
MAHATMA GANDHI- JOURNEY AS A JOURNALIST IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT OF INDIA

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Abstract: Gandhi was not only a freedom fighter or a mass leader but he was a journalist too. He realised that "Pen is mightier than Sword" and so he took up the cause of the people and started publishing the newspapers with his whole hearted dedication. It is unwise to compare Gandhi as the editor of the modern days because he had the noble objective of fighting against apartheid oppression and imperialism.

Mahatma Gandhiji is familiar to an ideal of the political movement of South Africa and this country. But he cannot be recognised considerably as a Journalist. The main objective of his publishing of journals is to propagate and expand the mass-movement.

Gandhi as an editor and also as a journalist emphasized on the importance of the use of language. Be it publishing multilingual newspapers or using plain and simple language -- all were part of Gandhi's communication strategy.

Gandhi believed that it is sincerity sympathy and charity that touch the heart more than anything else. Gandhi as a development journalist showed an example to the present day media how to practice ethic based and development journalism.

Gandhi's views was that the newspapers were meant for public service, they should not compromise on their role in society, and the concept of profits should be regulated to the background advertisements from the businessman, the newspaper tend to be influenced and they yield to the process of those advertisers. Gandhi continued to publish his newspapers to serve the people without compromising on providing free and fair journalism.

Introduction: Gandhi was not only a freedom fighter or a mass leader but he was a journalist too. He realised that "Pen is mightier than Sword" and so he took up the cause of the people and started publishing the newspapers with his whole hearted dedication. It is unwise to compare Gandhi as the editor of the modern days because he had the noble objective of fighting against apartheid oppression and imperialism. Starting in South Africa and then coming to India Gandhi understood that it is through the newspapers a steady public opinion could be formed and he gave his effort to bring out four journals consecutively. The analyses of Gandhi's newspapers show that his journals were more of the views papers and with his genius touch he had shown an excellence in the field of journalism too.

The story of miracle is also the story of Gandhiji's life and his journalistic activities for him, more than any other individual was the architect as well as engineer of this historic phenomenon. It is not for nothing his grateful countrymen, have called him the Father of the Nation.

Journey As A Journalist: Mahatma Gandhiji is familiar to an ideal of the political movement of South Africa and this country. But he cannot be recognised considerably as a Journalist. The main objective of his publishing of journals is to propagate and expand the mass-movement. He published Indian Opinion in order to make the people aware of his political outlook during the movement in South Africa. Likewise, Gandhi published Young Indian to enrich the people with his opinion as he entered the political movement of this country.

There are certain goals of publishing the newspaper, Navajiban and Harijan to realise the thought and consciousness of public and to express it in language, to create peaceful emotion among the public and to bring to the fore front of all the common faults in a dauntless manner. This view of Gandhiji regarding the objective and ideology of newspaper was published in the journal 'Young India' on 2nd July, 1919.

Annie Besant said, "the language of Gandhiji's journal is much powerful than that of the others. This helps public mind flaring up". The Journal ceased to be published in 1922. Coming out of the prison in 1924, Gandhiji again took the responsibility of publishing that journal. In An article in the revived Journal Gandhiji said, "I Live for India's freedom and would die for it". In Young India, was published the differences of opinion between Rabindranath and Gandhi regarding 'Charka'.

Gandhi arrived in India on January 9, 1913. Journalism did not establish as a profession. Advertisement was not playing that important part as of today. Gandhiji was not only connected with Indian opinion, he started contributing articles to other newspapers. In an article to Gujarati daily, "Hindustan" his views on the newspaper is noteworthy.

Under the editorship of Gandhi an unregistered newspaper called the "Satyagrahi" was published from April 7, 1919 protesting against the Rowlett Bill. Subsequently, a band of young Gujarat is started an English Weekly, Young India. The editorship of the Young India was offered to Gandhi, which he gladly accepted. The Gujarati monthly the "Navajivan", under the same management, was also placed at his disposal. The Navajivan first appeared on October 7, 1919. The Young India was published after a day of the Navajivan.

The next paper Gandhi associated was "Harijan". The paper Harijan first appeared on February 11, 1933. Shri R. V. Shastry was editor. Explaining the term "Harijan", Gandhi wrote, "It is not a name of my own coining. Some years ago, several "untouchable" correspondents complained that I used the word "asprishya" in the pages of the Navajivan. "Asprishya" means literary untouchables. I then invited them to suggest a better name and one of the untouchable correspondents suggested the adoption of the name "Harijan", on the strength of its having been used by the first poet saint of Gujarat."

Language: Gandhi as an editor and also as a journalist emphasized on the importance of the use of language. Be it publishing multilingual newspapers or using plain and simple language -- all were part of Gandhi's communication strategy. He always wanted the language of writing to be clear, simple and effective to move the readers. Tushar Arun Gandhi (2018) writes that Gandhi did not use two different languages while communicating with the elites of the courtroom and talking to the common people in a mass rally. "When he spoke to the farmer of Champaran he used the same language and the farmers of Champaran understood him perfectly. They did not need to have an interpreter to explain what Gandhi spoke to them. And also all the very intelligent, very sophisticated, very erudite western educated elite in Mumbai, when he spoke to them, easily understood the same language," he writes.

Gandhi's Practice of Journalistic Ethics: Gandhi believed that it is sincerity sympathy and charity that touch the heart more than anything else. Gandhi as a development journalist showed an example to the present day media how to practice ethic based and development journalism. But where is the place for ethics in the globalized market place and corporatization of media houses, ownership of the media house by the politicians, paid news and propaganda have been the real threat for ethical journalism.

Thus, Gandhi, while favoring press freedom, advised the press to observe self- restraint. Looking at the need of the hour, rural development was given importance in the Gandhian journalism, as he was keen on rural development which would play a key role in national development. Gandhi focused on development journalism and consistently wrote on the subjects that were beneficial for the masses.

The Gandhian Journalism was fully in conformity with his ideology of nonviolence that it did not provide for any content which would cause fear ever in the thought of the reader. The content was

selectively so worded that it would put the people on alert and prepare them to face a challenge, provoke for a protest to oppose an unlawful act of the state, but the content was harmless so far as the prestige of the officer was concerned, while at the same time the opinion and the resolve of the people was clearly communicated to the rulers.

In those difficult days with shattered economy and scarce resources, when the English and vernacular press could be managed without any advertisement, it would not be difficult that the Press and Media today can find any difficulty in running their business of journalism with minimum advertisements and contribute to the need of creating awareness and build public opinion against the wrong and energize the mass with ethical values and support the cause of building a civil society where concepts of Non-Violence and Rule of Law will prevail.

Conclusion: Gandhi's views was that the newspapers were meant for public service, they should not compromise on their role in society, and the concept of profits should be regulated to the background advertisements from the businessman, the newspaper tend to be influenced and they yield to the process of those advertisers. Often, adverse news against advertisers is suppressed in support of the advertisers. Being in the service of people, the newspaper cannot 'soil' their pages with such advertisements. Hence, it would be worthwhile to revisit Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy and principle of journalism and his contribution as a journalist.

The journalistic ethics set by persons like Gandhi, who had written with the sole purpose to create public opinion and to bring awareness among the huge mass of illiterate natives of the British India are seen to be followed more in breach today in the background of the liberalized economy which is guided by the market forces rather than the social and national interests. It might be unfair if the Press and the Media are restricted to follow all the parameters and standards of journalism as set by Gandhi, but nevertheless the manner in which Media is allowing itself to be so widely open that it forgets that it ought to be only transparent and not irresponsible by being torn in its approach and contents. Hence, the study of Gandhi's approach and ethical practice to journalism can show the way for mass oriented and responsible practice of journalism.

It is also important to note that Gandhi faced many problems and challenges while running the newspapers but in spite of various problems like financial, administrative pressure, Gandhi continued to publish his newspapers to serve the people without compromising on providing free and fair journalism.

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