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GANDHIJI: THE STORY OF HIS LIFE

Told by GERTRUDE MURRAY
Illustrated by K. K. HEBBAR



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TO

THE MEMORY OF MY FATHER

JOHN MURRAY

FROM WHOM I FIRST LEARNED TO REVERE

GANDHIJI

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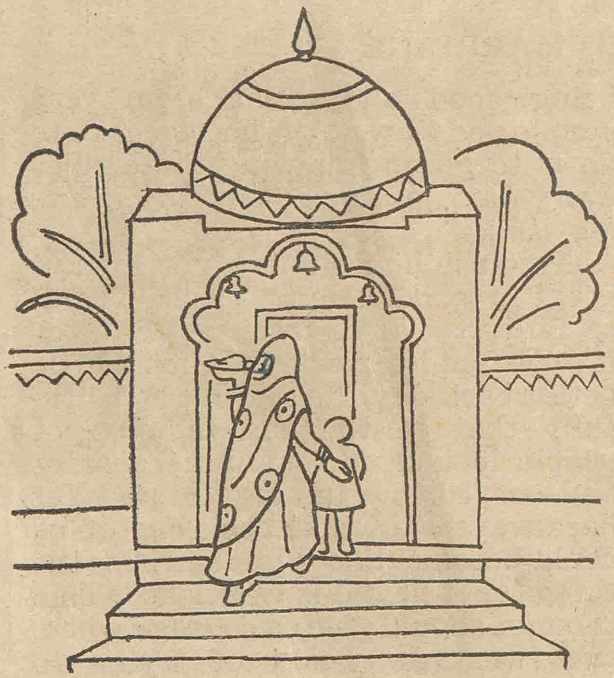
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CHAPTER 1

CHILDHOOD AND MARRIAGE

THERE is no boy or girl in India who does not know of Gandhiji. His kind smile and sweet expression are so familiar to us from a thousand pictures and photographs that we feel as if we knew everything about him. Almost every day of our lives we have heard his name spoken with love and reverence. Yet few of us know of half the wonderful things he has done for India. If we studied his life and his work carefully, we should not be content with just loving him, we should try to follow his teachings as well and to be as like him as possible. This is not so difficult as it sounds, because he has left us many rules to follow. These rules make being good and great seem very simple and easy. All that we have to do is to go on following these rules every day, *and never give up following them.*

Gandhiji himself was not always great or good. He was once as full of faults as anybody else. But for love of God he tried to become a little better each day. He did this so faithfully that in the end millions of people looked up to him as a saint and obeyed him in everything. Yet he always said that each one of us could become like him and do the things that he did if we wished. This thought should give us courage whenever we grow weary of trying to



follow in his footprints.

Because so many of us always think of him as Gandhiji, I will call him that from the start, instead of by his first name of Mohandas.

Gandhiji was born on October 2, 1869, at Porbunder, a small state in Kathiawar. His father was the Dewan, or Prime Minister, of Porbunder, and Gandhiji was his youngest child.

Gandhiji's mother was a very sweet, kind and religious woman. She visited the temple daily, often taking her little son with her. She fasted frequently, too. Once she made a vow to eat only one meal a day for four months, and not to take even that one meal unless she had first seen the sun shine. As she had made this vow in

the rainy season it was often very difficult to see the sun shine at all. Her children, who could not bear to think of their dear mother going without food all the twenty-four hours, would stand staring up at the sky, waiting to catch the first gleam of sun. As soon as a ray appeared, they would dash into the house and call their mother to come and see for herself. By the time she came out the sun had often gone behind the clouds again. "It doesn't matter," she would say, cheerfully, "God does not want me to eat to-day," and back she would go to her household tasks. In this way Gandhiji learnt from his good mother how to do penance cheerfully for love of God.

As a small boy of five or six Gandhiji was just like other children at that age. He found it very hard to learn the multiplication table. He would get cross with his poor teacher and call him names behind his back, just as many silly little children do. At that early age a child does not understand how hard a teacher's life is, and how many pleasures he gives up for the sake of the children he teaches.

In spite of his boldness in calling the teacher names, Gandhiji was otherwise a very timid little boy. He was very much afraid of the dark, and ghosts, and snakes. He used to think that goblins and evil spirits were lying in wait for him if he had to go into a dark room at night. All these foolish fears made life miser-

able for him. Fortunately his nurse, a good old woman named Rambha, came to know of all this. She told him to repeat the name of Ram whenever he felt afraid. She explained to him that evil spirits have no power against the holy names of God. At first he did as she told him just because he loved his old nurse and liked to obey her. Then he found that he felt brave and safe whenever he repeated the holy name. In this way he soon overcame his fears.

He never forgot the teaching of his good old nurse, and all his life after he had the greatest faith in the power of the holy name of God. We know that he died with it on his lips.

When Gandhiji was seven years old his family left Porbunder and



settled at Rajkot. There he was sent to a primary school. He was a very honourable little boy and never told lies even to save himself from a scolding. He was never late for school either. He was in fact a model child at that time.

He was terribly shy and always feared that the other boys might tease him. To avoid this, he would run home as fast as he could, the minute school was over.

No matter how hard the lessons were he would never copy from a companion's books. He felt the greatest respect for his teacher and would not have deceived him for anything in the world. All the naughtiness that had made him call his first teacher names had now left him. He only wanted to do his duty.





Shravana, the devoted son

Once he was allowed by his father to go to the theatre to see a play. It was the story of the good King Harischandra, who sacrificed everything he possessed in the world, even his wife and child, for the sake of truth. This play made a great impression on the truth-loving child. He determined to be just like Harischandra and suffer anything, even death, rather than tell a lie.

Just about the same time as this, he happened to read a book about Shravana, the devoted son. Gandhiji was not at all fond of reading as a child, but this book interested him very much. He made up his mind always to be as loving and devoted to his own dear parents as Shravana was to his.

Although you have only been reading for a few minutes, I think you must have already noticed a very beautiful side of Gandhiji's character: that whenever he came across good in anything or anybody, he at once tried to imitate it. He was never content with just admiring, as most of us are.

Though it was very unsual, in those days, for Hindus to mix with people of other faiths, Gandhiji's father had many friends outside his community. Jains, Parsees, Muslims —all were welcome in his home. With these friends the good man would talk much about religion and ask his visitors to explain their beliefs to him. His little son would always be near by at these times, for the father was often sick and required his help in many ways, espe-



cially, for rubbing his feet and legs when they ached. Gandhiji always listened carefully to these grown-up talks on religion. From them he learned to respect every religion, for *all* religions are meant to lead men to God.

As he grew up he understood this more and more. At last he came to see that as all religions teach us to be good, truthful, brave and faithful, there is really only *one* religion in the world—and that is to love God and to serve our fellow men with all our might.

When Gandhiji was only twelve years old he was married, according to the Hindu custom of those times, to a little girl just his own age. Her name was Kasturba and she was very sweet and pretty.

Marriage is a serious and holy thing. It joins two people together for their whole life. It is hard for a child to understand how great a thing marriage is, and nowadays people do not think it good for children to marry. In those days, however, the old-fashioned Hindus thought differently, and so Gandhiji and little Kasturba were married.

When he grew up Gandhiji admitted that all he thought about on his wedding day was the excitement, the music and drum-beating, the lovely clothes that he was given to wear, and all the good things there were to eat! He was very glad, too, that he would now have Kasturba for a playmate.

Weddings cost a great deal in those days in India. Families were often

ruined by the expenses of one. This was because each family wanted to show off and appear richer than it really was. Hundreds of people were invited, to eat and eat till they could manage no more. Huge sums were spent on lovely clothes and jewellery. Whole months were wasted in preparing everything, too. This was all very foolish, and Gandhiji was much against it when he grew up. He could not bear to think of hundreds of people stuffing themselves on the best of food at every wedding feast in India, when there were millions of poor Indians who never once in their lives got enough to satisfy their hunger. But at the time of his own marriage he was so young that he only thought how lovely it was to have such a fuss made about him.

Little Kasturba was very shy at first and would hardly speak to her new husband, but they soon became good friends.

Gandhiji found that his bride was a little girl of very independent character who did not like to be unnecessarily ordered about. On the other hand, now that he was married, Gandhiji felt himself to be very important and grown-up. He wanted to order her about all the time, even though he did it lovingly. He had soon become very fond indeed of his sweet little wife, but he wanted her to ask his permission for everything. Even if she wanted to go to the temple, he expected her first to ask leave to do so. This she absolutely refused to do. In this way they would quarrel, like the two children

they were. Sometimes they would not speak to each other for the whole day.

Another thing which troubled Gandhiji very much was that Kasturba had not studied anything. Modern Indian girls are very lucky in being able to go to school and college just like boys, but when Kasturba was a child, people in India did not care to let their daughters study. They thought it unsuitable and a waste of time. In those days girls were supposed to occupy themselves only with household tasks, cookery, embroidery and such things. Gandhiji, on the other hand, had grown to love study. He prepared his school tasks every day with the greatest care (for he continued to go to school after his marriage). He wanted to teach Kasturba all that he knew, but the little girl was not interested. Nobody had ever taught her the value of study, and her poor little husband was himself only a child, so how could he make her understand?

CHAPTER 2

BOYHOOD

As time went on Gandhiji became a model scholar. He had a high sense of duty and he tried in every way to obey his parents and teachers and make them contented with him. He never had a single bad certificate at school. Though he was not a very clever child, he studied so hard that he even won two small scholarships.

He was very sensitive and could not bear to be scolded. Once a teacher beat him for something he had done. Gandhiji cried bitterly. His feelings were terribly hurt. This sensitiveness made him feel pity for the sufferings of others. In particular he could not bear to see the contemptuous way in which people treated the poor so-called 'Untouchables.' They also, like everyone else, were the children of the Creator who made all things. This thought never left him, but grew with his growth. When he was a man he never ceased fighting for the rights of these poor unfortunate people. He even risked his life for them. It was he who, instead of using the ugly word 'Untouchables', first called them by the lovely name of Harijans, or the Children of God. But I am going on too fast and telling you about things done by the grown-up man, instead of continuing with the story of Gandhiji the school-boy, as he was then.

As you well know, many people in India are still very wrong in their ideas about the poor 'Untouchables', and in the days of Gandhiji's childhood matters were a hundred times worse. Even his sweet mother, gentle and kind though she was, believed firmly in the old idea that merely to touch an 'Untouchable' meant pollution. She therefore always insisted that her little son must take a bath of purification whenever he happened to touch the sweeper boy who came to the house. On these occasions Gandhiji would just smile coaxingly, as if to say: "It is really not necessary, Mother dear," and obey her without argument. In his heart, meanwhile, he felt sure that his good mother would agree with him, if only he could find the right words to explain to her that the 'Untouchables' were as much his brothers as his playmates at school.

At the High School Gandhiji began to take more and more interest in his country. He felt very sad to think that the British ruled India and kept Indians in an inferior position. He often wondered why it was that hundreds of millions of Indians allowed themselves to be ruled by a few Britons (for, as you all know, compared to India, Britain is a tiny country). He did not realise that it was because Indians were strictly divided into different castes and communities, each thinking only of its own interests, with little or no idea of a common leader or a common aim. One day a school friend told him that the British were able to rule

India easily because they were stronger than Indians. He said that they got their strength from eating meat and drinking wine. This was nonsense, of course, but Gandhiji in his simplicity believed his friend. He was still a timid boy and had not got over his old fear of goblins and serpents. He always liked to have a light burning in his bed-room, so that he could make sure there were neither ghosts, goblins nor serpents around to disturb his rest. He felt a great admiration for this friend of his who was so bold that he was not afraid of anything. So bold that he would even hold live snakes in his hand! At least he *said* so—but I rather think that last bit about snakes was just vain boasting. He told Gandhiji that he got all this bravery from eating meat. Secretly, of course, because, as both the boys came from strictly religious orthodox Hindu families, meat-eating was an idea that would have shocked everyone around them, even if they had only *spoken* of it.

Slowly but surely, this boy persuaded Gandhiji that if Indians would all take to eating meat they would be able to drive out their British rulers and be free. Although this was a very silly argument, poor Gandhiji let himself be finally convinced. He was so anxious to set India free that he didn't realise his friend might be quite mistaken in his ideas.

So the two boys went to a lonely spot on the river bank, and there, for the first time, Gandhiji ate meat,

which had been brought by his friend. It was goat's flesh, very tough and badly prepared, and poor Gandhiji did not like it at all, but he ate it bravely. The thing which upset him most was the thought that the meat had come from a poor live goat which had had to die in order to provide him with this meal. He could not get proper sleep all that night. He was tormented by a horrible nightmare in which a live goat kept on bleating inside his stomach.

After a while he came to understand that it was wrong to deceive his parents in anything, however good his motive might be. So he determined to give up the idea of becoming a regular meat-eater and think of some better way of getting strong in order to defeat the British.

Kasturba, who had a wise little head in spite of not having studied at all, had already understood that the bold, meat-eating boy who said he could pick up live snakes, was not a suitable companion for her young husband. She began to warn Gandhiji against him. Very soon Gandhiji saw how shrewd his little wife was, for his friend began trying to lead him into all sorts of mischief and wickedness.

Then another boy began teaching Gandhiji to smoke. This boy was a relative of the family. The two would pick up cigarette stumps dropped by grown-ups and puff away in secret, feeling wonderfully smart and clever. Unfortunately, one wrong action generally leads to another. They soon got tired of smoking only stumps,

and wanted to buy whole cigarettes. That cost money, and they had no money. So they began to steal copper coins now and then from the poor servant's pocket.

Shortly after this, Gandhiji's elder brother got into debt and didn't know what to do about it. He felt that he must pay the debt—but where to get the money? At last he thought of a bangle of solid gold which he always wore on his arm. Why not clip a bit out of that and sell it? No one would notice. Gandhiji, who was in the secret, helped his brother to clip out the bit of gold, and the debt was paid. As soon as it was done, however, Gandhiji's heart almost broke with remorse. He felt sure that what he had done was wrong, and he made up his mind to confess it to his father.



He felt terribly afraid, but he wanted to get the weight off his conscience. So he wrote what he had to say on a sheet of paper. He told everything and ended by promising never to steal again and asking for forgiveness. Then he handed the paper to his father who was at that time very sick in bed.

Though generally a quick-tempered man, the father was so touched by his son's brave confession that he cried. The boy cried too. He felt that his kind father's tears had washed all his wrong-doing away.

After this Gandhiji determined to give up smoking too. He wanted to have no more secrets from his good parents. Soon he came to think smoking a very bad thing. He understood that it was bad for his health and altogether a very foolish practice. When he grew up he did all he could to persuade people to give up smoking.



CHAPTER 3

CHOOSING A CAREER

When Gandhiji was about sixteen his kind father died. This was a great grief to the sensitive boy, for he loved his father dearly. Shortly after this a baby was born to Kasturba, but the poor little thing only lived a few days. This made Gandhiji still more unhappy.

The death of the head of the household made the question of Gandhiji's career very important. The family was not rich, although the father had been a Dewan. He had been a man of very simple tastes who was fond of doing good to others and cared nothing for money. His elder son was now to take his place in ruling the family's affairs. The younger son, it was decided, must take up some profession that would bring in good earnings.

So after Gandhiji had matriculated, an old friend of the family suggested that the boy should go to England to study law. Then he would be sure to earn well and perhaps become a Dewan as his father had been.

This idea pleased Gandhiji very much. He wanted to start for England at once, but he said that he preferred studying medicine rather than law, if no one had any objection. Wanting to be a doctor had been one of his earliest wishes, and it never left him all his life. During his

father's illness he had been a faithful nurse to him, and he always loved caring for sick people. Later on I shall tell you of some of the wonderful things he did for the sick when he grew up.

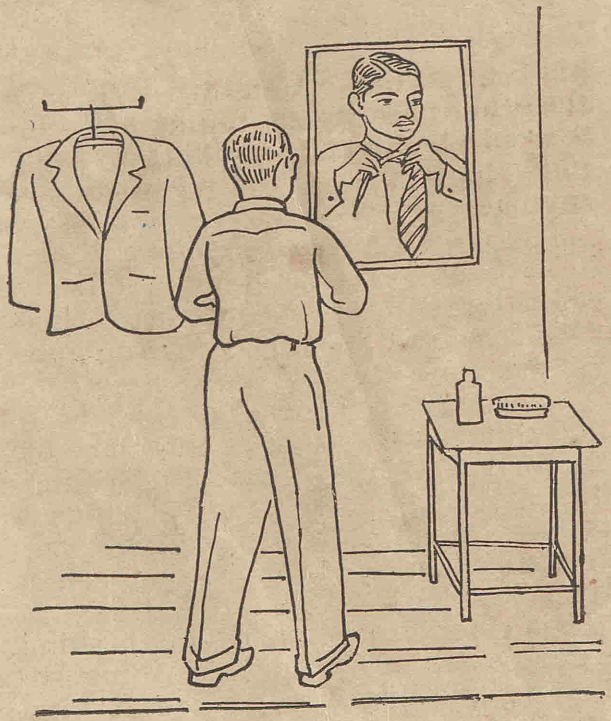
His family did not like the idea of his becoming a doctor. Then, too, in those days, orthodox Hindus were terribly against the idea of travelling across the sea to other countries. They thought it was a great sin. So even the idea of studying law seemed likely to come to nothing.

Gandhiji did not let the matter drop so easily, however, and at last he overcame the objections of all but one person. This was his mother. She was afraid that he might not lead a good life if he went so far from her side. She thought he might grow careless in religious matters, and eat meat or drink wine. He promised her that he would be very careful and not do anything to displease her while he was away. So at last she gave her consent. 26

There were of course many things to arrange before so long a journey could be made, and some little time passed before he sailed for England. He was now a young lad of nineteen.

Kasturba was also nineteen and she had a new baby to take the place of the one who had died. The young husband must have been very sorry to leave them both, although he was so excited at the thought of foreign travel.

His elder brother had bought him a good outfit of European clothing, so that people might not stare at him

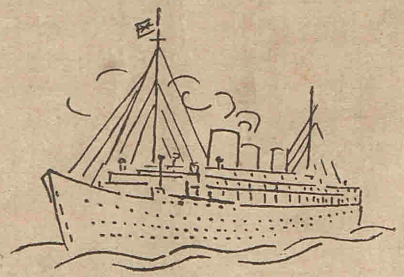


when he got to England. Gandhiji found these new clothes very strange and uncomfortable, and he did not like the necktie at all. As he was now a strict vegetarian again, and did not know what sort of food he might be given on board the ship, he took a large stock of sweets and dried fruits with him. It was a good thing that he did so, as we shall see.

As soon as he set foot in the dining room of the ship he noticed that all the passengers used knives and forks in the European style. This made him feel very shy, as up till that time he had only eaten in the Indian way, using his fingers. As he feared it would be impossible for him to manage knives and forks without accidents, he decided not to go into the dining room at all. Instead, he pass-

ed his meal-times in his cabin, eating his dried fruits and sweetmeats.

His thoughtful elder brother had put him in the care of an Indian gentleman who was going to England on the same boat. This gentleman did his best to make Gandhiji talk with the other passengers, telling him that it would be a good way both to practise English and to get over his shyness.



CHAPTER 4

LIFE IN ENGLAND

WHEN the ship arrived in the English port of Southampton, Gandhiji put on a white flannel suit, thinking that this would be suitable for the month of September. When he landed, however, he found the weather was far from summery, while he turned out to be the only person wearing white in the whole of Southampton! Wherever he looked he could see only people in dark clothes. How angry he felt! Worse still, when he had gone to a hotel and taken a room, he was told that his luggage could not be sent to him until Monday. And it was a Saturday! Poor Gandhiji! Two whole days more to spend dressed in that same white suit!

He felt terribly homesick, too, and cried when he thought how far away his family was. Everything about him looked so strange and foreign. There was not a single friend to whom he could say how lonely he was.

He did not like the food either. It was so different to anything that he had ever eaten. So he ate almost nothing and was hungry as well as sad.

In spite of his dreadful loneliness, he did not once think of writing to his brother and asking to be allowed to return home, as many another boy would have done. He knew that he must not disappoint his kind brother

who had made great sacrifices in order to get together the money for this journey to England. He had been sent here to study law and he would not go back till those studies were completed.

After getting his luggage, Gandhiji went on to London, where he was to study. There he found lodgings in the house of a widow who lived with her two daughters. He lost no time in telling her that he could not eat meat and was pleased when she agreed to give him vegetarian dishes only. But when the food was placed before him he could not eat it. The lady certainly cooked vegetables in a funny way—or at least Gandhiji thought so.

He was much too shy to tell her this, however, so he just ate as little as possible, and got hungrier and hungrier as the days went by. Every day he would wander about the streets, looking for a vegetarian restaurant, but in vain. Just when he was getting quite desperate, he found what he wanted. The food sold there was very good indeed, and at last he was able to satisfy his hunger completely.

Instead of giving his time entirely to his studies, Gandhiji tried hard at first to become a perfect 'English gentleman'. Like so many young men of his age, he was attracted by what was new and foreign, without considering whether it was suited to him or not.

He took notice of fashionable people and tried to copy them in every way. He wasted a lot of

money on buying smart English clothes, a tall silk hat and so on. He spent ten minutes every morning in brushing and arranging his hair. He started taking lessons in ballroom dancing, in playing the violin and in elocution. What a change from the shy boy on the ship who would not even talk to the other passengers! But these new ideas of Gandhiji's were not to last long.

After three months he suddenly understood how silly it was to waste his good brother's money on learning dancing and such things. They would not make him a good lawyer, and he had come to study, so that when he returned home he might earn a lot of money and help his family. Now there is another thing in Gandhiji that we must notice carefully, and it is this: as soon as he found out that he was doing a wrong or silly thing, he at once stopped doing it, and tried to find out what was the *right* thing to do. So now, as soon as he saw that he was wasting both time and money on his dancing and music lessons, he stopped. After this he gave all his time to serious study.

Having seen that it was his duty to *save* his elder brother's money, instead of wasting it, Gandhiji now tried to spend as little as possible to make up for what he had already squandered on the dancing lessons and smart foreign clothes.

He began to keep a careful account of every copper coin, writing down the amount spent on every bus fare and postage stamp. When he grew

older he advised all young people to do this.

Next he decided to walk as much as possible, finding it good for his health. In this way he also saved a lot of money, by not taking the bus. This habit of daily walking he kept up all his life. When he was quite an old man he would walk up and down the verandah during heavy monsoon rain, so as not to miss the benefit of this daily exercise.

All this saving of money made Gandhiji feel that he was living in a very sensible way, until he got to know some other Indian students living in London. Several of these young men were very poor indeed and they lived so simply that it made Gandhiji's way of life seem still very rich. Many of them even cooked their own food in their rooms.

Feeling that he could certainly do what these boys managed to do, and so save still more money, Gandhiji left his comfortable boarding house and went to live in a very cheap room. There he bought a small cooking stove and began to prepare his meals himself. As he did not want to lose too much time over this work, he ate very simple things only, such as porridge and cocoa. Meanwhile he studied hard and made good progress.

Just about this time there was a wonderful exhibition in Paris. Gandhiji thought it would be a good idea to visit it and see the lovely and famous city of Paris at the same time.

Paris is not very far from London,

as you know, so the trip did not cost much.

Being by now a very sensible young man indeed, Gandhiji began by buying a good map of Paris and a guide-book of the exhibition. By studying these carefully he was able to see all the important places and things easily, without having to spend money on guides as tourists generally have to do.

The thing that he liked best in Paris was to visit all the lovely old churches. He liked to walk about in them and watch the people praying. He would make a comparison in his mind between the noise and bustle of the streets outside and the holy peace and quiet in the churches.



CHAPTER 5

RETURN HOME

At last the three years of study came to an end, and Gandhiji was free to return home.

The voyage back to India was very stormy and nearly everybody on board was seasick, except Gandhiji. In the ship's dining-room only two or three people came to the table at meal-times. They sat holding their plates in their laps, for that was the only way they could get the food safely to their lips, as the ship was tossed this way and that by the wind.

Gandhiji was longing to see his dear mother again. But when he arrived he heard the sad news that she had died while he was in England. His elder brother had kept back the news, not wishing to tell him such a sad thing while he was away in a foreign land among strangers.

Since it was necessary for Gandhiji to start earning money as soon as possible, it was decided that he should go to Bombay to practise there as a barrister. He was to go alone at first and set up a household on his own until he had found some good clients.

He engaged a cook to look after him, but unfortunately the fellow was very stupid and dirty. He did not even trouble to wash his own clothes, much less to do his work in

the kitchen properly. Poor Gandhiji was too kind to scold him. Instead, he tried to teach him how to look after the house. But the cook was very lazy and merely watched while Gandhiji did almost all the work.

In the meantime no clients turned up and so Gandhiji earned no money at all. After six months of this life, he returned home to Rajkot, quite tired and disappointed.

It was good to be with the family again, of course, but it was disappointing to have to tell them how things had gone with him in Bombay. They had expected him to be of so much help to them after completing his studies in England, and so far he had been able to do nothing.

For a while things went very slowly in Rajkot, too. Gandhiji earned only a very little money now and then. He had begun sadly to feel that he was not going to be a success in life. Little did he think that one day the world would ring with his name, and that after his death people would scrape up, as a precious relic, the dust trodden by his feet!

It was just when he was feeling so downcast that a firm of Indian merchants from Porbunder, who had settled in South Africa, sent for him to come and take charge of some important law business for them in Durban, a South African seaport. They wrote that they would want his services for about a year. They were not going to pay him badly, either, and the idea of further travel pleased Gandhiji, so he accepted the

offer. If he was not going to be a successful barrister, he might at least see a little more of the world, he thought.

It was sad, of course, to leave Kasturba again, and they now had *two* little baby boys of whom Gandhiji was very fond. But he would be back again in a year, and that thought consoled them.



Return home

CHAPTER 6

OFF TO SOUTH AFRICA

GANDHIJI found South Africa wonderful and was astonished on landing to see the great trees and huge fruits that grew there.

He soon made friends with his new clients who had called him there. They were simple, kind-hearted Muslim people, very wealthy, and influential among the Indian community.

Two or three days after his arrival, Gandhiji went to the Law Courts with these new clients to attend to some of their legal business. He had gone back to wearing Indian clothes since leaving England and on this occasion he was wearing a turban. The magistrate ordered him to remove it. Gandhiji refused to do so and walked out of the court instead. He had already noticed that the white people who ruled in South Africa were very rude and snobbish to Indians, treating them as inferiors, no matter how educated or refined they might happen to be. As for the poorer class of Indians, who had come out to Africa to work as labourers, they were treated too badly for words. They lived a life little better than a slave's life.

Large numbers of very poor people from North and South India used to come out to South Africa in those days as indentured labourers. This means that they were employed by

their masters only on condition that they worked for them for five years. They had to work terribly hard, and for the lowest wages, but they had to go on working till the five years were over. They only consented to come out to Africa on these cruel conditions because of their terrible poverty. Afraid of starving to death if they remained at home, they at first consented to anything. Then, when they found out what a wretched life they would have in South Africa, it was too late to change. They had already signed an agreement to work for five years, and till those five years were over, they were little better than slaves. Gandhiji felt great pity for these poor countrymen of his.

He had not been many days in South Africa before he found that no Indians were allowed to stay at good hotels, or to eat in nice restaurants, or go to theatres. All these places were reserved for the white people. In some parts of the city even the pavements were reserved for them, while Indians had to walk in the road.

The white people had got the foolish idea that if a man's skin was dark he was not fit to associate with them. It did not matter how clever he was, nor how good his manners were. If he belonged to a dark-skinned race, they thought that he was their inferior. It is very hard to believe that people could be so silly, but they were. And if they treated Indians in this way, no matter how educated they might be, we can

guess how they despised the poor Africans, who were so very black and primitive and uneducated.

A few days after being asked to remove his turban in the court, Gandhiji had to go on a railway journey from Durban to Pretoria, on business for his clients. They bought a first class ticket for him and he started on his way.

After a time, a European passenger got into the carriage where Gandhiji was sitting alone. The European objected to travelling with an Indian and called the guard. The guard ordered Gandhiji to get out of the carriage and go into the compartment kept for African people. Gandhiji refused to go because he had a first class ticket and had every right to be in a first class carriage.

The guard sent for a policeman who pushed Gandhiji out on to the platform, but when they ordered him to get into the other compartment, he would not. So the train steamed out of the station leaving Gandhiji behind on the platform.

He went and sat in the waiting room. It was night and very chilly, and he had no warm clothes with him as the railway authorities had taken charge of his luggage. He did not wish to ask them for any of his things for fear that they might insult him again. So he just sat and shivered in the dark waiting-room, without a friend, alone in this strange, unkind land.

He felt that he had seen enough of

South Africa and of the rude, cruel way in which Indians were treated there. He longed for home and the company of all his dear ones. Should he not return home without delay, he asked himself.

Then he remembered his duty towards his clients. They had called him to Africa to manage their business difficulties for them. They had been kind and friendly to him, and they trusted him. Was it not his duty to remain in South Africa until his work was finished?

And there was another thing that made him want to stay: Indians were treated so badly in South Africa, and yet nobody did anything about it. Was it not time that somebody made these foolish Europeans see how wrong it was to treat a man badly just because his skin happened to be of a different colour to theirs?

As he sat shivering there in the cold dark waiting room, Gandhiji made up his mind to remain in South Africa, and work, and suffer, if need be, until he had raised the status of his countrymen there.

His life's work had begun. His decision taken that night was like a tiny seed that would one day become a mighty tree. Who could have guessed that the thin young man, shivering in the dark, would one day make India a free nation?

CHAPTER 7

INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA FIND A LEADER

THE next day Gandhiji continued on his journey to Pretoria.

Part of the way had to be made in a stage coach in those days. A stage coach was something like a big bus drawn by horses.

Gandhiji had now fresh insults, and worse, to bear.

He had already bought his ticket for a seat in the stage coach when the guard told him to sit outside with the driver. This was because the European passengers did not like to travel together with Indians. Gandhiji obeyed this rude command because he was in a hurry to get on with his journey and did not want to waste any time in arguing.

After the coach had been travelling for a few hours, however, the guard wanted to have Gandhiji's seat outside, in order to enjoy some fresh air. But instead of offering his own seat in exchange, he rudely threw a dirty gunny bag on the foot-board and said: "You sit on this." This was too much. Gandhiji refused absolutely.

The cruel man at once began to beat him and curse him.

Seeing that poor Gandhiji had done no harm, some of the European passengers began to take his part and made the man stop beating him.

Shameful things like this happened often in South Africa in those days.

and Gandhiji was to have many such bitter experiences.

When he went to a hotel the manager would not give him a room. In another hotel, although he got a room he was not allowed to eat in the dining room with the other people. These things never made him lose patience. They only made him more determined to make his countrymen respected in South Africa.

Gandhiji had only come to spend a year in South Africa, but it was three years before he returned home.

There was so much work to be done for his countrymen and there was no one, it seemed, with the courage to do it, but himself. He lost no time in making the acquaintance of the leading Indians in South Africa and



in discussing with them what was to be done. He made them see that it was disgraceful to sit idle while rich plantation owners treated thousands of poor Indian labourers like slaves. His burning words awakened a sense of national pride and duty even in the laziest and most indifferent hearts.

His first great step was to point out that all communities of Indians must *unite* if they wanted to be strong, and safe from insult, in this foreign land. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsees, Christians—all must become brothers in the struggle that was to begin.

In a few short months the shy young man had become the brave and fearless leader of thousands of oppressed Indians. It was as if God had chosen him to be His captain in the struggle for India's freedom, and had filled his heart overnight with the courage of a lion.

In his fight for the rights of Indians, Gandhiji could not bear to see any of them *deserve* the scorn with which they were treated. It pained him terribly to see how many Indians had become careless, untidy and dirty in their habits. He lectured them continually about this. He told them that they must never give others the slightest excuse to look down on them.

There were many unjust laws against Indians in South Africa at that time. These laws made life very difficult for the Indians. Gandhiji fought against these laws with all his strength, and taught his

followers how to fight against them too. Only on one point he was very strict: everything must be done peacefully. He had already chosen for himself the path of non-violence in all things and he felt that it was the only path pleasing to God.

In order to bring the South African Indians permanently together he founded a political party known as the Natal Indian Congress. It was named after the political party in India which was already the hope of all patriotic Indians. This party worked to make life better for *all* Indians, no matter what their community or religion was. It also worked to make India free, but in those days this seemed a very far-off hope. The members of Gandhiji's new party were to work to make life better for all the Indians in South Africa.

CHAPTER 8

THE OBSTINATE RICH MAN

One of the most important things to consider was the question of money. A political party requires a lot of money to keep it going. The leaders must travel here and there, books and leaflets must be printed and distributed, halls must be hired when speeches have to be made, and so on. Gandhiji had to insist on each member paying at least five shillings as a monthly subscription. He told the rich people to give as much more as they could. He himself gave twenty shillings a month. But the people were lazy when it came to giving money. They were very glad to have leaders who fought for them, but they seemed to think that all the work could be done without money. That is the way with many people in this world.

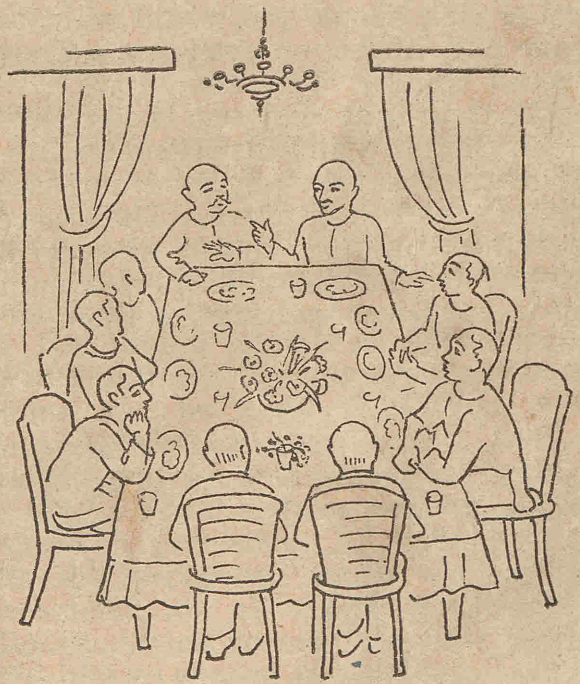
One day Gandhiji and some of his fellow-workers went on a tour to some out-of-the-way villages inhabited by Indians. They wanted to make even the most ignorant people understand that all must unite in the fight against injustice and tyranny.

Gandhiji and his friends were invited to spend the night at the house of a rich Indian who was already a member of their party. They knew that if this man gave a big sum to the Congress fund, other people living around him would want to imitate him and do the same. The Congress

was now badly in need of funds to carry on its good work, and they hoped that the rich man would give at least six pounds.

When they arrived at the rich man's house they found a grand feast waiting for them. Gandhiji thought it best to get the money matter over before eating, but he was greatly disappointed when he found that all the rich man intended giving was *three* pounds instead of six. He tried to persuade him to give more, but the rich man would not listen. He was not mean, but just obstinate. He refused to give more than three pounds and began offering refreshments to his guests.

That was indeed an awkward situation. Gandhiji knew that if he let the man give only three pounds,

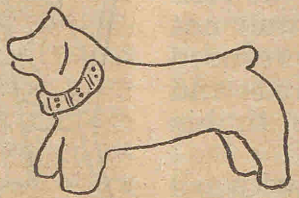


other rich people too would want to give only three, or even less. They would think: "Why should we give more than that man who is so rich?"

So Gandhiji and his friends politely refused to take any food until six pounds had been given. They were dreadfully hungry and it was awful to have to sit and talk only, when a good meal was waiting for them.

Neither side would give in and the arguing went on all night. Just at daybreak the host yielded at last. Then they all ate their fill.

This incident was much talked about and it made people see that Gandhiji was not to be trifled with. After that people paid up their subscriptions more promptly.



CHAPTER 9

THE GREEN PAMPHLET

THE reason why Gandhiji gave so much of his time and strength to the Indians in South Africa was this: he felt great pity and love for all unfortunate people everywhere, and a burning desire to help them. Every year this desire grew greater in him, until he used to say that he longed 'to wipe away every tear from every eye.'

He had now become famous in South Africa on account of his wonderful work for the Indian people there. Even his enemies felt a great respect for him because of his bravery and truthfulness. All the Indians loved him dearly and called him 'Gandhibhai', or 'Brother Gandhi'.

All this time, Kasturba and her two little sons had been patiently awaiting Gandhiji's return home. It was three long years since he had left his little family and he felt that he could delay no longer.

His Indian friends in Africa begged him not to stay away from them long, and he knew that they still needed his help very much. So he decided to go and bring his family back to South Africa and to settle there permanently. All these years he had prospered in his work as a barrister, so, all things considered, South Africa seemed the best place for him to choose as a home.



As soon as he got back to India, Gandhiji began writing a pamphlet, or little booklet, about the way Indians were treated in South Africa. He wanted the whole world to know about it, so that it might be stopped as soon as possible. Because the cover of this little book was green, everyone called it 'The Green Pamphlet'. He had been careful not to write any harsh or angry words in it as he never wished to hurt anybody, no matter how badly they had treated him. He only told the absolute truth in quiet, dignified language. But somehow word got back to South Africa that he was abusing the white people of South Africa and saying untrue things about them. This made the white people in South Africa simply furious.

Meanwhile, Gandhiji wanted to send copies of his Green Pamphlet all over India and he wanted the work to be done as soon as possible. This was not easy, as there were 10,000 copies to be sent. It was a very big job to put each one into a paper wrapper, address it and stick the necessary stamps on it. Gandhiji could not afford to pay people to do this work, either. So he asked all the children of the neighbourhood to help him in this work. They gladly promised to help whenever they were free from school, and in this way the work was finished in a short time. Gandhiji rewarded the children by giving them used postage stamps which he had collected. This work of sending off the Green Pamphlet was very important, so you see that even young children can be very useful to their country if they wish.

Just at this time there was an outbreak of plague in Bombay and people were afraid that it might spread to Rajkot. Gandhiji offered his services to the State to do any work which could help in preventing the spread of plague. He was made head of a committee which was to see that the people kept their houses clean to avoid contagion.

The members of the committee had to inspect all the houses in the town, one by one, and instruct people how to behave whenever they found a dirty house.

It was a great surprise to find that the houses of the very poor, particularly the so-called 'Untouchables', were far cleaner than many houses

of the rich. The rich people, too, were often very proud and would not listen when they were told they must be cleaner. They seemed to think that because they were richer than others they must also be wiser and did not need to be taught anything at all. With such proud and foolish people Gandhiji was always patient but firm. He never minded how rich they were. If their houses were dirty he told them so, without any fear, because it was his duty to do so.



CHAPTER 10

ATTACKED BY A MOB

BEFORE returning to South Africa as he had promised, Gandhiji got in touch with all the important men of the Congress party in India, like Sir Phirozshah Mehta, Lokamanya Tilak and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. They listened with great sympathy to his stories about the bad treatment of Indians in South Africa and encouraged him to speak about it on platforms at public meetings in Bombay, Poona and Madras. People in India already knew much about Gandhiji's work for Indians in South Africa and they greeted him everywhere with great enthusiasm. He had already become a national hero.

As he had already decided to do, Gandhiji took his wife and their two little sons, aged eight and four, with him on his return to South Africa.

During the voyage the ship was caught in a terrible storm. It seemed as if the ship might sink at any minute. In their distress and fear the passengers forgot all differences of religion and knelt together in prayer —Hindus, Muslims, Parsees and Christians. One and all called on God, the Father of Mankind. In this danger they felt themselves all to be brothers.

At last the storm ended and the sky grew clear. Everyone felt happy and relieved, and the ship arrived safely in the port of Durban.

You will remember that the white people in South Africa had received false news saying that while in India Gandhiji had abused them and told lies about them, and that this news had made them very angry. When they heard that he was back again they at first refused to allow anybody on the ship to land. Their excuse was that the passengers might have brought plague germs with them from India. Only after many days was anyone allowed to leave the ship.

As soon as Gandhiji set foot on dry land he was recognised by a band of European boys who began to throw stones and rotten eggs at him. One of them snatched off his turban, while others began to beat and kick him. All this was because they believed he had criticised them unjustly while in India.

He might have been killed if it had not been for a brave English lady, Mrs. Alexander, the wife of the Police Superintendent, who was passing by at that moment. She forced her way between the crowd and poor Gandhiji, who was gasping for breath, and opened her umbrella to protect him from the rain of blows. It was now very difficult for the boys to hit Gandhiji without striking the lady as well, so they had to stop.

Meanwhile, an Indian boy, who had seen everything, ran to the police station and told Mr. Alexander, the lady's husband, what had happened. Mr. Alexander at once sent a number of policemen to protect Gandhiji and

conduct him to the house of one of his friends—a gentleman named Mr. Rustomjee. Kasturba and her two little boys had already been sent in advance to this friend's house before the attack on Gandhiji had taken place.

Poor Gandhiji was covered with bruises from the kicks of the cruel boys and had to be attended to by a doctor on arriving at Mr. Rustomjee's house. He badly needed rest and quiet, but soon a crowd of angry people surrounded the house, shouting: "We must have Gandhi!"

The good Police Superintendent, who had been expecting something like this to happen, had followed Gandhiji to Mr. Rustomjee's house. He now kept the crowd back by going outside and talking to them in a joking manner, treating their behaviour as if it was all fun. He even sang a comic song to make them think that he, too, was in a joking mood. While this was going on, Gandhiji was quietly escaping from the back entrance of the house, disguised as a policeman. The idea of escaping in this way was Mr. Alexander's. Perhaps Gandhiji himself would not have liked to turn his back on danger, but he had not only himself to protect. There was also Kasturba with her little ones, who might have been injured had the house been attacked. Neither did he want to bring any trouble on his kind friend Mr. Rustomjee.

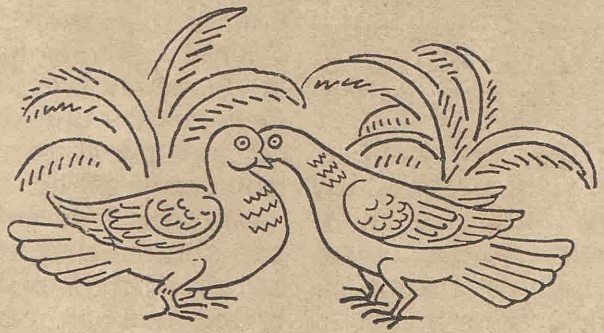
As soon as he knew that Gandhiji was safely out of the way, Mr. Alexander laughingly told the crowd

that their victim had escaped and that they had better go home. Some of the people were very angry at this. Others could not help laughing at the trick Mr. Alexander had played on them. Some would not believe the story and insisted on entering the house to see for themselves. Mr. Alexander allowed two or three to come in and see that there was only the Rustomjee family and Kasturba with her little boys. Then the crowd went away.

Many people in South Africa were greatly shocked at the behaviour of the mob led by the foolish, wicked young men. The Government was willing to arrest them if Gandhiji would point them out, but he refused. He had firmly made up his mind never to hurt anyone, no matter what they had done to him. He explained to the Government that he did not blame the foolish young men at all. They had been made to believe that Gandhiji was their enemy and that he had spoken badly about them abroad. For this they had wanted to be revenged on him. He felt that when the truth came to be known, the young men would be sorry.

This noble behaviour of Gandhiji made such an impression on the European people of South Africa that a large number of them felt deeply ashamed at what had happened. The newspapers declared that Gandhiji had done nothing wrong and that the crowd had been entirely to blame. From this we can see that if God wills that we shall triumph, no earthly power can overcome us, however

great it may be. This truth can be learnt again and again from the life of Gandhiji. He was always meek and gentle to his enemies. When they tried to crush him he fought back only with absolute truthfulness and love. Yet these weapons achieved more than fire or sword could have done. They freed his country from foreign rule and turned his onetime enemies into friends.



CHAPTER 11

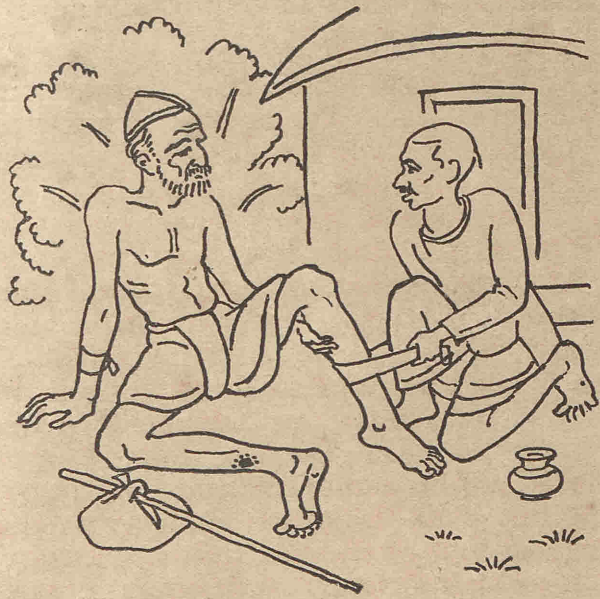
LOVE OF SERVICE

GANDHIJI now took up his old life again.

He was busier than ever. In addition to his work as a successful barrister, there was much to be done for his countrymen. The Government had begun making new laws to make life difficult for Indians and to prevent them from prospering, and Gandhiji had to struggle more than ever before.

There was also the education of his little boys to see about. As there were no Indian schools in South Africa, and he did not want his children to go to a European school and forget their mother tongue, he decided to teach them himself. He always talked to the little boys in Gujerati and he gave them their lessons in Gujerati, too. Though all this meant much extra work for the busy young father, he undertook it gladly.

One day a poor leper came to Gandhiji's door, begging for food. Most people would have driven him away in horror, but Gandhiji could not be unkind to anybody, least of all to a poor leper. He gave the man food, bandaged his terrible wounds and took him into the house for a rest before removing him to the hospital. This kindness came from the great love of the sick that had always been in his heart ever since he was a little boy. He had never lost his



longing to be a doctor, either. But since that was impossible now, without long years of further study, he wanted at least to do *some* service for the sick, however small. So he began to go daily to a free hospital kept by a Christian missionary. There he offered his services for two hours a day, preparing and giving out medicines in the dispensary.

Most of the patients were very poor Indian labourers and Gandhiji was very happy to have this further chance of serving his own people.

As time passed, two more little boys were born to Kasturba. The first two sons had been named Harilal (beloved of Hari) and Manilal (precious stone). These are the kind of names that come naturally to parents' minds when they think of

their darling children. But now Gandhiji's whole mind was filled with the thought that our duty in this world is to serve others. This made him very careful in choosing the names of his last two sons. He knew that names are very important in our lives. A man whose name has a beautiful or holy meaning will surely feel obliged to live up to it. So Gandhiji called his third son Ramdas, or the servant of Ram, and the fourth son Devadas, or the servant of God.



CHAPTER 12

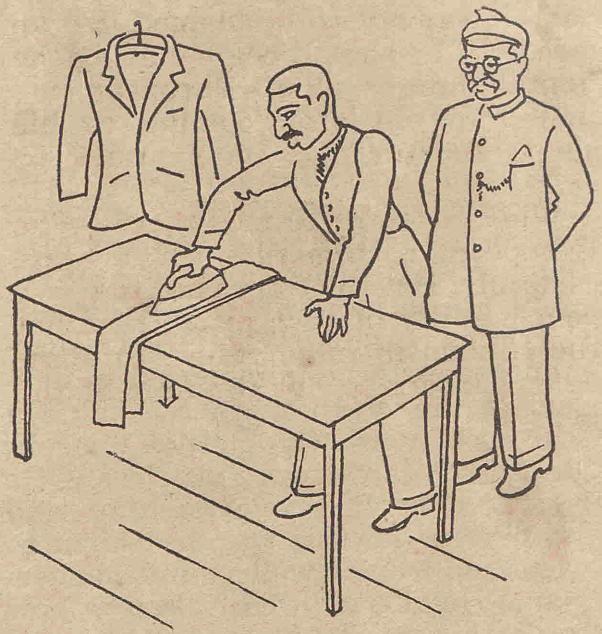
CAPABLE IN ALL THINGS

In spite of all his professional and political work, Gandhiji always found time to take interest in all the little details of home life. In every little domestic trouble he found a practical way out. He disliked a helpless attitude in difficulties and wanted to make himself and his family as self-reliant as possible. When the washerman began to be unpunctual in delivering the clean clothes, Gandhiji started to wash the clothes himself. He did not do the work carelessly. He bought a book about washing and studied it. In this way he learnt to wash and iron as well as any washerman. He also showed Kasturba how to do this work. This took up a lot of his time but he found it very interesting, too. Soon, he was proud to go about in his beautifully starched and ironed collars, for they were stiffer and glossier than those done by the washerman.

Once when Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the founder of the Servants of India Society, was on a visit to South Africa, he showed Gandhiji a fine scarf that had been given to him by the great Indian politician, Mahadev Govind Ranade. Gokhale treasured this scarf as if it had been a precious relic, and only wore it on great occasions. He had meant to wear it at the grand dinner which the Indians of Johannesburg were giving in his

honour. Unfortunately, at the last moment, the scarf was found to be badly creased. There was no time to send it to the laundry, so Gandhiji offered to iron it instead. Gokhale doubted very much if a barrister and politician could also be a good ironer, but Gandhiji assured him that he need not worry. The work turned out to be done very well and won Gokhale's praise.

Having made himself into a good laundry-man, Gandhiji did not see why he should not do without the services of the barber, too. The idea came to him when an English barber in Pretoria refused to cut his hair for him because he was an Indian. At first Gandhiji felt wounded by the man's rudeness. Then he considered the other side of the case, as he



always did when hurt by others. The barber was not to be blamed, he decided. If he should begin cutting the hair of Indians, all his European customers might stop coming to his shop, and the poor man would be ruined.

Who *was* to be blamed then?—The European customers? In a way, certainly. But they were not the *only* people guilty of such pride. Did not the Hindus in India refuse to allow *their* barbers to cut the hair of the poor Untouchables? So all the world over, proud and powerful people had the same ideas and acted in the same cruel and stupid manner. The thing to be attacked, therefore, was neither European nor Indian. It was just sinful, foolish *pride,* which can be found in every corner of the world.

Thoughts like these prevented Gandhiji from getting sad, or angry with the barber. Instead, he bought a pair of hair-clippers and clipped his hair himself.

CHAPTER 13

THE BOER WAR AND AFTER

WHEN the Boer War broke out between the British and the Boers (or Dutch people settled in South Africa), Gandhiji's sympathy was on the side of the Boers. But he was a subject of the British Empire and he felt it was his duty to serve the side to which he belonged. He did not want to fight and shed the blood of others, but he was not afraid of risking his life.

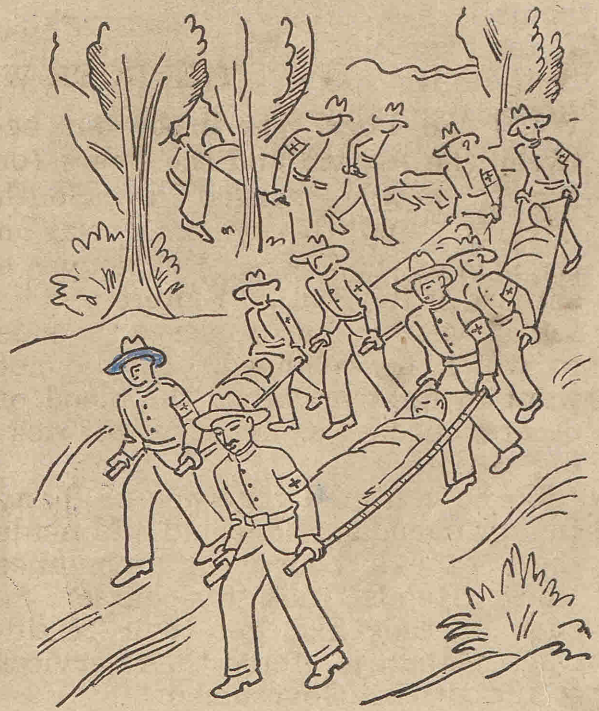
So he collected together as many Indian friends as he could and made them take a course in ambulance work. He also took this course. As soon as they had got their certificates, Gandhiji offered their services to the British Government.

They were about 1,100 men in all, and they did very brave work, even rescuing the wounded within the firing line. They were much praised for this and the newspapers even published verses about them and their bravery. Up till that time the British had had the idea that Indians were not brave at all. Now they had changed their minds.

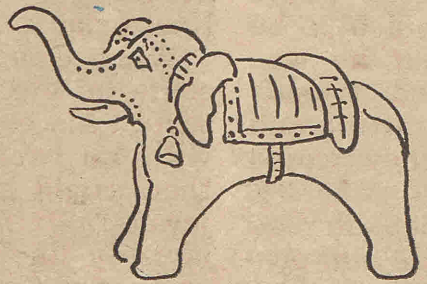
Whilst doing this ambulance work, Gandhiji and his friends came much together with English soldiers. They did not find these soldiers proud at all, but very friendly, and grateful for the good which the Indians were doing for their wounded. They behaved to the Indians like brothers.

Among the Indians forming the Ambulance Corps, too, there were no feelings of pride about caste, or quarrels on account of religion. Hindus, Muslims and Christians—all were as friendly as could be. The danger in which they now lived, with guns booming about them, made them all understand that there is but one God and He is the Father of all. From this we see that even a cruel war can be a blessing if it makes men understand this great truth.

One of the greatest services that Gandhiji did for Indians was the way in which he made them see their faults. As soon as the war was over, he returned to this task with new zeal. He continually told Indians that if they wanted to enjoy all their rights as citizens, they must make



themselves worthy of those rights. If, for example, they wanted to live in the nice quarters reserved for Europeans, they must show, by always being tidy and clean, that they were able to keep those quarters in good condition. There is no doubt that a large number of Indians had become careless and slovenly in their habits, and Gandhiji would not allow this any longer. He wanted his people to be as clean and orderly as any other people in the world. He never accepted any excuse for laziness, and since they all loved him for his goodness to them, even the very laziest people tried to improve to please him.



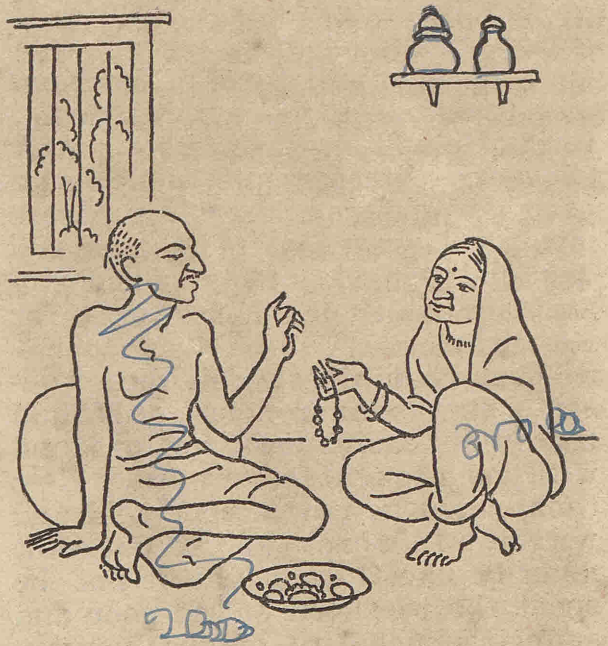
CHAPTER 14

DOING RIGHT IN EVERYTHING

WHEN four more years had passed, Gandhiji felt that the time had come for him to go back to India. He had done wonderful work for his people in South Africa in helping them to get their rights recognised by the Government. Now he wanted to work for the whole of India. There was of course still very much to be done in South Africa, but he was leaving behind him good friends whom he had trained to work and think in his way, and they would continue the fight.

The Indians did not let him go easily, however. They made him promise that he would return within a year if they should need him, and they arranged all sorts of meetings and functions to honour his departure. He and Kasturba were simply showered with presents, many being of gold and jewels. There were lovely gold watches, gold chains, and diamond rings, and a wonderful necklace, all of pure gold, for Kasturba.

When Gandhiji saw all these presents, he was far from happy. He had served his countrymen for love, and with no thought of reward. How then, could he now accept gold and jewels? If money was to be spent lavishly like this, should it not be spent for the good of the poor and suffering members of the commu-



nity? For such a long time now he had been teaching his followers that it was foolish and wrong to waste money on luxury when millions of Indians hardly ever got a full meal. Was he, the leader and teacher, now to accept all this richness in payment for his teaching?

Not many people would have thought in this way. The sight of so much gold would have tempted most men into forgetting their ideals. But not Gandhiji. He could not sleep at all that night. In the morning he told Kasturba that all the gifts must be returned.

Kasturba would not agree. As any lady would, she wanted at least to keep her lovely necklace. If not for herself, she thought it would be nice to give it to one of her daughters-in-

law when her sons married. It took a long time to persuade her, but in the end Gandhiji made her understand that people should never expect reward for their service to others. He gave all the gold and jewels to a bank, to be kept as a reserve fund for the Indian community.

As soon as he came back to India again Gandhiji threw himself heart and soul into Congress work. He had only been fighting for the rights of his people in South Africa, up till this time. Now he was working for the freedom and happiness of all the Indians in the world.

Apart from the political struggle, he interested himself in everything that would make Indians a better, stronger, nobler people. He studied such things as cooking, sanitation—everything connected with our daily life, in order to find out the best way of living. Above all he tried to find out what was both *good* and *cheap* because he wanted to help the poor. As soon as ever he made a fresh discovery of this kind, he began teaching it to others.

More than all else he insisted on people being *clean*. Dirt is not only disagreeable in the home—it is a cause of sickness, too. When people are very poor, they get careless and say "Oh, what does anything matter?" Gandhiji was never tired of lecturing people about this.

Once there was a big Congress meeting at Calcutta. A camp was made to shelter a large number of the Congress workers. As they were only to stay there a few days, these

workers did not care much about keeping the camp clean. When he saw the dirtiness everywhere, Gandhiji pointed it out—"Oh, that is sweepers' work," said everybody. Gandhiji quietly took a broom and began to sweep. In such ways he taught people how silly it was to be too proud to work. He took pleasure in doing sweepers' work. He wanted to destroy the foolish and wicked idea that work is degrading. Any work which makes the world a cleaner or better place is noble. That was the lesson he wanted everybody to learn.

In order to see and know all the trials and troubles of the Indian people, Gandhiji travelled all over India by third class. He could easily have travelled more comfortably, but



he wanted to know just how poor people lived, so that he could help wherever possible.

He had not been back in India long before his second son, Manilal, became very sick with typhoid and pneumonia. The doctor said that the child's life was in danger and that he must be given chicken broth to strengthen him. Gandhiji had brought his children up to be strict vegetarians like himself, and he felt it wrong to take the life of even a single chicken, although it might save his son's life. Manilal, when questioned, said that he would do whatever his father thought right.

Gandhiji prayed to God with all his strength to save his child without the necessity of chicken broth. After three days Manilal was out of danger. If we do what we believe to be right, and trust in God, as Gandhiji did, He will always hear our prayers.

Very soon another call came from South Africa. The Indians were again in need of their dear 'Gandhibhai' to fight for them against the harsh, unsympathetic Government. Without hesitation, not caring about his own comfort, Gandhiji set out on the long journey, leaving his family again in India.

Whilst in the midst of his political work, he never forgot that a man's first duty is towards God. He felt that he ought to study his religion well, in order to be able to follow all its teachings. In his place many people would have said: "I have no time to read religious books. See how much work I am doing for others!

God will be satisfied with *that.*" But Gandhiji always *made* time for anything that he felt to be necessary. He used to write verses from the Bhagavad Gita on strips of paper which he pasted on the wall in the bathroom. Whilst cleaning his teeth each morning he would stand and study these verses. Soon he had thirteen chapters of the Gita by heart.



CHAPTER 15

PHOENIX SETTLEMENT AND THE ZULU REBELLION

WHILE on his third visit to South Africa Gandhiji decided to found a colony of people who would all lead simple lives pleasing to God. He therefore purchased a piece of land not far from the city of Durban, intending to start a farm where the people could live and grow their own food.

Although he had left his wife and children in India, he had brought with him on this voyage several relatives—young men who wanted to see life in a new land. These young men, several friends, both European and Indian, and a small number of Gandhiji's devoted followers and fellow-workers formed the new colony. All were equal in position and all shared in the work of farming the land and harvesting the crops. There was no idea of getting rich or having an easy life. Every man, woman and child in the colony was ready to perform any task that was asked of him or her, as if they had all been one loving family.

In their spare time they wrote and printed a newspaper, called "Indian Opinion". This paper published all kinds of news helpful to the Indian people of South Africa.

The farm was called the Phoenix Settlement and Gandhiji, its founder, loved it very much. He would have been glad to live there always, but, apart from his legal work, his political work was growing bigger and bigger. He was fast becoming the hope of the Indian nation, and Indians felt that only he could make them free. So he could only pay short visits to Phoenix.

Soon he sent for Kasturba and the little boys to come and live at Phoenix. On the voyage, Ramdas, the youngest child, broke his arm whilst playing. Gandhiji still loved nursing sick people and he was learning more and more how to cure them. In spite of all his work, as soon as his family arrived, he took complete charge of little Ramdas and soon had his broken arm well again.

Gandhiji wanted to make life at Phoenix absolutely simple, just like the life of very poor people. Only at Phoenix everything was to be as clean as a new pin, healthy and happy. In this way they would show people that even if one is poor, one need not be dirty or miserable.

They even made their own bread. Because wheat flour is more nourishing and more economical when it is ground by hand, they ground their wheat in this way themselves. The children were allowed to help in this work and they liked doing it very much.

Just when the Gandhi family had settled down nicely again, the Zulu Rebellion broke out. The Zulus were a somewhat primitive race of African

people who objected to the taxes which the British made them pay. Because of these taxes they rebelled against the British.

Although Gandhiji was always struggling (but without the use of violence) against the British to make them treat Indians fairly, he was loyal to them whenever they needed his help. He wanted to make them understand that they were unjust towards India, but he was never their enemy. So once again he collected a group of Indian volunteers to do ambulance work for the British forces.

His heart was soon filled with pity for the poor, simple Zulus, however, when he saw how helpless they were against their powerful rulers.

When Gandhiji and his friends went to the military hospital to start their work, they were surprised to find only Zulu patients—no Europeans at all. These wounded Zulus were not rebels, but a group of Zulus friendly towards the British. The British soldiers had fired at them by mistake. Then there were other Zulus who were sick because they had been severely beaten by the British who suspected them of belonging to the rebels.

Gandhiji and his companions nursed all these poor Zulus lovingly. To Gandhiji all men were brothers, however poor, however ignorant, and whatever side they happened to be fighting on.

CHAPTER 16

A NEW WORD

For some time now, Gandhiji and his followers had been growing stronger in the spirit of true Satyagraha, but they did not yet call it that. They used the English words "passive resistance" whenever they wanted to describe their way of resisting British injustice. Gandhiji was absolutely determined that neither he nor his followers should ever use violent means in order to make Britain respect India's rights. He felt, however, that they needed a better word to describe their attitude. He wanted Indians to die, if need be, for the rights of their country, but without any hate or anger in their hearts. They must even love their oppressors. They must understand that strong people are often cruel and unjust to weaker people because the strong people are blind and foolish. They must make the British people understand their right to be free by showing that Indians were prepared to die for the sake of freedom....but they must never shed the blood of others, or harm others in any way at all. When forced to obey unjust laws, they must simply but firmly refuse, and remain quiet.

Gandhiji offered a prize for a new word to describe this kind of rebellion that was something better and nobler than mere "passive resis-



tance". Maganlal Gandhiji, a young relative of Gandhiji's and very dear to him, won the prize. He had thought of *Sadagraha* as a good word. *Sat* means truth, and *Agraha* means firmness, so the full word would mean 'firmness in the truth'. In order to make this word clearer Gandhiji changed it to Satyagraha—a word which is now famous all over the world.

MUNAVIRUL ISLAM HIGH SCHOOL
Date
ERNAKULAM.

CHAPTER 17

GANDHIJI AND KASTURBA SAVE EACH OTHER'S LIFE

WHILE in South Africa, Kasturba fell very ill and had to go to hospital for an operation. It was impossible to chloroform her, as she was too weak to bear it. She was as brave as any man during the operation and did not complain at all. After the operation, however, she grew worse instead of better, until it seemed as if she were about to die. The doctor said it was absolutely necessary for her to take beef tea if her life was to be saved. Gandhiji refused to allow this, just as he had refused to allow Manilal to take the chicken broth. Not even to save the life of his dearest ones would he do a thing that he thought to be wrong.

The doctor said that if Kasturba did not take the beef tea and obey all his orders with regard to diet, she must be removed from the hospital. He said this because he really feared that she would die if she did not eat the food ordered by him, and he did not want to take the responsibility.

Gandhiji was in a terrible position. The Hindu religion absolutely forbade the eating of beef, and he himself felt that we should not kill even the smallest insect, much less a gentle animal like the cow. Kasturba was dying, however. He decided to ask her what she wanted to do—just as he had done with Manilal, for he did not like to force anyone not to

eat meat if it was his or her wish to do so.

Kasturba firmly replied that she would rather die than drink beef tea, and asked her husband to carry her away from the hospital.

It was raining, and they would have to go home to the Phoenix Settlement by train. The station was a long distance away from the hospital, and Kasturba appeared near to death. She was as thin as a skeleton and as weak as a new-born baby.

They got to the station in a rickshaw. Kasturba bravely comforted her husband when she noticed how worried he was over her condition: "Don't worry", she said cheerfully, "nothing will happen to me".

At Phoenix station, good friends from the farm were waiting for them with hot milk for Kasturba to drink and a hammock to carry her in.

Gandhi nursed her with all his skill in the days that followed, and for a time she was much better. Then she became very ill again. Nothing did her any good. One day Gandhiji thought that perhaps she might get better if she gave up eating salt and pulses. He asked her to do so but she said that she never could. When he gently insisted, she said that he was asking something impossible, and that he himself would never be able to give up eating salt and pulses. Gandhiji was only too pleased to have a chance of doing something difficult for her sake, and promised to give up salt and pulses for a year.

This great kindness so touched Kasturba's heart that she at once

promised to do as he wished. She begged him, however, not to trouble about giving up salt and pulses himself. She could not bear that he should make such a sacrifice just because she had been obstinate. Gandhiji replied that he could not break a solemn promise.

Kasturba wept, but he remained firm. So they both left salt and pulses out of their daily food—and the happy result was that Kasturba soon began to get well again.

Later on Kasturba had an opportunity of saving her husband's life in return.

He had come to know how cruelly many people treated their poor cows in India. How, in their greed to get more and more profit, they tortured the poor animals in their efforts to squeeze out the last drop of milk. This brutality was horrible to Gandhiji's loving heart. He often said that he would never kill a single animal even to save the life of a human being. So we can guess how he felt about poor, gentle cows being made to suffer awful pain just for the sake of getting a little extra milk. He also felt at that time that milk was not absolutely necessary to man. So he made a vow never to touch milk again, and he kept this vow faithfully for a long time. At last he fell very ill, however, and the doctor told him that he *must* take milk if he wished to become strong again. Gandhiji explained about the vow he had made.

Wise and clever Kasturba was standing near by, and in her wish to

see her husband well again she quickly thought of a way out of the difficulty. She asked Gandhiji if, by 'milk' he did not mean the milk of cows and buffaloes. He said, of course, that it was so. Then, said Kasturba, even if he *had* vowed never to touch the milk of cows and buffaloes, there was nothing to prevent him from taking the milk of *goats,* as they had not been in his mind at the time of taking the vow.

The doctor said that if his patient would only consent to drink the milk of goats, he would be quite satisfied.

Gandhiji agreed and soon was well again. In this way, Kasturba's quick brain rescued her husband from a severe illness that might easily have ended in his death. Though she had not studied, she was



more intelligent than very many educated women, always showing great commonsense. A perfect wife and mother, she is an example for all Indian girls to follow in her loving devotion to her husband and children, and in her simplicity, modesty, bravery and sweetness.

Good book



CHAPTER 18

GANDHIJI'S FASTS

THE Phoenix Farm was such a grand success that Gandhiji decided to found another colony like it, also in South Africa. The second one he called the Tolstoy Farm, after Tolstoy, the great Russian writer, whom Gandhiji greatly admired. On this second farm a number of people, both Indian and European, came to live together in brotherhood and usefulness. They were all good friends, though of different religions and races. As there were no suitable schools to which the children of these people could be sent, Gandhiji himself taught them. He was always a very kind and patient teacher, for he did not believe in severity.

Gandhiji's many fasts have become famous all over the world. Many times he risked his life by fasting—and always for the good of others.

The very first time he fasted was when two of the inmates of the Phoenix Settlement behaved very badly and shocked him by their wicked conduct. He did not scold them because all his followers, even the bad ones, were like beloved children to him. But he wanted these two to understand how much they had displeased God, so that they might truly repent. He said that teachers are responsible for the



faults of their pupils and that therefore he must do penance for the sins of these two pupils of his who had done wrong.

He began a fast of seven days, and after that took only one meal a day for four and a half months. This of course made everyone at Phoenix very unhappy, for they all loved their master and leader dearly. They all hated even the very name of sin after that.

After this, throughout his long holy life, Gandhiji fasted whenever he found that his great work for India had come to a standstill, because of the hardness of the rulers' hearts, or because of the foolish blindness of his followers. And this heroic way of fighting was always successful. Men might oppose him

when he argued or pleaded with them, but when he bravely risked his life in order to persuade them, they always gave in. A man who did not fear to die, so long as his work bore fruit, must surely be on the side of truth. More and more people came to understand this as time went by.

Not everybody can succeed in getting what he wants merely by fasting. Gandhiji was always pointing out that fasting should not even be *tried* except by people whose heart and intentions are pure. There must be no vanity or selfishness in the mind at all, and during the fast one should think only of God. If a man should fast with the idea of convincing people that they are wrong, but at the same time have his heart full of anger against them for their blindness and foolishness, his fast would only be displeasing to God.

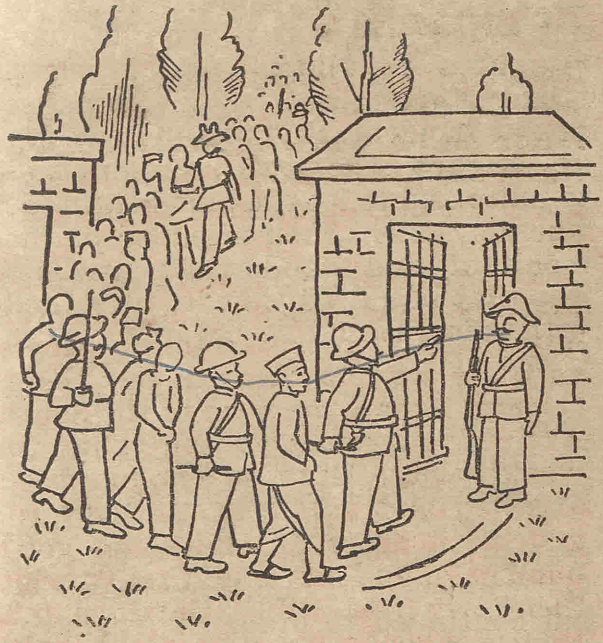
CHAPTER 19

FORGIVENESS OF ENEMIES

ONE of the most beautiful things we can learn from Gandhiji's example is willingness to forgive those who do us harm. This was especially noticeable in him during his years in South Africa.

Among the many humiliations which Indians had to suffer in South Africa at that time there was a law which obliged them to register their names with the Government and allow their finger-prints to be taken —just as if they were criminals! When this law was passed Gandhiji led a resistance movement against it. Indians quietly but firmly refused to obey the law. As a result, thousands of them were put in jail, including Gandhiji himself. This was the first jail sentence of his life. Later on he was to go to jail many times for his resistance to a foreign government's oppression of his people.

So many Indians were arrested that the jails became full. It was impossible to go on arresting people as there was no place to put them. General Smuts, the head of the South African government, said that he would release all those who had been arrested and withdraw the new registration order, if at least a good number of Indians would register of their own free will. Gandhiji felt that this was a big step in the right



direction and agreed to register. He was always too wise to expect people to give in at once, no matter *how* wrong they were. Little by little he would try to bring them to their senses. If they gave in on one point, he would give in on another. This generous and reasonable way of behaving seldom failed to win people's hearts in the end.

A number of Indians went with Gandhiji to register themselves, but on the way a group of Pathans stopped them. Pathans are very brave and proud people and these Pathans felt that it would degrade them to yield even an inch to the Government. They were angry with Gandhiji for giving in. They could not understand that he was acting wisely, and for their good. They were led by a

man called Mir Alam. This man hit Gandhiji on the head and he fell unconscious. Some time before he had been stoned and kicked in the streets by a mob of white people who wrongly fancied him to be their enemy. Now he was being beaten by his own people who also fancied him to be their enemy. It is often so with the good people of this world. Real unselfish goodness is so uncommon that men cannot understand it when they find it. It seems too wonderful to be true, and they fear it must be evil hiding behind an appearance of goodness.

This time Gandhiji was so severely beaten and wounded that he had to be carried to a friend's house and put to bed. The police arrested the Pathans, but Gandhiji refused to accuse them of anything. He could not bear to think that the old quarrels between Hindus and Muslims might break out again because of this incident. Humbly and sweetly he begged the two communities to unite and to let the blood from his wounds cement their friendship. The result of this wonderful gentleness was that Mir Alam's heart was filled with remorse and he became a close friend of Gandhiji.

Whilst still lying in bed recovering from the beating he had received, Gandhiji allowed his finger prints to be taken by the Government.

This was not the end of the registration struggle, however. For the Government did not keep its word, but continued to order the registration of Indians. So Gandhiji, who

could be just as firm as he was sweet and forgiving, wrote the Government a severe letter. He told them that if the registration order was not done away with, all the Indians who had registered willingly would burn their certificates of registration. As the Government was obstinate, he collected 2000 certificates and set fire to them publicly. For this act he was again put in jail.



CHAPTER 20

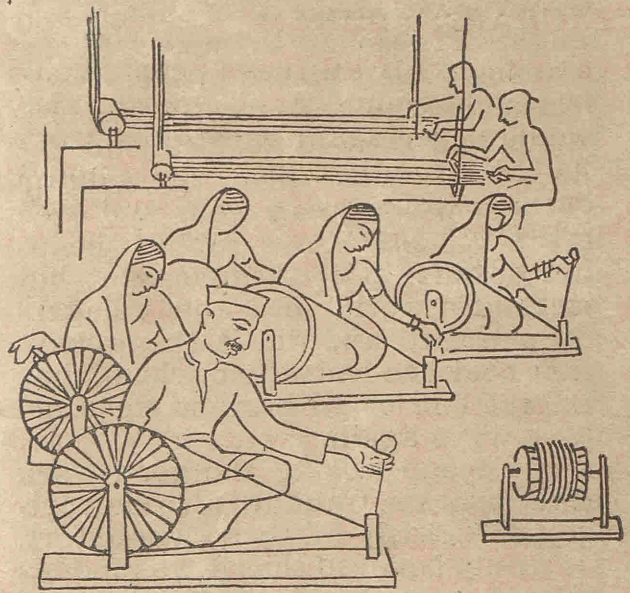
WORK AT THE SATYAGRAHA ASHRAM

WHEN at last Gandhiji returned again to India, the Great War of 1914 was in progress. He was determined to do no more political work for a time but just to study the situation in India. He wanted to be quite sure what it was that India needed most.

He had long felt the great importance of cottage industries, particularly spinning and weaving. India had to spend vast sums of money on foreign cloth to clothe her millions of people. If Indians would learn to make their own cloth, this money would no longer have to go out of India. Then there were always crores of Indians who had no employment except some little odd job now and then. If all these people could be taught spinning and weaving they would never again be without work. At the same time they would not be depriving others of jobs. In a country with so many millions of inhabitants there would always be customers for this hand-made cloth.

Spinning, too, was an occupation that could be carried on whilst chatting. Women who spend so much time in gossiping each day, could easily spin at the same time. In this way, idle hours could be turned into a most useful part of the day.

The ancient city of Ahmedabad seemed to Gandhiji a good place for experimenting with this new idea.



There he began to teach India the great lesson of self-reliance and self-support.

Since he believed that teachers must give a perfect example to their pupils in everything, he did not mean to work with ordinary people as his fellow-workers. He founded the now famous Satyagraha Ashram—a place of holiness like the hermitages of olden times. In this ashram he collected twenty-five people who all made vows to lead pure and holy lives of self-denial and sacrifice for the good of others. All were to live together like one loving family.

After a time, feeling that he must set an example in this also, Gandhiji allowed a family of Untouchables to join the Ashram. This family consisted of a father, mother and baby

daughter called Lakshmi. They were good, simple, hard-working people, but many of Gandhiji's Hindu friends became angry that he should take in Untouchables. Many of these friends had been giving him money to help the good work done by the ashram. All these gifts of money now stopped and the friends would no longer come near the ashram.

Gandhiji did not mind. He knew that he was right and that God was on his side. Even though the ashram was badly in need of money, he did not fear. He was certain that God would not forsake him.

And God rewarded his faith. An unknown person sent him the gift of Rs. 13,000.

As time went on, the members of the ashram did wonderful work. They visited village after village and taught the peasants to improve themselves and their homes in every way. Whenever the villagers were obstinate and refused to clean up the dirtiness around them, the ashram workers would clean wells and even sweep roads, remove rubbish heaps and do all kinds of unpleasant but necessary work, until the villagers got ashamed and did it themselves. Once they had learnt to be clean, they did not like to go back to their old dirty ways again.

While supervising the good work of the ashram, Gandhiji also supported the British in their war effort. He firmly believed that it was India's duty to help Britain in her hour of need, by giving men to fight against

Britain's enemies and defend her. He also felt certain that, in return, the British Government would give India freedom. He worked so hard recruiting men to defend Britain that he fell ill. It was during this illness that Kasturba persuaded him to take goat's milk in order to recover his health.



CHAPTER 21

NON-VIOLENT REBELLION

THOUGH Gandhiji had been so full of hope that the British would reward India by giving her complete freedom, he was bitterly disappointed. When the war ended it became plain that there was to be no reward at all for the sacrifices India had made. As time went on, harsher laws came to oppress the people, until Gandhiji saw that rebellion all over the country was the only way to break the British power in India.

But he would allow no violence. For years he had been preaching love, peace and non-violence. Now he called on the people to rebel non-violently. They were to refuse to obey unjust laws, but always in a peaceful manner.

Above all the people rebelled against the taxes they were expected to pay. These were far too many for the masses of India, who were already on the brink of starvation. In particular there was the salt tax. This meant great hardship to millions of poor Indians whose food is often only rice or wheat flavoured with a little salt. Gandhiji encouraged them to avoid the tax by preparing their own salt from sea-water.

The Government had also forbidden the sale of a number of books which spoke of freedom. They did not want the people to read such



books. Gandhiji had many thousands of copies of these books printed. These copies were carried about everywhere by Congress volunteers and offered for sale at four annas each. Though the price was so low, people often gave as much as five or ten rupees instead, in order to give Gandhiji money to carry on his great work. One man even gave fifty rupees for one book! In this way a lot of money was collected. After a time the Government left off forbidding the sale of these books, as it seemed useless.

No leader ever fought before as Gandhiji fought. However violently the Government might treat Indians, he ordered only quiet civil disobedience. People were to refuse to obey unjust laws, but they were

never to strike back, no matter what they were made to suffer. If they were fired on or beaten, they were just to stand firmly in their places. They were never to run away, but only ignore orders and disobey laws quietly. They were to refuse to work, to refuse to do whatever they were ordered, but they were never to harm anyone. This refusal to work, by thousands of people at a time, upset life in the big cities completely. Everything came to a standstill. In this way, Gandhiji hoped to force the British to come to terms.

Whenever he heard that people had forgotten his instructions and wounded or killed any British soldiers or policemen, Gandhiji was very sad. He knew and loved the British people. He had lived and studied among them, and he knew that they were just like other people. If the soldiers now fired on disobedient Indians, it was because they were obeying orders which told them to do so. It was the *orders* and the *laws* which were bad, and that was why Gandhiji wanted the people to disobey them. This is hard for children to understand, perhaps, but as soon as you are old enough you must read and study all that Gandhiji taught by his words and daily example. You will then understand that it is the best teaching in the world. All the great religions of the earth tell us to live as Gandhiji lived, but men are blind and foolish and confuse everything. They are often very artful and selfish, too, and twist and turn the laws of the One

God and Eternal Father to suit their own convenience. Gandhiji always prayed with all his heart that he might know and obey the true Will of God. God never refuses to answer such a prayer. That is how we know that Gandhiji was right in teaching what he did. He wanted India to be free, but he did not want even one man to be hurt for the sake of gaining freedom.

He knew that if Indians would go on quietly and bravely showing the British that they had every right to be free, the British would be forced to understand in the end. And that was how it was. That is how and why India is free to-day.

The fight was a very long one, though. So many times the Indian people felt that freedom must be near, but always they were disappointed. This is easy to understand. Nobody likes to give up his treasures without a struggle. Even a child fights anyone who tries to take away his toys. So of course the British did not even want to *think* of giving up a great, rich and beautiful country like India.

CHAPTER 22

THE TWO GREAT WARS

In the weary years that rolled by between the First Great War and the Second, thousands of changes came in the world outside India. Violence became a part of daily life in country after country. Everywhere men had been fighting for so long that it had almost got to be a habit with them. During the First Great War, whenever the different governments of the world found their soldiers were tired of fighting, they promised them a wonderful life if they would fight on till victory was won. When peace came at last, the poor soldiers only found that the world was a much worse place than before. There was less food, less of everything, and for millions of men there was no work at all. When they found that none of the good things promised them were going to come to them, they started fighting against their own governments. Kings and rulers were overthrown by their rebellious subjects in many lands, while in almost every country many political parties struggled with each other for power.

Then strong men began to rise up in one country after another. These men seized power and became like kings. They were called Dictators and they ruled with tyranny and cruelty, killing all who opposed them. The two most terrible of these

Dictators, Hitler and Mussolini, the one an Austrian and the other an Italian, made life miserable for millions of people. They ruled by violence instead of justice and men trembled at their name.

When people fear violence they generally *become* violent in order to protect themselves. This was how it was in Europe and in other continents too. No man's life was safe under the Dictators, who talked only of war. They called it a glorious thing and encouraged their people to fight for the sake of fighting. They ordered their armies to invade all small and weak countries. The populations of these small countries were then treated by them as slaves.

In the end the Second Great War broke out. It was the most terrible war that the world has ever seen. Men seemed to have forgotten all the teachings of religion. Hatred and cruelty reigned everywhere.

CHAPTER 23

RULING BY LOVE ALONE

ONLY one political leader spoke out for peace and brotherhood among the nations. That was Gandhiji.

He had now become so great and powerful in India that millions of men and women worshipped him like a saint and were ready to give their lives for him. Unlike the Dictators he wanted nothing for himself and ruled by love alone. His only throne was in the hearts of his followers.

He still worked tirelessly for India's freedom. He continually told the British that if they would only set India free, Indians would gladly help Britain in all her troubles caused by the war. But the British Government would not listen. In a world so full of hatred and deceit they found it hard to believe that there was one man who was absolutely truthful and sincere.

Again Gandhiji tried Satyagraha. By organising a movement of peaceful disobedience to the Government's orders all over India, he tried to convince the British that India must be free without any more delay. But it was useless.

The long years of hard toil had made Gandhiji an old man, though he was very healthy and still worked harder than any youth.

Several times during these years of struggle he had fallen seriously ill. Many times he had been sent to jail.



Many times he had fasted. But nothing had changed his determination to set India free. At the same time he had been continually teaching Indians of all communities to live together in peace and love.

He had raised up great numbers of the poor Untouchables, making them understand that they had every right to hold their heads up with dignity like other men. He forced Hindus to respect them and allow them to enter the temples from which they had so long been shut out. He educated them, taught them handicrafts and proved that they were just as intelligent as other Indians. For this glorious work alone he deserves undying fame—but it was only *one* of the wonderful things he did for India.

Since this land is chiefly a land of villages, he and his fellow-workers taught the peasants how to make their villages into little earthly paradises. He wanted the villagers to be so content at home that they would no longer want to wander into the big cities to work in the factories and lose their health away from the green fields and pure country air. He wanted them to practise their lovely handicrafts that they had learnt from their fathers and grandfathers, instead of learning how to work machines. He taught them to understand the beauty of hand-made cloth, pottery, furniture and even houses, and explained how these things could all be made by themselves, so that no one need be without them, however poor he was.



CHAPTER 24

THE ASHRAM AT SHEGAON

BECAUSE he always taught by example, Gandhiji went to live in a village himself to show people how they must live. He chose the tiny village of Shegaon in the Central Provinces. It was so small that there was not even a post office. It had no beauty and was terribly hot and dusty. There were no shady trees and only very little grass.

You may ask why he wanted to go to such a village instead of choosing a beautiful place. His reason was simple. He wanted to show how even the driest and ugliest village can be improved and turned into a place of beauty. Generally people don't care for anything, or anybody, which is ugly and poor. Gandhiji was not like that. He loved poor, ugly people and only wanted to make them into something better. Everything that was poor, weak and despised touched his loving fatherly heart.

At first he did not mean that many people should be with him at Shegaon, but wherever he was, others came. He was so much loved that people would not leave him alone.

At first a little dispensary for poor sick villagers was started. They could get free advice and medicine there. But more and more sick people came daily for advice, until Gandhiji felt it would be better to

start a little hospital. He and his fellow workers gave the poor patients the best they had of everything and the tenderest care.

Sick people must have good milk. So a little dairy was started to provide this. Then vegetables were planted and grown so that the little hospital could supply its own fresh vegetables.

Soon a new ashram was formed. An ashram, as I have told you, is a place where a number of people live together a holy life of prayer and service to others. More and more people came to join this ashram, although the rules were very strict. All must share in the daily household work, wash their own clothes, help with the cooking and do even the humblest sweeper's tasks. For where



Gandhiji was, all must be equal, both in the pleasant and the unpleasant things.

Every member of the ashram had to spin for half an hour daily. In Gandhiji's eyes spinning was one of the most important things in Indian life. He felt that if every Indian learned to spin, the problem of India's poverty would be over. Every man, woman or child would then have a way of earning money whenever other work failed. And there would be no more nakedness, or dirtiness for want of a change of clothing.

The little ashram at Shegaon flourished more and more. Gandhiji made it his headquarters. Slowly it had become a dispensary, a hospital, a dairy, a farm and a school. It was also the place to which thousands of people came like pilgrims, from all over the world, to see the great leader who ruled millions by love alone. Great politicians and humble peasants came. Foreigners, Indians of all communities, learned and illiterate. Some of them stayed for weeks and months. Some came to stay for ever. But no one was allowed to remain unless he agreed to lead a simple life of hard work in the service of others.

Meanwhile, from this humble village, Gandhiji carried on his great work for the freedom of India. A most important part of this work was the great number of letters that had to be written daily to people all over the country, to Congress leaders, to friends, to helpers. The Congress and Gandhiji had become in-

separable. All the Congress looked up to him as their leader, teacher and father. They did nothing without consulting his views and wishes first.

As there was no post office at Shegaon, Gandhiji's secretary had to walk five and a half miles every day to the nearest post office, which was at a place called Wardha. This secretary, who was named Mahadev Desai, was one of Gandhiji's most faithful followers. Gandhiji loved him like a son.

Poor Mahadev Desai continued to walk uncomplainingly to Wardha with his burden of letters every day, through the burning heat and dust of summer and the streaming downpour of the monsoon months, until at last it was decided to build a post office at Shegaon itself.

As there were *two* places called Shegaon in the same province, people often got confused. The postal authorities therefore suggested that as a post office was being set up at Gandhiji's Shegaon, they might as well give *that* place a new name. They asked Gandhiji what name he would prefer. He chose the beautiful name of Sevagram, or Place of Service.

That was always Gandhiji's way. In all that he did he seemed to make things more beautiful than they were before he touched them. More beautiful—and more *useful.* The *usefulness* was what mattered to *him,* for he did not care at all for useless things, no matter how beautiful they were.

CHAPTER 25

THE GANDHIAN WAY OF LIFE

GANDHIJI did many great and wonderful things throughout the whole of his life. He was like a king among the great political men of India and as such they considered him. He was known to people all over the world. He was famous in a thousand different ways and he always will be. But the things that we love most about him seem all to be connected with his life at Sevagram. I think this is because he was nearest to us there.

We cannot all be politicians, or lead millions of people. We cannot all be heroes and fight for the freedom of the oppressed. But we *can,* each one of us, make life happier for those around us. We can all look after our neighbour when he is sick, teach the ignorant, comfort the unfortunate, and keep all around us fresh, clean and tidy. We can all be kind, patient and loving. We can all be truthful, humble and obedient. These are the greatest things in life, because without them the world could never be happy. And these are the things that Gandhiji did every day of his life, for years and years, at Sevagram.

He knew that if we all lived a life of simple goodness and truthfulness, as he did, India would become a paradise. It would not be so very difficult, either. The only trouble is

that we are too lazy. Gandhiji managed to do it, although he was the busiest man in India. Best of all, he made people see the sweetness and beauty of goodness, so that everybody who met him longed to imitate him.

Those who had the happiness of living at Sevagram with him are never tired of repeating their tales of his sweetness. When we hear them, we long to have been able to live there too. Now that Gandhiji is no more with us we must study these stories carefully until we learn why it was that Sevagram seemed like heaven on earth. Then, if only we copy Gandhiji in all the little things of life and teach our dear ones to do the same, we shall find our own homes turning into little Sevagrams of peace and happiness.

Gandhiji was very strict in allowing no unnecessary luxury in Sevagram. As far as possible he liked people to make for themselves whatever things they required.

Everything had to be spotlessly clean, too. He would not permit the smallest speck of dust anywhere. He encouraged everybody to wear white clothes so that it could be seen at once when they were dirty.

CHAPTER 26

LIFE IN GANDHIJI'S LITTLE COTTAGE

His own little cottage, built of sun-baked mud, was a model in its tidiness and order. When people came to visit him they could hardly believe that such a plain little cottage was the home of so great a man. There was no furniture except an ordinary charpoy bed and a few bamboo stands for holding books and papers. If he wished, he could have had a palace, because thousands of Indians would have spent all they had in the world, just to please him. But he wanted nothing that a poor man could not have also. So in that little cottage there was nothing that a poor man could not have made with his two hands. Screens, curtains, floor mats, baskets, the fan that he used on very hot days, all were made of plaited palm leaves.

From all over the world people sent him books, magazines and papers, but he kept none for himself. All were given to the library of the ashram, so that all might share in the benefit of them.

Everything in the hut had its own particular place, and Gandhiji knew where everything was to be found. Even if only a pin or a bit of paper was required, he could find it in a moment.

At first the hut was only one big room, but after a time mud partitions were put up. In this way, within

the same space as before, there were three rooms: a dressing room, a bath-room and a study or living room. In the study Gandhiji worked all day, reading his post, writing, receiving visitors and discussing his plans with his friends and fellow workers, or spinning. However busy he was he never failed to do his daily half hour of spinning. This was because he knew the importance of *good example.* How could others say they *had not time* for a little daily spinning when Gandhiji, with all his huge burden of work, could manage it?

Very often, important visitors would come during the spinning time. Gandhiji would receive them kindly, but continue his spinning throughout the visit. When it was so hot that any other aged man would surely have rested, he would go on seeing his visitors just the same, with a cool bandage filled with wet earth round his head, to keep him fresh.

For all who came, he had sympathy and patience, no matter how humble they were. No one went away without having learned something good from him.

Once, when he was fasting as a penance for quarrels and riots between Hindus and Muslims, a couple of peasants came to the ashram, begging for some of the water in which Gandhiji's feet had been washed. Their son was dying and they felt that if this water was given to him he might recover.

As soon as Gandhiji heard of this,

he sent for the couple. Though weak from many days of fasting, he gently explained to them how silly it was to think that dirty water could cure anybody. Only God can work miracles, he told them, and to God only must they turn. When he had made them understand their foolishness, he let them go.

His love of service to others came before all else. He felt that it was far more important than even the very greatest political work. He used to say that if we do not serve others, life has no meaning.



CHAPTER 27

LOVE OF GOD

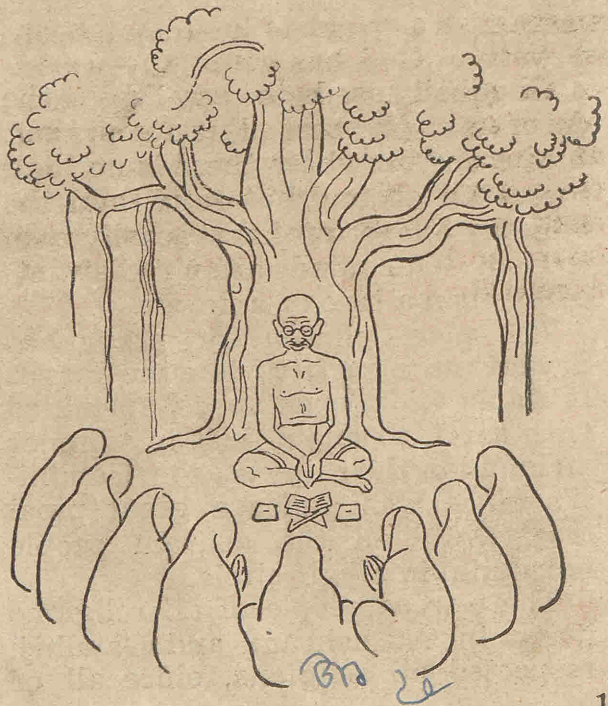
ALL this goodness and sweetness came from his great love of God. He saw God in every living creature. Without God nothing on earth could live. The life in each one of us is a little spark of the eternal life of God. We all know this, but we forget it again and again. Gandhiji never forgot it. That is why he was able to look with love on every creature, however unlovable or ugly.

This great love of God made him take great joy in prayer. He never failed to pray morning and evening. He used to say that whatever trouble we are in, there is no medicine like prayer. Morning and evening prayers at Sevagram were something no visitor ever forgot.

Gandhiji used to say that the desert was the best place for prayer. In the desert, where there is nothing to see all around but sand, and the blue sky above, our hearts easily turn to God. Our minds are not distracted by even a tree or a flower.

The place chosen for prayer at Sevagram was a little like the desert. It was a wide, open space, sprinkled with sand, to avoid dust in summer and mud in the rainy season. Gandhiji's place was under a great pipal tree, while all the ashram people faced him in a half-circle.

There were people of all religions living in the ashram, and Gandhiji respected all religions, since all of



them teach us to love and serve God. So during the prayers, portions of the holy books of various religions were read aloud. The two Hindu sacred books dearest to Gandhiji's heart were the Bhagavad Gita and the Ramayana, so parts of these were read daily; also passages from the Christian Bible and the Mohammedan Koran. The prayers began with the beating of a little drum to call everybody to the prayer-ground. Then, for a moment, all bowed low in silence to honour Buddha, the Lord of Peace and Non-violence. The readings from the various holy books followed. Sometimes parts of the Zend Avesta of the Parsees and the Jewish Talmud were added. Thus we see that all religions were honoured by Gandhiji, who wanted every-

one to be left free to love and serve God in his own way. Quarrels about religion were terrible in his eyes.

It was Gandhiji's love of God, too, that made him careful never to waste anything. Since millions of people in the world, especially in India, live always in the greatest poverty and want, he felt it to be a great sin to waste even a crumb of bread or a drop of water. God has given the world to all equally, to be enjoyed by each one of us. Yet some of us are as rich as kings while others go hungry all their lives. If we have more than we need, we should give it to those who have nothing, and never throw it carelessly away.

CHAPTER 28

LOVE OF SIMPLICITY AND TRUTH

LITTLE by little, Gandhiji had accustomed himself to do without one thing after another. Generally, when people become great and famous, they collect more and more possessions. In the end they require big mansions and palaces to contain all their stores of furniture and paintings, glass and china, books and curios, fine clothes, jewellery, and treasures of all kinds. Gandhiji was just the opposite. The more famous he grew and the more people loved him, the more and more simple he tried to make his life.

As a young man in England he used to dress in the most fashionable European clothes. When he returned to India after his years in South Africa, he adopted simple Indian dress. But at Sevagram, when he was known to all the world, he dressed like the poorest Indian peasant who has only a small loin cloth to cover him. He wanted the poor to feel that he was truly their father, equal to them in everything.

He ate such things as milk and fruit only because he felt it was his duty to keep his health and strength so that he could continue his work. Many times he tried giving up all foods that the poor cannot easily afford, but his health suffered too much to allow him to continue. For a time he took only one meal a day, and that was only bread and salt.

All the food prepared in the ashram had to be simple. No spices or other flavourings were allowed, not even salt. All food, if cooked, had to be boiled. From the following little story, we can see how very strict these rules were:—

Two little girls who lived in the ashram with their parents, had been to pay a visit to some friends. The lady of the house offered them some nice bhajas. Now another rule of the ashram was that no food was to be eaten between meals.

The little girls couldn't resist the bhajas, however, and enjoyed eating them very much. By doing so they disobeyed three rules of the ashram all at once. The first, that no fried food should be eaten. The second, that no spices or flavourings should



be taken. The third, that no food should be taken between meals.

When the little girls came back home, they happened to meet Gandhiji. They told him they had paid a visit. Something made him suspicious and he asked them if they had eaten anything. They at once replied: "No." Very soon, however, the truth came out. Gandhiji was very sad, because they had not only broken the three rules, but had told a lie as well. He hated lies more than anything else in the world, because they offend the Almighty God who is Truth Itself.

God had been offended by the little girls' lie, said Gandhiji, and somebody must do penance. He did not tell the little girls to do penance, but said that he would himself fast for two days as an atonement for their sin. We can easily imagine how unhappy the two children were about this. Gandhiji, who had done nothing wrong at all, was going to suffer hunger for two days to atone for *their* lie. How they must have promised never to lie or be disobedient again!

CHAPTER 29

LOVE OF CHILDREN

You must not think Gandhiji was ever a severe teacher, or difficult to obey. He knew well that most of us are far from saintly, and he always said that there are *two* good ways of doing everything. One is the difficult and more perfect way, the other, less perfect, but quite easy. There is no harm, he taught, in *beginning* with the easy way, if the other way frightens us at first. We can always change over to the difficult way when we have grown brave enough.

Above all he loved to teach and help children. No matter how busy he was he always found time for children. Every morning and evening he went for a little walk, to keep in good health. Many of the ashram children would accompany him on these walks. These were children whose parents lived and worked in the Ashram.

None of the Ashram children were at all shy of Gandhiji. They used to tell him all their little troubles, and also about their games. Sometimes they would tease him and run away with his stick. One small girl would even climb up on his lap to pull his nose and tweak his ears.

In his leisure time, short as it was, he would even crawl about on all fours to amuse the very little ones, and let them ride on his back. If a small child cried, he would even leave



off important work while he comforted it.

All this does not mean that he *spoilt* children, however. By no means. He was never weary of telling them to keep themselves clean and tidy, and he thought that all children should learn to do some useful work and be self-reliant. Laziness or dirtiness in children he would not tolerate. Once, at a public meeting, he noticed a sniffly little Harijan child. Lifting it up, he said kindly but firmly: "Blow your nose clean!"

However important the occasion was, he always noticed such little things. This was because for *him* they were *not* 'little things'. Where others would only have seen a ragged little Harijan child with a dirty nose,

he saw a child dear to God, born in dirt and misery through no fault of its own. In that poor dirty child he saw one of those whose rights he had been fighting for all his life.



CHAPTER 30

THE HARIJAN FUND

If he had wished it, Gandhiji could have been a rich man, living a life of luxury, for he was very successful as a lawyer. It was his love for the poor that had made him turn instead to a life of simplicity and continual toil. He felt that he could not rest until every Indian had enough to eat and the chance to go to school. He wanted to see no more very rich or very poor people, but each man, woman and child with enough for his needs.

He knew well that there was nothing harder in the world than to make this dream come true. Rich people cannot bear to give up what they have. The richer they are, the more they want. There are many rich people who fall ill from over-eating and laziness, and yet they would not like to give away even a piece of bread to those who are starving. But Gandhiji never gave up hoping for an India in which nobody would be hungry or without clothes. Just as men will work and slave to get rich, so Gandhiji worked and slaved to make others happy.

His greatest sympathy was always with the poor Harijans. He used to collect money everywhere and spend it on educating them. He wanted to make them equal to everyone else, so



that nobody would dare to despise them any more. When people complained that the Harijans were dirty, they never stopped to think that these poor people were not allowed to use the wells used by others and so had little chance to be clean. And how could they be anything but ignorant when they were never allowed inside the village schools? By opening schools where Harijans could learn all that others learn, Gandhiji soon proved that they could be just as clever as other people.

Much money was needed for this great work, though. The poor Harijans had nothing but their rags. Everything had to be provided for them. Gandhiji was never ashamed to beg for his dear Harijans, and he would ask for money so sweetly and

persuasively that it was impossible to say "no" to him. The rich would often give him thousands of rupees at a time. The poor gave whatever copper coins they could spare. He took all, provided it came from a good heart.

If anything was given to him for himself, he generally gave it away soon after to some person in need. But he never lost a chance of collecting money for his poor. Sometimes thousands of people attended his prayer meetings, and then he would take the opportunity to beg them for funds. When he spoke in this way, people felt their hearts melting. His simple words and poor dress made their own luxury seem mere foolishness. Grandly dressed ladies would pull off their gold bangles and diamond rings and pour them into his hands.

That was a wonderful sight to see! Gandhiji in his peasant's loin-cloth, and the rich people in their splendid clothes, standing before him like subjects before their king.

CHAPTER 31

THE STORY OF A NECKLACE

ONE very sweet story is told of Gandhiji's persuasiveness in getting gifts for his poor people.

Several ladies had come to Sevagram on a visit. They just wanted to see Gandhiji and have a few words with him. He received them kindly and chatted with them for a while. He noticed that they all wore ornaments and asked if they would not like to give him something for his Harijan fund.

The ladies gladly took off their ornaments and handed them over to him—all except one young woman. Gandhiji asked her what *she* was going to give, and she replied that she had nothing. He quietly pointed to her mangal-sutra or marriage necklace, but she only cast down her eyes in silence. She was very young and probably newly married. Her marriage necklace must have been very precious to her. But Gandhiji gently persisted in his request.

At last she took the mangal-sutra from her neck and gave it to him. Her face was sad and it was easy to see how heavy her heart was, but she did as he asked.

Gandhiji thanked her for her generosity and then said sweetly:

"And now—here is a gift from *me*—" and gave her the necklace back again. He had well understood how it hurt the young bride to part with



her marriage necklace, and he did not wish for such a sacrifice. All that he wanted was her *willingness* to give.

After receiving it back again as a gift from Gandhiji, the necklace must have been doubly precious to the young bride.



VIRUL ISLAM HIGH SCHOOL ERNAKULAM

CHAPTER 32

A MODEL FOR THE POOR

JUST as nothing was too rich for Gandhiji to accept for his Harijans, so nothing was too small in his eyes either. From a rich lady he would not hesitate to ask all her jewels, while from the poor he would accept even a copper pice.

Always with the same goal in mind he made everyone around him observe the strictest economy, saying that even the tiniest wastefulness was a sin against the poor.

When doing his daily spinning he was always careful to collect every tiny bit of yarn. With these as stuffing, and with covers from tiny left-over scraps of cloth, he would have pincushions made.

Nothing was ever thrown away at Sevagram.

In the kitchen he had a notice hung, forbidding the waste of salt.

He even kept old letter covers. He cut them up neatly and used them for making notes on. Often the thoughts that he jotted down on these scraps would amaze the world by their beauty when they appeared later in print.

Once a visitor to the ashram was pouring himself out a cup of water. As people often do, he filled the cup too full, and carelessly threw the excess water on the ground. Gandhiji scolded him and told him that he had no right to do such a thing.

The water which he had carelessly thrown away was a precious thing in a tropical country like India, where shortage of water is often a serious problem.

In every way Gandhiji was practical. He liked food to be cooked in earthen pots. Firstly, because this encouraged the cottage industry of pot-making. Secondly, because food is better and more appetising when cooked in earthen vessels. Thirdly, because earthen pots are cheaper than other cooking utensils. When people complained that such pots easily get broken, he told them to be more careful.

He wanted his life to be a model for the poor in everything. With this idea always in his mind he would never use a thing which poor people could not afford—not even a mosquito net on his bed. He preferred to think out a way in which even the poorest man could protect himself from mosquitoes. This way was to cover himself completely with the bedsheet, before going to sleep, having put a few drops of kerosene oil on his face and hands. Mosquitoes dislike the smell of kerosene oil.

He was equally careful to be plain and simple in the cold season, too. Once when it was very chilly, a young girl in the ashram brought him a hot water bottle to keep his feet warm. He told her to take it away, saying that such things were not used by the poor.

When sick, he would use no expensive patent medicines, as these are also beyond the poor man's reach.

Instead he would try experiments on himself with cheap and simple remedies that can do no harm—such as bathing with hot or cold water, putting earth poultices on the stomach, and so on. Very often, he discovered very good cures in this way.

He was as careful with time as he was with everything else. His cheap pocket watch, which he kept tied to his waist by a string, as he had no pocket, was always kept right to the second. He was never a minute late.

Whenever he had to speak in public, he always arrived exactly on time, spoke for just a fixed number of minutes and no more. He never wandered from this subject to that, as so many speakers do. He was never afraid of saying anything that had to be said, no matter how painful it might be. His words were always simple and plain, so that even the most ignorant might understand him.

CHAPTER 33

FREEDOM AT LAST

OVER fifty years of Gandhiji's life were spent in working for the freedom of India. How his heart must have rejoiced when at last that dream came true!

How much he had suffered during those long years! How many times he had been sent to jail for opposing the foreign Government! How many times he had fasted when all other arguments failed to move people's hearts! How great he became during those fifty years! His name was known to the highest and the lowest all over the world. He need only have expressed the wish and grateful Indians would have built him a palace as splendid as any in the world. But he wanted nothing for himself. All that he had ever asked was freedom for India from the British, kindness for the Harijans from the caste Hindus, and that Hindus and Muslims should live together as brothers. One of the last acts of his beautiful life was a fast to bring this about.

When at last freedom came, his dear Kasturba was no longer by his side to share his triumph. She had died a little while before. But greatly as he felt her loss, he would not grieve. He said that when a man or woman has lived and died well, there is no cause for grief. It was when the *living* showed no desire to live well, that his fatherly heart was



crushed with sorrow. When *Indians* killed *Indians* just because they belonged to different communities, and in the very moment when freedom had been given to *all* Indians—*that* was when his heart was near to breaking.

So in the last year of his life, old and frail, he wandered on foot from village to village, calming the angry, comforting those who had suffered, bringing peace wherever he entered. Then he began his last great fast, ready to give his life in penance for the sins of his foolish children.

Once more his gentle bravery won the victory over violence, and peace returned.

It seemed as if at last Gandhiji was to enjoy the reward of his years of labour. He had finally overcome

example.

Each day he held prayer meetings in the open air as usual. He never showed the least nervousness, nor looked about to see if danger threatened. He knew that nothing could happen to him that was not willed by God.

Then, a few evenings later, as he walked to the prayer ground, still weak from his recent fast, a man came forward and shot him through the heart.

Without a cry Gandhiji sank to the ground, murmuring only: "O Ram! O Ram!"—the name of God which he loved the most. His kind eyes turned for a second towards his murderer—and Gandhiji was dead. He died because there are in the world some men so evil that they hate goodness—hate it as much, and more, than good men hate evil. Into the hearts of such men devils seem to enter.

Like lightning the terrible news sped round the world and all nations mourned with India in her sorrow.

The loss of Gandhiji has left a terrible emptiness in the land he loved so dearly, but he would not want useless grief. In our sadness we may find comfort in the thought that his dearest wish was to see God face to face, for most surely he is with God now.

And he has left each one of us a legacy. Rich or poor, great or small, we have each our part to fulfil in completing his work. He trusted us to walk in his foot-prints and we can and must be faithful. He has left us

an example that even the poorest and most ignorant can follow. If we each do our utmost to end communal hatred, despise nobody, help all who need our help, and sincerely follow the right path in all things, we shall each and all be sharing in the great and blessed work for which Mahatma Gandhi gave his precious life.



This is a good books and it was the English book because many children's reading the books

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