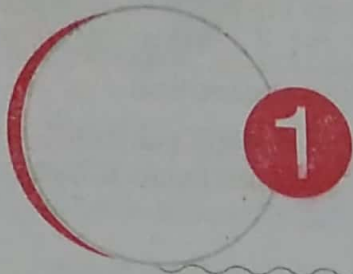


# SUPPLEMENTARY READER



## GANDHIJI AND A COFFEE DRINKER

—G. Ramchandran (1904-1995)



**About the Author :** G. Ramchandran was a soldier for the Gandhian cause, social reformer and a teacher. He wrote many books. The present lesson has been adapted from 'A Sheaf of Gandhi Anecdotes' published by Hind Kitab Ltd, Bombay. He was born on 7 October, 1904 and died on 17 January, 1995. He was a powerful orator and brilliant writer.

**About the Lesson :** Gandhiji was a first class nurse to the sick. He had an Ashram at Sabarmati. In his Ashram Gandhiji visited the sick people everyday. He used to cut jokes with them. Once he served coffee to a South Indian young man. He prepared the coffee himself. Read this story and know how he served the sick people.

[1] Gandhiji was a first class nurse to the sick. Where he picked up nursing was a mystery. He certainly did not pass through a nursing school. As in many other things, when nursing became necessary to him in life, he learned it the hard way of experience. In the Ashram at Sabarmati all sick persons came directly under his eye and care. Doctors were, of course, consulted; but the care of the sick Gandhiji arranged in person. It was a joke, especially among young people in the Ashram, that if you wanted to see Gandhiji everyday and talk to him and hear him crack jokes, you had only to be ill and get into bed ! For Gandhiji visited the sick everyday, spent a few minutes at every bed-side, himself saw to things carefully and never failed to crack a joke or two with the patient. There was no day too busy for Gandhiji to attend sick person.

There was once a young lad who went down with dysentery. He had done his best to accustom himself to Ashram food, but failed. He had a great liking for coffee. But in the Ashram there was no coffee for him nor was coffee allowed. In good time he got rid of his dysentery, and was now recovering. Gandhiji visited him for a few minutes everyday during his usual rounds. Those few minutes were like a tonic to the poor lad.

He pined for a cup of good coffee. One day he was lying on his back dreaming of it, when he heard the welcome sound of the wooden sandals of



Gandhiji. A minute later Gandhiji entered with his never failing smile and cheering word.

[2] He looked at the lad and said : "Now you are decidedly better. You must have recovered your appetite. What would you like to eat ? Ah ! some good, *uppama* or *thosai* ?"

Gandhiji evidently knew all about the lad's partiality for these two good old South Indian dishes. Gandhiji was laughing. The youngster had a sudden brain-wave.

"Could I have a cup of coffee, please," he blurted out.

Gandhiji answered with a peal of laughter, "Oh, you old sinner, that is what you want !" And then seeing the look on the lad's face, he added, "You certainly shall have your cup of coffee. Yes, light coffee will soothe your stomach. And what will you have with the coffee ? I don't think we can make *Uppama* or *Thosai*, but warm toast would go well with coffee. I shall send you a tray."

With that, and a kind parting word, Gandhiji left the room. The lad lay waiting. He could not believe his good luck. Coffee in Sabarmati Ashram ! And Gandhiji himself offering to send it in to him !

Gandhiji's cottage was at the other end of the Ashram, a good way across the road. The lad could well imagine what would happen. Gandhiji would go to Kasturba in her kitchen and ask for coffee and toast. But it was an untimely hour. The kitchen would be closed. Ba herself would be taking rest. Had he caused Gandhiji too much botheration ? Some twenty minutes passed. Hark ! What was that sound ? The click-click of Gandhiji's wooden sandals again. Had the coffee been called off ? His heart sank within him. But there was Gandhiji carrying a tray covered with a white khadi napkin. The lad was dazed. What had really happened ?

Gandhiji was speaking, "Now, here is your coffee and toast. And, mind you, I made the coffee myself. Now, like a good South Indian, will you certify I can make good coffee ?"

[3] "But", whispered the lad, "Why did you not ask someone else to bring this for me ? I am so very sorry I put you to this trouble."

"Now, now", said Gandhiji, "Do not ruin your coffee. Cold coffee is bad coffee. You see Ba was resting, and I did not dare to disturb her." And then he said suddenly, "Well, I shall leave you now. Someone will come for the tray." With that off he went.



The coffee was light, but excellent. The lad sipped as if it were nectar. But he was troubled. His mind's eye saw Gandhiji opening the kitchen, lighting the stove, making the coffee and toast and carrying it to him, all in order not to disturb others at that untimely hour. He was overwhelmed.

## Glossary

mystery	: beyond understanding रहस्य
certainly	: definitely निश्चय ही
of course	: naturally स्वाभाविक रूप से
Sabarmati Ashram	: An ashram in Sabarmati laid by Gandhiji गुजरात में साबरकान्थानामक स्थान पर गांधीजी द्वारा स्थापित साबरमती आश्रम
crack jokes	: to say something to cause amusement हँसी-मजाक करना
dysentery	: stools पेशिया
lad	: young man, boy लड़का
usual	: routine सामान्य
to get rid of	: to make free from छुटकारा पाना
pine (for)	: to have a strong desire for प्रबल इच्छा करना
sinner	: to say 'sin' to a person in joke पापी
wooden sandals	: Sandals made up of wood लकड़ी की खड़ाई
added	: continued कहा
never failing smile	: a smile that never failed to appear सदा रहने वाली मुस्कराहट
imagine	: think कल्पना करना
cheering word	: words that make others feel happy प्रेरणा देने वाले शब्द
evidently	: clearly स्पष्ट रूप में
partiality	: preference विशेष चाह
mind-eye	: imagination कल्पना शक्ति
brain wave	: sudden inspiration, or bright idea उत्सव विचार
blurt (out)	: to say something suddenly बिना सोचे-विचारे कहना
peal of laughter	: laughing boisterously उन्मुक्त हँसी
sipped	: drank पी
soothe	: to give comfort आराम देना
excellent	: very nice उत्ति उत्सव



an untimely hour	: an odd hour अनुपयुक्त समय
whispered	: to say in a very low voice धीमे से कहना
botheration	: worry, trouble परेशानी
hark	: listen सुनो
nectar	: the drink of the Gods अमृत
napkin	: रूमाल
parting word	: greeting words spoken when you leave a person किसी से अलग होते समय कहे जाने वाले शब्द
overwhelmed	: wondered आश्चर्यचकित

## EXERCISE

### Short Answer Type Questions

Answer the following questions in about 25 words :

1. Why did Gandhiji visit the sick daily?
2. Why was Gandhiji a first class nurse to the sick ?
3. How did Gandhiji learn nursing ?
4. How did Gandhiji humour his patients in the Sabarmati Ashram ?
5. Why did the young lad fail to accustom himself to Ashram food ?
6. Why did Gandhiji call the lad an old sinner ?
7. What thing of the lad's great liking was not allowed in the Ashram ?
8. What did Gandhiji promise the young lad ?
9. How did Gandhiji arrange coffee for the lad ?
10. Why did Gandhiji prepare coffee himself for the lad ?
11. Why was the young lad overwhelmed when Gandhiji brought coffee to him ?
12. What was the joke about Gandhiji among young people in the Ashram at Sabarmati ?
13. Why could the young lad not believe that he would get coffee ?
14. Why was the lad troubled after having the coffee ?

### True/False Statements

Point out True or False statements :

1. The young lad went down with malaria.
2. Gandhiji looked after all the sick persons in the Ashram.
3. In the Ashram coffee was allowed twice a day.
4. Gandhiji prepared the coffee and toast himself.
5. Gandhiji visited the sick in the Ashram whenever he found time.



6. Gandhiji asked Ba to prepare coffee.
7. The sick in the Ashram were attended by doctors.
8. Gandhiji passed through a nursing school.
9. All sick persons came directly under eye and care of Gandhiji.
10. Gandhiji never cracked jokes with the patients.
11. Gandhiji offered the lad *uppama* and *thosai*.
12. Gandhiji's cottage was at the other end of the Ashram.
13. The coffee was light but excellent.

### Answers :

1. False, 2. True, 3. False, 4. True, 5. False, 6. False, 7. False, 8. False, 9. True, 10. False, 11. False, 12. True, 13. True.

### Multiple Choice Type Questions

Select the most suitable alternative to complete each of the following statements :

1. Gandhiji was able to nurse the sick well because he .....
  - (a) picked up nursing at a nursing school.
  - (b) was interested in nursing.
  - (c) learned nursing through experience when nursing became necessary for him in life.
2. Gandhiji visited the sick in the Ashram .....
  - (a) whenever he found time.
  - (b) everyday.
  - (c) every alternate day.
3. Gandhiji promised the young lad for .....
  - (a) a cup of coffee only.
  - (b) warm toast and coffee.
  - (c) coffee and *uppama* or *thosai*.
4. Gandhiji prepared the coffee himself because .....
  - (a) only he knew how to prepare good coffee.
  - (b) it was an untimely hour and so he did not want to trouble Ba.
  - (c) he liked to do the work himself.
5. Gandhiji's cottage was .....
  - (a) in the centre of the Ashram.
  - (b) just across the road.
  - (c) a long way across the road, at the other end of the Ashram.
6. Gandhiji arranged coffee for the lad by .....
  - (a) preparing it himself.
  - (b) requesting Ba to prepare coffee for the lad.
  - (c) asking one of the inmates of the Ashram to prepare it.
7. When Gandhiji gave the lad the coffee, he .....
  - (a) trembled with fear.
  - (b) sipped it with pleasure.
  - (c) was overwhelmed.



8. The care of the sick in the Ashram was arranged by .....
- (a) the doctors (b) Kasturba  
(c) Gandhiji (d) none
9. Gandhiji never failed to crack jokes .....
- (a) with doctors. (b) with patients.  
(c) with Kasturba. (d) with none.
10. The young lad pined for a cup of .....
- (a) tea. (b) milk.  
(c) water. (d) coffee.
11. The young lad had .....with the coffee.
- (a) bread (b) toast  
(c) *uppama* (d) *thosai*
12. The young lad was sorry because the coffee .....
- (a) was light. (b) was too sweet.  
(c) was prepared by Gandhiji. (d) was not tasty.

**Answers :**

1. (c), 2. (b), 3. (b), 4. (b), 5. (c), 6. (a), 7. (c), 8. (c), 9. (b), 10. (d),  
11. (b), 12. (c)

**Vocabulary**

Fill in the blanks with the missing letters to complete the spelling of the following words :

d\_s\_n\_e\_y, n\_p\_in, s\_\_t\_e, c\_f\_, l\_\_rn, n\_r\_e, s\_nk, w\_lc\_me, c\_f\_ee, cr\_\_k.

