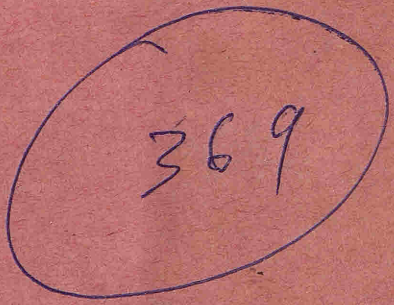
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FIVE GREAT SONS OF INDIA





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BY

T. N. K PILLAI, M. A., L. T.

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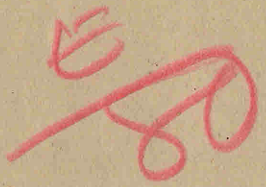
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FIVE GREAT SONS OF INDIA

1964

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THE BUDDHA

About two thousand five hundred years ago, there was a small kingdom in the valley of the Himalayas. Its Capital was Kapilavastu. A wise and virtuous king ruled over it. His name was Suddhodana.

Suddhodana had a noble queen named Mayadevi. One night she dreamt that an elephant, white as snow, came down from heaven, paced round her bed, and presented her with a white lotus. At the same time, she heard a sweet voice singing.

"Those who have ears, let them hear! Those who are fallen, shall now rise! For Lord Buddha is born."

Soon the vision faded and the voice died away. When the King heard of the queen's dream, he sent for wisemen. "O King," said they, "This dream means that you will soon have a great son." The King and Queen felt very happy.

Months passed and Mayadevi gave birth to a son. Many wonders marked the birth of the child. A glorious light shone over the palace.

Sweet music filled the air. The blind saw, the deaf heard and the dumb spoke. An old hermit came down from the Himalayas and told the King "This child will be either a king of kings or a great sage, a Buddha." The child was named Siddhartha.

Seven days after the birth of the child, Mayadevi died. One of the child's aunts now took it under her care and brought it up tenderly.

II

Years went by. The child grew up into a fine lad. He was as wise as he was handsome and as good as he was wise. Every one loved him. In learning and in sports he was without an equal. He loved all princely sports such as riding and shooting. Even his teachers wondered at his in-born skill.

The Prince was leading a very happy life. He lacked nothing. He knew not pain or sorrow. His father fondly wished to hide all suffering from him. But he did not succeed in his plan.

One day, Siddhartha saw a large bird carrying off a smaller one. This opened his eyes. He watched the life around him. He soon found out

that stronger creatures lived upon weaker ones. His heart was filled with pity.

Another day, the prince was in his garden. He saw flocks of white swans flying towards the Himalayas. "How happy and free they are!" he thought. Just at that moment, one of the swans fell down near him. Poor thing! An arrow had pierced its body. The bird was beating its wings with pain. Tears welled up in Siddhartha's eyes. He took the wounded bird in his hand. Softly he laid it in his lap and gently pulled out the arrow. He poured honey into the wound and laid cool leaves on it. Then he wounded his own arm with the point of the arrow, just to know what pain was. While he was comforting the bird, a servant from the prince's cousin, Devadatta, came to claim it. Siddhartha refused to give it to him. He said, "This bird is mine for I have saved it. I am going to save many more creatures through mercy. Let this be the first." When Devadatta received this answer he felt very angry. He went straightway to the king and laid the case before him. The king called together his wisemen and consulted them. They decided that the bird belonged to Siddhartha, for, they said, "A thing belongs to the person who saves it, not to the person who seeks to destroy it".

When the wound was healed, the prince set the bird free. It flew away with joy. So began Siddhartha's work of mercy.

III

The Prince was now eighteen. His father still remembered the words of the old hermit. He wanted his son to succeed him and become a king of kings. Suddhodana could not bear the thought of his son leading a hermit's life. So he had the prince married early to a lovely princess, Yasodhara.

The prince and the princess led a very happy life. They loved each other deeply. They passed their time in merry company. They sang and danced and played games. Time passed quickly and a child was born to them. Happiness now seemed perfect. The king felt secure. He was certain that the prince would not give up his wife and child and go into the lonely forest to do penance. His hopes were only deceiving him. Even when Siddhartha seemed lost in pleasure his mind was not at peace. He had already seen things, which he could not easily forget. He longed to see more of the world.

One day he asked his father for permission to go about the town. His father did not like the request, but he could not refuse it. So he gave his consent. At the same time, he asked his men to decorate the town and keep the old and the sick out of the prince's way.

The prince went out in his chariot. Pleasant sights greeted him everywhere. He was filled with joy. "What a beautiful world" he thought. Just then he saw a poor old man begging for bread. "What is that? Are there such people in this charming world?" he asked himself. He returned to the palace sunk in thought.

A few days afterwards he went into the streets again. This time he saw life as it was. He had not gone far when he came across a sick man lying by the road side. A little farther on, he saw dead body carried by a few mourners. These sights impressed him deeply. He desired to know more about it all. Chanda, his faithful charioteer, said, "O prince, all men are liable to fall ill. All men should die one day or other. The rich and the poor, the prince and the peasant, all have to die. No body can prevent that." The words went to the heart of Siddhartha. "Is life so insecure?," he asked himself, "How can I save mankind?"

On his way back he saw a hermit. His face was bright and he appeared to be happy. Siddhartha again asked himself, "Is this then the right way?"

IV

That night Yasodhara had a dream. It seemed to her that her lord had become a hermit and had left for the forest. She started out of her sleep, weeping bitterly. Siddhartha comforted her and she fell asleep again. But he could not sleep.

The Full Moon was up in the sky. There was peace everywhere. Siddhartha alone was restless. He felt that the time had come for him to give up his life of pleasure and go in search of everlasting joy. Worldly ties were strong, but they had to be broken. He made up his mind at last. Casting a last look on his sleeping wife and dear little child he left the chamber. His heart was almost breaking. But how could he keep back? Duty was calling. He had to go. He could not but obey.

Chanda was asleep. The prince woke him up, "Get up, Chanda! Fetch my horse at once." Chanda at once knew what it meant. He tried to reason with his master. But it was in vain.

Siddhartha rode through the silent moon-lit streets. Chanda followed him. At their approach, the gates fl w open, the sentinels stood asleep. They slipped out of Kapilavastu.

At break of day Siddhartha found himself on the borders of the kingdom. He then bade farewell to Chanda and sent him back to Kapilavastu. The charioteer returned to the palace with a heavy heart. He brought no good news. The king was beside himself with grief. Yasodhara cast off her ornaments and gave up her silken robes. "Until my lord returns" she said, "I will have no joys. A widow I will regard myself and a widow's life I will lead."

V

Siddhartha wandered in search of peace. He went from one teacher to another seeking truth. No one satisfied him. At last he reached the forest of Uruvela. There he met five holy hermits. He joined them in their penance. Six years he spent there. With them he fasted and prayed and meditated. He even excelled them in devotion. So they accepted him as their Guru.

He was now so weak with fasting that he could not remain long in thought. He felt that

there was something wrong with the method. It could not be the right one. There must be a better way. He should find it.

One day as he was returning from the river with such thoughts, he fainted on the way. A shepherdess found him lying there. She nursed him back from his swoon and gave him food. He now decided to leave the hermitage. His companions got disgusted with him. They lost their faith in him. Siddhartha started on his wanderings once more.

He reached Magadha. There he met some shepherds on their way to the capital of that country. They were driving a flock of sheep before them. They seemed to be in a great hurry. A poor little lamb was limping behind the flock. Siddhartha took pity on it and asked the shepherds why they were in such a hurry. They replied: "Our great king, Bimbisara is performing a yaga. These sheep are to be offered as sacrifice. We fear we are late. Hence this hurry." Siddhartha resolved to go with them. He took up the lame lamb and followed them.

On reaching the city they made straight for the temple. The great king was there. A fire was blazing. The priests were chanting hymns

and getting ready to sacrifice a sheep. Siddhartha, in a loud voice , asked the priests to stop. They were lost in wonder at this. They, however, obeyed the stranger. Even the king stood still. Then Siddhartha walked up to the poor animal and set it free, saying :—"Kill not. You have no right to kill. He who cannot give life should not take it. These dumb creatures love life even as we do. He who seeks mercy for himself must show mercy to others. Follow the path of love and mercy." The king heard these words and was convinced. He ordered that in future, no animals should be sacrificed in his kingdom.

Siddhartha set out and reached Gaya.

The still night came on. Everywhere there was peace. The prince sat under a tree in meditation. The evil spirit, Mara, came to tempt him. But he could not deceive the true devotee. As Siddhartha sat there in thought, a dark veil seemed to lift from before his eyes. Truth suddenly dawned upon him. There was Light! He had gained True Knowledge. He had become Truly Wise. He was a Buddha.

VI

Buddha sat still for seven weeks in meditation. All these days he did not touch food or drink.

When he opened his eyes again, he saw two men standing before him with folded hands. They brought him bread and honey and prayed for his blessings. They became his earliest disciples.

Buddha soon started on a tour. At Harinavana the five hermits of Uruvela joined him again. Then he went to Magadha, where king Bimbisara accepted the new faith. A messenger from Suddhodana entreated Buddha to visit Kapilavastu and so from Magadha he went to his father's court. There the old king became his follower. Yasodhara and the young prince, Rahula, too, learnt the noble truths from the lips of the great teacher.

From Kapilavastu Buddha went to Sravasti, where some of his disciples had already built a monastery. He stayed there during the rainy months and travelled from place to place during the rest of the year. For forty years he thus shed light and peace around him.

When the time came for him to leave the world, he called his chief disciple, Ananda, to his side and told him of his approaching end. Ananda was filled with grief. Buddha consoled him, "Don't give way to sorrow. Death is only natural.

Every thing else dies. Truth alone survives. I am going before you because my work is finished. Your work is yet to begin. When you have done your duty, you can follow me." With these words Buddha entered into meditation. He never woke up from it. The light that he kindled spread from country to country. It still continues to shine.

QUESTIONS

Lesson I. The Buddha

1. Describe Mayadevi's dream.
2. What, according to the wise men, was the meaning of the dream?
3. What wonders marked the birth of the child?
4. Write a paragraph on the boyhood of Siddhartha.
5. How did he begin his work of mercy?
6. What had the old hermit foretold about Siddhartha? How did Siddhartha try to fulfil it?
7. How did Siddartha come to know about the sorrows of the world?
8. What was Yasodhara's dream? How was it fulfilled?
9. Give an account of Siddhartha's search for Truth.
10. How did he stop animal sacrifice in Magadha?

11. Describe how he became a Buddha.
12. In what ways did he spread the new faith ?
13. Tell in your own words the story of Buddha's passing away.
14. Write a paragraph on the greatness of The Buddha.
15. What do you know about Buddhism ?

ASOKA

India has produced no other ruler so great as Asoka. She has every reason to be proud of him. We have now adopted the 'Asoka chakra' and the 'Lion Capital' of the Asoka pillar as the symbols of free India. But unfortunately, we know only a little about the greatest of our emperors.

Asoka was the grandson of Chandragupta Maurya. His father, Bindusara, was a great ruler and general. Asoka's mother was the daughter of a Brahmin who lived at Champa. Like the other princes of his time, he received a good education. He was good at studies as at sports. When his education was over, he was appointed Governor of Takshasila. There he received training as a ruler. At the time of his father's death, he was Governor of Ujjaini. There seems to have been some dispute about his right to the throne: perhaps, he had an elder brother; perhaps, there were wars between them. But the story that Asoka killed all his ninety-nine brothers is certainly false. From records we know he had several brothers still living in the thirteenth year of his reign.

When he came to the throne the Mauryan empire was already a vast one. The whole of India, and regions up to Central Asia, had been under his father. Only Kalinga, a small coastal strip between the Mahanadi and the Godavari in the south east, and the extreme tip of the southern peninsula remained outside his rule. When Asoka became emperor he naturally thought of annexing these portions also to his empire. In the ninth year of his reign he sent an army against Kalinga. The people of the country fought fiercely for their freedom. They were, however, overpowered in the end and forced to accept his rule. There was terrible slaughter. Over one hundred thousand of the brave defenders were slain and many times that number were wounded. When the news of this reached Asoka he was stricken with remorse and was disgusted with war. He made a vow that he would never more engage in war. It must be remembered that, in the entire history of mankind, he is the only king who gave up warfare in the hour of his victory.

This was the turning point in Asoka's life. He accepted the teachings of the Buddha. He now preferred the conquest by Dharma (the Law of Duty or Piety) to the conquest by war. He was

converted to this view by Upagupta, the greatest Buddhist teacher of his time. Soon after the Kalinga war, Asoka joined the Buddhist order as a lay brother and four years later, became a monk.

Asoka was thus monk and monarch at the same time. He never remained idle. He had the highest ideal of kingship. Day and night he laboured for the good of his people. "At all times and at all places, the official reporters should keep me informed of the people's business ....At any hour and at any place, I must work for the good of my people."

Asoka was an ardent Buddhist. He sent men to far-off countries like Egypt, Syria and Greece, to teach Buddhism. His missionaries went to Central Asia and Burma, as also to Siam. Asoka's own son, Mahendra, and daughter, Sanghamitra, went to Ceylon and took with them a branch of the Bodhi tree, under which true wisdom had been revealed to Siddhartha. That branch has grown into a big tree and we can see it still at Anuradhapura.

Although Asoka was so very devoted to Buddhism, he showed respect and consideration for all other faiths. He never forced people to

change their religion. With Upagupta for his guide, he went on pilgrimage to the places sacred to the memory of the Buddha. He called together the chief followers of the Buddha at his capital, Patalipura, and tried to settle their differences. He directed his officers not only to rule over the people, but to teach them the noble truths of religion. He started a new department for helping the poor. He devoted special attention to the needs of the travellers. He established hospitals, both for men and for animals.

Asoka led a simple life. Until the Kalinga war he used to enjoy hunting parties. Then he gave it up altogether. He also gave up meat and forbade animal sacrifice. Under him, Universities like Takshasila and Ujjaini became great centres of learning. Students from distant countries came to study in them.

The great emperor died after a reign of about forty years. When we consider his greatness we must remember that he lived over two thousand two hundred years ago. Amidst the names of tens of thousands of Kings, 'Asoka's name shines and shines almost alone, a star'.

QUESTIONS

Lesson II. Asoka

1. Who was Asoka ?
2. What was the turning-point in his life ?
3. What did he do to spread Buddhism ?
4. How did he treat other religions ?
5. How did he work for the good of the people ?
6. Why do you consider him as "great" ?
7. Write notes on :—
   (i) The Asoka Pillar.
   (ii) The Asoka Chakra.





AKBAR

AKBAR

Emperor Humayun was defeated and driven out of Delhi by his enemy, Sher Shah. He fled to the deserts of Sind. There he collected a small army, but it was not strong enough to recapture Delhi. Humayun, therefore, resolved to wait and strengthen himself before making an attempt to drive away his foe. Meanwhile, he thought of capturing a small town called Jun. Leaving his young wife, Hamida, at Umarkot, he set out on the march. He had not gone far, when a messenger overtook him and told him that Hamida had given birth to a son. Humayun's joy knew no bounds. As a sign of his happiness he wished to make presents to his followers. But he had nothing to give away. He took out a small box which contained a little musk, and opening it, he held it before them. "May my son's fame spread all over the world!" he said, "even as the perfume of this musk fills the air." This was in November 1542.

In course of time the prayer was fulfilled and the child grew up into one of the most famous men of his time. He was Akbar.

Humayun captured Jun. His wife and child joined him a few weeks later. For some months they lived in the little town. Humayun was, all the time, planning to reconquer Delhi. He knew it was impossible to do so unless somebody helped him. But who would help him? His brothers, Kamran and Askari, would not. Would the Shah of Persia lend him an army? Perhaps he might. It was a chance worth trying.

He set out towards Persia. His wife and child were with him. When they reached Kandahar, news came that Askari was marching against them with a strong army. There was nothing for him but to flee. It was not possible to carry the child into the mountains where they hoped to hide themselves. So, little Akbar was left behind under the care of a faithfull servant, Jauhar. Hardly had Humayun, Hamida and their men disappeared in the distance when Askari arrived on the scene. He took possession of his one-year-old nephew. He carried him to Kandahar where Akbar lived until he was recaptured by his father, in 1544.

The next nine years Akbar spent in Kabul. Humayun engaged several tutors to teach him. But, the prince refused to learn his letters.

Instead of spending his time on reading and writing he spent it on games and sports. He was fond of animal fights, riding and sword play. He grew up into a skilful sportsman but he remained illiterate till the end of his life. However he had a strong memory. He remembered all that was read out to him once. It was this wonderful power that helped him to carry on the Government of a vast empire, and take part in the discussions of learned men.

Humayun recovered his kingdom and reoccupied Delhi. But he was not allowed to enjoy the fruits of his victory for long. Six months later, he fell down a staircase and lost his life.

Akbar was now emperor. But neither his empire nor his life was safe He was surrounded by dangers on all sides. He had more enemies than friends. Yet, he did not lose heart. He set to work immediately. Fortunately for him, he found an able soldier to help him in his task. It was Bairam Khan.

There is a story relating to this period of Akbar's life which reveals his character. In the course of a battle, one of his most powerful enemies was wounded and captured. Bairam Khan

bade the young emperor cut off his head. Akbar refused to do so. He would not use his sword on a helpless man.

Akbar was still a boy. He spent much of his time in games. Yet there were moments when he felt dissatisfied with the world. On such occasions he liked to be left alone. Sometimes he rode away from the city and remained for hours in meditation. For a boy of fourteen thi was something unusual.

Bairam Khan looked after the government. Many people grew jealous of him. Among them was Akbar's chief nurse, Maham Anaga. She was a very ambitious woman. She knew that if Bairam was dismissed she could rule the country in Akbar's name. She poisoned the ears of the young mperor and persuaded him to send his faithful officer away Bairam got angry and rebelled against his master. But he was defeated and captured. Akbar forgave him and allowed him to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Maham Anaga now became all powerful at Akbar's court. She had a wicked son named Adham Khan. He grew very proud, and led an evil life. He even murdered one of the trusted

officers of the emperor. Next, he thought of attacking the emperor himself. They met on a terrace. Adham tried to snatch away Akbar's sword. But Akbar was too strong for him. The emperor felled him to the floor with a single blow and then ordered his men to throw him down from that great height. Adham thus paid for his misdeeds with his life. The news broke his mother's heart and she died in a short time. Akbar was now free to rule, in fact as well as in name.

Akbar proved himself to be a great ruler. His success was due in a large measure to his correct understanding of his position. He was a Moslem and an alien but the country he had to rule was India and the people were mostly Hindus. It was not enough to keep them down by force. He had to give them peace, win their love and make them happy. All this he was able to do because he regarded himself as an adopted son of India. He tried to bring the rulers and the ruled together. Hindus and Moslems were to forget their differences. They were to regard themselves as Indians, not as Hindus or Moslems. The greatness of their motherland depended upon their union. So he searched for ways to bring about that union. He

felt that marriages between Hindus and Moslems might prove useful in the matter. He set the example himself by marrying a Hindu princess.

III

Akbar was an ambitious king. He wanted to enlarge his kingdom and rule from sea to sea. So he attacked one country after another and conquered them. Gwalior, Jaunpur and Malwa were among the earliest to fall into his hands. When he attacked the country of the Gonds the people offered resistance. A fierce battle followed. The heroic Rani Durgavathi died fighting. Only then was Akbar able to conquer the country. Next he turned to Chitor. It was a stronghold of the brave Rajputs. They fought hard but were overpowered in the end. The Rajput women burned themselves and the men perished sword in hand. Akbar admired their courage and resolved to honour them. He set up two statues in Delhi, one of Jaimall, the brave leader of the defenders, the other of a sixteen-year-old prince who died fighting, with his mother and his bride to his right and left. These conquests were followed up by the annexation of Guzerat and Bengal.

Akbar thus conducted many wars, but the wars did not take up all his time. He devoted as

much attention to the work of government as he did to the conduct of war. He chose brilliant men to help him. Luckily, he had a number of able men at his court. Among them were the two brothers, Faizi and Abul Fazl. Faizi was a poet and physician while Abul Fazl was a statesman and historian. There were also able generals and rulers among the courtiers—men like Todar Mall, Bhagvandas and Mansingh. Whether Hindus or Moslems, they were all loyal to the emperor and helped him in the Government of his vast empire.

IV

It is said that Akbar worked like ten men. Wars and Government demanded all his attention. Yet, he found time for study and meditation. He had a thirst for truth. He never missed an opportunity to learn more about it.

At his new capital, Fatehpur Sikri, he built a "House of Worship." Learned men of all religions met there and held discussions every week. Akbar presided over them. Besides Moslems, there were Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Jews. Later, two Christian missionaries from Goa joined them. He treated them all with great respect and listened to their words with deep

attention. Each missionary, therefore, hoped to convert him to his own religion. They were doomed to disappointment. The fact was, Akbar found good in all religions and good men professing each. In his opinion no religion was altogether bad. He was therefore kind to the followers of all religions. He got angry with only those who quarrelled with other men's faiths. He practised toleration. He allowed his people complete freedom of faith and worship. He gave high offices to men of all religions. Against the advice of his ministers and relatives, he abolished all the taxes imposed upon Hindus on grounds of religion. He also appointed a Christian missionary as tutor to one of his sons.

When Akbar felt that he had understood the truths of all religions he thought of founding a new faith. It was to have the good of all creeds and the evils of none. The new faith was called the 'Divine Faith'. It recognised Akbar as the representative of God on Earth. The faith pleased nobody. The priests of all religions opposed it. Among them the Moslems were the most bitter. The Christian missionaries left the court in disgust. Even among the Hindus there were not many willing to join the new faith. Thus Akbar's

sincere attempt at unifying India through a common religion failed.

Akbar was more successful in bringing India under one Government. He conquered more countries. Kashmir, Sind, Orissa, Baluchistan and Kandahar were added to his empire. The Deccan alone remained free. Akbar sent his army against Ahmednagar but it did not make good progress. The city was defended by a brave woman, Chanda Bibi. As long as the people obeyed her, everything was safe. But then quarrels broke out among the people and Chanda Bibi was murdered. Akbar's forces, waiting for a chance, marched into the city and declared Ahmednagar to be part of the Moghul Empire. The fall of Ahmednagar was followed by the surrender of Khandesh. Akbar had no time to make further conquests. In 1605, his empire extended from Kashmir in the north, to the Godavari in the south, and from Kabul in the west to the Brahmaputra in the east.

Akbar's fame as a ruler spread even to Europe. Queen Elizabeth addressed a letter to Akbar as 'the most invincible and most mighty, prince'. But with all his wealth, power and fame he was not very happy. In youth he had longed

for a son and heir to succeed him. Three sons were born to him, Salim, Murad, and Danyal. Of these, the two younger sons took to drink and died before their time. The eldest, Salim, grew ambitious and impatient. More than once he rebelled against his father. He even murdered Abul Fazl, his father's ablest and most trusted Minister. Akbar could never forgive him for that crime. At one time it was thought that the emperor might even disinherit him. But, when Akbar was on his death-bed, father and son were reconciled. Salim was recognised heir to the throne. Soon after that, Akbar passed away in his sixty-fourth year.

Among the great rulers of India, Akbar is second only to Asoka Both believed in goodness and toleration. But Akbar, unlike Asoka, did not give up the use of force altogether.

In a sense, as Pandit Nehru says, Akbar might be considered to be the father of Indian nationalism.

QUESTIONS

LESSON III. AKBAR

1. Where was Akbar born ?
2. What did his father pray when he heard about his son's birth ? Was the prayer fulfilled ?

3. How did the child fall into the hands of his uncle ?

4. Write a few sentences on Akbar's childhood at Kabul.

5. Who was Bairam Khan ? Why did he rebel against his master ? What did Akbar do with him ?

6. What was the end of Maham Anaga ?

7. How did Akbar try to bring about a union of Hindus and Moslems ?

8. How did Akbar honour the defenders of Chitor ?

9. Who helped Akbar in the work of Government ?

10. Why was Akbar unhappy in his last days ?

11. Write Notes on:—

(1) House of Worship.

(2) Divine faith.

12 Of the two great rulers Akbar and Asoka whom do you like more ? Why ?



TAGORE

TAGORE

Rabindranath Tagore was born in 1861. His father, Devendranath Tagore, was a man highly respected for his goodness and devotion. He was generally spoken of as 'Maharshi'. Rabindranath was his youngest son.

The children in the Tagore family led a simple life. Though the family was rich, they enjoyed no luxuries. They had to make their own toys. They were not allowed even to go beyond the gates of their own house. So, the outside world had a particular attraction for young Rabindranath and his brothers and sisters. Their father spent most of his time in travel and mother was busy with house-hold work. The children, therefore, came to spend much of their time with the servants. Rabindranath's memories of this period are found in some of his poems and stories. He tells us how a servant, one day, drew a circle round him on the verandah and asked him to remain within the circle. If he stepped out, the servant told him, terrible things would happen to him. Poor Rabindranath remembered what had happened to Sita and kept himself within the circle.

As a boy, Rabindranath, enjoyed roaming about his father's big house. He listened eagerly to the stories which an old clerk told him. Often he fancied himself as the hero of such stories. He also listened to the recitations from the Ramayana. Very soon, Rabindranath began to tell himself stories of his own. Even in early childhood he enjoyed the sight of beautiful things. The garden in the morning with its beautiful flowers and dewy grass, the deep blue sky and the wonderful rain, impressed him with their loveliness.

Somendra and Satya, in whose company Rabindranath spent most of his time, were now sent to a school nearby. Rabindranath longed to go with them, because, he hoped to find more freedom there than in his home. He was, at last allowed to accompany them. But he soon found out his mistake. The school was worse than a prison. He wanted to get away. It is said, he desired even to fall ill, so that he might remain at home.

During his years at school, Rabindranath began to write verses. The news reached his teacher. He asked his pupil to write a poem. The boy produced a few verses. But the other

boys said that he had copied them from some book.

About this time, a company of players visited his house. They acted the play, "Nala and Damayanti". Rabindranath liked the drama. That also made an impression on him.

When Rabindranath was twelve years old, his father went to the Himalayas. He took Rabindranath with him. On their way, they came to a village called Bolpur. Near it, Devendranath Tagore had already built an ashrama called 'Shantiniketan.' Rabindranath liked the place. It was really a 'Home of Peace.'

Father and son spent four months in the Himalayas. They lived at a place called Dalhousie. During the stay, Devendranath taught his son English and Sanskrit. The boy, now, began to understand the beauty of 'Kalidasa's poetry. He enjoyed the Sanskrit poems, such as 'Meghadut' and 'Kumara Sambhava'.

When Rabindranath returned to Calcutta, another attempt was made to continue his studies. This time, he went to St. Xavier's College. He liked the masters and the boys at the college, but

he did not like the studies. So he discontinued his studies once more. Never more did he attend a college. However, he did not give up reading. He read what he liked and wrote poems, which he often read out to the members of the family. Some of his early poems and stories were published in magazines.

In his fourteenth year, Rabindranath lost his mother. His sister consoled him and tried to make him happy.

II

When Rabindranath was eighteen, he went to England. He spent a year and a half there. He read widely, but, did not pass any examination. Then he returned to India. His serious attempts at writing began only now. His collection of poems, 'Evening Song', made him famous among the Bengali writers of his time. Bankimchandra, the famous Bengali novelist, read it and at once recognised the genius of Tagore. One day, they happened to meet at a wedding. When the host garlanded Bankimchandra he took the garland off his neck and placed it round the neck of the young poet, saying, " It is he who deserves a garland, my friend! Have you not read his 'Evening Songs?'

Rabindranath was now twenty-one years old. One day, as he stood on the verandah of a house in Calcutta watching the sun rise, he had a wonderful vision. This he has described in a poem called "The Awakening of the Fountain".

In 1883, Rabindranath married Mrinalini Devi. For the next fifteen years he did not go on long travels; he lived in Bengal and wrote several poems, plays and stories. He wrote them all in simple Bengali. The scholars blamed him for this and found fault with his language.

The poet took up his residence at Santhiniketan in 1901. There he started a school. It was like the ancient Gurukula. Rabindranath chose the best teachers and followed new methods of teaching. He gave children more freedom. He allowed them to enjoy the beauty of life and brought them closer and closer to nature.

Towards the close of the year 1902, Rabindranath's wife died. Two of the children followed their mother to the grave. In 1905 Maharshi Devendranath passed away. These sorrows touched the poet deeply.

III

Tagore's most famous collection of poems, 'Gitanjali', was composed before 1912. He

translated some of his poems into English. At once they brought him great fame. He was awarded the 'Nobel Prize'. Now his name spread all over the world. The British Government Knighted him. From that time, he was called Sir Rabindranath Tagore. However, when the Government ill treated the people, Tagore gave up his knighthood.

Tagore was already building up a great centre of learning. This was named 'Viswa Bharathi'. It is a great University. Scholars from all parts of the world are welcomed there. The students of the University have been doing great service to India by improving village life and helping the growth of music, dancing and other fine arts.

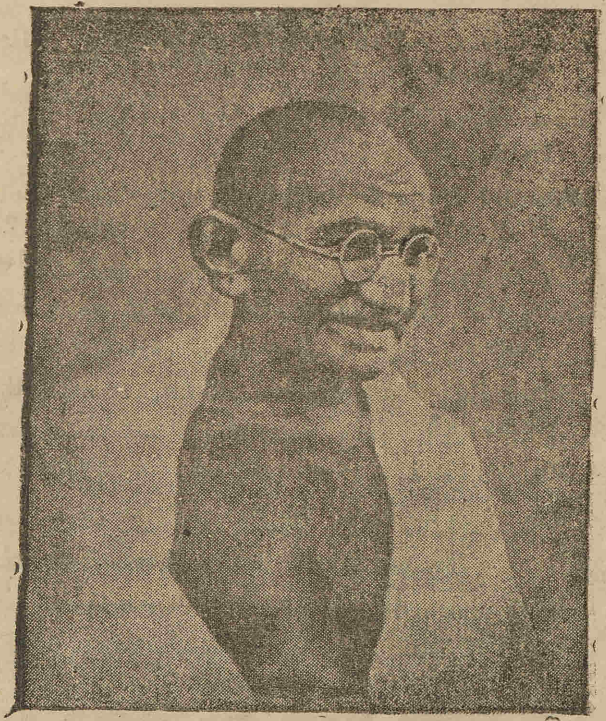
Tagore's influence is felt everywhere in India. His poems, plays, novels and short stories have been translated into every language. The stories of Tagore are best liked by children. They are simple and beautiful. Stories like 'Cabuliwallah' and 'Hungry Stones' must be read by every one. Most of them deal with the life of common people.

Tagore died in 1941, full of years and honours. His name will remain so long as the Bengali and the English languages las..

QUESTIONS

Lesson IV. Tagore

1. Why was Rabindranath's father called 'Maharshi' ?
2. How were the children brought up in the Tagore family ?
3. Why did Rabindranath long to go to school ? Why did he soon get tired of school-life ?
4. Where is Santinikethan ? Why is it so called ?
5. How did Bankimchandra honour the young Tagore ?
6. How did Santiniketan differ from other Schools ?
7. What is the most famous poem of Tagore ?
8. Why was he given the Nobel Prize ?
9. Write a few sentences about ' Viswa Bharati.'
10. Have you read any of Tagore's stories ? Name a few of his books.



GANDHI

GANDHI

Gandhi is the maker of modern India. The world knows him better by his title 'Mahatma'. than by his real name, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

Gandhi was born in 1869, at Porbunder in Kathiawar. His grandfather, Uttamchand Gandhi, had been a Dewan of Porbunder. Gandhi's own father, Karamchand, was for some time Minister of Rajkot. He was a truthful and brave man generous but short tempered. His wife was a noble and religious woman. Gandhi owed his character most to his mother.

Gandhi himself has told us a story about his grandfather which helps us to understand his own character. Once, Uttamchand was dismissed from his State, Porbunder. He accepted office in Junagadh. When he saw his new chief he saluted him with the left hand. The chief got angry and asked him "Why do you salute me with your left hand?" "Because, the right hand is pledged to Porbunder", answered Uttamchand.

Gandhi passed his childhood in Porbunder. He attended a local school and learnt his lessons

diligently. He was too shy to mix freely with his school-mates. As soon as the bell rang he would run back to his house. He was always a gentle and truthful boy. Books were his best companions.

There are many interesting stories about the boyhood of Gandhi. Once an Inspector of Schools came into his class and tested the spelling of the boys. He read out a passage and the boys wrote it down. When it came to the word 'kettle' Gandhi stopped writing. He did not know how to spell it correctly. The teacher who stood close by, noticed this. He was anxious that his boys should do well. So, touching little Gandhi's foot with his shoe, he silently urged him to copy the correct spelling from his neighbour's book. Gandhi was too honest to do so. The teacher felt ashamed of his own conduct later on. Gandhi, however, told nobody about it in those days. He did not want to put the teacher to shame.

By nature, Gandhi was shy and reserved. Yet, he fell into bad company, more than once. Only his devotion to truth saved him from being spoiled for ever.

At one time he found himself in the company of some people who were fond of meat. They

told him that meat alone could make men strong. If English men ruled India, they said, it was because they ate meat. Gandhi, in his innocence, believed every word of what they said. He joined them and tried eating meat. The first time he could eat nothing. He felt sick. That night it seemed to him that a sheep was bleating in his stomach. He felt very guilty. When he told his companions about it, they laughed at him and advised him to try again. On the second occasion, he felt less uneasy. Soon, he began to like meat. Then he remembered that he was deceiving his parents, who would never have allowed him to touch it. He, therefore, gave up taking meat. It was the same with smoking.

Gandhi was now thirteen. According to an old Hindu custom, he was married early to a girl of almost his own age. She was Kasturba, who proved to be a devoted helpmate to him all through the sorrows and trials of his life.

Four years later, he passed the Matriculation examination and joined the Samaldas College, but, he did not stay there long. At the age of eighteen, he went to England to study law. His mother allowed him to go, only when he had promised her to remain chaste and not to touch wine or meat.

After completing his studies, Gandhi returned to India. He set up practice at Bombay and then removed to Kathiawar. As a lawyer he was no great success. At this time, an Indian merchant in South Africa engaged him to conduct a case there.

On reaching South Africa, he saw how cruelly Indians were treated there. They could not live in the country with self-respect. All Indians were regarded as coolies. Gandhi himself was called 'Cooly Barrister'. Indians were not allowed to travel in the same railway compartment with Europeans. Even the right to vote was taken away from h Indian settlers.

Gandhi made up his mind to settle down in South Africa and fight for the rights of his countrymen. He returned home to fetch his wife and children. His speeches in India during this visit angered the South African Whites. When he came back to Durban they attacked him. They would have even murdered him. But, a European lady saved him. When the British Government asked the Government of South Africa to punish the criminals, Gandhi refused to prosecute anyone. This was a surprise to the Europeans in the country.

Gandhi still tried to help his countrymen in South Africa. But, when the Whites were in difficulties, he helped them too. At that time, a war broke out between them and a set of people called Boers. Gandhi helped the Whites to win the war. He even risked his life for it. When the war ended, the English Government presented him with medals for his good work.

As soon as the war came to a close, Gandhi returned to his struggle for saving the honour of Indians in South Africa. He did not want his men to use force. He asked them to be brave and to resist injustice. Through their own suffering, they won the struggle. Gandhi and many of his followers had to go to jail. But, in the end, they were successful. It became possible for Indians to live in South Africa with honour.

III

Gandhi returned to India in 1914. Soon afterwards he joined the struggle for Indian independence. During the first world war, he helped the English again. They promised self-government to India. But when the war ended they did not fulfil their promises. Indians therefore resolved to win their freedom. Gandhi

became their leader. He started a movement called 'Non-co-operation.' He told the people that if all of them refused to help the Government, the Englishmen would have to leave India. Officers should resign their jobs, lawyers should give up practice, students should come out of schools and colleges and they must all work for the freedom of their motherland. They should not buy British goods ; they must encourage only 'Swadeshi'. All must wear cloth made in India. Hindus and Moslems must be united. Untouchability should be abolished. If the Government still refused them their liberty, they must refuse to pay taxes.

The mass of people obeyed Gandhi. The movement gathered strength. Then the Government struck. They arrested thousands or men, women and children. At last they arrested Gandhi himself and had him tried for treason. He pleaded 'guilty' to the charge. He was sentenced to six years' rigorous imprisonment and thrown into prison. But the movement did not die out. It took only new forms. The struggle went on, till India attained her independence in 1947. Whether in jail or outside it, Gandhi was always the leader. He had many great followers

like Pandit Nehru, C. Rajagopalachari, Subash Chandra Bose and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. Most of them made great sacrifices and spent years and years in prison.

In jail, Gandhi once fell seriously ill. He underwent an operation. Fortunately for India, he soon recovered. Several times he fasted both inside and outside jail. Once it was to bring about Hindu-Moslem unity; another time, it was in the cause of the Harijans. Many times he fasted to make himself pure. In 1930 he marched to Dandi to break the Salt Laws of the Government. A few months later, he went to London to take part in a conference which was called together to consider the question of Indian independence. In a life so full of activities these are only a few land marks.

IV

When the British at last made up their minds to quit India they divided it. The result was quarrel between Hindus and Moslems. Gandhi did his best to prevent it. He went to Calcutta where there was trouble. The effect was magical. There was peace. Then quarrels broke out in Noakhali. He went there. When India was celebrating her independence in New Delhi, the

Father of the Nation was wearily walking along the deserted roads of Noakhali. It was the hour of his victory, but his heart was full of grief. He found that the Hindus and Moslems had forgotten that they were brethren. They had gone mad and were cutting each other's throats. Gandhi could see only sad and angry faces everywhere. He moved about the country helping the wretched and consoling the grief-stricken.

Still there were many in India who did not understand Gandhi. Among the Hindus there were some who thought that he was destroying Hinduism. They wanted to do away with him.

On the 30th January 1948, Gandhi was in New Delhi. In the evening he went out to the prayer ground as usual. As he approached the platform, a fanatic young Hindu, Godse, shot him down. In a few minutes he died.

India has never produced a greater man. His death was a loss not to India only, but to the whole world. And people all over the world have mourned him. It is for us to show our love and respect towards him by following his principles of Love, Truth and Non-violence.

QUESTIONS

Lesson V. Gandhi

1. Who is the maker of modern India ?
2. What do you know about Gandhi's grandfather ?
3. Write a few sentences about Gandhi as a school-boy.
4. Tell a story to show Gandhi's love of truth even as a boy.
5. Why did he begin to eat meat? Why did he give it up ?
6. When did Gandhi marry ? Whom did he marry ?
7. On what promise did his mother allow him to go to England ?
8. What led him to south Africa ?
9. What was the Condition of the Indians in South Africa at the time ?
10. Why did Gandhi settle down in South Africa ?
11. How was he ill-treated by the white men ? Why did he refuse to prosecute them ?
12. How did he help the white men during the Boer war ?
13. What was the result of his work in South Africa ?
14. Why did he start the Non-co-operation Movement ?

15. How did he help the Harijans ?

16. Where was Gandhi when people were celebrating Independence Day in New Delhi ?

17. Why was Gandhi murdered ?

18. How can we now show our respect to Gandhi ?

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