

JOURNALISM AS SEEN THROUGH THE PRISM OF GANDHIAN IDEOLOGY

By

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Mahatma Gandhi A Journalist and Editor, Edited by Dr. Mrinal Chatterjee and Snehasis Sur, Press Club, Kolkata, 2018, 175 pages, 200INR

The 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Indian nation and the apostle of peace and non-violence is being celebrated in India and across the globe in many ways. To pay homage to the most worthy son of Mother India, the Kolkata Press Club, the oldest in the Asian continent has brought out an anthology entitled ‘Mahatma Gandhi A Journalist and Editor’. The book has been edited by Dr. Mrinal Chatterjee and Snehasis Sur. The volume has got 22 essays focussing on a specific aspect of Mahatma Gandhi’s multifarious and myriad activities – Gandhi as a journalist and a communicator.

The authors include Mahatma Gandhi’s grandson Tushar Arun Gandhi, noted historian Ramchandra Guha, editor and commentator Nikhil Chakravarty and many other senior journalists and academicians. Mahatma Gandhi edited four well known journals which he used to propagate his philosophy and vision about society, politics and his ideals of *satyagraha* and *ahimsa*. Through his newspapers, the Indian Opinion in South Africa and the Young India, Navjeevan and the Harijan in India, he put into practice his idea about journalism which according to him should nothing be other than service.

The authors in the book has explained how “through his journals, the Mahatma had not only propagated his views but led down a unique standard in journalism”. The inclusion of Nikhil Chakravarty’s essay ‘Mahatma Gandhi – the Great Communicator’ in the volume has enhanced its worth manifold as the author has meticulously explained how Gandhiji throughout his entire life has himself practiced what he preached and what role communication played in his acts of social service and political activities. It has documented well many events in Gandhiji’s life and the troubled times in brief.

Ramchandra Guha in his article 'Gandhi, the journalist' quoted Krishnaswamy Swaminathan, the Chief Editor of the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi who eulogised his use of the English language. Swaminathan said, "Gandhi's prose is a natural expression of his democratic temper. There is no conscious ornamentation, no obtrusive truck of style calling attention to itself. The style is a blend of the modern manner of an individual sharing his ideas and experiences with his readers, and the impersonal manner of the Indian tradition in which the thought is more important than the person expounding it". Similarly, Subir Ghosh ended his essay entitled 'The Man Who could Communicate with Masses without Mass Media' with the comment, "as a communicator, Gandhiji ignited three of the great wars of the 20th century against colonialism, racism and violence...he shines as a conscience for the world. The communicator and politician go hand-in-hand, proclaiming the power of inspiring communication, peaceful agitation and moral courage."

The articles in the book analyse Gandhiji and his contribution to peace and non-violence, construction of an Indian identity, *satyagraha* and ethical mores of the profession of journalism. The twin goals of the Gandhian credo of journalism – mission and service has been well espoused by BP Sanjay in his essay. Another very interesting piece is by Smarajit Roy Chowdhury where the author meticulously quotes events of history to highlight how on many occasions Gandhiji brushed with the wrong side of law while practicing journalism.

The editors of the book in the foreword mentioned that this volume not only enables the reader to have a close look at Gandhiji's views on journalism but also why and how most of his views are still relevant today. Interestingly, Dr. Mrinal Chatterjee in his opening remarks quotes Tara Gandhi Bhattacharjee, Gandhiji's grand daughter as saying, "there is no wisdom in carrying a lantern when there is electricity. We need to change our attitude about who is Gandhi and what he means today". Therefore, the stress should be "to marry Gandhi's ideologies and persona to the needs of modern society". Mahatma Gandhi is known more as a political crusader and social reformer. This book with the help of historical trajectories provides an analytical understanding of Gandhiji as a journalist and a communicator which of course was guided by his own values and philosophy.

Finally, being a very important contribution for future study and reference, the quality of this production could have been made better. This needs to be taken care of by the publisher in its second edition.