

मेरे जीवन में गांधी जी (इन्दुप्रकाश पाण्डेय)

Gandhiji in My Life

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From the very early times I recall of my childhood and the age of learning the lessons of life, I remember five great personalities that influenced the shaping and growth of my mind. Raja Ji, (Rajagopalachari), who was a pure intellectual with the futuristic vision, Azad (Maulana Abul Kalam Azad), who had a great impact on me through his impartial and firm stance, and who also created profound faith in me. Jawaharlal Nehru's handsome and attractive face with his ever-expressive enthusiasm, Subhash Babu (Subhash Chandra Bose) whose magnificent visage with round spectacles that were always the glance of thoughtful eyes inviting excitement and cheer by his quest for freedom. And Gandhiji, whose idealism in ethics, spiritual conscience, simplicity in lifestyle and endless zeal for action that inspired my mind always to do something, by which Gandhiji had haunted all thinking minds. In those times, it was impossible to think indifferently.

Gandhiji had included all dimensions of life in his activities in such a way that he was completely dedicated to the rise of our nation. This very whole hearted dedication of his life was spreading hopes and faith among all. Many others who had followed Gandhiji, with the sense of togetherness were struggling in the mission to liberate our nation. He had such great impact even on the minds of the illiterate, poor and helpless farmers from remote villages, that his decision of not paying the tax was doubtlessly supported by all the farmers. His impact was thus, so magical on the minds of the educated as well as the illiterate masses. I was not meant to be escaping the same. I learnt the lesson of Swaraj from him, and I

could create self reliance to some extent in my life. In 1937, Subhash Babu on his tour in UP during elections, had come to Raebareli. His speech on the station was attended by a huge crowd including me.

His miraculous personality had so deep influence on my mind exciting my patriotic spirit, that I was tempted to join him at that very moment and move onward with him. But I was just a boy studying in seventh standard at that time. Pure white loosely tied dhoti of Khadi, similar loose kurta, round glasses, and high, crossed Gandhi cap on his head made Subhash Babu look so handsome and grand. In the mission of freedom fighters, my mind was intensely excited by the very sight of this man. In 1931, at Kasganj, even otherwise, while we moved around the centre streets of the town, shouting slogans like “तोडी बच्चा हाय-हाय, लाल पगड़ी हाय-हाय”, which meant the open hatred toward the slayers of Bhagat Singh, and we were so highly burning for the cause at that time that our place Kasganj itself looked like Bhagat Singh assassination spot.

There was this building of Tilak Bhavan opposite of our primary school in Kasganj, that the leaders of Kasganj used to visit often. I had seen a person there in Khadi dress as a frequent visitor. He walked with his head held high towards the skies. I tried to mimic his walking style once in pride, and got my foot wounded in the stony bumpy road. I was feeling wounded even mentally. I was under the impression that Mohanlal Gandhiji was our classmate when he had refused to correct the error in his notebook. It was the influence of that Gandhi-bound ethos that my mother had started weaving cotton on the spinning wheel.

She had been weaving the carpet and rug at home. I used to help her with the same tasks. So, the whole inside and outside of our home was occupied by Gandhi. In the winters of 1939-40, I participated for the first time in that procession of Mohanlal Ganj exhibition. My friend, the elder brother of Vindhyeshwari Prasad Singh, was elected as the Satyagrahi, (Truth-Insistence) leader of Congress, to individually display our opposition to the government. Gandhiji had started the opposition to British government, with Vinoba Bhave at the same time. The British had not taken into consideration any national leader's opinions while including India in the Second World War. The only party leading the nation at that time was Congress. Gandhiji took it as the insult of the nation and started his Satyagraha to

oppose the government. In this Satyagraha, he did not call any common masses but selected specific leading workers and planned their rebellious lectures on particular dates as fixed by him. Each leader who followed this, had to inform the government about where and when will he arrange his rebellious lecture.

The stages were prepared, the roads were opened, and like the Satyagrahi the information leaking individuals too used to reach there with the police and they used to arrest the speaker as soon as he started his speech. The common people also would gather to shout slogans, "Bharat Mata ki Jai, Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai. Inqilab Zindabad" which meant "Hail the Revolution", along with "hail Mother India, Hail Mahatma Gandhiji, Hail the Revolution! "

The police walked ahead with the arrested leaders while the masses followed then up to the police station loudly shouting the slogans and then return wearily to their homes. We too went on the crowded path when Bhaisahab was arrested and chatting about the possibilities, slept late at night. I started wearing the clothes of Khadi at that time. I started using khadi kurta and dhoti or pyjama. When Gandhi haunted my mind like this, I threw away my earlier clothes and shoes. Now, I got a pair of shoes made by the cobbler of our area, from dead lamb's skin just in one and half rupee. We too were the followers of Swaraj now. The Swaraj was grounded in our minds like an obvious mission. As an effect of the same, I started visiting the central building in the city, Tilak Bhavan. Many leaders used to meet us there. I was much younger than them. I was a child indeed. I was not happy with this kind of impression. My discipline had its own demands.

The first was I will not fall short in my studies, and I will not accept any hindrance in my routine of exercise or even my sports. My leadership did not help me change my routine. That is how I remained three in one, a student, a sportsman and a follower of Swaraj. The leaders arrested in individual Satyagraha Revolt were gradually released from the jail's and returned till 1942. Gandhiji was engaged in creative work even at that point of time. For freedom, Gandhiji had created two major fronts in fighting with the British.

One was the straight war of non-violence and the second, when no direct action was followed, multiple social actions to be creatively executed like adult education,

Hindu Muslim unity, the annihilation of untouchability, rural development and so on. Approximately, the volunteers were working on 16 different plans. This whole work was done inside and outside of the ashrams. These were all the works of social reformation. In absence of anything else, the work of weaving on the spinning wheel and preparing cloth was permanently pending. Much was yet undone in the area of rural development. But finally, Gandhiji decided to confront the British directly through war to gain freedom, how long we can remain to be cheated by them! At that time, the Congress declared Quit India movement at Bombay in Gandhiji's leadership, on 8th August 1942. The government urgently arrested all the leaders at night, before the next morning. Consequently, there was a havoc in the whole country and we all marched forward in the battlefield prompted by Gandhiji's slogan "Do or Die". I left my studies and joined the battleground.

This was the last year of my high school. I was studying in Sir Raja Rampal Singh Hindu High school at Raebareli in UP, and was staying in the hostel with my two younger brothers since my sixth class. This was the fifth and the last year for me. In these five years, I had created a lot of pressure in school and the city. Mostly in my fame as football, volleyball and hockey player and in the last two years as a leader too. The leadership had made the secret police keep watch on me. Crisp mission has failed and returned. Gandhiji had rejected the proposal of that mission as "a post-dated cheque on a defunct bank". In 1935, the Act of provincial autonomy declared the victory of Congress in the elections of seven states. The Muslim league had been defeated badly and was not included in making of the new government. The Muslim minorities were hurt by this failure and their anger had taken the form of revolt. The fights were visibly confronted. Sikandar Hayat tried the making of mix government in Punjab. But these governments did not work properly due to the reluctance between Hindus and Muslims. The Congress was bound to its struggle for complete autonomy. The British government had stated that autonomous power cannot be granted till all the communities come together unanimously. One third of Muslims were not ready for this. How will the kings and emperors be ready? Hence the Muslim league and communist party too was reluctant. Hitler Stalin Pact was finalized at that time and the communist party was supporting the fascist which made the fascist war the battle of people.

So, when the revolt of Quit India was beginning, the Muslim league, communist party and the nominated kings did not participate in that. And I did observe that all my Muslim friends were staying out of the march. The communist party was not functional in our all town. A few landlords and owners of estates were trying to participate, yet it was a huge surprise for me how the fourteen-year-old young son of director of Defence India Rule, was helping me in legalities during my arrest. And he was a Musalman. After the pact between Hitler and Stalin was done, the communist party was supporting the fascist followers. That was the time when the fascist battle seemingly turned into the battle of the people.

The procession of revolutionaries was moving forward across the court with slogans of hailing Gandhiji. Reaching near the government high school we were inviting the schoolboys to join us. Not a single child from that school came to us was really shocking. The message of Gandhiji remained limited to our private schools. But we were not to be discouraged. We moved ahead towards the city till further on the way, a group walking with the police inspector stopped and warned us to withdraw and return from there. They threatened us raiding their sticks, and scared us with the threat to be arrested but we were charged with such passion that such threats did not affect us at all.

So, the four leader type boys in front were tied with a rope, except me Shrikant Singh, Radha Raman, and Mahesh Dutt. The police started pushing them towards the court. The noise increased. The crowd in procession raised their slogans to higher volume. We were sent in the vehicle to the court and then they locked us in a room. The room was so suffocating. We were feeling choked in heat of the closed room. I tried to console my friends with the couplet, "this is only a beginning, of the passion you love, in place of crying, just watch what is yet to come...! Yet to come whatever, we have to pay some price for freedom. At that very moment, the Muslim guy entered there like a breeze. If you need anything tell me, he said, asked for cold water and signalled us to go. We tried to sympathise in a thought if he would fall in some trouble because of us, his father may struggle to free him, but we did not know what was the scene outside as we were closed in custody. The same evening, we were brought out and the police vehicle took us to be dropped at some unknown destination...!

That destination was R Central Jail. They took whatever little money we had in our pockets and deposited that in the office of the jailor. What tough treatments my companions were given, I do not know, but I was taken to a small closet like bathroom and was locked there in that. No furniture, no rug, not even a rag! It was utterly vacant. Within few minutes my head started feeling giddy because of the stinky smell from urinals around'. Standing or sitting was impossible. My breath was choking and my feet were aching due to standing for long, I sat down on the dirty half-cemented floor and my mind was so upset that I could not even think what to do. How was this nation going to get its freedom, where are my companions, are they also locked in dungeons like me, what they must be thinking ...I had no answers. There was no way to get any answers. My mind was anxious and my head was heavy. Those narrow walls had brought my breath to lifeless state and my heart was trying its best to keep beating in this damage of my freedom witnessed for the sake of national freedom. How to entertain myself, how to keep the mind engaged, I asked myself and recalled a doha which conveyed " do not lose your mind keep offering prayer". To find some solace I also uttered the lines my mother used to often teach me, "Say Ram, do your work, don't be afraid, you are in alien town, ", but my mind was not calmed. I was not really afraid yet my eyes filled with years, regretful of how I am trapped and took more people with me, they may be cursing me, I thought. It's quite possible that they will prove braver than me.

The darkness increased and the night fell around. Where shall they sleep, will they provide food or not, In that gloomy moment someone opened the lock like an angel, one was the policeman and the other was a jailed person who looked like a criminal. The confidential prisoners of Pakka jail become pakka in few years and they are called pakka. He said, "you are lucky man, now they will close you in another B class. And they took is in a huge open yard, and closed up all of us there. There was a big hall, two rows of cemented benches and the rugs were placed on those. "Now you enjoy", said pukka, moving away with the guard. In the same manner, the other prisoners were brought gradually one after the other.

The sparrow twitters too much while she is building her nest, in the same way, we all were creating noise. No end of talking. As if we had gained freedom. The food was ready and we were so hungry. The kitchen was large where I lay my rug and

sat on that. The other prisoners of the jail were assigned to serve the A and B class. They were all working here for something or the other. The cook served food in a brass plate with neat and clean hands. They had given daal, one with gravy and one dry veggie, rice and chapatis. Even the ghee, prepared in jail, was added to daal. The food was so good that I forgot my issues of the whole day. The good food we relished was so tasty that we forgot all issues of the day. And receiving one full glass of milk at bedtime we also forgot that we are in jail. We were not actually getting this much even at home. Later I came to know that 17 rupees were spent on, for 17 aana per person's meals, while we gave 5 rupees for the whole month's food, at the hostel and in a day the jail was spending 2 rupees on us per person.

So, we were really lucky. A class people also got fruits and flowers. That was the time when in the same yard we had also got good rooms with bathrooms. We were getting old books to read from the library of the jail. All the things were accessible to us except newspapers. No news from the outside world could reach us. The empty space in this yard was too large. That was the beginning of August. The monsoon had already commenced. "Naag Panchami" a festival of worshipping snakes, was nearing. We made a yard to play and the joy was immediately shared by playing there. Sometimes we met Laalsaheb, the king of Semary, Kedarnath Pandey from Laalganj and a Maulana with long beard, whose name I don't remember, used to sit together and chat for hours. We argued on various matters. The main point recurringly discussed was leaving school after the primary education, everyone should join the activism in politics. Except me everyone agreed that we have plunged in this battle for freedom on the basis of calls by Gandhiji and we can return to education afterwards when we get our freedom. The free country will certainly need educated citizens.

The country needs to be educated to move ahead. In the illiterate masses, who will do the work for country. In the matter of education, I was firmly decided. But presently we were in lock up. Sometimes we used to shout slogans and hail Gandhiji. Who knows when shall we get free? Even Gandhiji was imprisoned with thousands of leaders. Sometimes we got a few rumours. The gunshots, people dying, army spreading the terror all over, the masses in pity, and so on. The good food too on that day would taste bitter. We used to keep fasting to console our own sense of guilt. Our impotence was closed in the fists closed and teeth rubbed

in silence. Around three months passed like that and one fine morning there came an order saying leave all youngsters. Yes, we were youngsters only. Returning all our stuff and money they drove us out of the jail. Where shall we go? What to do? The uncertainty took us toward the city. Nobody knew we were released from the jail. No one would come to receive us, obviously. Who will talk about welcome by flowers or garlands? If you don't understand anything go to Pratap cinema. In Raibareli, I had stayed in the hostel so we went there. The next day we went to the school and met the headmaster. He said, your rustication orders are prepared and sent to us. If you apologize to commissioner, he may allow you to come back to school any time. I tried to make you understand that these movements are not for you. But you were haunted by ghost of Gandhiji at that time. I had not imagined this state. He liked me so much. He loved me in fact. He used to invite me to his place. Mentally he approved of me even more as I had taken part in the freedom fighting movement.

After I left the school, he gave me a very good character certificate which still lies with me preserved. My friends tried to apologize and got scolding's from him. How shameless you are, you don't feel ashamed to apologise. You and your revolution have taken the lives of so many people. Many lost their homes. Now you go and educate yourself to become a good human being. I had already told the head master now I will not apologize even if Gandhiji comes to tell me to say sorry. Now I did not feel the need to contact the commissioner. The case was taken a few days to the court but we all declined when the question of forgiving was raised. We were charged ten rupees each and those who could not pay will be put in jail. Someone paid that fine for us at that time. We were released. There was a lot of hush hush outside the court. And when we came out, the skies were filled with the slogans of the crowd, "Gandhiji ki Jai"! We entered the school. A few months were left for the final exams of the high school. Somehow, I could prepare and appear for the exams but missed my first class by four marks.

I was a sportsperson as well as a very bright student. The headmaster expected a lot from me but those hopes were nothing in comparison to the need of our country. After being released from the jail I remembered where should my younger brothers have been, All these days. Did they return to our village, but they had no money? I don't know till now. Those were the days of extreme madness. We

had no sense of being conscious. The headmaster called My father by sending a letter. He took us back forcefully like the ones captured. In the night to Lalganj on camel ride, and ahead of it, nearly 10 miles we kept walking towards Shivpuri.

The vehicles anyway had no access to our village. There was utter silence everywhere and the atmosphere was sensational. We too did not talk for long time. Afterwards at home we were equally quiet. At home pushing me towards mother, he said, see here is your great son. Take him. And I don't know how and when, much later, my mother told me, you are getting married on 14th June. I jumped, out of shock, cried, shouted, kept showing my reluctance saying no. When father will come back from the camp, show the same drama to him she said. We used to speak Awadhi. I could not utter a single word when father came. I kept crying and telling my chacha to stop it. He could not do anything. Marriage was already fixed when I was in prison. All the family members thought that the only way to tie me was to the pole of marriage. I felt like my hands were tied with handcuffs earlier but now even my feet were chained. In this way, I was imprisoned for lifetime.

A drum was hanged in my neck. I play or not, nobody will hear. This imprisonment was not to be helped even by Gandhiji. The father of my intimate friend, Trambakeshwar Prasad, who was a landlord and the honorary magistrate, advised me that I should run away from home. My twin questions were, where shall I go if I run away, and what will happen to this innocent, unknown, illiterate girl who is tied to me. How does she know that her marriage was performed with a revolutionary rebellious youth; she must have believed dreamily that her father has found a suitable groom for her. Her father might have tried to find such a groom from his point of view. I was lost in thinking seriously. What a trap indeed. She must be dreaming of happy home, handsome groom, in laws, the unknown and unseen house of in-laws...! And I was thinking how to earn bread, how to provide her with basic needs of clothes and shelter, where shall we stay...! I was already away from Gandhiji's frenzy and was chained in the web of married life. Sweet were the fruits of desire. So now I had to walk like that cow whose neck bears the burden of living. If I walk faster, my feet will ache, no other way to find out. I could not see any other option. My feet heavy with chains of marriage and my hands tied to the mission of Gandhiji. This country got freedom but what about my freedom...did I get one...?

I lost my first child who would have been 75 today, if survived. This country is independent for 72 years, and I am turning 95, but the question of what is right and what is not right keeps haunting me even now. What is good and how long ...are all the good works right? And are all right things good? How to understand this dichotomy? Is there a way out? Two years went by. I continued my education firmly. Parents have married me off so they have to look after I thought. Hence, I stayed with parents in Kanpur for two years. My mother often called my wife from her maternal home. She wanted to trap me in temptation. I was trapped for a while. Staying in Kanpur I could not do any task of Gandhiji.

I read a lot of books and studied a lot in those two years. I studied the whole literature of saints, by reading all the books like those of Vivekanand, Swami Ramteerth, Dayanand and whatever books were available. How much I could perceive only God knows. In Bengal the masses were dying of the drought at that time. The reports mentioned that around 3 lac million people died. Calcutta was attacked by the Japanese forces. What Gandhiji said was hard to believe now. He had said that we shall be able to protect ourselves after the British leave our country. My mind was not at rest. I tried to express my impotent anger in the outbursts of fruitless poetic writing. Fruitless as no periodical preferred to print my poems. I was restless and wandering from village to village to do Gandhiji's work. Nobody was listening to my talks and the people who heard me were not doing anything. I was so frustrated that I tried to practice some spirituality. All the leaders and Gandhiji were imprisoned. Subhashbabu was hidden somewhere and was preparing the Azad Hind Sena while the battle was going on up to the borders of Imphal.

The British government had started training sessions for the lessons of Air Raid Precaution. They had built around two meters high brick-walls on both sides of the roads. The factories were cheerfully working to prepare the weapons for the army forces. Even at that time our leaders were all imprisoned. The communist party and Muslim League were working with loud tone while Jinnah Saheb was adamantly terrifying the nation by forwarding his demand of Pakistan. The communist party was supporting them and they were also helping the British in the war. Even Before Raja ji they were keenly opposing the Quit India movement. He had also brought up a formula to emphasise his demand of Pakistan. 1941 to

1942 was such a worse time that all the things were happening in the opposition of Congress and Gandhiji.

In 1942, the train tracks, bridges and poles were being destroyed. It was all chaos around. Some people also visited me with ropes and axes but I refused to team up with them and tried fruitlessly to convince them to follow the lessons of non-violence. They argued with me saying that Gandhiji is quoting this chaos as spread by the British but we are okay with it if it is a chaos. In 1940 Jinnah had already convinced the president of the league to accept his proposal of Pakistan. There were protests exhibited in all places for Pakistan. In 1945 when Gandhiji was released from the jail, he conducted multiple meetings with Jinnah and tried to convert him, to allow this country not be divided. But Jinnah Saheb did not change an inch. And Gandhiji also did not move from his firm standing on the principles of Hindu Muslim unity and till his last breath he kept fighting for the same goal. He endangered his own life again and again to protect his ideal of Hindu Muslim Unity.

I often wonder about the relationship of Jinnah and Gandhiji and the question that comes to my mind is how is it possible that Jinnah who as the secretary of Congress, in 1916 convinced the Muslim league, to sign on the pact of Hindu Muslim Unity, (Lucknow Pact) and the same Jinnah was not ready to listen to a single word of Gandhiji now. Gandhiji talked to Jinnah as per the formula of Rajaji and directs that the Muslim inhabited zones may be taken to plebiscite in the western regions and more such matters which Gandhiji actually did not approve of. In fact, Jinnah Saheb was envious of Gandhiji and his populist politics and his grip on the masses. After his return from the south Africa Gandhiji had attained huge popularity in his Kheda and Champaran protest (1918). He had influenced the Congress to the extent of his domination in it and up to 1922-23 it was dissolved.

The whole power was now in the hands of Gandhiji. One has to notice that Jinnah was already a well-established lawyer at that time. He was well known and very impressed by the parliamentary membership of Dadabhai Naoroji. He was ambitious about gaining fame also in the area of politics. He was also successful in his ambition despite his father's lack of support to him. After the entry of Gandhiji's in Congress, he had been reduced to just a member. He was a very important

lawyer and impactful and rich man at that time. I guess he was disappointed and lost his space because of Gandhiji's presence.

So, with a sense of defeat, he became an opponent of Gandhiji. Once he even escaped to London for a while and isolated himself from the politics of India. It was in 1930 that Liyaqat Ali Khan somehow convinced him to return as a member of Muslim League. He accepted to come back on the condition that the League would accept his plan of Pakistan and obey his commands. He was also offered the award of qayad-e-azam which meant the king of law. So, it was impossible for him now to accept any kind of defeat at the hands of Gandhiji. Thus in 1940 and again in 1942 at the procession in Lahore he announced the formation of Pakistan. The British and the communists supported him. At that time, Gandhiji and the leaders of our freedom struggle, were all imprisoned and reading or writing books in the jail. I think Jinnah had taken this revenge on Gandhiji. This is totally my observation, may be a wild guess.

The fourth decade of the last century was the most terrifying and painful time for our nation. If the time of gaining independence was the greatest triumph and victory for our nation, it was also the huge penance and the toughest time of ordeal for Gandhiji. Cruelty was on its peak reflecting itself in mass-riots, assassinations of innocent people and unsettling the millions of people in the country. How ironical the time was, on one hand the celebrations of our freedom, were enjoyed like festivals by crackers, spreading lights and on the other hand, Gandhiji was the only man trying to console the lost people by his compassion.

He was fasting in Calcutta. In the times of election for the minister of Sohravardi thousands of people were being killed, and Gandhiji was still crowning Sohravardi. He returned from Bihar, after his efforts to quieten the chaotic conditions there, and within six months three gunshots of Godse sent him to divinity. How and when all this happened, we all know very well. It is not easy to talk about it as we take pride in the 15th August 1947, the Independence Day. I was fasting in my room on that day, as I had often kept fast on Sunday with my mother and later, following Gandhiji, I added speech fasting on Sundays. So, I kept Maun Vrata till 12 o'clock in the noon. Every day, I also used to spend at least an hour in weaving on the spinning wheel. I could weave around 300 meter of cloth in an hour on

Yervadachakra, and by practice I could produce 40-50 count thin cotton easily. It was not that easy to weave the clothes so by adding the cover to objects I used to make dolls and after collecting many a doll, I offered those to the Khadi Bhandar in exchange of some more cotton to weave, or a puny readymade, as the room was too small to make a puny.

I could weave enough cloth as to make a couple of pyjamas, two shirts and two pull over wears. In my neighbourhood, there was a student named Katariya. He too was under the influence of Gandhiji. Even Gopinath, the next-door one, was of the same thought flow so we three used to read Gandhiji's books and writings together and used to discuss freely. Narayan Dutt Tiwari also used to stay in the same hostel with Vimal Mehrotra. Both of them were followers of socialist thinking. With them as well the interactions about Gandhiji were discussed frequently. I had established a creative congregation which met every Sunday at 2 in the noon in the union hall. One hour was spent in weaving the cloth on the spinning wheel and half an hour was further spent by us in the discussion about the current political updates and movements. In these discussions, Sadik bhai, Shankar Rao Dev, Kaka Kripalani, Prof. Mahesh Dutt Mishra and many such people who intellectually participated.

I went to the Prof. of Physics from the Kashi University, Prof. Uddhav Asrani to get some lessons on the method of working and I tried to understand the ways of activism from him. He was propagating the Gandhian thoughts there in Kashi in the Nandkishor lodge. I tried a lot to run such an organization in Allahabad but this was not granted to me as I was merely a student. To work on the principles of Gandhiji, I also stayed in the Sevapuri Gandhi Ashram for many months and learnt all those works which I was intending to do further in my life. I stayed in the wise company of people like Karna Bhai, Vichitra Bhai, Bhai Mazumdar, (Ude). I learnt the political philosophy of Gandhiji from Prof. Dhawan and Gandhian Economics from J. C. Kumarappa. I roamed around in the villages to spread the adult education as a part of my social experience.

I used to grind nearly two kgs flour each morning by getting up early. In the Ashram, I used to wash the utensils including mine and of other people. I also visited the popular leaders of Allahabad Vishwambharnath Pandey and Purushottamdas

Tandon. The son of Tandonji who was a professor of Chemistry used stay at the very back yard of our hostel. Some good books, prepared on these very thoughts, brought to us to discuss as very useful stuff to turn the younger generation towards the thoughts of Gandhiji. I was only a student and such activities I thought were not good for me. Yet I had been walking on this road, not taken, with some promises to fulfil. But I got very less time for my studies. So, I used to get up at midnight and write my notes. During the day, I used to attend classes like all, and used to make extensive notes like those of the lecturers. Now all the playing was stopped but I was still the captain of my hostel volleyball team. In 1945 when the prisoners of 1942, were released for the Quit India movement, one of those prisoners, Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna, after 3 years of his jail life, came to me. He started staying with me in my room. He had not enough clothes too for himself. He was a student of Allahabad University. So where should he go. Before finding a right place to go, he came to me initially. I could not even today know why did he come to me while he could have gone to anyone.

He went also but that was much later. He was a politician and I was only a Gandhian worker. He was not like Narayan Dutt Tiwari, an open-minded person. He was a very efficient orator and a very sociable, impactful and brilliant person. Both these persons came like a breeze in my life and disappeared too like the same. Yet he was not out of my sight. Sometimes by chance we used to meet and greet each other warmly. Their activities too were controversial. All know how many traumas were spread in India during 1945 to 1950. Great Calcutta killing happened in the Hindu Muslim riots massacre wherein, open assassination in Sohrawardi, Hindu Muslim riots in Bihar, on 16th August 1946, the direct action of Jinnah. In our building, ground floor famous as the great Calcutta killing named also for Hindu Muslim communities along with the public massacre in Calcutta the state of Sohrawardi.

Hindu Muslim riots in Bihar, the violence on 16th August, on 6th August the direct action for Jinnah. And the riots and massacre in the whole nation, the absurd transactions of British missions coming here and going, finally the partition of India and independent to Pakistan was granted on 14th August and to India on 15th August. And at that time the huge massacre that happened was never seen nor heard so far. Gandhiji kept trying on his behalf till his last breath. To stop this

painful accident and trauma he told Nehru and Patel that Jinnah should be made the prime minister of the country and with his cooperation the indivisible India can survive as it is. At that moment both the great leaders were taken aback and questioned him, Bapu what are you saying...? And despite all reluctance of Bapu, this nation was partitioned. The nation was divided in partition and Nehru became the prime minister of the independent India, and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel became his home minister. This time Gandhiji felt list by his own people. Anyone who does not get defeated by enemy can be defeated always by his own people. Gandhiji continued to firmly extend his faith in the Hindu Muslim unity. A brother may separate in anger but does not become an enemy. We are like an elder brother.

With love a younger brother can be convinced. Gandhiji recommended and availed 55 crore rupees to Pakistan for restructuring the mosques that were destroyed. For this he did a fasting strike till death. Nehru and Patel, all had to do the same although later only Gandhiji was blamed for this often and again. (In Bombay the speech that was delivered by Patel) because if all these reasons the masses in the nation were weary of Gandhiji. His popularity was much declined despite people being still respectful and affectionate to him. (one story by Vishnu Prabhakar ---) And they were weary of his love for Muslims. On this my respect for Gandhiji mounted higher. But I was not his worshipper. I was never able to worship any hero. Even then I was prepared to accompany those few Gandhi-followers to convince Muslims to bring them back to India. Kripalaniji, Karmaveer Bhai Sunderlal, (British Raj in India) and many other disciples of Gandhian thought had the mission of going to Pakistan and returning to India. Sunderlalji also had gone but he had to return. Kashmir matter was hot on the plate. Even six months had not passed and a young man called Nathuram Godse assassinated Gandhiji, shooting him by gun. What an irony! Horrifying tragedy! This news unsettled the whole country. The natives may be weary of Gandhiji's Hindu Muslim unity approach but they really loved him.

This sorrowful accident disturbed me thoroughly. And that very moment Gadre ji came to My room and started crying sitting near me. He wept more intensely for making me see how he was a Brahmin from the Rigid area of Sadashivpeth in Pune, opposing Gandhi always yet he never wanted Gandhiji to be assassinated.

That too at the hands of some so-called sacred Brahmin person. He wanted to lessen his sense of guilt by lamenting with me. Whatever the sense, he was always with me and remained my lifetime friend. The third day the carrier of Gandhiji arrived with all small and big leaders.

The slowly marching procession moved from Allahabad station and reached the Sangam, the fusion point, around two o'clock in the noon, via civil lines road with all respectful pace. Ramdhun was played as the tune of Song of Ram. In the big military tank, the body was covered with flowers and they carried it in the depth till they disappeared in January fogs. From the station I kept running across the fusion point of Ganga. A huge frenzy was haunting my mind. After returning, I kept brooding in my room with my mind crying on the riotous and woeful conditions in our country. MA previous exams were nearing by a couple of months.

So once again my studies were stopped and my examination was escaped on account of Gandhiji. Had I been a superstitious one, I would have thought that Gandhiji is not in favour of my waste of time in education in place of using that time for our nation. But I truly believed only educated people can work and help the nation progress and carry our life forward. With the same intention I started concentrating on my studies again. In 1948-49 for the academic year, I was elected unanimously as the president of hostel union.

At that time, I had invited Lal Bahadur Shastri for a speech in the union and Karmaveer Bhai Sunderlal ji also came to address our union. He used to speak a lot, and while speaking his eyes would fill with tears. In Hindi he used such tiny phrases while speaking softly in the stylized conversation, that the deep impact was created on the minds of his listeners. That was actually his own style. All the students listened to his speech carefully. In the same period Jinnah Saheb died of tuberculosis in September. Before his death he had started sending his Kashmiri Kabalies to protect his army and he wanted to merge Kashmir in Pakistan. That did not happen but he passed away. Being a Gandhi-disciple I called the union meeting to express our condolences to Jinnah Saheb. All came but when I was trying to express the condolences proposal, they started chit chatting, I was so disturbed that I declared my reluctance to continue the membership of such a union wherein people cannot even sympathise with a dead person at least to

send a formal letter of condolences. And I resigned from that president's post forever. O. P. Bhatnagar, the superintendent of hostel, used to like me a lot. He in fact was very affectionate to me. He came to my room and tried to convince me that I should withdraw my resignation. But I refused to agree with him. Not even an insistence that I would withdraw my resignation letter if the condolences proposal is revised and forwarded again. Then I left everything except my habit of spinning wheel. Such a sacrificial sense occupied my mind deeply that everything else seemed absurd. At the same time my two and a half years old son suddenly passed away. I had not known till now how is the feeling of becoming the father. My mind was lost in speechlessness. When the bad news was received by my wife she started lamenting loudly. I was watching it with my wife open eyes. In place of Gandhiji's work, now only his spinning wheel and his thoughts were my companions. When I left India, in June 1963, the spinning wheel too was left behind in Indian soil and in place of Khadi, the English dressing came with me.

Now the remaining factors were me the restless one, and the memories of the martyr, the disappointed Gandhi. They passed away and became martyrs. I was left behind with my body like a living corpse. Whatever happens, we have to be there, so we are, witnessing what and how. The camera does not know anything nor does it understand anything about you or anyone else. Watching with wide open eyes. Where Gandhiji and where am I...

We did not ever meet and he did not even know me. The basic differences existed between us, as usual. He was firm in his creed and faith in God. And I had always been a disbeliever. I could never ground my faith in such a god that does all good to His worshippers. Yet I admired the innocent worshippers. I liked the devotional engagement of the worshippers in worshipping God. That devotion is admirable indeed. Even if I was willing, I could never be a worshipper. That is why I adore them. Gandhiji was a radical activist. He used to confront on any matter anytime for the sake of truth. I was too scared to call a thief a thief. He regarded non violence as his religion. Non violence for him, in fact was the only path to arrive at the truth. Non violence was the only religion he believed in. Love thy enemy. I may like to follow him on this point but my nonviolence I without any courage. Out of gear though, I am a true follower of the non violence. In today's violent world I am also a propagator of non violence.

I was afraid of Gandhiji's moral rigidity. In any way I never dared to go near him. I went to his ashram only when he was absent. I visited Sabarmati and Sewagram like a pilgrimage destination with all others. I also visited the ashram of Vinobaji, and had the pleasure of his sight but he was on speech fasting. I had adored him greatly on his land donation movement. Even then I could not gather courage to walk with him on his mission of Journey on Foot. Dada Dharmadhikari always used to tell Gandhiji that your words are an order for us Bapu, you need not explain. So, we even today can narrate the miraculous stories of Gandhiji's courage and soul power. And whatever was expected to happen was actually gone with Gandhiji.

Anna Hazare had come ahead but was caught in the Lokpal bill. I was willing to participate in his mission, leaving all, but not merely for the Lokpal bill. Had he started the protest activism of masses in opposition to the all occupying corruption. Not only a few officials and ministers are corrupt in our government, but the whole society around is corrupt. We have to reform the society in our nation. But they soon became the compromising communities. Life is to be lived finally, how much we go on fighting and with how many people how many times. They disappointed me more. One possibility then is kindled through Gandhiji. One infinite possibility.

To some extent like Gandhiji, by being aware and awakened all the time and living with a sense of fearless generation so that we will never be exploited. Each generation has to bring its own revolution and carry the cross of its own progress.

For Peace and Truth, the only path is that of non violence which Gandhiji had proved to us by his martyrdom. In this simple way I made life easier: Asked for apologies from the one and offered forgiveness to the other..... (Apologised to some and forgave some).

This escapism of Ghalib may make life easier, but is not justified, and the unjustified cannot reach the truth. For the real attainment of Truth and Peace constant working with non-violence is essential.

