



"WHAT DID
GANDHIJI GIVE
ME?"

Translation of essay
Gandhiji Enikku Enthu
Thannu
by Edasseri

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I was born in 1906. World War I¹ broke out when I was eight years old. I had heard about the major players during the war time itself. But it was during the Malabar Rebellion² (Moplah Rebellion) that I heard about Home rule³ and Mahatma Gandhi. I got the first report on Gandhiji during an informal family gathering. One of our relatives acting as the spokes person of the government because he was working as a clerk in one of the offices said enthusiastically to my mother, "he is a rascal". Since then, a thousand curses were hurled at him from that decayed 'Naalu kettu' (ancestral Nair house). But the feedback that I had received from my teacher was just the opposite. Don't know why, my young mind was inclined to believe him. Hence I used to secretly make a 'walk out' to register my strong protest against such abusive words.

A couple of days after India got independence, I happened to hear one friend telling another at Thrissur⁴ that Gandhiji was a thief. The accusation was that he was favouring the capitalists and the landlords. Again I escaped from the scene, under the pretext of some urgent work.

Between these two brackets showing my evasive nature - it was nothing but cowardice - and the fearlessness that Gandhiji taught, had many conflicts within me. In other words, most of my life is the history of the vicious inner fights that I mercilessly fought with myself.

Did I succeed? It is too early to say. Rather, it is for my younger generations to assess. If this is the story of my personal life, my experience in my literary world is different. I have not written even a single poem portraying Gandhiji. I was intensely broken hearted about him when I heard the news about the sad demise of Kasturba Gandhi⁵. I wrote a small poem about the compassionate mother titled "Our mother".

Even though I have not portrayed Gandhiji as an individual; I have not written even a single line in literature without keeping him in my mind! My writings reflected my complete views either as approvals of or as disapprovals of Mahatma's ideologies and vision. Those works that reflected my approvals on Gandhian ideologies made a critique label me to the extent, "an incorrigible optimist". There were a few others who proclaimed I was a "Communist" in view of what I have written disapprovingly. The basis for both the views is my likes and dislikes about Gandhian philosophy that I am still studying.

Gandhiji is the sole living being known to me, who has seriously studied 'human life' in its entirety. Therefore, if I had any transformation in my life that can be termed as 'development', the inspiration behind it could not be from any other teacher.

Before I conclude this short note, I wish to scribble down a small incident that happened in my personal life.

Immediately after Gandhi left us, I bought one of his portraits and gave it for providing a wooden frame with glass panel. After I returned home from my work on one night, I finished my bath and supper and was getting ready for the writing table when I saw the photo with the frame on the table. My wife must have kept it there to discuss with me



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the location before hanging it. I had not noticed at that time that the bright light from the table lamp had enlivened the photo. Because my mind was in complete turmoil, I was not able to observe keenly any external things. That day I had returned home humiliated. It was one of those isolated events in the day-to-day life. If a coward is wounded, he cannot easily wake up from his reverie on taking revenge. There, he is taking revenge using every possible amenity/diplomacy in hand. In life, there is no other intense emotion with the adhesiveness of hatred to stick to one's mind. During a pathetic stage of this delusion, I suddenly woke up. My eyes met with the glowing colourful portrait. That smile on his face with open lips seemed to irritate me. You know, what I immediately did? I covered his face with that day's news paper. Suddenly, I felt someone roaring inside me. No, it was not from inside. It seemed like from outside, just from my immediate vicinity, so vivid as well as startling. What I heard was "Godse"⁶.

With trembling hands, I removed the veil. My inner eyes could see the clear sky, with the dark clouds scattered away by a storm! For the first time in my life, I stood up before that great luminary with eyes closed and hands folded.

That was a scene I could cherish till my death.

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Notes for quick reference:

1. World War 1 - 28 July 1914 to 11 November 1918.
2. Malabar Rebellion (Moplah Rebellion) took place in 1921
3. Home Rule was started in 1916 and Gandhiji was elected it's president in 1920 at the age of 51.
4. Thrissur is a small town lying 49 km south of Ponani where Edasseri lived.
5. On the evening of 22nd February 1944, Kasturba Gandhi breathed her last at the age of 74 at the Aga Khan Palace Detention Camp.
6. Mahatma Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869. Gandhiji was 78 years old, when Godse shot him to death at New Delhi on 30 January 1948. Godse (May 19, 1910 to November 15, 1949) was put on trial, sentenced to death and hanged.

Translated by Edasseri Trust Team