

Article 6

Gandhi: Dodgy Doings

“That which we call sin in others is experiment for us.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

In this article are some of the Gandhi episodes that distressed me to the very core of my being during the course of my research on Gandhi. And perhaps because it is *such* an unnecessary, petty, cruel, inconsiderate, and inhuman act which no *decent* human-being should have done—leave alone a Mahatma—I have chosen the incident below to be the first to be presented.

Gandhi: A ‘Bapu’ or not a ‘Bapu’ . . . ?

“Bapu”—father—is how Gandhi was fondly referred to by all. He also had an honorary title bestowed upon him, “Father of the Nation.” This incident of the pumice stone that I recount here is one example of how very undeserving these titles were.

In the *Great Soul*, the Pulitzer Prize winning author Joseph Lelyveld has recorded an incident that happened during Gandhi’s Tour of Mercy in Noakhali in 1946. The setting was one of horrendous rioting, where Hindus were mercilessly raped and slaughtered and had their homes gutted by the Muslims.

“On reaching a village called Nayanpur in the third week of the walking tour, Gandhi couldn’t find a piece of pumice he used to scrape his feet before soaking them. He’d last used it at a weaver’s hut where he’d stopped to warm his chilled feet. Evidently, Manu had left the stone behind. This was a “major error,” Gandhi said sternly, ordering her to retrace their steps and find it, which meant following a path through thick jungle in an area where assaults on young women were not unknown. When she asked if she could take a couple of volunteers, Gandhi refused. She had to go alone. The weaver’s wife had tossed the stone out, not knowing that the Mahatma counted it as precious. When Manu finally recovered it and returned, Pyarelal tells us, she burst into tears, only to be met by Gandhi’s cackle. To him, her afternoon’s ordeal was part of their mutual “test.”¹

“If some ruffian had carried you off and you had met your death courageously,” he told her, “my heart would have danced with joy. But I would

¹ The original story is to be found here: “There will be no tears,” *Mahatma Gandhi: Last Phase*, Vol. I, by Pyarelal; pp 321.

have felt humiliated and unhappy if you had turned back or run away from danger.”²

I ask you:

- In the midst of rape, riot, and ravaging of the devastated Hindus, should the Mahatma have worried over a mere pumice stone? A missing stone, a “major error” . . . !
- Where women were still being raped, even in the presence of the Mahatma in Noakhali,³ should Manu have been forced by the Mahatma to venture alone on the lonely, treacherous path?
- Would any “Bapu” put his daughter through that hell?
- With *what* face did the Mahatma—himself travelling (as always), violating his ‘stout’ principles of nonviolence, protected by an Armed Guard *and* a Sikh Volunteer Corps—dare to say that he would have been “humiliated and unhappy” if Manu had run from danger?

Gandhi: A British Mole . . . !

Dhananjay Keer was a very reputable biographer. Indeed, his biography of Gandhi—of some 800 plus pages—was invaluable for my research.

Out of the forest of words therein, out jumped these words given below and smote me a deadly blow between the eyes. The timing of this incident is 1919, after the Noncooperation Day (and the resultant Jallianwala Bagh tragedy) declared by Gandhi.

“He [Gandhi] gave interviews freely to the police at his place, visited their offices to give information about his tours and visits, and discussed with them the behavior of his lieutenants. He told police that ‘Horniman was an advocate of violence’ who believed that a revolution might be justifiable if justifiable ends could be achieved by no other means. He promised the British Police that if Umar Sobani revealed his mind to him he would tell them about it.”⁴

I read this passage once, did a double-take and read it again—and again. I couldn’t believe my eyes!⁵

² *Great Soul: Mahatma and His Struggle with India* by Joseph Lelyveld; Alfred A. Knopf, Newyork, 2011; pages 315-316.

³ Read Ashoka Gupta’s account: <http://www.india-seminar.com/2002/510/510%20ashoka%20gupta-noakhali.htm>

⁴ *Mahatma Gandhi: Political Saint and Unarmed Prophet*, by Dhananjay Keer; Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1973; page 288.

⁵ B. G. Horniman, a “dhoti clad, bare-footed” British citizen, has been described as being “more Indian than Indians as a freedom fighter, and his forceful speeches ignited the Bombayites’ to urge for freedom. His main themes were complete freedom and parliamentary democracy for India.”

Umar Sobani was a Muslim Nationalist who joined Gandhi in the Noncooperation Movement of 1920.

- The Mahatma of the Indians, the “Father of the Nation” was passing on to the British the confidences made to him by the freedom fighters of India . . . !
- And that was his conscious, deliberate act.

That is the action of a spy, a mole.

Gandhi’s Modus Operandi: “I preach, you practice”

Gandhi has spouted his “lofty” principles often and often, but only a cursory glance is sufficient to drive home the fact that rarely did he hold himself accountable to them. I shall only point out a few, but telling, instances.

- **The Vow of Poverty was certainly an ideal Gandhi upheld.**

How did he follow it?

He collected thousands of Rupees from his benefactors, encouraged industrialists to keep making a fortune and make donations, lived in palatial homes, traveled first class, ate an expensive special diet, and he even accepted gifts and sold them for money.

This is what his biographer Keer writes in *Mahatma Gandhi: Political saint and unarmed Prophet*:

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“Answering the query about his expenses, he [Gandhi] said: ‘I do make the claim that I attempt to act as I preach. But I must confess that I am not as inexpensive in my wants as I would like to be.’ . . .

Gandhi had at his disposal the biggest fund ever collected in the world by a political party, and he spent millions on political propaganda. His was an expensive leadership. Just to humor him, first class railway saloons were sometimes called second class. Just to satisfy his love of simplicity, palaces were called huts. It is no exaggeration to say that Gandhi’s menu and living were undoubtedly expensive.”

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“He [Gandhi] left Manglore on October 28 and reached Bombay on the morning of October 29 by the S.S. *Vegavati*. As usual, Gandhi did a little ‘business’ on the launch taking him to the steamer, by selling one of the gifts of the previous evening for Rs. 125.”

But the very *worst* of all is the fact that he made a profit from his speeches on spirituality in England in 1931 . . . !

“Meanwhile Gandhi attended a journalists’ party, visited India Office and gave a spiritual message for a gramophone company, drawing a profit of £5,000.”⁶

- **Gandhi considered surgery, injections etc. to be against his “staunch” principles of nonviolence.**

His wife died in dire straits, but he did not allow the doctor to give her the newly discovered penicillin shot.

And *yet* there are at least two operations that Gandhi himself underwent: one for hemorrhoids in January 1919, and another for appendicitis in January of 1924. He also took fifteen shots prior to the operations, in the hope that they would give him relief from his ailment.⁷

Eighteen months after the death of his wife, Gandhi developed what Keer calls “malignant malaria.” His blood pressure was high at the time, too. This is how Gandhi’s health at the time is described by the Gandhiserve Manibhavan website:

“Gandhi was released from Aga Khan Palace on 6th May, 1944. During his detention, he had developed hook worm and amoebic infection in addition to malaria. All this led to acute anemia.”

I have been unable to find even one reference in his biographies or the Gandhi websites as to *how* Gandhi was able to recover from this *severe* sickness—especially without the aid of modern medicines which he had just a little while before deprived his dying wife of.

I did find online an excerpt from one book, *100 Things You’re Not Supposed to Know* by Russ Kick (pp. 167-169), which claims:

“A mere six weeks after Kasturba died, Gandhi was flattened by malaria. He stuck to an all-liquid diet as his doctors tried to convince him to take quinine. But Gandhi completely refused and died of the disease, right? No, actually, after three weeks of deterioration, he took the diabolical drug and quickly recovered. The stuff about trusting God’s will and testing faith only applied when his wife’s life hung in the balance. When he needed a drug to stave off the Grim Reaper, down the hatch it went.”

⁶ *Mahatma Gandhi: Political Saint and Unarmed Prophet*, Dhananjay Keer, page 560.

⁷ Check in: http://www.gandhi-manibhavan.org/aboutgandhi/chrono_gandhiinbombay.htm#1919

I haven't found corroboration—yet. Hopefully, the book itself will give a reference where this information came from.

- **In his *Hind Swaraj* (reprinted with Gandhi's full backing over and over for many years) Gandhi advocates that true nonviolence lies in making it easy for a thief to steal one's home.**

And yet what did he do when his ashram was being robbed? Here it is:

“Nor could he [Gandhi] follow his principle in respect of thieving. When thieves attempted to steal things from the Ashram, Gandhi instead of asking, as he did in *Hind Swaraj*, ‘to keep your things in a manner most accessible to him’ instructed Maganlal to ask someone to sleep in the verandah and send for others also to do so.”⁸

- **From Gandhi's “Love the Harijans” mantra one would assume that he believed in equality of all human-beings. One would be wrong.**

Dhananjay Keer writes in his biography (page 619):

“The fate of Gandhi's Harijan uplift movement was no better than its theory or blue-print. M. C. Rajah moved a temple entry Bill [to allow untouchables entry into temples] in 1938, and Rajagopalachari [Rajaji] as Premier of Madras compelled 28 out of 30 Harijan members to vote against it. When Rajah appealed to Gandhi, he replied that Rajah's community had no better friends than Rajagopalachari. The Bill had been introduced with the consent of the Congress Party. . . .

And when Dr. Khare, Prime Minister of the Central Provinces, later included a Harijan in the Cabinet, Gandhi expressed disapproval of thus ‘raising absurd ambitions in the minds of the Harijans’! No wonder then that after twenty years of the Gandhian Harijan Movement, S. Ramanathan, a Congress Minister of Madras, said in 1943: ‘Gandhism has given rise to a worse evil than the Hindu-Muslim conflict. It has justified the caste system and has given it a fresh lease of life.’”

Gandhi strongly supported the birth-based caste system of the Hindus. He even proclaimed that inter-marriage and inter-dining between different castes was promiscuous.

What he said about the black locals in South Africa has to be read in his own words to be believed:

⁸ *Ibid* page 268.

**“Indian Opinion, March 7, 1908,
“Classification of Asiatics with Natives”**

The cell was situated in the native quarters and we were housed in one that was labeled “For Coloured Debtors”. It was this experience for which we were perhaps all unprepared. We had fondly imagined that we would have suitable quarters apart from the natives. . . .

Degradation underlay the classing of Indians with Natives. . . .

Many of the Native prisoners are only one degree removed from the animal and often created rows and fought among themselves in the cells.”⁹

Gandhi also bombarded the Government in South Africa for months fighting for a separate entrance to the post office for the Indians. It was a degradation for the Indians to share one with the “Natives,” he writes.

I shall end my article here offering just one more point to think upon. It is so easy to be conned by a slick tongue and a charming personality. And so, I have a very simple litmus test to weed out the worthy from the unworthy.

My litmus test: compare a person’s words very carefully with their actions. If they match, the person passes and is certainly of genuine, solid character. If not—watch out!

Needless to say Gandhi fails this litmus test time and again. The blinkers around the eyes have to be made of cast iron to not accept this fact.

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⁹ *Gandhi: Behind the Mask of Divinity*, G. B. Singh. Amherst, NY: Prometheus books, 2004; page 160-61.