

LESSON 2

TRUTH AND CONFESSION

Gandhi's Confessions to Papa

When Gandhi was a small boy, he was very shy and thus did not move with a large crowd. He preferred a few to be his friends. And at high school he made a very few friends. Among them Lohana and Sheikh Mahtab were Gandhi's intimate friends. Lohana left Gandhi when Gandhi became more close to Sheikh Mahtab who was elder to him.

One day Sheikh Mahtab persuaded Gandhi to eat meat. Sheikh Mahtab had convinced Gandhi that he could only grow strong by eating meat and only if he grew stronger he could teach a good lesson to the British ruler of India. Thus in secret Gandhi started eating goat meat. This was against his family tradition and so it had to be done in secret with care. He continued the habit of eating meat for about a year.

On the first day after taking mutton, he felt as if a goat was bleating inside him. He took meat as a 'duty' even though he did not like its taste. Since he took meat it filled his stomach and often had to avoid taking food in the night at his house. He told his mother a cock-and-bull story for skipping the dinner at home. He usually said that he was not hungry or that there was something wrong with his stomach or the digestive system. This act of lying pained his heart.

His friend Sheikh Mahtab also taught him to smoke. Sometimes Gandhi had to steal the servants' money to meet these expenses and once he also stole some gold from his brother's bracelet to repay the debts. These incidents pained him much and he could not have a peace of mind. He decided to confess this deceitful act to his father in order to get forgiveness. He did not want to hide this from his Papa but did not have the courage to face him directly.

Gandhi thought that he would write a letter begging forgiveness and give it to his Papa. He wrote all his mistakes and requested his Papa to give him with a suitable punishment. He gave the letter to his father and stood silently near to his sick bed.

When his Papa read the letter of confession, tears were rolling from his eyes. On seeing the tears roll down from his father's eyes Gandhi's heart broke. He was very sorry for what he had done and for breaking the heart of his Papa. He made up his mind never to commit such a mistake. He kept this till his death. His Papa did not scold him or did not use any harsh words. Papa was simply silent. He tore the letter into pieces as a sign of boundless forgiveness. The loving act of his father purified Gandhi's mind. He had recorded later, that he learnt the first lesson on how confession can lead a person towards the light of truth from his Papa and especially this incident.

Gandhi who has been hailed is no immortal but a mortal like any of us. But the way chosen by Gandhi to overcome these hurdles at such a tender age is what makes him stand apart from most of us. He did fully understand that mistakes even the greatest sins could be overcome through the power of confession and forgiveness. Gandhi could reach such heights only because he understood that confession was the first stepping stone towards repentance and reconciliation which leads towards truth.

Questions:

1. What was the reason for Gandhi to eat meat?
2. Why did Gandhi steal money from the servants and steal Gold bracelet?
3. How did Gandhi confess to his father and what did he ask from him?
4. What is the lesson this story tells you?

