

LESSON 1

TRUTH AND TRUTHFULNESS

An Incident on the occasion of the visit of the educational inspector

Gandhi completed his primary education at the age of twelve in a Taluk school. After his primary education he joined the Kattyawar High School at Rajkot in October 1880. The name of the school was changed to Albert High School but much later, after the independence, the name was changed to Mohandas Gandhi Vidyalaya. This change of name was done in order to honour and cherish the memories of Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi liked the Kattyawar High School very much for it was neat and simple. Even though Gandhi was not a bright student he tried his best at studies. One day an incident took place at the school which Gandhi could not forget till his end. This incident took place when he was doing his first year of studies. The memories haunted his thoughts and he mentions about this incident in his autobiography *My Experiments with Truth*.

Mr. Giles, the Educational Inspector, an English man had come on a visit to inspect the school. In India such visits made by Educational Inspectors in order to check the proper functioning and dissemination of knowledge is a usual routine till date.

Mr. Giles entered Gandhi's class in order to inspect the learning and teaching process. He gave five words and asked the boys to spell it on a slate. This test given by the Educational Inspector Mr. Giles was the unexpected part of the examination. One of the words given by Mr. Giles was 'kettle'. Gandhi had misspelt the word 'kettle'. This was noticed by the class teacher. The class teacher tried to prompt Gandhi with the point of his boot to copy the spelling from his neighbour's slate. Gandhi did not want to do anything against his conscience and he knew that this act of copying was evil and untruthful. Gandhi also thought that the teacher was there to supervise the students and to see that none of the students copied. Thus Gandhi did not copy from the neighbours' slate which was against his conscience and reason.

When the results were announced Gandhi was the only boy in the class who had not spelt that word correctly. All the students had written all the five words with correct spelling. Even though Gandhi felt embarrassed and shy due to the poor score which he had received, he never learnt or did the foul act of copying in the days of his life.

Even after this incident, Gandhi respected that teacher the way a student had to respect his guru. This incident did not diminish the respect Gandhi had for his teacher because Gandhi had learnt to love persons far beyond mere incidents. Later in life, Gandhi came to know more about the failures of that teacher, but his love and regard towards that teacher remind the same.

Gandhi had learnt to carry out the orders of elders and not to scan their actions. But when he was asked to do wrong deeds, he was firm not to change himself for the sake of Truth.

When Gandhi grew older he became famous. He recollected that it was this concept of Truth and the act of being truthful to oneself, to others, and to God made him rise to such heights. It was from this inner strength that he was able to overcome all the hardships, trials, and tribulations. And it was the conscience of Truth and of his act of being truthful to the human community that made his life a light to shed away the darkness in the life of millions of people even in the twenty first century.

Questions:

1. Who is Mr.Giles?
2. Why Gandhi did not copy the word 'kettle' from his neighbour?
3. What do you think about the act and the feeling of Gandhi?
4. What did you learn from this story?