Twitter Thread by Anand Ranganathan



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Travelling during Noakhali riots, Manu told Gandhi she had mislaid his pumice stone. Incensed, he ordered her to revisit their last stop. The terrified Manu, just 16, walked 30 miles. Gandhi later told her: Had a rioter assaulted & killed you my heart would have danced with joy.

Here is Rajmohan Gandhi describing the grisly incident though I had read it first in Kriplani's biography of Gandhi. It totally creeped me out then, as it does even now.

Manu was only 16. Gandhi made her walk alone through dense jungle and rioting villages. For his pumice stone.

A harder lesson had been given a few days earlier when Manu left behind Gandhi's scrubbing stone – given to him by Mira – in the village of Bhatialpur. Discovering the loss later in the day (15 Jan.) in Narayanpur, Gandhi asked Manu to walk back alone to Bhatialpur and retrieve the pumice stone. Though an old woman had thrown the stone away, Manu located it and hurried back.

Saying, 'Take your stone,' she threw the object before Gandhi, who laughed and said that Manu had passed a test. He added:

> If scoundrels had seized and killed you I would have danced with joy, but I would not have liked it a bit if you had run back out of fear … I said to myself, 'This girl sings '*Ekla Chalo Re*' with enthusiasm but has she digested the message?' … You can see how hard I can be … I also realized it.[40]