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MY MEMORIES OF GANDHI

by

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If anybody had told me in 1920 that I would one day live in the same community with one of the great men of the age and see him every day and listen to him and peel vegetables with him in the common kitchen, I would have said that my informant was crazy. But that is what actually happened. So far as I know, there is no American other than myself, with the possible exception of Louis Fischer, the biographer of Gandhi, who lived with Gandhi in his training school for as long as seven months, as I did. Personal memories of a great man are engrossing to the person who has had the experience of such friendship. Can I tell them well enough to be interesting to others? Let me try before it is too late.

On January first, 1925, just before my fortieth birthday, I set sail from New York to India to see Gandhi and find out at first hand, if possible, how and why his method of handling conflict worked. What led me to take such a step?

To go back eleven years, - after graduating from college and law school, I practiced law in Boston for two years and disliked it. At the end of the second year of practise, my brother-in-law, who had a business interest in a jute mill near Calcutta, offered me a job as his private secretary on a trip to India and around the world. I accepted and spent a year in his office learning the ropes. Then we set forth in December, 1913, and after a stop in England, reached India in January, 1914. After a few weeks sight-seeing we went to Calcutta. Naturally we associated with big British and Scotch business men. They told us that Indians and their whole civilization were distinctly low and of no account. In all innocence, I

accepted all they told me as gospel truth. We reached home in May, 1914. I went back to the practise of law to give it one more try, this time in another office.

It was not for me, and at the end of the year I left the law. Then, through the kindness of a friend, I got a job in the field of labor-management relations with a most interesting and stimulating man, Robert G. Valentine, who had been the director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs during the presidency of Taft. It was Valentine's idea that friction between labor and management was largely due to certain conditions that could be ascertained and corrected. He devised what he called an industrial audit, a systematic way of investigating the physical conditions of work, the relations within the organizations, and various practises. It was all open and above-board and with the consent of the parties involved. No detective work or secret investigating!

For seven years I was in this very interesting work. After the United States got into the first World War in 1918, I was asked to come to Washington to help in dealing with the relations between the U.S. Shipping Board and the seamen and longshoremen. Valentine had died in 1916.

There was a dispute between the ship owners and seamen on the Great Lakes. My immediate boss in this division of the Shipping Board, ex-governor Robert P. Bass of New Hampshire, who had been a friend of Valentine, took me with him on an investigation of the labor situation at Chicago, Buffalo, Cleveland and some of the Great Lakes ports, and we found that the seamen had some just grievances that deserved discussion between them and the ship owners. The war effort required the continuous carriage of iron ore on the Lakes. So Mr. Bass called a meeting of the representatives of both parties in Washington. On the appointed day, the representatives

of the Lake Carriers' Association, dominated by the U. S. Steel Corporation ore-carrying boats, refused to come into the same room with the representatives of the seamen. Mr. Bass sent me to the head of the U.S. Shipping Board to ask him to compel the representatives of the ship owners' association to meet with the seamen's representatives to talk over the situation and try to reach an agreement. The head of the Shipping Board declined to do so. It was clear then where the power lay. In all innocence I had been going to various meetings of seamen and longshoremen and telling them that the government would give them justice. When I saw that was not so, I resigned and joined the staff of the National War Labor Board of which ex-President Taft was a member. They assigned me to administer a wage award that the Board had made covering the machinists at the plant of one of the big steel manufacturing companies. In trying to carry out this award I saw so much unfairness, injustice, misrepresentation and cheating that I became more and more interested in the labor side of these disputes. Then came the Armistice and the end of that job.

After a few months in the labor-management field in the men's clothing industry in New York City, I took a job with a friend in a federation of railway shop craft unions. These men repair and maintain the rolling stock of the railroads. Our job was to prepare arguments and evidence for the unions to present to the U.S. Railway Labor Board, to write publicity and to appear on behalf of the unions before the Interstate Commerce Commission. In this job I saw further injustice and workings of the desire for power.

The unions I was working for went on a nation-wide strike. At the height of the strike, when feelings were most intense, just by chance I picked up in a Chicago book shop a book about Mahatma Gandhi

and his nonviolent struggle for justice in South Africa. The contrast between his way of handling conflict and what I was in the midst of was so great that I pondered over it constantly. Here was a man who was making the Sermon on the Mount work. I had never heard of him before. About that time B. W. Huebsch, who started the Viking Press, published a collection of Gandhi's writings from Gandhi's weekly paper, "Young India". I devoured it.

We lost the strike, and the unions had used up so much of their funds supporting the idle striking membership that my job had to stop. I was not married then and had saved up a little money so I wrote to Gandhi telling him my history and background and that I felt the West was on the downhill path, and asking if I could come out to India to learn about his better way. At that time in the early 1920's Gandhi was in jail, but his English friend, C.F. Andrews, who was editing the weekly paper, "Young India" for him, answered my letter and told me to come along. So I took a couple of short courses in agriculture at the University of Wisconsin and a course in Swedish massage as a possible way of earning money. I wrote to my mother and brothers and sisters what I was about to do and why. My father was then no longer living. My mother worked up a theory that I was going to be an agricultural missionary. She could not understand that I was out to learn something, not to teach. My departure hurt her feelings. My brothers and sisters kindly did not protest or argue.

So I arrived in Bombay February 1, 1925. Within a few days I luckily learned that C.F. Andrews was at Ahmedabad, about a night's journey north of Bombay. So I wrote to him and went up there in a couple of days. We met at the railway station. He took me to drive in a horse drawn vehicle, a gharry. I told him my story and we had a good talk. Then he drove me across the Sabarmati River on the west

side of Ahmedabad, to Gandhi's school, called an ashram in the Indian language. There we were met by Gandhi's cousin, Maganlal Gandhi, a sweet, kind and able person who was manager of the Ashram. Gandhi was away for a few days. Maganlal assigned me a room in a long dormitory and invited me to have meals at his house. A couple of days later Gandhi returned and that evening took me for a walk and talk. I told him my history and background and my feeling that Western civilization was on the wrong track and that I wanted to learn his ideas and adapt myself to Indian ways. At that time I planned to stay in India permanently.

Knowing what I did about his ideas and what he had done, I felt at first awed by his presence, but he listened attentively to what I said and made me feel entirely at ease. There was no false dignity or pretentiousness about him. He accepted me as a student and made me feel at home. So I began life in the Ashram. The next day I got Indian clothes, - a dhoti (a sort of skirt made of one long piece of cotton cloth wound around one's legs and hips and tucked in at the waist), a couple of long shirts and a strip of cloth worn like a shawl. Also Maganlal got me a spinning wheel and I began to learn how to spin cotton.

The day's schedule at the Ashram was as follows: Rising bell at 4 A.M. Then with our lanterns we assembled at the prayer ground, an uncovered bit of sand about 50 feet by 50 feet surrounded by a brick wall about one foot high. By we, I mean all the students and Ashram members, men and women. We sat down on the ground in rows with Gandhi and a musician in front facing us. There was a lantern beside Gandhi. The lanterns of the audience were parked outside the wall. The service began with a recital by all the audience together of Gandhi's favorite passage from the Bhagavad Gita (Chapter II) in the Gujarati language. In this passage the god Krishna describes the steadfast man.

Swami Nikhilananda translates the passage thus: "When a man completely casts off the desires of the mind, his Self finding satisfaction in itself alone, then he is called a man of steady wisdom. He who is not perturbed by adversity, who does not long for happiness, who is free from attachment, fear and wrath, is called a man of steady wisdom. He who is not attached to anything, who neither rejoices nor is vexed when he obtains good or evil - his wisdom is firmly fixed. When he completely withdraws the senses from their objects, as a tortoise draws in its limbs, then his wisdom is firmly fixed." Then there was a song by the musician accompanied by his stringed instrument, and a chant by all together of what I believe was a passage from some other scripture (perhaps the "Ramayana") that as I remember it, went, "Rughoo pati raj pata raja ram, pati ta pah pata Sita Ram." That was repeated many times over with gradually increasing tempo. I do not know its translation into English. The service lasted about half an hour.

Then people dispersed to their rooms or houses and swept up their quarters. About daylight the work of the day commenced. The spinners and weavers began their jobs and those learning such skills went at their practice. The dairy and orchard workers went about their routines. Gandhi himself was busy with correspondence or talking with visitors. He kept four secretaries busy constantly.

About ten o'clock work stopped and everyone had baths in their own quarters or in the Sabarmati River which flowed past the Ashram. About eleven came the main meal of the day. Then during the heat of the day many people took siestas for about an hour. After that, work resumed until the evening meal which came just before sundown. In the twilight after the meal Gandhi always took a walk of perhaps a mile. Some of his close followers and usually any visitors went with him.

About 7 P.M. came the evening prayers. Usually then Gandhi would talk in the language of his province, Gujerati. There was more music and chanting than at the morning prayers. Once a week after the prayers the roll was called and everyone reported the number of yards of cotton yarn he or she had spun during the past week. Then people went home to bed.

Every morning as soon as it was full light Gandhi made a tour of inspection of the whole Ashram, being especially careful to visit any who were sick.

At four in the afternoon Gandhi spun cotton for about an hour and talked with visitors. Anyone was welcome. I used to go almost every day to listen to the conversation. Gandhi was so good a spinner that he could listen to questions, and talk while spinning. This conversation did not happen every day, for he occasionally had to travel to other parts of India.

My guess is that the Ashram then comprised about fifty acres of land, along the west bank of the Saparmati River, a shallow stream during the dry season, but broad and deep during the rains. At that point the river ran nearly north and south, and across the river you could see the tall chimneys of the Ahmedabad cotton mills.

There were about 120 people at the Ashram. The majority, I think, were students who came to learn the methods of what we would call social service work for the peasants. The permanent members and their families had taken vows of several kinds of austerity devised by Gandhi. There were also teachers and their families. The buildings included a cottage for Gandhi, cottages for the permanent members and teachers, dormitories for the students and visitors such as myself, a library, a dining room, a dairy, a school for the children, spinning and weaving sheds.

Bathing and washing one's clothes came together. Taking a clean shirt and dhoti, you went down to the bank of the river, put your clean clothes on the branches of some shore shrubs, also the shirt you had on. Then you waded into the stream with your dhoti on and washed your body all over, came out, and took the clean dhoti off the bushes, draped it around your middle and stood on a stone in the shallow water. Then you loosened your wet dhoti and let it drop into the shallow water, holding one corner of it with your foot so it would not be carried away by the stream. You wound the fresh clean dhoti around you and rolled the cloth on itself at the waist. When that was firm, you tucked up the long part of it so it would not get wet, washed your discarded dhoti and hung it on the bushes to dry, you put on your clean shirt and were ready for lunch. After the noon meal you rescued the then dry dhoti.

Drinking water came from a big well not far from the river edge. You filled your bucket at the well and carried the water to your room and poured the water into a large globe-shaped earthenware pot about 16 inches in diameter and with a wide mouth. It rested on a stand on your veranda and was covered with an earthenware saucer. Some of the water slowly seeped through the earthenware, evaporated and thus kept the water cool.

My veranda was on the north side of the dormitory. Behind the main room was a bathroom with a toilet consisting of a bucket under a stand, the bottom of the bucket covered with earth, beside it another bucket filled with earth and a little scoop with which to cover the night soil. Every morning someone came around, took your bucket, dumped the contents into a trench in the orchard for compost, and covered it with soil. If you wanted to bathe indoors, you could, getting the water from the river yourself. There were, of course, no bath tubs. You dipped the water out of your bucket and poured it

over you. The floor was slightly tilted so that the water drained off into the field behind the building. The only furniture in the main room, besides my trunk with western clothes and my books and spinning wheel, was a cot with rope woven across instead of springs and a thin mattress. There were no chairs, for Indians sit cross-legged on the floor on a little square rug. I had to learn how to sit that way. It took me about six months to get my knees and ankles limber enough to endure the position without shifting.

I practised spinning for an hour every morning and afternoon, and enjoyed mastering the new skill. Maganlal was much interested in spinning by means of a simple hand spindle such as the poorest of the poor and children could make for themselves. He thought it would be helpful to prepare a pamphlet of instructions telling how to make such a spindle and to spin on it. So I volunteered to try to write it. He got some photographs made in Ahmedabad, showing the correct position of the hands and fingers at each stage of the spinning. We put together his pictures and my text and had it printed with the title,- THE TAKLI TEACHER, the name of the hand spindle in the Hindi language being takli, with the a pronounced like a short u.

Maganlal kindly and generously let me take meals with him. It is the custom for Indian wives to remain in the kitchen and make the wheat cakes, called Chappaties, as they are eaten. So I did not get a chance to get acquainted with Mrs. Maganlal. She was quite shy too. Maganlal was wonderfully kind in explaining Indian ways to me. He had been with Gandhi in South Africa and so knew western ways and ideas. He was very practical and yet imaginative. There were two children, Keshu the boy, and a girl whose name was Radha, if I remember aright. They were about 15 years old. I got to know Maganlal better than anyone else in the Ashram. My next best friends

were a brother of Maganlal named Chbaganlal, and Gandhi's chief secretary, Mahadev Desai, a very sweet and understanding person and a tower of secretarial strength. There were two other secretaries, Pyarelal Nayar and Krishnadas. In after years I came to know Pyarelal well.

What was Gandhi himself like?

Physically, he was a little man, standing up to about my shoulder, say five feet two inches. He was very thin, weighing, I guess, one hundred and five pounds, approximately. Maganlal told me that in his younger days in South Africa Gandhi was a great walker, doing twenty miles every week-end between the farm where they lived and the railway station, for he worked in the city and came out to their home only on week-ends. His chest, from front to back, was very deep. I think that made possible his tremendous endurance, enabling him to work for long stretches on only four hours sleep per night.

His face was homely but friendly and open. His head was bald. His skin had a beautiful brown sheen. His eyes in repose were sad. His manner was always courteous and friendly. In conversation he was a good listener and paid you complete attention. He had an excellent sense of humor, and conversation with him had always some laughter. If he could find something to tease you about, he enjoyed that. Even in the pressure of important business he was considerate and kind. For example, when my wife and I visited Sabarmati Ashram in early March, 1930, just before Gandhi's famous march to the seashore to make salt in defiance of the British legal monopoly of that manufacture, and when many Indian leaders were coming to the Ashram to consult with him, he invited my wife out for a little walk with him, and had her sit near him in the common dining room.

He had great firmness, endurance and patience, and a deep

understanding of human nature. But he was never dogmatic or too proud to admit publicly that he had made a mistake. On one occasion he said in his weekly paper that one of his mistakes was "Himalayan" in size. He was modest and humble. He disliked the name "Mahatma" (Great Soul). He said, "Mahatma" "stinks in my nostrils." He tried always to appeal to the best in everyone, whether friend or opponent, Indian or British or other foreigner. As the only ornament in his study he had one of the little Japanese ivory figures of the three monkeys who were by their gestures embodying the principles of "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil."

He was deeply religious, equating God and Truth. "God is Truth, and Truth is God". He believed in the constant presence and power of God as firmly as you and I believe in the attraction of gravitation. He was tolerant of all religions, saying that there is truth in them all. He revered Jesus and his teachings but preferred his indigenous Hinduism. He was against religious proselytizing and missions except medical missions. He thought that medical help was fine, but that using the medicine as a sort of bribe to people to become Christians was wrong. He had deep respect and compassion for the Indian peasants. His scanty clothing was intended to symbolize his oneness with them. While deeply pitying their poverty, he believed in helping people to help themselves and thus keep their self-respect. He never gave money to beggars.

He believed in the value of manual work. It is not easy for a middle class person in India to do manual work, for the age-old caste customs of the Hindus accord no respect for manual workers. But despite his middle class ancestry and upbringing, Gandhi practised what he preached. He never asked other people to do anything unless he had practised it first himself. In the Ashram he himself cleaned the latrines till the rest of the members saw the value of even that.

During part of my stay in the Ashram, after they began having all their meals in a large common dining room, Gandhi for awhile set an example by cleaning, paring and cutting up, in the early morning, the vegetables for the noon meal. He let me join him in this work. I remember saying to him on one of those occasions that I was surprised that with so many of the troubles and sorrows of India on his mind he could nevertheless joke and see the funny side of things and people. He answered that if he could not laugh sometimes, he would go mad.

Later, during World War II, I used sometimes to smile to myself at the contrast between Gandhi and two other great leaders of their people,- F. D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. One could not imagine either of them peeling vegetables in the kitchen as examples to their people of the value of manual work.

From my watching and listening to him dealing with people and reading his writings, I saw that his mind and intelligence were quick, far-ranging and deep. He was not a frequent reader of books, but what he read he mastered and assimilated thoroughly. I say that his mind and knowledge of human nature, were deep because he went so far in his thinking and actions towards solving the greatest and most difficult human problem, that of violence and the handling of conflicts.

He believed and practised his belief, that the nature of the end reached in any endeavor is determined by the character of the means used to reach it. One cannot reach a peaceful and lasting settlement of any conflict by using violent means. He felt that deceit is a kind of violence. Before beginning any movement of resistance to British rule, he always notified the Government in advance what he was going to do, and when and where he would start. As a result, the British came to trust him. For awhile the secret police used to come disguised into the Ashram trying to find out who had visited there and what was

discussed. Gandhi went to the head of the secret police and told him he would personally furnish each week the names of all visitors, why they came and what they discussed. The police took him at his word and the arrangement was continued openly and trustingly on both sides. I remember seeing the policeman come one morning, get his report and depart. I myself was questioned by an English policeman when I first came to Ahmedabad. He wanted to know my reasons for coming. I told him that I thought Gandhi had successfully solved the twin problems of violence and settlement of conflicts. He did not believe me but let me go.

Gandhi was always patient and considerate of the minds and feelings of others. He was persistent. He began his struggle to persuade the British to grant independence to India in 1920 and kept at it despite all sorts of obstacles until, after twenty-eight years, he won. No other empire had yielded up power to subject peoples using non violent resistance. All the way along he had to get his people to understand the method and obey orders from him. He went to jail for his principles many times and for long periods of years. There were of course many other factors in the historical result besides Gandhi and his method of non violent resistance, but Gandhi provided the spirit, developed the courage and sense of unity among Indians,- all these essentials of victory.

He lived very simply. The money he had earned as a lawyer in South Africa he put into a trust fund to finance the Ashram and its work, and this fund was added to by wealthy men. But he was not one of the trustees. He was an ascetic in the old Greek sense of that word, as training for a contest. But he was no sour puritan. He urged people to disagree with him if they were not persuaded by his reasoning and actions. While appreciative of natural scenery, he was not interested in art. For him, I think, moral beauty was of

supreme importance.

Though he was deeply devoted to the peasants and their welfare, and was worshipped by them, he was not hostile toward or condemnatory of wealthy men. He respected their managerial abilities and believed they should hold their wealth in trust for the welfare of all. He respected them as persons despite their temptation to be selfish. The wealthiest man in India, G. D. Birla, came to Gandhi and offered to give up his wealth and retire from business and become an Ashram member. Gandhi said no, that Birla had great executive and administrative talents and should not waste them but should use his wealth for the common good. Birla has tried to do that. Such ideas would be laughed to scorn in the West, but not among the best people of India. This is just one example of Gandhi appealing to the best in everyone, despite appearance and experience to the contrary.

One part of Gandhi's program has been ridiculed in the West as unrealistic and "trying to turn the clock back". I refer to his promoting hand spinning and weaving. But my experience in the field of labor-management relations had included investigating textile mills in the United States and had prepared me to see the value of this. Let me explain.

Its validity grows largely out of the climatic conditions of India where the rainfall is concentrated in three months in the summer of the year. The remaining nine months are wholly dry. By the end of the first six of the dry months the crops have all been harvested and the soil is baked dry by the tropical sun and cannot be plowed or sowed to fresh crops. The peasants, who then were 85% of the population, had nothing to do. The Indian census figures for 1921, just before I got there, showed that there were approximately one hundred and seven million "actual workers" wholly engaged in pasture and agriculture." They were idle at least three months of the year, every year. One

hundred and seven million people was then one third of the entire population of the United States at that time. In those days the average daily wage for agricultural labor was about seven cents. The wage loss for the three months of agricultural idleness amounted to over \$674 million dollars or over two hundred million dollars more than the gross revenue of the Central Indian Government for 1927-28, the comparable figure I have now available. The actual economic loss was far greater. Besides this there was the incalculable cost of discouragement, loss of self-confidence and self-respect, and a sense of futility among those idle millions of peasants.

Cotton can be grown in all the States of India but one. Good yarn can be spun on a hand spindle made of a nine inch sliver of wood with a ball of clay at one end to act as a fly wheel, and a spinning wheel costs only five rupees (then about \$1.75) and spins faster. Spinning is easily learned and the spinning wheel was traditionally familiar in all the villages.

When the British came about 200 years ago they soon realized that here was an enormous market for the cotton cloth of the Manchester mills. The British deliberately and systematically suppressed the Indian hand spinning by every possible means, and grew rich on the results. After this the Indian peasantry suffered further impoverishment.

So Gandhi's promotion of hand spinning and hand weaving was a wise effort of relief for Indian rural unemployment and under-employment. It was wise, not only economically, but also psychologically and morally and socially.

Here is a peasantry that for about nine hundred years have been a more or less oppressed and subject people; poverty stricken and ridden by malaria and other diseases, and during the last 150 years subject to unemployment and underemployment on a huge scale. They

are mostly illiterate, intensely conservative, apathetic, disheartened, generally lacking in initiative, self-confidence and self respect. When attempting reforms and improvements among such people, the advance steps must be very small, easy of accomplishment, concrete, immediately productive of improved bodily welfare. It is like a man learning to walk again after a long melancholy sickness. Beginnings can be only very slow and small. A big task at first would be impossible, and failure would only throw the patient into complete apathy and despair. But a few tiny triumphs are the right sort of stimulus. Once growth is started and right conditions provided and maintained, then strength and betterment may soon increase and rapidly become normal. The mass poverty is so vast that only some form of self-help, such as the spinning wheel, can relieve it surely and permanently and with reasonable speed. In respect to these psychological and moral conditions, the spinning wheel is superior to all other proposals. Even improvements in agriculture depend on the presence of actually felt hope, initiative, self-confidence, self-reliance and understanding. There is much more to it than I have room to explain here.

The spinning program need not displace all other efforts toward reform, but it seems to possess certain advantages over all other proposals. It does not displace the peasants and lure them into the cities to fester in dreadful slums. It keeps the product right in the hands of the peasants and out of the rapacious market. The hand spinning has valuable moral and psychological effects. From skilled manual work come self-reliance, self-confidence, poise, quick sound judgment, independent thinking, self-respect, initiative, a sense of responsibility and hope. And there are still other advantages. It is closely adapted to the ingrained habits and modes of thought, actions and institutions of the great majority of the people. There is its simplicity and its ability to produce necessities almost immediately, the relative ease of

learning, the cheapness of installation and operation, the relative simplicity of organization required, the fact that more people can take part in it than in any other scheme,- (young, aged, men, women, city people, country people, manual workers, intelligencia, all castes and all classes). It needs no special legislation, foreign or other capital. It provides one of the three elemental necessities,- food, shelter and clothing, and removes clothing from the field of profiteering. It is an indigenous industry. It needs a minimum of assistance from book-educated people. Although not a cure-all, it is an effective first step.

There is a very considerable amount of hand weaving in India which has been using mill-spun yarn, and this with a little addition would turn all the hand-spun yarn into cloth.

I go into all this description of Gandhi's hand spinning program because I think it shows his originality and independent thinking, his deep understanding of people, their character and of the relationship between what men do and its effect on their character. He understood, too, that for the well-being of the people modern machinery and machine industry are not as important as human moral and intellectual character. Gandhi's understanding and wisdom are an important part of my memories of him.

In addition to hand spinning and weaving, Gandhi promoted some eighteen other activities for the improvement of Indian life, which he called his "constructive program". They included sanitation, teaching reading and writing, other village industries, removal of untouchability, improvement of agriculture, proper care of cows, reducing conflicts between different religious communities, promotion of labor unions, promotion of justice and freedom for women, prohibition of drinking, intoxicating drugs and gambling; promotion of education of village children based on handicrafts, which he called "basic education." For each of these he established an organization to carry on his work.

He was a great social inventor.

After a couple of months at the Ashram, they (I suppose Gandhi and Maganlal made the decision) sent me east to the province of Bihar to see the operation of the spinning program in the villages there. It was arranged that on the way I was to break the journey at Allahabad and spend a night at the home of Jawaharlal Nehru. All I knew about him was what Maganlal told me; that he was one of the active younger men in Gandhi's movement and that his father was a prominent lawyer. Nehru happened to be the only member of the family at home. He was courteous in an aristocratic manner, and we had supper together. I do not remember any of our conversation. I did not see him again till the winter of 1949-50 at the World Pacifist Conference in Sevagram.

Enroute I spent another night at Patna, in the house of an Indian lawyer just one month older than myself, named Rajendra Prasad, a devoted follower of Gandhi and his program. He was gentle and modest, with a deep interest in the welfare of the peasants. After Gandhi's death he was chosen President of the newly independent India. But he was not spoiled by his position and remained the same quiet, thoughtful man.

After one night at Patna I was taken north to a village and stayed a week with a kind man named Ram Binod Sinha who was very active as organizer and manager of a center for the Khaddar program (Khaddar or khadi is the Indian name for hand woven cloth made from hand-spun yarn). During my second morning there, my host took me out on a walk that led past a group of villagers who were making mud bricks. As we approached the whole group called out together, "Mahatma Gandhiji ki jai!", "Victory to Mahatma Gandhi." My host explained that it had gotten around the village that I had come directly from Gandhi's Ashram and these men wanted me to know they were all for him. I was astonished at such a spontaneous indication of Gandhi's influence on

the peasants.

After about a week observing the khaddar work there, my first friend in India, C. F. Andrews, arranged for me to visit Shantiniketan, a coeducational school founded and maintained by the Indian poet, Rabindranath Tagore, in Bengal, about one hundred miles north of Calcutta, and after a few days in the guest hostel, to share the room of a kind senior student, G. Ramachandran. For some years now in South India he has run a school of his own for training young men and women to carry on parts of Gandhi's program in the villages. Thirty two years later this same G. Ramachandran asked me to teach for awhile in his school. This I did in the autumn of 1956 and spring of 1957. While at Shantiniketan I became good friends with one of the teachers, Kshitimohan Sen, who traveled widely through northern India every vacation, recording the poems and sayings of the medieval mystic Kabir, as they were remembered among the peasants. He read me many of these sayings and songs. Tagore translated them into English and Macmillan published them as "Songs of Kabir".

Again by Andrews' kindness I spent my first hot season in the Himalayas, near a village named Kotgarh, fifty miles north of Simla, on the Hindustan-Tibet Highway. If you have read Kipling's "Kim", you may remember Kim's experiences in Simla, and later how the woman of Shamlegh told Kim that she had been to school in Kotgarh, the same Kotgarh. An ex-American named S. E. Stokes who had married a very intelligent and practical Indian hill woman, had bought an old tea plantation there, taken out the tea bushes and in their place had planted a large orchard of scions of Red Delicious and Golden Delicious apples from Washington State. When I was there the trees were bearing nicely, and he was shipping the apples to Simla and using the proceeds of their sale to support a school for his five children and the children of several nearby villages. Stokes and Andrews were old friends, and

at Andrews' suggestion, Stokes took me in for the whole summer. Stokes had earlier been a supporter of Gandhi's movement, so that gave us a common interest. In conversation with Stokes I happened to mention that long before, in order to earn money to start in law school, I had taught mathematics and chemistry in a boys' boarding school near Boston. The children in Stokes' school had reached the stage of plane geometry and elementary science, so Stokes offered me the job of teaching those two subjects in his school. In those days, with the British in charge, children who wanted to go to college were required to study those subjects in English. Such a requirement, to study a strange new subject in a language foreign to them, was very hard on the children. But it made it possible for me to teach them after a fashion, for I did not know enough of the Hindi language to use that medium. I told Stokes that I would give him my answer after I got down to the plains and could plan my future a little more surely.

In early September I went down to Sabarmati Ashram again. At the end of about a week, while working in the garden one afternoon, I began to feel badly and returned to my room. The next thing I knew was waking up in the morning feeling very weak. They told me I had been delirious with malaria for five days and nights. There was never any recurrence of the fever but it took me months to recover my strength. I realized that to remain in India I would have to get away from the mosquitoes. So I wrote to Stokes accepting his offer to come up to Kotgarh and teach in his school. I taught there for three years. Living there was marvelous, at an altitude of seven thousand feet in the midst of glorious mountain scenery with the Sutlej River visible thousands of feet below, and above, the eternal snow peaks of the high Himalayas. They were hardly one hundred miles away, and when they came out of the clouds on clear days, seemed to float above the nearer mountains.

The school vacations came in winter, when the mosquitoes on the plains were relatively inactive and it was safe for me to be there then. So I visited then at Sabarmati Ashram and Shantiniketan to become further acquainted with Gandhi and his ideas.

In early November, 1925, while I was convalescing at the Ashram, another foreign recruit to Gandhi's ideas arrived. She was an English woman, Miss Madelein Slade, a daughter of an Admiral in the British Navy. She had tired of the superficiality of life in high society, and being very fond of the music of Beethoven, she went to Switzerland to see Romain Rolland who was writing a life of Beethoven. Rolland gave her a little book about Gandhi that he had written. Gandhi was little known in Europe then, but the story of his life and ideas so greatly appealed to her that she spent a year training herself for life under the leadership of such a man, and then came to the Ashram as a disciple. She told me that before she left England her father said to her, "Well, now that you have chosen your leader, stick with him through thick and thin." Pretty sporting, I thought, of an English Admiral. She was and still is utterly devoted to Gandhi. He gave her an Indian name,- Mirabehn.

I became so interested in the hand spinning program that in 1927 I wrote a book about it, using my experiences in American textile manufacture as a background. That pleased Gandhi. The book was entitled "Economics of Khaddar" and was published in India.

This writing was due to the stimulus of the situation, new to me, and the contact with Gandhi's original mind. I am not a professional writer and I did not go to India in order to get material for writing. Such an idea never occurred to me. I just got steamed up over the whole idea and possibilities of the program, and felt compelled to explain it in Western terms. This was true also of a book I wrote later, called "The Power of Nonviolence". I did not keep a diary nor

did I have a camera. What I am writing now is all from memory. I went to India not to write but to learn something that seemed to me vital, and the learning was not just intellectual; it was absorbed into my whole being.

In writing these recollections I find it difficult to separate my memories of Gandhi from those of India and the whole Indian civilization which I was trying to take in. The Indian culture was a part of Gandhi and in trying to understand him I had to try to understand that too. Likewise, in this attempt to help you to understand Gandhi, I feel obliged to describe some of the Indian environment and people as I experienced them.

When you go and live in a culture very different from your own, far more different than in any European land, and you wear the clothing of the new culture, eat its special food in their manner, read as much as you can find of its literature and religion, try to learn its language, soak yourself in its arts and ways of living, and you keep that up for several years, you find yourself not only thinking new thoughts and feeling new emotions, but having to examine the very assumptions, the preconceptions, the axioms of your own civilization. That is really deep education. You gain a perspective on your indigenous culture and ways that you never could get in any other way.

The influence of environment is very subtle. For instance, before I went to India in 1925 I had read the great Indian scripture called "The Bhagavad Gita" (The Song of the Lord) and thought I understood it. After I got to India I did not ask about its meaning or discuss it with my Hindu friends at all. But after I had lived in Indian style for a couple of years, I found myself seeing new meanings in that book, meanings I am sure would never have occurred to me if I had stayed in the United States or anywhere in the West.

Let me tell a couple of incidents that help provide background for understanding Gandhi.

One night at Sabarmati Ashram after prayers I went to my bathroom to brush my teeth and prepare for bed. By the light of my lantern I saw a large snake which had crawled in through the drain hole leading out to the field behind the dormitory. Not knowing whether or not it was poisonous, I went to Maganlal's house and reported the situation. He sent a couple of students to handle the matter. They brought with them a pole maybe six feet long with a strap loop at one end which could be pulled tight from the other end. They slipped the loop over the head of the snake and pulled the loop tight and thus had the snake captured. They did not kill it as most Westerners would have done, but carried it out to the fields about a quarter of a mile away and released it there. Respect for all life even though it may be dangerous to man.

Again, At the Ashram there was a large well which supplied everyone with drinking water. There was a good deal of malaria among the Ashram members. To avoid malaria I always slept under a mosquito net. This was before I came down with malaria myself. It occurred to me that some of the malaria-carrying mosquitoes might be breeding in the well water. So I suggested to Maganlal that he put a few minnows down in the well water. They would eat the mosquito larvae and thus perhaps reduce the incidence of malaria in that neighborhood. Maganlal thought over the idea for a day or two and then said, no, someone might draw up one or more of the minnows in a bucket for drinking water, and the fish might get thrown out onto the ground and die. Again, a case of respect for all life, even though it might result in sickness to mankind.

Such attitudes and practise seem to us Westerners to be lacking in respect for the highest form of life, - man, and therefore

dangerous and stupid. But possibly their attitude may be rather a long distance ecological wisdom. Maybe man's superiority over other creatures does not entitle him to take charge of the balance of all Nature and the evolution of all species. Man is, after all, only one of the creatures of Nature. We thought we were wise and kind to greatly reduce so many diseases, but lo, we have created thereby the population explosion whose results are going to be more than uncomfortable. Maybe man is not quite so important and wise as he thought he was. Perhaps we have to take our chances along with the minnows and mosquitoes.

I myself have thought that one element in the fascination of India is the subtle omnipresence of this Hindu belief in the oneness of all forms of life. Anyhow, that belief or assumption was part of the background of Gandhi's attitude to life. But he was no fanatic. Once while I was in India a calf at the Ashram was badly injured or became incurably sick, and Gandhi had it killed, to put it out of its misery. That raised a storm among the orthodox Hindus, but Gandhi successfully stood up to the criticism.

But now, back to my story. Like everyone, Gandhi had his quirks and peculiarities. He was meticulous to avoid waste of any kind. One way this showed was his using tiny bits of paper for notes or messages. He would use a pencil up to the last inch of its existence. He was insistent on punctuality, living up to it himself with the aid of an Ingersol dollar watch whose chain was a piece of string. He was also insistent on exactness in money accounts. When he asked money from people of all sorts for the promotion of hand spinning, he insisted that a receipt should be given to each donor even though the giver was a villager giving only the smallest coin.

Every Monday he observed complete silence. He used this time for his writing and a partial rest from incessant demands on himself.

He would let people come to him on that day and talk if the matter was important and if they asked questions and the answer was short, he would write it on one of those bits of paper, but would not utter a word.

One of his great pleasures was to nurse sick people and prescribe natural treatment for their ills, such as mud baths, fasting, hot poultices and strict diet. He himself was a rigid vegetarian but within that limit he liked to experiment with diets. Once in a mood of strictness with himself and vegetarianism, he took a vow not to take milk because it is an animal product. He knew he needed more protein than the Indian vegetables provided, so he tried to get it through ground-up almonds. I remember seeing his secretary Pyarelal grinding the almonds for his dinner. But this did not supply what his body needed. He grew weaker and weaker, but he had made a vow and would not break it no matter what the consequences. Finally his wife, Kasturba, made him admit that when he took that vow against drinking milk he actually had in mind cow's milk. "Well, then," she said, "It would not violate your vow if you took goat's milk." With that argument she had him. He had to admit her logic. So after that he lived with the help of goat's milk!

On the tours inspecting the whole Ashram that Gandhi conducted every morning, several people usually went along with him. Out of curiosity, one morning I joined the tour. At one stage he led us through his wife's kitchen. In passing through, he carelessly made some derogatory remark about the kind of food she was preparing which did not fit with the kind he was then experimenting with. Her response was quick and energetic, - "Get out of my kitchen!" We promptly moved along.

One morning I was surprised to receive an invitation from Gandhi to join him in a sun bath. We sat on the crest of a high

bank of the river in only our loin cloths. I suppose he wanted to get further acquainted and found that was the only free time available. I cannot remember what we talked about, but it lasted about three quarters of an hour.

Another time, just after Gandhi was recovering from a fever, I went to his room at four o'clock to listen to whatever conversation might be going. There I found a wealthy cotton mill owner from Ahmedabad and his wife, urging Gandhi to come and stay at their house to get a rest. Their plea was unsuccessful. What sticks in my memory was the firmness yet courtesy of Gandhi's declining. The mill magnate was accustomed to have his own way but this time he had come to a stone wall, a polite stone wall.

One winter when I had just come down from the hills, I joined Gandhi and his secretary Mahadev Desai in Calcutta. Gandhi was raising money for a hospital as a memorial to a Bengali leader. It was the end of the afternoon and I was waiting for them to return. I was tired and was lolling on a couch. Gandhi and Mahadev came in. As soon as he saw me in that position Gandhi stopped and reproved me for being lazy. I was abashed. There was an implication that I was capable of something better and that he was expecting it of me. This acted like a subtle back-handed compliment which soothed my embarrassment. During those days in Calcutta the morning and evening prayers continued strictly on time though with only Gandhi, Mahadev and myself as the congregation.

At my request, for I expected to live permanently in India, Gandhi gave me an Indian name. He wanted me to take the name of a man in Hindu legends who was absolutely steadfast against all obstacles and trials. I was not sure enough of living up to such a name and so declined that. Instead I chose the name of a very famous cowherd, "Govind" for I was then interested in dairy cattle and fond of

milking. True, the original Govind was a god, but I knew nobody would expect me to live up to that.

In December, 1928, I had returned to the United States and was married soon after. In the early spring of 1930 my wife and I visited about a week at the Sabarmati Ashram. Gandhi was preparing to march on foot to the seashore a hundred miles away, to boil down seawater and make salt as an act of civil disobedience against the British Government which held a legal monopoly of salt making. As an act of defiance against British rule, it was to be a step in the determination of the Indians for self government. Approximately a week before the beginning of the march, Gandhi had sent a letter to the British Viceroy telling him of the plan and the place of starting, the route and the date of the beginning of the march. Gandhi sent this letter by the hands of a young English admirer, Reginald Reynolds. The project caused much excitement in India and a considerable number of Indian leaders had come to the Ashram to consult with Gandhi. I watched Gandhi speak to them in a body. He did not orate or talk loudly but he spoke very emphatically. After the talk was finished, I went to him to make a comment, and noticed that he was sweating all over.

The Government did not attempt to interfere. Apparently they were of the opinion that there was an old sentimentalist making a silly gesture, and that it was better not to dignify the act by arresting him, but let the whole thing fall flat as it surely would. But they overlooked the power of symbolism. By walking to the sea, Gandhi was doing something that every peasant could do. The distance of the march would give plenty of time for the meaning of the affair to sink in and pervade the whole country.

The response of the Indians of all kinds was electrical. Several weeks later my wife and I were down at Madras and saw the great

broad beach there miles long, alive with people boiling down sea water in defiance of the Government. It developed into a great non-violent struggle. Gandhi was arrested, of course, but not till after he had boiled down some water and made salt.

While we were at the Ashram a young Englishman came as a reporter for one of the British newspapers, "The Civil and Military Gazette" of Lahore. The young man expected hostility and secrecy but was received in friendly fashion. Gandhi appointed a student to look after the Englishman's wants, fetch him tea as desired, and so forth. He was told he could wander anywhere in the Ashram and listen to anyone. To experience Gandhi's complete belief in truth astonished him. It was amusing to see.

While I was away in the hills during most of each year, I wrote to Gandhi and got letters from him in answer. This continued nearly until his death. How he found time for that I do not know, for he had an enormous correspondence from all over the world as well as India. I have given away all my letters from him, for I thought it might be a way of helping to spread his influence. Some I gave to the Jane Addams Memorial Peace Library at Swarthmore College, some to the Library of Howard University in Washington, D. C., some to Widener Library at Harvard College, and some to the Gandhi Memorial Library at Rajghat, New Delhi.

The most interesting one told how he decided to go to London to the Round Table Conference called by the British Government in 1931 to decide on the future form of government for India. The British Government had invited the Indian National Congress to send representatives. The Congress through its Working Committee had appointed Gandhi their sole representative and left it to his discretion whether he should attend. Among the Congress there was

much distrust of the good faith of the British Government. After much discussion with Congress leaders Gandhi had decided that there could be no good from his attending the Round Table Conference; that it was organized so as to give a predominant weight to the rulers of the Indian States, the Princes who were appointees and puppets of the British Government; and to provide a mere pretence of giving a voice to the desires and needs of the Indian masses.

Gandhi wrote me that in early September, 1931, he was up at Simla, the summer capital of the Government of India, in the Himalayas discussing another matter with the Viceroy. He wrote that all of a sudden he had an intuition, a hunch, that it would be wise for him to go to the Conference after all. Trusting his intuition, he immediately acted and caught the last train he could have taken to catch the boat from Bombay to London that would get there in time for the Conference. His speeches at the Conference, his meetings with leading British thinkers and with the cotton mill employees of Manchester, and many other contacts with influential Englishmen turned out in the end to have been a subtle but persuasive element in the granting of freedom to India, sixteen years later. Of these contacts that Gandhi had with British leaders of thought outside the Conference, his English friend, C. F. Andrews, who was at the Conference, wrote, "His unique personality gripped the best Englishmen and his originality of thought set those whom he met thinking as they had never done before. They were not always in agreement with him, but they all unanimously respected the greatness of soul, which they found in him. England is a very small country and impressions like these go round very fast indeed. No serious minded man or woman could any longer take the view, which had been widely held before, that Mahatma Gandhi was only an impossible fanatic, after all."

What I have written here are my memories and opinion that he was a very great man. Indeed I think he was the greatest man of our era. What I have said does not prove his greatness. For such proof you must read his life story and his own writings or selections from them. The best biography of him in English is that by Louis Fischer, "The Life of Mahatma Gandhi". Louis Fischer also edited an anthology of Gandhi's writings called "The Essential Gandhi". There is an excellent collection of Gandhi's own writings on the subject of Nonviolent Resistance published by Schocken Books, Inc., New York. There are many other good books about him, his ideas and achievements but these will give you a start.

Albert Einstein, himself a very great man, in July, 1944, wrote this of Gandhi. "A leader of his people, unsupported by any outward authority, a politician whose success rests not upon craft nor mastery of technical devices, but simply on the convincing power of his personality: a victorious fighter who has always scorned the use of force; a man of wisdom and humility, armed with resolve and inflexible consistency, who has devoted all his strength to the uplifting of his people and the betterment of their lot; a man who has confronted the brutality of Europe with the dignity of the simple human being, and thus at all times risen superior."

"Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth."

There is an old Sanscrit saying that applies well to Gandhi: "Magic powers do not come to a man because he does things that are hard, but because he does things with a pure heart."