He would himself tie bandages or administer enema, or apply mudpacks and so on. A few moments with Gandhi served as a priceless tonic to the minds of those who were ill.

Once a young boy from the South fell ill at the Sabarmati Ashram. He was down with an attack of dysentery, and was in the hospital for a few days. Every evening Gandhi used to visit and enquire about the progress he was making. He had grown accustomed to anticipating Gandhi's arrival, as soon as he heard the sound of Gandhi's wooden sandals outside. Since he was from the south of India, he was accustomed to his tumbler of good hot coffee everyday. As he was lying there thinking of the day he would sip coffee again, Gandhi appeared near his bed. After making enquiries from the doctor and assistants, Gandhi told him: "You are getting

better. Now you can start eating *Idlis* or *Uppma* (popular South Indian dishes). Shall I send you some? What do you want?" Suddenly it occurred to the boy to say, "I am pining for the day I can have a cup of hot coffee." Gandhi chuckled and called him an incurable addict of coffee. Then to his surprise, Gandhi said: "Light coffee can be soothing to the stomach. We don't have *Idlis* and *Dosas*. But hot toast will go well with the coffee. And Gandhi moved on, and out of the sick room.

The young boy lay on his bed thinking of Gandhi's words. Coffee and tea were not permitted in the Ashram's kitchen. Only Gandhi's wife Kasturba was likely to have some coffee in her kitchen. Gandhi's house and Kasturba's kitchen were far away. Even if Gandhi sent someone across and the coffee got made, it will take a long time arriving. As he lay lost in these thoughts, he heard the tick tock of Gandhi's wooden sandals. And lo and behold! There was Gandhi himself with a tray on which was a covered tumbler of hot coffee and two toasted pieces of bread. He set the tray down before the boy who was dumbfounded, and was saying that he would never have dared to ask for coffee if he had known that Gandhi would have had to make it and bring it. Gandhi laughed and asked him to drink his coffee while it was hot. And he left post-haste for work that was waiting for him.

Source: *A Sheaf of Gandhi Anecdotes* — G. Ramachandran.

27. THE PULL OF PATIENTS

In 1936, Gandhi went to Trivandrum to preside over a meeting to welcome the epoch-making proclamation accepting the right of so-called 'untouchables' to worship at Hindu temples. Mr. S. K. George, a friend and associate of Gandhi, went to call on Gandhi at his residence, but could not see him. He met Shri Mahadev Desai and told him about his wife who was ill at the time. He spoke about it also to Shri G. Ramachandran, another colleague of Gandhi's hailing from Trivandrum, regretting their inability to meet Bapu. Ramachandran, knowing the mind of the master, said that then it would be a case of the Mountain going to Muhammad. I quoted scripture against that, and said that it was unworthy that he should enter under our roof.

But what the disciple had predicted happened. After the great meeting that evening Gandhiji returned to his residence, not joining in the procession that followed. During his evening meal he asked about my wife and enquired where we were staying. It so happened that the State Guest House where he (Gandhi) was staying was close to our house, and one of the sisters in attendance on him was a teacher in our school. She offered to guide him to our place; and so immediately after food, staff in hand, the old man set out to visit his humble sister who, he had heard, was lying ill.

It was past nine, and we had retired early. Only a single kerosene oil lamp was burning in the house. We had not slept, and I could distinguish the voice of Mahadevbhai who was one of the company visiting us. I told my wife about this and heard Mahadevbhai remarking: "He thinks it is only Mahadev." Looking out I saw Gandhiji and party at our gate. I immediately rushed to open the gate which was locked. Gandhiji observed with a chuckle: "So you are afraid of thieves." I mentioned to Gandhiji what Ramachandran had said, and referred to the Biblical parallel of the Roman centurion telling Jesus that he was not worthy that the Master should enter under his roof. "Aha!" retorted Gandhiji.

Coming into the house, I sought to detain him in the drawing room. But he had come to give a courtesy call and put me immediately in my place saying. "I have come to see not you but your wife." And he walked straight to her room. Sitting beside her cot he enquired about her illness and the treatment she was having. I woke up our little son and brought him to Bapu

for his blessing. It was a very patient and unhurried few minutes that he spent with us, but we were a little too flurried to use it to the fullest advantage in seeking his paternal advice on our problems.

Source: "A Sick Visitation" - by S.K. George, Incident.....

28. WHAT GANDHI DID TO PATIENTS

Sir Purushottamdas Thakurdas, a friend of Gandhi's was ill in Bombay in 1945. Thakurdas recalls: "He (Gandhi) had kind enquiries made after my health fairly regularly, and on the very first day after his arrival in Bombay, after the evening prayers, he told his host, Mr. Birla, that he was calling on me. When Mr. Birla said that at about 8.30 p.m., I might not be able to see him, all that Gandhiji said was: 'Anyway I will see him, if he cannot see me.' He called at my residence with Dr. Sushila Nayyar and another friend. My daughter and grandson had left me for the evening just a few minutes before, and the nurse was preparing me for the night's rest. A servant brought the message that Mahatmaji had arrived. My wife was wondering what to say to him, but she forthwith went down to meet him. Gandhiji at once asked: 'Is Purushottamdas in?' When my wife said: 'I am afraid he cannot come down, but is a little better'. Gandhiji smilingly said: 'Oh! I can go up and, if you like, I will take you up with me to convince you that I can go up the stairs comfortably.' Without waiting any more, he started going up the stairs, and as soon as he was at the entrance of my bedroom, he said in his cheerful voice: 'Don't move at all. I will come and sit by you.' He was one of the very few who, instead of enquiring of me as to the why and wherefore of my illness, kept on talking to me merrily, as if bracing me to the course of recovery. When Gandhi left after twenty minutes the nurse who had seen Gandhi for the first time said: 'If only I could be sure that patients would have such visitors ... they would do more for a patient's recovery than doctors, themselves.' "

Source: Sir Purushottamdas Thakurdas - Chandra Shanker Shukla

29. PATIENT'S CONCERN FOR THE DOCTOR AND THE CAPTOR

I was called suddenly to the Sassoon Hospital yesterday night to see Mahatma Gandhi. In view of the profound interest that the matter would have for the public, I venture to make the following statement:

Dr. V. B. Gokhale came to me at about 8.45 p.m. just as I was finishing my dinner and told me how the Yervada (prison) authorities had removed Mr. Gandhi to the Sassoon Hospital where he was in charge. He was about to be operated upon for appendicitis. As the case was serious the patient had been asked whether he would like any doctor friends of his to be sent for. He had mentioned Dr. Dalai of Bombay and Dr. Jivraj Mehta who was in Baroda. Both had been wired to; and attempts had been made, but in vain, to get at Dr. Dalai by means of the phone. Meanwhile, in view of the patient's temperature and pulse, it had been decided to perform the operation immediately, and he was asked whether he would like to have any friends brought to see him. He mentioned me, Dr. Phatak of the Non-Co-operation Party, and Mr. N. C. Kelkar. Dr. Gokhale and I started at once and took Dr. Phatak on the way, Mr. Kelkar being away at Satara. On my entering the room we greeted each other, and enquired how he felt as to the operation. He answered firmly that the doctors had come to a definite conclusion, and that he was content to abide by it. In reply to further inquiry he said that he had full confidence in the medical men about him;" and that they had been very kind and very careful. Should there arise any public agitation, he added, then it should be made known that he had no complaint whatsoever to make against the authorities, and that so far as the care of his body went, their treatment left nothing to be desired.

Then I enquired if Mrs. Gandhi had been informed of his condition. He said that she did not know the latest development, but she knew that for some time he had not been well, and he expected to hear from her. He then made enquiries of my wife and of my colleagues in the Servants of India Society, viz. Messrs. Devadhar, Joshi, Patwardhan and Kunzru. "Have your frequent journeys out of India benefited your health?" asked the Mahatma.

Dr. Phatak then read a draft statement to be signed by Mr. Gandhi conveying his consent to the operation. After hearing it once, Mr. Gandhi put on his spectacles and read it himself. Then he said he would like the wording changed, and asked Col. Maddock who was in the

room what he thought. The Colonel said that, since Mr. Gandhi knew best how to put in appropriate language, his own suggestion would not be of much value. Then he dictated a longish statement which I took down in pencil. It was addressed to Col. Maddock who was to perform the operation. The letter acknowledged the exceeding kindness and attentions which he had received from Col. Maddock, the Surgeon-General, and other medical officers and attendants, and stated that he had the utmost confidence in Col. Maddock. It proceeded to thank the Government for their considerateness in allowing him to send for his own doctors, but as they could not be got in spite of the best attempts made by Col. Maddock, and as delay would, in the opinion of the Colonel involve serious risk, Mr. Gandhi requested him to perform the operation at once. When it was finished I read it out to him once. Then he called Col. Maddock to his side, and I read it again at his desire. Col. Maddock was quite satisfied and remarked: "Of course, you know best how to put it in proper language." He (Gandhi) then drew up his knees in posture for signing the paper which he did in pencil. His hand shook very much, and I noticed that he did not dot the 'i' at the end. He remarked to the doctor: "See how my hand trembles. You will have to put this right." Col. Maddock answered: "Oh! We will put tons and tons to strength into you."

As the operation room was being got ready, the doctors went out, and I found myself nearly alone with the Mahatma. After a remark or two of purely personal nature I asked him whether he had anything particular to say. I noticed a touch of eagerness as he replied, as though he was waiting for an opportunity to say something. "If there is an agitation," he said, "for my release after the operation, which I do not wish, let it be on proper lines.... Any agitation must be kept on proper non-violent lines. Perhaps I have not expressed myself quite well, but you had better put it in your own inimitable style." I mentioned the motions of which notice had been given in the Assembly, and added that though Government might in other circumstance have opposed it, I expected that they would take a different line.

I then pressed him again for a message to his people, his followers in the country. He was surprisingly firm on this subject. He said he was a prisoner of Government, and he must observe the prisoner's code of honour scrupulously. He was supposed to be civilly dead. He had no knowledge of outside events, and he could not have anything to do with the public. He had no message.

"How is it then that Mr. Mahomed Ali communicated a message as from you the other day?" The words were scarcely out of my mouth when I regretted them. But recall was impossible. He was obviously astonished at my question and exclaimed; "Mr. Mahomed Ali! A message from me!" Luckily at this point the nurse came in with some articles of apparel for him, and signaled me to depart. In a few minutes he was shifted to the operation room. I sat outside marvelling at the exhibition I had witnessed of high-mindedness, forgiveness, chivalry and love transcending ordinary human nature; and what mercy it was that the non-cooperation movement should have had a leader of such serene vision and sensitiveness to honour! The Surgeon- General and the Inspector-General of Prisons were also there. I could see from their faces how anxious they were at the tremendous responsibility that lay on them. They said that the patient had borne the operation very well indeed, that some pus had come out, and that it was a matter of congratulation that the operation had not been delayed any longer. The patient had morphia and was expected to sleep soundly for some time longer, when we dispersed.

I learnt from the doctor this morning that the patient's condition was thoroughly satisfactory.

Source: "At The Sassoon Hospital" — by Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri — *Gandhiji As We Know Him*,
Chandra Shanker Shukla

30. PARCHURE SHASTRI — NURSING A FRIEND AFFLICTED BY LEPROSY

Gandhi was in the habit of taking a brisk walk every evening. He would walk for three or four miles, covering the distance in about three quarters of an hour. Accompanying him on the walk would be some members of the Ashram community, children and some visitors to whom he wanted to talk during the walk, thus saving on the time that he would otherwise have had to find from his heavy schedule of work. The walk was not merely a stint of exercise but also a period of relaxation. Gandhi would be up to his pranks with children or would be provoking laughter with his banter and wit.

On a cold December day in 1939, as he stepped out of the Ashram for his walk, he found a human form with a bundle in his hands about to enter the Ashram. On seeing Gandhi, the visitor halted six steps away, kept his bundle down and did obeisance to Gandhi. Gandhi looked grave, a thick pall of sorrow fell on his face. He recognized the man before him. It was 'Parchure Shastri' a famous Sanskrit Scholar and poet who had been with him in the Yervada Jail in 1922. In these years, Shastri had contacted a vicious form of leprosy. He had tried treatment at many hospitals, and with many doctors. Nothing had helped. He wanted to disappear from view and meet what was in store for him. But before making his final exit, he wanted to have a *darshan* (glimpse) of Gandhi. So he had written to Gandhi asking for permission to meet him. In the meanwhile, the Second World War had broken out. It was feared that Gandhi might be compelled to start some form of Civil Disobedience, and might be lodged in Jail. He would then have no chance of meeting Gandhi before he met with his end. These thoughts prompted Shastri to arrive on the scene, before, as he thought, it became too late.

Gandhi looked at him with infinite sadness, and said that he had received Shastri's letter but had thought that Shastri would wait for his reply before arriving at the Ashram. Shastri explained: "I know I should have waited for your permission to come to the Ashram, but somehow I could not restrain myself, and so I left Hardwar to come to you." Gandhi explained to him that he wanted Shastri to come. But there were many others, including women and children, in the Ashram. He was debating in his mind whether it would be proper for him to ask Shastri to live with him in the Ashram, knowing the nature of the disease from

which he was suffering. Shastri realized Gandhi's difficulty, and said: "I have had your *darshan*. This bundle contains the yarn that I spun while at Hardwar, with the hope that I will be able to give it to you some day. My purpose is served. I shall now spend the night under the tree in the distance, and go away in the morning."

Gandhi asked him whether he had had a meal. When he learned that Shastri had not eaten, he asked one of the inmates of the Ashram to fetch food for him, and serve him. Gandhi then resumed his walk with a face that was overcast with pain and introspection. That evening he was silent during his walk. Others in the entourage too were silent. He returned to the Ashram, and after the evening prayer, went to his bed. But he could not sleep. The picture of Parchure Shastri and the dilemma that he was facing kept sleep away. What was he to do? Could he turn Shastri away? Could he make him reside in the Ashram if the other inmates of the Ashram resented or panicked? By the morning all aspects of the question had been weighed, and Gandhi was clear on what he should do.

As soon as the Morning Prayer was over, Gandhi spoke to the inmates of the Ashram. He explained the situation and the risks. He wanted to keep Shastri in the Ashram and nurse him back to health. But he could do so only if they also welcomed him. He felt that God in the form of Parchure Shastri had come to test his sincerity. To turn Shastri away would be to deny himself and God. But to let him stay would be to expose the Ashramites to risk. The members of the Ashram too had been entrusted to his charge by God. Would they share the risk with him, and welcome Shastri? The members of the Ashram community were unanimous in declaring that Shastri would be welcome in the Ashram.

The next morning a tardy but special hut was set up for Shastri near the hut that Gandhi occupied. Every morning Gandhi would go to him, talk with him and cheer him up for a while. He would then wash and clean the leprosy wounds on Shastri's body. They were days when momentous political decisions were being taken. The Ashram was full of the leaders of the nation who were there for discussion with Gandhi. But everyday Gandhi found time to dress Shastri's wounds and massage his ailing body. Gandhi determined the patient's diet, and the food served to Shastri was taken to Gandhi for inspection thrice a day.

In a few days, the Ashramites took over the task of dressing Shastri's wounds. But Gandhi would go to the hut everyday, in the morning and evening and spend some time, talking to

Shastri. Once when he went to see Shastri on his day of silence, Shastri recited Sanskrit poetry and talked animatedly on many issues. But Gandhi could not talk. After listening to Shastri with a smile, Gandhi produced a fresh orange from his shawl, and offered it to Shastri with a smile. That was his answer. Before he left his hut, he had remembered that it was his day of silence, and taken the orange along as a token of his love and concern. Shastri's face reflected the glow of love.

Shastri's stay in the Ashram extended itself to years. The affection and attention that he received from Gandhi and the Ashramites, and the treatment that he followed helped him to recover.

Source: Based on "An Eye-Witness Account" by Shri Jairamdas Doulatram
in Chandra Shanker Shukla, pp. 89-93.

31. A LITTLE DROP, BUT IN TIME, AND IN SILENCE

One of Millie Graham Polak's young friends was trying to qualify for a profession. But she had hardly any money, and was, therefore, passing through a very hard time. Gandhi knew her too. One day while talking to Gandhi, Millie said: "I am worried about.... I do wish I had a little money to lend her. She absolutely needs shoes and stockings, and does not see how she can get them. Of course if she can get through this year she will be able to manage, but it is the immediate present that is the trouble. I wish I could help her."

"Do not worry about her," Gandhi replied. "She is too fine a character to be hurt by hardship; she will not fail, but will manage to get through all right."

A few days later, when Millie met her, she said, "I have had such a wonderful surprise. Mr. Gandhi sent me two pounds, asking me to accept it as a little present from him."

So the stockings and shoes were taken care of. But, says Millie, "Mr. Gandhi never mentioned it to me."

Source: Millie Graham Polak — *Mr. Gandhi The Man*

32. CONCERN FOR A COLLEAGUE

Mahadev Desai, Gandhi's Secretary, was touring with Gandhi in North India. One day, he had so much of work that he set down to write in the evening and went on till the early hours of the morning. He went to sleep thereafter, and could not therefore get up at the usual hour.

When he awoke, however, he saw his morning tea — to which he was very much accustomed — laid out before him. Gandhi had gone down to the restaurant himself, and ordered tea, milk, sugar, bread and butter to be brought to the apartment. Gandhi himself did not drink tea, but he knew Mahadev could not do without it. So he got everything laid out, and waited patiently for his Secretary to wake up.

Source: Kaka Saheb Kalelkar — *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*

33. CONCERN FOR COLLEAGUES

Henry Polak and Millie Graham Polak who were among the closest associates of Gandhi in South Africa, came to India during the First World War, soon after Gandhi himself returned to India from South Africa. While in India, Polak was laid low with a very serious illness. After his recovery he returned to England, leaving his wife Millie with her sister and children, commended to the care of Gandhi.

"At the time my husband sailed from Bombay, I was ill myself. The prolonged nursing of my husband and little son had worn me out, and on the eve of a collapse I succumbed to a bad attack of malaria.

"Mr. Gandhi had come down to Bombay for a few days, and after leaving the docks, where he had seen my husband off, came immediately to me. Days passed, the fever continued, and Mr. Gandhi grew quite anxious about me. He refused to leave Bombay until I got over the worst part of my illness, and came everyday to see how I was getting along. He would sit beside my bed talking to me, while all I could do was to lie and let the tears tumble down my cheeks. He never suggested that I was foolish or weak, or exhorted me to pull myself together, as a less understanding person might have done. He would just sit there telling me little interesting bits of gossip or news and occasionally make me smile.... I knew that he had

important work waiting for him in Ahmedabad, and that he was neglecting it for my sake. Once I suggested to him that he had better go, No,' he replied, 'I cannot leave you until you are better,' and so he stayed on till the temperature became normal, and he knew that I was on the road to convalescence."

Source: Millie Graham Polak - Chandra Shanker Shukla – Incidents

34. 'I AM THE WATERFALL'

Gandhi was on a tour of South India to spread the message of the spinning wheel or Khadi. He reached Shimoga in the State of Mysore. Very near to Shimoga are the Jog falls which is the highest waterfall in the world. In Gandhi's entourage were Kaka Saheb Kalelkar, Mahadev Desai (Gandhi's Secretary) and many others. Many in the entourage including Kaka Saheb Kalelkar wanted to go and see the Falls. They approached Gandhi and tried to persuade him to go to see the Falls. He declined saying that it was a luxury he could not afford. He had gone to Mysore to spread the message of Khadi. In the time he would take to go to the Falls and return, he could meet many workers and get through a lot of work that he had to do. Kaka Saheb then pleaded on behalf of Mahadev Desai and asked that he be allowed to go to see the Falls. Gandhi was stern and brief: "No. For Mahadev, I am the waterfall. Mahadev will not go."

Kaka Saheb had forgotten that was the day on which Gandhi and Mahadev Desai had to complete their articles, notes and editorial work for the *Young India* and *Navjivan*, the weeklies that Gandhi was publishing from Ahmedabad. If the material was not dispatched on that day, the journals would not have come out, and thousands of workers all-Over the country who looked to these journals for guidance would have been sorely disappointed. Their work would have been affected. Kaka Saheb was permitted to go.

Nearly fifteen years later, Gandhi sent Mahadev Desai to Mysore to carry a special message from him to Sir Mirza Ismail, the Diwan of Mysore. As Mahadev Desai was about to leave, Gandhi told him: "Mahadev, when you are in Mysore, you will be very near the Jog Falls. Go and see them. I have written to Sir Mirza to make arrangements to take you to the Falls. Your work in Mysore will take a few days. There is no hurry for you to return."

Source: Kaka Saheb Kalelkar — *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*

35. THE EXPANDING FAMILY

On my joining the Ashram, Gandhiji asked me to keep a daily diary. He also asked me to write down a brief history of myself giving names of all the members of the family. I could not make out why I was asked to do this. But, later I discovered that he kept direct contact with the relatives of the workers; he remembered their names and corresponded with them. He thus treated hundreds of workers as members of his family and dealt with them as such.

Source: R.N.C. p. 102

36. TRAINING ASSOCIATES

All those who have spent some days with Gandhi helping him to deal with his correspondence or the editorial work of his journals or the work of the organizations that he founded for his Constructive Programme (like the Spinners' Association, the Village Industries Association, Harijan Sevak Sangh) have testified to the way Gandhi tried to train them in their work. On the eve of the Non-Co-operation movement Gandhi was keen to spot persons (from his personal secretariat) who could carry on the work of his journals, *Young India* and *Navajivan*, if he were arrested. His choice fell on Pyarelal who later became his Secretary, and on Krishnadas. Krishnadas has recorded how Gandhi first asked him to write short notes for publication in the *Young India*. He would remind Krishnadas everyday to see that he wrote in spite of his other responsibilities. He would ask Krishnadas to read out what he had written or leave it with him. He would then study it with great care, and tell how he should correct what he had written. Sometimes he would tell Krishnadas that the note ended too abruptly; he should write a longer conclusion. In the same way, Gandhi also used to train Krishnadas to draft replies (to letters) in Gandhi's own style.

"An Indian sojourner in England had written a long letter to Mahatmaji. Mahatmaji asked me to write out an answer and show it to him. He passed the draft reply. Only he scored out the word 'Mahatmaji', wherever I had written it, and put in 'Mr. Gandhi' instead. In another place, I wrote 'India can remain within the Empire, if it is consistent with her dignity and self-respect.' He has altered it into 'India can remain with the British, if it is consistent with her dignity and self-respect.'"

Source: Krishnadas, p.358

37. GANDHI'S TOY

Pratap was a young child who lived in Gandhi's Ashram at Sabarmati (Gujarat). Gandhi made no distinction between his "immediate family" and the members of the Ashram community. They were all members of his family. He was concerned about their welfare, their habits, their diet, their health, their dress, work and everything else. He was equally concerned with the way they moulded their character or brought up their children.

Gandhi had a pocket watch. He kept it on his table. Sometimes when his visitors showed no signs of getting up and leaving, though the time he had agreed to give was over, he would gently lift up the watch and hold it up before the eyes of the visitor, to remind him that his time was up. Sometimes when he was walking about, the watch would be dangling from the fold of the dhoti tucked on his hip.

One day, when Pratap and his mother were in front of Gandhi, the child caught sight of the dangling chain and the watch. They attracted him. He wanted them, and began pulling and tugging at his mother's sari, making it plain that he would not leave her in peace till he got the watch and the chain. Gandhi watched for a while, and sized up the situation. He walked up to the child and put the watch against its ear. As the child listened intently to the tick-tick, he said to the child, "Hear, how well it ticks! tick-tick, tick-tick." Then he took the watch off from the child's ear, and said "You have your toys. I have mine. This is my toy. So you should not ask for it," and he moved on to other matters.

Gandhi believed that parents had a heavy responsibility to the children under their care. It extended not only to feeding and clothing the child, but to training the mind of the child. Everything they did or did not do had an effect on the mind of the child and the habits it formed. The child should never be encouraged to make unreasonable demands or do things which resulted in the formation of unwholesome habits. Parents had to set examples, wean and nudge, and above all make full use of the law of love, to train children in the duties that love cast on both sides.

Source: *Bapu As I saw him* - Ram Narayan Chaudhuri.

38. SPARE THE ROD — I

A boy of about fourteen years, who was among those receiving education in the Phoenix Settlement, was a great source of trouble. He appeared to be instinctively cruel and deceitful, and was guilty of many acts of cruelty to other children as well as to animals. Gandhi tried to deal with the boy with extra affection; tried to persuade him and wean him from his ways. There was no effect. Polak and other associates of Gandhi often complained to Gandhi. One day, the boy flung a cricket bat at the head of a younger child. Gandhi, who witnessed it, promptly asked Polak, who too was present, to thrash the boy. Polak did this, and for a time, a distinct improvement was visible in the behaviour of the boy. Some of Gandhi's associates wondered whether Gandhi did not feel disappointed that the boy responded to brute force and not to gentler methods.

Source: Millie Graham Polak *Mr. Gandhi The Man*

39. SPARE THE ROD — II

Gandhi believed that "as physical training was to be imparted through physical exercise, and intellectual through intellectual exercise, even so the training of the spirit was possible only through the exercise of the spirit." The exercise of the spirit depended on the life and character of the teacher. He, therefore, did not believe in corporal punishment.

One of the boys in the Tolstoy Farm was "wild, unruly, given to lying, and quarrelsome. On one occasion, he broke out most violently. I was most exasperated. I never punished my boys, but this time I was very angry. I tried to reason with him. But he was adamant and even tried to over reach me. At last, I picked up a ruler lying at hand and delivered a blow on his arm. I trembled as I struck him. I dare say he noticed it. This was an entirely novel experience for them all. The boy cried out and begged to be forgiven. He cried not because the beating was painful to him; he could, if he had been so minded, have paid me back in the same coin, being a stoutly built youth of seventeen; but he realized my pain in being driven to this violent recourse. Never again after this incident did he disobey me. But I still repent that violence. I am afraid, I exhibited before him that day, not the spirit, but the brute in me.

"I have always been opposed to corporal punishment. I remember only one occasion on which I physically punished one of my sons. I have, therefore, never until this day been able to decide whether I was right or wrong in using the ruler. Probably it was improper, for it was prompted by anger and a desire to punish. Had it been an expression only of my distress, I should have considered it justified. But the motive in this case was mixed. The incident however, made me understand better the duty of a teacher towards his pupils."

Source: *Autobiography*, M.K.G.

40. GANDHI AND THE GLUTTONOUS CHILD

There was one boy in the family who was inclined to be greedy. He was quite fond of some items of food. When they were around, he would ask for more, again and again. He would not feel satisfied; and if he was not given what he wanted, he would sulk or throw tantrums. Gandhi had tried to reason with him, many times. But there was no effect.

"At last, one evening, Bapu (Gandhi) told him that he could have as much as ever he wished to eat, and that no one would stop him or check him. The meal proceeded, the child sitting at table in his usual way, and having eaten all he could, he laid his head upon the table and fell asleep. The table however was not cleared even though all of us had finished, and presently the child woke up again. Mr. Gandhi asked him if he wanted anything more. He replied in the affirmative and recommenced eating. We still sat at the table, not hurrying the child in any way, but talking of many things. Eventually, the little fellow could not swallow any more, and being more than filled, he commenced to cry. Mr. Gandhi took no notice of him, and when Mrs. Gandhi wanted to attend to the child, he prevented it. The child cried quietly for a little while, and tried to go to sleep again. But he grew more and more uncomfortable, and eventually had to be carried from the room. This Mr. Gandhi did quite tenderly, taking him in his arms, and carrying him upstairs to bed, where his mother took him in charge. Most of the night he was unwell, but the lesson was never forgotten, and the child never again worried to be given things to eat that were refused to him."

Source: Millie Graham Polak: *Mr. Gandhi The Man*, p. 25, 2nd Edition (1950)

41. THE STUBBORN GERMAN

In 1934, Agatha Harrison, one of Gandhi's English associates, was touring Orissa with Gandhi. She relates: "Another incident occurred during the tour which I record as being typical of Gandhiji's sense of justice and fair play. Attached to our party was a hefty young German about 18 years old. Gandhiji had given him permission to join him, as he does everyone who is eager to learn more about his way of life. The young man acted as a volunteer and made himself generally useful.

"It was known to all of us that Gandhiji had taken a self-imposed vow to make no political speeches during the tour, — and naturally that none of the party would. At one place in Orissa we stopped for several days, and while there, (unknown to the rest) the young German addressed a large gathering of students. Had he spoken about what was going on in his country, there might have been no trouble. Instead, he chose to deliver himself on the inequities of British rule in India, and cited tales of repression he had heard. The next day came a letter from the British Official in the District warning him, that if he took part in further meetings, he must leave the province. Delighted with this further proof of British Imperialism, the young man showed his letter to Gandhiji. Rarely have I seen the Mahatma more angry. He turned on the lad and said: "You have offended, you know of the vow I have taken; yet you, one of my party, have done this thing!" Gandhi told him, he must write and apologize to the British official, and he wanted to see the letter before it was sent. Unrepentant, and rather bombastic, the culprit argued that he, not Gandhiji, had spoken at the meeting, and besides, all that he had said was true. Quickly Gandhiji replied that this might be so, but how could the official view it otherwise than a breach of trust on his, (Gandhiji's,) part? And if he felt he could not write a contrite letter of apology, then he must leave his party at once. And he handed him a letter that he felt met the case. It was a typical Gandhi letter, and the stubborn young German rebelled at putting his name to it. Gandhiji then turned him and the draft letter over to me; and after many hours he agreed to the substance of Gandhiji's draft. This was taken by hand to the British official, and a sobered young German remained with us. Gandhiji's treatment of this incident made a deep impression on him."

Source: Recounted by Agatha Harrison - Chandra Shanker Shukla incidents...

42. SMALL THINGS I LEARNT FROM HIM

I do not exactly remember the occasions on which I learnt several small things from Gandhiji. I shall just mention what they are:

1. This was perhaps when I met him for the first time in Champaran in 1917. He asked me to copy out a passage from the Indian Year Book on a sheet of foolscap paper. As the paper was larger than I needed I folded it up, made a crease by passing my fingers over it, and began to tear it along the crease. Gandhiji stopped me, and asked me to cut it with a knife. "When you tear along a crease with your hands," he said, "fibres appear along the edges. They jar on the eye. You should make it a rule always to divide the paper with a paper-cutter or an ordinary knife."

2. Once he showed me how to open up the flap of an envelope, the gum of which had got stuck. He introduced a fountain pen into a slight opening under the flap, and quickly rolled it round the edge. He said: "Do you see how it opens up without injuring the paper? This is a method which everyone should know."

3. He was displeased if he saw a letter placed in an envelope with irregular foldings. He said: "When you fold your letter you must see that the ends coincide properly and the fold is regular. An irregular folding creates a bad impression upon the receiver about you. It looks slovenly."

4. One of my young nephews lived with me at Sabarmati. He once tore his clothing during play and then went straight to Bapu's room. Bapu saw the torn condition of the cloth, and when he saw my wife later he showed his displeasure at it. He said, "One need not be ashamed of clothes repaired with sewing or patches. Poverty in itself is not a matter for shame. But there is no excuse for a person to put on unmended or dirty clothes. A cloth must be repaired as soon as it is torn, and washed if it has become dirty."

5. I may also mention a habit which I developed, under his influence, to a greater extent than commendable, as it verges on miserliness and disorderliness. It is that of preserving and using bits of paper written on one side, wrappers on book post packets etc., and used envelopes. Perhaps the instinct of thrift was inherent in me, and it got encouragement by his example. I

am not at all proud of it; I rather feel ashamed of the extent to which it has grown. But it seems to have got hardened in spite of my own mental protest against it.

Source: K.G. Mashruwala in *Reminiscences of Gandhiji*, Ed. Chandra Shanker Shukla, pp. 172-73

43. GANDHI'S PATENT ENVELOPES

Krishnadas, who was working as Gandhi's secretary during the days of the Non-Co-operation movement, one day found that Gandhi was in a happy mood. He was all by himself, and told Krishnadas as soon as he entered: "Krishnadas, so many telegrams come to me daily and yet not knowing what to do with the forms, I used to tear them. But I was not happy I had to tear them, and I was thinking of what use they could be put to. At last I have hit upon a plan." He took up a form and showed Krishnadas how to make an envelope out of it. He then directed Krishnadas to prepare envelope from the telegraph forms received everyday. Gandhi gave them the name of 'Patent Envelopes'. He would not touch envelopes of superior quality as long as his 'Patent Envelopes' were available.

Based on: *Seven Months With Gandhi* — Krishnadas

44. THE ECO-FRIENDLY TOOTH BRUSH

One day, in the Yervada Jail, Gandhi noticed that one of his associates in the Ashram, Kaka Kalelkar, was in the habit of breaking off whole little branches of the neem tree even if he needed only four or five leaves. Gandhi said to him: "This is *hinsa* (violence). Others might not be able to understand, but you can. Even these four leaves should be plucked by us humbly, with due apologies to the tree. You break off whole twigs or branches."

".....And then," recalls Kaka Kalelkar, "we stopped

getting *datuns* (pieces of fresh neem or babul twigs used as tooth brushes) from outside. I said, 'Bapuji, this place abounds in neem trees. I will make a nice, fresh *datun* for you every morning.' Bapu agreed. The next day I brought a *datun*, pounded one end of it into a soft brush, and gave it to Bapu. After using it, he said, 'Now cut off the used bit of the *datun* and pound the end into a brush again.' I was surprised, I asked: 'But why? We can get a fresh one

every day.' 'I know we can,' said Bapu, 'But that does not mean we should. We do not have the right. We must not fling away a *datun* until it becomes too dry to be used.'

Based on: Kaka Saheb Kalelkar, *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*

45. THE COSTLY TELEGRAM

In 1921, the annual Session of the Indian National Congress met at Ahmedabad. Mr. Mavlankar, who later became the Speaker of the Indian Parliament was the secretary of the Reception Committee as well as the Provincial Committee. He had ordered large quantities of hand-spun, hand-woven cloth (khadi) for the decoration of the dais and the delegates' enclosures. The payment for the cloth had to be made in installments everyday. The daily installment was around Rs. 15,000 from the Bombay Provincial Committee. The amount had not come for many months, in spite of his reminders. The balance of the money with him had come down so low that he was greatly worried. He would not be able to make further payments if the money did not come. Luckily for him, Gandhi was going to Bombay at that time. So he explained the desperate situation to Gandhi and requested him to talk to the Bombay Committee and get the money sent the very day he reached Bombay. He also requested Gandhi to send him a telegram to relieve him of his anxiety. Gandhi agreed. Mr. Mavlankar waited for the telegram. None arrived, and his anxiety increased no bounds. He concluded that Gandhi must have forgotten. Gandhi had gone to Bombay for some very important matters, and the matter that Mr. Mavlankar had entrusted to him was a small matter in comparison to what was Gandhi's main concern in Bombay.

But the next day, Mavlankar got a letter from Gandhi. It contained a telegraph form with a telegram that Gandhi had drafted for submission to the telegraph office. At the back of the telegraph form was Gandhi's letter or note. "Dear Mavlankar, I know I am prolonging your anxiety for twenty-four hours. But today being a holiday the telegram charges would be rather higher. As the money will surely be remitted, I preferred to save the telegram charges even if it meant continuation of your anxiety for some hours."

Source: G. V. Mavlankar: Recited in Incidents - Chandra Shanker Shukla

46. HOW TO CLEAN VESSELS AND YET SAVE WATER

Once Kanubhai and I were cleaning vessels at a well. Bapu happened to pass that way and saw us pouring water profusely over a small vessel to wash it. He came to us and said: "Look here, Kanti, how much water you are wasting? Even now you don't know how to clean vessels." It was not that we did not know how to clean vessels. We had several lessons from the same *guru* at Sabarmati. It was our carelessness, or rather our inability to think of our actions in terms of millions of people. He continued: "How much water you are wasting?" "Well, Bapu, it is our energy that is spent in drawing more water, and in the well the water is inexhaustible," we argued. He gently said: "Quite right, but why do you forget that here we live for the service of others? Can you waste your energy like this? No, you must preserve it for the service of our country." Then he sat down and showed us how to clean vessels with a minimum quantity of water. As he went on cleaning another vessel he said: "See, take a small quantity- of wet earth and rub all over the vessel; then put plenty of dry earth in the vessel and clean the vessel dry; after this you don't require a large quantity of water to wash it. Now, will you do like this?" he said finally. We promised to do so henceforth. But Bapu did not leave us until he saw that we could perform the operation well....

Kantilai Harilal Gandhi. Ed. Chandra Shanker Shukla. *Reminiscences of Gandhiji*, p. 97

47. MENDING TORN CLOTHES

The dress that Gandhi wore was the bare minimum. He had a short dhoti, often called a loin cloth, and a shawl which he used to cover his chest and back when necessary. He believed he had no right to wear more when the ordinary villager had nothing more and when the village women often had to make do with one sari. One day, on one of his tours he found a woman draped in a drenched sari. Half of it was draped round her body, and the other half was stretched out and tied to a small tree. There she stood in the sun. Gandhi asked Kasturba, his wife, to find out why the woman was standing in the sun in this manner. She was told that the woman was wearing the only sari she had. So, this was the only way in which she could wear a clean sari. Gandhi was moved by this account, and decided that he had no right to

wear an elaborate dress when those whom he represented, and wanted to serve, hardly had anything to hide their nakedness.

But Gandhi was quite concerned with cleanliness. In fact, cleanliness was a passion with him, and he wanted to be impeccable in whatever he did or whatever he wore. He was therefore fastidious about the cleanliness of his clothes and the manner in which he wore them. He could not bear the sight of people who were slovenly or wore torn clothes when the tear could easily be stitched or darned. He had trained himself in stitching, darning, fixing buttons and such other first-aid work that clothes need.

One day, an associate of Gandhi went to attend to his usual chores with Gandhi. Gandhi pointed out to a tear in his shirt around the collar. The associate tried to explain that he could not get it mended because his wife was not well. Gandhi replied: "A normally neat, clean and well dressed man like you should not become careless. It is not compulsory to wear a shirt, but if you do so, the shirt should be clean and properly stitched. Unclean and torn clothing signifies laziness, ignorance and a lack of culture. A worker should know at least how to mend his own clothes, if not how to tailor them."

Source Based on *Bapu As I Saw Him*: R. N. Chaudhari

48. HUNT FOR THE TINY PENCIL

One day, Gandhi was working at his desk, when he suddenly realized that he had to leave at once to be in time for an appointment elsewhere. He started collecting his papers and arranging whatever he had on his desk with great care and method. Suddenly he stopped, and began to scan through everything that was on the desk. It looked as though he was looking for something that he had lost or misplaced. Kaka Saheb Kalelkar, one of Gandhi's associates, who was standing and watching, could not help asking Gandhi, "What is it that you are looking for?" Gandhi replied that he was looking for a 'tiny pencil' of his, which should have been on the desk. Kaka Saheb immediately took out a pencil from his pocket, and gave it to Gandhi. Gandhi declined. Kaka Saheb insisted thinking that he would save Gandhi's time. He assured Gandhi that he would look for the tiny pencil and keep it on the desk. But in the meanwhile, Gandhi could use the pencil that Kaka Saheb had offered. Gandhi could not be persuaded. He said, "You don't understand. I simply must not lose that pencil. Do you know it

was given to me in Madras by Natesan's little boy? He brought it for me with such love. I cannot bear to lose it."

Gandhi's associates organized a hunt, and finally found the pencil. It was nearly two inches in length. It was restored to Gandhi, who placed it on his desk with glee.

Source: Kaka Saheb Kalelkar: *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*. p 17

49. AUSTERITY EVEN IN PRISON

When Gandhi was arrested and lodged in the Yervada Jail in 1930, the Government had fixed a sum of Rs. 150 for the monthly expenses on him in prison. On the first day, Major Martin (an Englishman) who was the Superintendent of the jail took a lot of furniture, crockery and cooking utensils to Gandhi. Gandhi enquired: "For whom have you brought all this?" Then he asked Major Martin to take everything away. The Major was nonplussed. He thought Gandhi was dissatisfied, with what he had brought. He tried to mollify him, "I have written and told the Government that at least 300 rupees a month should be spent on an honoured guest like you. I have every hope the Government will agree." Gandhi saw that the Major had not understood him. So, he explained: "That is all good. But after all, the money would come from the Indian Treasury, would it not? I do not want to increase the burden on my country. I hope that my boarding expenses will not come to more than 35 rupees a month." If his health had not been so bad, he would have eaten 'C' class food. "But, to my shame, fruit is a sheer necessity. So is goat's milk."

So all the furniture and utensils that the Major had brought were sent away. And in their place came an austere iron cot and mattress, 'C' class utensils — plate and bowl and tumbler made with a metal that was an alloy of tin. In an adjoining room was placed a high stool with a chamber pot. And Gandhi slept in the open space within the yard.

Source: Kaka Saheb Kalelkar: *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*, Navajivan

50. SEEING THE OTHER MAN'S POINT OF VIEW

As I look back upon the talks that I had with him in Delhi in the spring of 1931, two conversations stand out in my recollection. They have always seemed to me a better interpretation of his mind and method than anything else, as showing the way that the idealist and the realist could meet.

The first related to his demand, as part of the arrangement to be made on the cessation of Civil Disobedience, for an enquiry into the actions of the Police over the last twelve months. I resisted this on various grounds, pointing out to him among other arguments that I had no doubt the Police, like everybody else, had made mistakes, but that it was quite futile to attempt, twelve months later to get accurate information of what might have passed in some local brawl or minor riot. All that we should achieve would be to exacerbate tempers on both sides. This did not satisfy him at all, and we argued the point for two or three days. Finally, I said that I would tell him the main reason why I could not give him what he wanted. I had no guarantee that he might not start Civil Disobedience again one of these days, and if and when he did, I wanted the Police to have their tails up, and not down. Whereupon his face lit up and he said: "Ah, now Your Excellency treats me like General Smuts treated me in South Africa. You do not deny that I have an equitable claim, but you advance unanswerable reasons from the point of view of Government why you cannot meet it. I drop the demand."

The other incident was of the same date, and illustrates, if I was correctly informed, both the quality of Mr. Gandhi's courage, and sense of honour. After we had made our so-called Irwin-Gandhi Pact, he came to me the next morning and said that he wished to talk about another matter. He was just going off to the meeting of the Congress at Karachi, which he hoped would ratify our agreement, and he wished to appeal for the life of a young man called Bhagat Singh who had been recently condemned to death for various terrorist crimes. He was himself opposed to capital punishment, but that was not now in debate. If the young man was hanged, said Mr. Gandhi, there was a likelihood that he would become a national martyr and the general atmosphere would be seriously prejudiced. I told him that while I quite appreciated his feeling in the matter, I also was not concerned with the merits or demerits of capital punishment, since my only duty was to work the law as I understood it.

On that basis, I could not conceive anyone who had more thoroughly deserved capital punishment than Bhagat Singh. Moreover, Mr. Gandhi's plea for him was made at a particularly unfortunate moment. For it so happened that on the previous evening I had received his appeal for a reprieve which I had felt bound to reject, and he was accordingly due to be hanged on Saturday morning (the day of our conversation being, if I remember rightly, Thursday). Mr. Gandhi could be getting to Karachi for the meeting of the Congress in the afternoon or evening of Saturday after the news would have come through, and the coincidence of date from his point of view could therefore hardly be more difficult.

Mr. Gandhi said that he greatly feared, unless I could do something about it, that the effect would be to destroy our pact.

I said that it would be clear to him there were only three possible courses. The first was to do nothing and let the execution proceed; the second was to change the order and grant Bhagat Singh a reprieve. The third was to hold up any decision till after the Congress meeting was well over. I told him that I thought he would agree that it was impossible for me from my point of view to grant him his reprieve, and that merely to postpone decision and encourage people to think that there was such a chance of remission was not straightforward or honest. The first course alone, therefore, was possible in spite of all its attendant difficulties. Mr. Gandhi thought for a moment, and then said, "Would Your Excellency see any objection to my saying that I pleaded for the young man's life?" I said that I saw none, if he would also add that from my point of view he did not see what other courses I could have taken. He thought for a moment, then finally agreed, and on that basis went off to Karachi. There it happened much as anticipated; the news had come through; many of the crowd were in highly emotional state, and I was told afterward that he was quite roughly received. But when he had opportunity he spoke in the sense agreed between us.

The two episodes that I have quoted will suffice to show on the personal side what reason I had to value his friendship, and I can think of no person whose undertaking to respect a confidence I should ever have been more ready to take than his."

Lord Halifax - Former Viceroy of India: *Reminiscences of Gandhiji*, ed.

Chandra Shanker Shukla. p. 117-19

51. GANDHI AND THE DACOITS

The veneration that Gandhi's name evoked was evident even among dacoits and robbers who plied their trade in dense forests. The Singoli area of Gwalior State was a thick jungle, and it was dangerous to pass through it without an armed guard. One day a goldsmith went to one of Gandhiji's associates, Shri Ram Narain Chaudhari, and expressed his deep gratitude. Chaudhari could not recall doing anything for which the goldsmith should have felt grateful to him. So Chaudhari wanted to know why the goldsmith was thanking him. The goldsmith then related to him how he had been surrounded by dacoits in the Singoli hills. He had greeted them with *Vande Mataram*. He showed them his khadi clothes, and told them he was Gandhi's man. The dacoits then left him alone, and withdrew into the jungle.

On another occasion Chaudhari himself was passing through the jungle in the company of some peasants. A gang of armed dacoits advanced towards them. The peasants shouted *Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai*. Hearing this slogan, the armed gang retreated, and refrained from molesting the group.

Source: R.N. Chaudhari, *Bapu As I Saw Him*

52. COURAGE IN THE 'COOLIE'

Soon after one of Gandhi's English Associates, Muriel Lester, arrived in India, she was at dinner with an English Civil Servant who was the Magistrate of the District. The English Magistrate, "seeing I had only just arrived in India, said one night at dinner. 'Do you want to know what Gandhi has done for India? Ten years ago, if a coolie had suddenly crossed my path and frightened the horse I was riding, I would probably have sworn at him and shouted: "Get out of my way — you!" He would have cowered before me and disappeared.

Now I should not shout at a coolie like that. But if I did, he wouldn't disappear. He'd instead, stand facing me with complete assurance, look me full in the face, and politely enquire: 'Why should I move?'"

Source: Recalled by Muriel Lester Chandra Shanker Shukla - *Incidents in Gandhi's Life*

53. A LIE TO SAVE A LIFE?

One day I said to Mr. Gandhi: "But supposing Mr. Quinn does come here and is hiding in our house, and some of his enemies come to the door asking for him. Am I supposed to say: 'Mr. Quinn is hiding in the cupboard,' or should I try to put them off by some subterfuge?"

"What do you think you should do?" asked Mr. Gandhi.

"I am inclined to think I should try and put them off." Gandhi: "And if they asked you point-blank if Mr. Quinn were in your house, what then?"

"I believe I should be justified in denying it." Gandhi: "But that would be lying to them." "I know it would be, but my sin, if any, would be simple beside the sin of permitting a man to be murdered, to whom we had given refuge."

"You are a Jesuit in your reasoning," objected Mr. Gandhi. "You are saying that the end justifies the means."

"I do not mind you calling me Jesuit. I think it is often so difficult to know what is right and what is wrong. It is often a choice between two wrongs, and one naturally chooses the lesser."

"You may never choose wrong that good may come of it," concluded Mr. Gandhi.

Based on: Millie Graham Polak — *Mr. Gandhi: The Man*

54. I OWN NOTHING

While at the Woodbrooke Settlement of the Quakers, in 1931, Gandhi told J.S. Hayland of how "one night many years before that time, he had made the resolve that never again, so long as he lived, would he call anything his own; but that he would hold everything as belonging to the community. He told me of the vast resources at his command, and of the eagerness of his followers to do anything he might desire." "Yet, I own absolutely nothing," he declared. "And from the night's decision there came into experience four things — life, power, freedom and joy. If you would know these things, my friend, you must tread the same path."

"If I own anything of which my brother stands in need, I am to that extent a thief." These words came powerfully to my mind. I remembered also that I had been told of how the Mahatma had made five thousand pounds in half an hour, just before coming to Birmingham by giving an audition to a gramophone company; and that not one penny of this large sum would go to himself; it would all be devoted to one of his funds for the suffering poor in India."

Source: John S. Hayland - Chandra Shanker Shukla Incidents

55. GANDHI EXORCISES SUPERSTITION

In 1924 severe communal riots broke out in Delhi. Gandhi went on a 21-day fast to appeal to the consciences of both the communities and to persuade them to put an end to fratricidal strife. Thousands of people from the town and the neighbouring areas used to throng to the house where Gandhi was staying, to share the ordeal and the agony, and if possible to have a *darshan* (glimpse) of the fasting Mahatma. On some days his health caused grave anxiety. Doctors did not want him to bear the strain of meeting visitors. So (Deenbandu) C. F. Andrews, an English associate of Gandhi, took upon himself the responsibility to prevent visitors from going up to the room in which Gandhi was lying.

One day, a couple from a nearby village managed to jostle their way up to the foot of the stair-case that led to the room in which Gandhi was fasting. There they encountered C. F.

Andrews who was all politeness, but was firm in refusing them entry. They were distraught. They had with them a brass pitcher with water, with the mouth well covered and fastened. They implored Andrews to let them in, they were sure that if he heard their story he would not stand in the way of their going to the presence of Gandhi. Their only son was seriously ill in their village home. They had tried all medicines. There was no improvement. He was sinking. They believed that his life could be saved if the Mahatma's feet could be washed with the water they had brought, and their sinking son could have a sip of the water. Andrews was shocked to hear this explanation for their insistence. He was firm in refusing them entry. Moreover, he was sure Gandhi would never permit or countenance such superstitious conduct. While Andrews was still arguing with them, someone standing by suggested a solution, why not take the matter to Gandhi. After hearing everything, if he did not want the couple to go up to him, they would go. They squatted at the foot of the stair-case as Andrews went up the stairs and placed the matter before Gandhi. Gandhi was very weak. But after listening to Andrews, he signaled to him to let them come in. Andrews could not understand how Gandhi could encourage the superstitions of the couple and let himself be treated in this fashion.

However, when the couple came in, Gandhi asked them to sit near his bed, and gave them his thoughts in his weak, sad voice. Did they believe in God? If they did, how could they insult God by transferring their faith to a frail human being? Did they not know that it was degrading to him and to them to get his feet washed in the superstitious belief that the water would turn into medicine? How could they be so ignorant of the laws of God, the laws of nature, and the laws of health and hygiene? He talked to them gently and sadly, but with great affection and compassion. He talked to them for nearly fifteen minutes even in his poor state of health. They saw the truth of what Gandhi said. They emptied their pot, and left for their village, happy at what they had learnt from the saint himself.

Source: G. Ramachandran, *A Sheaf of Gandhi Anecdotes*, Hindi Kitabs. Bombay 1945, pp. 11-13

56. STRANGE COINCIDENCE

The love and veneration of the crowds and their anxiety not only to see him but to touch his feet created serious problems wherever Gandhi went. Once, when Gandhi arrived from Sindh, one of his associates, Kaka Kalelkar, found that Gandhi's legs and feet bore the marks of nails, and were bruised, and bleeding at many places. Gandhi explained to Kaka Kalelkar that he had sustained the injuries while wending his way through crowds. Kalelkar had to wash Gandhi's feet in warm water, and apply balm, and massage the bruised feet.

In Bihar, Gandhi's associate Acharya Kripalani found it hard to protect Gandhi's feet from devotees who found themselves too far from Gandhi to be able to touch his feet with their hands. They therefore used an ingenuous method to reach Gandhi's feet. They tried to touch his feet with the lathis (sticks) they were carrying. Kripalani therefore had to see that Gandhi's feet did not get entangled in the mesh of lathis that were extended to his feet.

When Gandhi's motorcade approached villages, people used to block the roads so that the car would slow down and they could have a closer and longer look at Gandhi. Once near Sasaram, in Bihar, Gandhi's car had to stop because of a tyre-burst. He had to wait till the tyre was fixed. It was drizzling. Krishnadas was standing close to Gandhi on his left. Just then an old lady holding an umbrella over her head and supporting herself on a staff approached Krishnadas with slow steps and asked him the question, "My son, who here is Mahatma Gandhi?" "Standing as I did so near Mahatmaji, I refrained from saying that the person by my side was none other than Mahatma Gandhi because I was feeling shy. So I made no reply, but remained mute. As she repeated her question, Mahatmaji himself put in the query: 'Why should you be seeking him?' At this, the old lady stepping forward said: 'Sir, I am now one hundred and four, and my sight has grown dim. I have visited the various holy places. I have been to Badrikashram. In my own home I have dedicated two temples and made provision for the worship and maintenance of the Deity. Just as we have had Ram and Krishna as Avatars, so also Mahatma Gandhi has appeared as an Avatar. Until I have seen him, death will not come to me.' When she was speaking, tears surfaced in her eyes. She had herself become aware, without my telling her, that the person she was speaking to was none other than Mahatma Gandhi himself. So the next question that she put was: 'Sir, how could this desire or

thirst (for things) be allayed?' Mahatmaji nodded, smiled a little and said: 'This desire, yes, it is impossible to get rid of our bondage so long as there is this desire, this thirst for enjoyment.' Then hearing that she was so old, Mahatmaji wanted to know what kind of food she took, etc. She began by saying that she had been following a very austere mode of life. She described it all. At the time in question, she said that she had been subsisting on very little, for her practice was to take only one syrup made out of Durba-grass during the day. Finding that the old lady was thus freely talking with Mahatmaji, the eight or nine rustics who had in the interval gathered together informed us that she had been standing at the very spot the whole of the day since early morning with the umbrella over head, with no other object than that of having a *darshan* of Mahatma Gandhi. She was now too old to be able to walk about. At that time we had been speeding along with the speed of an arrow; and so if per chance the tyre had not burst at that very spot, she could hardly have noticed anything. Or, if the tyre had burst at some little distance from the spot, it would not have been possible for her to walk that distance, and have a look at Mahatmaji. The tyre had burst only at a distance of four or five yards from where she had been standing. This coincidence of circumstances seemed, indeed, strange."

Source: Krishnadas: *Seven Months With Gandhi*, pp. 34, 35

57. ILLUMINATION AND POOR MAN'S COPPERS

During his tour to campaign against untouchability, Gandhi wanted to address a meeting at Tuticorin (Tamil Nadu). He and Dr. Rajan were driving down from Kerala. As they approached the town, they found that the roads and lanes were chock full of people. It took them a long time to reach the place of the meeting. Night had fallen, and the dais from which Gandhi was expected to address the meeting could be seen from quite some distance, illumined with coloured bulbs, tubelights, and twinkling strands of bulbs. When Gandhi arrived on the dais, there were deafening cheers. But as soon as he settled down, he turned to Dr. Rajan and asked: "Rajan, what is this brilliant illumination? Who pays for it? Is the Reception Committee spending out of the money raised for the Harijan Sevak Sangh? I am out begging even for the poor man's coppers. Surely money collected for the Harijan should not be allowed to be wasted like this." Dr. Rajan tried to assure that no money from the funds of the Harijan Sevak Sangh or even the Reception Committee had been spent on the lighting. It was a contribution

made by the contractor who erected the dais, as a token of his affection for Gandhi. Gandhi was not satisfied. He called the other workers on and around the dais. They gave the same answer. Still, he was not satisfied. He enquired whether the contractor was anywhere around. He was summoned, and produced before Gandhi. Gandhi cross-examined him till he was fully satisfied that the contractor had done it on his own, out of affection, and without any expectation of being recompensed in some other way by the organizers. It was only then that Gandhi turned to the mammoth gathering and spoke of the sin of untouchability and the need to rid Hinduism and India of the blot.

As soon as Dr. Rajan recovered from the shock, he sent telegrams to all centres that were on Gandhi's itinerary cautioning them against spending even a single pie from the funds of the Harijan Sevak Sangh on organizing receptions for Gandhi.

Source: Dr. Rajan's account in — *Incidents of Gandhi's Life* Chandra Shanker Shukla

58. OFFERING FROM A SMALL BOY

When the Second World War broke out in 1939, India was under British domination. There were popularly elected governments in seven out of the eleven Provinces of India. Yet without consulting them, Britain declared that India was at war with Germany, Italy, and later Japan — the Axis Powers. Gandhi and the Indian leaders were sympathetic to Britain and its allies, because they believed in democracy and were against Nazi and Fascist dictatorships. So they asked Great Britain to declare that India too would enjoy the democracy for which they were fighting, at least after the war. The British Government refused.

Meanwhile, the Axis Powers made spectacular advances. They overran most of Western Europe, and Asia, and reached the doorstep of India. In most of the South-East Asian countries including Malaya, Singapore and Burma, British Armies had retreated, and after destroying even standing crops in a scorched earth policy. It appeared as though it would now be India's turn. Gandhi and the Indian leaders were worried that the Indian people would not resist the aggressor with such means as they could muster unless they knew they were fighting for their homeland, a free homeland.

But it appeared that Britain was prepared to lose India to the Japanese, yet was not prepared to leave India to Indians. So Gandhi and the leaders declared their intention to lead a non-

violent movement to force the British Government to "Quit India". India was there before the British came. It would be thereafter the British left. But as soon as the "Quit India" demand was made, Gandhi and the leaders were arrested. Gandhi was detained without trial from August 1942. In the prison his health deteriorated. He had malaria and amoebiasis. Apprehending further deterioration, the British Government released Gandhi in 1944. He went to convalesce in the house of a friend, on the sea beach at Juhu in Bombay.

Thousands of people used to gather in front of the house to have a glimpse of the Mahatma (the Great Soul). It was a hard task for the volunteers to prevent gate crashers and stragglers. One day, among the crowd, there was a small boy holding a worn out basket in his hands, and trying to push his way in through the crowd. The volunteers spotted him, and pushed him aside taking him for a beggar boy. The boy stood aside with tears glistening in his eyes. He told the volunteers, "I am not a beggar. I go to school. When I heard that Mahatma Gandhi was ill, and had been released, I wanted to do something to be of help, and to show my affection for him. I started working as a porter carrying head loads, without my people coming to know of what I was doing. I earned enough money to buy these fruits in the basket. I have brought them as an offering to the Mahatma." The volunteers were moved by the story, and took the boy into the presence of the Mahatma. As the boy stood with folded hands, and his head bowed in reverence, the volunteers related his story to Gandhi. Gandhi patted the boy on his back and offered him a fruit from the basket. The boy declined to accept it, saying that it was his offering to the Mahatma. Gandhi persuaded him, "These are the fruits of your labour. You have the first claim. Come and eat yourself the fruit of your labour." The boy happily accepted the fruit, and walked away with a sense of fulfillment.

Source: *Mahatma Gandhi — The Last Phase*. Volume I. pp. 15-16.

59. MEETING OLD CRONIES

"Atakara was only miles from Badalkot. But it took full one hour to reach it. A very old couple lived in its neighbourhood. They were anxious to meet Gandhiji, but were too infirm to walk the distance. When Gandhiji came to know of it, he said he would visit them in their hut. He went there in the evening. The old man was deaf. Gandhiji affectionately patted him on the cheek as he came up. The old woman, too, came with two necklaces of camphor beads. She handed one of them to her old man, keeping to herself the other, to put round Gandhiji's neck. As the old man came up with his necklace, Gandhiji took it out of his hands and put it round the old man's neck instead — the latter being senior in years. The old dame then came up, put the other necklace round Gandhiji's neck, took both his hands in hers, and reverentially pressed them against her eyes and face and whole body for his blessings. Her gnarled hands and whole body shook with ecstasy as she did so. Gandhiji was deeply moved. His eyes glistened and his countenance beamed with tender affection. "When two cronies meet, there is unsurpassable joy," he remarked.

Source: *M. G. — The Last Phase* by Pyarelal Vol. 1. p. 519

60. STAMPEDES OF DONORS

"Travelling with Gandhiji is a remarkable experience. I accompanied him on his tour in Bengal, Assam and Madras in the cold weather of 1945-46. Everywhere the enthusiasm of the people for him was unbounded. In some cases it was beyond control, and people stopped his train and demanded *darshan* (auspicious glimpse) even at odd hours of the night before they would let the train pass. On the night that we were travelling from Wardha to Calcutta, he was so tired with the noise and the shouting throughout the day that he sat in his seat exhausted, with his fingers in his ears. It was a pathetic sight. He went to bed at 9:30 p.m. with cotton wool stuffed in his ears.... Our worst experience was as we travelled through Bengal to Assam. Mobs stopped the train repeatedly by pulling the alarm chain. They flashed torches on Gandhiji's face to have a look at him, and banged the windows of his compartment to make him get up and give them *darshan*. We were entirely at their mercy. Because of being held up the mail took 13 ½ hours to cover distance usually made in 6^{1/2}

hours. After this bad experience, the Government of Bengal would not allow him to travel by ordinary trains. Gandhiji protested in vain, saying that as a public worker he did not want any special facilities. He believed that public money should not be used for providing comforts to people who were journeying at public cost. The Government, however, was adamant. If ultimately he yielded and permitted a special to be provided for him, it was because he was told that the Railway could not afford to have ordinary trains detained for several hours on the way, and that such delay caused other passengers and the Railway great inconvenience. So thereafter we had to travel by special trains.

During the journey, whenever the train stopped at stations, he collected money for the Harijan Fund. People often underwent torture to get through the crowd to place money in his hand. They pushed their way through, and in the process got crushed, or tore their clothes, or lost their chappals. Still they persisted till they could reach his outstretched hand. It often happened that someone was at the point of placing money in his hand, and Gandhiji was bending (down) to take the gift holding on to the window sill to prevent himself from falling out, the crowd would push and the gift receded. He would laugh like a child heartily stretch his hand out all the more till he secured the money with evident glee. At one station in Andhra, I noticed a woman holding in her hand a pair of gold bangles and trying hard to get to him. She struggled for well over five minutes although she was within a few feet to where he stood. At times she was pushed towards him, at times away from him. She could make little progress and seemed in great distress. In the meantime Gandhiji went off to the other side of the compartment to give *darshan* to the throngs who demanded his presence there. The woman, however, continued to struggle to get to within reach of his window, thinking that he might still come back to it. On seeing this, I spoke to him about her and brought him back. But just as she was pushing through desperately, the train whistled and started off. She made one last frantic effort, but was mercilessly pushed back by the police. And there she stood on the platform, disconsolate and weeping, with the gold bangles still in her hand. For most of us, to give is no pleasure; to this woman as to thousands of poor people, not to give to Gandhiji what was often their sole possession was untold deprivation.

Source: *The Great Experimenter*— By Bharatan Kumarppa, Incidents...

61. DISCRIMINATION BY THE VICTIMS OF DISCRIMINATION

"When Gandhi was in South Africa, he was liable to the same restrictive laws (as the natives and the coloured). So, to protect him, my brother granted him a Certificate of Exemption. I remember an incident which occurred when my brother had invited him one night to dinner. The natives, serving at the table, protested at being called upon to attend to an Indian, and it was only after it had been explained to them that Gandhiji was a great man, just like a native chief, that they were prepared to continue their service ..."

Source : F.E.T. Krause: Judge of the Supreme Court of South Africa, *Reminiscences of Gandhiji*, ed.

Chandra Shanker Shukla, p. 160

62. I WANT YOU, NOT YOUR MONEY

"I saw Gandhiji for the first time in London on 1909, in an English suit and a top hat. A party was given to a friend who had completed his education in England, and I was invited to it. Gandhiji too was there. When he was asked to speak, he got up and said: 'Why do you give him a party? What has he done? He has merely completed his studies. Let him go to South Africa and work there.' That was the tone of his speech even in those days.

The next time I saw him at Kanpur in 1916 in the simple dress of a peasant. The first thought that came to me was that he had become so poor. I pitied his lot, and thought of taking out some guineas from my pocket to give to him. That was my second impression of him.

The third time I met him was in Bihar in 1917, when, on his way to Champaran, he stayed as a guest with my father-in-law, the late Mazhar-ul-Haque Saheb. The fourth time I met him was in 1921. The Ali Brothers had asked me to suspend my practice at the Bar, but I refused to do so and said: 'Why do you want me to suspend my practice? I will give you money, if you want it.' But I had to give in when Gandhiji asked me to suspend the practice, saying: 'We want you and not your money.' (As it was said by St. Paul: I seek not yours but you.' — 2 Cor, 12;14.) "After that," Dr. Mahmud added, "I have been in intimate contact with him. I resumed my practice in 1925 with his permission, and left it finally in 1930, after which I have never practised."

Dr. Syed Mahmud : *Reminiscences of Gandhiji*, ed. Chandra Shanker Shukla, pp. 113-14

63. WALKING WITH EYES CLOSED

Nowadays Bapu often closes his eyes while walking, but walks at his usual speed, with his hands on two persons walking with him on two sides. He begins his silence about the time he starts for the walk, and during the walk hears what other people have to tell him, even though his own eyes are closed. He opens his eyes when we arrive at the main gate on our way back. Today he expressed his delight on being told that my duty nowadays consisted of digging trenches in the field.

G.G. Gurubaxani in *Reminiscences of Gandhiji*, ed. Chandra Shanker Shukla, p. 113

64. PUBLIC MONEY

"His attitude regarding public funds is brought out by an incident within my personal knowledge. He was then organizing collections for the Deshbandu Memorial Fund, and Congress workers had been asked to make house to house collections. One worker charged Rs. 67 out of the collections he had made, for taxi hire incurred by him. Gandhiji strongly objected to this, and said that the worker had no business to pay taxi fare out of the collections; that, if such practices were allowed, the sanctity of public funds would be in jeopardy. He was so stern about the matter that the worker in question had to make good the money from his own pocket, or, may be, from some other source."

Source: When Gandhiji Came to Bengal — By Nalini Ranjan Sarkar. Incidents...

65. THE SANNYASI/ AND PUBLIC WORK

Swami Satyadevji was a *sannyasi*. He was in America for some years, and on his return, had taken *sannyas*, to dedicate himself to the cause of Indian freedom. He was devoted to the propagation of Hindi; and worked for some years in the South teaching Hindi. Once, on his visit to Gandhi's Ashram he went to Gandhi and said that he wanted to join the Ashram and live as an Ashramite. Gandhi welcomed the idea, but said the Swami would have to discard his ochre robes if he wanted to live in the Ashram and work with others. The Swami was shocked at the suggestion that he should discard the robes that he had taken after much reflection, and as a mark of his renunciation and dedication. He asked Gandhi how he could make such a suggestion. Gandhi replied: "When have I asked you to leave *sannyasa*? But, you see, our countrymen have such reverence for the ochre robe, that the moment they see it they start worshipping the wearer and offering him their whole-hearted service." He pointed out to the Swamiji that if he went in his *sannyasi's* robes, people would never permit him to serve them; instead, they would insist on serving him. "So,... we cannot afford to retain anything which might act as an obstacle in the way of our acts of service, *sannyasa*, after all is primarily an attitude of mind, a purpose and resolve. What has it to do with outer vestment? Renouncing the ochre is by no means synonymous with renunciation of *sannyasa*. If tomorrow we go off into the villages and start cleaning the latrines, do you suppose the people will let you do it as long as you have the *sannyasi's* robes on your body?"

Swamiji understood Gandhi's reasoning though he could not bring himself to discard the robes.

Source: Kaka Saheb Kalelkar: *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*

66. DETECTIVES WHO BECAME MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY

When Gandhi went to attend the Round Table Conference in London, the British Government detailed two of their most experienced detectives to guard Gandhi. They were among the chosen few who were generally deputed to shadow members of the Royal Family. They were tall imposing men who towered over most of the people who were around Gandhi. To them Gandhi was "the little man" whom they were privileged to guard and look after. Both of them became very fond of Gandhi. They were willing to do anything to be of service to the "little man". When there was too much work to do looking after guests and interviewers, and the people of the press, they readily and unobtrusively helped the members of the Gandhi entourage. As days went by they began to feel part of the family.

When Gandhi was about to leave London to return to India, a British Official asked Gandhi whether there was anything more he could do for him. Gandhi requested that his two detectives might be allowed to go with him up to Brindisi. When he was asked the reason, Gandhi replied: "Because they are part of my family." The request was granted, and they travelled with Gandhi in his journey in Europe, till he reached Brindisi. There they took leave of Gandhi and returned.

Soon after they reached Britain and Gandhi reached India, the two detectives received two watches sent by Gandhi from India with the inscription "With love from M. K. Gandhi".

Source: Pyarelal, Sushila Nayar, *in Gandhiji's Mirror*, Oxford, 1991, p .23.

67. MARCH IN PRISONER'S ATTIRE

"I recall ... how, after this conviction, and upon his return to Johannesburg some time later, upon being transferred to the local jail, several of us awaited his (Gandhi's) arrival at the Park Station. Among the many watchers were a number of Madrasi hawkers. There descended from the train, attended by a prison-warder in uniform, this small, slim, dark complexioned man, with calm eyes and a serene countenance. He was clad in the garb of a native convict — small military cap ... which did not protect him from the sun, loose coarse jacket, bearing a numbered ticket and marked with the broad arrow, short trousers — one leg dark, the other light, — similarly marked, thick gray woollen socks, and leather sandals. He was respectfully saluted by us all, as he turned quickly to the warder for instructions. He was carrying a white canvas bag, which held his clothing and other effects found upon him when he was received by the jail authorities, and also a small basket containing books. A brief consultation took place between the two. The warder appeared to realize the incongruity of the situation, for he bore himself towards the prisoner with every reasonable mark of respect. For this was evidently a person of some importance, to whom a certain degree of deference must be shown. The subject of conversation was whether the prisoner preferred to go by cab or to walk to the jail He, however, preferred the easier way to march the three quarters of a mile, in broad daylight in his convict suit. Resolutely shouldering his bag, he stepped out. Later he disappeared behind the grim portals of the Johannesburg jail.

Source: Harry S. L. Polak in Chandra Shanker Shukla

68. COWARDICE AND THE HINDU'S TUFT

On his return from South Africa in 1914, Gandhi went to Haridwar and Lakshman Jhula at the time of the Kumbh Mela (Hindu festival which takes place once in 12 years). At Hrishikesh, many *sannyasins* called on him. One of the Swamis saw Gandhi returning from a bath in the Ganges. He saw that Gandhi did not have the customary holy thread or *shikha* — the tuft of hair that Hindus wore on their head. The Swami remonstrated with Gandhi. Gandhi told him that he was not having a holy thread since he did not think it was essential to wear a thread to be a Hindu. He pointed out that many non-Brahmins did not wear 'threads', and yet were

considered Hindus. As for the tuft, he admitted that he had removed it on the eve of his going to England (as a student) for fear that fellow-students and others would ridicule him: "On the eve of my going to England, however, I got rid of the *shikha*, lest when I was bare-headed it should expose me to ridicule and make me look, as I then thought, a barbarian in the eyes of the Englishmen. In fact, this cowardly feeling carried me so far that in South Africa, I got my cousin Chhaganlal Gandhi to do away with it."

Gandhi told the Swami that his suggestion about the *shikha* was worth considering. "I once used to have it, and I discarded it from a false sense of shame. And so I feel that I should start growing it again. I shall discuss the matter with my comrades."

Later, after consultation with his colleagues, Gandhi decided to grow the *shikha*, since he had discarded it out of 'cowardice'. He had the tuft even when he went to England for the Round Table Conference. But later, perhaps, having overcome 'cowardice', he found it unnecessary to keep a tuft.

Source: *Autobiography* - M.K.G.

69. HOW GANDHI TOOK TO THE LOIN CLOTH

In 1921. Gandhi was touring Tamil Nadu to spread the message of non-co-operation. It will be difficult today to believe the eye-witness reports of the way millions of people turned out to receive him everywhere. Villages emptied themselves. The roads and lanes of the towns were choked with milling crowds. Passengers travelling by trains could not step out till the platforms emptied themselves after Gandhi had left the stations. But the crowds were unruly. They could not control themselves. It was often very difficult to protect Gandhi from being submerged by the waves of humanity. People wanted to have his *darshan*, to touch his feet. Gandhi was touched by the love of the people. But he was very sad and pained to see the lack of discipline that he witnessed, practically everywhere. Non-co-operation or Satyagraha depended on disciplined and non-violent collective action. How then could he launch a mass struggle with the state of indiscipline that he found everywhere? He was deeply disappointed that little progress was being made in the spread of khadi (hand-spun cloth.) The Congress had decided that spinning wheels would be distributed, and the production of hand-spun and hand-woven khadi organized through co-operatives of spinners

and weavers. His mind was preoccupied with the need to put the message of khadi before the people in as graphic and effective a way as possible. There was also a feeling that he should atone for his failure to get better response from his co-workers as well as the people.

It appears that an idea came to him in a flash. He should atone and inspire and present an example at the same time. He wrote out a statement on the train at Dindigul, on his way to Madurai: "The document which he had hurriedly written in the train at Dindigul, and which, afterwards he had asked me to copy and despatch to different places was a manifesto to the public, proclaiming that as a sign of mourning, he would discard for a month his dhoti, vest and cap, and content himself with a mere loin cloth; and, when needed, an additional piece of cloth to be thrown over the upper part of the body. He called upon all those who were too poor to buy Khaddar, to adopt this sort of dress — the Fakir dress, and remain satisfied with this irreducible minimum of clothing."

"That night at Madurai Mahatmaji received visits from members of different communities, but though he was freely conversing with everybody, he still appeared to me as wearing an unusually grave and thoughtful countenance.... Then at 10 p.m., a barber was called in to shave his head. The man came and first reverently took the dust of Mahatmaji's feet, and proceeded to shave with all possible care. He felt himself honoured at having the highest privilege of thus touching Mahatmaji's body; and he declined to take anything as remuneration for his work in spite of repeated offers made by us."

The grave countenance which Mahatmaji now wore, and his general behaviour at the time, as also the manifesto to the public which we had seen in the original induced in the hearts of Mahatmaji's followers and associates a feeling of indefinite fear. It was clear in their minds that this change of costume was not meant to last for a month only; some were even apprehensive that this was but the beginning of his life as a '*sannyasi*'. There was thus grief in the hearts of all of us, and there was the shadow of anxiety on every face. With a heavy heart we, all of us, sat round him till late in the night, attempting by a word or two to divert him from his thoughts.

The next morning, Mahatmaji was to journey by motor to Karaikudi, a distance of some sixty miles from Madurai. Mahatmaji rose very early, and proceeded to change his dress. His cap and vest he altogether discarded, and he had made a little khaddar bag to carry the things he

used to put in the pocket of his vest. Then he wore a new piece of khaddar not more than a cubit in width round his loins. Mr. Rajagopalachari and Dr. Rajan now came and employed all kinds of arguments to dissuade Mahatmaji from his purpose. Failing in all their efforts, they finally pressed him to wait for a few days more before taking the final step, but Mahatmaji gently explained his position and persuaded them to withdraw their request. First of all, he assured them that it was no part of his intention to turn into a '*sannyasi*'. The new style of dress he was adopting, he said, was nothing strange to the people there, —for in the Madras Presidency people mostly went about with half-naked bodies. Again, in Madras Province khaddar was least in evidence, and the power of khaddar least felt; nor was there any discipline or order observable among the people. Looking to all these things, Mahatmaji said that his heart was bleeding and his present dress was but an expression of the intense pain he was feeling. He realized that this change of dress would inflict the heaviest of shocks on the hearts of the Gujaratis, and he knew that he was subjecting Gujarat to a sore trial. Therefore, he had pondered very deeply indeed before finally deciding upon this course. Looking at Mr. Rajagopalachari, Mahatmaji said with a smile: "I may not be able to convince you, but I am absolutely clear about the correctness of the step I have taken." Mahatmaji said, he had woken up at three in the morning, and all those early hours of the morning he gave this matter his deep thought, and he went on to describe the solemn stillness of those hours, broken only by the music of the chirping of birds. He was going to say something more, but he seemed to check himself rather abruptly. I alone had slept in his room that night. I woke up once at 3.30 a.m. and turned my eyes towards him, but I had no suspicion that he was not asleep. Being, however, much fatigued on account of the journey, with my limbs aching, I had again fallen asleep.

When he had completed his change of attire Mahatmaji made ready to start for Karaikkudi. Four cars were waiting at the gate to take him and his party. The people of Madurai had left their beds to be in time, and gathered on the road to have a sight of Mahatmaji. When he went and took his seat in his car in his new attire, all stood with their heads bent in sorrow; and as the car set out on its journey, the ruddy streaks of light of the rising sun fell full on his bare head and his bare limbs, and he looked a radiant mass of light."

(Source: *Seven Months With Gandhi* — By Krishnadas, G.A.N. (1926) pp. 203-204-205)

70. REV. ANDREWS, THE VILLAGER

In 1918, Gandhi was staying at Principal Rudra's house in Delhi. The Rev. C. F. Andrews was once a teacher in the St. Stephen's College of which Rudra was the Principal. One day Rev. C. F. Andrews and Gandhi were going out for a walk when a student who had seen them together came running in and told other students that Andrews Saheb (Mr. Andrews) was taking a villager along to convert him to Christianity. The students came running out, only to find that the one in rustic clothes who was walking with Andrews was none other than Gandhi.

Source: Brij Kishor Chandiwalé — *My Bapu*

71. THE KING EMPEROR AND GANDHI'S LOIN CLOTH

In 1932, the British Government decided to hold a Round Table Conference in London. The purpose of the Conference was to reach an agreement on the outlines of the Constitutional reforms that were necessary in India. The Government nominated most of the participants. The Congress too was invited to send its representatives. It decided that Gandhi would be its sole representative at the Conference. The Conference was held in the St. James Palace in London, in a hall that had all the paraphernalia of Imperial glory. Many of the participants too were dressed in the regalia of princely Rulers or Lords and Knights of the Empire. Among them sat Gandhi in a loin-cloth that reached up to his knees, with a woollen shawl thrown round his chest to protect himself from the severe cold of the winter in London. He could not be persuaded to wear anything more. He said he was at the Conference as a representative of the poor, half-clad people of India. As their true representative, he could not clothe himself more luxuriously.

The officials who were in charge of protocol and the organization of the Conference soon confronted another, an even more serious, problem in protocol. The King Emperor George V had decided to receive the delegates in a banquet. What were they to do with Gandhi? Were they to exclude him on the ground that he would not be in appropriate dress for the occasion? Would it not be taken to mean a political affront? To get over the problem, many officials and some delegates directly or indirectly tried to suggest to Gandhi that he should

regard the Royal banquet as a special occasion and go to attend the party wearing the dress that was worn on such occasions. Gandhi refused to budge or compromise. He said he was to be invited because he was a delegate; he was a delegate because an organization that represented the poor had chosen him as their sole delegate. How could he betray his 'principals'? He went to the Palace for the banquet wearing the same loin cloth and shawl that he wore at the Conference, and everywhere else in England and Europe, everywhere in India. His Majesty the King Emperor and all the high dignitaries of the Court had to see this "half-naked fakir" at the banquet. What was worse was that Gandhi was the centre of attraction, and not the King Emperor or others!

Then the moment came when the two, His Majesty and Gandhi had to meet and exchange greetings at the party. The King Emperor moved towards Gandhi with evident irritation and hauteur. Gandhi greeted him with folded hands. The Emperor could not restrain himself. He asked Gandhi, "I hear you are making trouble for me and inciting people against me?" Gandhi was not irritated or unnerved. He told the Emperor: "Your Majesty, I am here as your guest. I do not want to bring up controversial matters here." The Emperor withdrew and moved to the next guest.

When the party was over, and delegates came out the Press surrounded Gandhi, and asked him how he felt meeting the King and attending the Party dressed in loin-cloth; he replied that the King had enough clothing for both of them.

Source: Tendulkar: *Mahatma* — Vol. III

72. LOIN CLOTH AND THE FRENCH CUSTOMS

On his way to London to attend the Round Table Conference, Gandhi's ship docked at Marseilles. French journalists were scandalized at the sight of Gandhi in his loin cloth and shawl. To their question whether he would go about the streets of London in that attire, Gandhi replied with a disarming smile: "You, in your country, wear plus fours, but I prefer minus fours." At the custom, he declared: "I am a poor mendicant. My earthly possessions consist of six spinning wheels, prison dishes, a can of goat's milk, six home-spun loin cloths and towels and my reputation which cannot be worth much."

Based on: D.G. Tendulkar — *Mahatma*, Vol. III

73. IF YOU TAKE MY LOIN CLOTH AWAY, I SHALL NOT CALL THE POLICE

When Gandhi was in London to attend the Round Table Conference convened by the British Government, he delivered an address at the Guild Hall, London on the significance of voluntary poverty. He concluded: "And those who have followed out this vow of voluntary poverty to the fullest extent possible — to reach absolute perfection is an impossibility, but the fullest possible extent for a human being — those who have reached the ideal of that state, testify that when you dispossess yourself of everything you have, you really possess all the treasures of the world." He went on, "But you will say, Mr. Gandhi, you are wearing a piece of cloth. To whom does it belong? And I shall have to admit that, as long as I have a body, I must wrap it with something. But, if any one wants to take it off me, he can have it. I shalln't call the police." A body of eighteen policemen with whom the British Government had provided Gandhi, burst into a roar of laughter as he turned a look on them, and the whole audience followed suit.

Based on: D.G. Tendulkar — *Mahatma*, Vol. III

74. THE PLASTER THAT SHOCKED THE DOCTOR

I can see Mr. Gandhi, now, propped up with pillows, his lacerated face swathed with bandages, unable to speak, and writing answers to questions on a slate before him. Strangely, many of his visitors wrote the questions down on the slates too, not realizing that he could hear, even if could not speak.

One night, when he was feeling very weak, we gathered outside his door, and sang to him some well-known Christian hymns. "Lead kindly light," his own request, was one of them, and it seemed to give him great satisfaction.

The healing of the wounds was slow, and he got impatient. He told my father that, if he could get a plaster of "clean mud" on his face, he was sure it could help. So off I was sent with spade and bucket to clean away the top soil and get uncontaminated lower earth for the plaster. We made the mud plasters, and my mother applied them. Well do we remember the consternation of the doctor when he found what had been done. He threatened to wipe his hands of responsibility for his patient — but in two days Mr. Gandhi was sitting out on the verandah, in the study arm-chair, and eating fruit."

Source: C.M. Doke - Son of Rev. J.J. Doke in C.S.S. *Incidents of Gandhi's Life*, pp. 40-41

75. GANDHI AND CHICKEN SOUP

Dr. Syed Mahmood was a well-known leader of the national struggle in Bihar. On one occasion, when he was quite ill, he went to meet Gandhi in his Ashram at Sevagram. Seeing the condition of Dr. Mahmood's health, Gandhi asked him to stay in the Ashram till he was well enough and strong enough to bear the strain of heavy work. But Dr. Mahmood demurred. On Gandhi's insistence, Dr. Mahmood explained his difficulty. The doctor who was treating him had prescribed 'chicken soup' as essential for recovery. No one could have chicken soup in the Ashram, since no non-vegetarian food was allowed there.

Gandhi surprised him by telling him that, that was no reason for him to leave the Ashram, and go elsewhere for recovery. "Should not the inmates of the Ashram understand? I will see that you get well made chicken soup. I will ask one of the girls to make good soup for you. I

will not entertain any excuses from you. I will give the orders. I am a good doctor too, and you will remain under my care. See how fast your health improves."

With that Gandhi made arrangement for Dr. Mahmood to remain in the Ashram, and have his chicken soup.

As Dr. Mahmood recalls: "It was perhaps a new thing for Sevagram Ashram, and naturally there was a flutter in the Ashram. I protested strongly, that I should not have it, but he refused to listen to me and said that when the doctor prescribes you must have it. The Ashram people may not themselves have meat but they must learn how to feed others if and when it was absolutely essential.... He simply captivated my heart."

Source: In the Cool Shadow of Ba and Bapu (Hindi), Manuben Gandhi and

Dr. Mahmood's letters to her, pp. 219, 221

76. 'MINDING' THE GRANDSON

At the time of the Rajkot Satyagraha, Kasturba Gandhi insisted on going to take the place of Maniben Patel and Mridula Sarabhai who had been arrested. Ramdas Gandhi's young son had been with her some time. The boy had become very attached to her. After she went to Rajkot, he became very sad and used to cry for his grandmother or "Motiba". Nobody could manage him. Gandhiji was too busy. But he had to take up the matter in the end. He sent for the child and told him that he would soon be with Motiba. The little imp was at once all smiles. Gandhiji took out a *mala* (rosary) and gave it to him. He told him the story of little Dhruva, and then-advised him to sit down in meditation in imitation of the child saint. When he had done so, Gandhiji told him to tell the beads repeating 'Motiba' each time. "If you do that with absolute concentration and without a break, Motiba will be with you in person." And so little Kana (the grandson) sat down with eyes closed, counting the beads in all seriousness, with all the concentration that he was capable of. The family had a little relief and could attend to their work. From time to time little Kana would open his eyes and complain, "Motiba has not yet come." Gandhiji reprimanded him in mock seriousness: "That is because you interrupt your meditation time and again. In this way, she won't come at all." And so it went on for two or three days. In the meantime Gandhiji had made arrangements for the boy to be sent to his mother at Dehradun.

Source: Sushila Nayyar in Chandra Shanker Shukla – Incidents

77. FOR DOMESTIC PEACE

When the All India Village Industries Association was set up, Gandhi went to stay at its headquarters in Maganwadi, Wardha. One of the rules of the community was that everyone should take part in all activities that related to the daily life of the community. This included sweeping and cleaning the latrines, cooking, scrubbing and washing the heavy utensils used in the kitchen and so on. Once Gandhi was in the batch that had to do the scrubbing and cleaning of the vessels in which food was cooked. The other member of the batch was J. C. Kumarappa, the well-known associate of Gandhi who was a recognized exponent of Gandhi's economic thought. The two sat down near the well, with coconut fibre, ash and sand and were engrossed in scrubbing the soot and black stains on the vessels. Suddenly, Gandhi's wife, Kasturba appeared on the scene. It was too much for her to see the Mahatma sitting cooped up with a big dirty vessel, and black oily soot right up to his elbows. She watched for a little while, and then burst out in Gujarati telling Gandhi that what he was doing was not what a person like him should be doing. Gandhi sat dump-founded and burst out in a smile. He persisted. But she would have none of it. She sat down by his side and swiftly swooped on the vessel and took it away from his hands and started scrubbing. She asked him to leave and do something else. He was left with the coconut fibers in his hands.

Gandhi looked at Kumarappa and said with a laugh: "Kumarappa, you are a happy man, you have no wife to rule you this way. I suppose I have to obey my wife to keep domestic peace. So you must excuse me."

Source: J. C. Kumarappa's Recollections in Chandra Shanker Shukla's *Incidents of Gandhi's Life*

78. A PARENT'S ORDEAL

After his return from South Africa, Gandhi decided to set up legal practice in Bombay. As he was settling down, his son Manilal fell ill with a severe attack of typhoid combined with pneumonia. The temperature was so high that there were signs of delirium. A doctor was called in. He recommended eggs and chicken broth. Gandhi could not possibly agree to his son being given either of these. He wanted the doctor to recommend something which was vegetarian. The doctor said, "Your son's life is in danger.... I think you will be well advised not to be so hard on your son."

Gandhi told the doctor: "What you say is quite right. But my responsibilities are great. If the boy had been grown up, I should certainly have tried to ascertain his wishes and respected them. But here I have to think and decide for him. To my mind it is only on such occasions that a man's faith is truly tested. Rightly or wrongly, it is part of my religious conviction that a man may not eat meat, eggs and the like. There should be a limit even to the means of keeping ourselves alive. Even for life itself, we may not do certain things.... I must therefore take the risk that you say is likely. But I beg of you one thing. As I cannot avail myself of your treatment, I propose to try some hydropathic remedies which I happen to know. But I shall not know how to examine the boy's pulse, chest, lungs, etc. If you will kindly look in from time to time to examine him and keep me informed of his condition, I shall be grateful to you."

The doctor agreed. When Gandhi's son woke up, Gandhi told him about his talk with the doctor. The son agreed with Gandhi.

Gandhi tried the Kuhne system of treatment, and kept the patient on orange juice mixed with water for three days.

But the temperature persisted, going up to 104 degrees. The patient was delirious. Gandhi began to get anxious. "What would people say of me? Could we not call another doctor? What right had the parents to inflict their fads on their children?"

"I was haunted by thoughts like these. Then a contrary 'current would start. God would surely be pleased to see that I was giving the same treatment to my son as I would give myself. The doctors could not guarantee recovery. At best they could experiment. The thread of life was

in the hands of God. Why not trust it to Him, and in His name go on with what I thought was the right treatment?

"My mind was torn between these conflicting thoughts. It was night. I was in Manilal's bed lying by his side. I decided to give him a wet sheet pack. I got up, wetted a sheet, wrung the water out of it and wrapped it about Manilal, keeping only his head out, and then covered him with two blankets. The whole body was burning like hot iron, and quite parched. There was absolutely no perspiration.

"I was sorely tired. I left Manilal in the charge of his mother, and went out for a walk on Chaupati to refresh myself. It was about ten o'clock. Very few pedestrians were out. 'My honour is in Thy Keeping, Oh Lord, in this hour of trial,' I repeated to myself. Ramanama was on my lips. After a short time, I returned, my heart beating within my breast.

"No sooner had I entered the room than Manilal said, 'You have returned Bapu?' (father.)

'Yes, darling.'

'Do please pull me out, I am burning.'

'Are you perspiring my boy?'

'I am simply soaked. Do please pull me out.'

"I felt his forehead. It was covered with beads of perspiration. The temperature was going down. I thanked God.

"I just managed to keep him under the pack for a few minutes by diverting him. The perspiration streamed down his forehead. I undid the pack and dried his body. Father and son fell asleep in the same bed."

Manilal recovered in a few days.

Source: *Autobiography* - M.K.G.

79. ANOTHER ORDEAL — THIS TIME THAT OF A HUSBAND

On one occasion, when Gandhi was at Johannesburg, he received a telephone call from the doctor who was treating Kasturba. She had become too weak even to sit up on her bed. She had become unconscious on one or two occasions. The doctor felt that the only way he could treat her was by giving her beef-tea. So he wanted Gandhi's permission. Gandhi declined to give permission, but added that he would have no objection if the doctor asked Kasturba, and she was willing to take it. The doctor said that he was not willing to let patients decide their diet or medicines. So he said that he would not hold himself responsible for Kasturba's life, if he was not allowed to determine her diet and medicine.

Gandhi arrived in Durban the same day. The doctor told him that he had already given beef-tea to Kasturba before he had telephoned Gandhi. "Now, doctor, I call this a fraud," said Gandhi.

The doctor did not agree that it amounted to a fraud. It was part of what doctors had to do, often, to help a patient recover. The doctor was a good friend of Gandhi's. But Gandhi was very upset. He told the doctor that he would never permit his wife to be given beef-tea, "even if the denial meant her death, unless of course she desired to take it".

The doctor was adamant. He said he could not take the responsibility of treating a patient if he did not have the freedom to decide her diet or medicine. He told Gandhi: "If you don't like this, I must regretfully ask you to remove her. I can't see her die under my roof."

Gandhi asked: "Do you mean to say that I remove her at once?" The doctor explained that he did not ask him to remove her, but only wanted to give the doctor freedom to treat the patient as he felt was in the best interest of the patient.

Then Gandhi spoke to Kasturba herself. "She was really too weak to be consulted in this matter. But I thought it my painful duty to do so. I told her what had passed between the doctor and myself. She gave a resolute reply: 'I will not take beef-tea. It is a rare thing in this world to be born as a human being, and I would far rather die in your arms than pollute my body with such abominations.' I pleaded with her. I told her that she was not bound to follow me. I cited her the instances of Hindu friends and acquaintances who had no scruples about

taking meat or wine as medicine. But she was adamant." And she asked to be removed at once.

Gandhi was 'delighted'. He told the doctor of her decision. The doctor was furious: "What a callous man you are! You should have been ashamed to broach the matter to her in her present condition. I tell you your wife is not in a fit state to be removed.... I shouldn't be surprised if she were to die on the way. But if you must persist, you are free to do so. If you will not give her beef-tea, I will not take the risk of keeping her under my roof even for a single day."

Gandhi decided to leave the place at once. It was drizzling. The station was some distance away. They had to reach the station, take a train from Durban to Phoenix, and from there take her to the Settlement which was more than two miles away from the Phoenix station. 'I was undoubtedly taking a very great risk,' thought Gandhi, 'but I trusted in God and proceeded with my task.' Gandhi sent a messenger to Phoenix in advance, asking Mr. West to receive them at the station "with a hammock, a bottle of hot milk, and one of hot water, and six men to carry Kasturba in the hammock." He got a rickshaw to the Durban station, and took her by the next available train to Phoenix.

Kasturba needed no cheering up. She comforted Gandhi by assuring that nothing would happen to her.

She was skin and bone. Gandhi carried her in his arms and put her into the compartment. From Phoenix she was carried in the hammock. In the Settlement she slowly picked up strength.

In two or three days a Hindu Swami arrived at the Settlement. He tried to persuade Kasturba to take meat or beef-tea as medicine since the scriptures, according to him, allowed such diet in emergencies. Kasturba put an end to the dialogue at once. She said: "Swamiji, whatever you may say, I do not want to recover by means of beef-tea. Pray don't worry any more."

Source: *Autobiography* - M.K.G.

80. GANDHI AND KASTURBA'S ANAEMIA

"The most remarkable cure that I knew of, from the commencement of the Indian trouble to the end, concerned Mrs. Gandhi herself. She was about forty at that time, and had been ailing for a long while. She had consulted a doctor, who treated her, but she grew worse, and eventually her condition, which had become serious, was diagnosed as pernicious anaemia. She was then living at Phoenix. Mr. Gandhi was in Johannesburg, and my husband and I were living in Durban. A night arrived when a hasty messenger came from Phoenix for us and the doctor. We got the last train to Phoenix and arrived, between eleven and midnight, at the bedside of Mrs. Gandhi, feeling very anxious.

We found her in a state of collapse, and whilst the doctor tried his restoratives, we, with the members of the family, waited. The night was got through, and as soon as possible Mr. Gandhi was telegraphed for. Mrs. Gandhi would not permit "Bapu" too be bothered so long as she had had the power to prevent it. But with her collapse things were taken out of her hands. Mr. Gandhi arrived the next day, and in the meantime Mrs. Gandhi had rallied slightly. No possible hope, however, was given of her recovery, and at the most only a week or two of life could be looked for.

Mr. Gandhi put everything on one side and devoted himself entirely to her. During one of her conscious periods he asked her if she trusted him absolutely. She replied in the affirmative. Then he said: "Will you let me try and help you?" This she agreed to, placing herself entirely in his hands. After this he stopped all medicines and refused to allow the doctor to try and force his patient to take meat extracts. The doctor abused Mr. Gandhi, who, however, stood firm. Then, almost in despair and anger, the doctor practically threw up the case.

For the next two weeks Mr. Gandhi scarcely left his wife's side. He fed her at intervals with pure lemon juice, and no other food or drink of any kind was given to her. He poured his calm nerve energy into her, and did for her all the little delicate duties that a very sick woman required. For these two weeks, Mrs. Gandhi semi-consciously struggled for life, but by the end of that time a marked change was noticeable. The conscious periods were much longer, sleep became more natural, the dropsical swellings became less, and the eyes began to look clearer. Then by slow degrees, a little fruit and milk were given, and lastly vegetables without

condiments, and cereals. And without a single relapse, Mrs. Gandhi slowly but surely returned to health. Although that is over twenty years ago, she has not had a serious illness since, though she has endured a very difficult and strenuous life.

Mrs. Gandhi's recovery from pernicious anaemia at that time was almost in the nature of a miracle, for it was still looked upon as one of the fatal diseases, and very few cases indeed of recovery were on record."

Source: Millie Graham Polak — *Mr. Gandhi The Man*

81. THE CALF AND MERCY KILLING

Once a calf from the dairy in the Ashram (Sabarmati) fell ill. It was writhing in pain. Many remedies, were tried. Experienced hands from the nearby villages and the veterinary surgeon from the city of Ahmedabad tried to relieve the pain of the calf and cure it of its ailment. But nothing worked. The calf was in constant pain. Anyone who saw it could hardly look on unaffected. When Gandhi saw the calf, he called together his close associates to discuss what could be done. When he found that there was no way of relieving the calf of its pain, and no chance of its recovering, he broached the question of putting an early end to its misery. "It is the height of cruelty to go on prolonging its agony like this," he said.

But there were two views on the question. The calf of the cow is regarded as holy by many Hindus. They could not contemplate putting an end to the life of the calf. There was also the danger that the orthodox who were already against Gandhi for his views on untouchability and other matters, would use the incident to carry on a campaign against him and discredit him in the eyes of Hindus.

Even Sardar Patel said: "We are just leaving for Bombay to collect funds — not a pie shall we get. Our work will suffer terribly."

Gandhi heard everyone in silence, appreciating everyone's views, and gravely considering all arguments. Even Kasturba, his wife, was shocked at the thought of putting an end to the life of the calf. She remonstrated with him. He told her that if she undertook to nurse the calf to health, he would agree. She went and saw the calf writhing and throwing up its legs and kicking the sky as well as the ground on which it was writhing. She could not bear the sight. She went back to Gandhi and said she was resigned to what seemed to be the only solution.

Gandhi told those who had doubts: "What you say is perfectly correct. But it is impossible for us to sit still and do nothing while that calf writhes its last moments in agony. I believe that it would be sheer wickedness to deny to a fellow creature the last and most solemn service which we can render it."

After having heard everybody and having made up his mind, Gandhi sent a note to someone who had a gun to come and shoot the calf. The man came, but told Gandhi there were other

ways to putting an end to the life of the calf. An injection would quieten the calf, and put it instantly to sleep. So a doctor was summoned, and he ended the suffering of the calf.

As was to be anticipated the controversy about the morality and the 'sin' of killing the calf raged for many months.

Source - Kaka Saheb Kalelkar: *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*

82. THE ILLEGAL WIFE

"One day after cleaning the toilettes and taking my bath, I went to the kitchen around 9.30. Gandhiji also arrived there almost at the same time. Kasturba was already there. She had already prepared the '*ata*' (kneaded dough) necessary to make '*rotis*' (thin fresh baked bread). She started rolling out the '*rods*', and I started baking them on the iron plate. Gandhiji was attending to some minor chores. While doing these, all of a sudden, he asked Kasturba:

"Do you know something?"

"What?" asked Kasturba, rather inquisitively. Gandhiji replied with a smile, "Up to this day you were my truly wedded wife. But now you are no longer my wedded wife."

Kasturba raised her eyebrows and said: "Who said this? You discover some new problem everyday."

Gandhiji laughed and said: "Where am I looking for new problems? General Smuts says that since our marriage was not registered in the Court or done according to Christian rules, [as Christian marriages are done], it will be considered illegal. Therefore you will no longer be considered my legal wife, but will be considered my mistress."

Kasturba flared up: "Something is certainly wrong with his brain. From where do such ideas crop up in his head?"

Gandhi replied briefly and pensively: "But what will you women do now?"

"What will we do?" Kasturba asked.

"You too fight as we are fighting. If you want to be a truly married woman, and not an illegal mistress, and if your honour is dear to you, you also fight against the Government.

"But you go to jail!"

"You also get ready to go to jail for your honour." Hearing this, Kasturba was surprised. She said: "To jail? Do women also go to jail?"

"Yes, to jail. Why can't women go to jail? Why can't women bear the pleasures and sorrows that men bear? Sita accompanied Rama; Taramati accompanied Harishchandra; Damayanti went with Nala. And all of these went through immense suffering in the forests."

Hearing Gandhi's analysis, Kasturba exclaimed: "All of them were divine beings. Where do we have the strength to walk in their footsteps?"

Gandhiji replied with solemnity: "What is so difficult in this? If we conduct ourselves like them, we can also become like them, become divine beings. I can be of Rama's family, and you, of Sita's. I can become Rama, and you can become Sita. If Sita had not accompanied Rama for the sake of *dharma*, no one would have called her Mother Sita. If Taramati had not allowed herself to be sold to honour Harishchandra's vow to cling to Truth at all costs, there would have been something lacking in Harishchandra's dedication to Truth. No one would then have called Harishchandra a votary of Truth, nor called Taramati *sati*. If Damayanti had not joined Nala in putting up with the suffering and ordeals in the forest, no one would have looked upon her as a *sati*. Now if you want to retain your honour, you want to be my legally wedded wife, and you want to rid yourself of the blot of being a mistress, then you fight the Government and get ready to go to jail."

Kasturba kept quiet. I was waiting to hear what reply she would give. I was feeling thrilled at all that I was hearing. Meanwhile, Kasturba spoke: "So you want to send me to jail somehow? This is all that remained for you to do. But will the food that one gets in the jail agree with me?"

"I am not telling you to go to jail. If you feel the urge to go to jail to protect your honour, go; and if the food you get in the jail does not agree with you, go on a fruit diet."

"Will the Government give me a fruit diet in prison?"

Gandhiji then proceeded to tell her how she could get a fruit diet.

"Fast till they give you a fruit diet."

Kasturba laughed and said: "How nice! You have now shown me the way to die. I feel that if I go to jail, I will certainly die."

Gandhiji nodded and laughed: "Yes. That is what I too want. If you die in prison I will worship you as the Mother — Goddess of the Universe."

"Yes then I am ready to go to jail," asserted Kasturba.

Adapted from Raojibhai Patel — *Gandhiji ki Sadhana* – Navajivan

83. CHASTISES WIFE FOR 'THEFT'

On his return from the Calcutta Session of the Congress, Gandhi found that some lapses had occurred in the Ashram. He denounced the offenders publicly through *Navajivan* (his journal). The statement received wide publicity as he chastised, among others, his wife Kasturba, and called her a "thief". Some visitors to the Ashram had given her rupees four which as an inmate of the Ashram who had taken the vow of non-possession, she should have handed over to the Ashram authorities. She did not do so. "The Ashram authorities came to know of it and reminded her. She gave the amount to them." Writing about it Gandhiji said: "She felt repentant and in all humility, she gave back the money and vowed that such a thing would not be repeated. I believe hers was an honest repentance. She has taken a vow that she would leave me and the *mandir* (Ashram), if any other lapse committed in the past is detected, or if she is caught doing the same thing in the future. The *mandir* has accepted her repentance. If the inmates forgive her and she stays in the *mandir*, she will enjoy the same honoured place as before."

Recalled by Acharya Kripalani: *Gandhi — His Life and Thought*

84. WHEN GANDHI ASKED KASTURBA TO QUIT

Even as a young boy Gandhi did not believe in untouchability. He could never understand how a human being could be 'untouchable'. He therefore disputed his mother's injunction not to touch Ulaka, the 'untouchable' boy. He often went out of his way to touch the boy, and then reported to his mother that nothing had happened to him. Kasturba, Gandhi's wife did not find it so easy to overcome the superstitious prejudice. She had to struggle with herself. Gandhi was very stern, and was not willing to make any exception. Not only should his wife discard the superstition and prejudice, but she should practise no discrimination whatsoever. Even that would not do. She should be happy to do what she had to do to demonstrate that she had no prejudice.

Once in South Africa, the Gandhi home at Durban had a guest who belonged to the 'untouchable' community before his family converted to Christianity. Gandhi and Kasturba used to clean the pots and commodes used by the members of the family as well as guests. Kasturba was reluctant to clean the commode used by the guest who came from the untouchable caste. She demurred and argued, and was in tears, asking Gandhi why he was forcing her to do this against her liking. Gandhi was in a rage, and said that one who made such distinctions and refused to clean the commode of an 'untouchable' guest had no place in his house. Kasturba asked him whether it was not her house as well. He had no time for argument. He led her by the hand, opened the gate, and was pushing her on to the road, when, with tears streaking down her cheeks, she asked him to return to his senses, and realize what he was doing. She asked him whether the scene he was creating at the gate on the road would do good to anybody. Suddenly Gandhi realized the gravity and enormity of what was happening. She was his wife. She had been a partner of his woes and struggles, and the '*sadhana*' (spiritual endeavour) he was undergoing. South Africa was a foreign country. They had no relatives or family friends. Where was Kasturba to go? He was full of remorse, and took Kasturba in. That day, he learnt a great lesson in Non-Violence. His wife (Kasturba) taught him what it was to resist injustice with the weapon of non-violence or love.

Source: M.K.G. — *Autobiography*

85. GANDHI, KASTURBA AND UNTOUCHABILITY

It was not easy for Kasturba to get over her reluctance to take food cooked by the so-called untouchables. When Gandhi came back to India from South Africa, he set up his first Ashram at Kochrab in Ahmedabad. In the Ashram all inmates had to take responsibility for the work of the community in turns. When it was the turn of the 'untouchable' members to cook, Kasturba would go without food.

At night, other inmates of the Ashram could hear Gandhi remonstrate: "I will not tolerate untouchability in the Ashram. If you insist on making these distinctions between human beings, go and live in Rajkot (from where Gandhiji's family came). You cannot live with me and practise untouchability.

In the morning Gandhi's sons Ramdas and Devdas would take up the thread. "You did not have these scruples in South Africa. What has come over you here?" — And she would reply: "That was a foreign land, how can I break the rules and conventions of my society here?"

Source: Kaka Saheb Kalelkar — *Stray Glimpses 'of Bapu*

86. NO COMPROMISE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST UNTOUCHABILITY

Gandhi established the Gujarat Vidyapith (National University) in 1921. In one of the early meetings of the Senate, C. F. Andrews who was attending by invitation, raised an important question: Will the Vidyapith be open to Harijan students (students belonging to the 'untouchable' castes)? Kaka Saheb Kalelkar immediately exclaimed: "Of course, the Vidyapith will be open to Harijan students." But it was soon found that some among those who were present were not in favour of such a 'drastic' step. Some of the affiliated institutions also demurred. It was then decided to refer the matter to Gandhi. Gandhi did not take even a minute to give the answer. He saw no distinction between one human being and another. Harijans or 'untouchables' were as much entitled for admission as students of other castes or religions.

The news of this revolutionary decision made many orthodox Hindus quite restive. They did not want Gandhi or the Vidyapith to go so far and alienate many caste Hindus. A few wealthy merchants from Bombay went to Ahmedabad to meet Gandhi. They told him that they were fully behind him in his effort to build up the Vidyapith as a National educational institution. They would be prepared to give whatever financial support was needed. But could he not, please, keep his anti-untouchability campaign out of the new educational institution? Gandhi was swift in his reply: "Leave alone the Vidyapith Fund; if somebody were to offer me even Swaraj as a bribe towards keeping untouchability alive, I would not touch it with a pair of tongs."

Source: Kaka Saheb Kalelkar: *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*

87. DOES SUFFERING HAVE A SUNDAY?

On a Sunday morning, in South Africa, a client came to inform Mr. Gandhi that he had just been arrested on a very serious charge, and had been released on bail. He wanted Mr. Gandhi to appear for him in court the next day. One of Gandhi's associates, Mr. Polak, who had noticed that Mr. Gandhi was being rather badly over-worked, expostulated with him for receiving the client on Sunday, when he should have been recuperating his mental and physical forces. Mr. Gandhi's reply was a gentle but penetrating rebuke:

"A man who is suffering misfortune knows no Sunday rest! This man is unhappy and anxious. How can I shut myself away from him, even if he is, as in the present case, guilty?"

Based on: Millie Graham Polak — *Mr. Gandhi: The Man*

88. GANDHI AND THE MILL HANDS OF LANCASHIRE

As a part of the Indian struggle for Independence, Gandhi started a movement for economic regeneration and economic self-reliance. He called it the Swadeshi movement. The movement not only included the indigenous manufacture of essential goods, but also the boycott of foreign goods. It was widely believed that the country-wide campaign for the boycott of foreign textiles had an adverse effect on the British textile industry which was centred in Lancashire. It was also believed that the Indian boycott of textiles from Lancashire contributed to unemployment and consequent suffering for the textile workers of Lancashire.

Gandhi was aware of the resentment and anger and anti-Indian feelings that were spreading in Lancashire. He wanted the workers of Lancashire to know that his movement was not aimed at them, but was only aimed at protecting the identical rights and interests of the Indian workers. He therefore availed himself of an early opportunity to visit Lancashire on September 22. He wanted to meet the people who were hit hard by the boycott movement. "I am pained," he said, "at the unemployment here. But here is no starvation or semi-starvation. In India we have both. If you went to the villagers, you would find utter despair in the eyes of the villagers, you would find half-starved skeletons, living corpses. If India could revive them by putting life and food into them in the shape of work, India would help the

world. Today India is a curse. You have three million unemployed but we have three hundred million unemployed for half the year. Your average unemployment dole is seventy shillings. Our average income is only seven shillings and six pence a month. Even in your misery, you are comparatively happy. I do not grudge that happiness. I wish well to you all, but do not think of prospering on the tombs of the poor millions of India. I do not want for India an isolated life at all, but I do not want to depend on any country for my food and clothing. Whilst we may devise means for tiding over the present crisis, you should cherish no hope of reviving the old Lancashire trade. Do not attribute your misery to India. Think of the world forces that are powerfully working against you. See things in the dry light of reason."

He stayed for two days in Lancashire and argued the Congress case with the working people. "Do you wish to prosper by stealing their morsel of bread from the mouth of the Indian spinner and weaver, and their hungry children?" he asked the Lancashire mill operatives. Their curiosity was aroused, and they asked questions about the agricultural conditions in India and why the standard of living was so poor, and so on. "We understand each other now," they said. "It is a privilege to have seen Mr. Gandhi, a mighty force thrown up by the awakening East."

Source: *Mahatma* - by D. G. Tendulkar. Vol. III, p. 155

89. EVER MINDFUL AND CONSIDERATE

During the fast which Gandhi undertook against the Communal Award that excluded the Harijans (Depressed Classes) from the rest of Hindu society and created separate electorates, Jack Winslow went to see him in the prison at the Yervada. "He was lying on a cot in the open court under a tree; and, as I approached, I struck my head on an overhanging bough."

"A few days later, I went again to see him; and as I approached, Bapu (Gandhi) lifted a warning hand and said: 'Mind the branch.' With visitors coming all day, it was amazing that he could remember so trivial a matter concerning one unimportant person."

Based on: Jack Winslow in *Reminiscences of Gandhiji* ed. Chandra Shanker Shukla, Vora & Co.

90. POPULAR WITH THE EAST ENDERS

While in London for the Round Table Conference, Gandhi insisted on staying in the East End of London, where the working class and the poorer sections resided. He became increasingly popular with the East Enders. A neighbour crippled with rheumatism sent a message to Gandhi that he could not leave his home but wanted very much to chat with him round his kitchen fire. A blind man in St. Andrews Hospital sent him a message of greeting and of disappointment at missing him. Two days later the whole ward was spruced up at six in the morning to entertain the honoured guest. "A skimmy little bloke with a funny face — that's how the papers had shown Mr. Gandhi to us," said a neighbour. "I took a lot of notice of him because I live just opposite. I watched all his ways. I reckon he is a man you must admire."

Based on: D. G. Tendulkar — *Mahatma*, Vol. III

91. GANDHI AND BROCKWAY'S INSOMNIA

In 1927, the Indian National Congress and the Indian Trade Union Congress held their annual sessions in Madras. Fenner Brockway, a well-known friend of India in Great Britain, was in Madras to attend the Conference as a fraternal delegate of the Independent Labour Party of the United Kingdom. At one time, Fenner had been the Secretary of the British Committee of the Indian National Congress.

As ill luck would have it, Fenner was injured in a car accident a little before the Congress opened. He could not, therefore, attend the Sessions of the Congress. But when Gandhi came to know that Fenner Brockway was injured and immobilized, and was in the General Hospital, he went to meet Fenner in the Hospital. Everyday, while the Congress was in session, and Gandhi must have been hard pressed of time, he drove down to the General Hospital, and spent some time with Fenner Brockway. One day, it was Gandhi's day of silence. He understood that Fenner was not too well that day. He made enquiries with questions jotted on a piece of paper. Fenner told him that he was not able to sleep at nights because of severe pain. Then, Fenner reports: "He (Gandhi) took my hand, and an extraordinary calm came over me. That night I slept without a drug for the first time."

Source: F. Brockway in Chandra Shanker Shukla

92. THE UNUSUAL CHIEF GUEST

Around the year 1909, Indian students studying in the various colleges and universities in Great Britain decided to organize a get together to remind themselves of their Indian heritage and the Indian aspiration for freedom. They decided to organize a dinner and talk, and looked for an outstanding or well-known Indian politician who could be the chief guest and deliver a befitting address. They did not succeed with the many leaders they tried. Then they turned to Gandhi who was known as the leader of the Indian struggle in South Africa. Gandhi agreed on condition that the dinner would not be in a hotel or restaurant, but would be organized by the students themselves. They would do the cooking, serving, dish-washing and all the rest. This was a tall order for the rich young men who had gone to England to pursue their studies. But they agreed, and decided to start operations by the afternoon itself so that the dinner would be ready by the appointed time, 7.30 p.m.

As they were working in the underground cellar of the restaurant, a pleasant looking young man turned up around 2 p.m. He busied himself washing and drying plates, and cleaning and cutting vegetables. He was doing all this with single-minded devotion and remarkable efficiency. Nor was he letting his attention wander, talking to anyone else. Everyone thought he was one of the many Indian students in the United Kingdom. He had been working with concentration for many hours when one of the chief organizers, Mr. Ayyar turned up in the kitchen, and recognized the young man. He was Gandhi, the chief guest of the evening.

Efforts were made to dissuade Gandhi. But he continued to work till he laid the plates and dishes and helped in setting the table. Then he reluctantly sat at the head of the table for dinner, and spoke to the Indian students of his vision of India's future.

Source: Dr. T.S.S.Rajan's Record of *First Meeting with Gandhi*, Chandra Shanker Shukla

93. THE AFRICAN ATTENDANT

In 1922, the British Government sentenced Gandhi to six years of imprisonment. He was lodged in a jail at Yervada, near Poona. The Government did not want any Indian, even a convict in the prison to come into close contact with Gandhi. They were afraid that even hardened 'criminals' might become victims of their love and loyalty for Gandhi. So they hit upon an idea. Among the prisoners who had been convicted for criminal offences there was an African ('Negro.') He did not know English. Nor did he know any Indian languages. He could hardly utter a few words in English. For the rest he could only gesticulate. The authorities of the prison chose him as Gandhi's attendant. This, they thought, would ensure that Gandhi had a glum, ferocious, uncommunicative jail mate attendant.

But one day, the African was stung by a scorpion. He was screaming and writhing, and took himself to Gandhi. Gandhi understood what had happened. He held the African's hand and washed it clean. After cleaning the wound well, he sucked the injured area hard, extracting as much of the poison as he could, and spitting it out. This brought much relief to the African. He was practically free from pain. Gandhi then applied tincture and bandaged his arm. The African was overwhelmed by the affection that he received from Gandhi. Gandhi's profound love and its spontaneous and immediate expression in service, even running the risk of the effect of the poison on himself, melted the African completely. From that day he became a 'devotee' of Gandhi, revelling in every opportunity to anticipate his needs and serve him. He even learnt to spin to emulate and please his 'master'.

Source: Kaka Saheb: *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*, p .6

94. AT KING GEORGE'S BANQUET

"He was equally frank with the King. When His Majesty told Gandhi that he was a "good man" when he had met him during his visit to South Africa and up to 1918, but then something had gone wrong with him, Gandhi maintained a dignified silence. When, however, the King questioned: "Why did you boycott my son", he replied, "Not your son, Your Majesty, but the official representative of the British Crown." Further when the King proceeded to tell him that a rebellion could not be tolerated and had to be put down, and the King's government kept going, Gandhi could not allow the statement to go unchallenged. With his characteristic courtesy and firmness, he interpolated: "Your Majesty won't expect me to argue the point with you." Someone referred to his scanty dress, and he replied with a twinkle in his eyes: "The King had enough on for both of us."

Source: *Mahatma* - By D. G. Tendulkar Vol. III, p. 159

95. GANDHI AND MUSSOLINI

At six in the evening Gandhi, accompanied by Miraben and Mahadev Desai, went to see Mussolini. Visitors to the Duce were made to walk the full length of a huge hall up to the table where Mussolini sat in stately eminence. But on this occasion, he came down the hall to meet Gandhi. And after ten minutes the Duce accompanied Gandhi as far as the door. The official communique said that the interview lasted twenty minutes. Mussolini asked Gandhi whether he expected to win independence for India through nonviolence. He also wanted to know what Gandhi thought of the fascist state that Mussolini had built. With disconcerting frankness, Gandhi said that Mussolini was merely building a house of cards. Gandhi was not at all impressed by the dictator's personality. "His eyes are never still," he observed.

Source: *Mahatma* - by D. G. Tendulkar, Vol. III, p. 181

96. GANDHI AND BERNARD SHAW

"I know something about you and felt something in you of a kindred spirit," said George Bernard Shaw to Gandhi when he dropped in at Gandhi's residence at Knightsbridge, London (during the Round Table Conference). He shook hands with Gandhi, and called himself 'Mahatma Minor'. "You and I belong to a very small community on earth," Shaw remarked. They sat together for an hour and talked on a variety of subjects.

Based on: D. G. Tendulkar — *Mahatma*, Vol. III

97. THE FIRST IMPRESSION

In 1932, Gandhi arrived in the United Kingdom to attend the Round Table Conference (on Constitutional Reforms and the Indian demands). John Haynes Holmes was one of the many dignitaries waiting to receive him and meet him. "I wiped the rain from my glasses, and gazed out through the mist to the open sea. There was the steamer, a little craft in white, emerging from the horizon like a sheeted ghost. As she made fast at the pier, only one man, the official representative of the British Government, was allowed on board. All the rest of us — friends of Gandhi, delegates from India, the Dean of Canterbury, newspaper reporters and photographers — were left standing in the rain, with a great crowd of sight-seers behind the barriers. But the delay was brief. In a few moments we were aboard the ship, and I was standing at the door of Gandhi's cabin awaiting my turn to be received.- It was here I had my first glimpse of the Mahatma. He was sitting cross-legged upon his berth, in earnest conversation with Reginald Reynolds, a young English Quaker, who had been a resident at the Ashram in India and had become famous as the bearer of Gandhi's letter to the Viceroy on the eve of the march to Dandi. Gandhi's legs were bare, his body wrapped to the neck in the ample folds of a khaddar shawl. His head and shoulders were bent forward in a listening attitude. A naked arm, long and lean and wiry, reached out to the shawl and took a paper from Reynolds's hand. There was a quick interchange of word, a flitting smile and the conference was over.

"It was now my turn. I stepped into the little cabin. Instantly Gandhi jumped to his feet, and with a lithe, quick step of a school-boy, came forward to greet me. I felt his hands take mine in a grasp as firm as that of an athlete. I saw his eyes shining with a light so bright that not even the thick glass of his crude spectacles could obscure their radiance. I heard his voice addressing me in tones as rich and full as they were gentle. We had a few precious moments together, I was confused and excited, and today have little memory of what was said. But at his first meeting it was not words but feelings that were important. I was in the presence of the man whose spirit had reached me, years before, across the continents and seas of half the world, and now this presence was stamping its indelible impression upon my mind.

"What was this first impression of Gandhi, as distinguished from the others which came later? I do not find it difficult to answer this question. It was an impression of the beauty of the man! Where do people get the idea that Gandhi is ugly? Why have they described him as a "dwarf and "little monkey of a man"? It is true that his limbs and body are emaciated — his ascetic life produces no surplus flesh. But his frame is large, and his stature erect and is medium height; I have seen many Indians who are much more insignificant in appearance than Mahatma Gandhi. It is true also that his individual features are not lovely. He has a shaven head, protruding ears, thick lips and a mouth that is minus many of its teeth. But his dark complexion is richly beautiful against the white background of his shawl, his eyes shine like candles in the night, and overall is the radiance of smile like sunshine in a morning landscape. What impresses you is not the physical appearance but the spiritual presence of this man. You think at once of his simplicity, his sincerity, his innocence. He approaches you with all the naturalness and spontaneity of a little child. There is not an atom of self-consciousness in Gandhi — in spite of all his greatness in the world and all the adulation which has been heaped upon him, he has no pose, no pretentiousness, no pride. You realize at once that his peculiar aspects of appearance and his peculiar ways of life have nothing fraudulent about them, but are the honest and fearless expression of a transcendent personality. Therefore you do not think of how he looks, but only of what he is. You see truth, in other words, shining through the imperfect garment of the flesh. It is this which makes Gandhi beautiful. For truth is beauty!"

Source: *Gandhi As We Know Him*, John Haynes Holmes, pp. 97, 98, 99

98. NOT ALL THE MAJESTY OF THE KING COULD MATCH THIS ROYALTY

A 'great audience' had gathered at the Friends' Meeting House in London to meet and welcome Gandhi. "As I saw him enter this auditorium, I was impressed again by the beauty of his personality, and now also by its power. With what dignity he walked upon this platform; with what serenity he surveyed this English scene; with what command he took possession of these men and women! To an intruder who knew nothing of Gandhi, nor of the momentous character of the occasion, there might have been something ridiculous in the picture. Here was this Indian striding into the room with his feet bare, his legs naked to the thighs, his middle bound by the loin-cloth, his body wrapped and rewrapped in the ample folds of his khaddar shawl. But as he took his seat, and sat there calm and motionless as Buddha, the ridiculous, if it ever was present, was straightway diffused and dissolved into the sublime. I shall never forget the sense of awe that settled like an atmosphere upon that room. For the first time I understood the secret of Gandhi's influence over the millions of his fellow-countrymen. Had a king been present, we could not have felt more reverence in his presence. Suddenly I found myself remembering the testimony of Mr. Bernays, a sensitive English journalist, who said: 'The moment you see Gandhi, you catch the atmosphere of royalty. I had seen and talked with the man who, for more than thirty years, had been the most brilliant monarch of his day. This man was nobly dressed, attended by his court, himself a fascinating, gracious and splendid figure. But not all the majesty of this king could match the royal air of Gandhi.'"

But Gandhi not only looked like a king, he spoke like a king. His words that afternoon were gently uttered, in a voice quiet, almost monotonous. But as they reached our ears, they were the words of a royal proclamation. He made three points clear: First, his credentials! He came to England, he said, not as an individual, but as the representative of his people. "I represent, without any fear of contradiction, the dumb semi-starved millions of India." Secondly, his mandate! He came not to bicker at, or to bargain with Britain, but to present the terms of the All India Congress. "As an agent holding a power of attorney from the Congress," he said. "I shall have my limitations. I have to conduct myself within the four corners of the mandate I have received from the Congress.... If I am to be loyal to the trust which has been put in me, I must not go outside that mandate." Lastly, his goal! What did the mandate exact?

"Freedom," said Gandhi. "The Congress wants freedom unadulterated for these dumb and semi-starved millions. No compromise here, no equivocation!" He spoke as one having authority — and with the voice of prophecy.

Source: *Gandhiji As We Know Him*: John Haynes Holmes, pp. 100, 101, 102

99. FIGS AND GOAT'S MILK

"The time had come for Gandhi to leave Europe (after the Round Table Conference). One of his last visitors was the youngest daughter of the King of Italy.

Princess Maria had brought him a basket of fruit. 'They are Indian figs,' she said. 'I have brought them for your journey to Brindisi.' Gandhi was delighted and inspected the daintily packed fruit. He thanked her, but added: 'They are not figs.' The Princess assured him that they were *Fichi d'India*. 'What we call figs are not like this,' he argued. 'But whether they are figs or not they will taste just as sweet on the journey, whatever their name.' He thanked her once more. 'Her Majesty the Queen packed them for you.' The lady-in-waiting said. 'It was very kind of her,' he remarked.

"On December 14, as he was about to step aboard s. s. *Pilsna* at Brindisi, he was offered milk from a cup of the fifth century before the Christian era. 'Is it goat's milk?' he asked. 'It is goat's milk,' several voices replied eagerly.

"The impression left by Gandhi on the best minds of Europe was given by Romain Rolland in a letter to an American friend of his: 'how i should have liked to have you here during the visit of the Indians, they stayed five days, from the 5th to the 11th December, at the villa vionette. the little man, bespectacled and toothless, was wrapped in his white burnouse, but his legs, thin as a heron's stills, were bare, his shaven head with its few coarse hairs was uncovered and wet with rain, he came to me with a dry laugh, his mouth open like a good dog panting, and flinging an arm around me leaned his cheek against my shoulder. I felt his grizzled head against my cheek, it was, i amused myself thinking, the kiss of St. Dominic and St. Francis.'

'Then came Mira — Miss Slade — proud of figure, with the stately bearing of Demeter, and finally three Indians, one a young son of Gandhi, Devadas, with a round and happy face. He is gentle, but little aware of the grandeur of his name. The others were secretaries, disciples, two young men of rare qualities of heart and mind — Mahadev Desai and Pyarelal.

"As I had contrived shortly beforehand to get a severe cold on my chest, it was to my house and to the chamber on the second floor, where I sleep at Villa Olga, that Gandhi came each morning for long conversations. My sister interpreted with the assistance of Mira, and I had a Russian friend and secretary, Miss Kondacheff, who took notes on our discussions. Some

excellent photographs by Schlemmer, our neighbour from Montreux, recorded the aspect of our interviews.

"Evening, at seven o'clock, prayers were held in the first-floor salon. With lights lowered, the Indian seated on the carpet, and the little assembly of the faithful grouped around; there was a suite of three beautiful chants — the first an extract from the Gita, the second an ancient hymn from the Sanskrit texts which Gandhi has translated, and the third a canticle of Rama and Sita, intoned by the warm, grave voice of Mira.

"Gandhi held other prayers at three o'clock in the morning, for which, in London, he used to wake his harassed staff, although he had not retired until one. This little man, so frail in appearance, is tireless; fatigue is a word which does not exist in his vocabulary. He could calmly answer for hours the heckling of a crowd, as he did at Lausanne and Geneva, without a muscle of his face twitching. Seated on table, motionless, his voice always clear and calm, he replied to his adversaries open or masked — and they were not lacking at Geneva — giving them rude truths which left them quite silenced and suffocated.

"The Roman bourgeoisie, and the nationalists, who had at first received him with crafty looks, quivered with rage when he left. I believe that if his stay had lasted any longer, the public meetings would have been forbidden. He expressed himself as unequivocally on the question of national armaments and the conflict between capital and labour. I was largely responsible for steering him on this latter course.

"His mind proceeds through successive experiments into action and he follows a straight line, but he never stops, and one would risk error in attempting to judge him by what he said ten years ago because his thought is in constant evolution. I will give you a little example of it that is characteristic.

"He was requested at Lausanne to define what he understood by God. He explained how, among the noblest attributes which the Hindu scriptures ascribed to God, he had in his youth chosen the word 'truth' as most truly defining the essential element. He had said, 'God is Truth.' 'But', he added, 'two years ago I advanced another step, I now say, 'Truth is God'. For, even the atheists do not doubt the necessity for the power of truth. In their passion for discovering the truth, the atheists have not hesitated to deny the existence of God, and, from their point of view, they are right.' You will understand from this single trait the boldness and

independence of this religious spirit from the orient. I noted in him traits similar to Vivekananda.

"And yet not a single political ruse catches him unprepared. And his own politics are to say everything that he thinks to everybody, not concealing a thing.

"He is very sensitive to the religious chants of his country, which somewhat resemble the most beautiful of our Gregorian melodies and he has worked to assemble them. We also exchanged our ideas on art, from which he does not separate his conception of truth, nor from his conception of truth that of joy, which he thinks truth should bring. But it follows of itself that for this heroic nature, joy does not come with effort, not even life itself without hardship. 'The seeker after truth hath a heart tender as the lotus, and hard as granite.'

"Here, my friend, are a few hints of those days of ours together on which I have taken detailed notes. What I do not dwell on to you is the hurricane of intruders, loiterers, and half-wits, which this visit loosed on our two Villas. No, the telephone never ceased ringing; photographers in ambuscades let fly their fusillades from behind every bush. The milkmen's syndicate at Leman informed me that during all the time of this sojourn with me of the 'King of India' they intended to assume complete responsibility for his victualling. We received letters from 'Sons of God'. Some Italians wrote to the Mahatma beseeching him to indicate for them the ten lucky numbers for the next drawing of the weekly national lottery."

Source: *Mahatma* - By D. G. Tendulkar. Vol. III. pp. 181, 182, 183, 184

100. STEALING TO LIVE

When Gandhi qualified to practise as a barrister, and returned to India, he had to struggle for briefs. He was so shy and tongue-tied that on one occasion, when he got up to cross-examine a witness, he could not find his voice. He sat down, and returned the fees that he had taken. Another lawyer had to carry on with the case.

But in South Africa, he gradually blossomed into an outstanding lawyer. He had a high reputation for his knowledge of law, laws of evidence, skill to get at facts, and effective presentation to the Court. He enjoyed a high reputation among his professional colleagues. The Courts held him in the highest esteem.

Everyone knew Gandhi's loyalty to truth. He would never stand up in Court and plead "not guilty" for a man whom he knew to be guilty. He would only plead extenuating circumstances. If at any time during the proceedings he discovered that he had been misled and the client was really guilty, he never hesitated to throw up his brief and leave the Court.

But the way Gandhi interrogated the client before deciding whether he could accept his brief often threw light on Gandhi's view of life. In one such case that came to Gandhi, a man charged with stealing wanted Gandhi to defend him. When Gandhi interviewed the accused man, he interrogated him closely, and very soon the man confessed that he had committed the crime.

"But why did you do it?" asked Mr. Gandhi. "You knew you were stealing, and you knew the penalty. Why then did you do it?"

"I had to live," replied the man with finality.

"You had to Live?" echoed Mr. Gandhi softly. "Why?"

Millie Graham Polak who heard this conversation says: "I have often thought of this episode since, and Mr. Gandhi's "Why?" at the end. It was so indicative of the working of his mind. Why have you to live? What are your contributions to life? Were the questions perpetually before him?"

Source: M. G. Polak: *Mr. Gandhi The Man* - Vora 1949

101. DISCOVERS HIMSELF AT MARITZBURG

That was the night on which Gandhi discovered himself. Shivering in the cold of Petermaritzburg, that night Gandhi thought of the meaning of life. He was a human being, and yet was being treated as though he was not one. His humanness was being denied. The dignity that was inherent in him was being violated. What was he to do? Was he to assert his rights and guard his dignity or was he to reconcile to humiliation and slavery, merely to earn a few pennies or save his skin? Was money greater than honour? Was living more important than protecting his dignity as a human being? It was a cruel choice. But one could not escape it by turning one's face away. Was one to fight or surrender? Was one to be a party to one's own humiliation and slavery? Can one desire freedom if one is not willing to fight for it? — pay its price in suffering? The powers ranged against him were mighty. He had only his will and the power of the spirit with him. He decided that he would not flee the battlefield. He would not co-operate in his own humiliation. He would resist without rancour, and do whatever was necessary to bring about a change in the mind of the evil-doer. He would distinguish between the evil and the evil-doer, and struggle to eliminate the evil by weaning the evil-doer through persuasion and suffering.

Source: *Autobiography*

102. EXPERIMENTING WITH TRUTH

Gandhi described himself as a seeker after Truth. He believed that one should seek and follow Truth in every field of life. One could pursue the quest for Truth only if one had a scientific temper, and was willing to experiment and go by evidence. He, therefore, conducted experiments in every field of life. He started experimenting with his diet as early as his student days in London. He continued his experiments in South Africa, and later in India. He encouraged his friends and colleagues to conduct experiments, and asked them to be meticulous in controlling the conditions of experiments, observing and recording effects and submitting them for scrutiny. He himself regulated his diet with the precision of a scientist or a doctor dispensing medicine. At one time, when his diet consisted of goat's milk, raisins and fruit, those who attended on him had to weigh and measure out these items, "with a druggist's exactness and care". Pyarelal recalls an occasion, "When I... gradually increased the number of raisins from nineteen to twenty-three, he gave me a sermon on the danger of blind affection. Menu for the next meal was adjusted carefully each time, according to how the system had responded to the previous meal, the amount of sleep he had or expected to have, and the physical and mental strain already undergone or in prospect."

Quotation from Pyarelal: *Gandhi As I Saw Him*, Chandra Shanker Shukla

103. MOMENT OF MYSTIC UPLIFT

"I next saw Gandhi on Sunday night at a religious service in which his friends and some men and women from the neighbourhood participated. The Mahatma sat on the platform, not in a chair but on the floor, wrapped in a shawl, with a rug thrown about his bare legs. He spoke to us, from his sitting posture, on prayer, — his experience of prayer. He stated that he believed in God, and therefore of course prayed. He told us what prayer had done for him. "Without prayer," he said, "I could do nothing." As he went on in his quiet way, telling us of his experience, with this most intimate discipline of the spiritual life, his voice became very soft and low. I doubt if many persons in the room, back of the front rows where I was sitting, could hear what he was saying. The Mahatma seemed more and more to sink into himself. His address became a process of self-communion, or communion, right there before our eyes, with one greater than ourselves. But words were not necessary at such an hour! Gandhi's presence was diffusing an atmosphere in the little room which gripped us in its spell. It was a moment of mystic uplift never to be forgotten."

Source: *Gandhiji As We Know Him*: John Haynes Holmes, p. 104

104. PLEASING ALL GODS

"The papers say," said Sardar Vallabhbhai one day to him, "that Lord Linlithgow sent an advance copy of his speech to you. Was it for suggestions or alterations?"

"It is a delicious lie which needs no suggestions or alterations, but a summary rejection."

"But," said the Sardar, laughing, "You have a knack of pleasing all gods. In the very article where you have a good word to say for the Viceroy's speech, you have something nice to say for Jayaprakash and the Socialists too!"

"Oh, yes," said Gandhiji joining the laughter, "that was what my mother taught me. She would ask me to go to the Haveli and also to Shiva Temple, and you may be interested to hear that when we were married we were taken to worship not only to all the Hindu shrines but to a Fakir's shrine as well!"

Source: *Gandhiji As We Know Him*: Mahadev Desai, p. 128

105. NO PISTOL CAN SAVE ME, ONLY GOD CAN

One day Gandhi was going to a meeting in South Africa. One of Gandhi's associates, Kallenbach, had heard that the Whites were planning to attack Gandhi. So Kallenbach quietly slipped a revolver into his pocket as he was getting ready to accompany Gandhi. Gandhi was annoyed. He asked Kallenbach to throw the revolver away. He asked Kallenbach: "Is your trust in God or in that revolver? ... there is no need whatever for you to come with me.' I need no protection. Am I not safe in God's hands? As long as He desires to make use of me, He is bound to keep me safe."

Source: Kaka Saheb Kalelkar — *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*

106. GANDHI AND THE RULES OF THE GAME

"Another scene that comes to my mind is one of our friend (Gandhi) trudging up the hill, to the Fort (Johannesburg) beside a policeman. He was not handcuffed — they trusted him too well for that indignity — and my sister and I walked parallel to him on the other side of the road that runs on the west of the hospital. We tried to attract his attention without letting his escort see us, but his face was straightforward. It was not until he reached the prison gate that he turned, saw us, and waved a hand, before the heavy doors closed on him for another spell of imprisonment. We admired him. He was to us an example of the greatest self-sacrifice."

Source: C.M. Doke - Son of Rev. J.J. Doke in Chandra Shanker Shukla, *Incidents in Gandhi's Life*

107. AT THE GREAT TRIAL

By 1921, the campaign of non-violent non-cooperation with the British Government had made considerable headway. Thousands of young men had left British educational institutions. Thousands of lawyers all over India had given up practising in British Courts of law, and had become 'Non-co-operators'. They were either serving terms in jail or working in the villages. Many thousands of nationalists from all professions were in jail. Non-co-operation was the programme of the Muslim Khilafat Committee as well as the Congress. Gandhi was going round the country propagating the message of Satyagraha and non-co-operation. The Government had not taken action on him. But they arrested Maulana Mohammed Ali, the leader of the Khilafat movement on the plea that he had delivered speeches that tampered with the loyalty of the soldiers in the Army and the other servants of the Crown. Gandhi's answer was to tell the Government that what the Maulana had said could already be found in the resolutions and statements of the Congress. He further asked people to read out the impugned speeches of the Maulana at open meetings. Yet Gandhi was not arrested. The tempo of the non- co-operation movement was building. Congress decided to convert it into a Mass Civil Disobedience Campaign. It was decided that the Bardoli Taluka of the Surat District in Gujarat would be the first to start Mass Civil Disobedience. Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy informing him that the Mass Civil Disobedience would commence from Bardoli and then would be extended to other districts.

Within two days of this letter, something unforeseen happened. A crowd of processionists at Chauri Chaura in Eastern United Provinces had got provoked by the police, and had returned to attack the Police station. The station was set on fire. The Constables who took refuge in the station tried to flee from the fire. The crowd caught them and hacked them to death. This was a clear instance of barbarous and cruel violence and indiscipline. Gandhi felt that he could not launch a Mass Civil Disobedience movement when people had not learned the importance of discipline or the spirit of non-violence. He therefore decided to suspend the plan for Civil Disobedience.

Many leaders of the Congress were highly critical of Gandhi. There was widespread dismay in the country. The British Government thought that Gandhi's aura had disappeared; that he

had lost the support of the masses; people were disillusioned with Gandhi, and the hour had come for the Government to strike.

Gandhi was arrested, and put on trial. He was charged with sedition, and tampering with the loyalty of His Majesty's loyal soldiers and civil servants. The specific charge against him was based on three articles he had written in his weekly *Young India*, quite a few months ago.

Gandhi was produced before a Magistrate in Ahmedabad on the 18th of March, 1922. The Court was packed to capacity, overflowing with officials, colleagues and sympathizers. "I give here below a sketch of my impressions of the great Gandhi trial, to which I was an eyewitness, on the 18th March, 1922. For it helps me to recall a vision which shall remain one of the cherished reminiscences of my life. Never was romance and reality rolled into a more vital unity than in that sublime spectacle.

"As a member of the Working Committee of the Congress, I had that day the privilege of occupying one of the reserved seats in the court-house. But the 'court-house' was only one term in a whole series of misnomers on that occasion. The reader can well imagine what ideas the name of a State-trial brings in its train. But here everything was completely reversed. This State-trial was not so much a trial by the State as a trial of the State itself. And all else was naturally consonant.

"This was a mean, white washed, inelegant, insipid, room of the true barrack fashion. A hundred people could easily overcrowd it. From the interloper who for want of an admission ticket spied with one eye from the farthest window, up to the Judge who presided over the trial, was one continuous assembly of human forms. Knit together, as it were, by the real physical nexus. No one, high or low, among the hundred there could keep his distance.

"The Judge. I thought, was the most pathetic figure among them all in that memorable trial. Never was he charged with a more unpleasant duty. Never did he feel as he did on that day that an accused under judgement could be really superior to the judge himself. The bloom on Mr. Broomfield's face had faded. A hectic pallor had taken its place. Neither the natural correctness of conduct nor the consciousness of prestige could keep off the creeping nervousness from him. For once in his official life a Civilian English Sessions Judge nodded respectful salutation to a native in the dock before he himself took his seat on the Bench. For once were the judicial words of penal sentence belied by the tributary words of human

admiration. 'Would I not rather sit at your feet and learn a little of your nobility than send you to jail for six years?' — words like these might easily have come from the inner lips of Mr. Broomfield when he stole a parting glimpse of Mahatma Gandhi.

"And what shall I say of the accused himself? Clad only in a khadi enlargement of the proverbial fig-leaf, there was Mahatma Gandhi, with submission to none and yet with goodwill to all, the grand accused, whom it was Mr. Broomfield's rare privilege to try and judge. When he was brought from the jail to the court-house his guard looked more like an escort of honour. With his nimble feet he stepped into the court-room, and with one universal smile he at once shed a halo of the holy spirit of the blessed passive resister upon the whole assembly, from which even his prosecutors could not extricate themselves. But I doubt whether they really did not like to share in that glory. The accused was not only supremely serene but looked even festively joyful to a degree. No Counsel in robes or without robes appeared for him. He was himself his own Counsel. And paradoxical as it may seem, also his own accuser. He needed no file of witnesses, no tomes of law-books, and no encumbering paraphernalia of authorities. Two or three type — written sheets contained the whole of his defence. The greater part of it, however, being devoted rather to a justification and an aggravation of the offence than a defence in any shape or form.

"Did he plead guilty to the charge? Yes, by all means. Swiftly did the memories of another great State-trial of fourteen years ago rush into the mind of everyone present; and the Judge proved an unconscious wizard so to convert the dead past into the living present by one key-word. There must be surely some magic charm in a sentence of six years' imprisonment that it should be regarded by Government as an effective amulet for the salvation of India, and two heroes like these — Tilak and Gandhi — should accept it as much in terms and spirit. Yes, by common consent imprisonment of six years for men like these could certainly do much to cure India of its present maladies!"

Source: N. C. Kelkar - *My Contact with Mahatma Gandhi*, Chandra Shanker Shukla

108. GANDHI, THE GENERAL, AND NON-VIOLENCE

General K. M. Cariappa of the Indian Army, in one of his utterances in England, had allowed himself to say that non-violence was of no use under the existing circumstance in India; only a strong army could make India one of the greatest nations in the world.

Gandhiji joined issue with him in the *Harijan*: "Generals greater than General Cariappa have been wise and humble enough frankly to make the admission that they can have no right to speak of the possibilities of the great force of Ahimsa. I make bold to say that in this age of the atom bomb, unadulterated nonviolence is the only force that can confound all the tricks put together of violence. We are witnessing the tragic insolvency of military science and practice in its own home. Should a bankrupt, who has been (ruined) by the gamble in the share-market, sing the praise of that particular form of gambling?"

This in army language, as the General afterwards put it, was "a rocket". But he took it sportingly. On his return to India he called on Gandhiji in the first week of December, on the eve of taking over the command of the Eastern Army. This was their first meeting. It was Gandhiji's day of silence. He was busy with his Charkha. Declining to take his seat on a chair that Gandhiji had offered him, the General respectfully sat on the floor.

"I have come here to receive your blessings...." he said to Gandhiji.

Gandhiji scribbled on a piece of paper: "You know something of my having written in my paper about your statement on non-violence in London last month?"

The General smiled and said that he had seen it and had felt greatly honoured that the Mahatma should have taken the trouble to notice at length the views of a person like him whom he had never met.

Coming to the point at issue, he said: "We soldiers are a very much maligned community.... Even you think that we are a very violent tribe. But we are not.... Of all the people in this world, the one community which disliked wars is the soldier community. It is not because of the dangers and horrors on the battlefield but because of the knowledge we have of the utter futility of wars to settle international disputes. We feel one war merely leads to another. History has taught us this."

This testimony as to the utter futility of war as a means for settling international disputes from such an eminent professional soldier came to Gandhiji as an agreeable surprise. It made the search for an effective moral substitute for war common ground between them. This was half the battle won.

The General continued: "In a democratic country soldiers-do not initiate wars.... Governments, when they have failed to get a satisfactory solution to international problems, declare wars.... We merely carry out the orders of the Government and therefore... of the people.... If a people in a democracy do not like wars they should not blame us ... but ... the government they have put in power.... It is quite simple for them, if they are not satisfied with the Government, to change the Government and put another in its place which will not resort to wars. So you see we are the innocent party.... Why blame us?"

Gandhiji signalled to him to return the slip of paper he had given him. On it he again wrote: "When we meet again ... I would like further to discuss this subject with you."

Two days later they again met. "He was looking very cheerful," the General recalls. "I was in uniform on this occasion. I stood in front of him and saluted him."

Gandhiji turned to him and said smilingly: "I see you have again removed your shoes outside. You had done it when you came two days ago also."

With deep reverence the General replied: "It is but proper that I should do so when coming to see a godly man like you."

Resuming their talk on non-violence, the General said: "I have come ... to tell you that we soldiers practise every bit of the ideologies which you practice...i.e. love and loyalty to mankind, discipline, selflessness in the service of our country, dignity of labour and non-violence,.... If we have to have an army at all ... it must be a good one... I would ... like to remind them in my own way of the need for and the value of non-violence. I cannot possibly do my duty well by the country if I concentrate only on telling the troops of non-violence all the time, subordinating their main task of preparing themselves efficiently to be good soldiers. So I ask you, please, to give me the 'Child's Guide to Knowledge'.... Tell me, please, how I can put this over, i.e. the spirit of non-violence to the troops ... without endangering their sense of duty to train themselves well professionally as soldiers. I am a child in this matter. I want your guidance."

Gandhiji laughed. He was still at his Charkha. He paused, looked at the General and said: "Yes ... you are all children; I am a child too, but I happen to be a bigger child than you because I have given more thought to this question than you all have. You have asked me to tell you in a tangible and concrete form how you can put over to the troops you command, the need for non-violence."

"I am still groping in the dark for the answer. I will find it and I will give it to you some day."

Gandhi then went on to recount how even Lord Wavell and Lord Mountbatten, both veteran professional soldiers, had expressed their implicit faith in the value of non-violence. "Lord Wavell was very impressed with the non-violent way in which the communal troubles between Hindus and Muslims have been tackled by us. They both hope that our ideologies of non-violence and pacifism would be understood by the peoples of the world and practised by all in solving international disputes." Of course, like the General, they had at the same time said that one should always be prepared for self-defense.

At parting Gandhiji repeated: "I will think about this seriously in the next few days and will let you know about it soon. However, I would like to see you more often so that we may further discuss this important subject.... I have always had the greatest admiration for the discipline in the army and also for the importance you army people pay to sanitation and hygiene. I tell my people in my talks to them to copy the army in these respects."

The General met Gandhiji for the last time on the 18th of January, 1948. He had come to Delhi to take charge of the Western Command, then known as D.E.P. (Delhi and East Punjab Command) which had the responsibility of conducting the operations in Jammu and Kashmir.

"I am going to Kashmir in a few days' time," he said.

"I hope you will succeed in solving the Kashmir problem non-violently," Gandhiji replied.

"Come and see me after your return from Kashmir."

The General returned from Kashmir on the afternoon of 30th January, 1948, to see Gandhi's remains as they were cremated at Rajghat the next day.

Source: *Mahatma Gandhi — The Last Phase* by Pyarelal Vol. II, pp. 523,524,525

109. DISARMING THROUGH FRIENDSHIP

As a believer in Truth and the Law of Love, Gandhi believed that every human being was entitled to trust. Quite a few people exploited, the trust that Gandhi placed in them, and sometimes landed him inconsiderable trouble. One such situation arose in the early days in South Africa. General Smuts, the Prime Minister of South Africa, wanted to introduce laws that would make it compulsory for all Indians, — men, women and children, — to carry certificates of registration on their person, and be ready to submit them for scrutiny at any time, and at any place. They had to obtain these certificates by registering with the "Asiatic Department", and attesting their identification with fingerprints. The Indian community looked upon this law as an inhuman and revolting example of discrimination. Gandhi was leading the struggle against the law, and was in prison for defying the law. Many Indians had followed his lead and defied the law. They too were in prison. As their numbers swelled, General Smuts sent a common friend to Gandhi, with a proposal for compromise. The compromise was that the General would withdraw the law for compulsory registration, if the Indians who were already in the State registered themselves voluntarily, since his real objective was not to harass the Indians, but only to regulate further immigration. Gandhi believed the General and agreed to advise Indians to register themselves voluntarily. He would be the first to register himself and attest his identification with finger prints. The Indians in prison, including Gandhi were released. But there were many among the Indians who did not see eye with Gandhi. They could not swallow the agreement. Only a few weeks earlier they had taken an open oath to resist the law, and refuse to register. Some thought Gandhi had been tricked by General Smuts. Some thought that there was some secret deal, and Gandhi had been bought over. They began to say that Gandhi was a traitor who had betrayed the community.

Gandhi stuck to his view. But it was rumoured that Gandhi might become the target of the sullenness and anger of his critics. One day after a crowded meeting of Indians and their sympathizers at the Masonic Hall in Johannesburg, Gandhi came down from the platform. He stopped for a few minutes talking to friends, and then left in the company of an associate, Mrs. Millie Graham Polak. As they reached the exit, Mrs. Polak noticed a man standing in the shadow of the door. It was evident that Gandhi also noticed him, for he went straight to him,

"and linked his arm in the man's saying something in a quiet, earnest voice to him. The man hesitated for one moment, then turned and walked away with Mr. Gandhi. I, meantime, keeping my place on the other side of him, walked the length of the street. I did not understand what the others were talking about, — both men were speaking in a very low voice. At the end of the street, the man handed something over to Mr. Gandhi and walked away.... As soon as the man had gone, I asked Mr. Gandhi what was the matter."

"What did the man want — anything special?" I queried.

"Yes," replied Mr. Gandhi, "he wanted to kill me."

"To kill you?" I replied. "To kill you?", How horrible! Is he mad?"

"No, he thinks that I am acting traitorously towards our people; that I am intriguing with the Government against them, and yet pretending to be their friend and leader."

"But that is all wicked and dreadful," I protested. "Such a man is not safe; he ought to be arrested. Why did you let him go like that? He must be mad."

"No," replied Mr. Gandhi, "he is not mad, only mistaken; and you saw after I had talked to him, he handed over to me the knife he intended to use on me. He thought he wanted to kill me; but he really had not the courage to do so. If I were as bad as he thought I was, I should deserve to die. Now we will not worry any more about it. It is finished. I do not think that man will attempt to injure me again. Had I had him arrested, I should have made an enemy of him. As it is, he will now be my friend."

Source: Millie Graham Polak — *Mr. Gandhi The Man* - Vora, 1949

110. THE ANGRY PLANTER

In 1915, Gandhi was working in Champaran (Bihar - India) among poor peasants. They had been reduced to semi-slavery by British planters who were forcing them to grow indigo on their farms. The peasants had also to pay many other illegal levies that were extorted from them. The planters were afraid that Gandhi would foment a revolt, and they would lose their wealth, plantations and privileges. They therefore looked upon Gandhi as an enemy and a threat. The British Government asked him to leave the District. Gandhi declined saying that he had come to serve the poor, not to foment a revolt against the British Crown. Gandhi was arrested, but the trial had to be abandoned because the precincts of the Court were overflowing with people who had thronged from the neighbouring villages to have a glimpse of the Mahatma (the Great Soul) who had come to save them. The Magistrate had to seek Gandhi's help to control the crowds. Later, on instructions from the Viceroy, the case was withdrawn. Gandhi stayed on to work among the people.

Some planters however were not merely unreconciled, but angry and eager to teach Gandhi a lesson. It was reported that one of them had begun to stock rifles and engage 'goondas' (hoodlums) to do away with Gandhi. When Gandhi heard this, he was surprised. He was there out of love, and all that he wanted was justice for the starving and exploited. He had no evil intentions against anybody.

So he thought he should reassure the planters, and free them from fear. One night, as darkness descended on the plantation, Gandhi walked up alone to the house of the planter. The planter was surprised to see Gandhi at his door. Gandhi said: "I hear that you have requisitioned arms in order to kill me. That is why I have come alone and in secret to your house." The planter was transfixed. He did not know what to say or do. From that day he ceased perceiving Gandhi as a threat.

Source: Kaka Saheb Kalelkar: *Stray Glimpses of Babu*

111. THE STONE AND THE LAW OF LOVE

On the eve of the Partition and Independence of India, severe "communal" riots broke out in many parts of India. The carnage and brutalities that took place in Noakhali (East Bengal) and Bihar were unprecedented. Thousands of innocent people were killed; their huts and houses were burned to ashes women were raped and kidnapped, and kept as forcibly married slaves in the households of those who had led the murder and pillage. In some cases husbands or fathers or brothers were killed before the eyes of the women of the household, and the women were taken home as booty or "forced brides". In other cases, women were raped before their parents or husbands or brothers, before the men were done to death. Smiling villages were turned into charnel grounds with purifying human bodies on which vultures and jackals fed.

When reports of these unprecedented atrocities reached Gandhi, he decided to go to Noakhali to be with the victims of the holocaust; give them such solace as he could, and above all give them the courage to survive as human beings. He also wanted to arouse the conscience of the people of the majority community and to lead them back to sanity. He looked upon this situation as the most severe challenge that he had faced in his life. How could he bring down the passions of those who had turned mad with fury? How could he bring them to the path of love? It was his ability to kindle or rekindle love in the hearts of human beings that was being tested. How could he demonstrate the power of the Law of Love? Could he be the conduit through which divine love would flow and submerge the forces of hatred and vengeance? To be an instrument of the Divine, or divine love, he had to overcome all his own passions, and become transparent. He had to depend on nothing external, no other human being. He had to walk alone. For this he should be free from his entourage. He, therefore, asked his colleagues to disperse themselves in different centres, and to work on their own. Only his granddaughter Manu was allowed to be with him. In some places, he also had an associate who could act as his Bengali interpreter, or help him deal with correspondence. He walked from one village to another, without footwear, through thorny thickets and slush, over bridges that were single-bamboo poles spanning the two banks of swollen rivers. He ran the risk of slipping and falling into the swirling waters. At some places, he had to face the active hostility of those who had perpetrated the carnage and

atrocities. They paved the narrow footpaths that he had to traverse with thorny bush or nightsoil. He would stoop down and remove the nightsoil with the dry leaves that had fallen from trees along the path, while miscreants would stand and watch. When he had the time, he would try to practise crossing single bamboo bridges by walking on the narrow trunks of trees that had fallen or been felled near where he spent the night.

It was his habit to wash his feet in warm water when he arrived at the place where he was to halt over-night. He used to scrub his feet with a stone that he had kept for the purpose. One day, when he arrived at the village of Narayanpur, and sat down to wash his feet, the stone was not to be found. In the hurry of packing to leave in time his grand-daughter Manu had perhaps left it behind. But he needed the stone, and so she had to find it. Oversight or the pressure of the situation was no excuse. She had to make amends. She had to go back, look for the stone and bring it back to him.

The last place where Gandhi had used the stone was quite far away. The way to it lay through a thick jungle. At places it was almost trackless. It was already late. Even local adults were wary of crossing the jungle in poor light. It was possible that ruffians who had been guilty of murder and rape and kidnapping were hiding in the jungle. But Manu had to go. Gandhi insisted that she should go alone, look for the stone and bring it. She asked whether she could take anyone else with her. Gandhi sternly refused. She should go alone. So she went, finding her way through the trackless jungle, braving ruffians and wild animals. She reached the hut where Gandhi had stayed last, from where he had set out to Narayanpur. Only an old woman was there. When Manu asked her about the stone, she said she had seen a stone near where Gandhi had sat, but she had thrown it away thinking that it was useless. Manu went out and looked for the stone all around the hut. Finally she found it, and rushed back through the jungle. She reached where Gandhi was staying, placed the stone before him and burst into tears. Gandhi laughed. He told her: "I warned you on the day you came to me that to be with me in this Yajna (sacrifice) was no joke. You can still go back. Thanks to the stone, you had such an early opportunity to go through the test."

Source: Pyarelal — *The Last Phase*

112. POISONOUS SNAKES — I

One of the basic beliefs on which Gandhi wanted to mould the life of the community at his Phoenix Settlement was respect for all life. It was very easy to proclaim one's belief, but very difficult to stand by it when one faced a real threat to one's own life or that of those whose life one valued. The Settlement and the area surrounding it were infested with poisonous snakes. The road from the station passed through plantations, and one often came across snakes on the road. Inside the Settlement, it was almost an everyday experience to find poisonous snakes like the dreaded African Mamba curled up in corners or bath tubs or hanging from rafters or branches of trees. Gandhi did not want the members of the community to kill these snakes. He often cited the instances of the Ashrams of Indian sages where traditionally hostile animals lived together in amity, like the tiger and the deer, and so on. There were wild and poisonous snakes too. But no one hurt each other. Gandhi believed that in the presence of true and unalloyed Ahimsa or Nonviolence or love, all enmity melted away, and no one indulged in violent or harmful acts any more. So to him, non-killing and living together was a test of the Ahimsa they had attained as individuals and as a community. He also talked of Indian houses where a dish of milk was kept in a corner for snakes, and how they quietly crawled in and drank the milk that was set for them, and crawled out as they had come in, without hurting anyone or coming in anyone's way. But the inmates of the Settlement had no escape from severe tests.

One day a big green mamba, one of the deadliest snakes found in South Africa, was "seen suspended from an overhanging bough of a tree at the spot from where water was fetched daily. The colonist who first saw it did not know what to do ... no one could argue or reason with a snake, and the snake seemed absolutely disinclined to go away." No one knew how many more might be around, or might come later. "Eventually an Indian colonist settled the problem for himself and others." He had an old gun. He got it and shot the snake. He then kept vigil to see whether other snakes were around. He had two daughters, and "believed that the safety and life of the children were of greater importance than those of a snake." Millie Polak, a close associate of Gandhi's in the Settlement thought that Gandhi did not complain about the shooting of the snake although everyone agreed it should not be regarded as a precedent.

Source: Millie Graham Polak, *Gandhi The Man* — Vora

113. POISONOUS SNAKES — II

There were instances of the inmates of the Ashram attempting to practise the 'Law of Love' in extremely dangerous situations. One day, one of the inmates, Mr. C. went to the shed to fetch his bicycle. There, inside the shed, he saw two green mambas coiled up quite near his cycle. Even before he observed them, some movement of his must have disturbed them. They were lifting their heads and uncoiling themselves. The shed was small and narrow. There were too many things inside, hardly any room for the snakes or Mr. C. to manoeuvre, without getting in each other's way. He wanted the bicycle at once, since he had to be in Durban, fourteen miles away, in a very short time. He first looked for an instrument with which to kill the snakes. But then he remembered "his new faith, — and determined to put himself to a severe test." He decided "to hold his mind calm, to eradicate from it not only any sense of fear, but also of antipathy and dislike. Slowly he went towards the door and, having reached it, stood quietly up against the supporting post. The snakes, by now fully awake and alert, commenced to move. First one looked around, and then glided towards Mr. C. and the door. But Mr. C. stood firm. He neither moved nor allowed his mind to falter. The snake glided close to him, passed him, and went out into the open. The second snake followed the first ... coming up close to Mr. C. ... almost touching him, as it too passed through the open door, leaving Mr. C. ... quite unharmed. We all soon heard the story and were tremendously impressed by it. Years afterwards, however, I understand, Mr. Gandhi himself calmly allowed a deadly snake to crawl over his legs on its way to safety."

Source: Millie Graham Polak — *Mr. Gandhi The Man*

114. POISONOUS SNAKES — III

Confrontations with snakes occurred in the Tolstoy Farm as well.

At the time the incident took place Kasturba (Mrs. Gandhi) was living in a part of a stable that had not been in use for long. One day, Mr. Polak and Mr. Kallenbach, both close associates of Gandhi, visited her there. They were talking to her when Mr. Polak noticed a deadly snake lying coiled up inside a zinc bath at the far end of the room. Polak went near Kallenbach and explained the situation. They whispered to each other and decided on a plan of action. Kallenbach engaged Kasturba in conversation, to distract her attention. He had asked Polak to get a pick-handle that was nearby and kill the snake. Polak feared of taking life. He did not know what to do. He took the pick-handle and raised it with the intention of bringing it down on the head of the sleeping snake. But "the blow never fell, for his arm remained paralysed in mid-air, and refused its task." The movement however disturbed the snake. It started to uncoil. At that moment a young Indian inmate came in. He helped Polak to lift the tub and take it out of the room. As the snake was about to find its moorings and leave the tub, the young Indian used the pick-handle and crushed the head of the snake.

Mrs. Polak could not "now recall Mr. Gandhi's reaction when he came to hear of the episode."

Source: Millie Graham Polak — *Mr. Gandhi The Man*

115. SNAKE ON THE SHAWL — IV

One day, after the evening prayers, (at Sabarmati, India) Gandhi was seated on his bed, talking to one of his close associates, Ravjibhai. He was reclining on a pillow. The air was somewhat chilly. So Kasturba, Gandhi's wife, came out with a white shawl and draped it round Gandhi's back, leaving the tips of the shawl on Gandhi's shoulders.

As Ravjibhai was talking, he noticed a black line on the white shawl. He leaned forward and looked, and saw that it was thick black snake that had climbed upon the shawl on Gandhi's back. It had reached up to the shoulder, and was in the process of deciding which way to turn. The snake was of a highly poisonous variety. Anything could happen.

Gandhi had noticed that Ravjibhai was no longer looking at him, but was gazing intently on the shawl on his shoulder. He was also feeling some weight on his shoulder. He asked Ravjibhai what was attracting his attention. In a hushed voice he said that there was a black snake poised on Gandhi's shoulder. He asked Gandhi to remain still. Gandhi asked Ravjibhai what he proposed to do. Ravjibhai replied that he was going to pick up the shawl by the comers, catching the snake in its fold and take it away. Gandhi was sitting still all the while. The snake seemed to have sensed the imminence of some movement. It slid down into the folds of the shawl. Ravjibhai immediately picked up the shawl by its corners and took it away along with the snake that was ensconced in its folds. He took it some distance away and let it go.

The next day the newspapers were full of stories of Gandhi's miraculous escape and cool courage. Some saw in the incident a divine message that Gandhi was protected by the gods.

Source: Kaka Saheb Kalelkar and Ravjibhai Patel

116. COURAGE IN THE AMBULANCE CORPS

Gandhi did not believe in taking to arms and participating in a war. But when the Boer War broke out in South Africa, Gandhi was keen to demonstrate that Indians not only demanded the rights of citizenship, but were also prepared to do justice to all the duties that came with citizenship. So he organized an Indian Ambulance Corps to serve in the fields of battle. They would not take up arms, but would serve by ministering to the wounded, dealing with the dead and dying, and doing other duties related to the work of an Ambulance Corps in battle areas. Gandhi and his Corps earned praise for their courage, fortitude and compassion, for the tenderness and conscientiousness with which they moved in the danger zones braving bullets and death.

Vere Stent, a European South African who saw Gandhi's Ambulance Corps on the battlefield, wrote, "It was on such occasions that the Indians proved their fortitude, and the one with the greatest fortitude of all was the subject of this sketch. After a night's work, which had shattered men with much bigger frames, I came across Gandhi in the early morning sitting by the roadside — eating a regulation army biscuit. Every man in Bullets force was dull and confident in his conversation, and had a kindly eye. He did one good. I saw the man and his small disciplined Corps on many a field of battle during the National Campaign. When succour was to be rendered they were there. Their unassuming dauntlessness cost them many lives, and eventually an order was published forbidding them to go into the firing line."

Source: Stent in: *Gandhiji As We Know Him* — Vora

117. IN DOUBT AND DESPAIR

It was during the First World War (1914 - 1918) that Gandhi returned to India from South Africa. At that time Gandhi had not yet become disillusioned with the professions of the British Government and what he believed were the values on which the British Empire was based. He therefore considered it his duty as a loyal citizen to give the Government such help as he could, consistent with his faith in non-violence. While still in England, he had offered to raise an Ambulance Corps but had to give up the idea because he suffered an attack of insistent pleurisy, and had to return to the warmer climate of India. In India, soon after he arrived, he was drawn into the struggle of the peasants in Champaran, the mill-hands in Ahmedabad and the Kisans (peasants) of Kheda in Gujarat. Here he had led the people in a successful campaign to hold back taxes and levies. Sardar Patel was his chief lieutenant in this struggle. Gandhi became a 'demi-God' in Kheda where people vied with one another in welcoming him and demonstrating their deep veneration.

A few months later, when the British Government was in dire need of more recruits for the Army, Gandhi agreed to ask people to join the Army to honour the duties of a citizen. This decision of Gandhi's drew much criticism, from those who thought that as a believer in non-violence, Gandhi should not have agreed to ask people to sign up as recruits to the Army. Gandhi's answer was that he was asking only those citizens who did not believe in non-violence, who had not renounced their belief, in arms and the Army, to offer themselves as recruits. But this did not seem to cut much ice with the people, whose minds were still fresh with memories of the atrocities that the Government had committed to crush the peasants' movement in Kheda. Gandhi, therefore, was astonished to find that no one turned up at the meetings he addressed to ask for recruitment. In the very villages in which Gandhi had been hailed as a leader, liberator and hero, he was made to feel the pangs of public unconcern and hostility. To make his cup full, he fell severely ill. The hectic tours and the heat and the strain were too much for him. He suffered from acute pain and dysentery. It looked as though the end was not far. There was a miraculous recovery however when the Government announced its intention to proceed with the Rowlatt Bill that suppressed all civil liberties and belied all the promises that had been made during the war. Gandhi rallied himself and then rallied the people for Satyagraha.

But on one of the days before the recovery, while Gandhi's health was still in the twilight zone, Rajendra Prasad met him in Ahmedabad and the Ashram at Sabarmati. (Rajendra Prasad was an associate from the days of the Champaran Satyagraha, and later became the first President of India.) Most of Gandhi's colleagues wanted him to stay and rest at the house of a friend in Ahmedabad. It was easy to get doctors to attend at any time if he was at Ahmedabad. But Gandhi did not want to stay in what he called a palatial house. He insisted on being taken back to the Ashram. Rajendra Prasad recalls: "One afternoon he was very insistent. I had gone away to see the city, and on my return I found that he had gone to the Ashram. So I followed him there, and I learnt that although he had high temperature, they could not induce him to stay, and so he had to be taken to the Ashram. I was to leave the next day, and I went to his room early in the morning. He was then very weak and looked much distressed. When I told him that I would be going, he kept quiet for some time, and then began to talk. He said he had insisted upon coming to the Ashram in spite of running a temperature because he was feeling very unhappy in that big palace. Then he related how he had been keeping awake and revolving in his mind, all the time, his own life and activities, and how distressed he was. He had started so many projects, but had not completed anything to his satisfaction. How would he fit into a big palace like that? How could he live there? And so on. He had started work amongst the mill-labourers of Ahmedabad, but before it made any progress he had to take up something else. He had thought of starting the Ashram and had made arrangements for it when he was called away to Champaran. He had hoped to finish the work in Champaran in a few days and to go back by the date fixed for the opening of the Ashram. This he could not do as he was held up there for months. In Champaran, he had succeeded in getting some relief for the *rayats*, (cultivators) but to him that was not enough. He had started schools and wanted to have close contact with the district so that the people might be trained, but he could not give time to the work as he had to go to Kheda. There also the plan had succeeded in the sense that relief had been obtained, but before he could train them, he had to take up the work of recruitment, and now he was so ill. He did not know if he would recover from this illness, and he was doubtful if he would be able to do anything more. So his whole life had been one in which he had taken up things, left them half done, and now he was about to pass away; but if that was the will of God, there was no help, and he began to cry like a child. Some of us who were present there could

hardly offer any words of consolation. After some time he collected himself...the tears which had been shed had consoled him, and then he talked about other things."

Source: Rajendra Prasad in Chandra Shanker Shukla - Incidents...

118. AGILITY SAVES GANDHI

In 1921, the All India Congress Committee held its Session in Vijayawada (Andhra). After the session, there was a mammoth meeting. The dais was erected on a specially raised mound, and there were wooden pillars on the dais holding up a canopy. In those days there were no microphones and public address systems. Gandhi was on the dais. The crowd was more interested to have a 'glimpse' (*darshan*) of Gandhi, than to hear his words. They knew his voice would hardly carry to them. Soon after the meeting started, a cow got into the crowd. There was a stampede, and people began to rush towards the dais. It looked as though in the melee, with people trying to climb on to the mound, the wooden pillars would collapse and Gandhi would be crushed under the pillars or the canopy. It was impossible to control the crowd. All of a sudden Gandhi jumped on to a chair and eyed the crowds that were milling towards the dais from all sides. Suddenly he jumped from chair to chair, got down where he could see the crowd was thinnest, and jostled his way to safety. He then stopped a passing vehicle, and got to the place where he was residing. When his associates came back they were surprised to see Gandhi seated in the room, coolly answering letters that were waiting for reply.

Source: Kaka Saheb Kalelkar — *Stray Glimpses of Bapu*

119. ASSAULT AND PARDON

When Gandhi and many other Indians were in jail in the first phase of the Satyagraha against the "Asiatic Registration Act" that made it compulsory for Indians to register themselves with their finger prints, General Smuts called Gandhi from prison, and put forward a proposal for compromise. The General told Gandhi that the only objective of the new legislation was to prevent further immigration into Natal. So if the Indians already in Natal voluntarily registered themselves, he would withdraw the new Law. Gandhi believed in the bona fides of the General, and agreed to advise Indians to register voluntarily, to enable the General to withdraw the Law prescribing compulsory registration. Many Indians did not agree with Gandhi. Gandhi, however, announced that he would be the first to register himself voluntarily. He was warned that there might be attempts, from his own compatriots to prevent him from registering himself.

Undaunted by threats, Gandhi began walking towards the office of the Registrar of the Asiatic Department. He was accompanied by a good number of Indians. Among them were some tall well-built Pathans who had not reconciled themselves to Gandhi's proposal for voluntary registration. Only a few days earlier, on Gandhi's own suggestion, they had vowed in the name of God, to resist registration. They could not understand the same Gandhi now asking them to register. Some of them wondered whether Gandhi had turned traitor to the Indian cause, and been bought over by the Whites. As Gandhi neared the gate of the Registrar's office, one of the Pathans, Mir Alam, asked Gandhi where he was going, and when Gandhi replied that he was going to register, he landed severe blows on Gandhi's head and face. Gandhi swooned, and fell down crying "He Ram" (Oh! God). Other friends of Mir Alam also fell on Gandhi and landed blows on him. Some Europeans who were passing by intervened. They chased away the assailants and rescued Gandhi who was lying unconscious with his face and body lacerated with wounds. They removed him to a near-by office, and thence to the residence of Rev. Doke, who was a good friend of Gandhi's.

In the words of Rev. Doke, "When he recovered consciousness, he was lying in our office to which he had been carried. I saw him a moment later. He was helpless and bleeding, the doctor was cleaning his wounds, the police officers watching and listening beside him, while

he was using what little strength he had to insist that no action should be taken to punish his would-be murderers. 'They thought they were doing right,' he said, 'and I have no desire to prosecute them (they were punished, but Mr. Gandhi took no part in the proceedings.)'

Harry Polak, one of Gandhi's close associates during those days, gave his version: "Mr. Gandhi had no thought of seeking police protection against a compatriot, but walked straight to the Registration office, and on the way the expected attack was delivered. Bleeding from open wounds and in the greatest pain, he was taken to Rev. J.J. Doke's house, but before he would permit the doctor to stitch up his face, which was badly gashed, he insisted upon completing the form of application for voluntary registration in the presence of the Registrar of Asiatics, giving full details as to identity, like the least of his followers." (H.S.L. Polak)

On Gandhi's insistence, the Registrar, Mr. Chamney had been summoned to the house of the Rev. Doke, since Gandhi wanted to be the first to register. Seeing Gandhi's wounds and swollen hands, the Registrar said he would keep the first line in the register blank so that Gandhi could sign his name and give his finger-prints when he was better, — at least after the swelling and pain in the right hand subsided. But Gandhi would not agree. He wanted someone to lift his swollen hand and place it on the first line so that he could sign in the presence of the Registrar on the first day itself. As Gandhi's swollen hand was being lifted and placed on the register, and Gandhi essayed his signature, the Registrar, Mr. Chamney could not help wiping the tears that trickled from his eyes.

Gandhi then allowed his injuries to be attended to, but insisted that the doctor should put in the stitches without anesthesia. That same day, "though tossing feverishly upon a sick bed" Gandhi issued an appeal: 'Those who have committed the act did not know what they were doing. They thought that I was doing what was wrong. They have had their redress in the only manner they knew. I therefore request that no steps be taken against them. Seeing that the assault was committed by a Muslim or Muslims, the Hindus might probably feel hurt. If so, they would put themselves in the wrong before the world and their Maker.... Rather let the blood spilt today cement the two communities indissolubly. Such is my heart-felt prayer.'

Source: Polak - *Gandhiji As We Know Him* - Chandra Shanker Shukla

120. GIVING UP CIGARETTES

A common friend of Mr. Ritch (a South African colleague) and Gandhi, professed that he could give up smoking cigarettes at will. "A packet of his cigarettes lay on the table at which the three of us were seated." "Could you give it up now?" asked Gandhiji. "Yes," was the reply. "Do so then," said Gandhiji, making as if to possess himself of the cigarettes. It was our friend's hand, not Gandhiji's that reached the packet first. Gandhiji smiled.

Source: *Recollections of. W. Ritch* - retold in Chandra Shanker Shukla – Incidents

121. LYNCHED

In 1897, Gandhi was living in South Africa, but visited India. While in India he received an urgent summons from the Indian Community in South Africa. So he decided to cut short his stay in India and return to South Africa with the family. He and his family boarded the s. s. *Courland*, a ship that belonged to Dada Abdullah. Another ship of Abdullah's the *Naderi*, was also sailing at the same time. There were 800 indentured labourers travelling by these ships. Meanwhile, the white population of Natal was in a state of mad fury. They had been infuriated by a news agency report that Gandhi had published a scurrilous and hateful leaflet against the whites of South Africa, and was bringing shiploads of Indian labourers to flood South Africa. Whites had held meetings and declared that they would teach Gandhi a lesson. The flames of fury were fanned by leaders and officials. Thus, when the ships arrived at the port, they were not allowed to dock. They were kept at sea. Even when they were allowed to dock, the ships were quarantined, and passengers were not allowed to disembark. Agents of the whites were busy persuading labourers to return to India, while groups of white infuriated men were waiting at the dock to deal with Gandhi. After 23 days of quarantine, on the 13th of May, 1897, the passengers were allowed to disembark. There were fears about what might befall Gandhi and his family. The family managed to leave and reach safety. Gandhi received a message from Mr. Escombe, the Attorney General, warning him about the mood of the whites. He asked Gandhi to wait till nightfall, and leave the ship after darkness had settled. Gandhi had nearly decided to accept Escombe's advice when he received a message from Mr. Laugnton, the advocate of Dada Abdullah advising him against accepting

Escombe's suggestion, and informing him that he himself was going over to the ship to accompany Gandhi.

Gandhi left the ship and walked down with Laughton, with the intention of walking to the house of his colleague, Parsi Rustomji. Kasturba and the family had already reached the house. Soon after Gandhi and Laughton set out, "whites" who were holding vigil spotted Gandhi by his turban. Alerted by them, a crowd collected and moved menacingly towards Gandhi. Laughton tried to hail a rickshaw to take them to the house. The rickshaw puller was scared away. The crowd started closing in on Gandhi. In the pushing and pulling, Laughton got separated from Gandhi. Now the crowd began to rain blows and throw stones. They were intent on lynching Gandhi. Gandhi walked on. He was hit by a rain of stones. He was injured, and started bleeding profusely. Swathed in blood, he was still hauling himself forward when he got dizzy and swooned. The crowd of lynchers and persecutors was in hot pursuit. Gandhi held on to the railings on the side of the road and kept crawling while more stones landed on his bleeding body. It is difficult to say what would have happened if, at that crucial moment, Mrs. Alexander, the wife of the Police Superintendent had not chanced to come from the opposite direction. She was a white woman, and much respected in the community. Seeing Gandhi bleeding and crawling, with tormentors in hot pursuit, she went to Gandhi, opened her parasol to protect him from the stones and chastised the crowd. In the meanwhile, Alexander, the Police Superintendent himself arrived on the scene with a posse of Police and rescued Gandhi, and escorted him to Parsi Rustomji's house.

Hearing that Gandhi had reached Rustomji's house, a crowd collected there, asking that Gandhi be handed over to them. They threatened to burn the house down, along with all the inmates, if Gandhi was not handed over. The Police Superintendent acted with great tact in holding the crowd at bay, and meanwhile persuading Gandhi to leave through the back door dressed as a policeman, and go to the safety of the police station.

When the news that white crowds had attempted to lynch Gandhi and had inflicted injuries on his body reached London and other capitals of the world, there was widespread revulsion and sorrow. The Secretary of State for Colonies (U.K.) sent a telegram to the Government of South Africa asking them to track down and punish the culprits. The Police Superintendent informed Gandhi of these orders, and asked for his co-operation in identifying the culprits and punishing them. Gandhi had no bitterness whatsoever. He told the Government that he

did not want it to prosecute any of his assailants. He could perhaps identify many. But he did not believe in retaliation. It was against his *Dharma*. They were the victims of prejudice, and had to be weaned. There was neither bitterness, nor anger, nor hatred in his heart. Moreover, it would serve no purpose if small fries were prosecuted while those who incited them went scot free.

Source: *Autobiography* — M. K. G.

122. IN AND OUT OF THE VALLEY OF DEATH

When Gandhi was in prison in the Aga Khan's Palace at Poona, in 1943, he went on a 21-day fast. By the 20th of February, his condition had begun to cause considerable anxiety. When Surgeon General Candy arrived in the morning to examine Gandhi, there was some talk of intravenous administration of glucose or mixing glucose in the enema. But Dr. Sushila Nayyar told General Candy that Gandhi would never agree to take glucose. She told Dr. Gilder, another personal physician of Gandhi's that she felt Gandhi would resist the administration of glucose, and it might even lead to death. One could not play with Gandhi. Dr. Gilder too strongly protested against the idea of administering glucose. Dr. B. C. Roy, a well-known physician who later became the Chief Minister of West Bengal, also agreed with the other two Indian doctors. All three decided to give their opinion in writing and warn the Government against the forcible administration of glucose.

When Gandhi woke up from sleep, the doctors examined him. General Candy then wanted to have a minute with Gandhi. Dr. Sushila Nayyar took him back to Gandhi's room. She asked General Candy whether he wanted to 'talk to Gandhiji alone'. He nodded and said, 'yes'. All the others left the room.

After a little while, General Candy left the room through the back door that led to a verandah. Other doctors, and Gandhi's Secretary Pyarelal and son, Devdas, were waiting for the General. Dr. Gilder felt for a moment that the General might have lost his way.

He called out aloud, "General, this way." Sushila Nayyar felt that the General knew the way, but had deliberately gone out from the other door, because she had seen that the General's eyes were wet. Dr. Roy was mischievous. He went looking for the General, and called out,

"General, General, the way is this side." Candy stopped. Dr. Roy asked him, 'What did he say?' The General wiped his tears, and said, 'Nothing', and walked away from the scene.

Later when the others came back to the room and enquired, Gandhi told them what had happened. The General was quite agitated, and paced up and down the room for some time. Later he went and sat on a chair near Gandhi. He could not bring himself to speak. In the end, he mustered courage, and said, "Mr. Gandhi, as a doctor I should tell you that you have crossed the limit of your strength; your capacity to fast or keep alive without some form of nourishment has been exhausted long since." Gandhi listened silently. But Candy could not speak further, — he burst into tears. Gandhi consoled him. "Why are you nervous? I am in God's hands. I have voluntarily put myself in His hands. If He wants to take me away, He will take me away. I am ready to go. If He feels that my work is not over, He will keep me here."

All of them now left General Candy on the verandah, and went and sat around the big table to draft the medical bulletin for the day.

Later, it was learnt that the British Government had asked General Candy to put the matter to Gandhi so that they might exculpate themselves if something untoward happened. They had kept a pile of sandalwood ready on the campus to cremate Gandhi's body if he died. But the miracle happened, and he survived the fast.

Based on: *Bapuki Karavas Kahani* — Dr. Sushila Nayyar

123. GANDHI FACES THE FURY OF A MOB

One of the colossal problems that arose with the partition of India was the problem of refugees. Many people who had to leave their hearths and homes in West Pakistan and flee for safety had crossed over to India. One centre where Hindu and Sikh refugees had gathered was Hardwar, the pilgrim city. Gandhi and Nehru went to Hardwar to meet the refugees. Even as Gandhi's car entered the city, refugees were taking out a procession brandishing black flags and shouting slogans condemning Gandhi. Spotting Gandhi in the car, two of the processionists climbed on to the bonnet of the car and started screaming. It was with great difficulty that they were persuaded to climb down. As one of Gandhi's aides, Chandiwalla, opened the door of the car and got down to persuade the two processionists to get down, someone pushed his hands inside the car, and attempted to grab Gandhi's feet and pull him out of the car. It was with great difficulty that he was pushed away. Slogan shouting mobs milled around the house in which Gandhi was staying.

For many years since Gandhi came back to India from South Africa it was impossible for him to travel anywhere in India or address meetings without being mobbed by devotees who were eager to catch a glimpse, to reach his hands to deposit jewellery or money in donations, or to touch his feet.

But after Partition, there were many occasions on which Gandhi had to face the fury of those who had been displaced or looted, or dishonoured. On his way to Kashmir, Gandhi passed through Amritsar. As his train drew in on the platform, the air was rent with cries of 'Gandhi go back'. A hundred or more young men with black flags came and stood opposite the compartment in which Gandhi was travelling. Amidst cries of 'Gandhi go back', they started pounding the panels and the body of the compartment. They peeped in, glowed at Gandhi, shouted themselves hoarse, and threw sticks (on which black flags had been mounted) into the compartment. In the midst of the deafening din, and the faces glowing with fury, stood Gandhi. He had plugged his ears with his fingers, and was looking at the irate young men with calm eyes that reflected his compassion and agony.... It was the same Amritsar which had welcomed Gandhi as a saviour and the symbol of national honour and resurgence in 1918.

Based on Chandiwalla, *Mere Bapu* (Hindi)

124. SAVED FROM BEING LYNCHED

When the Hindu-Muslim riots were at their peak in Calcutta, Gandhi was there to cool passions and bring about the return of peace. He was staying at the Hydari Mansion with a Muslim family. The Hindus at Calcutta were in a mad fury, and many thought that Gandhi was protecting Muslims who were leading and organizing riots. Gandhi was to proceed to Noakhali in East Bengal. But on the 1st of September, the scene changed when a mob of Hindus attacked Gandhi's residence.

As Pyarelal, Gandhi's secretary, recalled: "The demonstrators had already broken their cordon in their eagerness to hear the dialogue and were clustering round us in a disorderly fashion. We brushed them aside and went in. Crowds were all over the place. Some rowdies were already inside the main hall. More were pouring in. It was only the next day that we were able to piece together the story.

'A little before 10 o'clock, a man heavily bandaged had been brought to Gandhiji's residence by some excited young men at the head of a procession. How they got hold of him and who had engineered the demonstration will probably never be known. There were several conflicting versions. One was that he had fallen out of a tram car. Another was that he had been accosted by a drunken man in the street and asked to shout "Pakistan Zindabad". On his refusing to do so, a scuffle ensued resulting in some minor injuries. Some communally-minded fanatics, hearing of the incident, traced him to his residence where he was virtually pulled out of his bed. Still another version was that he had been stabbed by some Muslim in a Muslim locality. The assailant could not be traced. Later the Chief Minister, Dr. Prafulla Ghose, had the victim of the alleged stabbing examined. The doctor's report was that he bore no mark of stabbing. The details of injury, however, did not matter. What really mattered was that these young men had taken the law into their own hands and had assumed the role of judge, jury and executioner rolled into one.'

Gandhi had gone to bed. "This was about 10 p.m. (Calcutta time). They began to shout at the top of their voices. My sleep was disturbed but I tried to lie quiet, not knowing what was happening. I heard the window panes being smashed. I had ... on either side of me two very brave girls (Abha and Manu). They would not wake me up from my sleep; but without my

knowledge — for my eyes were closed — they went among the crowd and tried to pacify them. Thank god, the crowd did not do any harm to them.

"The entreaties of the two girls apparently had no effect on the rowdies. They began to smash furniture, picture frames and chandeliers with hockey sticks and by hurling stones. There were two groups — one trying to incite, the other to pacify the rowdies. The sensible section tried their best to protect the two girls and entreated them to go inside. One of Gandhiji's party was wearing pyjamas. He was mistaken for a Muslim and set upon.

To recall Gandhiji's narrative: "The old Muslim lady in the house endearingly called Bi Amma (mummy) and a young Muslim stood near my matting. I suppose, to protect me from harm. The noise continued to swell. Some had entered the central hall, and begun to knock open the many doors. I felt that I must get up and face the angry crowd. I stood at the threshold of one of the doors. Friendly faces surrounded me and would not let me move forward.

"Dr. Dinshah Mehta was in the house. But what could poor Dinshah do? He did not know the language. Besides, 'even the strength of Hercules' could not have availed much in such circumstances."

Gandhiji's vow of silence admitted of his breaking it on such occasions. He addressed the rowdies: "What madness is this? Why do you not attack me? I offer myself for attack." He repeated it thrice and asked his Bengali granddaughter-in-law to translate his words into Bengali. "All to no purpose. Their ears were closed against reason. I clasped my hands in the Hindu fashion. Nothing doing. More window panes began to crack."

"'Where is the rascal Suhrawardy?' shouted someone from among the crowd." It seems they intended to lynch Suhrawardy. Luckily he was not in the house. He had gone home to get ready to start with me... for Noakhali. Not finding him, they turned their wrath on me. There was pandemonium."

Just then two Muslim members of the household, with whom Gandhiji was staying came rushing in, pursued by the infuriated crowd. One of them was bleeding profusely. He took shelter behind Gandhiji. Seeing him someone aimed a massive brickbat at him. It struck a Muslim standing by. A heavy stick narrowly missed Gandhiji's head and crashed against the opposite wall without hurting anybody. If it had hit Gandhiji, it would have been the end.

At last, Gandhiji said in a husky voice: "My God asks me, 'Where do you stand?' I am deeply pained. Is this the reality of the peace that was established on the 15th August?"

Minutes later, the police chief and his officers came in. They appealed to Gandhiji to retire. In an aside I requested them not to use force against the rowdies knowing how it would affect Gandhiji. After a time they succeeded in getting the building cleared of the crowd.

Gandhiji called Charu and me (Pyarelal Nayyar) to him and said: "My resolve to go to Noakhali collapses after this. You will agree I cannot leave for Noakhali or for that matter for anywhere else in the circumstances. I would like you to think it over and then tell me. I do not know what God has in store for me next. But Noakhali seems to be just now out of the question."

Hardly was this talk finished when Dr. Prafulla Ghosh, the Chief Minister, arrived. He asked Gandhiji: "Shall we arrest Hindu Mahasabha Leaders?"

Gandhiji said: "No. Instead, you should put upon them the burden and responsibility of maintaining the peace. Ask them whether they want peace or fighting. Tell them you want their co-operation and wait for their reply."

It was half past twelve when Gandhiji went to bed. But the crowd outside lingered in the streets till long after that. Ultimately the police had to use tear gas to disperse it. By the time quiet was fully restored, it was half past one in the morning. Not till two o'clock could anyone go to sleep.

Source: *Mahatma Gandhi — The Last Phase* by Pyarelal, Vol. II, pp. 403,404, 405

125. THE CALL OF MARTYRDOM

In 1921, the message of non-co-operation was spreading all over the country. The All India Khilafat Committee headed by devout Muslim scholars and divines had accepted it as the only way in which the community could respond to the British Government's breach of trust on the restoration of the Khilafat. The Congress too had accepted the programme, and authorized Gandhi to launch a struggle. The British Government thought that an effective way of diverting the people's attention and kindling a spirit of loyalty to the British Crown would be a visit by the Prince of Wales. They thought that the pomp and parade of regalia and fireworks would snuff out the excitement and appeal of non-co-operation. But Gandhi and the Congress saw through the Government's plan, and gave a call for a country-wide boycott of all functions connected with the visit of the Prince.

The Prince was to arrive in Bombay on the 17th Gandhi had been summoned to Bombay by his coworkers. No one turned up to welcome the Prince except a few British officials, a few Eurasians and a few leaders of the Parsi community. Gandhi's meeting at a distance of a few miles was a sea of humanity. Gandhi explained that they had nothing against the person of the Prince or for that matter, any Englishman, and that the boycott was totally voluntary, and no one should be harassed for attending the programmes of the Prince. However, when it came to be known that people of the Eurasians and Parsi communities had attended the Reception to the Prince, extensive rioting broke out in Bombay. Eurasian and Parsis were attacked. They retaliated by attacking people who were wearing khadi or 'Gandhi caps'. There was further retaliation from Hindus and Muslims. Crowds entered Parsi colonies, attacked, looted and set buildings on fire. In some places even Parsi women were assaulted. Gandhi was beside himself with grief and remorse. He blamed himself for the violence and barbarous acts of the crowds and went on a fast unto death.

There were heroic and Herculean efforts to put out the fires of passion and violence. Sarojini Naidu, Maulana, Shankarlal Banker and many others showed great courage in confronting pillaging and hostile crowds and bringing sanity to them, and in intervening in many places to prevent firing on unruly crowds by undertaking to persuade the crowds to disperse and return to the paths of peace.

The city had begun to return to normal. However, it was still in the grip of rumours and uncertainty. Krishnadas, Gandhi's secretary, vividly recalls what happened at Gandhi's residence on the eve of the return of peace and sanity.

"In the afternoon, the city witnessed the unique sight of two large motor lorries filled with representatives of the four great communities of Bombay, — Parsi, Christian, Muslim and Hindu, — going round and visiting every quarter of the city, and of their occupants proclaiming the glad tidings of peace and goodwill. The Parsis were thoroughly won over. Whatever traces were there of ill will or a desire of revenge in their breasts, were all wiped out when Mahatmaji gave them the supreme authority to determine the final terms of peace. Only the day before, members of hostile communities had been breaking each other's heads at sight; and now today, representatives of the very same communities joined in a common cause were unitedly touring the whole city holding aloft the banner of peace. Such a sight, unique of its kind, sent a thrill of joy, amid cries of '*MAHATMA GANDHI KI JAI*'.

'The news of the restoration of peace was hailed with delight everywhere throughout the city, and the leaders were returning in the very same lorries to announce to Mahatmaji the happy news. It was a little before sundown when they arrived near Mahatmaji's quarters. The deep, resounding noise of the lorries and the loud cheering sent up by the returning leaders combined to set up such a tumultuous roar that Mahatmaji mistook the same for the near approach of a band of Parsi youths out to wreak their vengeance on his devoted head. He was so glad at this that his body swayed to and fro in sheer joy, and with divine smile lighting up his countenance he expressed his delight in the following words: 'That's right, that's right, indeed! When the Parsi youths arrive and demand Gandhi's head, I will instantly come out and give myself up.' A thrill of horror passed through our frames as we heard these words uttered with so much zest, and we could only then realize with what consuming ardour he was craving to meet death as a sacrifice. It had hardly been possible for us to conceive of the cruel pain that was tearing his heart to pieces.... The anger of the Parsi community would be quenched in his blood if the Parsi youths came and broke his head, and that also would expiate his guilt — such thoughts as these cheered his spirit and buoyed him up beyond measure. I hurried forward in dismay towards the verandah; but saw that Providence in Infinite Mercy had sent out His blessings and not danger. It was the divine flag of peace which the leaders of all parties had been bearing in their hands with such demonstrations of

tumultuous enthusiasm; and it was they who had now returned to present their message of peace to Mahatmaji."

Source: *Seven Months With Gandhi* p. 148-49 – Krishnadas

126. THE LAST DAY - THE TRYST WITH MARTYRDOM

Around four o'clock, the interviews of the afternoon ended. Gandhi got up from the sun where he was sitting, and leaning on the shoulder of one of his associates, Braj Krishan Chandiwala, moved towards the toilette. He told Chandiwala: "Tomorrow you go and make arrangements for going to Wardha. Meet the Sardar (Vallabhbhai Patel) and do as he says."

Chandiwala asked him: "So you will not take me with you to Wardha? I have not been to Sevagram after 1942."

"I know, but your work is in Delhi," replied Gandhi.

Chandiwala writes: "I went out of the room. I had to make arrangements for the train to Wardha. I saw Sardar Patel coming from the opposite side. I told him about Bapu's plan to leave for Wardha. He asked me where Bapu was. I told him he had gone to the toilette. Thereupon he paced up and down, and talked to me."

Around 4.15 Bapuji was talking to the Sardar when Abha (one of Gandhi's grandnieces) brought Gandhiji's evening meal. Manibehn, daughter of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, was also with her.... Bapu had 14 ounces of goat's milk, 14 ounces of vegetable juice and three oranges. This turned out to be his last meal.

Three quarters of an hour went by. The hands of the clock showed that it was past five. Prayer always commenced sharp at five. It was getting late, but the talk was going on.

At last, when Manibehn pointed out that it was getting late, Bapuji rose. He put on his chappals and came out of the room. As usual, the two girls were on either side, — Abha on the right, and Manu on the left. Gandhiji's arms were on their shoulders. Behind them, Nandalal Mehta and others from the Birla House were walking. Dr. Sushila Nayyar was away at Bahawalpur those days.

It was already ten minutes late. Bapuji's feet were moving fast towards the prayer ground. Whoever knew that with the same speed, he was moving towards the sunset of his life?

Bapuji climbed the four steps and reached the top of the raised platform. As on every other day, visitors had fallen into lines, making way, and standing respectfully on either side. Someone could be heard saying something on the left side. Bapuji also said something in reply. He moved further forward. Both his hands lifted from the shoulders of the girls, and his palms joined together to do '*namaskar*'. He moved forward a little further. Manu saw someone moving forward from the left. She thought he was coming to the front to touch Bapu's feet, and wanted to stop him with her outstretched hand. But in one second, as the man pushed Manu's hand away, Bapu's note book, rosary and spittoon fell down from Manu's hand. She bent forward to pick them up. In an instant there were three loud thuds. I was coming from behind with my head bent. As I lifted my head, my eyes fell on blood flowing along the left side of Bapu's dhoti, and in a second, I saw that he had collapsed on Abha's lap. All this happened so fast, that the mind could not even keep pace with what I was seeing. The tender body that we were always keen to protect was sprawled on the grass and the wet soil. Bapuji's left leg was spread out, the other was bent. His head was on the lap of the two girls. His face had turned pale.

As he fell, came from his lips, the name of Rama who was so dear to him, and, who was always in his heart. Twice he exclaimed, "He Ram". His eyes and tongue rolled for a second, lips parted, and his body became quiet, — he reached *Nirvana*.

His watch was showing 5.17 (p.m.). The watch had stopped.

Bapuji always wanted to die the death of a brave man. After the bomb explosion (on the 20th — ten days ago), he had said one day, in his past prayer address: "If bullets are pumped into me, and at that time the name of Rama comes from my lips, and I meet death as a brave warrior, there can be no better end for me."

Source: *Mere Bapu* — Brij Kishan Chandiwala

127. GANDHIJI AND THE PLEDGE

One of us went to him on Independence Day and presented him with a number of conundrums on the Pledge. "What would you advice me to do? And why should you have framed a pledge capable of so many interpretations?" "Don't you know," replied Gandhiji with a smile, "the Vedas are capable of innumerable interpretations? Our Pledge is like the Vedas. If you have the intelligence and the courage to interpret it, take the pledge; if not, don't take it."

Source: Gandhiji As We Know Him, Mahadev Desai, pp.126, 127