**Shyness, My Shield - Mahatma Gandhi**

**Shyness, My Shield**

**A. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two.**

**1. Who was Mr. Hill? Was he an important person?**

Mr. Hill was the proprietor of the Thames Iron Works and president of Vegetarian Society. He was a puritan and an important person.

**2. Why did the Committee decide to call for a motion to remove Dr. Allinson?**

The Executive Committee of the Vegetarian Society decided to call for a motion to remove Dr. Allinson as he was in favor of the new birth control movement. The president of the society is a puritan and he didn’t like Dr. Allison’s views.

**3. In which country do the events described in the essay occur?**

The events described in the essay, Shyness, My Shield, written by Gandhi occurred in England.

**4. In the essay, how many instances of his shyness does Gandhi describe?**

In his essay, Shyness, My Shield, Gandhi described four instances of his shyness.

**5. In paragraph 1, Gandhi says, ‘This went on for a long time.’ What does the word ‘this’ here refer to?**

‘This’ here refers to Gandhi’s inability to express his opinions at the meetings of the Executive Committee of Vegetarian Club.

**6. In paragraph 2, Gandhi says, ‘ ….and felt it cowardice to register a silent vote.’ Was he successful in expressing his opinion? Support your answer with evidence from the essay.**

No, Gandhi was not successful in expressing his opinion. Though Gandhi took a written speech to the meeting, he could not muster the courage to read it. He wrote about it in paragraph 3.

**7. The writer had his speech read by someone else in two instances. What are those instances and what was the result?**

The first instance was at the meeting of Vegetarian Society and the second was at the meeting organized to promote vegetarianism in Ventnor. Gandhi felt ridiculous on both the occasions.

**8. ‘But this time too, I succeeded in making myself ridiculous (paragraph 5). ‘What does he mean by this sentence?**

Gandhi thought of making a humorous speech at the dinner he hosted on the eve of his departure from London. His memory failed entirely and he could not make the speech.

**9. ‘My hesitancy in speech, which was once an annoyance, is now a pleasure (paragraph 6)’. What is the significance of this statement?**

The statement is significant because Gandhi says that his hesitancy in speech taught him economy of words. It helped him in restraining his thoughts.

**10. Why do you thing Gandhiji resigned from the Society, as he vaguely remembers to have done?**

As he vaguely remembers, Gandhiji resigned to the Society because it was not fair to remove Dr. Allinson for his views in support of birth control.

**B. Short Answer Questions.**

**1. The essay presents puritanical and anti-puritanical views. If you were a member of the Committee, who would you support? Justify your response.**

Mr. Hill, the financier of the Vegetarian Society, was a puritan. He regarded birth control movement as cutting at the root of morals. Dr. Allinson, another member of the society supported the movement and advocated the movement in working classes. The movement was anti-puritan. Thus the essay presented puritanical and anti-puritanical views. If I were a member of the Committee, I would support Dr. Allinson. Birth control movement saves over population. It teaches humans about responsible and planned parenting. It protects humanity from hunger and diseases. Countries with less population are marching ahead. Countries with huge population are struggling to feed people. (102 words)

**2. Gandhiji’s views on shyness are a little complex. Comment on them with evidence from the essay. Support your argument with the evidence from the essay.**

Gandhiji’s views on shyness are a little complex as he suffered initially and later benefitted from shyness. When he was in London, he was embarrassed with his shyness. He failed to make any impression on his audience however hard he tried.  He could not express himself in the Executive Committee meeting of Vegetarian Club. He fumbled to speak in a meeting to promote vegetarianism at Ventnor. He made himself ridiculous while speaking on the eve of his departure from London.  Later he says that his hesitancy in speech taught him economy of words. It helped him in restraining his thoughts. (100 words)

**3. Why does the writer say that his ‘constitutional shyness has been no disadvantage whatever’. Support your arguments.**

Gandhi says that his constitutional shyness has been no disadvantage whatever. He admits that his shyness was once an annoyance and then a pleasure. He explains that his hesitancy in speech taught him economy of words. It helped him in restraining his thoughts. He never uttered or wrote anything without giving proper thought. He never regretted anything he spoke or wrote. He says that silence is a part of spiritual discipline and votary of truth. A man of few words never speaks thoughtlessly. He concludes that his shyness helped him to grow and in his search for truth. It is his shield and buckler. (104 words)

**4. Consider the imagery of the words, “shield and buckler”. Where do these metaphors come from? Are they somewhat ironic?**

The metaphors come from the Holy Bible. In Psalm 91:4 faithfulnesses is compared to shield and buckler. Gandhi in his essay says that his shyness is his shield and buckler.  He gives us examples of his clumsiness owing to his shyness when he was in London. He felt ridiculous whenever he attempted to speak before an audience. Later in life, shyness helped him in restraining his thoughts. He never uttered or wrote anything without giving proper thought. He never regretted anything he spoke or wrote. He concludes that his shyness is his shield and buckler. The imagery is somewhat ironic as shyness is generally considered as a negative quality. (109 words)

**5. Recount some of the ways that he was affected when he had to speak. Are they funny?**

Gandhiji could not express his views in meetings when he was in London. He fumbled to speak in Executive Committee meetings of Vegetarian Club. He failed to support Dr. Allinson. His speak had to be read by the Chairman. He could not read the speech he wrote before the audience of a meeting to promote vegetarianism. His friend Sjt. Mazmudar had to read it for him.  His last effort to make a speech on the eve of his departure from London was also ridiculous. His memory failed entirely and he failed to make a humorous speech. Yes. All the instances are funny. (102 words)

**C. Long Answer Questions.**

**1. Summarize the main ideas of the essay.**

Gandhi was a member of the Vegetarian Society. He could not speak in the Executive Committee meetings of the society. He could not support Dr. Allinson, who favored birth control movement. Gandhi says that he suffered initially and later benefitted from shyness. When he was in London, he was embarrassed with his shyness. He failed to make any impression on his audience however hard he tried.  He could not express himself in the Executive Committee meeting of Vegetarian Club. He fumbled to speak in a meeting to promote vegetarianism at Ventnor. He made himself ridiculous while speaking on the eve of his departure from London.

Gandhi says that his constitutional shyness has been no disadvantage whatever. He admits that his shyness was once an annoyance and then a pleasure. He explains that his hesitancy in speech taught him economy of words. It helped him in restraining his thoughts. He never uttered or wrote anything without giving proper thought. He never regretted anything he spoke or wrote. He says that silence is a part of spiritual discipline and votary of truth. He concludes that his shyness helped him to grow and in his search for truth. It is his shield and buckler. (201 words)

**2. Explain the significance of the statement, ‘It had helped me in my discernment of truth”.  Substantiate your answers with textual evidence.**

In his essay, Shyness, My Shield Gandhi states that his shyness had helped him in his discernment of truth. He gives us examples of his clumsiness owing to his shyness when he was in London. He felt ridiculous whenever he attempted to speak before an audience. Gandhiji could not express his views in meetings when he was in London. He fumbled to speak in Executive Committee meetings of Vegetarian Club. He failed to support Dr. Allinson. He could not read the speech he wrote to the audience of a meeting to promote vegetarianism. His last effort to make a speech on the eve of his departure from London was also ridiculous. His memory failed entirely and he failed to make a humorous speech.

He admits that his shyness was once an annoyance and then a pleasure. He explains that his hesitancy in speech taught him economy of words. It helped him in restraining his thoughts. He never uttered or wrote anything without giving proper thought. He says that silence is a part of spiritual discipline and votary of truth. A man of few words never speaks thoughtlessly. He concludes that his shyness helped him to grow and in his search for truth. (202 words)

**3. What factors did Gandhiji have to consider when he opposed the removal of Dr. Allinson? What does the episode reveal about his personality? Would you call him stubborn?**

Gandhiji was a member of the Executive Committee of Vegetarian Society. Mr. Hill, the financier of the Society, was a puritan. He regarded birth control movement as cutting at the root of morals. Dr. Allinson, another member of the society supported the movement and advocated the movement in working classes. The movement was anti-puritan. Mr. Hill didn’t like the ideas of Dr. Allinson and wanted to remove him from the society.

Gandhi had a high regard for Mr. Hill and his generosity. As a puritan, Mr. Hill had the right to oppose the views of Dr. Allinson. At the same time, it is not fair or proper to expel any member from the society for promoting birth control movement. Gandhi felt that every vegetarian had a right to be member of the Vegetarian Club irrespective of his moral views.

This episode reveals that Gandhi had a sense of righteousness. He wanted to allow Dr. Allinson to continue as a member of the society because he was a vegetarian. The club, being a vegetarian club had nothing to do with morals. Mr. Hill thought otherwise and he was successful in expelling Dr. Allinson from the society.

No, I would not say that Gandhi is stubborn in this episode. (207 words)

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**Brief Summery**

Gandhi was a member of the Vegetarian Society. He could not speak in the Executive Committee meetings of the society. He could not support Dr. Allinson, who was in favor of birth control movement. He fumbled to speak in a meeting to promote vegetarianism at Ventnor. He made himself ridiculous while speaking on the eve of his departure from London.

Gandhi says that his constitutional shyness has been no disadvantage whatever. He explains that his hesitancy in speech taught him economy of words. It helped him in restraining his thoughts. He never uttered or wrote anything without giving proper thought. He never regretted anything he spoke or wrote. He says that silence is a part of spiritual discipline and votary of truth. He concludes that his shyness helped him to grow and in his search for truth. It is his shield and buckler.