

STUDY MATERIAL - 07

'THE STORY OF MY EXPERIMENTS WITH TRUTH' : PART 5- SUMMARY

Part 5, Chapter 1 Summary

The First Experience

- Gandhi's group from the Phoenix Settlement arrives home before him, but Gandhi and his friends manage to find an ashram for them.
- People hold receptions for Gandhi in India because Gandhi is awesome, but at one of them, a Gujarati gathering, people are giving speeches in English.
- Mr. G. gives a speech in Gujarati saying that people at a Gujarati gathering should speak their own language.
- The audience agrees.

Part 5, Chapter 2 Summary

With Gokhale in Poona

- Our hero meets up with his mentor, Gokhale, in India.
- He tells Gandhi that the governor wishes to meet him.
- They meet, and Gandhi promises to see him whenever political actions are to be taken because as a Satyagrahi, Gandhi always seeks to understand the viewpoint of the opposite side.
- Gokhale decides to fund Gandhi's ashram of the Phoenix folks.
- It takes a weight off Mr. G's mind.
- Then, there's some debate over whether Gandhi can join the Servants of India Society. The members don't quite get behind his spirit of compromise. But, they do like him.
- Lastly, another party is held for Gandhi, this time arranged by Gokhale. Gandhi is a popular dude.

Part 5, Chapter 3 Summary

Was It a Threat?

- Gandhi travels third class on the train. Passengers are treated like sheep, he says, and are insulted by the officials.
- Mr. G. says "big men" (as he calls noteworthy people) traveling third class shouldn't ask for exceptions but fight for the removal of the unjust conditions.
- Our hero meets with one of the authorities, who asks him if his reference to Satyagraha in a speech was a threat. Gandhi says the inclusion of Satyagraha in a speech was meant to educate the public. The official isn't convinced.

Part 5, Chapter 4 Summary

Shantiniketan

- Mr. G. tells the Phoenix family to try cooking their own meals instead of using paid cooks. The experiment takes off but is eventually dropped. Gandhi says it was good experience for all.
- Gokhale dies. Gandhi attends the mourning.
- His friend Andrews asks when the time for Satyagraha in India will come.
- Gandhi says he doesn't know and that he must travel India for a year gaining experience as he promised Gokhale.

Part 5, Chapter 5 Summary

Woes of Third Class Passengers

- Gandhi details more of the troubles third-class train passengers face. The railway officials are high-handed, but the passengers themselves are rude, dirty, and selfish.
- Gandhi says their misdeeds may be traced to the indifference educated people show them.
- Gandhi takes up another's offer to help his wife use a second-class bathroom, despite their being in third class.
- He says this error wasn't fitting for a votary of truth such as himself. Even Gandhi makes mistakes.

Part 5, Chapter 6 Summary

Wooing

- Gandhi decides not to join the Servants of India Society because of the differences in views between himself and the members (which he doesn't spell out). He says he's a member in spirit.

Part 5, Chapter 7 Summary

Kumbha Mela

- Mr. G. lists troubles faced by deck passengers on a ship in India. It's similar to the difficulties faced by third-class train passengers. He wants to improve these conditions.
- Gandhi doesn't know which is worse: 1) when no one recognizes him and he has to put up with traveling hardships or 2) when he's surrounded by supplicants who come to him for blessings.
- He feels he's causing unnecessary trouble for his hosts, so he vows not to take more than five articles of food per day and not to eat after dark.
- As of the writing of this chapter, he's stuck to these vows for 13 years. We're still eating donuts.

Part 5, Chapter 8 Summary

Lakshman Jhula

- Our hero discusses wearing the sacred thread and the *shikha*, symbols of Hinduism.
- He says he's indifferent to the sacred thread and feels it shouldn't be a symbol of spiritual regeneration until Hinduism purges itself of untouchability.
- The *shikha*, however, Gandhi decides to regrow because cowardice was the reason he discarded it before—he thought Englishmen would consider him barbaric for it.

Part 5, Chapter 9 Summary

Founding of the Ashram

- Gandhi sets up an ashram at Ahmedabad, called Satyagraha Ashram, for some of his followers to live together as a family.
- They come up with a code of rules and observances.
- Someone suggests humility as an observance, and Mr. G. says service without humility is selfishness or egotism. The true idea of humility is self-effacement, he says.

Part 5, Chapter 10 Summary

On the Anvil

- The Satyagraha Ashram accepts a family from the untouchable caste. This causes a stir, and it seems the ashram will lose its funding. But, at the last minute, someone gives them plenty. Gandhi believes that untouchability is being shaken to its foundation.

Part 5, Chapter 11 Summary

Abolition of Indentured Emigration

- The British promise abolition of the indenture system at an unspecified time.
- Gandhi feels the time should be specific. He sets the date: July 31, 1917.
- He travels India preparing to launch Satyagraha if the demand is not met. But, the demand is met. The indenture system is no more.
