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Tax Id # EIN: 11-3766445

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PROJECT	: ONOBLEMAN
DOCUMENT TITLE	: Gandhi in childhood
DOCUMENT OWNER	: GMS, Inc.
VERSION	: 1.0.0
COMPILED BY	: Progorithms

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*As a child...*

He was the favorite of his parents being the youngest of 6 children. He was called Moniya by them affectionately. Moniya adored his mother. He loved his father too, but he was a little afraid of him as he was very short tempered. He was just seven years old when his father became the Diwan of Rajkot. They had to leave Porbunder. Mohan was very unhappy with the changes and missed the water and ships of Porbunder.

He was studying in a school at Rajkot. He was not bright at studies as he did not like to learn by rote and hence did not do well in subjects like Sanskrit. He loved Geometry though, as it involved a lot of reasoning.

But he was very fond of reading. Once he read the story of Shrivana who carried his old and blind parents in two baskets slung on a bamboo yoke. Mohan was deeply touched by his devotion to his old parents. He resolved to be like Shrivana and serve his parents.

Mohan saw a play depicting the life of King Harishchandra, who lost his kingdom and suffered much for truth. Mohan was so deeply moved by this play that he was in tears. He decided never to swerve from the path of truth and be ever truthful and honest like Harishchandra.

During their stay in Rajkot, Mohan's father's Parsee and Muslim friends often visited his house and discussed the good in their religions. Young Mohan, who quite often sat by father's side, heard these discussions. These debates created in him a real love for all religions.

As a child, he was very shy. As soon as the school bell rang, he collected his books and hurried home. Other boys chatted and stopped on the way; some to play, others to eat, but Mohan always went straight home. He was afraid that the boys might stop him and make fun of him. Once he went home crying to his mother as he brother beat him. His mother chided him for not hitting his brother back. He replied "How can you teach me to hit people, mother? Why should I hit my brother? Why should I hit anyone?" His mother wondered where her little son got such ideas.

Mohan was very timid and afraid of darkness, snakes and thieves. He had always been afraid of ghosts. Whenever he was alone in the dark, he was paranoid with the thought that a ghost lurking in some dark corner would suddenly spring on him. One night when it was pitch dark, so dark that one could barely see one's own hand, Mohan had to go from one room to another in his house. As he stepped out of the room, he started shivering and was petrified.

Rambha, their old maidservant was standing by the door.

"What's the matter, son?" she asked with a laugh.

"I am frightened, Dai," Mohan answered.

"Frightened, child! Frightened of what?"

"See how dark it is! I'm afraid of ghosts!" Mohan whispered in a terrified voice.



Rambha patted his head affectionately and said, "Whoever heard of anyone being afraid of dark! Listen to me: Think of Rama and no ghost will dare come near you. No one will touch a hair of your head. Fear never encounters him who remembers Rama. He will protect you. "

Rambha's words impressed Mohan and gave him courage. Repeating the name of Rama, he left the room. And from that day, there was nothing that would scare Mohan. He was never lonely or afraid. He believed that as long as Rama was with him, he was safe from the danger. This faith gave Gandhiji strength throughout his life, and even when he died the name of Rama was on his lips.

One day, the Inspector of Schools, Mr. Giles, came to Mohan's school. He read out five English words to the class and asked the boys to write them down. Mohan wrote four words correctly, but he could not spell the fifth word 'Kettle'. Seeing Mohan's hesitation, the teacher made a sign behind the Inspector's back that he should copy the word from his neighbor's slate. But Mohan ignored his signs. The other boys wrote all the five words correctly; Mohan wrote only four. After the Inspector left, the teacher scolded him. "I told you to copy from your neighbor," he said angrily. "Couldn't you even do that correctly?" Every one laughed. As he went home that evening, Mohan was not unhappy. He knew he had done the right thing. What made him sad was that his teacher should have asked him to cheat.