

8. A Great Leader



Mahatma Gandhi was one of the greatest leaders of the world. Other leaders win wars by hurting others and killing them. Mahatma Gandhi did not use any arms and weapons like guns, rifles or bombs. And yet, he won the war of India's independence. People lovingly called him 'Bapu' or Bapuji – Father of the Nation.

Gandhiji was a man of iron will. If he decided to do something, he did it, no matter how difficult it was. One day, he decided that he would have an early morning prayer every day. From that day onwards, he never missed the prayer.

Gandhiji gave a lot of importance to truth, simplicity and non-violence, that is, not hurting others. Gandhiji's dress was very simple – just a loincloth, a *dhoti* worn above the knees, and sometimes a shawl. Could he not afford fancy, fashionable clothes? Of course he could. But this simple loincloth was a deliberate choice. How did he come to make this choice?

Once Gandhiji was on a lecture tour in Odisha. Usually, men and women gathered in large numbers to listen to him. In Odisha, however, women were not seen at these public meetings or lectures. On making inquiries, Gandhiji found that the people in that part of the country were so poor that their womenfolk had not a decent thing to wear. Therefore, they kept away from public functions. Gandhiji was deeply pained to hear this. From that day, he decided to wear the bare minimum of clothes. Be it cold or hot, he never changed his simple dress.



Gandhiji before
he decided to use
simple clothes

Once, he had gone to England to attend a very important conference. King George of England gave a reception to the participants of the conference at his palace. People received by the King have to dress up in a certain way. At that time, England ruled over India.

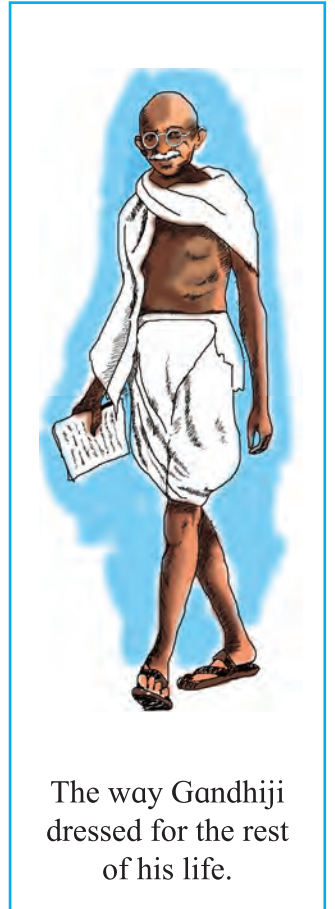
People in England wanted to know if Gandhiji would change the style of his dress to see the King. Gandhiji made it very clear that he would be dressed in his usual way – even when visiting the King of England. He would wear the dress of the people whom he represented. Gandhiji was not bothered by what style of dress the British approved of, so long as the poor people in his country did not have enough clothes to wear.

Finally, the King had to welcome at his reception, this great man dressed in a simple loincloth and a shawl.

The King himself was dressed quite extravagantly. Gandhiji was asked whether he had enough clothes on for meeting with the King. He replied that the King had enough clothes on for both of them!

Millions of poor people in India felt happy that Mahatma Gandhi dressed like them.

Although Mahatma Gandhi did not use any destructive weapons, he had millions of staunch followers. Gandhiji showed all the suppressed people in the world the new path of *satyagraha*. He is remembered for his greatness not only in India, but in all parts of the world.



- **iron will** : strong determination.
- **conference** : a large formal meeting where people discuss important matters.
- **bothered** : worried.
- **extravagantly** : in a way that costs a lot of money.
- **staunch followers** : people who were firm and loyal in following him.

Things to do :

1. Write the meaning of the following with the help of the passage :
 - * a man of iron will
 - * loincloth
 - * non-violence.
2. From the passage, find the bigger words that include the words given here :
 - * loving
 - * fashion
 - * women
 - * great.

3. Answer the following questions with 'yes' or 'no'.
 - (a) Did Gandhiji use any weapons ?
 - (b) Did Gandhiji ever miss his prayers ?
 - (c) Could Gandhiji afford fancy clothes ?
 - (d) Did the King receive Gandhiji at his palace ?
 - (e) Did Gandhiji change his style of dress for the reception ?
4. Find and copy any two sentences containing 'not' from the passage.
5. With the help of your teachers and parents, gather some information about the great men and women of our country. Prepare a short speech about any one of them. Present it in the class. Two examples are given below :



Lokmanya Tilak

‘Swaraj is my birthright and I will have it.’ The person who asserted this was Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was born in 1856. At that time, the British ruled over India. People did not like this British rule. They agitated against the British Government. Lokmanya Tilak inspired a national spirit among the people. For that purpose, he organized public celebrations of Ganeshotsava and Shivajayanti. In his papers ‘Kesari’ and ‘Mahratta’, he boldly criticised the Government. The British Government arrested Tilak and put him in prison. But Lokmanya Tilak continued his struggle for Swaraj even after he was released from prison.

He spent all his life in the service of the nation.



Savitribai Phule

Today, we see that girls go to school, colleges and excel in every walk of life along with men. But this was not always so. In the past, women and the downtrodden sections of the society did not have the right to education. They were not allowed to work in any important position. Their life was miserable. This was a great social injustice. Social reformers fought against this injustice and discrimination. Foremost among them were Mahatma Jotirao Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule.

Mahatma Phule started the first school for girls in Pune in 1848, in the face of great social opposition. At a time when women were not allowed to read and write, Savitribai became the first woman to teach in a girls' school. To stop her, people created many obstacles in her path. They even threw dirt and stones at her. But she did not waver. She did not give up her noble cause. Her nobility and courage will always guide men and women alike in the course of their life and career.

