

Lesson 1

Stealing and Atonement

[**Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi** was born in Porbandar, Gujarat in 1869. After completing his education in Gujarat, he went to London for higher education and became a lawyer. Later he began his career as a lawyer in South Africa. He was moved by the plight of the Indians living there and as a leader helped them fight injustice. On his return to India, he joined the Indian National Congress. Under his leadership the people of India created a massive freedom struggle against the British following the ideals of truth and non-violence and India became independent on 15 August, 1947. Gandhi died on 30 January, 1948. He was given the title of Mahatma and is also called Father of the Nation. He was one of the greatest leaders of the world of all times. This lesson is an extract from his autobiography 'My Experiment with Truth'.]

I pilfered the coppers 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 meat-eating 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 it to my father, and ask his forgiveness. I wrote it on a slip of paper and handed it to him myself. In this note not only did 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 suffering from a fistula and was 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 pearl-drops 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 again lay down. 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 pearl-drops of love cleansed my heart, and washed my sin away. Only he who has experienced such love can know what it is. As the hymn says :

Only he
Who is smitten with the arrows of love,
Knows its power.

This was, for me, an object-lesson in *Ahimsa*. Then I could read in it nothing more than a father's love, but today I know that it was pure *Ahimsa*. When such *Ahimsa* becomes all-embracing, it transforms everything it touches. There is no limit to its power.

This sort 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, when offered before one who has the right to receive it, 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.

Wordnote

pilfered (v)	: stole things of little value
copper (n)	: brown coin
armlet (n)	: an ornament worn on the arm
solid gold	: made completely of gold
clip (v)	: to cut
resolved (v)	: made firm decision
made up my mind (make up one's mind) (idiom)	: take a decision
confess (v)	: to admit
cleansing (n)	: the act of making somebody free from guilt
guilt (n)	: unhappy feelings for doing wrong
adequate (adj)	: enough in quantity or quality
closed with (v)	: ended with
offence (n)	: an illegal act
pledged (v)	: promised
fistula (n)	: a disease
confined to bed (v)	: stayed in bed
plank (n)	: a flat piece of wood
pearl-drops (n)	: drops of tear
trickled (v)	: flowed
lay down (v)	: rested
agony (n)	: extreme mental pain
vivid (adj)	: clear
hymn (n)	: song praising God
smitten (v)	: have affected
embracing (adj)	: including
sublime (adj)	: of very high quality

Comprehension

1. Answer the following questions in single sentences from your text. 1×7=7
- At what age did Gandhi steal for the first time ?
 - What did Gandhi steal gold from ?
 - To whom did Gandhi decide to confess ?
 - What did Gandhi write on the note to his father ?
 - Why was Gandhi's father confined to bed ?
 - What was Gandhi's father's first reaction after reading the note ?
 - What did Gandhi think his father would do after reading the note ?
2. Give brief answers to the following questions. 2×4=8
- Why and how did Gandhi steal gold ?
 - How did Gandhi feel after stealing ?
 - What did Gandhi's father do after receiving the confession note ?
 - What is the purest type of repentance ?
3. Why did Gandhi call the incident an object lesson in 'Ahimsa' ? 5
4. What qualities of Gandhi's character are reflected in this lesson ? 3
5. Write true or false. ½×6=3
- One of Gandhi's brother ran into a debt.
 - Gandhi's father often beat him.
 - Gandhi requested his father to punish him for stealing.
 - Gandhi's father wept after reading the confession.

- e) The power of Ahimsa is limited.
- f) Gandhi's father's love for him decreased after the incident.

Grammar and usage

[Look at the verbs in the following sentences.

- i) I stole a bit of gold.
- ii) I also cried.

In the first sentence the verb 'stole' has the object 'a bit of gold'. A verb which has an object is a **transitive verb**.

But in the second sentence, the verb 'cried' has no object. A verb which doesn't have an object is an **intransitive verb**.]

6. Find out the transitive and intransitive verbs from the following sentences.
- a) She is a teacher.
 - b) I go to school.
 - c) Seema was reading a book.
 - d) The sun gives heat and light.
 - e) We sleep at night.
 - f) I fed the dog.
 - g) Everybody has blamed him.
 - h) The birds fly in the sky.

[Now, read this sentence.

I resolved never to steal again.

In this sentence the first verb 'resolved' has a subject, a tense form, and completes the meaning of the sentence. But the second verb 'to steal' does not have a subject, tense form or sense of completion. The first type of verb is a **finite verb** and the second is a **non-finite verb**. In English gerunds, infinitives and participles are non-finite verbs.]

7. Rewrite the following sentences underlining the finite verbs and circling the non-finite verbs. One is done for you.
- I like singing.
 - We saw him working in the garden.
 - They went to the market to buy vegetables.
 - Looking at the sky I saw many stars.
 - I went there riding a bicycle.
 - The sun having set we returned home.
 - Anil Ambani is an established businessman.

Vocabulary

8. Complete the puzzle with the help of the clues given below. The number of letters for each word is given in brackets.

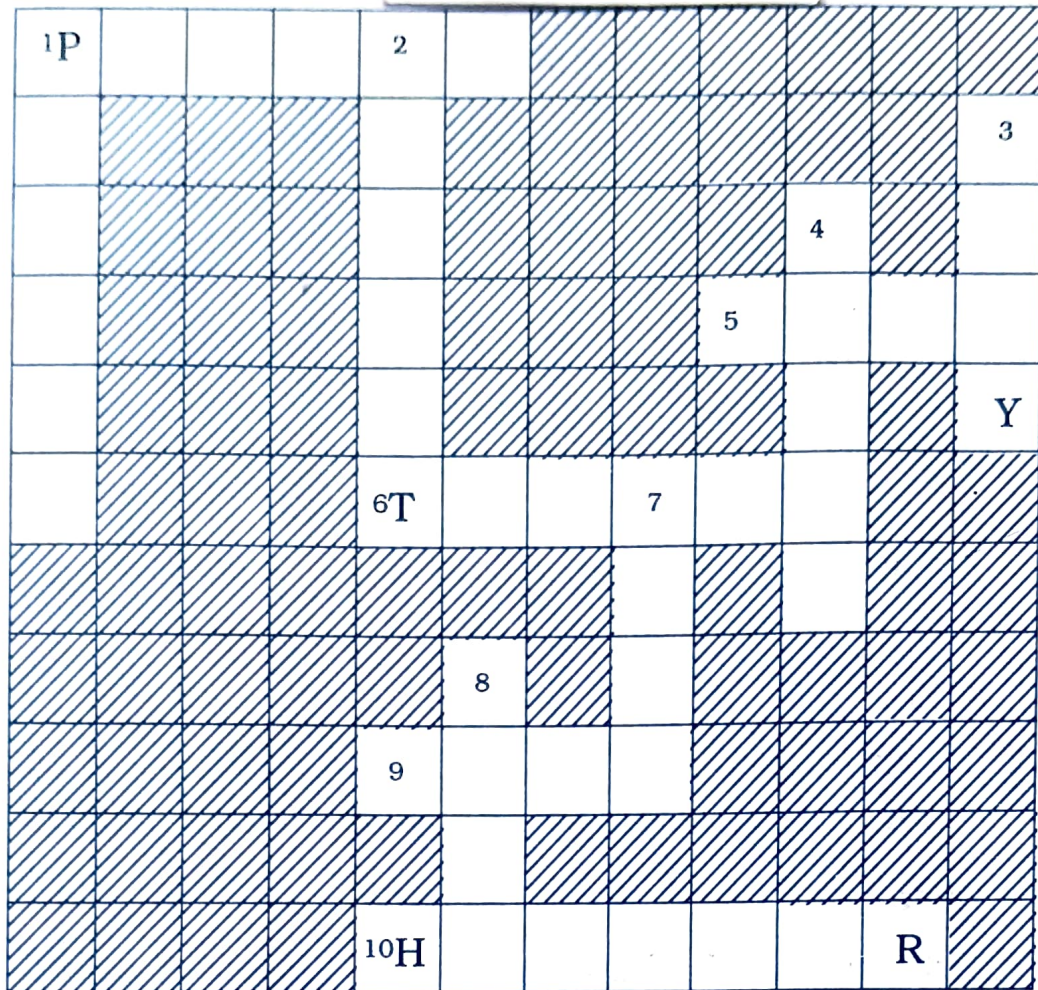
Across

- the home of a king. (6)
- a large building with tall, thick walls, towers etc. (4)
- a place of worship for Hindus. (6)
- a device which prevents a door from being opened. (4)
- an area of sea or river where ships come and stop. (7)

Down

- a tall post used as a support for a building. (6)
- a thick woolen mat to cover the floor. (6)
- a big and important town. (4)
- a narrow, tall building. (5)
- a garden where people go for walk, playing etc. (4)
- a comfortable seat with raised arm. (4)

DAILY ASSAM



Composition

9. Write a note to your parents confessing one of the mistakes that you have made recently.

Spoken activity

10. Suppose you have got the magic power to become a powerful man. What would you like to do ? Share it with your friends.

Note to the teacher

In this lesson the students should be taught the classification of verbs in detail. Emphasis should be given on finite, non-finite, transitive and intransitive verbs. They should be encouraged to read famous biographies such as M.K. Gandhi's 'My Experiment with Truth', Ann Frank's Diary etc.

