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Article

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When different societies meet, the encounter can broadly be of two types: encounter by invitation or encounter through encroachment. While the type of contact determines the nature of the relationship, change becomes inevitable in both cases. In the case of invitation, the foreigner receives a gift or hospitality that the hosts believe appropriate within their cultural paradigm; however, in the case of encroachment, the dynamic is very different. In encroachment, the outsider advances beyond the cultural or geographical limit without the consent of the

inhabitants, seizing items and ideas. The movement of the West to India was an encroachment. Centred on colonialism, this encroachment had multiple consequences, such as the massive influence of the West on India's socio-political scene. Among other effects, the encroachment facilitated travels to India for spiritual reasons. While missionaries arrived with the intention of spreading their faith, others came to adopt India's spirituality.

In this paper, I attempt to look into one such trajectory with Madeleine Slade's journey as the subject through the copious correspondence between her and Mahatma Gandhi. Madeleine Slade was a British woman who spent a large part of her life in India with Gandhi as her guide. He had a massive influence on her thirty-four years in the sub-continent. They kept up a correspondence for more than two decades, making the letters a portal to the dynamics of their relationship. The letters not only illuminate that relationship but also chart the journey of a person who adopts a completely different culture and spirituality to the one in which they were raised. The letters also shed light on how, despite substantial differences, Gandhi and Slade managed to maintain their connection for over two decades. This paper attempts to uncover their personalities and emotional vulnerabilities, thus mapping the changes that occur in Slade. This is significant because it helps elucidate how colonialism impacted people in ways that are not often appreciated. For instance, there are personal and emotional journeys that get sidelined in the narratives of power and numbers in mainstream themes. This paper attempts to highlight one such journey. The correspondence gives the reader insight into the changes that Madeleine goes through as an outsider. Observed through this insider-outsider lens, the relationship between Gandhi and Madeleine and her journey can be seen from a fresh perspective.

To understand the transitions and changes that occur, I have roughly mapped three phases of Slade's life. These are:

1. Pre-Mira
2. Mira
3. Post-Mira.

By Pre-Mira, I refer to the phase before her move to India; by Mira, I mean the phase when she lived in India as Mirabehn, a name given to her by Mahatma Gandhi. Post-Mira refers to her life after leaving India. The three phases, I hope, will give us an understanding of the trajectory of her journey and her contributions. Notwithstanding the distinctiveness of each stage, there also is an element of continuity.

Under these three phases, let us look at the dynamics of her journey.

1. Pre Mira

Understanding the beginning is important as it helps with comprehension of the subsequent events. Therefore, let us look at Slade before her 'Mirabehn' journey began. She was born, on 22nd November 1892, into an aristocratic British family. Her father was Rear-Admiral Sir Edmond Slade, who was posted in the East Indies for long periods, so she spent much of her childhood at her maternal grandfather's country house in Surrey, England. Despite the comfort and abundance of material wealth, her inclinations made her rather different from her peers. She loved nature and lived a solitary and contemplative life, different from most of her social class (2008:158). As she grew up, perhaps she felt like an outsider even where she was not. However, upbringing and culture wire a person's character in multiple ways, and the social imaginary,

despite private dispositions and inclinations, influences an individual's outlook. Nonetheless, whatever the cause, be it her unique personality or her upbringing, Madeleine exhibited vigour, discipline and independence. We shall see later how these made her different from others as she journeyed towards India. Shades of pre-Mira can be seen in the later stages of her life as she persevered in adapting to Indian ways.

Slade first heard of Gandhiji from Romain Rolland, a pacifist and the author of a book on Beethoven. Indeed, it was her love for Beethoven's music that led her to meet Rolland. This meeting is significant because it marked a new epoch— the portal to the Mira era. In Rolland's description of Gandhi, she found an immediate connection, which was more than mere fascination. The later decades spent in India perhaps reflect her profound interest and sincerity. It may not be wrong to say that her interest in Beethoven's music and Gandhiji's ideals demonstrate her inclination towards abstract ideas and spirituality, something beyond the material.

If one is to impose a time frame, it can be seen that Slade began the process of becoming Mira almost immediately after she heard about Gandhi. We see how Madeleine started to become Mira even before meeting Gandhi in person. We also begin to see her strength of character; she was so determined to follow her new path that, prior to any contact with Gandhi, she trained herself in the rules of his ashram for a year. Her lifestyle changed significantly as she began to read the *Gita* and dressed in distinctly unfashionable garments. Indeed, her clothes were specially tailored for the discipline she was embracing. Her independence and determination in choosing a path that she felt was right speaks clearly of her firmness of purpose. To quote Kumar,

She went out of her way to forget her past. She read the *Bhagavad Gita* before she arrived in India and also burnt her dresses from Paris, aboard her ship. Her London dressmaker designed a shapeless *khadi* gown for her. She thus disowned her upper-class upbringing and forsook her family. Her family, friends and acquaintances took pity on her... (2008: 162).

Two aspects stand out in Slade's transformation. The first is the independence she shows by choosing her own path. This was done not under pressure from anyone else; rather, it was an act of free will. The second aspect I wish to highlight is how she chooses to become Mira— a person who is dependent on the idea of Gandhi. The transition and the transformation show the changes that took place when this free and independent individual surrendered herself to the idea of Gandhi even before meeting him. Thus, we can observe the trajectory of an independent person becoming a follower. Slade gave up her comfort and independence to live the life she foresaw with Gandhi. Despite this symbolic act of submission, we shall see later that her persistence and vigour remained with her against all odds, even in her phase as Mira.

As Slade begins to move towards India, we can look into the hierarchy that existed right from the beginning of her relationship with Gandhi. The nature of the hierarchy was clear from the correspondence. Her earliest letter to Gandhi, she did not address him as an equal. Rather, he was addressed as 'Dear Master'. She wrote to him,

Dear Master, Master may I come? Please do not think of troubling to reply to this letter yourself, but perhaps you could send me a word of answer through someone else.
(2015:12)

From this mode of address, we see that Slade had placed Gandhi on a pedestal. Her approach is much more than a polite mode of address and a request; in-between the lines is the

acknowledgement of hierarchy. The relationship was founded on Gandhi's ideals, and the hierarchical form that it took continued throughout. To talk about the foundation, let me quote from the letter. She wrote to him,

May I come to your ashram to study spinning and weaving, to learn to live your ideals and principles in daily life, and indeed to learn in what way I may hope to serve you in the future? In order to become a fit servant of your cause, I feel the absolute necessity of that training, and I will do my very best to be a not too unworthy pupil if you will accept me!
(2015:12)

She was committed to Gandhi through service. The enthusiasm and dedication were not focused on Gandhi but the abstract principles by which he lived. This makes her journey distinctive. It was not Gandhi the person she decided to follow, but Gandhi's ideals, his bigger cause. Of course, it is not easy to make a clear demarcation between a person and his ideals; and Slade, as we shall see later, could not always distinguish between the two. Nonetheless, the genesis of their relationship shows that it was Gandhi's ideals and principles that made her gravitate towards him. Furthermore, in this journey, Slade chose to make Gandhi her master. Without the ideals, one cannot explain the huge commitment she made. It was not the dream of a comfortable life or some idea of a soul mate that drew her. Gandhi also did not endorse the idea of an enlightened or comfortable life when he permitted her to take the big leap from Europe. On the contrary, he emphasised the practical and physical challenges of the ashram. He wrote,

You are welcome whenever you choose to come ... Only please remember that the life at the ashram is not all rosy. It is strenuous. Bodily labor is given by every inmate. The climate of this country is also not a small consideration. I mention these things not to frighten you but merely to warn you. (2015:12)

As one reads the correspondence, we see that Gandhi was serious about his warning and the difficult life she would have to lead. However, she managed to merge into the life of the ashram, where the daily comforts of Western homes were not accessible. It is interesting to see how a person from the other side of the world could be drawn to Indian spirituality and lifestyle and, moreover, try to imbibe it. Indeed, the hierarchical relationship between the colonised and the coloniser were reversed in instances such as this. She lived in India for thirty-four years and, if time can be a measure of sincerity, perhaps this shows that she was sincere about the decision she made. Her way towards her master started on 7th November 1925, shortly before her 33rd birthday. The comfortable life she had lived became a distant memory.

2. Mira

With Slade's arrival in India, we see the relationship with Gandhi unfolding and the beginning of her life as Mirabehn, a name given by the one she called her master. While most people spend the prime of their lives bringing up children and taking care of family, she chose to live for a cause, living up to the name Mirabehn. To understand how she began her life as Mira, let us look into the dynamics of her relationship with Gandhi.

2.1. The path of proximity

She came to India for a cause and to learn from Gandhi. It is interesting to see that Gandhi started to address her as 'Chi Mira' in the letters, meaning 'daughter'. Indeed, on her arrival to India, 'He held her by her hands and proclaimed: "You shall be my daughter"' (2008:162). Thus, he made a public declaration that she was an adopted daughter. The letters had the relational

quotient of a parent and a child or a teacher and a pupil. The letters were not kept private. He wrote a letter on 24th January 1927 stating, 'You should perhaps know that I send most of the letters to the ashram to be read to the members' (2015:42). The openness of their relationship can thus be inferred through this. He was addressed as 'Bapu', and she was 'Chi Mira'.

While we cannot deny that Gandhi's ideals, in other words, his spirituality, were the foundation of this relationship, we see a certain dynamic between them reaching a point of difficulty time and again. As early as 4th December 1925, a few months after her arrival in India, Gandhi made a point to her in a letter about distance. He wrote, 'This three days' separation is good discipline' (2015:18). Perhaps, Gandhi knew the course their relationship was going to take, or perhaps it was an agenda he was determined to pursue. In the letters, he often talked to her about separation. In a letter dated 15th May 1926, he writes, 'the few days' separation is a preparation for the longer that death brings... Death brings us nearer' (2015:20). Indeed, forms of exhortation on distance are seen throughout the years of correspondence. Perhaps, Gandhi wanted the relationship to be as spiritual as possible, as idealistic as it could get. The letters to Mirabehn addressing detachment are examples. He would write to her, 'You must not cling to me as in this body, the spirit without the body is ever with you' (2015:42).

The concern about distance was a major difference between them. She constantly nagged him about it, and Gandhi could not help but brutally criticise her desire for physical proximity. Many letters show this aspect of their relationship. As Kumar notes, 'Mirabehn was a determined daughter who wanted to possess him, own him, cuddle him like a child and worship him as the Holy Father' (2008:162). For example, in a letter written on 24th June 1929, Gandhi stated that her desire to be near him was idolatry (2015:233). Gandhi was aware that he was harsh towards

her, and one can imagine that he felt a sense of guilt. For instance, in a letter written on 20th November 1929, he expressed a sense of remorse about his anger: 'Only I wish I did not lose temper. But such is my brutality towards those I love the most... May God remove what I think is your *moha* [ignorant attachment], or may He open the eyes of my understanding and let me see the error' (2015:234). Here we see two aspects. One is his sense of guilt, and the other is Slade's attachment to the physical Gandhi, which he despised. The anomaly is that Gandhi did not chase her away from his life. It appears that he did not want her to disappear completely, nor did he want her to be close to him. The letters give the reader the impression that Gandhi, although physically detached, was emotionally attached to her. In some letters, he mentions that he enjoys writing to her. For instance, in a letter written on 9th December 1926, he wrote, 'Your two letters came.... I am glad you wrote so fully. Please continue the habit. I miss you in my walks here' (2015:27). Such letters show that Gandhi was affectionate towards her. Perhaps, the letters expressing such affection gave Mira the courage to lay her heart bare before him. He also wrote in a letter dated 4th April 1927, 'I cannot deny myself the joy of writing to you every Monday' (2015:44). Then on 25th April 1927, he wrote to her, '. . . if the separation becomes unbearable, you must come without waiting for an answer' (2015:47). The letter on this date shows that Mira was not satisfied with the distance in their relationship.

Thus, there were conflicts in the expectations each had from the relationship. As mentioned in the earlier section, one can see that Mira's enthusiasm and dedication were focused on a bigger cause rather than on Gandhi as a person. But when we look at the journey, this focus seems to change. Perhaps, Mira wanted to be more than his student or just another acquaintance. Perhaps for Mira, the means and the end came together in the same person, namely, Gandhi. She was

able to leave her family across the oceans, yet the distance between her and Gandhi was something she could not accept. She called him 'Bapu', and perhaps, Bapu meant everything to her. He was not just a father figure, but much more. This is substantiated in a letter which said, 'I could not, even if I tried, be anything else but what I am before you & that is why, however ashamed I am of my weakness, I have to lay my heart bare [sic] before my Bapu...*my Babu* –in whom I live, & in whom I have that utter confidence that only boundless love can inspire--And it is Bapu alone who can make me what I should be' (2015:56). This speaks volumes, for one can see how large a place in her heart she had for one person, Gandhi. She wrote several such letters within a few months. For instance, on 18th November 1928, she wrote, 'If I can be near my Bapu for a while... it will mean all the world to me' (2015:157). Then, on 14th January 1929, she pleaded again, saying, 'Bapu dearest– I have reasoned and argued with myself – but what can I do, there comes a time when love will have its way, & refuses absolutely to bend on philosophy' (2015:173). There are many instances in the correspondence showing that the relationship was not smooth sailing. The emotional weight in her letters is heavy, and one can detect a tinge of sadness within them.

Nevertheless, they cared for each other, whether as a father and daughter or as a teacher and student. There was a mutual concern, and, in this period, they were never absent from each other's lives. In the above-quoted lines from Mira, we can read the love she had for Gandhi. Moreover, I believe that Gandhi loved the company of her letters, for if he did not, he would have been colder towards her. Instead, we see letters of affection, care, teachings, arguments, and details of work. From the letters, one cannot say that the relationship was merely one-sided.

2.2. Parent, teacher, confidante

The correspondence between Gandhi and Mira show that she was not completely settled in one place. No one ashram was her permanent home. In the early years of her stay in India, she had to study Hindi, and for that purpose, she lived in the Bhagad Bhagti ashram. There, she encountered ashramite lifestyles that were immodest in her eyes and contrary to her principles. To quote Kumar, 'Very soon she realised that the ashram was neither a monastery nor a haven of peace' (2008:163). She was displeased and, as she always did, poured her heart out to Gandhi. Gandhi comforted her and encouraged her to bear the discomforts because it was not her duty to reform the ashram; rather, her duty was to learn the language. However, in a letter dated May 27th, 1992, she narrates an incident in which she and other inmates had been teased. The letter clearly talks about the disrespectful actions of men who were under the influence of bhang. Here, on this occasion, Gandhi's response was most touching. He wrote to her, 'Whereas in a previous letter I told you that it was no business of yours to rid the ashram of the bhang habit, now in view of the developments described by you, it becomes your duty either to end the bhang or to end your presence there ...' (2015:64). He also added, 'You may not co-operate with the ashram even to gain a kingdom or even if it was the place where you could finish your Hindi course ...' (2015:64). Gandhi could sense the danger she faced in the ashram, and he did what he could in his power to take her away from that situation. In an instance such as this, one can sense that he felt responsible for her.

She would pour out her opinions and, in their discussions, Gandhi variously took the roles of a teacher, a confidant, or a parent. For instance, even where their opinions differed, for example, on issues related to Udyog Mandir, Krishna Das, Brahmacharya, and the ashram, the three

relationship quotients continued to be exhibited. He advised Mirabehn to be less critical towards others. On one such occasion, we see him telling her,

...examine yourself critically and see whether you may not be possibly wrong, and, so long as there is a possibility of your being wrong, the golden rule is to give that person the benefit of doubt; because that is exactly how we would like others to deal with us. We would not like the world to judge us merely on suspicion. (2015:188).

Mira was the student; he was the teacher. He found it necessary to instruct her even in the smallest things, such as spelling. Gandhi seemed to take it upon his shoulders to try to educate her in all ways possible. His letters consisted of teachings and scolding's, as well as details ranging from the smallest daily routines to the most spiritual aspects. It is interesting to see that, throughout the letters, Gandhi acted like a parent in cautioning her about health and hygiene. Madhu Kishwar writes, 'Gandhi took deep personal interest not only in the political development of all those who came in close contact with him but also in the most intimate, private details of their life in the same way that a mother does (2006:305). In fact, he would nurse sick people even during the worst political turmoil (2006:305). Most men would probably be uncomfortable cautioning a woman in this manner. But Gandhi was different; he was the parent, the teacher, and the confidante. Substantiating this, she wrote on 27th October 1928, '...my beloved Bapu knows everything that is in my heart– he knows even better than I know myself ...' (2015:133). Such reverence for Gandhi shows the level of esteem in which Mira held him.

2.3. Involvement in Gandhi's projects

Spinning was important to Gandhi. It represented emancipation from colonial power. It also was an attempt to put women at 'an important social base' where they could be a part of the cause (2006:282). In relation to this, Kishwar notes,

In a way abstract political ideas, such as struggle against colonial rule assumed concrete form of the ordinary people. This was a very remarkable way of reaching out to women and bridging the gap between their private lives and the economic-political life of the country (2006:283).

As early as 1928, one can read from the letters that she took an active part in the *Khadi* movement, both as a participant and teacher. If *Khadi* was a way of empowering women, then Gandhi was empowering Mirabehn in this way. She would contribute ideas on improving carding techniques and regularly gave intricate details of the work to Gandhi, which may have been helpful for him. He did not passively listen to her ideas but trusted her abilities. For instance, he wrote to her, 'I want your informed opinion on the soft spindles and a description of your improvements on the bow...' (2015:211). With trust also comes responsibilities, and needless to say, Mirabehn became a trusted worker in his movements.

It can be deduced in a subtle yet undeniable way that Mirabehn was not just a spiritual disciple but had become a missionary for Gandhi's cause, thus fulfilling the aspiration she had expressed in one of her first letters. She was also allowed to make decisions on her own in specific issues involving the ashram. For instance, we find that a certain worker named Prabhudas wanted to plunge into Brahmacharya. Gandhi gave her the authority to guide him in his endeavour. Thus, from being a disciple, she moved on to the role of a teacher. As stated in the earlier portion of this article, her vigour and character shone in times such as this.

Hope is always the push that keeps any relationship alive. Mira hoped that, although far away, Gandhi would write to her and believed that he wanted to know the details of her work. This effort and understanding probably helped them keep the relationship alive. Letters including requests from Gandhi such as, 'I want your informed opinion on the soft spindles and a description of your improvements on the bow...' (2015:211) probably made her feel valued and acknowledged.

It is important to note that Mirabehn was always supportive of Gandhi, and this is clear from her letters. For instance, on 18th March 1929, she writes, 'God's strength is with you, otherwise, you have long since been overcome. But it is not for us to abuse the miraculous endurance & I pray that more mercy may be shown in future programmes!' (2015:215). Let us also remember that Gandhi was in the thick of the fight for India's freedom, and in the hours of struggle, such words of encouragement could not have gone unappreciated.

We read in her letters how appreciative she was of village life. This must have pleased Gandhi, for the village was important to him too. She had loved nature as a child, and this romantic view of rural life remained with her. One cannot but admire how Mira described the scenes she saw to Gandhi in her correspondence. The descriptions had a poetic quality, and Gandhi must have felt great pleasure reading such beautifully detailed letters. Like Gandhi, she was critical of civilization and would connect the scenic beauty to God. Having written engagingly of the scenery she saw at Muzaffarpur on the 11th November 1928, she wrote, 'And I felt how Nature lives for His presence, while we with our civilization shut Him out from our lives & can only with difficulty find Him ...' (2015:149). They both agreed on the ills of modern civilization. Like Gandhi, she did

not favour Western education. She wrote to him, 'How ridiculous and stereotyped the present form of education makes people ...' (2015:130). The student and the teacher united in their love of nature.

2.4. Letters from prison

Gandhi was usually less detailed in his letters, but we see this changing in the letters written to her while he was in jail. Here, it should be kept in mind that she was one of many people with whom he kept up a correspondence. However, in a letter dated May 12, 1930, from jail, he said that she was the first person he was writing to. In the many letters from this period, we find topics such as work, health, criticisms, and spiritual teachings. In one such letter, he said, 'In my opinion...your chief trouble is mental.... This anxiety complex, you should try to throw off...' (2015:278). Then he went about taking examples from the Bible showing how God takes care of people even when they do not ask for it. He encouraged her not to worry but to work with a detached attitude. Then he wrote, 'You and I and us all have to make a conscious and deliberate effort to realise this blessed state. Or else our reading of the Gita is in vain ...' (2015:278). We see an effort made by Gandhi to make the ideas he found in the Bible and the Gita complement each other. In effect, he used these examples not only to reprimand Mira but also to ease her struggles.

Mira was also imprisoned for offering Satyagraha in the same year as Gandhi. By 1933, Mirabehn had been at the Sabarmati Central Prison for nearly eight months (2008:169). She continued writing letters to him during these years of political turmoil. Mira appears to have expressed her

sufferings to Gandhi, and his encouragements are clearly seen in his letters to her. For instance, in a letter dated 20th September 1932, he writes, 'You have chosen to enter the furnace. You must remain in it. My society is not easy. Drink then the poison to the last dregs...' (2015:322). We see that Gandhi does not tell her to give up but complete what she has begun despite all troubles. Let us recall that it was her decision to join Gandhi's cause.

2.5. Disagreements and disconnect

Mirabehn and Gandhi had disagreements on his experiments with Brahmacharya. Gandhi's letters show that she was not in favour of the experiment he had embarked on. She believed that men and women in the ashram should strictly maintain certain degrees of segregation. Contrary to her opinions, the ashramites 'slept, ate, and worked together ...' (2006: 311). The justification given by Gandhi for such experiments was to find 'newer and healthier ways of relating with the opposite sex and moving out of the framework of power relations based on sex' (2006:312). To Mirabehn's disapproval of this experiment, he replied, 'In your next letter, you must tell me in concrete terms what definite changes I should make so as to fit in with your idea' (2015:449).

The latter portion of the letter shows him defending himself by stating that the experiment has made his Brahmacharya 'firmer and more enlightened' (2015:449). Again, in a letter on 8th May, he tells her that she must continue to warn him when she thinks he is straying away. (2015:449) Thus, we see two sides of Gandhi, where on the one hand, he defends the experiments, and on the other, he keeps himself open to criticism. The catch is that he did not accept her warnings and ideas regarding the gender protocols in the ashram. In such issues, we see that Gandhi stood

his ground and did not accept her advice. His experiments with Manu in the final years perhaps show that he did not heed Mira's warnings. The disagreement between them on this issue became stronger over time.

With disagreement, there also was the dawn of a disconnect. During the time she lived in the Frontier Province, Gandhi lived in Segaoon. In a letter, Gandhi writes, 'I am prepared to risk your death there rather than that you should return to Segaoon to live ...' (2015:457). Thus, one can discern Gandhi's strong view that they should stay apart despite Madeleine's wish to be closer to him. The correspondence continued, and in a letter written after a year, he stated that he missed her. In this trajectory, we see a relationship where separation was the only way they could be in each other's lives. The years from 1935 to 1940 show an increasing distance between them. Around this time, Sushila Nayyar, a young trainee doctor, became his caregiver, a position that used to be Mirabehn's (2015:409). Perhaps, such changes created more distance between them. She continued to make efforts to be closer to Gandhi, but this was not reciprocated. To quote Tridip, 'She walked over to him but was barred from his presence with the words that the guards had orders to keep her away' (2015:408). This must have been very disheartening. We do not know what Gandhi intended by doing this, but we can infer that the dynamic was souring. There was both disagreement and a disconnect between them.

There are only a few letters between 1940 and 1944. By this time, Mira had found Prithvi Singh, a nationalist revolutionary to whom she could open her heart and whom she even intended to marry. Eventually, this relationship did not work out. However, the point to note is perhaps that, with time, Mirabehn was learning to live without Gandhi. During this period, her correspondence with him became less frequent. In a letter dated 18th May 1940, we find Gandhi saying, 'I was

wondering why I had not heard from you for so long. Anything beyond a week would be too long for me. Though your descriptive letters are welcome... a p.c. when you have no time would be enough...' (2015:475). In the previous section, I have pointed out how Gandhi encouraged distance between them, as in the case of Segaon, even exhorting her to be a detached person. Perhaps Mira was, at least for a time, becoming the person Gandhi asked of her. But ironically, we see him asking her to write to him.

The point in their relationship where Gandhi was perhaps the coldest was when Mira was ready to start her new ashram. Mirabehn had had the habit of handing over whatever money she received during her stay in India to Gandhi. As she was about to establish an ashram of her own and needed finance for this project, she asked for her money back from Gandhi. This talk about money did not go too well. Perhaps there were misunderstandings. He wrote to her, 'It hurt me yesterday when Ammajan told me that you had doubt about my willingness to part with the money you gave me from time to time...' (2015:497). He, who previously had always addressed her as 'Chi Mira', suddenly started addressing her in the most formal ways as 'My Dear Madeleine' (2015:496) and 'Dear Miss Mira'. This signified a new direction, and one can only guess how hurt she must have been by this shift in the form of address. She, on the other hand, despite all disagreements, addressed him as 'Beloved Bapu'. At first, he could not approve of the plan to build the ashram. As we read in Gandhi's letters and Mira's replies, Gandhi was, as she says, indeed trying to sabotage her. In her words, 'To give me my money and freedom with one hand and to say that as soon as I begin to use them, you will publicly disapprove, is to sabotage anything I may try to do ...' (2015:498). In this letter dated 12th June 1944, we see a ferocious side of Madeleine as she boldly points out what she thinks is wrong, and we also get a glimpse of the

autonomous pre-Mira. After all the arguments, Gandhi decided to give her what was hers. It is interesting to note that Gandhi did not show any anger in the letters that followed. We do not have all the letters they wrote to each other, but it appears that the issue was no longer disputed. In one of the final letters, we see Gandhi criticising her. He calls her a 'gipsy' (2015:528) and says that it was a 'defect' (2015:528) in her. However, it was Gandhi who sent her off to various destinations to be with people working for the same cause. To quote Girija Kumar,

By definition, honeymoon does not last long, Gandhiji had a fill of her too soon. She was sent out of the Sabarmati ashram to Kanya Gurukul (Daryaganj), New Delhi, and subsequently to Bhagira bhakti Ashram, Poona. Then onwards, she did not return to the ashram except for her brief visits. Subsequently, Gandhiji managed to keep her off his track by sending her in exile to distant places for establishing and maintaining new ashrams. She was back with him from time to time, but never for too long ... (2008:163).

The point is, while he called her a 'gipsy', he was responsible for making her one.

3. Post Mira

Mira was with Gandhi for three months before he was assassinated. Afterwards, she lived in the hills for eleven more years before finally leaving India. Eleven years is a long time, and perhaps this is convincing evidence that she was sincere about the principles she had embraced. If we look at her life, we get a sense that there were more highs than lows. Her final days in India were not the best; she was dissatisfied with people and began questioning her identity (2015:507).

Slade had great expectations when she came to India; she also had emotional and spiritual needs and found that these could only be met by Gandhi. In a letter, we find her saying, 'I have nobody

else in the world but you.' This statement is most touching, for we see that she became dependent on Gandhi. However, we have observed that their relationship, like most, was not problem-free. The letters illuminate a complicated connection between two people and give us a closer view of Gandhi as a person. We see his strengths and his flaws, his insecurities, and his struggle to be blameless. Slade, as Mira, was a strong person and was not afraid to express what she felt. We see how she stuck to her commitment to Gandhi despite the many lows. She seemed to have persistent faith in Gandhi's goodness, despite the disagreements. With time, her pilgrimage came to an end, and she confessed that Gandhi and India did not interest her anymore (2008:188). In this pilgrimage, we see a beginning with great expectations, followed by an eventful and draining journey. Slade left India in 1959 after serving her master for many years and spent the rest of her life in the pursuit of classical music. She lived in Vienna and died in 1982. Slade is known today as one of Gandhi's closest associates and someone whose contributions to India cannot be forgotten. She was awarded the second-highest civilian award in 1981, the Padma Vibhushan, by the Republic of India for her social work. Madeleine, the young girl who loved nature, found her calling in India as Mirabehn and finally left after completing her pilgrimage.

This paper has thus followed Slade's journey, a journey that was largely possible because of British colonialism. She came for spirituality, and the locus of that spirituality was Gandhi. Socio-political narratives are a major theme of colonialism. However, some experiences are personal, and these may be overlooked when larger social and political problems dominate the scene. At the very least, we should recognise people's struggles as they navigate cultural differences and appreciate the effect of the journey on their personal lives. The paper has therefore attempted

to investigate these aspects. Slade came to India because of the path created by colonialism. She left India with a story— her story with and without Gandhi. Her journey was sincere and passionate. Her dedication and determination drove her as she lived as Mirabehn, and through this, we see her strength.

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