

গান্ধি - সহিংসতার বিকল্প লিখেছেন

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জিতেন্দ্রভাই দেশাই নাভাজীবন
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01. পাঠ সংখ্যাটি চার নম্বর

পড়ার জন্য একটু উপাখ্যান। আমি একবার আহমেদাবাদে বন্ধুর পরিবারের সাথে দেখা করতে গিয়েছিলাম, যখন উপস্থিত সকলের আগে এই ছোট কিন্তু বলার ঘটনাটি ঘটেছিল। পরিবারের শিশুটি স্কুল থেকে সহপাঠী নিয়ে এসেছিল এবং দুজনেই মেঝেতে বসে আমাদের সবার আগে প্রতিদিনের কাজ হিসাবে খেলতে বের হওয়ার আগে একসাথে তাদের গৃহকর্ম করার জন্য। আমরা প্রবীণরা আমাদের কথোপকথন এবং আমাদের চা দিয়ে চালিয়ে গেলেন, যখন শ্রোতাদের কাছে অস্ত্র ছিল না এমন দুটি ছোট পণ্ডিত তাদের পাঠ্যপুস্তক খুললেন এবং পৃষ্ঠাগুলি ঘুরিয়ে, প্যাসেজগুলি নির্দেশ করে এবং নোট লেখেন। গণিত, পদার্থবিজ্ঞান, ব্যাকরণ, ইতিহাস সবকিছুই তাদের পাঠ্যক্রমের অংশ হিসাবে মনে হয়েছিল এবং তারা ঘনিষ্ঠ অংশীদারিত্বের সাথে ঘুরে ঘুরে প্রশ্নগুলি পড়ে এবং উত্তরগুলি রচনা করে। তাদের গবেষণার মাঝে, তাদের মধ্যে একজন অন্যকে একটি প্রশ্ন জিজ্ঞাসা করেছিলেন: "গান্ধী কে ছিলেন?"

আমি কান ছাঁটাই করেছিলাম, স্পষ্টতই ক্লাসরুমে মহাত্মা গান্ধী সম্পর্কে একটি পাঠ ছিল এবং তাদের পাঠ্যপুস্তকে বিষয়টি সন্ধান করতে বলা হয়েছিল। গণিতের সমস্যা, ব্যাকরণ বিশ্লেষণ এবং ইতিহাসের তারিখ, রাজা এবং যুদ্ধগুলির সাথে একসাথে, তাদের ইতিহাসের সেই চরিত্রটি খতিয়ে দেখতে হয়েছিল এবং তাঁর সম্পর্কে একটি প্রবন্ধ লিখতে হয়েছিল। এটি তখনই হয়েছিল যখন ছেলেদের মধ্যে একজন তাকিয়ে অন্যটিকে জিজ্ঞাসা করত, "গান্ধী কে?" অন্য ছেলেটি তার নোটবুকটি না তাকিয়ে কেবল ইঙ্গিত করেছিল। সামনে পাঠ্যপুস্তকটি জবাব দিয়েছিল এবং সত্যই বলেছিল: "চার নম্বর পাঠ।" এবং দুজনেই তাদের বাড়ির কাজ চালিয়ে গেলেন। আমি বড়দের কথাবার্তায় মনোযোগ দেওয়া বন্ধ করে দিলাম।

গান্ধী? চার নম্বর পাঠ। এই দু'জনই তরুণ ছিল তাঁর সম্পর্কে নতুন ছেলেরা। আর তা ছিল ভারত, গুজরাট, গান্ধীর মৃত্যুর অনেক বছর পরে নয়, তারা গুজরাট ভাষায় কথা বলছিলেন যা গান্ধীর মাতৃভাষা ছিল Their তাদের বাবা-মা গান্ধীর সমসাময়িক ছিলেন, তাঁকে ব্যক্তিগতভাবে দেখেছিলেন, শুনেছিলেন তাকে এবং তার সম্পর্কে শুনেছিলাম, ছিল কাগজপত্রগুলিতে তাঁর সংবাদ পড়েছিলেন, দিন দিন তাঁর কাজ অনুসরণ করেছিলেন, তাঁর চিত্রটি স্বীকৃতি দিয়েছিলেন, তাঁকে ভালোবাসতেন, তাঁর উপস্থিতিতে শিহরিত হয়েছিলেন এবং তাঁর মৃত্যুতে কাঁপছিলেন। তিনি তাদের জন্য একজন জীবিত ব্যক্তি ছিলেন যে তারা যে পথে চলছিল সেই দেশে হাঁটছিল, যে শ্বাস নিচ্ছে বাতাসটি শ্বাস নিয়েছে, যে ভাষায় তারা কথা

বলছিল। এটাই ছিল তাদের পিতামাতার জন্য গান্ধী। তবে তাদের সন্তানদের জন্য গান্ধী আর কেউই ছিলেন না। তিনি ইতিহাসের সবেমাত্র একটি চরিত্র, অতীতের স্মৃতি, পাঠ্যপুস্তকের একটি অধ্যায়। অধ্যয়নের জন্য একটি বিষয়, পরীক্ষার জন্য একটি প্রশ্ন, কিছুটা বাড়ির কাজ। সম্ভবত একই পাঠ্যপুস্তকে অশোকের উপরে, গ্রেট আলেকজান্ডারের নেপোলিয়নে একটি পাঠ ছিল। এবং তাদের মধ্যে, গান্ধী। চার নম্বর পাঠ। এই দুটি স্মার্ট এবং দায়িত্ববান ছেলের জন্য, গান্ধী তাঁর নিজের দেশে এবং প্রদেশে এবং তাঁর নিজের সময়ে, একটি জীবন্ত উপস্থিতি বন্ধ করে দিয়েছিলেন এবং পাঠ্যপুস্তকের একটি পৃষ্ঠায় পরিণত হয়েছিল। এবং তারা ক্ষতির বিষয়ে অবগত ছিল না।

আমাদের কাছে গান্ধীর যথাযথ গুরুত্ব হ'ল তিনি আমাদের সময়ের অন্তর্গত। তিনিই প্রথম মহান আধুনিক রাজনীতিবিদ যিনি আমাদের যুগে যুগে, বিশ্ব দারিদ্র্য, ধনী-দরিদ্রের মধ্যে ব্যবধান, সম্ভ্রাসবাদ, জাতিগত যুদ্ধ, নিপীড়ন, দুর্নীতি, পূর্ব ও পশ্চিম, উত্তর ও দক্ষিণ, ধর্মীয় অসহিষ্ণুতা, সহিংসতা। তিনি এখন যে মহান আদর্শের জন্য আমরা লড়াই করছি তার পক্ষে লড়াই করেছেন: স্বাধীনতা ও সাম্যতা, বন্ধুত্ব এবং মর্যাদা, ব্যক্তি কল্যাণ এবং সামাজিক অগ্রগতি। এবং সর্বোপরি, তিনি তাঁর সমস্ত মহান আজীবন পাঠ শিখিয়েছিলেন এবং দেখিয়েছিলেন, যা আমাদের সবচেয়ে বড় প্রয়োজন, ইতিহাসের আসল লড়াইগুলি সেনাবাহিনী ছাড়া জয়ী হওয়া, সবচেয়ে বড় শক্তি আত্ম-শক্তি, যে স্বাধীনতা পাওয়া যায় না সহিংসতার মাধ্যমে। হ'ল তাঁর "সত্যকে ধরে রাখা" লাভের(সত্যগ্রহ) স্বায়ী শান্তিএকমাত্র এবং আসল উপায়এবং এটি আমাদের এবং মুহুর্তে যখন ইতিহাসের সবচেয়ে প্রয়োজন তখন ইতিহাস ও বিশ্ব-শান্তিতে তাঁর দুর্দান্ত অবদান।

গান্ধী ইতিহাসে প্রথমবারের মতো স্বাধীনতা যুদ্ধ না করেই একটি মহান সাম্রাজ্য থেকে একটি মহান দেশের স্বাধীনতা অর্জন করেছিলেন। তাঁর দিন অবধি আমেরিকা ও এশিয়ার উপনিবেশগুলি ইউরোপের izingপনিবেশিক শক্তিগুলির কাছ থেকে স্বাধীনতা অর্জন করেছিল, কিন্তু যুদ্ধ ছাড়া কখনও হয়নি। এমনকি ভারতে, নেহেরু, প্যাটেল এবং সুভাষ চন্দ্র বোস-এর মতো কিছু রাজনৈতিক ও সামরিক নেতারা ভেবেছিলেন যে সশস্ত্র অভ্যুত্থান জরুরি হবে এবং ভারতকে ব্রিটেন থেকে মুক্ত করার জন্য যুদ্ধ করতে হবে। কিন্তু গান্ধী পরাজিত হয়েছিল, এবং জিতেছিল। তিনি শান্তিপূর্ণ উপায়ে স্বাধীনতা অর্জন করেছিলেন। এটি ছিল ইতিহাসের একটি যুগান্তকারী। তাঁর পরে এবং তাঁর উদাহরণের মাধ্যমে, এশিয়া ও আফ্রিকার আরও অনেক দেশধীরে ধীরে

বিনা যুদ্ধে স্বাধীন হয়েছিল এবং মানব জাতির ইতিহাসে গান্ধীর এই অবদান অবশ্যই অবতীর্ণ। যুদ্ধ ছাড়াই স্বাধীনতা।

তখন থেকে যুদ্ধ সন্ত্রাসবাদের নতুন সংস্করণ অর্জন করেছে, যা আমাদের সময়ের ইতিহাস the সীমালব্ধিহীন যুদ্ধ, তালিকাভুক্ত সেনাবাহিনী ছাড়া, প্রকাশ্য লড়াই ছাড়াই, তবে অস্ত্রের সাথে যুদ্ধ, শিকারের সাথে, ধ্বংসের সাথে, রক্ত দিয়ে with যুদ্ধক্ষেত্র এবং তারিখ ছাড়া একটি দৈনিক যুদ্ধ, কোনও মহৎ কারণ বা বীরত্বপূর্ণ দেশপ্রেম, সাহস এবং সম্মান ছাড়াই। সহিংসতার রাজত্ব এবং মিডিয়া রিপোর্টগুলি ছাড়া আর কিছুই নয়, যখন সর্বশেষ সন্ত্রাসী হামলার সংবাদ আমাদের মধ্যে উদ্বেগের অনুভূতিটিকে নতুন করে জাগিয়ে তোলে যা আমরা আমাদের দিনগুলির মহামারির আগে অনুভব করি। কীভাবে সন্ত্রাসবাদ বন্ধ করা যায়?

জরুরি প্রয়োজন হ'ল অহিংসতার কৌশলটি বিকাশ করে মানবজাতিটিকে তার জ্ঞানে ফিরিয়ে আনতে। অহিংসার উপায়গুলি শিখতে এবং এর মতবাদটি অনুশীলন করা। এবং গান্ধী সেই নতুন শৃঙ্খলায় মহান বিশেষজ্ঞ ছিলেন। প্রতি শান্তিপূর্ণ প্রতিবাদে, প্রতিটি শান্তি পদযাত্রায়, প্রতিটি শান্তিচুক্তি ও শান্তি ইশতেহারে, বিরোধী পক্ষের মধ্যকার প্রতিটি বন্ধুত্বপূর্ণ বৈঠকে, প্রতিটি সাদা পতাকায় এবং প্রতিটি মানুষের হাত ধরে গান্ধীর নাম বেনামে থাকে। তাঁর কেরিয়ারটি দেখার, তাঁর পড়াশোনার অধ্যয়ন করা, তাঁর উপাখ্যানগুলি উপভোগ করা, তাঁর কথা শোনার জন্য, তাঁর উদাহরণ থেকে শেখা আমাদের পক্ষে মূল্যবান হবে।

চতুর্থ পাঠের সাথে শুরু করা যাক।

02. দ্য লাজার

একজন প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ের শিক্ষার্থীর স্মৃতি:

স্কুলে আমি কিছু সংখ্যার টেবিল সহ অসুবিধায় শিখেছি। অন্যান্য ছাত্রদের কাছ থেকে আমি খুব শিগগির যা শিখলাম তা শিক্ষকের কাছে উল্লেখ করার জন্য খারাপ শব্দ ছিল এবং আমি অন্য কিছু মনে করতে পারি না। আমি এই সিদ্ধান্তে পৌঁছেছি যে আমার বোঝাপড়াটি মাঝারি এবং আমার স্মৃতিশক্তি বিস্কুটের মতো পাতলা।

পরবর্তীতে উচ্চ বিদ্যালয়ে:

এখানে কয়েকটি বিষয় ইংরেজিতে পড়ানো হত। আমি একটি শব্দ বুঝতে পারিনি। জ্যামিতিতে আমি ইউক্লিডের 12 নম্বর উপপাদ্যে পৌঁছাতে সক্ষম হয়েছি। জ্যামিতি মাস্টার একজন ভাল শিক্ষক হিসাবে বিবেচিত, কিন্তু আমি খুব কমই কিছু বুঝতে পেরেছি। আমি প্রায়শই হতাশ বোধ করতাম।

এবং কলেজে:

এখানে আমি কোনও কিছুই অনুসরণ করতে পারি না। ক্লাসে আমার কী চলছে তা নিয়ে কোনও ধারণা ছিল না এবং এটিতে মোটেই আগ্রহী ছিলাম না। দোষটা প্রফেসরদের নয়, আমার ছিল। আমি খুব নিস্তেজ ছিলাম।

গুজরাটের ভাওয়ানগরের শামালদাস কলেজে তারা আজ দর্শকদের কাছে প্রথম সেমিস্টার পরীক্ষার পরীক্ষার ফলাফলের রেকর্ড দেখায় যেখানে এই শিক্ষার্থী উপস্থিত হয়েছিল। সেই রেকর্ডটি আমি নিজের চোখে দেখেছি। নামের একটি দীর্ঘ তালিকার মাঝে, সম্পূর্ণরূপে ভুলে যাওয়া, একটি অবিচলিত এবং অভিন্ন ধরণের চিঠিযুক্ত লংহ্যান্ডে লেখা, এখানে প্রশ্ন করা শিক্ষার্থীর পুরো নাম। মোহনদাস করমচাঁদ গান্ধী। এবং এই নামটির পরে, চারটি কলামে, তিনি যে চারটি বিষয়ে বসেছিলেন তার মধ্যে ফলাফল পেয়েছেন। প্রথমটিতে তিনি পাস করেন, দ্বিতীয়টিতে তিনি ব্যর্থ হন এবং তৃতীয় এবং চতুর্থ ... তিনি অনুপস্থিত ছিলেন। বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে তাঁর প্রথম পরীক্ষার ফলাফল শিক্ষার্থীদের সম্পর্কে কম মতামত নিশ্চিত করেছে।

ওই বছর দ্বিতীয় সেমিস্টারে তার পরিবার ইংল্যান্ডে পড়াশোনা চালিয়ে যাওয়ার জন্য তাকে পাঠানোর সুযোগ পেয়েছিল। তারা তাকে জিজ্ঞাসা করেছিল যে সে বছরই তিনি ইংল্যান্ডে যেতে প্রস্তুত কিনা, এবং তার উত্তর:

এটিই"এই বছর ইংল্যান্ডে যাওয়া ঠিক হবে, কারণ এখানে আমি কোনওভাবেই পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ হব না।"

ইংল্যান্ড যাওয়ার বেশ ভাল কারণ! এখানে আমি ব্যর্থতা নিশ্চিত, তাই আমাকে বিদেশে পাঠাও এবং আমি সেখানে কীভাবে পরিচালনা করব তা আমরা দেখতে পাব। এভাবে আসন্ন বিপদ এড়ানো যায়। পালানো। পালিয়ে গিয়ে সংকট এড়ানো। এই শিক্ষার্থী বড় হওয়ার পরে তার কী করবে তার ঠিক বিপরীত; সে কখনই কোনও সংকট থেকে বাঁচতে পারবে না, তবে সামনে থেকে দেখা করবে এবং তা অতিক্রম করবে। এই নতুন দৃষ্টিভঙ্গিতে পৌঁছাতে তাকে অনেক বড় পরিবর্তন করতে হবে। বর্তমানের জন্য আমরা তাকে ছাত্র হিসাবে তার অসম্মতায় অনুসরণ করব।

তিনি কেবল মধ্যযুগীয় বুদ্ধিমত্তাই ছিলেন না, সর্বদা তাঁর মতে তিনি দেহের প্রতি দুর্বল এবং চরিত্রে লাজুক ছিলেন। তিনি এত লজ্জা পেলেন যে, সমস্ত ভারতীয় ছেলেদের মতো তিনি ক্রিকেটকে ভালোবাসতেন, তবুও তিনি কখনও খেলেন না, যেহেতু খেলতে গেলে তাকে অন্যদের সাথে কথা বলতে হবে এবং একটি দলে যোগ দিতে হত এবং তার লজ্জা তাকে এই কাজ থেকে বিরত করেছিল। ।

এটি এমন এক ব্যক্তির মধ্যে এক বিস্ময়কর বৈশিষ্ট্য যা পরে ভিসোয়্যারির মুখোমুখি হবে এবং জনতার মুখোমুখি হবে। ইংল্যান্ড থেকে ফিরে এসে তাঁর আইন ডিগ্রি নিয়ে প্রস্তুত হয়ে তিনি বোম্বে হাইকোর্টে আইনজীবী হিসাবে কাজ করার জন্য এবং জীবিকা নির্বাহের জন্য যোগ দিয়েছিলেন। তবে তিনি বেশি দিন স্থায়ী হননি। এখানে তার প্রথম আদালতের মামলায় তার অভিজ্ঞতা যেমন তিনি নিজেই এটিকে তাঁর সাধারণ সরলতা ও আন্তরিকতার সাথে বলছেন:

আমি প্রথমবার আদালতে যাচ্ছিলাম। আমি রাষ্ট্রপক্ষের আইনজীবী এবং আমাকে অভিযুক্তকে জিজ্ঞাসাবাদ করতে হয়েছিল। খাঁটি রুটিন প্রশ্নের জন্য আমি সমস্ত প্রশ্ন তৈরি করেছিলাম। আমি উঠে দাঁড়ালাম এবং আমার পা কাঁপতে লাগল। আমার মাথা ঘুরছিল এবং আমি ভেবেছিলাম এটি হলটি ছিল যা গোল এবং গোল হয়ে চলেছে। আমি প্রথম প্রশ্ন জিজ্ঞাসা করতে পারে না। আমি দাঁড়িয়ে থাকি, বোবা আর কাঁপতে থাকি পাতার মতো। বিচারক অবশ্যই হেসেছেন এবং উকিলরা অবশ্যই আমার ব্যয়ে আশ্চর্য হয়েছেন। তবে আমি কিছুই দেখতে বা শুনতে পেলাম না। আমি কোথায় ছিলাম তাও জানতাম না। অবশেষে বসে রইলাম। আমি আমার ক্লায়েন্টকে বললাম আমি তার প্রতিনিধিত্ব করতে পারি না, এবং তিনি আমাকে যে ফি দিয়েছিলেন তা আমি তাকে ফিরিয়ে দিয়েছি। তারপরে আমি তাড়াহুড়া করে বের হয়ে গেলাম। আমার ক্লায়েন্ট মামলাটি জিতেছে বা হারিয়েছে তা আমি জানি না। আমি নিজেকে পুরোপুরি লজ্জা পেয়েছিলাম। সেখানেই আমি সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছি যে আমি কিছুটা আশ্চর্যবিশ্বাস না পাওয়া পর্যন্ত আদালতে ফিরে আসব না। এই সিদ্ধান্তটি অপ্রয়োজনীয় ছিল, যাইহোক, কেউই

আমাকে একটি মামলার উপর সোপর্দ করবে না, যেহেতু আমি নিশ্চিত যে এটি হারাতে চাইছিলাম। আইনজীবী হিসাবে আমার ক্যারিয়ারের এটিই শুরু।

এটাই ছিল গান্ধীর পেশাদার সূচনা। মাঝারি ছাত্র এবং লাজুক আইনজীবী। এটি তাঁর যৌবনের মূল্যবান বছরগুলির ইতিহাস যা নিজের বলেছিলেন। পরবর্তীতে তিনি যখন তাঁর জীবনকে নির্মলতা এবং হাস্যরসের সাথে স্মৃতিচারণ করেছেন এবং সাফল্য তাকে স্মরণ করেছিলেন, তখন তিনি হারিয়ে যাওয়া এই সময়ের সংক্ষিপ্তসারটি লিখেছিলেন: "আমি নিজেকে সদ্য শ্বশুরবাড়ির সাথে বসবাস করতে যাওয়া সদ্য বিবাহিত মেয়ে হিসাবে পেয়েছি।" "যৌথ পরিবার" জীবনযাপন থেকে বোঝা যায় যে ছেলে বিয়ে করার সময় তার পিতা-মাতার বাড়িতে থেকে যায়, আর কনে তার বাড়িতে তার শ্বশুরবাড়ির বাড়িতে থাকে। যৌবন, নতুন পারিপার্শ্বিকতা এবং শ্বশুরবাড়ির অবিচ্ছিন্ন উপস্থিতি সদ্য বিবাহিত মেয়েটির প্রতিচ্ছবি লজ্জা, প্রত্যাহার এবং অস্বচ্ছলতার প্রতিশব্দ হিসাবে তৈরি করেছে, যা গান্ধী মজাদারভাবে নিজেকে বর্ণনা করার জন্য বেছে নিয়েছেন: "নতুন হিসাবে শ্বশুরবাড়ির সাথে বধূ।" তিনি যদি এটি না বলতেন তবে কেউ এটি বিশ্বাস করত না। এই সমস্ত বছরগুলিতে গান্ধীর নিজের মধ্যে শক্তি, শক্তি এবং মহত্ব ছিল যে একদিন তাঁকে একটি জাতির পিতায় পরিণত করবে, কিন্তু এই শক্তিটি নিজের কাছেও লুকিয়ে ছিল। সেই লাজুক উকিলটিতে, সেই দুর্বল সন্তানের যে সুপ্ত ছিল সেই দৈত্যটি কেউ অনুমান করতে পারত না এবং নিজেও least ইতিহাস যদি তাকে নাড়া না দিত, যদি পরিস্থিতি যদি প্রতিভা আবিষ্কার না করত, তবে গান্ধী আদালতের মামলা হারাতে এবং জনগণের লজ্জাজনক লড়াইয়ের দিকে ঝুঁকতেন। ভারতের ইতিহাস অন্যরকম হত এবং আজ কেউই পোরবন্দর ছোট্ট আইনজীবিকে মনে রাখবে না।

মনোবিজ্ঞানীরা আমাদের শেখায় যে আমাদের পুরো জীবনে আমাদের বিকাশের চেয়ে চিন্তাভাবনা, কথা এবং ক্রিয়ায় আমাদের অনেক বেশি ক্ষমতা রয়েছে। আমরা সকলেই আমাদের থেকে বেশি কিছু করতে পারি এবং পৌঁছানোর চেয়ে আরও অনেক বেশি পৌঁছতে পারি। একজন সাধারণ ব্যক্তি তার অর্ধেক অনুশদও ব্যবহার করেন না এবং যে আরও কিছুটা বেশি ব্যবহার করেন তিনি বুদ্ধিমান। আমরা নিজের থেকে সেরাটা অর্জনের শিল্প সম্পর্কে নিজেকে অসুস্ত, পুরোপুরি জীবনযাত্রায় নিজেকে ফেলে দেওয়া, জীবনকে পুরোপুরি জীবনযাপন করার। আমরা স্তব্ধ রুটিন জীবন যাপন করি। আমরা আমাদের বাজেটের একটি ক্ষুদ্র ভগ্নাংশই ব্যবহার করি। আমরা ইউক্লিডের দ্বাদশ উপপাদ্য বা আমাদের প্রথম আদালতের মামলায় আটকে যাই এবং আমরা কখনই এর বাইরে পাই না। মহিমা অর্জনের জন্য যে সমস্ত জিনিয়াসের উদাহরণগুলি তাদের ক্রেড থেকে পূর্বনির্ধারিত বলে মনে হয়েছিল সেগুলিও আমাদের সহায়তা করে না। এগুলি শুরু থেকে আলাদা ছিল এবং তাদেরকে কেবল দূর থেকে প্রশংসা করা আমাদের পক্ষে বাকি।

অন্যদিকে, আমরা গান্ধী একটি নিকট আত্মীয়, একটি পরিবার বন্ধু নন। তিনি দু'টিতে বেহালা বাজাননি এবং পাঁচটিতে হৃদয় দিয়ে ওডিসিটি শোনাননি। তিনি বহু বছর ধরে এক আশ্বাসজনক মধ্যযুগে বড় হয়েছিলেন। তাঁর নিজস্ব বিকাশ আমাদের ব্যক্তিগত বিকাশের উপায় এবং গোপনীয়তা দেখায়। হয়ে ওঠার মহান্না প্রশ্নই আসে না, সার্থক করে তোলা, তবে আমাদের সমস্ত সম্পদকে যতদূর আমরা পৌঁছাতে পারি, আমাদের জীবনকে পুরোপুরি জীবনযাপনের। এক কথায়, জেগে ওঠার।

আসুন দেখি গান্ধী কীভাবে শেষ পর্যন্ত জেগেছিলেন।

03. অন্যর সাথে জীবন

গান্ধী নিম্নলিখিত পর্বটিকে "আমার জীবনের পুরো জীবন বদলে দেওয়ার ঘটনা" বলেছেন। বোম্বাইয়ে (বর্তমানে মুম্বই) আইনজীবী হিসাবে ব্যর্থ হওয়ার পরে, গান্ধী জীবিকা নির্বাহের জন্য কিছু কাজ সন্ধানের জন্য তাঁর জন্মস্থান পোরবন্দর ফিরে গিয়েছিলেন। সেখানে তিনি দেখতে পান যে তার ভাইয়ের একটি সমস্যা ছিল। এই অঞ্চলের ব্রিটিশ প্রশাসক তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে কুসংস্কারমূলক আচরণ করেছিলেন, যদিও সত্যই তাকে জরুরিভাবে কিছু আইনী জঙ্গলে প্রশাসকের সহায়তার প্রয়োজন হয়েছিল। এটি ঘটেছিল যে ইংল্যান্ডে থাকাকালীন, গান্ধী জানতে পেরেছিলেন এবং এমনকি সেই ইংরেজ যিনি এখন পোরবন্দর প্রশাসক ছিলেন তার সাথে কিছুটা বন্ধুত্ব গড়ে তুলেছিল। তাঁর ভাই তাকে সেই বন্ধুত্বের সর্বোত্তম ব্যবহার করার জন্য, তাঁর সাথে দেখা করতে এবং তাঁর সম্পর্কে তাঁর যে খারাপ প্রভাব ফেলেছিলেন তা সরিয়ে দেওয়ার জন্য প্রস্তাব করেছিলেন। গান্ধী ধারণাটি পছন্দ করেন নি, তবে তার ভাই জোর দিয়েছিলেন, এবং শেষ পর্যন্ত চলে গেলেন। এটি তাঁর নিজের কথায় তাঁর অভিজ্ঞতা:

আমি আমার ভাইকে না বলতে পারি না। আমার ইচ্ছার বিরুদ্ধে আমি ব্রিটিশ প্রশাসককে দেখতে গিয়েছিলাম। আমি পুরোপুরি সচেতন ছিলাম যে তাঁর কাছে অনুগ্রহ চেয়ে দেওয়ার আমার কোনও অধিকার নেই এবং এটি করার ফলে আমি আমার নিজের মর্যাদা হারাচ্ছিলাম। তবে গেলাম। আমি তাকে অ্যাপয়েন্টমেন্টের জন্য জিজ্ঞাসা করেছি, এবং তিনি তা আমাকে দিয়েছেন। আমি তার বাড়িতে গিয়ে লন্ডনে তাকে আমাদের বন্ধুত্বের কথা মনে করিয়ে দিয়েছিলাম। খুব শীঘ্রই আমি লন্ডন এবং পোরবন্দর মধ্যে পার্থক্য বুঝতে পেরেছিলাম, ব্রিটিশ বন্ধু তার নিজের দেশে ছুটিতে থাকা এবং তার ঐক্যপন্থিক সিংহাসনে সাম্রাজ্যের প্রশাসকের মধ্যে। তিনি আমাদের বন্ধুত্বকে স্বীকার করেছেন এবং একই সাথে তার চেহারা এবং স্বর আরও কঠোর হয়েছিল। আমি তাঁর চোখে তাঁর চিন্তাভাবনাগুলি পড়েছিলাম: 'আপনি এখন আমাদের বন্ধুত্ব থেকে লাভ করতে আসেন নি, তাই না?' এটাই ছিল তাঁর পুরো মুখ আমাকে পরিষ্কার করে বলছে। তবুও, আমি বিষয়টি সামনে এনেছি। ভাল মানুষ অধৈর্য হয়ে উঠল। 'তোমার ভাই স্কিমার। আমি তাঁর সম্পর্কে কিছু শুনতে চাই না। আমার সময় নেই। আপনার ভাইয়ের যদি কিছু বলার থাকে তবে সে যেন অন্য কারও মতো লিখিত আবেদন করতে দেয়।' উত্তরটি বেশ স্পষ্ট এবং চূড়ান্ত ছিল এবং আমার এতে সন্তুষ্ট হওয়া উচিত ছিল। ভিক্ষুক কিন্তু ভাবেন না। আমি অন্ধ হয়ে গিয়েছিলাম এবং আমার আবেদনের সাথে জোর দিয়েছি। প্রশাসক উঠে আমাকে বললেন: 'এখন, দয়া করে এখান থেকে চলে যান।' আমি জোর দিয়ে বলেছিলাম: 'আপনারা অবশ্যই শেষ অবধি আমার কথা শোনেন।' তিনি অত্যন্ত বিরক্ত হয়েছিলেন,

তাঁর সহকারীকে ডেকে হিন্দিতে আদেশ দিয়েছিলেন: 'এই লোকটিকে তাত্ক্ষণিকভাবে বাইরে নিয়ে যাও'। চাকর দৌড়ে এসে বলল, 'হ্যাঁ স্যার', আর আমার দু'হাত ধরে আমাকে ধরে ফেলল। আমি কথা বলতে এবং সংগ্রাম করতে গিয়েছিলাম, তবে তিনি আমার চেয়ে শক্তিশালী, তিনি আমাকে দরজার দিকে ঠেলে দিয়ে রাস্তায় ফেলে দিলেন। আমি সেখানে পরাজিত, লজ্জিত, অপমানিত হয়ে পড়েছিলাম।

গান্ধী এই বৈঠক থেকে এতই ক্ষোভ প্রকাশ করে বেরিয়ে এসেছিলেন যে তিনি তাঁর সাথে যেভাবে আচরণ করেছিলেন তার জন্য তিনি ব্রিটিশ প্রশাসককে আদালতে নিয়ে যেতে চেয়েছিলেন। সকলেই তাকে বলেছিল যে এ জাতীয় জিনিস চেষ্টা করা পাগলামি, তবে তিনি অনড় ছিলেন। তিনি একজন গুরুত্বপূর্ণ রাজনৈতিক ব্যক্তিত্ব স্যার ফিরোজশা মেহতাকে জিজ্ঞাসা করতে এতদূর গিয়েছিলেন, যিনি তাঁকে নিম্নলিখিত পরামর্শটি পাঠিয়েছিলেন:

গান্ধীকে বলুন তিনি একজন কাঁচা মানুষ। তিনি ব্রিটিশ সাম্রাজ্যের শক্তি বা এর প্রশাসকদের অসম্মান জানেন না। যদি সে শান্তিতে থাকতে এবং জীবিকা নির্বাহ করতে চায় তবে সে বন্ধ হয়ে যায় এবং ঘটনাটি ভুলে যায়।

এই পরামর্শটি [অবিরত গান্ধী] আমার কাছে তিক্ত বিষের মতো স্বাদ পেয়েছিল, কিন্তু আমাকে এটি গ্রাস করতে হয়েছিল। আমি কখনই অপমান ভুলে যাইনি, তবে আমি এটি থেকে একটি ভাল উপসংহার টেনেছি। আমি নিজের সাথে সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছিলাম যে আমি আর কখনও নিজেকে এইরকম পরিস্থিতিতে ফেলব না, এবং আমি কখনই কারও পক্ষে পক্ষপাত করব না। এটি ছিল দু' resolution: রেজোলিউশন যা আমি কখনও ভাঙ্গি নি। সেই অপমান আমার জীবন বদলে দেয়।

আত্ম-শ্রদ্ধা, নিজের মর্যাদার অনুভূতি এবং সাধারণ জ্ঞান গান্ধীকে শেকড়ে নিয়েছিল। তিনি অন্যের সামনে নিজেকে নীচু করার ফলাফলটি অভিজ্ঞতার দ্বারা শিখেছিলেন, চক্রান্ত, চাটুকারিতা, সুপারিশের শূন্যতা অনুভব করেছিলেন। তিনি তার সম্মানের সাথে বিশ্বাসঘাতকতা করেছিলেন। সেই ব্যক্তিগত অভিজ্ঞতা ছিল সমগ্র আন্দোলনের সূচনালগ্ন, যা ভারতকে সর্বোপরি মূল্য সম্মানের দিকে পরিচালিত করবে এবং স্বাধীনতা অর্জন করবে। এটি ছিল ব্রিটিশ শক্তির সাথে গান্ধীর প্রথম সরাসরি লড়াই; এবং সেই চিন্তাভাবনা এবং অনুভূতিরও এটিই ছিল একদিন তাঁকে সেই শক্তির বিরুদ্ধে তাঁর জয়ের দিকে নিয়ে যাবে। গান্ধী লিখেছেন:

অবশ্যই আমি প্রশাসকের কাছে আবেদন করার মতো ভুলভাবে ভুল করেছি। তবে তিনি আমার সাথে যেমন আচরণ করেছিলেন তেমনি ভুলভাবে কাজ করেছিলেন। তাঁর ক্রোধ, তাঁর ক্রোধ এবং উগ্রতা আমার দোষের কোনও অনুপাত বহন করে না। আমাকে তার অফিস থেকে বের করে দেওয়ার ব্যাপারে তার কোনও অধিকার ছিল না। কোনও সভ্য ব্যক্তি তা করেন না। তবে স্পষ্টতই একজন ইংরেজ ভারতে তা করতে পারত। তারা শক্তি দিয়ে মাতাল ছিল।

গান্ধী ইংরেজদের প্রতি অত্যন্ত শ্রদ্ধা রাখতেন এবং তা আজীবন রাখতেন। এমনকি তাদের বিরুদ্ধে লড়াই করার সময়ও তিনি এটিকে নমনীয়তা ও সৌজন্যে, সুষ্ঠু খেলা ও অকৃত্রিম প্রশংসা দিয়ে করেছিলেন। কিন্তু ইংরেজী জনগণের জন্য তাঁর উপলব্ধি তাকে তাঁর দেশের যে অবিচার, গর্ব, colonপনিবেশবাদের তীব্রতা ভোগ করছে তা দেখতে বাধা দেয়নি। একজন স্ব-শ্রদ্ধেয় ব্যক্তি সেভাবে বাঁচতে পারেনি। সেই পরিস্থিতির অবসান ঘটাতে হয়েছিল। তবে জোর করে নয়, শড়যন্ত্র করে, চাপ দিয়ে। গান্ধী তাঁর নিজের অভিজ্ঞতা থেকে সেই পাঠ শিখেছিলেন। প্রশ্নের উত্তরটি এখনও খুঁজে পাওয়া যায়নি, তবে ইতিমধ্যে প্রশ্নটি জিজ্ঞাসা করা হয়েছিল। গান্ধীর মনে এই সমস্যাটি তৈরি হয়েছিল। কীভাবে সম্মানের সাথে বাঁচবেন। ব্যক্তি এবং দেশের জন্য। সেই উদ্যোগটি এখন গান্ধীর মন এবং ভারতের ইতিহাস পূরণ করবে।

ইতিমধ্যে একটি স্বাগত সুযোগ নিজেকে উপস্থাপন। গান্ধীর পরিবারের যে বন্ধুটির দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকাতে ব্যবসা ছিল তাদের একজন আইনজীবীর প্রয়োজন ছিল এবং গান্ধীকে সেখানে পাঠানোর প্রস্তাব দেওয়া হয়েছিল। তিনি দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকার আইনজীবী হিসাবে যাওয়ার সময় তাঁর অনুভূতিগুলি কী তা রেকর্ডে রেখে যাননি, তবে আমরা অনুমান করতে পারি যে তিনি যখন ইংল্যান্ডে গিয়েছিলেন তখন তিনি যে রকম ছিলেন, তার মতোই ছিলেন: বাড়িতে ব্যর্থ হওয়ার পরে এটি ভাল হয়েছিল বিদেশে সাফল্য আশা নিয়ে বেরিয়ে যান। আসলে, গান্ধী দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকার একজন ভাল আইনজীবী হয়েছিলেন এবং তিনি সেখানে একটি নামীদামী অফিস চালাতেন। তবে তিনি আরও গুরুত্বপূর্ণ কিছু হয়ে ওঠেন, এবং এটি আমাদের এখানে উদ্বোধনের গল্প বলে।

দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকার কালার বার, শ্রেণীর পার্থক্য, বর্ণ পরিচয় এবং বর্ণবাদ তখন পুরোদমে শুরু হয়েছিল। একদিকে সাদা, অন্যদিকে ভারতীয়, চাইনিজ, অর্ধ-বর্ণ, কালো। বাস এবং সিনেমা হলে, হোটেল এবং ট্রেনে, বেষ্ট এবং হলগুলিতে। কৃত্রিম, অন্যায়, অযৌক্তিক বিভাজন। এই পরিস্থিতির অযৌক্তিকতাটি হ'ল যে এটি সহ্য করা হয়েছিল, স্বীকৃত হয়েছিল, কেবল উদ্ভবিতরা নয়, নীচের লোকেরাও মর্যাদাবান হয়েছিল। এটি কেবল সাধারণ হিসাবে বিবেচিত হয়েছিল। রঙিন মানুষেরা প্রতিদিন তাদের অগণিত অপমানের অভিযোগ না করেই জমা দিয়েছিল এবং যেটি সমান অবিশ্বাস্য তা হ'ল শ্বেতাঙ্গরা কোনও বিবেক ছাড়াই অ-সাদাকে ধুবক ক্ষোভের কাছে জমা দিয়েছিল। পরিস্থিতি অসহনীয় ছিল এবং তবুও এটি গৃহীত হয়েছিল। গান্ধী সেই পরিস্থিতির মাঝে নেমে এসেছিলেন ইতিমধ্যে তীক্ষ্ণ সংবেদনশীলতাফিরতে চলেছিল

এবং ভারতে তাঁর অভিজ্ঞতায়খুব শীঘ্রই পরীক্ষায়। উপলক্ষটি ছিল ট্রেনে যাত্রা।

ততক্ষণে গান্ধী, একজন প্রখ্যাত আইনজীবী, প্রিটোরিয়ায় যাওয়ার ট্রেনটি ডার্বনে চড়েছিলেন। তাঁর প্রথম শ্রেণির টিকিট ছিল এবং তিনি প্রথম শ্রেণির বগিতে বসেছিলেন যেখানে তিনি ছিলেন একমাত্র যাত্রী। রাত নয়টা নাগাদ ট্রেনটি পিটারমারাটজবুর্গ স্টেশনে এসে পৌঁছেছিল এবং সেখানেই একজন সাদা মানুষ একই প্রথম শ্রেণির বগিতে প্রবেশ করেছিল। গান্ধীকে দেখে তিনি টিকিট সংগ্রহকারীকে ফোন করে তাঁকে বাইরে ফেলে দিতে বললেন। টিকিট সংগ্রাহক গান্ধীকে তৃতীয় শ্রেণিতে যাওয়ার অনুরোধ করেছিলেন। গান্ধী তাঁর প্রথম শ্রেণির টিকিট দেখিয়েছিলেন এবং সরতে অস্বীকার করেছিলেন। টিকিট সংগ্রাহক একটি সশস্ত্র পুলিশকে ডেকেছিলেন এবং তিনি গান্ধীকে জোর করে বহিষ্কার করেছিলেন। গান্ধী অন্য গাড়িতে যেতে অস্বীকার করলেন, এবং ট্রেন চলে গেল left প্ল্যাটফর্মে তার লাগেজ রেখে দেওয়া হয়েছিল, এবং সেখানে তিনি সারা রাত কাটিয়েছিলেন। এই দীর্ঘ এবং শীতের রাতে তাঁর ভাবনাগুলি যখন তিনি বছরের পর বছরগুলি স্মরণ করেছিলেন:

হয় লড়াই করার জন্য বা ছেড়ে চলে যেতে হবে। এটি আমার নিজের সামনে দ্বিধা সৃষ্টি করেছিল। যাইহোক প্রিটোরিয়ায় পৌঁছাতে, আমার হাতে যে ব্যবসা ছিল তা শেষ করুন এবং আমার যা কিছু আছে তা দিয়ে ভারতে ফিরে যান; অথবা পরিস্থিতির মুখোমুখি হয়ে লড়াই করতে হবে। সর্বোপরি, আমি যা ভোগ করেছি তা খুব কম ছিল। নিজের মধ্যে এটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ছিল না, তবে এটি বর্ণ বিদ্বেষের একটি লক্ষণ যা সত্যতার হুমকি দিয়েছিল। আমি নিজেকে বলেছিলাম: আপনার যদি শক্তি এবং শক্তি থাকে তবে আপনি রঙিন মানুষের বিরুদ্ধে এই অন্যায় বর্ণবাদী বৈষম্যের অবসান ঘটাতে পারেন। প্রক্রিয়াতে আপনার যা কিছু ভোগ করতে হবে তা ভোগ করুন তবে শেষ পর্যন্ত পৌঁছা পর্যন্ত থামবেন না।

এখানে ছিল অহিংসা, নিষ্ক্রিয় প্রতিরোধের, নাগরিক অবাধ্যতার, মর্যাদার লড়াইয়ের, ভারতের স্বাধীনতার বীজ। কারও অধিকারের পক্ষে লড়াই করা, অন্যায়ের বিরোধিতা করা, যা কিছু ভোগ করতে হয়েছিল তা ভোগ করা, নিজের শক্তি এবং শক্তিকে কাজে লাগানো, বর্ণ বৈষম্যের অবসান ঘটাতে হবে। ইতিমধ্যে সবকিছু ছিল। ন্যায়বিচারকে আলিঙ্গন করা, বিরোধিতার মুখোমুখি হওয়া, দৃ fastভাবে ধরে রাখা, জিততে। এবং শুরু করার জন্য, নিজের মধ্যে এবং সমাজে বিকাশ ঘটানো সহিংসতা ছাড়াই প্রতিরোধ করার জন্য, ঘৃণা ছাড়াই লড়াই করার, প্রতিহিংসা ছাড়াই জয় করার জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় নৈতিক শক্তি। গান্ধী তখন 24 বছর বয়সে। যখন বহু বছর পরে একজন আমেরিকান ধর্মপ্রচারক গান্ধীকে জিজ্ঞাসা করবেন, "সবচেয়ে বিপ্লবী অভিজ্ঞতা কোনটি ছিল

আপনার পুরো জীবনের?", তিনি ততক্ষণে জবাব দেবেন: "যে রাত আমি পিটারমারাইটজবার্গ রেলস্টেশনের প্ল্যাটফর্মে কাটিয়েছি।"

আমি এখানে একটি ব্যক্তিগত অভিজ্ঞতা অন্তর্ভুক্ত করি আমি এই প্রসঙ্গে অযোগ্য বিবেচনা করি না। আমার জীবনে কিছু কথা শুনেছি, আমি একবার দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকাতে দু'মাস কাটিয়েছি যেখানে বেশ কয়েকটি প্রধান শহরের ভারতীয় সম্প্রদায়গুলি তাদের মূল গুজরাটি ভাষায় তাদের সাথে কথা বলার জন্য আমাকে আমন্ত্রণ জানিয়েছিল এবং আমি তাদের বাড়িতে থাকি এবং অভিবাসী হিসাবে তাদের জীবন ভাগ করে নিই সেই সুন্দর দেশে সেগুলি এখনও বর্ণবাদীর দিন ছিল এবং আমি ছোট এবং বলার ঘটনাগুলিতে এর স্টিং অনুভব করেছি। আমি চুল কাটাতে পারি না, কারণ আমি অবশ্যই সাদাদের জন্য চুল কাটা সেলুনে যেতে পারতাম তবে আমার ভারতীয় বন্ধুরা আমার সাথে প্রবেশ করতে পারত না এবং আমি তাতে বিরক্তি প্রকাশ করেছিলাম, এবং কৃষ্ণাঙ্গদের জন্য চুল কাটার সেলুনে যেতে পারিনি কারণ তারা স্বাগত জানায় না **would** আমার উপস্থিতি। আমি আমার বন্ধুদের সাথে একটি বাস স্টপে অপেক্ষা করতে হয়েছিল, তিনটি বাস প্রচুর খালি আসন দিয়ে আমাদের গন্তব্যে যাচ্ছিল তা দেখছিলাম, তবে তারা কেবল শ্বেতের জন্য ছিল, এবং আমাদের চতুর্থ বাসটি নিতে হয়েছিল, দেরি করে এবং ভিড় ছিল এটি হিসাবে রঙিন মানুষের জন্যই ছিল এবং সবচেয়ে বড় কথা, আমাকে লেনাসিয়া থেকে জোহানেসবার্গে 30 কিলোমিটার পথ ধরে প্রতিদিন যাতায়াত করতে হয়েছিল কারণ "এশিয়ান" যাদের সাথে আমি ছিলাম শহরে তাদের দোকান থাকার অনুমতি ছিল কিন্তু সেখানে বাস করার অনুমতি ছিল না এবং আমরা চলে গেলাম প্রতিদিন সকালে ও সন্ধ্যায় ক্লাস্ত রাস্তা ধরে যে প্রতিদিন দেখা যায় এবং প্রতিদিনের যাত্রা ভোগ করে এবং সাদা শহর থেকে রঙিন প্রতিবেশী হুডগুলিতে ফিরে আসে। এগুলি আমার জন্য নতুন এবং বেদনাদায়ক অভিজ্ঞতা ছিল।

আমার সফরটি আমাকে নাটাল প্রদেশের পূর্ব উপকূলে ডার্বানে নিয়ে গিয়েছিল, যেখানে নাটাল নামটি ক্রিসমাসের দিন ভাস্কো দা গামার আবিষ্কারের কথা স্মরণ করিয়েছিল যিনি খ্রিস্টের জন্মের স্মৃতিতে এটির নাম রেখেছিলেন। আমার বন্ধুরা, যারা আমার পুরো ট্রিপটি বিশদভাবে পরিচালনা করেছিলেন, তাদের মধ্যে আমার দিনগুলির জন্য আমার কাছে কাছাকাছি সাইটগুলিতে আলোচনা, সভা, দর্শনীয় স্থান এবং ভ্রমণের একটি প্রোগ্রাম প্রস্তাব করেছিলেন। প্রোগ্রামটি পরীক্ষা করার সময় আমি লক্ষ্য করেছিলাম যে তারা কিছু ফেলে রেখেছিল, এবং আমি তাদের বলেছিলাম: "আমি জানি যে পিটারমারাইটজবার্গ এখান থেকে খুব বেশি দূরে নয়, এবং আমি এই জায়গাটি দেখতে চাই ... বা কমপক্ষে এর রেলস্টেশনটি কোনও কারণেই আমার আছে। আমি নিশ্চিত আপনি অনুমান করতে পারেন।" তারা অনুমান করেছিল। গান্ধীর স্মৃতি। তারা আমাকে বলেছিল, আমারঅবাক **অনুবোধে সন্তুষ্টভাবে:** "আপনি ভারত থেকে আগত প্রথম ব্যক্তি যিনি যাওয়ার জন্য বলেছিলেন

পিটারমারাইটজবার্গে। আমরা আপনাকে সেখানে নিয়ে যেতে পেরে আনন্দিত হব।" তাদের প্রশংসায় আমি চাটু বোধ করি এবং আমরা সকলেই একদিন সেখানে গিয়েছিলাম।

পিটারমারাইটজবার্গে কিছু চমক আমার জন্য অপেক্ষা করছিল, প্রথমে মনোরম এবং তারপরে এতটা মনোরম নয়। মনোরম অংশটি হ'ল রেলস্টেশনটি ঠিক গান্ধীর সময়ে যেমন ছিল; এটিকে সাবধানতার সাথে রাখা হয়েছিল, গান্ধীর প্রতি যথাযথভাবে শ্রদ্ধার বাইরে নয় কারণ তাঁর কোথাও কোনও স্মরণ নেই এবং তাঁর স্মৃতিশক্তি হারিয়ে গিয়েছিল, তবে সেই সময়ের colonপনিবেশিক স্থাপত্যের একটি আদর্শ মডেল হিসাবে। আঁকাবাঁকা প্ল্যাটফর্ম, পাতলা কলামগুলি প্রচুর পরিমাণে অলঙ্কারযুক্ত, টিকিটের উইন্ডোগুলি বিস্মৃত মাতাল-ধাতব ফ্রেমগুলি, দাগহীন পরিষ্কার, ভাল আকৃতির, সমানুপাতিক, দৃষ্টিনন্দন সুন্দর। আমি পরীক্ষা করে দেখলাম যে ওয়েটিং রুম নেই। গান্ধী প্ল্যাটফর্মে খোলা জায়গায় শীতল রাত কাটিয়েছিলেন এই বিষয়টি নিয়ে এটি খাপ খায়। আমি তখন আস্তে আস্তে পুরো প্ল্যাটফর্মের সাথে হাঁটতে শুরু করি, কোনও শব্দ ছাড়াই, কেবল চিন্তাভাবনা, প্রতিফলন, নিঃসঙ্গতার সাথে নিবিড়ভাবে স্মরণ করে একাকী রাতে figure স্টেশনটি প্রায় খালি ছিল। এ সময় কোনও ট্রেন ছিল না, এবং কেউই বেঞ্চে বসে দেখেনি। এই বেঞ্চগুলির বেশ কয়েকটিতে "প্রথম শ্রেণীর জন্য সংরক্ষিত" শিরোনাম ছিল। আমাকে বলা হয়েছিল যে "ফার্স্ট ক্লাস" মানে এখন পর্যন্ত "সাদা"। ঠিক সেই মুহূর্তে তিন কৃষ্ণাঙ্গ লোক স্টেশনে প্রবেশ করেছিল এবং তারা যে প্রথম বেঞ্চটি দেখেছিল সেখানে বসেছিল। এটি একটি চিহ্নিত "প্রথম শ্রেণি" ছিল। আমি স্বতঃস্ফূর্ত হাসি, তবে আমার হাসি আমার ঠোঁটে বেশি দিন স্থায়ী হয়নি। কৃষ্ণাঙ্গরা খুব কমই বসেছিল যখন কোনও সাদা আধিকারিক বেরিয়ে এসে তাদেরকে কিছুটা দু'roughভাবে বলেছিল। তিনটি কৃষ্ণাঙ্গ দু'খের হাসি দিয়ে একে অপরের দিকে তাকাতে লাগল। অফিসার জোরে জোরে জিদ করলেন। স্টেশনটি খালি ছিল, বেঞ্চগুলিতে কেউ ছিল না এবং তাদের উপরে বসার কথা কেউ ছিল না, কৃষ্ণাঙ্গরা কারও ক্ষতি করছিল না। তবে তারা ছিল কৃষ্ণাঙ্গ। তারা "প্রথম শ্রেণির" লেবেলের দিকে তাকিয়েছিল, তারা আধিকারিকের দিকে তাকিয়েছিল, তারা আমার দিকে তাকিয়েছিল, অদৃশ্য পর্বের অসহায় সাক্ষী, যেন এ জাতীয় উদ্বেগজনক পরিস্থিতির আগে পুরো পৃথিবীর সুস্পষ্ট এবং প্রাকৃতিক সাধারণ জ্ঞানের জন্য আবেদন করে। তারপরে তারা আস্তে আস্তে উঠল, তারা একটি লেবেল ছাড়াই অন্য একটি বেঞ্চে গেল এবং তারা এটিতে বসল। অফিসার তার জায়গায় ফিরে গেলেন। আমার দৃশ্য দাঁড়িয়ে ছিল, বিভ্রান্ত হয়েছিল, অবিশ্বাস্য ছিল, এই মুহূর্তের জন্য সন্দেহ হয়েছিল যে দৃশ্যটি সত্য ছিল কিনা এবং আমার উপকারের জন্য অতীতকে স্মরণ করার মতো নাটক ছিল না। তবে এটি বেশ বাস্তব ছিল। বেশি আশি বছর রাত গান্ধীব্যয় করেছিল যেহেতু পাশ

যে জায়গাকরেছে, কিন্তু
গান্ধীৰ বার্তা স্থায়ীভাৰে আসল।

অবস্থা ছিল। এখনও

একই

04. সত্যের শক্তি

গান্ধী পরে এটিকে "সত্যকে ধারণ করে" বলেছিলেন (সত্যগ্রহ)। যে জ্ঞানটি একদম সঠিক, সেই আইনটি আইন না থাকলেও তার পক্ষে রয়েছে, এবং এটি বলার সাহস, এটিকে চাপ দেওয়া, পুনরাবৃত্তি করা, বিনা সন্দেহে এবং নির্ভয়ে বিনীতভাবে এবং প্রকাশ্যে কাজ করা, ভোগ করতে প্রস্তুত হওয়া সক্রিয় প্রতিরোধ, কঠোরতা, হিংস্রতা ছাড়াই, যার জন্য এর জন্য যার যা কিছু ভোগ করতে হবে তা নিখুঁত বিশ্বাসের সাথে সত্য যে শেষ পর্যন্ত সময় এবং প্রতিবন্ধকতার মধ্য দিয়ে বিজয়ী হবে। তা হ'ল সত্যগ্রহ। আফ্রিকাতে তাঁর সূচনালগ্নের কঠোর অভিজ্ঞতার ভিত্তিতে গান্ধীর মনে এই এক সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া অল্প ছিল এবং পরবর্তীকালে তিনি পুরো জীবনকালে বৃহত্তর কারণে পুরো দক্ষতার সাথে ব্যবহার করবেন।

অন্য একটি অনুষ্ঠানে, আবার দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকা ভ্রমণের সময়, এবার স্টেজকোচে, একই কারণে তিনি একই বিরোধী দলের সাথে দেখা করলেন: কালার বার। তার রঙের কারণে তারা তাকে কোচ থেকে নামিয়ে দিতে চেয়েছিল, তবে তিনি তার মূল্যবান দামের জন্য গাড়ীর সামনের বারটি চেপে ধরেন এবং সেখানে তিনি কোনও প্রতিবন্ধক ছিলেন না। তাকে মুঠি এবং লাঠি দিয়ে আঘাত করা হয়েছিল, তবে সে দু'হাতে ধরেছিল এবং একটি ইঞ্চিও ফল দেয়নি। তিনি "সত্যকে আঁকড়ে ধরে" থেকেছিলেন, তিনি তাঁর প্রিয় শব্দতা বলার চিত্রটিতে চিত্রিত করে এবং পরবর্তীকালে সত্যগ্রহে পরবর্তী সময়ে কী প্রচার করবেন তিনি কী প্রচার করবেন তা প্রথমে প্রকাশ করেছেন। লোহার দণ্ডটি আঁকড়ে ধরে, সত্যকে ধরে রেখে, তার বিবেকে নিশ্চিত যে তিনি ঠিক ছিলেন, কখনও ফল দেবেন না বলে দু' determination় দু'তায় দু' ছিলেন, এবং যা তার ভোগ করতে হবে তা ভোগ করার জন্য সর্বদা প্রস্তুত ছিলেন, কখনও সত্যকে নিজের হাত ধরে না রেখে। তিনি নিজের নীতিটি অনুশীলন করে এবং ক্রিয়া দ্বারা ক্রিয়াটি আবিষ্কার করে নিজের নীতিটি সম্পর্কে তাঁর নিজের বোধগম্যতায় বৃদ্ধি পাচ্ছিলেন। তিনি যে নতুন অস্ত্রের ধারণা নিয়েছিলেন তার দক্ষতা উপলব্ধি করার সাথে সাথে তিনি আত্মবিশ্বাসে বেড়ে উঠতে শুরু করেছিলেন, নিজের লজ্জা ভুলে গিয়ে তার অবস্থানকে শক্তিশালী করতে শুরু করেছিলেন। তার লড়াই করার একটি কারণ ছিল: ন্যায়বিচার; এবং এটি করার একটি কৌশল: অহিংসা। এটি তাকে শক্তি এবং উদ্দেশ্য দিয়েছিল এবং তার চরিত্রকে তার সদ্যবহার করে যা তার সর্বদা ছিল তবে যা অতীতে সুপ্ত ছিল। শীঘ্রই তিনি সেই অসামান্য ব্যক্তিত্ব প্রদর্শন করেছিলেন এবং বিকাশ করেছেন যা তাকে ইতিহাসের অন্যতম সেরা নেতা হিসাবে স্থান করে নিয়েছে।

পিটারমারিটজবার্গে তিনি যে যাত্রা করছিলেন সেই একই যাত্রার পরে তিনি প্রিটোরিয়ায় পৌঁছে যেখানে তিনি যাচ্ছিলেন, তিনি শহরের সমস্ত ভারতীয়দের একটি সভা আহ্বান করলেন এবং তাদের প্রকাশ্যে সম্বোধন করলেন। এটি তাঁর মন্তব্য:

এটি ছিল আমার জীবনের প্রথম ভাষণ। আমি সাবধানে এটি প্রস্তুত ছিল। সত্যকে থিম হিসাবে নিয়েছি। আমি জোর দিয়েছিলাম যে বিদেশে এসে ভারতীয় বণিকদের দায়িত্ব যদি তারা আমাদের দেশে থেকে থাকে তবে তার চেয়ে বেশি ছিল। সর্বোপরি, আমি দাবি করেছিলাম যে হিন্দু, মুসলমান, পার্সী বা খ্রিস্টানদের পাশাপাশি গুজরাট, মাদ্রাজ, পাঞ্জাব, সিন্ধ, কচ্ছ বা সুরত থেকে আগত লোকদের মধ্যকার বিভেদগুলি আমাদের ভুলে যেতে হয়েছিল। অবশেষে আমি পরামর্শ দিয়েছিলাম যে দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকান সরকারের সামনে দেশের ভারতীয়দের দুর্ভোগের উপস্থাপন এবং প্রতিকারের জন্য একটি সংস্থা চালু করা হয়েছিল। আমার বক্তব্যটি ভালভাবে প্রকাশ পেয়েছিল এবং আমি দেখতে পেলাম যে এটি ভাল প্রভাব ফেলেছিল। এতে আমার আত্মবিশ্বাস বেড়েছে।

যে লাজুক আইনজীবী অল্প সময়ের আগে বোম্বাই হাইকোর্টে মুখ খুলতে পারেননি, হঠাৎ পুরো জনতার সামনে নিজেকে সফল বক্তব্য রাখতে দেখলেন। এবং তার বক্তব্য ভাল যায়। তার এখন একটি আদর্শ ছিল, তার একটি অস্ত্র ছিল, তার লক্ষ্য অর্জনের লক্ষ্য ছিল এবং এটি তাকে বিশ্বাস, শক্তি এবং উত্সাহ দিয়েছিল। তিনি অবশেষে কথা বলতে পারেন, এবং ভাল কথা বলতে পারেন। তাঁর বোম্বে ক্লায়েন্টের অর্থ যা অর্জন করতে পারেনি তা দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকার সহকর্মী দেশবাসীর ভোগান্তি দ্বারা সহজ হয়েছিল: একটি ভাল বক্তব্য দেওয়া। অভিজাত অভিজাত্য তাকে শক্তি দিয়েছে। পরিস্থিতির অন্যান্য তাকে জাগিয়ে তুলল। তাঁর জনগণের চাহিদা তাকে লড়াইয়ে পরিচালিত করেছিল। কারও থেকে সেরা পাওয়ার জন্য জীবন আদর্শের মতো কিছুই নেই। গান্ধী নিজেকে আবিষ্কার করেছিলেন, বেড়ে ওঠেন, পরিপক্ব হন এবং নিঃস্বার্থভাবে অন্যের জন্য কাজ করে হৃদয় ও প্রাণ দিয়ে তিনি "মহান আত্মা" হয়ে ওঠেন (মহাত্মা) আজ বিশ্বজুড়ে সম্মানিত।

সারা জীবন গান্ধী সর্বাধিক পুনরাবৃত্তি করে চলেছেন: "শেষটি উপায়কে ন্যায়সঙ্গত করে না"। শেষটি স্বাধীনতা, এবং সেটাই ন্যায়; তবে সহিংসতা কেবলমাত্র নয়, ফলস্বরূপ সে কখনই এটি ব্যবহার করবে না এবং এটি ব্যবহার করার অনুমতি দেবে না। যদি তিনি চান তবে তিনি একটি শব্দ দিয়ে পুরো সেনাবাহিনী তুলতে পারতেন, তবে তিনি তা করেননি। বিপরীতে, যারা সর্বদা হিংসাত্মক উপায় ব্যবহার করতে চান তাদের তিনি প্রতিরোধ ও বিরোধিতা করেছিলেন opposed তিনি আরও শিথিয়েছিলেন যে অহিংসা দুর্বলদের অস্ত্র নয়

, শক্তিশালীদেরই ছিল। বোমা নিক্ষেপ করা এবং নিজের হাত লুকানো কোনও সাহসী কাজ নয়। Violence is the weapon of the weak-minded, of those who have no faith in their own cause and so have recourse to violence to impose it, of those who do not trust truth and for that very reason they proclaim themselves judges and executors on their own. It is non-violence that requires true courage and faith and conviction. To put up with, to hold on, to wait, to suffer. This takes both physical and moral strength, firmness in mind and in body to an extent that is not easily found. To answer a blow with a blow is pure animal instinct. It is offering the other cheek that is the moral action. Even more, to offer it again and again, and not only on the part of one person but of a group and a people and a whole country. That is a miracle of moral strength. And that was what Gandhi achieved.

The basis of non-violence is faith in humankind. This is its importance and its difficulty. We have to trust each other, which is the hardest and the noblest thing we can do in society. It is hard, because we know the weakness of our race, and it is noble, because when trusting fellow men we appeal to their best feelings, we reach the depths of their soul, we give them the chance and we prepare them to respond to us with the same nobility with which we have approached them. Whoever attacks his neighbours is mistrusting them, and in that mistrust he hastens to get by violence what he cannot get by right. Whoever stakes his claim peacefully, steadily, firmly, is thus proclaiming his faith in his own cause and in the universal opinion as well as in the very conscience of the person against whom he stands. Gandhi knew the British people well, and he knew that in spite of their colonial and even racist attitude, they had a genuine sense of nobility, of justice, of fair play. He knew the British authorities would defend the existing laws, but he also knew that if those laws were not fair the British people themselves would recognise it and act accordingly. That was the long and painstaking task Gandhi undertook. There was no question of attacking an adversary but of educating a friend, no question of frightening anybody but of making themselves understood, no question of winning a battle but of letting truth win. Gandhi always kept a good relationship with the British even in the sharpest moments of his fight with

them. British judges, even when they sent him to jail according to their law, stood up in respect to him when he entered the court. And after independence, India remained in the British Commonwealth with the only change of suppressing the word "British" and thus managing to keep it as "Commonwealth". That was Nehru's touch in the delicate negotiations. Mutual respect always helps both parties.

Gandhi's methods are today known, accepted, imitated. Today's authorities know how to react to a silent manifestation, a peaceful protest, a hunger strike. World leaders in our times like Martin Luther King travelled to India to learn the art of non-violence in Gandhi's land. Today there is an unwritten law for those who stage a peaceful protest and for those who deal with them; the practice is known and the rules are followed. But in Gandhi's time this way of protesting was new and unknown, and both those who staged the protest and those who opposed it were often at a loss how to behave properly. Would the method work? How long would they have to wait? Can a judge send to jail a person who does break the law but does it in full respect, discipline, delicacy? Is he a villain or a hero? Guilty or innocent? The judge who condemns him appears in the eyes of the world guiltier than the accused he condemns. Who is the winner and who is the loser? These questions had no clear answers in the first skirmishes of the campaign of non-violence.

The first "victim" of Gandhi's peaceful methods was a great political and military figure of South Africa in that period, General Smuts. He was responsible for peace and order in the region when Gandhi organised his first peaceful campaign against the unfair tribute Indians had to pay and the identity card and work permit they had always to carry with them, a thing that was not required of the white. The good General did not know what to do. He tried force and he tried diplomacy, but he soon realised that those weapons were ineffective against such tactics. And yet, he had to do something. He pondered, he hesitated, he was furious, he calmed down, he gave orders against Gandhi and he cancelled them. He even pledged his word but was not able to keep it. He apologised. He *came* to know Gandhi little by little and

finally he trusted him. Years later, when Gandhi was already a world figure and some of his admirers prepared a volume of essays on him, one of the contributors was General Smuts himself in his essay he wrote:

For me Gandhi was a problem, and his behaviour was a mystery. His fighting method was entirely new for me. He kept peaceful, he trusted me, he even helped government and cooperated with us. And then he went and opposed the laws he considered unjust. I didn't know what to do with him. I felt angry, frustrated, helpless. He disobeyed the law and got thousands of people to disobey it. But he did all that with utmost discipline, without any violence, with full respect and delicacy. What was I to do? A law had been broken, and I in consequence had to take measures. But I couldn't send two thousand people to jail. My duty was to prevent them from violating the law, but how could I fire against a crowd of peaceful people who faced me with smiles on their lips? At last I had to send Gandhi to jail. But that was precisely what he wanted. That was his victory and his success. What had I got by putting him in jail? Just to make a fool of myself. And that was how, in spite of my having the whole support of the police and the army, and in spite of the enormous pressure the whites put on me, not only had I to get him out of jail but I had to withdraw the laws he opposed.

This was the first victory of non-violence. The first triumph of passive disobedience. The first demonstration before the world that violence was not the only method to obtain results (actually violence never resolves problems but makes them worse), that the non-violent alternative is the one that solves them at the end and leaves no traces of hatred and no bitterness of defeat. During that first stay of his in jail, Gandhi weaved with his hands a pair of straw sandals and presented them to General Smuts. He accepted them and kept them as a relic.

Famous as he already was now after his first victory in South Africa, Gandhi was invited by Indian leaders to come and study the political situation in his own country. He arrived in India to public acclaim, took part in the Indian Congress meetings and proposed a resolution to condemn the fact that Indians were not

properly treated in Africa. The Congress president, Dadabhai Navroji, told him sadly and feelingly: "How do you complain that Indians are not justly treated in Africa when Indians are not justly treated in India? Come to work here with us. This is your true field for work."

That was how Gandhi found himself finally in India and faced the huge task of applying his non-violent methods to the larger problem of his country's independence. It was no easy task. He had to face Nehru's energy, Sardar Patel's aggressiveness, Subhash Chandra Bose's militarism. All wanted quick, effective, military solutions. So Gandhi had to educate the leaders before educating the people. His own patience was the first example. The only person Gandhi called his guru (and that only in political matters, as he never acknowledged anyone as his religious or intellectual guru), Gopal Krishna Gokhale, advised him to spend a whole year studying personally the situation in India before taking any steps. Gandhi accepted the advice, and he travelled through the subcontinent for a year gathering information and forming his opinion. He arrived at the conclusion that the people wanted freedom, they were ready for any sacrifice for its sake, they preferred peaceful methods but nobody had any idea how this could be done. That was precisely what Gandhi was going to tell them.

How did Gandhi achieve all this is precisely the theme of this book, and I'll explain it step by step. For the moment I'll end this chapter with an image that sums up and brings out in itself the doctrine of non-violence, Gandhi's vision and effectiveness, and the place he occupied in the great enterprise of India's awakening.

I take the scene from the so called "Salt March", one of the most genial chapters of Gandhi's life. The fight for independence was on, but Gandhi's methods were still doubted. He was asked to show how his peaceful methods could indeed be effective. He himself understood the moment had come to test and to prove his approach in a way that would carry conviction both in India and in London. And then he thought of the extraordinary idea that by itself was enough to prove his genius in an evident way. That was the "Salt March" or

"Dandi March" as history has called it from the place where it was enacted. The British kept the monopoly of salt production in India, and it was a penal offense for any private person to collect even a handful of the salt that gathered on the low and hot coast-line of the Indian shores. On the other hand, salt was universally needed as a condiment for food, was part of human sweat in hot latitudes, and was traditionally taken as an honoured symbol of hospitality and loyalty (you cannot fall foul of the man "whose salt you have eaten"), all of which was incompatible with having that very salt controlled and monopolised by a foreign invader. Gandhi explained all this to the British Viceroy in a respectful letter, and let him know that on such a date and such an hour he would initiate a march from his headquarters in Ahmedabad with a group of volunteers, and would cover on foot in several days the distance till Dandi on the coast where he would collect with his own hand a handful of salt, fully aware that in doing that he was breaking an existing law. The letter was made public, and the whole world kept watch. The communication media rushed to the event, pictures and films were taken of the beginning and the process of the march, the number of news correspondents joining the crowd increased day by day, international tension mounted as the frail figure of the Mahatma walked tirelessly towards the sea. He reached Dandi. He bent low on the shore and gathered a handful of salt in his hands. Immediately the whole machinery of the British Empire was set in motion. Gandhi and all the Indian leaders that could organise the crowds into a national movement were sent to jail, a military guard surrounded all salt works to prevent access, and a state of emergency was declared in the whole country. But Gandhi had foreseen everything. He had anticipated that all political leaders would be put in jail, and so he had beforehand put a woman, the poetess Sarojini Naidu, in charge of the whole action and its consequences. She approached the police lines in the Dharasana salt works with a handful of volunteers who, dressed all in white and without any weapon, began to advance slowly towards the gates guarded by the police. As they came close, the police brought them down with blows from their *lathis* or iron-tipped canes. The volunteers fell one by one, and the nurses at the ready lifted them and took them to the emergency hospital they

had set up on the spot. One batch of volunteers succeeded another, and the police continued in cold blood with their brutal repression. It was then that a scene took place which an American newsman witnessed on the spot and soon went round the world in the radio and the papers of the time:

A British sergeant was carrying out his orders with as much cruelty as zeal. He would hit over the head with his *lathi* every volunteer that came in front of him till the man fell down unconscious at his feet, and went on to the next when one fell down. Then a strong and hefty Sikh volunteer approached him in the line. On seeing him, the sergeant grabbed his *lathi* with both his hands, lifted it high, and brought it down with all his might on the head of the helpless victim with added strength to render useless the turban that the man, as all Sikh people do, was wearing round his head. The volunteer collapsed on the ground with blood over his face. The nurses took him, placed ice on his head, he recovered, stood up and went to take his place in the line of volunteers again in front of the same British sergeant. The sergeant had seen everything, tired and covered in perspiration as he stood, and on seeing the same volunteer coming forward again he hardened his face, steadied his legs, and lifted his *lathi* with both hands ready to hit. All those who were watching the scene were horrified, expecting the worst. But then the heart of the sergeant was touched. Little by little he loosened the grip of his hands, he brought down his *lathi* slowly, he smiled a helpless smile and murmured between his teeth: 'Who's going to hit this man? My *lathi* is no use here. Here he is the brave one, not I.' With that the British sergeant stood to attention before the Indian volunteer, clicked his heels, saluted him in the military way putting his right hand to his forehead, placed his *lathi* under his arm, turned round and left.

Those news appeared the next day in every newspaper in every country round the world. The perfect image of the strength and power of non-violence. Brute force can hit. But how far? Before the naked courage of an unarmed volunteer no weapon is of any use. Violent opposition to armed force seems at first sight to be the only answer, but in fact it is not an answer at all. The armed conflict creates a first illusion of power and strength, but in the long run it defeats

itself. When violence meets violence, it increases, the conflict spreads, and the solution becomes more difficult. On the other hand, when violence meets non-violence it finds itself suddenly frustrated, disarmed, ineffective. Its methods and its weapons are of no use now. The sergeant leaves, as the British had eventually to leave India before a non-violent resistance. The Indians got back their salt and their land. There is no weapon more efficient than non-violence when it is handled with conviction, with courage, with perseverance, with faith. This was the lesson of the Dharasana salt works and of the independence of India. The great historical lesson of Gandhi. The world has still to learn that lesson. Back to lesson number four.

05. LEADER OF LEADERS

Gandhi worked at the same time on three different fronts: opposing British rule, educating India for freedom, and, perhaps the hardest and most delicate task, obtaining the cooperation and coordination of all the Indian leaders of the time. It was this last front that put his tact, his wisdom, his patience, his ability as a negotiator and his capacity to lead to the test. On the Indian political horizon shone at the time figures as different, genial, independent, and popular as Tilak and Gokhale, Nehru and Patel, Jhinnah and Kripalani, while thinkers and sociologists like Kishorlal Mashruwala, Swami Anand, Vinoba Bhave and Kakasaheb Kalelkar stood out in their own right. All of them acknowledged Gandhi as their supreme leader, but their strong personalities clashed at times while submitting to him. The great literary figure of the country, Rabindranath Tagore, welcomed him and gave him full support. Thus Gandhi soon emerged with almost natural authority and winning simplicity as the leader of all leaders and the father of the country. This enhanced his noble figure in his own country and before the world.

Gandhi possessed to the highest degree the two qualities that make a great leader: an inborn intuition to gauge a person's depth, and an irresistible attraction to make others follow him unconditionally. The best way to realise his magnetic influence on people will be to see real examples of Gandhi's dealing with the greatest figures of his time in the country and how he gathered round himself the brightest galaxy of valuable collaborators who shared his labours and multiplied his influence. I begin with the case, incredible in its simplicity, of his faithful secretary and inseparable companion for life, Mahadev Desai. This is how Kalelkar tells the story:

Mahadev did not know Gandhi personally, but he felt attracted to him and to his programme, and taking advantage of Gandhi's visit to Godhra in Gujarat, he went to see him and offered his services to him. He had started work as a lawyer in Bombay, was out on a brief holiday, and thought he could make himself useful in some way to Gandhi's and India's cause those few days. He

showed him some of his essays, a speech he had written in English and some of his letters. He had a good handwriting and was very careful in all he did. The interview did not last more than ten or fifteen minutes. That was the first time Gandhi was seeing him, and there had been no previous knowledge or recommendation in any way. But Gandhi was an expert jeweller who realised at first sight the value of an authentic diamond. And he just told him: "You may stay as my secretary." Mahadev was taken by surprise, but he too rose to the occasion and accepted on the spot. He asked: "When shall I come to take charge of my work?" Gandhi answered: "Take charge? You've already taken charge. You begin right now." Mahadev weakly remonstrated: "At least let me go home to say goodbye and take a change of clothes with me." Gandhi did not yield: "With me there is no going back. We'll give you clothes here. Sit down and I'll dictate you a letter. This evening we start on our journey.

That was all. A ten minute interview, an offer, a surrender. And a friendship for life. Mahadev never left Gandhi's side till he died of a heart attack in the Agha Khan palace in Poona, which served as his jail and where his tomb now rests. He was Gandhi's right hand and his closest and most helpful companion. Gandhi is said to have wept at his death more than for any other person in his whole life.

Gandhi knew by instinct the value of the communication media, and so his first concern, even in those days, when he settled in any place, was to set up a printing press and to publish a paper. I have seen the rather primitive printing machine that is kept as a relic in the Phoenix Ashram in South Africa and with which Gandhi began his printing campaigns, and I have visited the Navajivan Press in Ahmedabad which even today is one of the best in India. The next episode precisely refers to the establishing of this important editing firm from where English, Hindi and Gujarati publications kept coming out to spread Gandhi's message throughout India and on to the whole world. Gandhi needed a man for the work, and his usual instinct soon led him to pinpoint the ideal person for it: Swami Anand. I knew him at the end of his life, and I could appreciate how fitting Gandhi's election was, as well as how hard it must have

been for Gandhi to win over such an independent and original a character as Swami Anand was. He never followed or obeyed anyone, and always remained the genial personality, the free spirit, the wandering seeker of truth and beauty along the Himalayas, the tireless history scholar, the gifted writer who made printers and editors suffer with his ruthless quest for typographical perfection. Gandhi sought him out and wriggled out of him the bargain to come for six months to Ahmedabad to set up the new editing concern. Here I quote Kalelkar again:

Swami Anand threw himself with such a zeal into his work that he seemed just another cogwheel in the large machinery of the printing press. I am a witness how much he worked and got others to work. His table was always full of papers printed and to be printed, and in the midst of them all there was a glass of milk and a few bananas. With his right hand he corrected proofs, and with his left hand he went on eating bananas. When he finished a set of proofs, he took a sip of milk, and back to work. He would spend three or four days without leaving his place not even to bathe or to go to the toilet. And he just slept a few hours on the floor by his table.

Thus was his work getting on when one day he received a letter of Gandhi who at the time was in North India on his government work. In his letter he wrote: It has been a matter of great satisfaction and relief for me that you have taken charge of the Navajivan Press. I hope everything is going well with you and you find yourself at home there.'

Swami Anand was at a loss to understand what was the meaning of it all. He had not written to Gandhi, had not complained about anything or anybody and could not figure out the purpose of such a letter. Suddenly he realised it: 'That's true! I had promised Gandhi to work for six months in his Press, and today is six months to a day from that date. That old man is sharper than he looks. I had forgotten I had come here for six months only, but he was not going to forget it! See how he is hooking me again. Kripalani is right when he says that this old man has to be carefully watched.'

And so Swami Anand stayed in Navajivan. Gandhi knew how to "hook" people. With love and respect rather than with a document and a signature. Devoted work, true fidelity, total sacrifice. His followers forgot dates, limits, and conditions. Once they went to work for him, they never left him. Many people followed Gandhi in his life more or less closely, but for me, this commitment of Swami Anand to Gandhi's cause is the most exalted tribute to the magical attraction of his exceptional personality. At times it even happened that people who approached him with the idea of measuring him up in order to scale down his stature and so to tell people that Gandhi was not up to much after all, were on the spot taken up by him and had to admit that Gandhi was not less but even much more than they had imagined. Such was the experience of Shankarlal Banker, the social worker who is still alive when I write this, and this is how he told it to me:

Kripalani and I were then in Mumbai, in full political and patriotic activity. We heard that a certain Gandhi, a man who apparently wanted to do some-thing, had come to Mumbai, and we thought of going to see him, just to size him up. We went to his quarters, and there he was squatting on the floor. We sat on chairs to feel on top of the situation. But that did not help. We left the room converted in ardent followers of the Mahatma. Don't ask me what he told us because I don't remember, but there was something in that man that charmed anybody and made them feel happy to work under him. We went to size him up, but it was he that sized us up!

But perhaps the most remarkable case among all of Gandhi's followers is the one of Sardar Patel. "Sardar" means chief, military officer, captain, and that was the surname by which, in respect and appreciation, the "whole of India knew Vallabhbhai Patel, the Karamsad lawyer, the vice-minister of Pandit Nehru, the architect of India's unity against separatist maharajas, the iron leader, the general-in-chief. Independent, energetic, even arrogant character who later would require all of Gandhi's tact and authority to balance the uneasy relationship between Nehru and Patel. In a speech that Sardar Patel, who was not much given to autobiography for that matter, made years later in the

university Gandhi founded in Ahmedabad, he hinted at the personal struggle that at the end took him to Gandhi's side. Says Patel:

Back from my law studies in England I started earning some money working as a lawyer. I was interested in politics, but there was at the time no outstanding political leader, and those in the field were just talking and talking. To a man of action as I was that meant nothing at all. Each day, when finishing my work, I used to go to the Bombay lawyers club where I spent my time smoking and playing cards. If any time a speaker came to address us, I took pleasure in laughing at him.

One day Gandhi came to our club. I had read something about him in the papers. I listened to him, yes, but with my usual scepticism. I took him as a joke. I not even had the courtesy to put off my cigar, and I went on smoking while he was talking. This is almost an insult in our society, but it exactly reflects my mood at the moment. Even so I came out with the impression that that man was not stopping at words and meant facts. I decided to keep watching.

I never thought about his principles. Violence and nonviolence meant nothing to me. But I saw a man who knew what he wanted and was ready to do it, who loved his country, loved his freedom, and had consecrated to it his life and all he had. I didn't ask for more. Then the problem came up of the tax on the peasants of Kheda district in Gujarat, which is the district in which my native place Karamsad is situated, and Gandhi entrusted the whole affair to me. Since then I surrendered entirely to him and consecrated to him my whole life.

Some call me a blind follower, and reproach me that that is not my character. I am not ashamed of that. When I decided to follow this man I fully realised I had to be prepared because some day people would spit on my face because of his name. And since then till now I have never repented. He shows the way, and I follow him. I have absolute faith in him.

The "iron leader" converted into a "blind follower". The teacher becomes disciple. The "Sardar" comes under orders from the "Mahatma". Gandhi's strength and attractiveness attracted all kinds of persons. And the remarkable

thing is that Gandhi had no external qualities to draw the attention of people. No physical attractiveness, no eloquence, no scholarship, no art. Pure simplicity, clarity, and honesty. The firm ideal to be obtained, and the personal example to lead the way to it. With that alone he gathered round himself a distinguished set of faithful followers, he attracted the most outstanding figures in India, he lead them all to the final victory.

One more example, the one of Kalelkar, Gandhi's intellectual heir, writer and educationist, orthodox Brahmin and convinced ecumenist, whose witness I collected from his own lips in the long days of the friendship that united me to him till his death some years ago. After some initial turns in his life, Kalelkar had settled in Vadodara to head a college of national education established by the great patriot and educationist Keshavrao Deshpande. Gandhi who, in his deep and universal vision, wanted to establish a national university in Ahmedabad, asked Kalelkar to take charge of this project and set up the new university from scratch. Kalelkar accepted, went to Ahmedabad, and began to work with Gandhi. At that time Gandhi had to depart for Champaran in North India, and Kalelkar remained in Ahmedabad. However, he had left some business pending in Vadodara, and there he went just for a couple of days. Someone told Gandhi in North India about it, and Kalelkar received immediately a very hard letter in which Gandhi was telling him dryly: "You cannot serve two masters. Either you remain with me or you go back to Vadodara." Kalelkar was deeply hurt by this letter. He immediately wrote back to Gandhi explaining the situation and renewing his unconditional commitment. Thinking that a purely verbal guarantee was not enough, Kalelkar decided not to leave Gandhi's headquarters at all, and he stayed for a continuous year in Ahmedabad to prove his fidelity with facts. Gandhi recognised his sincerity, and after one year he began taking Kalelkar along with him as a companion in his journeys. In one of those journeys the following telling episode took place.

Gandhi and his entourage were planning the new campaign to propagate the use of Hindi in South India as the national language in India. It was a delicate campaign as South India had its own languages (Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam) and

therefore Hindi, as an imposition from the North, was not popular there. A group of Gandhian workers, Kalelkar among them, were discussing the issue while Gandhi sat in another corner of the room answering his correspondence. They were entrusting the several tasks to several people when one of them asked aloud: "What task shall we give Kalelkar?" Gandhi was writing letters, but at the same time he was following the discussion at the other corner, and when he heard the question, he interrupted them and said: "To Kalelkar you can entrust anything..., provided it is not easy." And he smiled his characteristic roguish smile his photographs have so well preserved for us.

Kalelkar told me that when he heard those words of Gandhi, his heart melted within him. Gandhi was trusting him. Gandhi knew he had capacity for work and was entirely committed to the cause. Giving him an easy task was insulting him. The teacher shows his appreciation for a clever student by asking him difficult questions in which he can shine, and asking an easy question is showing a low esteem of the student. Gandhi appreciated Kalelkar and he showed it in that spontaneous and practical way. "Ask him whatever you want... provided it is not easy." Kalelkar went on to tell me that at that moment he just surrendered his whole heart and life to Gandhi. "He had trusted me, and I was not going to let him down. I would show that I was worthy of his trust. The harder the work they give me, the better. I'll carry it out with all my strength, and I'll show everybody that Gandhi did well in trusting me."

Gandhi's trust helped Kalelkar grow. That was Gandhi's secret. He first put his followers to the test as he had done with Kalelkar, and then he granted them his full trust. By trusting them he brought them closer to him, made them give of their best, kept them faithful to him. That was how he surrounded himself with capable and devoted collaborators. Leading by trusting was his way.

06. A TEACHER OF A NATION

If Gandhi's first front was that of his collaborators, his second and more universal, extensive, and lasting front was the whole people whom he proposed to train for independence. Gandhi knew that the British would eventually quit, and he also knew that the exit of the British was not the same as independence. For the bird to fly it's not enough to loosen the bonds around its legs, it needs wings and strength and exercise and faith. To give back to India its wings was Gandhi's great task. The long years of servitude had fostered passivity, carelessness, negligence and negativity on the part of the people, and before giving it back its power it had to be given back its dignity. Before the prince sits on the throne, he has to be trained as a king. Gandhi wanted a sovereign people and he dedicated all his strength to its creation. Rabindranath Tagore's words were his inspiration and guide:

We observe certain parasites in nature that live at the expense of other animals, absorb their food directly from them, are carried with them wherever they go; they have no movement or digestion of their own. It looks quite comfortable in a way, but the insect that lives in that way has to pay a very high price for its laziness. The parasite loses all capacity to digest food, its digestive system atrophies for lack of use, and ceases to function. Full rest... and full slavery.

A slave nation, and in that sense a parasite to another nation, loses also its capacity to assimilate its own food: its food for body and soul. In order to give freedom back to that nation it has first to be given back its spiritual metabolism, its power to assimilate, its dignity, its honour.

India's long years as a colony had generated a general and deep laziness in the Indian people. When you are working for someone else you don't work with your heart. When you are working for a foreign government you don't give your best. Who is going to strive to increase the national gains when those gains are going to go to another nation? How to resist the temptation to mix water with the milk when it is not your children but your costumers that are going to drink it?

Working for strangers lowers the worker's enthusiasm and fosters mediocrity. Then comes the danger, following Tagore's thought, that when the milk is going to be drunk by the children at home, in virtue of the acquired bad habit we may put water into their milk too.

The danger in India was that the passivity and negligence generated by British rule would persist after the British left. The people had to be aroused. The nation had to be made to stand on its feet. New standards in enthusiasm, work, commitment, efficiency and responsibility had to be attained. That was Gandhi's aim in his nationwide campaign to make a great people worthy of its freedom under its own government. Soon India would be called the greatest democracy in the world. An example taken from one of his periods in jail:

A fellow prisoner of Gandhi's in jail had been heating water in a pail over some burning coals for Gandhi to take a bath in winter. When the water was hot he took the pail and called Gandhi. Gandhi noticed that in the fire the coals were still burning and he asked his companion:

'Is this fire of any use now?'

'No, Gandhi, it's no use any more.'

'Then put it off so that the coals can be used again.'

'What do we care when those coals don't belong to us but to the government?'

Then Gandhi took the opportunity to go on with his teaching: "There you are mistaken. These coals do not belong to the government but to the country. The British government spends as much money as it wants, but that money comes out of the pockets of India's poor. These coals that are burning are our coals, and it is we that have to save. Now go and put them off so that they can still be used again."

Gandhi was conscious that whatever he did in public or in private was broadcast around in a thousand ways and reached the last corners of the country. Every word, every gesture, every anecdote multiplied from mouth to mouth, was retold and reprinted, and became a teaching, an example, an exhortation for his dear millions. By saving a few half burnt coals he was preaching saving,

responsibility, awareness that public expenditure is actually private, and what belongs to the country belongs to each citizen both in its use and in its conservation.

It was to Charlie Andrews, the Christian clergyman and close friend whom Gandhi honoured with the title of "Dinbandhu" (friend of the poor) that Gandhi told the words that best summed up his programme, his strategy and his faith: "This is my faith: India will become independent the day it purifies itself and gets itself ready. Not a minute before, not a minute after. Independence comes from within." A few years later, Nehru described thus with his graphical and pointed style Gandhi's success in his fundamental task of awaking India: "What Gandhi has done is straightening up our backs. We all walked bent down, submitted, humiliated, and it is quite easy to climb on a bent back as the British did with us. Now we are walking straight and erect again and nobody can climb on our back."

Walking straight again. Erect. Proud. Independence comes from within. That was Gandhi's way. Independence, freedom, social justice are the fruit that will fall by itself when it is ripe, and ripeness comes from the tree that nourishes, not from the hand that plucks the fruit. That is the summary of the whole of the history of India's independence and of the whole of Gandhi's thought. Straighten up, and the rider on your back will fall off.

Violence is not compatible with the dignity of the person. He who attacks, degrades himself. Having recourse to violence means ceasing to have faith in any moral strength in one's own cause, in one's own honour. Gandhi always linked the cause of honour with the giving up of violence. He stressed the way of peace in every circumstance and before all audiences, and he took upon himself the hard task of educating the masses in the practice of resistance without violence. That was a new approach and it took much planning and trying and insisting to get his message across to the whole people. His first public undertaking after his initial period of the study of India's situation was the strike of the textile workers in Ahmedabad. The workers claimed an increase in salary, and on the authorities refusing it, they went on strike.

Gandhi stood for them with some clear conditions: total peace at every moment, no pressure on anyone, holding on to the strike happened what may and as long as it would be needed, and if it came to the point where they had nothing to eat, to work then in any other job just to avoid going hungry. Gandhi himself describes for us the whole situation:

Every day under a tree near the river we had our meeting. Hundreds of strikers gathered, and I reminded them of the promise they had made: total peace and respect to themselves above everything. They prepared posters with slogans saying, 'Dignity is truth', and they went every day in peaceful procession through the city's streets singing patriotic hymns.

The strike lasted twenty-one days. The first two weeks went very well. The strikers kept an admirable discipline, they went round in strength and in peace, and they came in their crowds to the prayer near the river. I reminded them of their promise, and they chanted: 'We'll do or we'll die!' (*karenge ya marenge*). That was truly worth seeing.

But at the end some started to yield and wanted to go back to work, opinions were divided, the two groups clashed and each group began to exert pressure on the other. At the beginning it was only with words, but I was afraid they would soon pass on to physical violence. Each day those who came to the prayer meetings by the river were fewer, and those who came did so without any enthusiasm or even interest. There was no singing and no chanting of slogans. I saw very clearly that they were doubting and their moral strength was vanishing. For me that was a moment of personal crisis. What was I to do? I was the one who directed them, who had led them to bind themselves with a promise, who had been witness to their oath. I had to go on helping them to keep their promise, and I had to do it without any violence on my part. How to do it?

We were in the middle of our morning meeting. I didn't know what to do and had not prepared what to say. But as I began to speak I heard myself saying: 'If you do not remain firm in keeping up your peaceful strike till we reach an

acceptable solution, I will fast and will take no food until we get such a solution.'

That was the first of Gandhi's famous fasts in India. The tree near the side of the Sabarmati River under which Gandhi sat when proclaiming his fast is still there, and I have stood by its reliving in my heart with reverence and wonder that pregnant moment of world history. Gandhi insisted that his fast was not meant to make the mill- owners yield but to get the workers to stand firm in their promise. And the workers understood him at once. They got back their courage and their enthusiasm, they reaffirmed their promise and stood on their dignity. "Dignity is truth." The opposition yielded to the truth, both sides accepted an independent arbitration, and the strike came to an end. The mill-owners distributed sweets to the workers in their factories. Dignity had won.

The great obstacle on the way to foster and strengthen national dignity was the inferiority complex the presence and domination of the British had created in the Indian people. Political power in the hands of the British had meant cultural superiority and racial pride on their part. The British ruled over the country, and that meant that in their culture, their religion, their way of life, their education, their language, their literature, their way of dressing and behaving, in everything they were superior people, and this had to be admitted with all its consequences. The complex of a colony. The tyranny of culture. Slavery of thought, which is far more dangerous and hurtful than slavery of money or of political power. This humiliating complex had wrought havoc in the Indian mentality. The higher classes prided themselves on their command of English with an Oxford accent, on wearing a tie, absurd as it is everywhere and particularly in India's heat, on receiving honours and titles as Sir or Baronet from the queen of England. Everything foreign was excellent, that is everything coming from England, to the detriment of Indian goods and Indian customs. Cultural colonisation.

In truth such an inferiority complex had no real basis on facts. India had and has a cultural, literary, mystic, artistic, folkloric richness of the highest rank as the whole world now recognises, but what is now seen and recognised by all

everywhere, was not seen and recognised in India itself at the time. The conscience of one's culture, the pride in one's traditions, the faith in one's own identity had to be restored. The national image of the Indian character had to be established. That was the delicate and transcendental task which Gandhi undertook with his characteristic insistence and tact. To awaken the interest in Indian languages, to foster the use of Indian products, to follow Indian style in buildings and Indian art in decoration, to speak as Indians and dress as Indians. That was the open and popular programme Gandhi launched with his word and his example.

A telling gesture was the one of dress as it was daily visible and strikingly typical. Judging people by what they are wearing is universal prejudice. The "beautiful people" dress beautifully, and in India the beautiful people dressed in full English fashion, as that was taken to be the elegant, the up-to-date, the proper thing to do. Coat and pants meant distinction while the *dhoti*, that is the white rectangular piece of cloth tied round the waist and hanging perpendicularly to the feet, was considered vulgar, and proper only for villagers. It was said of Nehru's father, in his refined and exclusive taste, that he sent his shirts to be ironed in Paris. To dress in European style was considered a sign of nobility, and that was a subtle way of declaring that Europeans were superior people. Sartorial domination in style and dress. Inferiority complex was apparent and enacted each day in the dresses all wore and saw others wear. The tyranny of fashion had to be abolished as it went against true patriotism, and Indian dress had to be given again its nobility and its pride of place.

Gandhi had experience in this matter. During his stay in England as a student he had not only dressed as an Englishman but he had gone to extremes in fashion and elegance. He himself tells his own excesses with self-deprecating humour in a chapter in his autobiography with the good-humoured title, "When I became civilised".

My efforts to become 'civilised' were as superficial as they were expensive - much more expensive than I could afford. I had brought to London English style

suits of clothes, but they had been made in Bombay. Their cut could not match the elegance I saw in London, and so I had new suits made at the 'Army and Navy' tailors. I spent 19 shillings (which was a fortune at the time) on a top hat, or as they called it there a 'chimney hat'. Not satisfied with that, I went to Bond Street where the most elegant people in the world have their dresses made, and I had a dinner jacket made for 20 pounds. Twenty pounds ... just burned down like that. My elder brother in India, as kind as he was generous, bore my expenses, and on top of that I asked him to send me a gold chain with a large pendant to wear it openly on my vest. And he sent it in his innocence. Then there was the problem of the tie. They sold ties already properly tied, but that showed up and was not proper, so I had to learn the art of tying my ties. I who when in India would not see a mirror except when I shaved from time to time, spent a good while every day in London before a large mirror tying my tie and parting my hair. This craze of dressing in the latest fashion lasted for several years with me.

In another place in his autobiography he mentions how his desire to appear European took him even to try to learn dancing and playing the violin. Those lessons did not take him far, and they only left him with the empty memory of a useless effort. When going from South Africa to India he would be dressed again in his typical Kathiawadi dress: tight narrow pants and long shirt outside them with a large turban, all in white, as a sharp contrast with the Indian leaders who went to receive him in Bombay all dressed in coats and ties. Later on, as he came into close contact with the crowds of people with their scanty dresses, he went on discarding first his turban and then his shirt, till he remained dressed in his *dhoti* from his waist down and an undershirt round his shoulders in the typical image he has left us in all his photographs. Churchill referred to him disparagingly as "the half-naked fakir", thus missing the message of solidarity with the poor in Gandhi's simplicity.

The Indian viceroy invited Gandhi to visit him in his royal palace in New Delhi, majestic showpiece of colonial architecture with its wide gardens, unending stairways, decorated halls. Gandhi presented himself clad in his usual attire as

a graphical contrast to all the luxury around him. He was not rebuking the viceroy, he was just representing his people, and so he dressed like them. Later on, when he went to England as the head of the Indian delegation to the Round Table Conference, the King himself, George V, invited him to take tea with him in the Buckingham Palace. Gandhi's companion in that visit described the situation:

"The English chief of protocol respectfully informed Gandhi that for the royal audience he had to dress up according to palace etiquette. His *dhoti* let his legs naked and that could be offensive to the eyes of the king and even more of the queen. It was not a dignified dress to wear. Gandhi answered with the same respect that if he was going to see the king it was left to him to decide which dress was dignified. He was told: 'The King's invitation is an order. If His Majesty invites you to come to Palace, you have to come to Palace, and if you come to Palace you have to be dressed according to Palace protocol.' Gandhi stood his ground: 'I sincerely appreciate the honour the King does to me by inviting me, but I'm not ready to change my dress in order to see him.' Before that attitude the British authorities had to yield, and Gandhi entered Buckingham Palace in his usual dress.

After his audience, the press was waiting for him. A British newspaper correspondent, sorry to think that a man dressed in a bed-sheet had taken tea with the king and queen of England, could not restrain himself and asked him: 'Mr. Gandhi, didn't you feel awkward or ashamed to sit for tea with the king and queen in that dress?' Gandhi laughed light-heartedly and answered: 'Nothing awkward. Each of us was quite comfortable with what he was wearing. And, speaking of clothes, the king had so many clothes on that they could have been enough for the two of us.'

There was something more than good humour in Gandhi's answer. There was the sense of his own responsibility and of the dignity of his people. The equality of all men and the respect for each individual. The king of England in his bright uniform and Gandhi clad in half a sheet sit at the same table to take tea together. They are both equal. Indians and Englishmen are equal. The anecdote

reaches everywhere, the image is printed in papers round the world, and its message, its invitation, its urgency go with it. When a simple Indian labourer dressed in his *dhoti* while toiling in the fields comes to hear that Gandhi, dressed also in a *dhoti*, has sat as an equal with the king of England, he learns to respect and appreciate his own *dhoti*, and, with it, to appreciate himself, his work, his country. A whole lecture in self-respect as only Gandhi could give. Simple and efficacious antidote against the national inferiority complex. Patriotism and humanism. Equality and dignity. Gandhi as a master of communication. And Gandhi as an expert psychologist in the knowledge of people and of the way to reach them. As he himself changed, he went showing to others the way of change, and as he himself woke up, he made all wake up with him. Nehru himself, who was an Indian to the core but had been educated in England in a fully English way, had to react consciously and to undertake a spiritual return journey to his own country and culture in order to feel Indian again, to find his roots, and so he called his best book, which was his intellectual autobiography, *The Discovery of India*. Nehru, an Indian, had to discover India. Gandhi had to discover India. The whole nation had to discover itself, and that was Gandhi's lifework. To educate, to wake up, to discover. Gandhi was the inspired master of a whole nation, and indeed of the whole world.

07. A HIMALAYAN BLUNDER

The first lesson the master imparted was the one of respect and dignity for one's own self, and the two great consequences of this lesson were and continue to be nonviolence and national unity. A nation that respects itself, that remains united, that wants to be free as a consequence and states his claim to independence with firmness, with unanimity and without violence, cannot but be heard. Freedom comes as a result of non-violence and unity based on self-respect. He who respects himself does not stoop to violence, and learns to respect others, to recognise the same rights for others, the dignity of each one and the unity of all as equal members of a large family. Equality, dignity, and non-violence are only three aspects of one and the same fundamental idea.

The Rowlatt Act was the first occasion to put nonviolence into practice at a national level. Gandhi had suppressed all opposition to the British government during the First World War out of the feeling, as noble as it is uncommon, that he would not take advantage of his opponent's weakness. "So long as England is at war it is not fair that we attack it from the back with our movement for independence. Let us wait for its conflict to be solved, and then we shall present our own." The other leaders were impatient and they found it difficult to accept so much generosity with the enemy. Some even preferred to take advantage of the difficult situation of the British to push independence with a vantage. But Gandhi's proposal won, and the nation waited. There was even the hope that England would appreciate the nobility of the Indian attitude, and as a recompense, after the war it would accelerate the process of independence of its colony. But the hope proved false. The Crown did not respond to Gandhi's noble gesture. The war got over, and the British government did not lose time to enact a new law, the Rowlatt Act, which in Gandhi's measured and studied opinion "no people with self-respect and no person with honour could accept". Gandhi got ready for action, and this is what he wrote to the South Indian

leader, Shri Rajagopalachari, who would later become free India's first Governor General:

The idea occurred to me in my sleep, and I validated it as I woke up. As an answer to such an unjust law, I propose that the whole country observes a total strike. Peacefully, of course, and with absolute moderation. This is a holy war that requires total purity in all of us. As a symbol of this purity and a means to obtain it, I propose that the first day we should all fast and spend the whole day without eating and without going to work.

The whole country obeyed Gandhi and went on strike with an exemplary spirit. Gandhi himself declared: "It was a grandiose and touching spectacle." But it was not possible to keep up such purity of spirit through such huge crowds everywhere. There were a few isolated incidents and violent clashes. Shops were looted, cables cut, trains derailed. The chief of police, Commissary Griffiths, laughed at Gandhi: "Your intentions may be good, but your people do not understand and will never understand you. They understand disobedience, but not peaceful disobedience. They are ready to strike work: anybody can do that with pleasure. The hard thing is to do it with order and discipline, and your people are not doing that. You have no control of your people, and if you cannot control your people you have no right to excite them."

Gandhi reflected. He studied the reports that reached him from the whole of India. He recognised that in some places the crowds had overreacted. Not all had yet assimilated the doctrine of non-violence. And Gandhi, with absolute sincerity and rare courage, drew the consequences:

It was then that I used the expression that became famous: 'A Himalayan blunder.' I had been mistaken. I had been in a hurry. The people were not prepared for peaceful disobedience, and in sending them on such a mission throughout the whole country I had been painfully mistaken. An error as large as a mountain. Such was my Himalayan blunder.

Many people laughed at me when I retracted; but I have never repented of having recognised my mistake. Some of my friends and collaborators were angry with me. They said that if we had to wait for all to become saints and to

behave with full meekness, we would have to give up our independence movement at a national level. But I stuck to my position. If the leaders of the people cannot control themselves and control the people, we have to call off the movement. We are not yet ripe. The 'power of truth' (*satyagraha*) is essentially based on non-violence and cannot act without it. We have to wait.

I decided to spend three days without eating, and I proposed to all to do the same for one day. I invited those who had stolen or killed to confess their misdeeds. And I clearly and decisively announced that until the whole nation would not learn the way of peace, the independence movement was suspended.

Gandhi knew perfectly well that the suppression of the movement would delay the sought-for arrival of independence, but for him conscience was more important than independence. Or, better, independence in his concept was nothing else than the emerging of a national conscience. Independence is not achieved by signing a paper or flying a flag, but by growing in dignity, morality and national character. Gandhi suspended the movement, and that was the best lesson he could give his people. With that he was not postponing independence but bringing it closer.

In a country as large and as complex as India, independence brought with itself a special problem: the diversity of races and colours, of languages and cultures, and above all of religions and of castes. In the question of castes it was not only a question of friction between caste and caste, but also between those with caste and those without caste, the outcaste, also called untouchables. Gandhi gave them another name, *Harijan*, or "children of God", and that is how they came to be called. The name itself encodes Gandhi's solution to the ancestral problem of untouchability. We are all children of God, all equal as men and women, as persons, as human beings, and nobody is more or less than any other for having been born in one family rather than another. The principle was clear, and Gandhi took every occasion to proclaim it and hammer it in.

The most famous occasion was the proposal to establish for the Harijans in the constitution of India separate constituencies for elections. The proposal was

well-meant, but it was ambiguous in its consequences, and in fact the main father of the constitution, Ambedkar, himself a *Harijan*, was in favour of it. But Gandhi rightly saw in that separation for elections a symbol and an instrument for the real separation of two groups in the nation, those with caste and those without it, and he opposed the measure tooth and nail. As the situation went from bad to worse, Gandhi had recourse to his usual personal weapon: the fast. He was at the time a prisoner in Yeravda prison in Pune, and there he declared that no food would pass his lips until the matter were properly settled. That fast brought Gandhi near death. The nation was on tenterhooks, and the whole world followed day by day the agony of his weak body as a docile instrument of his firm spirit. Tagore then took the leadership in writing to India, which listened to him when Gandhi was silent:

A dark and painful cloud is these days hovering over the whole of India. The Mahatma whose name is already synonymous of India has entered a heroic vow that can take him even to his own immolation in the cause of the unity of the people of India. The penance he has undertaken purifies all of us. His example and his suffering must awaken in the depth of our hearts the humanitarian feelings to see all men as equals and to love them without frontiers or divisions of any kind. The Mahatma's suffering has to become our salvation.

The effect of Gandhi's suffering was as wide as India and as deep as his own sincerity. On those days the people stopped going to cinemas or theatres, weddings were postponed, public prayers were organised in every square. The "Children of God" were allowed to enter the temples into which they had been forbidden to go, they were invited to draw water from wells formerly reserved for caste people, even public meals were organised in which people with or without caste would sit by each-other. It was a national effort, a coming together in an until then unknown way, a new beginning. There was a unanimous universal reaction, the proposal of separate constituencies was rejected, and Gandhi took food. A tragedy was avoided. And the fundamental principle of the equality and dignity of all men was established. It is true that a centuries-old prejudice cannot be eradicated in one day, but the beginning had

been made and the campaign would continue under Gandhi's inspiration. His example had made history.

The other threat to the unity of the country was the nation-wide division between followers of the two great religions, Hindu and Muslim. India has the great privilege and the great responsibility of harbouring in her midst since time immemorial almost all of the world religions. Kalelkar, whom I have often quoted, kept telling me many times till the end of his life that India's historic mission was the encounter, understanding and flowering of all religions side by side. "God", he would fervently repeat, "has put together on our soil from time immemorial all the great religions, and so we cannot call any of them foreign. When a stranger marries my daughter, he ceases to be a stranger to me and becomes my son-in-law. In the same way, even the religions that have come to us from outside India, as they have been accepted by Indians, they themselves become Indian, and so, together with Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism which originated in India, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam have now settled among us and belong to us. They too are our family. It is up to us to get all these religions to understand one another and to enrich and complement each other. That is the mission of India." Kalelkar himself was a Sarasvat Brahmin and he had found it hard to accept that other religions, particularly those that allow the eating of meat and the drinking of alcoholic drinks, were comparable to Hinduism, and he told me it was Gandhi himself in a personal and sustained effort that finally succeeded in convincing him that no religion monopolises truth and that, precisely because the spiritual reality surpasses our understanding, the different approaches and different experiences of all religions are necessary in order to give us a more complete idea of the supreme reality.

Gandhi also fasted for the unity of Hindus and Muslims. He fasted in the house of a Muslim friend, under observation by a Muslim doctor, and when he broke his fast after twenty-one days, he did so by taking from the hands of a Muslim friend a glass of lemon water. It was during those trying days that he wrote:

Up till now we have been making efforts to change the hearts of the English people, and we'll continue to do so till we get the desired result. But before that we have to work to change our own heart, all of us, both Hindus and Muslims. Before independence comes love. We have to achieve understanding and appreciation of the beliefs of others, however different they may be from ours, being ready even to tolerate other people's prejudices and superstitions. And above all, we have to foster mutual trust. Trust in all and trust in ourselves, which all in the end is trust in God. This unconditional trust will make it possible for us to love each other as brothers.

Gandhi said those trying days were for him "days of a great inner peace, happiness, and grace." The national problem, however, was large and deep and could not be solved by a single person however great his influence might be. Gandhi had to fast again. And Gandhi had to face at the end of his life the tragedy that cast a shadow over his achievements: the division of his beloved homeland into two nations, India and Pakistan, with a sharp division between Hindus and Muslims which caused untold sufferings for a length of years. Dividing India was dividing Gandhi's heart. He loved all. He even offered Jhinnah, the Muslim leader, the place of prime minister in an undivided India and got the two pretenders, Nehru and Patel, to accept the proposal. But he could not get Jhinnah to accept it. Gandhi insisted, against the opposition of the Indian leaders, that Pakistan would be paid all that India had promised on division. He announced he would go to visit Pakistan shortly. But he couldn't do it. A fanatic Hindu, representing those who thought that Gandhi was siding with Muslims against his own countrymen and fellow Hindus, shot him three times in the chest when Gandhi was walking to his prayers in the Birla House garden in New Delhi. The problem for whose solution Gandhi fought, lived, and died, remained unsolved. Gandhi, again, continues to be a very actual presence.

08. THE CULT OF EXCELLANCE

Gandhi summed up in one word all his doctrine and teaching on the way to independence and freedom: excellence. To do things well. To do one's best in whatever one does, be it much or little, important or insignificant, public or private. Everything has to be done well. One has to give always one's best, be exacting with oneself, keep always the highest standards. The sad heritage of carelessness and lack of interest that British dominion had left behind, had now to come to an end. Working under a foreign power lowers standards of work as it is that foreign power that first profits from it without any appeal to personal effort and distinction on the part of the workers, and mediocrity sets in as the normal rule in public labour. Gandhi had to change that too. And in this, Gandhi again remains quite actual and practical, as we all are inclined to do things with the least possible effort and we feel the temptation to laziness, to the shortcut, to shabby work, to do things in a hurry and in any way, to cheat ourselves when we cannot cheat others. Carelessness is the great enemy of development, both for the person and for the nation. Gandhi set about defeating that enemy.

His first weapon was his own example. Someone drew his attention to the fact that when he quoted verses from the *Bhagavad Gita* in his public prayers, his Sanskrit pronunciation was defective. Gandhi took note of it and resolved to learn a proper pronunciation. He loved the *Gita* and even wrote a commentary on it. He quoted it often, and most of his listeners would not care about pronunciation. But for Gandhi it was enough to know that it was not right, and decided to learn the right one. Learning pronunciation takes time, and Gandhi could not find it at the moment. But he found it later. In jail. He had not forgotten his resolution, and the next time he became again a "government guest" with time in his hands, he decided to put it in practice.

In the Yeravda jail he asked Kalelkar, who was also in the same jail with him:

I want to learn how to pronounce Sanskrit properly. I admire your Sanskrit pronunciation as I've observed you when you teach our boys in class, that's why

I want you to teach me. Take me as one more of your students. Every time I make a mistake make me repeat the word as many times as necessary till I do it well. Don't take me as an important person, as a '*Mahatma*' who cannot be disturbed. If you think that way and you leave me with my imperfect pronunciation, that sin will be on your conscience. See what you do.

Kalelkar used to say that the only way to learn good pronunciation in any language was to 'fill one's ears', and so he took it upon himself to fill Gandhi's ears with Sanskrit. Besides, he underlined for him the words he mispronounced and he made him repeat them without relief. Kalelkar used to say that he had never had such a keen student, and at the end of their stay in jail he gave him a diploma as 'Champion of Sanskrit pronunciation'. Something that troubled Gandhi till the end of his life was his bad handwriting. He wrote with both his hands, right and left, and his writing was as bad with one as with the other. Just as he wanted to have a good pronunciation, so he also wanted a good handwriting. But he never could get it. For all his efforts, he failed in his endeavour. Even the Mahatma had to admit defeat at times. He then quoted the Gujarati proverb: "You cannot put a new border on a clay vessel", that is, once the clay dries it is impossible to stick fresh clay on to it; and once the hand is used to write in one way, the muscles are hardened and conditioned and it is impossible to impose new ways on them. He had to resign himself to write as he did. For that same reason he insisted with young people that they should get used to write with a good and careful hand from the start so that they would not have to suffer later as he had to suffer.

He did succeeded in another endeavour, and that was the reform of spelling in his own Gujarati language. Gandhi suffered with the anarchy that obtained in Gujarati writing at the time. Each one wrote at will long and short vowels, half consonants and double letters, diphthongs and nasals (*anuswaras*). There was no rule and no uniformity, and all efforts to bring order into chaos had failed. The order and dignity in society are reflected in the language it uses, and the Gujarati language at the time lacked any kind of fixed rules, norms, linguistic good manners. Gandhi used to say: "We are ashamed to commit even one

spelling mistake in English, and yet we write our own language in any way and we are not ashamed of it. We respect the language of the English people and we strive to write it to perfection, and we do not respect our own language and are not worried about its dignity. This situation has to come to an end." Gandhi brought it to an end. He asked Kalelkar (again!) to publish a dictionary with the proper spellings which would then become fixed and compulsory. The curious thing is that Kalelkar was not a Gujarati, but living with Gandhi he had learnt the language, had studied its history, had understood its spelling- and he wrote and published the dictionary. Gandhi wrote in its first page this single sharp sentence: "Hereafter nobody has the right to write Gujarati as he pleases." There was no official institution, no academy of language and no teaching body with the authority to impose a fixed spelling, but Gandhi's moral authority reached even language matters, and his signature on the first page of the dictionary was enough to make it into law and to get everybody to accept it. Today we write Gujarati as Gandhi ordered it.

The interesting point here is how Gandhi, who carried on his shoulders the burden of the whole country, the fight for independence, and a thousand complex problems of historic importance, did not forget lesser items like spelling. He saw everywhere the opportunity, the example, the parable of the supreme lesson he wanted to teach to all as the summary and practice of all his teaching: doing well whatever we do.

If Gandhi minded writing and wanted it well done, he also minded printing and wanted it done in the best way. I've already mentioned the fact that wherever Gandhi settled, one of his first concerns was to put up a printing press. He knew the importance of the written word, of the mass media, of the power to reach with a printed paper where he could not reach with a spoken speech. He used his presses daily, and he insisted that the printing should be always well done, without mistakes, without misprints, in neat and clear print. Gandhi left thousands of printed pages in his articles, books, messages of all kinds, and all of them had to be printed to perfection. Gandhi's message went forward not only in what he said in his writings but also in the neat and careful way they

were printed. Doing all things well. Good spelling. Good handwriting. Good printing. And, as in the following case told by Kalelkar, good translation:

It was but natural that when Gandhi settled in Ahmedabad, he would like to get translated into the language of the region, Gujarati, the writings of his 'political *guru*' Gokhale which had been published in Marathi and in English. He decided to begin with the first volume of Gokhale's essays and speeches on education. A well-known Gujarati writer, who also knew English well, was chosen and was entrusted with the translation. The translator finished his work, and the book was printed at once in our Navajivan Press. Before proceeding to binding the books, the only thing left was for Gandhi to see it and to write the introduction.

Gandhi passed on the book to his secretary Mahadev to have a look at it. Mahadev did with great care whatever he did, and he soon realised that the book had not been well translated and would not please Gandhi. He told him as much: 'The translation is not faithful to the original, the language is poor and with mistakes.'

Gandhi is never satisfied with an overall accusation. He asks for proofs. Before him the accuser becomes the accused. Mahadev knew it and he was ready. He showed Gandhi several passages in the book with clear examples of bad translation and poor language. Gandhi told him: 'It's all right. I see your opinion and your proofs. Now show the book to Narhari, who knows about these matters, and ask him for his independent opinion.' Mahadev was not pleased to see that Gandhi would not trust him, but he knew well Gandhi's way of acting and the care he took in everything; and besides, Mahadev was so sure his opinion was right that he didn't protest and did as he had been told.

Narhari was of the same opinion. But Gandhi was not yet satisfied. He said again: 'All right, now show it to Kalelkar.' To the translator's undoing, my opinion coincided with the other two. When Gandhi saw that the three opinions coincided, he became serious and said: 'Then there is no other way. I will not put before Gujarat something badly done. I will take care to let the translator

know. You now burn down the whole edition so that not a single copy is left out'

The book was thick and thousands of copies had been printed. If we had sold them as waste paper we could have got some money. But Gandhi did not allow it. The whole edition ended in a good bonfire-and in the scolding the good translator must have got, which, for what I know of Gandhi, must have been a good one.

I don't know how the translator felt, but I do know the salutary effect this incident had on all of us in those days in which we were setting up our quarters, the press, and the university. The holy fear of the Lord took hold of us. We saw how Gandhi would not compromise on anything. Everything had to be well done. No mercy on defaulters. So we decided to do everything in the best possible way, writings, translations, printing, also our classes. Maybe in checking the translator, Gandhi had meant to teach all of us a lesson. That bonfire did us a lot of good.

The Navajivan Press stands to this day as a model printing press. Every book printed in it carries on itself the seal of excellence, the implicit message to do well whatever we do. The tradition Gandhi so painstakingly established has been kept up. The name itself that was chosen for the institution pleased Gandhi: Navajivan. Its three syllables Navajivan form a palindrome that is equally read forwards and back-wards and lends itself to calligraphic designs. The best is its meaning: "New Life". Pronouncing it over its historical background, it reminds us of Gandhi's fundamental teaching: the way to a new life is doing all things well.

09. USING TIME

The meaning of time is different in the East and in the West. In the West time is linear, it does not come back, there is only one life which has to be lived against the clock, in a hurry, hour by hour, minute by minute, with the regret of 'wasting time' and the doubtful urge to 'make the best of your time'. Punctuality is a virtue, and using one's time to the full is a trait of the efficient manager. In the Orient, however, the universally accepted belief in reincarnation, the conception of history as recurring cycles, the ages of the world that inexorably return to be again what they once had been, remove the urgencies of the calendar and the hurry in action. The eternal snake bites its tail and the whole universe turns round on itself. In the Gujarati language the same word, *kale*, is equally used to refer to "before" or to "after". I was utterly mystified when I asked the teacher in my early Gujarati class where in the textbook was a certain reference with respect to the chapter we were doing, and he answered, *agal*. I consulted my dictionary. It said that *agal* meant "before" or "after". Much help. I could not find the reference, but I did learn an important feature of the new language. There is no "before" and no "after". Everything turns round and round. No hurry. No "wasting time" because time will always obligingly come again. No urgency to do anything, as there are before us innumerable reincarnations in which we'll have ample time to do it. I remember with glee how people laughed when they saw an American tourist "doing", as they say, the seven bridges of the River Jhelum in Shrinagar in a *shikara*, the flat boat meant to be leisurely driven by a single oar, but which he had hired eight oarsmen to propel at full speed while he took pictures right and left with his camera to record his achievement. Two cultures in contrast.

This concept of time as indeed "no-time" leads to the peace, the leisure, the ease that the Orient represents and exemplifies, and which the West is beginning to discover with wonder and trying to learn to its own profit. But there is a danger in this concept, and this danger is also quite real. Peace and ease can degenerate into carelessness, and restfulness can come to mean

laziness. Gandhi, an Oriental himself but always open to any positive influence, combined Oriental virtues with all the good and valid attitudes he had observed in the West, and he strove to transmit them to his people. His practical mind realised the value of time, and he showed in his person and with his example the art of living day by day and minute to minute without ever losing one's peace. He was punctual to a fault, priced every minute, worshipped timetables, revered appointments. He hardly owned anything, but together with his wire spectacles and his wooden sandals, he always wore an old pocket watch which, missing a pocket, kept hanging outside from his belt. The whole country ran to that watch.

The year 1916, the annual session of the 'Gujarat National Assembly' presided by Gandhi took place in Godhra. Tilak, the undisputed national leader in the generation before Gandhi, who was old by then, was specially invited to the meeting. Gandhi arrived punctually as usual with him, and Tilak arrived half an hour late-also as usual with him. It was not easy to upbraid Tilak in private, let alone in public, but Gandhi did it in a masterful way. He welcomed Tilak on the dais with due honour and heartfelt affection. He praised his long and dedicated labours for the independence of India for so many years by then, and then he added with a smile: 'Though, one thing. If the independence of India comes half an hour late, the delay will be due to Tilak.' People laughed and clapped ... and Gandhi had taught his lesson.

Coming late for an appointment with Gandhi was missing it. Late arrivals were not admitted. Partly because Gandhi would by then be engaged with someone else, and partly to teach the latecomer a lesson. Once a rather important person protested at not being received by Gandhi, and he even claimed that he had arrived in time but it was Gandhi's watch that was fast. Gandhi had him informed that when one goes to meet someone, he has to go by the watch of the person he is going to see. And he added without pity: "Tell him to come tomorrow ... and to come in time."

Once Gandhi had appointed Kalelkar to represent him in a meeting in a village from which they would come to fetch him at the appointed time. The time

came and went, and Gandhi, whose attention nothing escaped, noticed that Kalelkar was still at home. He asked him at once: 'How is it you've not yet started?' Kalelkar answered: 'I'm ready and waiting, but I cannot go unless they come to fetch me. I don't know the way and I have no car.'

Gandhi got angry with him and getting serious told him before everybody: 'That is not right. As soon as it was time you should have started. What does it matter if you have no car? You can walk. If it takes you two days walking, let it take you two days. And if you don't know the way, ask for directions on your way. You are not responsible for arriving on time, but you are responsible for starting on time. As soon as it is time we must start off. If you are not ready to do it that way, you cannot represent me.'

Gandhi not only told his followers to do it that way, but he always did it so himself. In Ahmedabad people still remember the day on which Gandhi cycled through the city's streets. Those who were to come to fetch him did not come in time, and so he started off on foot. On his way he saw a worker of his institution on a cycle, he borrowed it from him, sat on it and in that way went to the appointed place in the midst of the surprise and the greetings of those who recognised him along the way. There was no photographer on hand to record the scene, but it has been faithfully kept in the memory of Ahmedabad citizens who still point out today the way Gandhi went that day on his cycle. The next episode is not so well-known but is even more typical and more exemplary.

Gandhi was in Bombay and had to go by the evening train to Delhi. A Bombay businessman who was present when they were planning with Gandhi how to take him to the railway station that evening volunteered immediately and said: 'Don't worry, I'll send you my car with my driver. No problem.' Gandhi answered:

'I accept, but the car must be here in time. 'Tell me the time you want it here.'

'Four o'clock here in this house.'

'At four sharp the car will be here.'

As the time approached in the evening, Gandhi finished his work and got ready to go. At five to four he looked outside and nobody had come. He looked at his watch and waited for five minutes. At four sharp he told his secretary: "Mahadev, it is time, so I start off." And taking his walking stick he started walking at a fast pace as he knew how to do when he was going somewhere for an appointment.

The people around him were horrified when they saw him struggling alone in the midst of Bombay's mad traffic. The man of the house in which Gandhi was staying ran after him and shouted to him: 'Please, wait; I'll get you a taxi at once.' But Gandhi did not stop to listen and went on making his way at full speed.

Meanwhile the car and driver promised by the businessman arrived at the house. When the driver realised that it was his fault that such a great person had to start walking to the railway station, he was very sorry and afraid. Without losing any time, he started for the station in his car and caught up with Gandhi on the way. But Gandhi, without stopping in his way, told him: 'I'm not getting in your car. I'll reach the station on foot. I will pay the penalty for your fault. If I now get into your car, you will never learn. You have to reach in time and start in time. Don't you ever forget it.' He went on with his fast walking and reached the station in time.

Those who were waiting for him at the railway station were astonished when they saw him arrive on foot. He explained to them the situation and added: 'When that businessman comes to know, I'm afraid he will punish his driver and may even dismiss him. Tell him from me not to punish him. He's been sufficiently scared. But let everybody learn to be punctual.'

There was no time to make the speech he had prepared to be given in the railway station, but for Gandhi that lesson was more important than a speech.

There is no need for a comment to this story. Neither to the next one which I append:

The Saurashtra leader, Fulchandbhai, was staying for a time in Gandhi's headquarters in Ahmedabad. One day he went to see Gandhi and told him,

'I'll have to go out for a few days.'

'When do you want to go?'

'Tomorrow itself.'

'And when will you be back?'

'Probably on Saturday, and if it can't be Saturday, then definitely on Sunday.'

'That will not do. The date must be fixed. If it is Saturday, Saturday, and it is Sunday, Sunday. Leaving things in the air is not allowed here.'

'All right. Then on Saturday evening I'll definitely be back.'

'Fine. And now take note. Once you give your word, you have to keep it. And in order to be on time for a given appointment, you have to keep it in mind and plan everything accordingly. So long as there is not a serious emergency, you have to appear in time. So, I expect one of these three things on Saturday evening:

either you appear here, or a letter arrives saying you are sick, or I get a telegram saying you have died. There is no fourth option.'

Gandhi's insistency gave fruits. His companions and followers were learning from him and were also beginning to tell others to do the same. Nothing gave Gandhi more joy than seeing his collaborators assimilate his principles and put them into practice. Ramnaresh Tripathi, writer and poet of the time, tells his own experience:

The year 1918, the annual meeting of the circle of writers and poets took place in Bombay. The most important figures in letters and in politics were in attendance, and Gandhi was presiding. There were talks in Hindi, Gujarati and Marathi, and the list of speakers was quite long. My name was the last in the list. Seeing the list and my name in it, Gandhi asked me:

'How long are you going to speak?'

'An hour and a half.'

'No. Three quarters of an hour.'

'I can't even begin with that.'

'You'll see how you manage. Three quarters of an hour.'

Those were the days of long speeches. Short speeches were not appreciated. I always spoke long and I had no practice in speaking briefly. For that occasion I had prepared a very long speech and I had no idea how to shorten it. But you had to obey Gandhi, and I did what I could. I suppressed full sections of my speech, shortened others, and kept looking at my watch all the time since I started. At the end of my speech I said: 'I had been granted forty-five minutes to speak, and I am finishing when it is exactly forty three minutes. I have two minutes left and I gift them to our president, Mr. Gandhi.'

Gandhi visibly rejoiced when he heard I was giving him two minutes and began clapping. Then he said: 'This is the first time in my life that someone presents me with a gift of time. I appreciate it all the more as more often people take my time from me. Even when I ring the bell for them to finish, they don't pay attention and go on speaking. Let all imitate the example given today. Saving time is also patriotism.'

And finally the most remarkable (and most expensive) case of Gandhi's punctuality.

Gandhi was travelling through the Northeast of India with a very tight programme of meetings in several places, among them a village called Navabganj. There were very long distances and a difficult terrain. To reach Navabganj, Gandhi and his companions had to take the Calcutta mail till Podadih, change there to the Daka mail till Goalando, and from there to Navabganj by steamer. But some landslides delayed the departure of the Calcutta mail, and although work to open the road again was started immediately, they calculated they would not arrive in time to catch the steamer to Navabganj, so that they would have to suppress the visit they had announced and programmed for that place. They were about to do that when

Gandhi spoke and said: 'I have promised to reach that village in this steamer, and they are awaiting me. I have to keep my appointment with the same exactness and punctuality with which I keep an appointment with the viceroy. They are not any lower. Do whatever has to be done and spend whatever has to be spent, but I want to be in Navabganj at the time we have announced.'

Satishbabu, who was the boss of Calcutta and travelled with Gandhi, proposed to set up a special train for the trip, and Gandhi accepted the proposal. They had to pay 1140 rupees for it, which was a fortune at the time, but Gandhi arrived in time for his appointment in the village where they were waiting for him.

Gandhi could be stingy when it came to money. He belonged to the merchant caste, kept in his mind an account of all he spent, and saved systematically. One day he could not find the stub of a pencil he used, and asked Mahadev to look for it. Mahadev gave him another pencil, but Gandhi refused to take it. He said that the other had still some lead in it and it had to be used. He insisted till they found it. For soap he used a smooth stone. Once towards the end of his life when he was travelling through hostile territory not without danger, they realized at night that they had left the stone in the previous village, and Gandhi made a young girl, Maniben, to fetch back the stone. Shankarlal Banker told me in person how he was put to shame when he was in jail next to Gandhi and wanted to show off how he washed his own clothes, and proceeded to wash them in front of Gandhi to be seen by him. Gandhi observed him for a while and then told him severely: "That's not how it is done. You are spending such an amount of water and of soap that you would be ruined if you had to live from that job. I'm going to tell you how it is done." With that, Gandhi began to wash the clothes using very little water and soap as though there were in a drought. And yet he gave the clothes a thorough wash. This same Gandhi who could be such a miser in his own expenses, could also be prodigal when there was question of keeping an appointment. Nehru once said: "It is quite expensive to keep Gandhi poor." And Gandhi himself liked to repeat Nehru's words with a mischievous smile. He was austere with himself, but he did not hesitate to go

to high expenses when it was question of principle and of the education of the people. Reverence for time was one of the main points in his programme to educate India.

10. OBEDIENT DISOBEDIENT

Together with respect for time, respect for the law was another of the great lessons Gandhi set out to teach to India and to the world. There he met with a difficult problem that required all his talent and all his tact to find a solution. Gandhi himself opposed the unjust laws of the British, he disobeyed them himself and incited others to disobey them. That was easily understood. But with that came the real and immediate danger that a people that had been taught to disobey the laws of the British would, on independence, go on to disobey their own laws.

It is easy to organise a protest. It is easy to raise the masses. Everybody knows how to leave work, crowd the streets and shout against anybody or anything, sometimes not even knowing why and against what they are shouting. Today they take the street because Gandhi has asked them to; tomorrow they may be doing it because someone without Gandhi's balance and seriousness and responsibility is asking them. Once they had done it for an authentic cause, the method is consecrated and can then be used for any other cause, whether right or not. The crowds do not reflect, they are led, and once used to protesting, they can go on protesting against anything. It is easy to unleash the storm. It is easy to incite people to disobey its rulers. The difficult thing is to inculcate respect for the law at the same time as it is being opposed, to educate the crowds, to maintain responsibility while granting liberty.

Gandhi undertook the delicate and almost contradictory task of taking the people to the disobedience of the actual laws and preparing them at the same time for the obedience to future laws. Disobedience now, yes, but "civil" disobedience, responsible, mature, limited to this moment and to this law, keeping at the same time the full respect for the legislator, for law in general, and for all other laws in the concrete. A lifelong education. A shared responsibility.

The method for that education was Gandhi's typical method: the example, the image, the anecdote. To do so that all may see; to speak out so that all may

hear. Let all see how the promoter of disobedience obeys, how the leader of independence submits himself. Gandhi showed in his own person in a thousand telling episodes that delicate balance, or, better, that bold synthesis between observance and rebellion, and carefully distinguished the unjust law against which to revolt from the just law he would always definitely obey. With that graphic way of exposing his doctrine he could make it reach all corners of India in its full extension.

The British government, without realising it or wanting it, repeatedly offered Gandhi the best way to practice his teaching, and Gandhi made use of it to the full. They sent Gandhi to jail. Gandhi was sent to jail again and again for having publicly disobeyed some law, and then once in jail he painstakingly obeyed the smallest injunction, rule, order or directive of his jailers. The preacher of disobedience, obeyed. Gandhi, who did not recognise the validity of British rule in India, accepted the jurisdiction of the jail authorities over the inmates and over himself. His exemplary submission behind jail walls was in sharp contrast to his challenge to power in the streets. This contrast made concrete and visible the lesson he wanted to teach and facilitated its acceptance.

The first to learn the lesson were his jail mates. Shankarlal Banker, political prisoner with him in the Yeravda jail, narrates the following instructive episode.

Dastane, the well-known Congress leader in Bhusaval, was condemned to forced labour for his active participation in the non-cooperation movement. He was sent to the same jail in which Gandhi was, although he could not communicate with him, and he was ordered to work according to the law and the sentence he had received. He refused to work, and as a punishment he was flogged.

When Gandhi came to know that, he went to the jail director and told him: 'In my opinion the prisoner who has been sentenced to forced labour, whoever he may be and for whatever motive it may be, has to work. Our volunteers challenge that law with full restraint and respect while they are free, but once in jail they have faithfully to obey all jail laws and regulations. That is how I

understand it, and if you allow me to speak to Dastane, I'll explain the matter to him and will convince him.'

The director appreciated Gandhi's attitude and initiative, but he had orders not to allow him to speak with the other prisoner, and he refused permission. Gandhi then sent a message, and Dastane wrote back to him: 'I accept your reasons and your advice, and I'm ready to work. I have only a difficulty: I first refused to work and was flogged; so if I now begin to work, all will believe I do it out of fear of the whip. In order to avoid that misunderstanding I want to be able to publicly say that if I now am ready to work, that is because Gandhi has sent me a message and has opened my eyes and made me realise my true duty.'

Meanwhile, Gandhi had already informed the director of the message he had sent, and had asked that if that was against the rule, he himself should be punished. The director, instead, admired his nobility of character and thanked him for having so skilfully solved a worrisome situation.

Gandhi's own wife was also witness and object of the care her husband always had to observe all rules in jail in a touching and instructive episode.

Gandhi's wife, Kasturba, who was at large, went to see her husband in jail with all due permissions. She came at the appointed time, and husband and wife got together in the presence of a jail official as prescribed and began to talk. They had been given half an hour for their meeting.

The jail official after a while saw that there was no need for his presence when Gandhi and his wife were such honourable people and behaved so exemplarily, and so, in order to give them some privacy, he quietly withdrew without saying anything and left them alone.

After half an hour the official came back and asked them with a smile: 'You must have been able to speak quite freely, isn't it?' He expected to be thanked for his gesture in leaving quietly, but Gandhi answered him with resignation: 'Speak? We just talked a little at the beginning while you were here. After that we kept quiet.' - 'How was that?' the jailer asked with sad concern. Gandhi explained to him in all sincerity: 'I know perfectly well all jail regulations, and

one of them is that for an inmate to be able to speak with a visitor, a jail officer has to be present. I noticed that a short while after our meeting began you had to leave, no doubt in order to attend to other business which I fully understand. Since then we kept quiet till now that you've come back and so now we take leave of each other.'

Gandhi had outjailed his jailer. The poor official must have remained dumbfounded. He meant to do Gandhi a favour, but he had not reckoned with Gandhi's own approach. Although in a way he did do him a favour: he gave him another image and anecdote with which to broadcast to India's people at large his message of fidelity to the law. Gandhi loved his wife but he willingly sacrificed a half an hour talk with her in order to give example of obedience to the law. He went on teaching from jail.

In the same jail there was an African prisoner from Somalia called Adam who had been there for many years. He was put in charge of Gandhi as the authorities thought that since he was not an Indian he would not easily come under Gandhi's influence. But they were wrong. The first three days he acted as Gandhi's zealous guardian observing all he was doing and not leaving him alone for a single moment. On the fourth day he complained to a companion: 'Why have they set me to watch this saint ? He gets up at four o'clock to pray. Then he is the whole day so busy that he has no time to talk with anybody. Watching him is a waste of time.'

Ever since then Adam tried, not watching Gandhi, but seeing how he could help him. After a few days he came to Gandhi with that day's newspaper, *The Times of India*, in his hand. Adam did know that political prisoners were strictly forbidden to read the paper, but he also knew that all, and particularly the political prisoners, were always eager to read it, and the day they got the paper on the sly was a feast day for them. He wanted to do Gandhi that favour and went to him with the paper. Gandhi realised at once the situation:

'What is this, Adam?'

'The paper, sir. It is today's paper. All fresh news. I've brought it especially for you.'

'I'm sorry but I can't read the paper. It is against the prison rules, and you know it well. Take it away at once.'

'But all of them like it! I've got it with great difficulty and I've got it inside at my own risk. Have a look at least.'

'I realise all that you are saying, but I cannot accept it. It is against the rules. Take that paper back immediately and burn it. Else I'll have to inform the authorities about it.'

Gandhi was human and he would have been delighted to read the paper. And if he had done it, probably no one would have come to know about it and nobody would have objected. But he was aware of his responsibility as the leader of the nation. His actions were law, his behaviour was rule. And he did not read the paper.

But this episode has a more human end, which throws a special light on Gandhi's character. In spite of his apparent hardness at times, Gandhi was not rigid, was not inhuman, was not insensible. He knew how to yield, how to set aside principles for a while, how to recognise the exception to a rule, and above all he knew how to appreciate a touch of humour in a situation. That happened beautifully in this occasion of the newspaper.

Adam was left helpless. But he felt unable to burn the paper. After so much work and so much risk he was not going to throw all that out of the window. So he thought of a trick. He insisted and told Gandhi: 'You are a great man, you are a saint and you don't read the paper. That is all right. But I am not a saint, it is a long time since I left my country, and surely in that paper there will be some news of my land. I don't know how to read and so I cannot get the news. Will you be so good as to see whether there is any news of my country in the paper and read it out to me?'

Gandhi saw through the proposal and smiled. That was an indirect way to make him read the paper. And Gandhi did not want to disappoint his devoted guardian and helper. Precisely at the time there was a war going on in Somalia, and Gandhi read out to Adam the news of his country. Adam showed great joy,

not at having got news of Africa but for having got Gandhi to read the paper, and he went out jumping like a child and shouting: 'I convinced him, I convinced him! Gandhi has finally read the paper!' And Gandhi also rejoiced with his joy.

Gandhi knew how to make an exception to the rule, and that attitude tells more in his favour than his habitual insistence on keeping the rules. This shows that when Gandhi insisted on keeping the rules, he was not doing it out of any mechanical rigidity or lack of understanding. He was understanding and flexible, and he could show it when the occasion came. He knew how to please a simple man, even if he had to abandon his throne of *Mahatma* for once. By doing this he was emerging as a true *Mahatma*.

Gandhi spent several years of his public life in jail. Apart from his daily work in his cell, he made use of those days to proclaim with his exemplary obedience the respect to the law, to authority, to the government. An image that sums up this constant and conscious attitude of Gandhi was that of the British judge who, on Gandhi's entering the hall as an accused, against all protocol, norm or tradition, stood up from his chair in respect and requested all those present to do the same in homage to the man he, as a judge, was going to condemn while, as a man, admired and revered. He had learnt Gandhi's lesson on obedience and disobedience.

11. CONSTANT WORK

In jail, Gandhi got up early and worked through the day. Not only in jail, but wherever he might be throughout his life. His constant work was an essential trait in his character and a fundamental element in his efficiency. This is often forgotten, and Gandhi is often represented as so quick in his analysis and genial in his decisions that he hardly needed a special study or preparation for his activities. This is quite far from the facts and is a great obstacle to the understanding of Gandhi's real greatness. He was a conscientious, meticulous, indefatigable worker. He studied all problems, prepared his visits, meditated solutions. His reaction before any new situation was to collect information, analyse all aspects, get references, interrogate all concerned, consult people. No hurry and no improvisation. That entailed much work, and Gandhi took it up without hesitation. Hard work was his faithful companion through life.

A typical example was his reaction to the Jallianbag massacre in Amritsar. At the most painful moment of the fight for independence, when General Dyer ordered his soldiers to fire in cold blood against a fully peaceful crowd of men, women, and children leaving behind many dead and seriously wounded, the whole nation grieved and the political leaders multiplied accusations and recriminations against the British government that was responsible for that massacre. Gandhi grieved the most, but his reaction was more concrete and more decisive. Instead of a general protest he ordered a detailed investigation. He directed it personally and took upon himself the writing of the final report. Kalelkar recalls:

The investigation lasted three months. 1700 written reports were ordered. All this had to be analysed, checked, summarised. Gandhi locked himself in his office and devoted himself exclusively to this work. He suffered when reading the stories of that shedding of blood as unjust as it was inhuman. He literally worked day and night without hardly any interruption. He slept only two and a half hours at night, and sometimes in the afternoon he became so tired that his body refused to go on.

One day I observed how he had remained seated with a paper in his left hand and his pen in the right, and had fallen asleep. I didn't touch him to wake him up, but he himself immediately opened his eyes, shook himself slightly and started again to write. He did not spare himself.

That was a special occasion, a national emergency, but for Gandhi such intensity at his work was normal. This is now a witness' account of the second stage of his fight for independence when he was not living in Ahmedabad any more, as he had promised not to come back to his headquarters there until independence were obtained. He had shifted to Wardha, in the geographical centre of India, graphically to stress again that he belonged to the whole of India without distinction of provinces, and that his mission was for all.

Banarasidas Chaturvedi went to visit Gandhi in Wardha. Gandhi had given him a half-an-hour appointment at nine o'clock at night. They spoke exactly till half past nine. Gandhi was in a good mood and he laughed a lot and made his visitor laugh. When the visit was over, he told him: 'Now leave me, please. I've got up this morning at one thirty and have only rested for twenty-five minutes in the afternoon.' Banarasidas was astonished when he heard that. From one thirty in the morning to nine thirty at night it's twenty hours. And Gandhi had been working non-stop all the time. When telling this anecdote, Banarasidas used to add: Gandhi works too much to make up for our laziness.'

The daily mail was a recurring, monotonous, heavy, important exercise every day. Wherever Gandhi might be, his room looked like a post office. He got hundreds of letters every day. In his headquarters in Ahmedabad a room has been converted into a museum where some curious specimens of the letters he received are kept. An envelope bears this address: "To Gandhi wherever he may be." Another bears his name without any other indication. Yet another doesn't even bear that: instead, Gandhi's face is drawn on it. And the letter reached him. The postman in the smallest Indian village was familiar with that face and felt responsible for the letter being properly delivered. An eye witness describes Gandhi's daily letter writing:

Gandhi receives dozens of letters and he reads and answers them personally, to the extent that he even writes by hand the address on each envelope. He insists that each letter has to be answered the same day it is received, and he does not go to bed until he has done with the day's mail. Sometimes his hand gets so tired with the writing that I've seen him pass the pen from his right hand to his left and go on writing with the left, as he has also known how to do that.

He also takes care that the letters have to be mailed on the same day or next day in the morning. When he is travelling, the first thing he asks on arrival at a new place is, 'At what time does the mail go?' And then every day at that time he asks whether the mail has been taken to the post or not.

He publishes two papers every week. *Young India* in English and *Navajivan* in Gujarati. The day the matter has to be sent to the press, the activity around Gandhi is worth seeing. In one corner, translations are prepared from one language to the others, in another the articles are being typed, and in yet another they are placed in the corresponding envelopes and the stamps are affixed. Gandhi oversees everything and gives orders as required. The articles he has not written himself he reads always carefully before they are sent. Everything has to be ready by mail time. Gandhi then asks who is going to take the mail and when will he start. Thus the tide gets over ... till the next week.

Another point to be mentioned and to be placed in its proper context is Gandhi's insistence on manual work. Manual work is not well regarded in India as it is something that belongs to the lower classes, even lower castes which is worse as that seems to place a stigma on it. I learnt that lesson at my own cost the day I taught my first mathematics class in Gujarat University. On entering the classroom I noticed that the blackboard was all written over, and to save time I did what my school and college teachers in Spain used to do every day in the same situation and with all naturalness, that is, I handed the duster to a student in the first row and signalled to him to wipe the blackboard clean. Horror broke loose! The student blushed and refused to take the duster. The whole class stood up ready to protect and defend the victim. They accused me

before the Rector of the University of asking a boy of a good family to do a menial job unworthy of him before everybody. The good Rector understood my ignorance and warned me not to do it again. To work with one's hands is denigrating, and to ask a student to wipe the blackboard before the whole class is a public humiliation. Though, ironically, that makes the teacher perform the unseemly task. Unless he, as I also learned in due time, calls a servant to clean the blackboard.

An Indian friend of mine confessed to me that the first time he had taken a suitcase in his hands was in New York airport when on arrival in his first journey abroad he found to his utter surprise that there were no porters. Such a thing was unthinkable for him, but he had to do what he had never done in his life, so he took his two suitcases in his two hands and walked ahead as everybody else was doing. Partly, this is the Manichean heritage we all bear inside us, according to which matter always stains by itself, and contact with it has to be avoided as far as possible; partly it is the concept of caste that limits certain works and tasks to certain groups as unclean; and partly the natural laziness that makes me prefer that others do the dirty work for me. The result is a universal and harmful prejudice that hinders the normal course of labour, lowers before society those who perform certain tasks, ignores the value and dignity of the human person with its body, its hands, and all that they do. Gandhi rose up against that prejudice and inveighed against it in word and in action.

We don't understand-Gandhi's words-the dignity of manual work. We have divorced our body from our soul, and our hands from our brain. There are millions of people among us who do not use their hands in work, and that is a tragedy. We are lame in practice. For many people the hand is no more than a foot, given the limited use they make of it. In reality, the hand is the glory of man, his special attribute, his most valuable possession. When we don't use it as we should, nature condemns us to be maimed ... in body and soul.

The image many people have of Gandhi, his most repeated and commented photograph, is that of him in advanced age with only a little white hair on his

head, sitting down and bent over a spinning wheel with his full attention on it. The spinning wheel was his inseparable companion. As soon as his hands were freed, he started spinning. He could spin while he talked, thought, or prayed. He set his hands to work lovingly, skilfully, gently. Spinning was not a distraction for him. He called it a sacrament. He liked to say that the wheel's circumference is small, but its message reaches the whole round world. A message of identification with the working masses, a message of simplicity, of self-sufficiency, of independence, of patriotism. He went to the length of saying: "I would like to die with my hand on the spinning wheel."

Gandhi was good at the wheel. And he could even make a political use of it. When he went to visit the royal family in London he thought of bringing a gift for the Queen Mother. The gift was a shawl made of cloth he had woven himself. There may not be many more valuable gifts in the collection of gifts in Buckingham Palace.

12. CARE OF THE BOY

If Gandhi set his body to work, he also looked after it with care. Thus he also showed that our body is important, even essential, for the wellbeing of the individual ... and of the country. In educating the nation for independence he wanted a healthy and strong nation in body and soul. He knew and quoted the Gujarati proverb: "Good health is man's wealth." Freedom from a foreign country was important, but freedom from sickness, malnutrition and misery was as important or more than political freedom. And, as usual, he began by experimenting with himself before beginning to teach others about the matter. One of Gandhi's biographers complains that when he sets about telling the story of his London stay in his autobiography, he devotes more space to his experiments with food than to his studies or his ideas. He was obsessed by the study of food, and kept making changes in what he ate and observing the effects of the changes on his health and his strength. He was a vegetarian in his family and religion, and only when he was fifteen he took meat by stealth for about a year; then he left it, and once in England he promised his mother not to eat meat, and at several stages in his life he took several vows related to food, as that of taking only one meal a day, of living on fruits only, of taking goat's milk instead of cow's milk, of taking no milk at all, of taking only five items in a meal ... with the amusing discussions between friends at the time of preparing the daily menu to determine whether the salt added to a vegetable counted for a separate item or not. Preoccupation about the kind of food and its effects accompanied Gandhi through life. "We are what we eat", he was fond of repeating, and he tirelessly went on carrying out his personal investigations about food.

Some see in Gandhi's attitude to food a kind of obsession or meanness. They don't realize that what Gandhi had was a scientific spirit that lead him to inquire and to investigate, to be based on facts, not on blind traditions or beliefs however venerable they might be, and who wanted to find out by himself, to experiment, to reach evidence. In other fields he could not

experiment by himself, but in the matter of food the laboratory was his own body, and so he insisted on the scientific method, on verifying hypotheses, on being ready to change his opinion if required by the facts. When his vegetarian bent led him to give up even milk, since after all milk comes from animals, he consulted a doctor and then followed his advice.

When Gandhi thought of giving up milk, he consulted Dr Harilal Desai. The doctor came every day and examined Gandhi. After a few days, Gandhi began having stomach ache. They waited for a few more days, and finally the doctor told him: 'You have been taking milk for many years, and on the other hand you eat so little that any change in your food affects you at once. In my opinion you should take milk again.' Gandhi answered: 'I had a great desire to do without it, but for me your opinion counts more than my own wishes. In any case I'm glad to have made the experiment, as now we know for certain what is to be done.' Since that day he took milk again.

There is a Sanskrit saying to the effect that, "He who controls his palate, controls all his senses". Gandhi gave much importance to the control of the palate, and included it in the vows that all inmates at his institution had to obey. (The other vows were: telling the truth, observing non-violence, sexual moderation, not using up in anything more than it was absolutely necessary, no private possessions, no foreign goods, wearing only self-spun clothes, using Indian languages over English, rejection of untouchability, fearlessness.) He wrote:

I'm convinced that the sense of taste resides not in the tongue but in the brain. A horse or a cow do not feel excited about eating as man does. We have to use our mind to control our appetite, not to excite it. We mistake the degree of complication in preparing food with the degree of civilization. The more spices we add, the more are needed; and on the contrary, the more we get used to simple meals, the more tasty they become.

Kalelkar told me about the problem he had on his arrival in Gandhi's institution. The daily food morning and evening was rice, but in the ashram, by Gandhi's order, it was cooked and taken with its husk. Kalelkar could not swallow it, and

he took his problem to Gandhi. Gandhi explained to him at leisure the advantages, not only for the spirit but also for the body, of rice with husk as against rice without its husk and therefore deprived of all its vitamins and fiber. Kalelkar accepted the argument, decided to try, got used little by little, and the moment came, as he himself told me, when white rice tasted insipid to him while with its husk it was much more tasty. And he told me again about Gandhi's principle: taste resides in the mind.

The most striking of all of Gandhi's meditations and experiments in his mind and his body was the one of sex abstinence. The Sanskrit word for chastity, used also in the modern Indian languages and to which no translation into Western languages can do justice, is *brahmacharya*. Gandhi went to its etymological root and interpreted it in its most general sense as "walking with Brahma", that is "living in a godly way", although in practice it is translated by continence or chastity. Indian tradition gives the utmost importance to this virtue, and it is common doctrine and belief, also accepted by Gandhi, that full spiritual development and final liberation after death cannot be attained without it. The word "semen" is translated by *virya*, which also signifies much more: its root "vir" reaches English through Latin in words like "virile", "virility", and the Indian word is used today to mean vital energy, strength, courage, and whatever virtue related to masculinity. Loss of *virya* is considered loss of strength, of health, of virility. Gandhi wrote these words which I quote with respect in spite of the manifest exaggeration they entail:

The real celibate will enjoy perfect health, and he will not even suffer from a cold. His body will reflect the shining of his spiritual power, his intelligence will be sharp and deep, his memory infallible, and he'll live in full use of all his physical and mental faculties till a very old age. He who conserves in himself the fluid of life, conserves his vitality and makes sure of his strength.

When Swami Vivekananda, who had an extra-ordinary memory, was asked what the secret of his fabulous memory was, he answered in all seriousness: "I have a good memory because I observe full chastity." When Kalelkar, who kept excellent health for ninety eight years, was asked by somebody in my presence

what was the secret of such a long life, he answered with a sense of humor and of reality: "I could answer that the secret was chastity which I faithfully observe since more than sixty years, and you would all believe me as that is a common opinion in India; but the truth is that I know real celibates who have been sick and have died young, and libertines who have lived long lives in the best health ..., so that the principle does not hold." We all present at the time round him laughed, as we knew the background of that belief, and I admired Kalelkar's spontaneous sincerity and humility in renouncing the aura his listeners were willing to surround him with. He knew the popular belief about the miraculous effects of celibacy, but he didn't take advantage of it. Gandhi was influenced by that belief as he also was influenced by the traumatic experience in his youth as he was in bed with his wife when his father died in the next room. He was very hard on himself reproaching himself of what he considered a blind passion which kept him from being by his father's side when he died. But more than that, it was the desire to undertake the cause of the service of the masses and of the country's freedom that lead him to practice and propagate the ideal of sexual control.

When he was thirty six and had been married for twenty four years, Gandhi, with his wife's agreement, decided to observe full sexual abstinence, and he faithfully carried out his resolution till death. He wrote about that decisive day:

The day I took that vow was the day I became free. My wife too became on that day a free woman, free from my authority and free from her obligation to satisfy my sexual urge. For me she became something sacred, and every woman became my mother or my sister. This decisive step helped me greatly, both in my own interior growth and in my consecration to the national cause. Whoever wants to serve the nation and to advance in the way of the spirit must observe complete celibacy, be he married or single.

Gandhi's insistence on hygiene and health was even more important and better reasoned out. This was the first lesson that had to be learned and to be taught.

Gandhi was once visiting a poor region in North India in the company of his wife, and he proposed to her that she would start a school for the children of the place. His wife answered him with her practical and realistic view of things: 'I don't even know the language of these people, so I cannot even teach them the alphabet. Do you want me to teach them in Gujarati which they don't understand?'

Gandhi had an answer for everything and he answered her: 'The first subject you have to teach them is cleanliness, and for that there is no need of language. Wash them, bathe them, clean their eyes, teach them to brush their teeth, make them get accustomed to go about with clean hands and clean clothes. This is the fundamental education, and you can begin with it from this moment.'

Sickness was another focus of Gandhi's constant attention. In the care of the sick too he saw the service to the nation and to humanity, the exercise of love to all, and the identification with those who suffered. He personally took care of the sick around him, and he gave them of his time even taking it away from important state meetings. He wanted all to learn that same dedication, and he took up this work with generous conviction and sincere joy. Here is an example which speaks by itself:

The wise and revered professor, Parchure Shastri, had taken up in his old age social work in the villages and had contracted leprosy. He had lost his fingers and nose, and was full of open sores in a pitiful state. He wanted to see Gandhi before he died, as he had never seen him, and so he travelled to Vardha where Gandhi was at the time. He reached in the evening and he remained standing at the gate of the *ashram* without entering, asking only that Gandhi would come out for a moment so that he could see him. Someone gave the message to Gandhi: 'There is someone there outside who just wants to see you before he dies.'

Gandhi went out, looked round and recognized the professor at once. He greeted him with great affection and invited him: 'What are you doing there standing outside? Come to the *ashram* and stay with me.' The old man was

touched and protested in the midst of tears: 'And who will look after me there? See in what state I am.' Gandhi cut him short: 'I will look after you. So long as I am here you will lack nothing. Come inside.'

Gandhi had to insist, and finally he convinced him. He accommodated him close to his own quarters, and every day he nursed him personally, cleaned his wounds, changed his dressings and gave him massage. He didn't miss a single day however busy he might be.

One day all the members of the executive committee of the National Congress were gathered together with Gandhi in an important meeting. In the middle of the session where a highly important matter was being discussed, Gandhi stood up to leave. Nehru stopped him: 'Where are you going? Your presence is indispensable for the points we are discussing, and you know it.' Gandhi excused himself: 'I have work outside.' Nehru took it ill and protested in a temper: 'Is there any work more important than the independence of the country?' Gandhi quietly answered: 'It is time for the care of the sick. Parchure Shastri is waiting for me for the daily cure. For me the care of the sick is more important than independence.' And he went on his work.

It is not that the care of the sick was more important than independence, but in Gandhi's mind and in reality it was part of it. Freedom had to be achieved not only from foreign domination but also from the slavery of bodily sickness; a fullness in political life as in physical and mental and cultural life. The body had to be trained for independence together with the mind and the soul. All was part of a unique programme, of a complete vision, of a total renaissance. Gandhi saw it, felt it, lived it out, and he spontaneously and naturally communicated that attitude to all those around him. It was more important for the members of the executive committee to see him cure a leper than for them to discuss with him the country's problems. All was a part of independence.

Gandhi himself was in his own body an example of what he preached. In spite of his fasts, his work, his cares, his constant travels and his heavy responsibilities, he always kept himself in good health in mind and body through his long life till his death at seventy nine. Three bullets on his chest

were needed to bring down that body he had lovingly and painstakingly trained for work.

13. THE ART OF PERSUASION

Gandhi's art of persuasion deserves attention. He was no orator, no dialectician, no preacher. His literary style in all his writings, which were abundant, is not brilliant or arresting or sweeping, let alone artistic. It is simple, clear, direct. He says what he has to say without any affectation, without passion, without any effort to convince. His prose befits his self-confidence as he knew what he wanted to say and how to say it clearly, trusting the reader to understand what is to be understood and to draw the conclusions that have to be drawn. That confidence in himself and in his readers marked his style and gave his prose and his voice that strange power that astonished those who remarked only on the unpretentious appearance of his speeches and his writings. Kalelkar remembers the following incident:

The year 1915, Gandhi went to Santiniketan, the literary, artistic, patriotic University Rabindranath Tagore had founded in Bengal. Many students lived there, and there was a legion of cooks and waiters to cook their meals and to serve them at table in their messes. Gandhi did not like that, and simply proposed that the students themselves would work in the kitchen and messes. Such a reform was according to Tagore's principles, but it remained to be seen whether the students would accept it or not, since the whole work would now come on their shoulders and it was to them a demeaning work fit for servants but not for students. But if they did not agree, nothing could be done. It was decided that they call a meeting that night for Gandhi to address them. Dinbandhu Andrews, who trusted his 'Mohan' as he called Gandhi familiarly using his name instead of his surname, told him encouragingly: 'Mohan, tonight you'll have to bring out all your eloquence. Prepare a good speech that may hypnotize them, or else the whole plan will collapse. It all depends on the way you speak.' Gandhi did not answer him.

In the evening we gathered all the students, and we were all impatient to hear the eloquent speech Gandhi had specially prepared. We were literally 'with our heart in our ears', as the saying goes. And what was what we heard? A weak,

thin voice, monotonous, almost cold; a kind of ordinary conversation, a brief and objective exposition of the matter. No eloquence, no enthusiasm, no fire. He didn't even invoke patriotism or insist on the plan's advantages. He just exposed the situation and sat down.

And yet his simple words had an immediate effect. I knew those students well, and I knew that working in the kitchen and in the dining room was the last thing they would agree to do. They had never done it and they would never do it. And yet as soon as Gandhi spoke, they took a free vote and the students themselves encouraged each other and they all voted in favour. We were all pleasantly surprised at the result. The only one who did not seem surprised was Gandhi.

Such was his eloquence: sincerity, simplicity, truth. When rhetoric is used to convince the audience, it often has the opposite effect; the listeners sense the hidden pressure, offer resistance, block acceptance. A direct and transparent exposition shows confidence in the justice of its own cause, and at the same time it trusts also the sincerity of the public for the right decision at the end. That was Gandhi's method, and those were its gratifying results.

My favorite example of Gandhi's persuasive power is the following, which is also told by Kalelkar. There is no question here of any political problem but of something more difficult, a family quarrel. Gandhi carried on his shoulders the weight and the responsibility of the government of the whole country, but he did not think it below himself to take up little family frictions if he could be helpful in them. And he sought the solution with the same patience, the same tact, and the same knowledge of people and analysis of circumstances he applied to problems of a national scale. Here is the sample:

A family related to Gandhi was faced with a problem to which nobody could find a solution. They had celebrated the betrothal of their daughter with her future husband. Betrothal in India is considered as serious as the wedding itself, and the undoing of it would bring opprobrium on both the families of the bride and the bridegroom, and would make it difficult for them to find other partners even for the brothers and sisters of the betrothed ones, as nobody would trust

their families any more. To break a betrothal was just unheard of. But that was precisely what had happened in this case. The bridegroom just refused to marry the bride. They all brought all pressure on him to convince him, threaten him, persuade him, but without success.

Finally, discouraged and defeated, they appealed to Gandhi. They did feel bad to trouble him with such a small matter in the middle of all his duty to the country, but for them it was a matter of life and death, and they could not find any other way. They went to see Gandhi, invoked their family ties, and set the case before him. The two families were present in full with all their young and old members in their numbers, they were all pressing their case, unanimously asking him to convince the bridegroom. During three long days Gandhi found time in the midst of his busy schedule, and spoke with the lad gently and leisurely, trying to convince him. After all, the boy had agreed to marry the girl, and if he now refused, he would cause serious difficulties to his bride and her brothers and sisters, as well as to his own brothers and sisters, and of course to his own parents and those of the girl. But all to no avail. The boy was stubborn in the extreme, and all could see the unpleasant character he had. Yet he could not stand the constant pressure brought on him by all, and finally, after three days he yielded and told Gandhi he was ready to marry the girl. Gandhi made him repeat that before all, and the girl's father breathed a sigh of relief and profusely thanked him for having achieved what nobody had been able to achieve.

Then Gandhi told all of them to go out, even the boy and the girl, and remained alone with the girl's parents. He told them sternly: 'You have what you wanted. The boy has said yes. You can marry him to your daughter tomorrow if you want. But you yourselves have seen all along these three days as I and all have seen that this boy has an impossible character. Your daughter will never be happy with him. I know all the problems this entails for you, but still I ask you straightforwardly: Do you, even after having seen all this, still want your daughter to marry him?'

I-follows Kalelkar-was watching the bride's father's face. It reflected the heavy battle that was being waged behind it. He could not bring himself to say either yes or no. Gandhi kept on looking straight at him with that look of his eyes that seemed to pierce through the person. A tense silence went on for quite a while. At the end, the bride's father broke down and said with a shaking voice: 'You are right, you are right. No wedding.'

Gandhi called in the boy and told him: 'I don't want to force you to do anything against your will. I have spoken with all, and you are free from your betrothal.'

They all left. Gandhi turned to me and, before I could make any comment, he told me cheerfully and wittingly: 'According to the Hindu scriptures saving a cow's life is a work of great merit. Today we have obtained such a recompense, as we've saved an innocent calf's life.' He laughed wholeheartedly, and I could see that his smile stayed on his face for the whole day.

Gandhi had seen from the start that the one to be dealt with was not the bridegroom but the bride's parents. And he also saw that if he addressed them directly, he would get nothing, as they would think he was tackling them to save himself the trouble of having to convince the boy. That's why he first dealt with the boy, spent three days labouring with him, got his consent, placed it in the hands of the parents... thus obtaining the right to ask them to give up their stand. Once the boy had been convinced, Gandhi had in his hands the cards to convince the parents. He proceeded to do that with all patience, delicacy, respect for each one, giving generously of his time, and keeping always before his eyes the good of the only person who was not present in the meeting and whom all seemed to have forgotten, the girl condemned to marry an unworthy and rebellious young man, the "innocent calf" who perhaps never actually came to know who had saved her from the slaughter. For me, Gandhi's greatness, his intuitive knowledge of persons, his instant and exact judgment of facts, his persuasive skill, his readiness to wait, his wisdom and his humor shine out in one such simple episode more than in the resolution of crises on a national scale. He succeeded in the great causes because he knew how to succeed in the small ones.

Another secret of Gandhi's success in his work was delegation. He knew how to trust others, to distribute work, to make each one feel responsible and take as one's own each task entrusted to everyone, because one was left free to carry out the work as one thought best. That made all give of their best, set to work all their qualities, obtain results. Gandhi surrounded himself with the most valuable coworkers, and he made them work at their best.

When he began his education campus at Ahmedabad, he chose three men of the highest rate to lead it: Kakasaheb Kalelkar, Kishorlal Mashruwala, and Narhari Parekh. Education was of the utmost importance for Gandhi, and he kept regular meetings in person with the three of them to evaluate results and plan new projects. In one of those meetings he told them:

I want to make one thing clear. This school and this university are not mine but yours. People know me and trust me, and I am in charge of getting funds for this to go on. But that does not make mine the institution.

The advice I give you here is only advice. If you do not agree with it, forget it. Do whatever you think best without fear or hesitation. I'm not a teacher and I have no right to impose my ideas on you. I fully trust you.

This trusting attitude brings the best out of people and obtains far better results than the strictest control. The persons feel great when trusted and they bring out all their resources. There is a dangerous proverb in Gujarati that says: "Nothing grows under a banyan tree." The banyan tree grows high and wide, its roots spread far underground and monopolise all water and nutrients. Strong personalities do not allow anybody to shine by their side. Gandhi avoided this danger with his conscious policy of delegating, trusting, fostering initiative and independence. He told Manuben, young woman though she was: "I don't like anybody to do anything only because I like it." And when she did something different from what Gandhi had recommended and she gave her reasons for it, Gandhi praised her before all and said: "If all were to do like that, my work would become much easier."

Gandhi applied this delegation principle not only to practical action but to the ideas themselves. He delegated principles as he delegated projects. He wanted

everyone to develop one's own ideas for oneself instead of borrowing them from him. Kalelkar learned non-violence from Gandhi, and when he found himself in jail with him, he thought of making use of the occasion to refine the concept and to deepen the theory asking him questions and proposing his own doubts. He would think out situations, cases, conflicts, and ask Gandhi the concrete non-violent solution in each case. Gandhi at the beginning would answer him and explain how he would proceed in each case. But one day when Kalelkar came with his usual list of questions, Gandhi cut him short and told him:

You have taken the idea of non-violence from me. Now it is yours. Develop it in your own way. It is a living idea and it incarnates itself differently in me and in you. Don't ask me what I would do in each case. Rather think what you would do in it, experiment, examine, and draw conclusions on your own. For non-violence to take root in your heart you have to take it as your own and understand it and practice it in your own way. Don't ask me anymore about it.

He who had said, "the university is yours", now says, "non-violence is yours". He hands over his ideas as he handed over his institutions, and this is the way for both of them to grow. To trust, to hand over, to delegate. To make the work become personal, individual, accepted and assimilated. Winning people over by trusting them. Convincing by innocence. Gandhi was nobody's guru, and by doing so he became a master for all.

The proof that Gandhi truly wished for others to think on their own and follow their own lights is the fact that he also was ready to let himself be convinced by others and to change his opinion when others reasoned out things with him. He was not rigid or stubborn, but open and flexible, always ready to learn and to be corrected. Even in a matter as personal as his fasts unto death he knew how to take advice and even sometimes changed his own proposal in view of what his companions would tell him. This aspect of his is less known, and yet it is important in order to understand his complex personality. Gandhi knew how to yield. The following anecdote, less known as it is more intimate, which I

heard from Kalelkar's lips and I tell here in my own words, throws an unexpected light on Gandhi's character.

As a result of the non-violent protest in the Dharasana salt works, many peaceful demonstrators got seriously injured during the protest itself and in jail afterwards where the police did not cease beating them, sometimes brutally. Gandhi was told about those abuses when he was in the Yeravda jail, and he began to think what he should do in the situation. Kalelkar was with him in jail.

One day after the night's common prayer, Gandhi approached Kalelkar and told him: "I cannot bear being here quietly in jail as a political prisoner while out there the police are hammering our young people on their heads. I'm going to write a letter to the viceroy and to begin a fast unto death." "For how many days are you going to fast?" Kalelkar asked him with concern. "There is no question of days", Gandhi answered, "this fast is unto death. Life in these circumstances has no meaning for me."

Both remained serious and silent for a long while, and at the end Kalelkar told him respectfully: "Before you take such a decision I entreat you to listen to me. Don't think I'm butting in to save your life for my love towards you or for fear of death. I too want to think objectively and to tell you freely what I think. It is true that our young people are suffering. But it is also true that without such suffering we cannot free the nation. Freedom requires a blood baptism. It has always required it. What we have suffered till now is nothing compared to the sufferings at the time of the patriotic revolution in 1857. We have become too soft. We have lost the capacity and the nerve to see arms being broken and blood being shed. This is the first time blood is shed in our struggle. Let it flow. If every time they break someone's head you're going to go into a hunger strike, we'll never end. Suffering is hard, but it is suffering that gives us strength and unifies us. This is the price of independence."

Gandhi said nothing. He remained lost in thought and then retired. He never spoke of this matter again. There was no hunger strike. Nobody else came to know about this crisis, and the incident remained only in Kalelkar's memory.

For me this fast which actually did not take place is as important as those which did take place and which the whole world knows about. Gandhi's greatness showed not only in the way he knew how to convince others but in the way he knew how to let himself be convinced.

14. THE BRACELETS CAMPAIGN

"In imagination I became a woman in order to reach women's hearts." These are Gandhi's words. They reflect his noble effort to come to understand women, to appreciate their indispensable contribution to the life of the man and to the cause of the nation, and to enlist all the women of India in the movement of national independence. Women are not only half of humankind, but also as mothers, as keepers of the home, as educators and teachers by nature it is they that shape the mind, uphold tradition, foster belief. Gandhi had undertaken the huge task of training a whole nation, and for that he needed the inside cooperation of the women of India.

While seeking their cooperation he sought also their own improvement, their education, their progress. He identified with them to live out with them the problems and the injustices they suffered from time immemorial. The wrong but universal concept of "the weak sex", the inequality of rights as against men's rights, the widely extended though plainly false image that Sita in the *Ramayana* was Rama's mute and passive slave, the dowry system that humiliates woman, the prohibition for widows to remarry: all that he denounced and attacked in order to liberate, to raise, to educate women in freedom and dignity on equal terms with men. Free women for a free country.

To understand the reach of Gandhi's action we have first to remark on the particular situation of women in India due to the common concept and practice of the "joint family" system, according to which the son, on marrying, continues living in his parents' home, while the newly wedded bride leaves her parents' home and goes to live with her husband in her in-laws' home. That ensures the unity of the family, the stability of marriage, the care of the parents in their old age as they will always have with them in their home their children to look after them. The idea of leaving their parents alone by themselves, or even worse, in an old people's home, is contrary to Indian ethics. But if the "joint family" has such advantages, it has also a serious disadvantage that affects the woman in the deal. Each couple knows that their male children will remain

with them, will look after them, will see to it that nothing is lacking to them till their death, while their daughters will leave them, will go on to live in another home, to serve another family. The daughter is called from her birth, in a brutal expression, "foreign capital" (*parki thapan*) destined to pass on to other people's hands, while the son is "home capital" which means rent and benefit in payment for all that is done for him since childhood. This situation means that the birth of a son is most welcome, while this is not so much the case for a daughter's birth. The second of the sixteen sacraments of the Hindu liturgy (*punsanvanam*) is administered to the mother after conception (*garbhadhan*) and it consists in a sacred rite and an official petition that the coming baby may be a boy. I used to tell my Hindu friends that the rite is effective in about half the number of cases. The consequence of such a mentality, sadly common if not universal, is that the woman has to undergo the trauma of being born without being wanted, the regret of knowing herself to be a burden to her parents, and the pain of having to leave her own home and to live all her life under her in-laws. Indian women can take pride in the fortitude with which they have been able to face such an unfair situation.

The interesting point here is to see how Gandhi tackled this situation and found a way to reach the feminine public with his message of liberation for the whole nation, for all women and men. How to reach those people who could not come to see him as they had to remain at home, who did not listen to the radio as it was still unknown in poor homes, who did not read his publications, how to reach the millions of women in India's infinite countryside who performed their daily tasks in the faraway silence of their remote villages? What to ask from them that would be privately and intimately their own, a personal contribution that would bring them into the national struggle for independence while at the same time it would inwardly wake them up, stress their dignity, make them conscious of their worth, their rights, their equality with all in society? The language of the sign, the symbol, the image, which Gandhi so masterly wielded, had to be particularly effective before a feminine imagination and sensitivity, but what symbol to use, what gesture to adopt, what image to project?

Gandhi exacted some sacrifice from all classes and all persons, as he knew that giving out something, particularly something personal and valuable, is what commits the persons to the cause and makes them come forward with all their heart more than mere discourses or promises; but what to ask from those who have nothing personal to give, who have already committed all their work to their homes, from those who consecrate their full day to their family, who already sacrifice their whole life for their husband and their children? To ask a housewife for her time has no meaning, as she already dedicates all her day to her duties and tasks at home, and any other work would take her away from her first and main responsibility to her family. Asking her for money has no meaning either, as she would have first to ask her husband for it. So, what sacrifice, what gesture, what contribution to the cause could Gandhi ask from the women of India, and how would that contribution help the growth and advance of those women themselves? Here is his solution in his own words:

To the women of India I'm asking, and I'll keep always asking, that they give me their gems and their jewelry, if possible all of it. Our women do not usually possess any money for them to freely dispose of it. Their true personal possession is their jewelry. They brought their jewels from their homes on marriage, and they wear them on their body as a walking capital till death. Now, people grow, advance and become nobler as they give of that which belongs to themselves, and so I ask the women of India to give their only personal possession, their jewels.

The jewelry most of the women among us wear is not a work of art, but rather a repository of dust and dirt. From a financial point of view they are a capital which is never used, which produces no interest, and which is wearing down with use, so that it is only a loss to the nation. Those big bracelets round their wrists and ornaments on their feet are a symbol of slavery as they are an ostentation in bad taste.

We are living in a time of sacrifice and purification, and I'm appealing to all women in our country to give me all their jewelry. My only condition is that they give it from the heart, give it with joy, and never again buy or wear any

other jewelry in their place. The money thus obtained will be used to improve the plight of the 'children of God' (untouchables) among us.

The big bracelets and silver pendants on wrists, ears, nose and feet are part of the home economy in rural India. They are the domestic capital safely kept and safely exhibited. In those remote and simple villages all over India there are no safes to keep jewels in and no banks to store them. The women keep their whole capital on themselves, they walk, work, sleep, grow with their bracelets on. The heavy silver pieces are an obstacle for work, a danger for health, and a temptation for thieves. Again, as they are also a necessary dowry for the woman's marriage, and therefore a matter for bargaining, they humiliate the woman when they ironically become the sign and symbol of her hopelessness and her slavery. In spite of all this, every woman loves her jewels and hates being deprived of them. Particularly in India where wrists without bracelets mean widowhood (when the husband dies, his widow has to publicly remove all her jewels), and widowhood, following the theory of reincarnation and *karma*, is a punishment in this life for extreme immorality in the previous one, and as such is the ultimate disgrace.

Gandhi approached that delicate question with firmness and clarity, and he asked of the women in India something they could do, something hard for them to do, and something that would ennoble them if they did it, would educate them and liberate them. The bracelets campaign. This, to me, was as genial and far-reaching a gesture as the salt march or the fasts unto death. Gandhi extended his hand, voluntary beggar for a cause, and asked along the length and breadth of India for alms of wrought silver, of feminine awareness, of popular upheaval. When travelling by train the unending miles of the Indian peninsula, the crowds waited for him at every station, where his train would stop; and where the crowds waited for him, the women were always a prominent part of that crowd. His message and his request had preceded him. Gandhi would lean out of the window in his car whatever the hour of the day or the night, would extend his hands without saying anything, and look at the women. In the Indian linguistic labyrinth they would not understand his words

and there was no need for that either. They saw his face, they saw his gesture, they understood the message and they rose to the occasion. The silvery rain would begin. Wrists and feet used from birth to the shining weight of the silver and gold saw themselves free for the first time from the false ornaments, the rough touch, the tyrannical habit of the absurd jewels. Then Gandhi would tell them:

If I had asked you for money, maybe I would have got more. But I wanted something that was your own, that would make you feel you were giving out something that belonged strictly to you. Money you could have asked from your parents or from your husband, while the bracelets are your own and the jewels are your own. When you give them you are giving something that is strictly yours, and you enter in person into the independence movement.

And one more thing. These jewels may be as shining as you wish, but they are a symbol of slavery. To reject them is to obtain freedom. I know many women who, on getting rid of their jewelry, have declared they felt truly free only when they gave them away.

Woman's ornament is her integrity, not metals or stones.

The greater part of those women had never got out of their villages, had not seen an Englishman or an American in their lives, were illiterate, did not know the history or the philosophy of the independence movement; but they knew full well that that man in front of them represented the country, that it was the time for sacrifice, and that they had given to him what they would not have given to anyone else because he too was going to do what no one had ever done before. Women all over India understood Gandhi, and they fervently and efficiently enlisted in the cause of freedom without leaving their villages.

Here is a case by which Gandhi himself was touched:

Gandhi was touring the Kerala province in South India, and in each village he would gather the women and ask them to give him their ornaments to help the untouchables as was his wont. In one of his meetings, a young girl of about

sixteen came forward to the dais where Gandhi was seated. Her name was Kaumudi. She approached Gandhi and asked him for his autograph.

It was Gandhi's well-known custom that when a woman asked him for his autograph he would willingly give it, and he expected the woman to remove there and then one of her bracelets and give it for the national cause. Kaumudi knew it, and without saying anything she removed one of her bracelets and gave it to Gandhi. Gandhi signed his name and was handing her the autograph, but meanwhile Kaumudi had removed the bracelet on her other wrist and was offering it also to him. Gandhi told her: 'No need for that. One autograph, one bangle.' But Kaumudi, without saying a word, had by then removed the gold necklace she had on. All people present saw it and hushed in surprise. Gandhi sweetly asked her: 'Do you have your parents' permission to do this?' As an answer, Kaumudi removed her earrings. People clapped. Kaumudi removed one by one all the ornaments she had on, placed them at Gandhi's feet and stood looking at him as though ready now to answer his questions. 'Have you asked your father's permission?' 'Yes.'

'And has he given it to you ?'

'Yes.'

'Have you asked also your mother's permission ?'

'Yes.'

'And has she given it to you ?'

'No!'

'But you'll convince her, isn't it?'

'Yes.'

Gandhi lovingly stroke her head and told her: 'Your generosity is your best ornament, far greater than all your jewelry', and let her go.

Gandhi liked this incident so much that that same day he wrote an article about it in his weekly *Harijan*. In it, after describing the whole scene in detail, he added: 'When women give me their jewelry I always put the condition that they

must not buy or wear other ornaments in place of the ones they have given to me. I have not expressly told Kaumudi about that, but I expect she knows it and will never wear any ornament anymore.'

But Gandhi was truth itself, and after writing that he realized he had no right to print that statement unless he checked with the girl first. He called her the next day and told her: 'Your sacrifice was admirable and I want other girls like you to know about it and to imitate it. To that end I've myself written an article in which I tell it all as it happened. But then I've added in the same article that you're not going to wear jewelry any more. That's why I want to ask you whether you are ready for that. If you're not ready, do tell me freely, and I'll change that paragraph.'

Kaumudi was going to answer, but Gandhi stopped her and added before she could speak: 'Think well before you answer. This is not just any unimportant point; it is a serious matter. If you promise, your promise stands for life. Now it is easy for you to give up ornaments, but remember that one day you'll marry, and the husband usually insists on his bride having ornaments and wearing them at the wedding. Some would even refuse a marriage without ornaments. What will you do then?'

Kaumudi attentively listened to all that Gandhi was telling her. She stopped for a moment. She perfectly understood her responsibility. Finally she answered steadily and seriously: 'I will not accept as a husband a man who insists on my wearing jewelry.'

Gandhi happily smiled-and the article went to the press.

Apart from writing the article, Gandhi told that story in his talks many times as an example of independence, determination and sacrifice in a sixteen year old girl, and as a graphic summary of his appeal to all the women of India. He put his jewelry campaign to good use. He brought in the women in his fight for independence, made them realize their own dignity, taught them simplicity and cleanliness, led them to act on their own freedom, reminded them of the cause of the untouchables, and on top of it all he got a good amount of money for

that noble work and for the spiritual upheaval of the country. No goldsmith could have foreseen his jewelry could be put to such a high use.

This encounter of Gandhi's with feminine jewelry has some antecedents worth exploring. When he was leaving South Africa for India his friends and admirers offered him and his wife a good amount of jewels and ornaments of great value. Gandhi was by then already watchful to detect the meaning and the present and future consequences of all he did, and so he reflected on the matter. He himself tells us his reflections and the conflict they generated for him.

I soon realized I could not keep those jewels and ornaments. I decided that the next morning I would call my wife and children and tell them in all sincerity what I felt. Then I thought it would be difficult to convince my good wife, while convincing my sons would be easier. And so I decided to begin with them and then they would be the advocates of my cause before their mother.

The children understood me at once. I felt happy. Then I asked them: 'Will you now be able to convince your mother?' They answered me, 'Of course. That's our job. She is never going to wear those ornaments and we don't want them, so what is the use of keeping them? There will be no problem.' But I well knew there was going to be a problem.

They spoke to their mother, and then she came to speak with me: 'I understand that you don't want the ornaments, *and* neither our children want them. They are all men, and they do whatever you tell them. But think that some day these boys will marry. What then about our daughters-in-law? They definitely will want jewels. Who will give the jewelry to them? And who knows what going to happen to us in the future? Jewelry is insurance for the future. They have given them to you with sincerity and love. You cannot give them back.' And she burst into tears.

I told her gently: Yes, our children will marry at their time, and as they grow up they'll. do what they think best. We'll try not to choose for them fashionable women who may insist on jewelry. But if they will choose otherwise, here am I to get them as much as they want of it.'

'I know you well. Are you not the one who is not allowing me to wear jewels ? And are you going to buy then jewelry for your daughters-in-law ? You are already preparing the way by making ascetics out of them. I've said those jewels are not to be given back. This gold necklace they have given you is evidently meant for me. What right do you have over it ?'

'Have they given me that necklace for my services or for yours?'

'For yours. But without mine, what use would yours be? You've made me work day and night without end, and that does not count? You've made me cry, you've made me keep and serve in this house all the people you wanted. Is that nothing again? The work has been done by both of us, and the gifts now are for both of us. Those jewels have not to be given back.'

I must confess her words touched my soul. They were sharp arrows. But I wanted to give those jewels back by all means. After much talking I got her to agree reluctantly. I gave back all the presents.

I never repented for having done that. And I must say that with time my wife too came to see that we had done the right thing.

Gandhi, as usual with him, had first experienced in himself what he was planning to propose to others. He could ask all the women of India for their jewelry because first he had asked it from his wife. He knew about the importance of their possession and the difficulty of giving them up. He knew that was the way to involucrate the women of India, to lift them up, to wake them up, to get them to occupy their place of honor in the great task that was taking up his whole life and that would change his country's history. Gandhi, with unfailing intuition, knew how to integrate the women in the fight for an independent India. Tagore clearly remarks:

Even though Gandhi had as much horror of sex as the author of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, he didn't feel, as he did, contempt for woman as a source of passion. On the contrary, tenderness and affection in dealing with women was one of the most typical and noblest traits in his personality. A good proof of this is that many of his best and more faithful collaborators were women.

The author of the *Kreutzer Sonata* for violin and piano Nr. 9, Op. 47 in A major is, of course, Beethoven, but here Tagore has in mind the author of the novel with the same title, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, so he refers to Leo Tolstoy.

15. RUSTY COINS

Gandhi asked of Indian women their jewelry. What did he ask from the rest? He knew that the act of giving reinforced the commitment, the following, the identification with the ideal one is fighting for. And so he kept on asking. He asked of them all what they most prized, what was hardest for them to give, what was most personal and intimate, and converted the giver into a soldier, a volunteer, a free and integrated member of the country on the move. A campaign for renunciation, for sacrifice, for consecration to the national cause.

He asked those in the government's employment to give up their jobs. It is not easy to give up the job that provides for one's livelihood, but the government whom those employees served was a foreign government, and giving up its service was an act of protest and of freedom. Thousands of government servants understood it so, and they became ready to give up a safe job for a patriotic ideal.

He asked students in government colleges to give up their studies. This was easier, of course, and more dangerous, and Tagore himself became deeply worried at Gandhi's call. Would this not result in an illiterate generation? But Gandhi wanted also the young in his peaceful army, and he knew that their greatest ambition was to obtain a college degree as that guaranteed a job and gave social status. If giving up studies was easy, giving up a degree was the hardest thing a capable and ambitious young person could be asked to do. And Gandhi asked for that. And the classrooms were emptied. I count among my friends persons of great knowledge and culture who don't possess any academic degree: they were in college when Gandhi gave his call, they left their studies and they gave to Gandhi the best years of their lives; and they later made up on their own and learned and studied and became worthy and useful members of society.

He asked people to give up their addictions if they had any. Peaceful persuasion. Women picketed bars and wine shops. Alcoholic drinks were looked down upon in Indian ethics, and addiction to drink is a kind of slavery. Gandhi

and his followers professed abstention, and the new Indian independent government went later so far as to impose total prohibition. Again the gesture, the giving up something hard, the personal liberation from bondage.

What, then, would now Gandhi ask from those who had nothing to give? He asked well-to-do people to help the poor, but what will he now ask the poor to do? They also had to be integrated in the great task of independence. They too had to contribute, to give something of their own, to give what they didn't even have, to become united, in their poverty, to the universal sacrifice, to the effort of the whole country. So Gandhi asked them precisely that, what they didn't have, what they themselves needed, what they could not afford to give, so that on giving it they would join the movement in full right, keeping their head high and on equal terms with the nation from its start. Gandhi, conscious of what he was doing and being the first to feel the pang of suffering in doing so, asked also the poorest of the poor for an alms for the country. Here is Kalelkar's touching narrative:

It was the year 1926. Gandhi had finished his South India tour among the patriotic enthusiasm of the crowds everywhere, and he now was in the North, in the region called Orissa. We arrived at a village called Itamati. Gandhi spoke to the people of the place, and then they began to bring whatever they could in answer to his appeal. One brought a cucumber, another some aubergine, others other vegetables. Some took out of the folds of the rags with which they covered themselves one or other small coin. I went through the crowd collecting whatever they were giving. The coins I took in my hands to keep them separate from the fruits and vegetables. Then on opening my hands I saw they were greenish. The coins had been kept long among the folds of the cloths and had rusted there, and now they had stained my hands with their green rust. I showed Gandhi my hands. I could not even speak.

Gandhi accepted the coins. Heavy price for an expensive freedom. More valuable than a millionaire's cheque. Patriotic relics. Nobility's jewels. A treasure for the funds of the national campaign. Gandhi suffered on accepting

them, and he did accept them as in his suffering he became one with the sufferers.

In his way of life and in his heart Gandhi identified with the poor. In his Ahmedabad headquarters he just lived on the floor in a simple open house that soon proved insufficient given his work, his visitors, and his meetings. The industry tycoon Janmalal Bajaj proposed to him building an upper storey for larger accommodation, and Gandhi was about to agree given the reasonableness of the proposal, but he at once reacted and answered him with feeling:

I am a child of the land. In my region, farmers literally live at earth level, they lay down on it, work on it, play on it. That's the way I too want to live. As a servant of the people I cannot break the contact with mother earth and go to live in a flat upstairs. I will always live in the little room in which I've always lived. It's a little uncomfortable, but in it I have the satisfaction of living at a level with my brothers and in contact with them.

Children were also attracted to Gandhi and flocked to him. They too were growing citizens in a country that was finding itself, they understood the earth language better than anybody, the gesture, the spontaneous anecdote that drew them to Gandhi. Here is an example:

Gandhi went once to visit a school. He loved children and knew how to come to their level and to speak with them and like them. He began telling them stories, and then he encouraged them to ask questions.

One of the children asked him with childlike innocence: 'Please, why is it that you don't wear a shirt?' And before Gandhi could answer, the child went on: 'If I ask my mother to stitch a shirt for you, will you wear it?'

Gandhi seized at the opportunity. He was not going to let go of the occasion to teach his favorite lesson to such a docile and important audience as children in formation, and to do it in his own graphic, spontaneous, imaginative way. Following up his dialogue with the child he told him: 'Yes, of course. If your mother stitches me a shirt I'll wear it most happily.'

The child began jumping for joy, and all his companions clapped. Gandhi kept looking at them smiling but then he became serious as though he had suddenly thought of something he had forgotten, and added: But I have a little problem. See, I'll explain. If someone gives you a toy but gives nothing to your brothers, they feel it, isn't it? That's what happens to me. If your mother stitches a shirt for me but none for my brothers, they are going to feel it. Do you understand ?'

The child would not accept defeat so easily. On the contrary, he at once began to say with energy: 'That doesn't matter at all. I'll tell my mother to stitch a shirt also for each one of your brothers. Tell me, please, how many brothers do you have ?'

Gandhi let the question in the air for a while, smiled slowly and answered the boy gently and sadly: 'Your mother will have to stitch many many shirts, my son. Do you know ? I have four hundred million brothers.'

No lesson had been taught in the school so well as the lesson Gandhi taught that day. That child and all the other children could never forget it. Four hundred million brothers. All are our brothers. The poor are our brothers. We identify with the least of them. An early lesson, clearly and tellingly taught in that school that day. By nature and by vocation Gandhi was a teacher.

To two formal questions of a newsman, Gandhi gave answers with unsuspected depth:

'What is it that gives you strength in your life ?'

'The faith of the poor.'

'And what is what worries you most ?'

'The insensitivity of the rich.'

Kalelkar told me that the day he heard Gandhi give those two answers, he could not sleep the whole night.

16. THE SECRET OF NON VIOLENCE

"The basis of non-violence is shedding fear." "The first requisite for moral strength is fearlessness." "All the readers of the *Bhagavad Gita* know that fearlessness heads the list of the divine attributes of man or fundamental virtues which appropriately sum up the code of the noblest ethics and of the deepest spirituality to be found in its famous 16th chapter. Some commentators say that placing fearlessness on top of the list is only due to the meter used in the poem, while others rightly defend that the placing is intended and significant. Fearlessness always obtains first place in Gandhi's mentality and doctrine. Fearlessness is the essential basis for all the other virtues and qualities to settle on and to grow from it. We cannot search for truth or feel and express love without first getting rid of all fear. The Gujarati poet, Pritam, sung: 'The way of Truth is the way of the courageous: let weaklings not venture on it.' The courageous are those that have conquered all fear and wield the weapon of fearlessness instead of the swords and guns that only cowards bear."

In those words and in many other throughout his life, Gandhi valued the primacy of fearlessness, of courage, of total lack of any fear over any other moral attitude, virtue or human quality. That was the essence of his creed, the secret of his energy, the centre of his life. Fearlessness. Bravery. Courage. Being afraid of nobody and of nothing.

Neither in life nor in death. Neither of physical violence nor of moral threats. Among the vows the residents of Gandhi's institution (*ashram*) in Ahmedabad had to take and which I have mentioned before, the last one, which may have passed unnoticed and which I stress now, is the one of fearlessness, which is the summary of all the others. Conscious or unconscious, vague or concrete, subtle or intense, fear clouds perception, misleads decisions, weakens our strength. It is the deadliest of feelings and at the same time the most universal. It hinders our faculties, cheats our senses, degrades our life. Fear is the greatest obstacle to personality development and to the enjoyment of life. It hides in the recesses of our mind, in the depth of our heart, down to the last