



# 14

## STEALING AND ATONEMENT

In this lesson you will read a few extracts from Gandhiji's autobiography 'My Experiments with Truth'. What does he reveal about himself? Were his childhood and teenage years like yours? Was he always truthful or did he learn to be truthful? Did he find it difficult to be truthful? Find out how he became convinced of the positive consequences of being truthful.



### OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson you will be able to:

- observe how children learn by imitating others;
- recognise that children can resist negative influences;
- differentiate between right and wrong choices;
- realise the importance of confessing one's wrong doing;
- use present and past participles, and
- write short messages.



### 14.1 LET US READ THE TEXT

A relative and I became fond of smoking. Not that we saw any good in smoking, or were very fond of the smell of a cigarette. We simply imagined a sort of pleasure in emitting clouds of smoke from our mouths. My uncle had the habit, and when we saw him smoking, we thought we should copy his example. But, we had no money. So we began to collect stubs of cigarettes thrown away by my uncle.

atonement: make amends for wrong doing  
emitting: giving out  
stubs: cigarette ends



## Notes

The stubs, however, were not always available and could not emit much smoke either. So we began to steal coins from the servant's pocket money in order to purchase Indian cigarettes. In the meantime we heard that the stalks of a certain plant were porous and could be smoked like cigarettes. We got them and began this kind of smoking.

But we were far from being satisfied with such things as these. Our want of independence began to upset us. It was unbearable that we should be unable to do anything without the permission of our elders. At last, in sheer disgust, we decided to commit suicide!

But how were we to do it? From where were we to get the poison? We heard that *dhatūra* seeds were an effective poison. Off we went to the jungle in search of these seeds, and we got them. Evening was thought to be an auspicious hour. We went to Kedarjee Mandir, put *ghee* in the temple lamp, had the *darshan* and then looked for a lonely corner. But our courage failed us. Supposing we were not instantly killed? And what was the good of killing ourselves? Why not rather put up with the lack of independence? But we swallowed two or three seeds nevertheless. We dared not take more. Both of us fought shy of death and decided to go to Ramji Mandir to compose ourselves, and to dismiss the thought of suicide.

I realised that it was not as easy to commit suicide as to think about it. The thought of suicide ultimately resulted in both of us bidding good-bye to the habit of smoking stubs of cigarettes and of stealing the servant's coppers for the purpose of smoking.

Ever since I have grown up, I have never desired to smoke and always regard the habit of smoking as barbarous, dirty and harmful. I have never understood why there is such a rage for smoking throughout the world. I cannot bear to travel in a compartment full of people smoking. I become choked.

But much more serious than this was the theft I was guilty of a little later. I stole the coins when I was twelve or thirteen, possibly less. The other theft was committed when I was fifteen. In this case I stole a bit of gold out of my brother's armlet. This brother had run into a debt of about twenty-five rupees. He had on his arm an armlet of solid gold. It was not difficult to clip a bit out of it.

Well, it was done, and the debt cleared. But this became more than I could bear. I resolved never to steal again. I also made up my mind to confess it to my father. But I did not dare to speak. Not that I was afraid of my father beating me. No. I do not recall his ever having beaten any of us. I was afraid of the pain that I should cause him. But I felt that the risk should be taken; that there could not be a cleansing without a confession.

I decided at last to write out the confession, to submit to my father, and ask for his forgiveness. I wrote it on a slip of paper and handed it to him myself. In this, not only did

Indian cigarettes:

*beedis*

want: desire

sheer: pure

fought shy: feared

ultimately: finally

barbarous: wild

choked: suffocated

armlet: arm band

debt: something that is owed, especially money

dare: to be brave enough to do something

adequate: suitable

pledged: promised

confess: admit

## Stealing and Atonement

I confess my guilt, but I asked adequate punishment for it, and closed with a request to him not to punish himself for my offence. I also pledged myself never to steal in future.

I was trembling as I handed the confession to my father. He was then confined to bed. His bed was a plain wooden plank. I handed him the note and sat opposite the plank.

He read it through, and tears trickled down his cheeks, wetting the paper. For a moment he closed his eyes in thought and then tore up the note. He had sat up to read it. He lay down again. I also cried. I could see my father's agony. If I were a painter I could draw a picture of the whole scene today. It is still so vivid in my mind.

Those tears of love cleansed my heart, and washed my sin away. Then I could read in it nothing more than a father's love; but today, I know that it was pure Ahimsa. When there is such Ahimsa, it changes everything it touches. There is no limit to its power.

This kind of sublime forgiveness was not natural to my father. I had thought that he would be angry, say hard things, and strike his forehead. But he was so wonderfully peaceful, and I believe this was due to my clean confession. A clean confession, combined with a promise never to commit the sin again, is the purest type of repentance. I know that my confession made my father feel absolutely safe about me, and increased his affection for me beyond measure.

– Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi  
(an adaptation from 'My Experiments with Truth')

## 14.2 LET US UNDERSTAND THE TEXT

### 14.2.1 PART 1

*A relative and I.....people smoking, I become choked.*

This section tells about how and why Gandhiji tried to imitate a family member. We often imitate people we admire. Copying hairstyles, way of dressing, manner of speaking or habits of film stars, public figures, and/or friends and relatives is quite common. But have you ever thought whether the person you are imitating is a suitable role model? When Gandhiji was about twelve, he and his relative imitated an uncle who smoked. They thought it would be fun to blow out clouds of smoke. They picked up cigarette stubs and stole money from the servants so that they could buy cigarettes. Like all teenagers, they wanted independence. They decided that life was not worth living because they had to seek permission from their elders for everything they did. They got some seeds that they believed were poisonous. However, they couldn't get the courage to eat all of them because they did not want to die. At that age, all kinds of thoughts and ideas cross one's mind and often, some problems seem huge. But don't you think there are better ways of solving a problem than suicide?



Notes

agony: suffering  
vivid: clear  
sublime: great  
repentance: feeling sorry  
affection: love



## Notes

All of us make mistakes and learn from them. This is just a normal part of growing up. Have you ever experimented or tried to do things which you knew were wrong and could put you at risk? Can young people correct their mistakes and then continue to live a normal life? Yes, they can. Gandhiji too made mistakes when he was young. But he realised his mistakes. He removed the thought of suicide from his mind forever. He also decided that he would never smoke or steal.



## INTEXT QUESTIONS 14.1

1. Tick the correct answer.
  - a. Who did Gandhiji try to imitate as a child?
    - i. his father
    - ii. his friend
    - iii. his servant
    - iv. his uncle
  - b. From where did Gandhiji first get money to smoke Indian cigarettes?
    - i. he earned it
    - ii. from his father
    - iii. he stole it
    - iv. from his friend
  - c. Why did he and his friend go to Ramji Mandir?
    - i. to pray
    - ii. to make an offering
    - iii. to ask for cigarettes
    - iv. to calm themselves
2. Why did their courage fail them when they wanted to swallow the *dhatūra* seeds?
3. When did Gandhiji give up the idea of smoking?
4. How did Gandhiji regard the habit of smoking when he grew up?



## LET US LEARN NEW WORDS 14.1

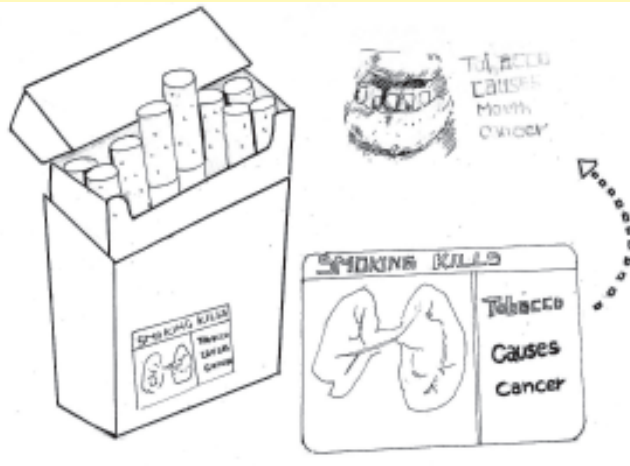
- a. Write the opposites of the following words from the text using the prefixes 'un-' or 'in'
 

auspicious, available, dependence, decided, effective
- b. Make sentences with the new words you made by using prefixes.



## DO YOU KNOW

Cigarettes are made from the leaves of the tobacco plant. For years tobacco has been consumed by people but research has proved that tobacco is bad for health - irrespective of the form in which it is consumed. Tobacco products in India include hookahs, chewing tobacco, cigarettes, *beedis*, snuff, *paan masaala*, etc.



Research has linked the following harmful effects to tobacco use:

- Smokers are three times as likely to die before the age of 60 or 70 as compared to non-smokers.
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD): Known as tobacco disease, it is a permanent, incurable reduction of pulmonary capacity characterised by shortness of breath, wheezing, persistent cough with sputum, and damage to the lungs, including chronic bronchitis.
- Heart disease: Several ingredients of tobacco lead to the narrowing of blood vessels, increasing the likelihood of a blockage, and thus a heart attack or stroke. Researchers have found that people under 40 are five times more likely to have a heart attack if they smoke.
- Cancer: The primary risks of tobacco usage include many forms of cancer, particularly of the mouth, larynx esophagus, lungs, kidneys, bladder, pancreas and stomach.
- Kidney disease: Smokers are at a significantly increased risk for chronic kidney disease than non-smokers.
- Tooth loss: Tooth loss has been shown to be 2 to 3 times higher in smokers than in non-smokers.



## Notes

- Reproductive health: Cigarette smoking affects the fertility in women and men, sexual function in men, pregnant women's health, the health of the unborn child and the health of younger children. Studies have shown that smoking increases the likelihood of impotence (erectile dysfunction). Smoking during pregnancy causes pregnancy-related complications, premature birth, low-birth weight baby and even and still birth infant death, etc. This can also happen if women don't smoke themselves but continue to inhale the smoke of cigarettes being smoked by somebody else. (Known as passive smoking)

Nearly 8-9 lakh people die every year in India due to diseases related to tobacco use. According to National Family Health Survey (NFHS-2) tobacco use is more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas in both men and women. Thirty five per cent of rural men in the age group 15-49, smoke cigarettes or *beedis*, compared with 29 per cent of urban men. Quote from NFHS-3 (2005-06)

What is the government doing to discourage smoking:

- heavy taxes on tobacco in all forms
- ban on smoking in public places
- ban on the sale of tobacco products to minors
- very strong warnings about the harmful effects of smoking on all cigarette packets

## 14.2.2 PART 2

*But much more serious ..... could not be a cleansing without a confession.*

When Gandhiji's elder brother fell into debt, he took a bit of gold from his brother's armllet to help the brother repay his debt. Later, he felt guilty of his act of stealing. He repented for his action as he knew that he had done something wrong. He decided that he would never steal again. He felt very disturbed and wanted to confess to his father but couldn't get himself to face him. He also knew that his father would be very pained to know what he had done. Gandhiji did not want to hurt his father but he could not bear to live with the guilt. So he decided to confess to his brother. It requires courage to admit one's mistake and to speak the truth. Don't you think so? Gandhiji got the courage to confess because he knew he was doing the right thing. Had you been in Gandhiji's situation, what would you have done?



## INTEXT QUESTIONS 14.2

1. How much was Gandhiji's brother's debt?
2. Why did Gandhiji take out a bit of gold from the armllet?

## Stealing and Atonement

3. What do you think Gandhiji did with the bit of gold?
4. Why did Gandhiji decide to confess to his father?
5. Have you ever done something wrong to help someone close to you? How did you feel afterwards? Write about it in approximately 100 words.



Notes

### 14.2.3 PART 3

*I decided at last to write..... beyond measure.*

This part of the lesson is about what happened when Gandhiji confessed his deed to his father. In a letter to his father, Gandhiji admitted that he had stolen and asked for suitable punishment for his wrongdoing. He also requested his father not to punish himself for the act and promised that he would never steal again. When Gandhiji's father read the letter, he did not scold his young son because he knew he was absolutely honest and sincere in his confession. Gandhiji's father began to cry. These were not just tears of pain but also love and forgiveness. After reading the letter, he was sure that the mistake would never be repeated. Gandhiji too started to cry. He learnt the first lesson on *Ahimsa* that day. Without any physical violence or angry words, the matter was taken care of. Gandhiji understood the real meaning of *Ahimsa* from his father's peaceful reaction to his confession of a wrong deed.



### INTEXT QUESTIONS 14.3

Answer the following questions.

1. How did Gandhiji's father react on reading his letter of confession?
2. Who taught Gandhiji the lesson on 'Ahimsa'?
3. 'Ahimsa' in the story means \_\_\_\_\_
4. What according to Gandhiji is the purest type of repentance?



### LET US TALK 14.1

In the lesson that you just read, Gandhiji wanted to help his brother who was in debt. To clear that debt, he steals some gold. However, he realises that wrong means cannot justify the right end. Given below is a short story about a man called Ratnakar who atoned for his life of theft and dishonesty and became Maharishi Valmiki. Read it aloud to two friends and/or relatives.



## Notes

When Ratnakar was very young he got lost in a jungle. A hunter found him and brought him up. Ratnakar grew up to become an excellent hunter and married a beautiful girl. As his family grew, Ratnakar found it difficult to feed his wife and children. So, he began to rob people travelling from one village to another.

One day he attacked the holy man Narada who he heard playing his 'Veena' and singing God's praises.

"Hand over whatever you have," said Ratnakar, "else I'll chop off your head."

Narada said, "You can take my 'Veena' if you want but why do you want to chop off my head?"

Ratnakar shrugged and replied, "I make my living by stealing and hunting."

"Brother, stealing is a sin and killing animals is also sinful," explained Narada. "Why do you do such evil acts?"

"What else can I do? My family is large. I have to provide for them."

"But will any member of your family share your sins? Go ask them and bring back their response to me."

"All the members of my family love me and will certainly share the sins that I commit. You are saying all this just to escape from me."

Narada said, "You can tie me to this tree, and then go."

Ratnakar did so and went to ask his family members. All of them said that he was responsible for providing food for the family and he alone was responsible for the sins being committed by him in making a living.

Ratnakar rushed back to Narada, fell at his feet and apologised.

He told Narada that he wanted to become a good man and make his family happy. Narada asked him to meditate and chant God's name until he returned.

Ratnakar obeyed him, and sat in meditation for a very long time. When Narada returned, he found that anthills had covered Ratnakar as he meditated. Narada removed the anthills. Narada told Ratnakar that God was pleased with his atonement by meditation. Narada changed Ratnakar's name to Valmiki, since he was reborn from the anthill (Valmika).

Valmiki built his ashram on the banks of the Ganga, where he wrote the Ramayana.

Discuss the following questions with the persons to whom you have narrated the story. Write down the main points in a notebook.



## Stealing and Atonement

1. Do you think it is easy to accept that what one is doing is wrong, and then change?
2. Do you know of any person who changed for the better, or gave up a bad habit (smoking, drinking, drugs, stealing, etc.)? How do you think he/she could do it?



### LET US DO 14.1

Suppose your father gives you a sheet of wrapping paper and cardboard box that has six glasses in it. He's on his way out and asks you to wrap the box because he has to present it to someone in the evening. You agree to do so. Before wrapping the box, you open it and take out one glass. As you are examining it, it slips from your hand and breaks.

What would you do? Select three options that you find most suitable. Justify your reason for selecting them in about 40-50 words.

- a. Throw the broken pieces away, wrap the gift and give it to your father when he comes home in the evening.
- b. Leave the broken pieces in the box, wrap the gift and give it to your father when he comes home in the evening.
- c. Mend the glass with some glue, put it back in the box and then wrap it.
- d. Apologise to your father for what happened.
- e. Borrow money from a friend/relative and buy more glasses.
- f. Take out money from your mother's purse (or any other person's) without telling her/him in order to buy the glass.
- g. Request your mother (sibling, grandparents, etc.) to tell your father on your behalf that the glass broke by mistake.
- h. Request your mother (sibling, grandparents, etc.) to tell him that she/he has broken the glass.
- i. Tell your father that when you opened the box, you found one glass broken.
- j. Tell your father that as you were about to pack the box, a cat/dog/monkey, etc. knocked the box and one glass broke.
- k. Admit to your father that the glass broke accidentally and that you wish to contribute towards purchasing new glasses with your own money (savings, pocket money, festival money, birthday money, etc.)
- l. Suggest to your father that he should gift something else as the glasses are not nice.
- m. Tell your father that you really like the glasses and want to use them, so he should gift something else.
- n. Any other choice \_\_\_\_\_



Notes



## 14.3 LET US LEARN GRAMMAR

### Present Participle and Past Participle

#### 1. Present Participle

Observe how the underlined words function in the following sentences.

- The boy washed his hands in running water.
- The sleeping child woke up.

The underlined words in the above sentences are present participles. They qualify the nouns *water* and *child*. They work like adjectives.

#### Exercise 1

Fill in the blanks with the appropriate form (present participle) of the words given in brackets:

- \_\_\_\_\_ dogs seldom bite. (bark)
- Detergents are \_\_\_\_\_ powders. (cleanse)
- Mala showed me her \_\_\_\_\_ doll. (dance)
- The king wanted a \_\_\_\_\_ bird. (sing)
- \_\_\_\_\_ beings need air, water and food. (live)

#### 2. Past Participle

Observe the following sentences:

- The tired traveller sat under a tree.
- Throw the broken glass away.

The underlined words in the above sentences are past participles which are formed by using -d, -n, (tire + d, broke +n). They are used as adjectives to qualify the nouns – *traveller* and *glass*.

#### Exercise 2

Fill in the blanks using the suitable form of the verbs in brackets.

- Please open the \_\_\_\_\_ (lock) cupboard.
- We should try to use \_\_\_\_\_ (recycle) products as they are eco-friendly.
- It was a \_\_\_\_\_ (plan) holiday.
- Kamla comforted the \_\_\_\_\_ (frighten) child.
- Please submit the \_\_\_\_\_ (complete) assignments.



## 14.4 LET US WRITE

### Message Writing

Gandhiji wrote a confessional note to his father expressing his feelings.

A note can be a message which you can create to give some information.

Suppose you go to your friend's house and find that he is not at home.

What would you do? You could give your friend's neighbour a message to be conveyed to him, or you could write a note and slip it under your friend's door, or tape it on the door.

A message is that important information which you want your friend to know.

### Consider the following situation:

Krishnan and Atul are classmates. Krishnan is out shopping when Atul comes to his house. Atul writes a short note for his friend. He leaves the note with Krishnan's neighbour and requests him to give it to Krishnan.

### The message

11 July 2002, 4.00 pm  
Krishnan,

I came to your house to return your book. You were not there. I'll come again tomorrow at the same time. Let me know if you will be at home. My phone number is 26843701.

Atul

### Discussion

A message:

- is always brief because it deals with only the important points
- is clear and accurate
- does not include direct speech
- does not contain address
- sometimes contains a contact number
- has a brief salutation, e.g., Krishnan



## Notes

- includes only time and date
- carries only the name of the writer at the bottom

**Exercise**

Imagine that you need money to buy a book for school. You take fifty rupees from your father's shirt pocket without telling him about it. You know that your father will be confused and angry when he finds the money missing. You decide to write a short note to explain to him what you have done and why. Write the note in about 5-6 sentences.

**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

At some point of time, all of us make mistakes and wrong choices. It could be deliberate or unintentional (not done purposely). Like Gandhiji, many adolescents/teenagers experiment with smoking and other risky behaviour even though they know that this is a bad habit and will also upset their parents. Such behaviours can risk health and safety of young people. They are likely to get trapped in an unhealthy habit for the lifetime. You also hurt your loved ones when you do these things.

But if you take Gandhiji as a role model and confess your wrongdoing, explain to the person you have hurt why you behaved the way you did, ask for forgiveness and promise never to repeat it, you will have peace of mind and also be respected for your truthfulness.

A positive relationship with your parents where there is openness, trust and sharing is an important factor that will help you to correct your mistakes, overcome harmful habits and become a responsible human being.

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. Gandhiji and his friend smoked cigarette stubs and stalks of some plants. Do you think they were right in doing so? Give your opinion.
2. Why did Gandhiji and his friend want to commit suicide? Do you think suicide is a solution to problems?
3. Gandhiji took gold from his brother's armlet. Do you think his action was correct or incorrect? Give reasons for your answer, in 20 – 30 words.
4. Why did his father weep when he read Gandhiji's confession?
5. You see your friend stealing. How will you deal with the situation? What will you say or do? Answer in 20 – 30 words.



**ANSWERS**

**14.2.1 PART 1**

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 14.1**

1. a. iv. his uncle  
b. iii. he stole it  
c. iv. to calm themselves
2. Their courage failed them because they feared they would not die instantly and also because they were not sure whether killing themselves would solve their problem.
3. Gandhiji and his friend gave up the idea of smoking after they had given up the idea of suicide.
4. When he grew up he regarded smoking as barbarous, dirty and harmful.

**LET US LEARN NEW WORDS 14.1**

- a. inauspicious, unavailable, independence, undecided, ineffective
- b. Individual responses

**14.2.2 PART 2**

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 14.2**

1. Gandhiji's brother had run into a debt of about twenty-five rupees.
2. Gandhiji took the bit of gold as he had a plan/idea to use it to clear his brother's debt.
3. Possible responses:

Gandhiji sold the bit of gold and used the money he got by selling it to clear his brother's debt.

or

He gave away the bit of gold in exchange for ending his brother's debt.

4. Gandhiji felt disturbed and unhappy after he took the gold from his brother's armlet. He realised he had done something wrong, but he felt this was not enough. He felt that a real and complete cleansing was possible only if he confessed.
5. Individual responses. Accept all responses.



## Notes

**14.2.3 PART 3****INTEXT QUESTIONS 14.3**

1. Gandhiji's father was overwhelmed and wept when he read his letter of confession.
2. Gandhiji father taught him the lesson on 'Ahimsa'.
3. In the story, 'Ahimsa' means to avoid causing pain, being violent and to bring about change in a peaceful and loving manner.
4. According to Gandhiji the purest type of repentance is a clean confession with a request for an adequate punishment for it, and a promise never to commit the wrong again.

**14.3 LET US LEARN GRAMMAR****Exercise 1**

- |            |              |            |
|------------|--------------|------------|
| a. barking | b. cleansing | c. dancing |
| d. singing | e. living    |            |

**Exercise 2**

- |               |              |            |
|---------------|--------------|------------|
| a. locked     | b. recycled  | c. planned |
| d. frightened | e. completed |            |

**14.4 LET US WRITE**

Individual responses

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. Gandhiji and his friend should not have smoked cigarette stubs because smoking is injurious to health.
2. Gandhiji and his friend wanted to commit suicide as they felt unhappy that they needed permission from their elders to do anything. They wanted to be independent. They wanted to be able to act without taking permission from their elders. Committing suicide is definitely not a solution to any problem. We should rather face problems with courage.
3. Gandhiji was wrong to have taken the gold from his brother's armlet because he took it without telling his brother. This act was the same as stealing. Stealing is not justified, even if it is for a good cause.
4. Gandhiji's father was angry and sad that his son had stolen something, but pleased that he had shown honesty and courage and confessed his wrongdoing.
5. Individual responses