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Gandhi's Ethics in Journalism

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Media as a Fourth Estate of Democracy has gone through great changes in terms of approach, style and journalistic ethics. This paper will throw light on Gandhi's logical thinking, ideal character and potential to rouse emotions among the masses. The contemporary media is not limited to print journalism rather it has expanded in different forms such as broadcast, telecast and digital media. This paper will explore and highlight the perspectives of Gandhi's ethical journalism as he was an accomplished journalist. It will also describe the four kinds of Gandhian journalism such as Gandhi's Development Journalism, Gandhi's Peace Journalism, Gandhi's Public Journalism and Gandhi's Ethics in Journalism. The paper will describe the Mahatma Gandhi's art of communication with Aristotle's three variables of communication. The paper will also explore the relevance of his concepts of journalism in contemporary era. It will conclude by illustrating the relevance of Gandhi's persuasive communication and objectives of journalism for the development of society and nation building. The study has a philosophical and uses secondary sources of information to comprehend the ethical role of journalism in commercialization of media.

Keywords: *Communication, Ethics, Gandhi, Journalism, Media*

Introduction

“Be the Change You Wish to See in the World”- Mahatma Gandhi

The journey from Mohan to Mahatma is inspiration to humankind. He was a social innovator and the world recognizes his contribution for human development. It has been more than seven decades since Mahatma Gandhi departed but his teaching is still alive and practised in the country and across the globe.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) also known as Mahatma was an embodiment of truth and non-violence and an extraordinary man who became inspiration for humankind. He was great messenger of peace and social reformer. He was voracious person whose mission was to stand for truth and non-violence. He fought for minority rights in South Africa. He was wise thinker, talented craftsman, skillful artist and determined scientist. All these were possible because he realized that communication is the most important and effective medium to shape and mould the opinion. He garnered his own art of communication to motivate and influence the people. He always prayed, meditates, vow of silence, travelled, communicated and developed conscience everywhere the conscience of his fellow people.

Gandhi was a skillful, consummate and accomplished communication practitioner, scholar and strategist. In Mahatma's own word “My life is my message”, one can conceptualized communication praxis which was important and fundamental part of his life. His strong communication skills and strategies mobilized nation for social movement and gain independence from British colonialism.

His message of ahimsa (non-violence) which is acts of self-suffering which is armed with dayabal (the force of compassion love) mobilized millions of people for social movement. He also insisted on Satyagraha ‘truth’ in action, thought and doctrine.

Mahatma Gandhi's art of communication with Aristotle's three variables of communication:

The art of communication of Gandhi was very significant to the Aristotle's Rhetorica. Aristotle strongly believed that the communicator should persuade or motivate his audience or people through good communication. He defines rhetoric as the art or skill to persuade or mould the audience opinions or thoughts. The three variables or persuasive appeals of Rhetoric are Logos, Ethos and Pathos. According to him, the three major aspects to persuade the audience for desirable act are the strong and effective character of the communicator, his logical sense and his potential to incite emotions and feelings in the receivers. Aristotle had a notion that with the right ratio or proper application of these three appeals, a communicator can intensify and convert his speech into powerful missile.

The three intrinsic parts of Aristotle's Rhetoric are Logos, Ethos and Pathos. The proper and genuine ratio of these three variables is the success of a speech. Logos is the logic and reason in the content or message of the communicator. Ethos is the credibility or reliability of the speaker or communicator. Pathos is also known as pathetic appeal which arouses a sense of emotions in the audience by communicator.

According to the Aristotle model of communication, an effective and good communicator should have sense of logic. Gandhi strongly believed that one should understand popular opinion and give expression and which he practised in his speeches and even newspapers. He adopted *Satyagraha*, a passive and non-violent resistance and *Rama Rajya*, which means equality and freedom from exploitation to attain freedom from British rule.

Aristotle strongly believed that a good and efficient communicator should arouse sentiments and emotions in the audience. While explaining the objectives of journalism, Gandhi said that arousing sentiments and emotions among the people which helps in exposing shortcomings. His journalistic writing, articles and speeches aroused emotions and sentiments to fight against British rule and colonialism.

Gandhi and Journalism

“As for giving ideas, I have originality. But writing is a bi-product; I write to propagate my ideas. Journalism is not my profession”- Gandhi in Harijan, 18 August, 1946

Mahatma Gandhi was a great communicator, social reformer and national leader. He realized and recognized that communication plays a very important and crucial role in shaping the opinion of the people and supports in mobilization. When he went to England at the age of 19, he started reading newspaper regularly. He wrote several articles on Vegetarian Indian food, festivals, cultural and religious occasion for English weekly called The Vegetarian at the age of 21. He took journalism not for creating impression but serving truth and educating people which was useful and beneficial for the country.

Indian Opinion

Mahatma Gandhi with his two associates Madanjit Vyavaharik and Manshuklal Hiralal Nazar launched a weekly *Indian Opinion* in four languages such as English, Hindi, Gujarati and Tamil in 1903 in South Africa. The objective and intention of the journal was to portray the condition of Indians in South Africa. The prime motive of the journal was to protect the interest of Indians in South Africa. It also highlighted the discriminatory laws and problems of Indian. It covered all aspects such as moral, social and intellectual. It also covered information and news happening in India. The journal didn't have any commercial leanings, so two associates left the journal and Gandhi took over it in 1904.

“Freedom of the press is a precious privilege that no country can forgo”- Gandhi

Satyagraha

After returning from South Africa, Gandhi started weekly 'Satyagraha' to protest against the discriminatory laws of the British colonialism in 1919. The weekly was unregistered publication and it was considered as criminal offence. During that time Non-Cooperation movement was everywhere and situation was out of control in the country. Gandhi was cautioning the people about the significance of 'hartal'. But after

Jailianwalla Bagh massacre, Satyagraha weekly was called off but Gandhi didn't stop, he started awakening and educating people through leaflets.

Young India

An English Weekly namely 'Young India' started by group of young and vibrant Gujarati. The editorship of the weekly was offered to Gandhi and he accepted. Young India was transferred from Bombay to Ahmadabad. Gandhi became editor of Young India and Navjivan in 1919 and Mahadev Desai and Shankarlal was printer and publisher for the same.

Gandhi turned Navjivan and Young India in to newspaper as he started writing and expressing his views, thoughts and opinion freely. In the first issue of 'Young India' he expressed in the editorial as *"They enabled me freely to ventilate my views and to put heart into the people"*. His views were soft and moderate towards British rule, when he was editor of Indian Opinion but there was tremendous change when he shouldered Young India. He expressed his views and opinion on all subjects. The objectives of the weekly were to understand the feeling of the people and express accordingly, to arouse sentiments and emotions among the people and last to expose fearlessly the defects of British rule.

The publication enjoyed and covered wide circulation. The publication doesn't have advertisements. Gandhi's approach towards journalism was free from ambition as it was not source to earn his livelihood. He never considered it as vocation to gain profit but to serve the society at large. He expressed his views in 'Young India' on 2nd July, 1925 *"I have taken up journalism not for its sake but merely as an aid to what I have conceived to be my mission in life. My mission is to teach by example and present under severe restraint the use of the matchless weapon of satyagraha which is direct corollary of non-violence"*.

Navjivan

Navjivan a Gujarati monthly started on October 7, 1919 under the guidance and leadership of Gandhi. After a day of publication of *Navjivan*, *Young India* was published. *Navjivan* has 12000 subscribers. Regional journalism started gaining importance and respect as Gandhi edited the paper in Gujarati. The publication not only covered town but it has also reached to interior parts of the country. The publication house assigned reporters to covers news and information from various and distant parts of the country. Through this publication, the major issues and defects of the British rule was unveiled. He united the people of the country to fight with satya and ahimsa to gain independence from them. It also expressed concern about the social evils prevailing in the society. On 11 March, 1922, Gandhi was sent to jail for six years for rebellious articles like ‘ Shaking the move’, ‘the puzzle and its solution’ and ‘Tampering with Loyalty’. His arrest badly affected the circulation of the *Navjivan* and the *Young India*. It plunged from 21, 500 to 3,000. He spent reading, quality books, manuscripts and epics in jail.

Harijan

During his stay in prison, he started *Harijan Sevak Sangh*. On February 11, 1933, he started an English weekly called *Harijan* on the request of the *Sangh*. Sri R V Sastry was editor and it was published under the patronage and auspices of the *Servant of Untouchable Society*. Simultaneously, he started *Harijanbandhu* and *Harijansevak* in Gujarati and Hindi editions.

His goal was to ware and awaken the masses and bring change in the society. The top priority of him was to bring social reform. His mission and purpose was to cover all aspects of life through writing. He wanted to educate and inform the people. His writing was to educate people about moral and ethical issues.

The *Harijan* concept was dedicated to untouchability. The prime and sole objective of *Harijan* was to serve the society for betterment. There was total devoid of political news in the weekly. There were several articles on developmental and progressive issues and topics such as agriculture, cleanliness in village areas, reconstruction and maintenance work in villages, health & sanitation, nutrition, waste management etc

The articles and news on the rural development programmes and initiatives of foreign countries were published to boost and motivate the people of the country. He promoted and uplifted the indigenous industries such as khadi weaving. He said that '*Harijan* is not a newspaper but it is a views paper representing those of one man' in the publication of September 24, 1938. After the arrest of Gandhi in 1942, the *Harijan* newspaper was shut down but after his released, he restarted the *Harijan* on February 10, 1946.

The four kinds of Gandhian journalism such as:

- **Gandhi's Development Journalism**

Development Journalism is the practice of disseminating the information for the acceleration of the development process for the betterment and progress of society and nation at large. It is an umbrella which covers all the socio-economic, cultural and scientific events. It critically analysis and examines the growth and development of any programmes and initiatives. It also highlights the relevance and impact of developmental programmes and initiatives.

Mahatma Gandhi was practicing the development journalism through his articles and writing in various publications even before the term, development journalism came into existence. Alan Chalkley coined this term Development Journalism in 1967.

Gandhi being a development journalist believed that newspaper plays a very crucial and pivotal role in educating the people about the development programmes and socio-economic, cultural and scientific issues. He set an exemplary example to the journalist, writers and practitioners to reform the society while practicing the development journalism. He wrote on contemporary and relevant issues and topics such as health and hygiene, Hindu-Muslim unity, abolition of untouchability, promoting indigenous industry, khadi promotion, village reconstruction, waste management, sanitation, food and nutrition etc. Through his articles on exposing and unearthing the social evils such as child marriage, casteism, restriction on widow remarriage, and gender inequality. He wrote series of articles in 1925 on *Young India* and *Harijan* for women upliftment and empowerment, health and hygiene, birth control etc. He educated rural people through his several articles published in *Harijan* on farming and instruction

related to it. He expressed through his feeling about the benefits of proper diet and nutrition for the masses. He wrote articles in Harijan on 15th February, 1935 titled ‘Milk and banana make a perfect meal’ and ‘Green leaves and their food value’.

Gandhi mentioned the concept of ideal village in India in the issue of weekly journal Harijan on 26th July, 1942. He believed that rural development is the most importance aspect and played a very key and important role in national building. He talked about the importance of education. He also dreamt about the availability of electricity in every village of the country.

- **Gandhi’s Peace Journalism**

Gandhi throughout his life practised peace and non-violence. He has been the epitome of peace, truth and non-violence. He symbolizes liberation, non-oppression and non-exploitation. He felt that Satya (Truth) and Ahimsa (Non-violence) was the core foundation of peace journalism. The ideology of peace journalism is to prevent war, riots and violence. Peace journalism has the responsibility to resolve the conflicts. It is defined as “a programme or frame of journalistic news coverage which contributes to the process of making and keeping respectively to the peaceful settlement of conflicts” (Hanitzch, 2004b: 482).

Gandhi was practicing and promoting peace journalism through articles in his publications such as Indian Opinion, Navjivan, Young India, and Satyagraha before the term was conceptualized. The term peace journalism was coined by Johan Vincent Galtung, a Norwegian sociologist and founder of the discipline of peace and conflict studies in 1970.

Gandhi practised truth and non-violence strategies to combat the issues like casteism and Hindu-Muslim. He wrote in his journal *Young India* on 11 August, 1920 about saying that the practised of non-violence is not for preachers, saints etc but it is for the common people. He said that the non-violence’s law is for human being and beast practised violence.

Advising the practice of non-violence with confidence Gandhi said: “I have been practicing with scientific precision non-violence and its possibilities for an unbroken period of over 50years. I have applied it in every walk of life, domestic, institutional, economic and political. I know of no

He mentioned about truth and non-violence in the article published in Harijan, 5th September, 1936 that non-violence should be practised equally by all irrespective of gender, age etc. He wrote that we should give equal love to whole mankind.

He believed that violence can't be resolved and stopped by violence. He quoted that 'An eye for an eye makes world blind'.

- **Gandhi's Public Journalism**

Gandhi expressed that the main objective of journalism was to serve the society. The role of newspaper was to educate, motivate and transform the individual and society as a whole for growth and development. “The true function of journalism is to educate the public mind, not to stock it with wanted and unwanted impressions”, said Gandhi. He believed that journalism should be useful for the society. He gave a concept of trusteeship means equitable distribution of wealth to all.

He expressed his feeling that core value of journalism is to serve the society by informing, educating and motivating the masses for social, moral, ethical, cultural, economical cause. He relates public journalism to economic equality.

- **Gandhi's Ethics in Journalism**

The core objective of journalism that was practised by Gandhi was based on ethical values. The transformation of Mohandas to Mahatma was materialized because he practised ethics in journalism throughout his life. His almost all the articles and writings were based on ethics and moral values which has transformed many individual for better conduct. He always supported and promoted ethical values and spiritualism for holistic life. He always advocated the self-restraint on the freedom of press. He was against the publication of advertisements in the newspapers

Ethics are the set of moral guidelines for maintaining the sanctity of the concerned profession. He believed that the journalist should adhere to ethics in terms of the use of language, objectivity, balance, and fairness in disseminating the news and information to the public at large. The press should not suppress the news from people. He always advocated for free and fair journalism.

Gandhi said in his publication *Harijan* on 27th April, 1947 that “ The press is called the fourth estate. It is definitely a power but to misuse that power is criminal. I am journalist myself and would appeal to follow journalists to realize their responsibility and to carry on their work with no ideas other than that of upholding the truth”

Conclusion:

The concept of Gandhi's journalism is still relevant and should practise by commercialized media houses. In today's world of sensationalism, paid news and fake news, people are losing faith in journalism. The concept of citizen journalism is very important in today's mainstream journalism but it is the duty of every individual, journalist and big media houses to follow the ethics in collecting and disseminating news and views to the public. The media houses should give more importance to development journalism for the better growth and development. In the age of digital era, it is the responsibility of an individual and organization at large to circulate, upload and share true and development information. Gandhi's life was full of struggle and challenges but he never compromised on the true spirit of journalism.

“My life is my message” Man of the Millennium- Mahatma Gandhi

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