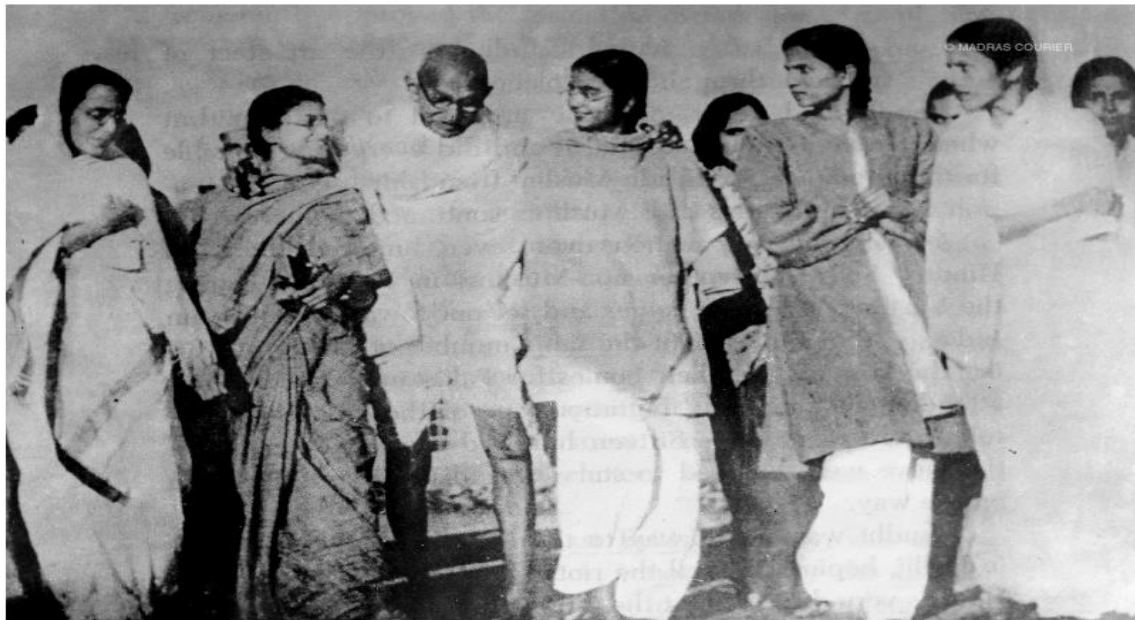


Biography / April 7, 2017

Gandhi: A Sexually Repressed Pervert?

by Madras Courier



Gandhi slept naked with his adolescent grand nieces to test his sexual urge. Are his perverse celibacy tests justified?

Iconic images of Gandhi show him walking with two young women on either side, his hands resting on their shoulders. Those two women, who 'replaced his walking stick', were Abha (seventeen) and Manu (eighteen) – his grand nieces. By day, they would walk with him. By night, they would sleep with him – naked.

They were among the many women subjects with whom Gandhi conducted his experiments in Brahmacharya or 'celibacy tests'. These tests, which Gandhi claims were his 'moral duty,' involved him sleeping naked next to nubile, naked women without touching them. This was an exercise to ascertain if he and 'his organ' would be sexually aroused.

These experiments were no secret. Gandhi contextualised, discussed and justified them in terms of morality and spirituality – as a step towards union with God. When Vallabhai Patel, disturbed by these so-called experiments in celibacy, wrote to Gandhi telling him what he was doing was '*Adharma*' (immoral), the 'Mahatma' retorted in his characteristic manner and proclaimed:

“ For me Manu sleeping with me is a matter of dharma (moral duty) ”

What is disturbing is the conviction with which Gandhi claimed that these experiments were essential for him to test himself against his weakness. “If I don't let Manu sleep with me, though I regard it as essential that she should,” he announced, “wouldn't that be a sign of weakness in me?”

More often than not, Gandhi was unsuccessful in these celibacy tests. He wrote of how he was aroused and had 'involuntary discharges' of semen. The 'father of the nation' used his grand nieces to test his ability to control his sexual urge. These young women were tools in his experiments with celibacy.

What is presented historically is a version of the truth narrated from his perspective – one which elevates him to a saintly 'Mahatma', champion of sexual restraint. A closer look at diaries, documents, and literature left by women who were part of these experiments present their picture.

More than four decades after Manu's death, her diaries (in which Gandhi often signed on the margins), written in Gujarati, reveal astonishing facts. On December 21, 1946, she wrote:

“ Tonight, when Bapu [Gandhi], Sushilaben and I were sleeping on the same cot, he embraced me and patted me. He put me to sleep with great love. He embraced me after a very long time. Then Bapu praised me for remaining innocent (of sexual urges) despite sleeping with him. But this isn't the case with the other girls. Veena, Kanchan and Lilavati (other associates of Gandhi) told me that they won't be able to sleep with him. ”

On December 28, 1946, she wrote:

“ He is initiating me to a higher human plane through the Brahmacharya experiments, part of Mahayana of character building. ”

Many saw Gandhi as infallible. Some of his followers saw Manu as the temptress from whose clutches Gandhi should free himself from. In a letter to Gandhi, his close follower Kishorilal Mushroomwala referred to Manu as “Maya” – the illusion.

While Manu was unmarried at the time, Abha was married to Gandhi's grandnephew, Kanu Gandhi. The fact that Abha was married did not stop Gandhi from inviting both Manu and Abha to sleep naked with him.

This is contradictory to what he preached. Gandhi urged all his followers to observe rules of chastity. He published manuals in which he argued that men and women should be segregated and that husbands should not be alone with their wives. A cold shower was his answer to kill any sexual passion. In his newspaper Indian Opinion, he told his readers:

“ It is the duty of every thoughtful Indian not to marry. In case he is helpless in regard to marriage, he should abstain from sexual intercourse with his wife. ”

Yet, Gandhi abrogated the rules he laid down for others and felt the need to sleep with young women to test himself. Gandhi also got his body massaged with women, bathed with them with his genitals in full display.

Dr. Sushila Nayar, Gandhi's personal physician, was also a part of his experiments with 'celibacy.' She was with Gandhi since a young age and would sleep naked and bathe with him. When challenged about it, Gandhi said:

“ While she is bathing I keep my eyes tightly shut,” ... “I do not know ... whether she bathes naked or with her underwear on. I can tell from the sound that she uses soap. ”

Much later, in the 1970's, Sushila revealed that the concept of Brahmacharya was a convenient response that could ward off criticism of his behaviour.

“ Later on, when people started asking questions about his physical contact with women – with Manu, with Abha, with me – the idea of brahmacharya experiments was developed ... in the early days, there was no question of calling this a brahmacharya experiment. ”

One could well argue that these experiments in Brahmacharya were non-contact sexual initiation or visual sexual titillation. Today, these experiments would be considered illegal and would get one jailed for inappropriate sexual conduct and crimes against under age girls.

These experiments are bizarre, considering the fact that Gandhi took a vow of celibacy and decided not to have sex with his wife. He took a private vow and made it public with no regard to wife's privacy. It gave him an extraordinary leeway in branding himself as a saint-like human, almost to the point where is elevated to the status of God.

His close associates found it difficult to understand Gandhi's strange obsession with his celibacy tests. Many left his Ashram. Of them was P. Parasuram, a young man from Kerala. In a letter to Gandhi on January 1, 1947, demanding he change his ways, he wrote:

“

I object to your sleeping in the same bed with members of the opposite sex...One day Amin-bhai came and told me that he was shocked to see Manu getting into your bed.

Apart from the question of any affect on you, what about the effect on girls?

There is something or the other wrong with them [the women who sleep naked with Gandhi]. [The] Punjabi girl who lived opposite my room in Matunga. She used to weep unrestrainedly and that not caring whether others saw her or not. She laughed also unrestrainedly. And then here is Dr. Sushila-behn [the 24-year-old in-house physician at the ashram who Gandhi also used for his 'experiments']. How many are the days when she has not wept? She is a doctor and yet she is always a patient, always is ill.

I object to your having massage done by girls. When I was studying in college, I read a report saying you were being massaged by Dr. Sushila-behn. And now I find you do get yourself massaged by girls.

Those people who know that you are naked during massage time say that you could at least put a cover over it [genitals].

The same objection I hold against girls coming to the bathroom when you go there.

Ever since the 17th December [1946], when in the small hours of the morning you made those dreadful sounds, dreadful because it came from you man of such eminence, even otherwise unbecoming for any wise or old man, my head has not been at peace. I have heard of another such instance from Mr. Ramachandran of the API [Associated Press of India] when you told Sushila-behn to leave you. I have seen such another instance at Delhi. But this event shook me to my depths. I said to myself that God and the nation would not forgive me if I kept quiet.” ”

Gandhi did not agree to his demands and asked him to leave. This ugly, awkward truth is swept under the carpet and a morphed version of the Mahatma makes its way into national consciousness. As Arundhati Roy writes:

“ History “has been unbelievably kind to Gandhi. This has given us the latitude to brush off his prejudices as mere imperfections, small marks on clean hands”. ”

That was indeed the case. After Gandhi’s death, Manu was instructed by Devdas, Gandhi’s youngest son, not to disclose contents of her diary. Manu’s book “Last Glimpses of Bapu,” tells of an attempt to hide this:

“ Kaka [Devdas] warned me not to disclose the contents of my diary to anyone and at the same time forbade me to divulge the contents of the important letters. He said, ‘You are very young but you possess a lot of valuable literature. And you are also unsophisticated. ”

Manu died a spinster at the age of 40. Her unexplained, unknown illness was more psychological than physiological. She and other women remain in history as Gandhi’s tools. His self-indulgent and self-promoting experiments had a deep psychological impact on these women. Yet, he got away with it in the name of morality, spirituality, and union with God.

Could the millions of people who revere Gandhi as the ‘Mahatma’ ever acknowledge that he was a sexually repressed pervert?

-30-



Copyright©Madras Courier, All Rights Reserved. You may share using our article tools. Please don't cut articles from madrascourier.com and redistribute by email, post to the web, mobile phone or social media.

Please send in your feed back and comments to editor@madrascourier.com