Press and Political Mobilization in Colonial India: A Case Study of Gandhi
In an attempt to deal with one of the broad objectives of this study, of determining role of the press in political mobilization in colonial India, we take up Mahatma Gandhi as a case study. This is a natural follow-up from the previous section on political communication and political mobilization. The previous chapter helped us understand the various factors involved in political communication and political mobilization. Political communication, as we have understood, is the deliberate passing of a political message by a sender to a receiver with the intention of making the receiver behave in a way that he might not otherwise have done. In the context of our study, this behaviour would mostly pertain to the actors' disposition towards acting in a manner that would amount to mobilization. We have also seen that political communication involves both written and oral media. This is especially important since we are dealing with Mahatma Gandhi who made extensive use of both the media in his communication. We also borrow from the previous section, hypodermic theory and the agenda-setting role of the media, for the present discussion. While the hypodermic theory says that the power of the press is implicit in the idea of harnessing the mass media to perform important social, economic, military, and political tasks, agenda-setting role of the media postulates that "the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but its stunningly successful is telling its readers what to think about that." We also borrow concepts like legitimacy, mobilisation, political participation and public opinion from the previous chapter to facilitate our present discussion. This chapter discusses various aspects of Gandhi: Gandhi as a journalist; His theme of communication strategy; His biography; His communication style and strategies for mobilisation; and His use of the press during the non-cooperation movement, in order to investigate our research question: How did Gandhi used press for political mobilization in colonial India?
A year after Gandhi passed away, the Harijan Wrote: “All work in whatsoever sphere, was a means primarily of service in Gandhiji’s eyes. Newspapers and journals can build up a fitting memorial to him in this matter by conforming or trying to conform to the unimpeachable standards of journalism practiced by our revered and be loved.”

As a journalist, Gandhi wanted to educate the people so that they could understand not only the significance of independence political, economic and social but also participate activity in freeing humanity from the bondage it was in. Gandhi motto as a journalist was service. He said once: “one of the objects of a newspaper is to understand the popular feeling and give expression to it; another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments and the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects.”

Such was the conviction of Gandhi; and beginning 1903 in South Africa, he constantly kept a companion in his writings and gave tem expressions through his journals and newspapers. That he used the press as a tool for political mobilisation is confirmed by the fact that he brought out four major journals: the Indian Opinion, the Young India, the Navajivan and the Harijan, all with the purpose of arousing “among the people certain desirable sentiments,” besides a number of books producing a total of two million English wordage. “His instrument for creating social change was to create mass awareness. His tool were letters, articles and speeches.”

Gandhi has been termed as the most influential writer and journalist that India has produced. Gandhi knew the power of the word, spoken and written, inspiring people to action. He resembled a charismatic arbiter when airing grievances be it in South Africa or India. His words were loaded with purpose. “No one who has used the words on a massive scale has been as passionately purposive as Gandhi. No one has used words with such intense longing to be down-to-earth on one hand and, paradoxically, to reach for the stars on the other.” Gandhi has plainly stated his
objective about writing “I write as the spirit moves me at the time of writing.” He further says: “I write to propagate my ideas.” Gandhi’s journey in journalism started quite early in his life, when he contributed nine articles on Indian diet, customs and festivals in a magazine Vegetarian in London. “When on arrival in London in September 1888, to study law, Gandhiji, at the age of nineteen, for the first time, how actively he would be associated with the newspaper for the rest of his life.”

Gandhi consistently wrote for the next six decades. The press for him, became a tool for informing, educating and mobilising the masses. “He used newspapers to educate masses about public causes for which he led mass movements.”

The Indian Opinion was the first journalistic craft of Gandhi, that was unveiled on June 4, 1903 in South Africa. It was a weekly newspaper and was published in English, Gujarati, Tamil and Hindi for the benefit of Indians residing in South Africa. As Gandhi recalled later about the purpose for which the Indian Opinion was launched, “A struggle which chiefly relies upon internal strength cannot be wholly carried on without a newspaper... we could not have educated the local Indian opinion, nor kept Indians all over the world in touch with the course of events in South Africa in any other way with the same case and success as through Indian opinion, which was a most useful and potent weapon in our struggle.”

Next in Gandhi’s armoury was Navjivan, a Gujarati monthly that was launched as a weekly on October 7, 1919, with Gandhi as the editor. And the magic of Gandhi’s pen soon showed up. Writing the editorial for the first issue of Young India, which was also relaunched under Gandhi’s editorship a day after Navajivan, Gandhi exulted: “The editing of Navajivan has been a perfect revelation to me. Whilst Young India has little more than 1,200 subscribers, Navajivan has 12,000. The number would leap to 20,000 if it would but get printer to print that number. It shows that a vernacular newspaper is a felt want. I am proud to think that I have numerous readers among farmers and workers. They make India... the English journals touch but the fringe of the ocean of India’s population.”
Gandhi was aware of the readership while writing in different languages. A trilingual—he wrote in English, Gujarati, and Hindustani—Gandhi’s tone and tenor changed while writing in different languages, because he had the ability to empathise with the audience and understand their expectations and needs in a newspaper.

Gandhi said that he was editing the English journal *Young India*, which along with *Navajivan*, was priced at one anna each, mainly for the benefit of his friends in the Madras constituency. Still, however, “*Young India* sold more copies than the combined totals of several newspapers in India. There was not only a new thought but a new language in newspaper writing, and what he wrote was ... finest in journalistic writing.”

The last of Gandhi’s journals, *Harijan* also priced at one anna, started publication on February 11, 1933, from Poona. While the first Gandhi decade in India is often called the story of *Young India*, the decade of the thirties was dominated by *Harijan*, which was started to help Gandhi in his crusade against untouchability. Introducing the weekly to his readers, Gandhi wrote in the inaugural issue: “The English edition of the *Harijan* is being published by and for the Servants of Untouchables society at my request. Ten thousand copies are being printed... if you diligently study the *Harijan*... it will give you an epitome of the week’s doings in the various parts of India in connection with the campaign against untouchability.”

In addition to the English version, *Harijan* was brought out in Hindi and Gujarati by the names of *Harijan Sevak* and *Harijan Bandu* respectively. In later years the journal was also published in Urdu, Tamil, Oriya, Marathi and Kannada. Initially Gandhi wanted to keep politics out of *Harijan*, but it soon became the voice of Indian reaction. The message of ‘Do or Die” rang from the meek looking pages of the *Harijan*. When Gandhi and his followers were locked up after the Quit India resolution the government confiscated and destroyed every available copy, and back issues confiscated. *Harijan* was revived in February 1946, survived Mahatma’s death, only to peter out in 1956. Today, the crafts of Gandhi’s Journalistic charisma, are repositories of vivid memories and scholarship. Adorning the thousands of libraries
across the world, these journals reveal stories of India’s emancipation from colonial rule; narrate the richness of India’s heritage and culture; and provide innumerable leads to social scientists for pursuing research.

The present work, which looks into the role these journals played in political mobilisation is based on one such lead.

The vastness of Gandhi makes it extremely difficult to keep the focus of the topic intact. However, every attempt has been made, all precautions taken, to ensure that the focus remains. One thing, that perhaps has been difficult to control, is overlapping. An attempt has been made to minimise on this variable.

**THEMES OF GANDHIAN COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

What were the themes that formed the basis of Gandhian communication strategy for effective mobilisation? In all, there emerge six themes. First, a communication strategy can be successful only if it is visualised from the point of view of the audience which is at the receiving end of the messages. Only if they feel that the message is relevant to them will they identify with it and only if they identify with it will they consider the behaviour change and action that the message is expecting of them. Gandhi was well aware of this. Thus discussing the crucial role of Gandhi in the rise of Indian nationalism, Yogendra Singh says, “Gandhi had an uncanny skill to project to Indian masses the many humanistic values of the modern west through traditional cultural symbolism.” Gandhi used these traditional symbols primarily because he understood that the masses would be able to relate to them in better, faster way. Once he said of non-violence: “Ahimsa, truly understood, is in my humble opinion, a panacea for all evils_mundane and extra mundane. We can never overdo it. Ahimsa does not displace the practice of other virtues, but renders their practice imperatively necessary before it can be practiced even in its rudiments. Mahavira and Buddha were soldiers, and so was Tolstoy. Only, they saw deeper and truer into their profession and found the secret of a true, happy, honourable and godly life. Let us be
joint-sharers with these teachers, and this land of our will once more be the abode of
gods." 20

Second, communication will be able to think from the people’s point of view only if
they have a deep understanding of them in the first place. This means knowing their
life style, priorities, loyalties and aspirations in order to mesh the message with their
lives and draw from them their willing participation. Such an understanding can
happen only through first hand exposure which, in turn, can be had from extensive
ing travel and study. That Gandhi traveled extensively and had a keen pair of eyes to
perceive people’s mind is too well known to need any elaboration. Thus just before
leaving South Africa in July 1914, Gandhi left a message for the Indians where he
wrote: “There has been no limit to the love I have received from the Indians in the
country. There are easy and effective measures which will enable Indians to live in
peace in this country. All religious antagonism, as that one is a Hindu or a Muslim, a
Christian or a Parsi, should be forgotten. Let there be no provincial distinctions such
as Bangalis, Madrasis, Gujaratis, Punjabis etc. All ideas of high and low which divide
men into Brahmins, Kshatriys, Baishyas and Shudras should be abandoned. Indians
are all subject to the same laws; if so how can we fight them disunited? ... Indians
from Bombay are often rude to those hailing from Calcutta and Madras and
indifferent to their feelings. The term colcha has still not gone out of use in our
language. Such ways are fraught with danger and if not abandoned, will assuredly
bring the community to grief. The people from Bombay know very well that their
counterparts from Calcutta and Madras are far more numerous than they. Even from
the point of view of self-interest, therefore, it’s necessary that we show them due
regard.” 21

Third, communicators working for social causes have to explain to people a variety of
abstract concepts like hygiene, nutrition, secularism, social justice, etc. People can
identify with and understand these goals only if they are concretised in some form and
made to relate directly with their lives. This means that the unfamiliar has to be
explained through something familiar. Symbols, being a part of peoples past, can be
reinterpreted to become effective media for communicating modern and abstract concepts.22 Gandhi realised this too. "I have suggested," he wrote in Young India, "Khaddar as indispensable for civil disobedience for swaraj for two reasons. The first is that Swaraj I hold to be impossibility without Khaddar becoming universal in our country. Secondly it is the most efficient aid to mass discipline without which mass civil disobedience is impossible."23 Few years later he reiterated "Khaddar has the greatest organising power in it because it has itself to be organized and because it affects all India. If Khaddar rained from heaven it would be a calamity. But as it can only be manufactured by the willing cooperation of starving millions and thousands of middle class men and women, its success means the best organization conceivable along peaceful lines."24

Fourth, even if a communication campaign is well thought of, conceived with a people-centered attitude and mediated through familiar symbols, it does not mean that the people will automatically accept it. It also depends on the source of the message, who is delivering it. If the sender of the message does not inspire confidence then it may not be acted upon. And credible sources are different for different messages and different audiences. Creating credibility is a continuous process and it is something a communicator has to work on to maintain. Gandhi, despite being never discounted on count of credibility, was continuously alive to this need.

Fifth, good ideas and credible communicators alone cannot ensure a change an peoples' behaviour patterns. They need the support of a reliable infrastructure and material resources to carry out the camping and deliver the goods. Gandhi in an appeal to the subscribers and readers of Young India wrote, "I will not be party to editing a newspaper that does not pay its way. Young India cannot pay its way unless it has at least 2,500 paying subscribers. I must appeal to my Tamil friends to see to it that the requisite number of subscribers are found, if they with to see Young India continued.25.

And lastly, while it is true that a good idea need not necessarily be a novel one, it should not be forgotten that just because a campaign is a successful one it can be
repeated in the same form again and again and be successful. Situations change, people’s priorities change and symbols can become ineffective if used repeatedly. Each problem has to be analysed afresh and appropriate solutions have to be worked out anew. For instance, Gandhi made use of salt as a symbol of India’s triumph over her coloniser.

A BRIEF PROFILE OF GANDHI’S JOURNALS

To explore the journalist hidden in Gandhi is no easy exercise, for he was as versatile, meticulous and authentic in his writings, as his speeches and actions. No wonder he produced about two million English words alone, the estimate for Hindi and Gujarati being not known. Beginning in South Africa as a freelance journalist Gandhi went on to become one of the finest journalists, producing some of the best journals in the history of Indian journalism. The Indian Opinion, Young India, Harijan, and Navajivan were the major journals that were edited by Gandhi. Additionally, he was associated with a lot of other publication during the peak of India’s freedom struggle.

This section attempts at profiling the above mentioned journals by Gandhi and their evaluation as mobilisation techniques.

INDIAN OPINION

Indian Opinion, a fullscap-sized-three-column weekly journal, was launched at Durban on June 4, 1903, by two of Gandhi’s close aides, Madanjit Vyavaharik and manshukhlal Hiralal Nazar. The former looked after the press. The latter was a journalist from Bombay and hold editorial charges till 1906. The Indian Opinion was started to vent the feelings of the Indians in South Africa and to improve their conditions. It was a noncommercial venture. Intially, the journal was started in Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil and English languages. Later the Hindi and Tamil versions were withdrawn.
The journal was “a mirror” on part of Gandhi’s life. “Week after week I poured out my soul in its columns and expounded the principles and practice of satyagraha.”

Starting from the first issue where Gandhi wrote an editorial titled ‘Ourselves’ Gandhi continuously wrote for Indian Opinion till 1914, the year of his departure from South Africa. Gandhi’s writings touched upon various aspects of exploitation of Indians in South Africa. Gandhi made the journal a potent weapon in his fight against the racial and discriminatory policies of the British government. He declared at a later date: “Satyagraha would probably have been impossible without Indian Opinion.”

Gandhi outlined three objectives of the journal: first to make Indian grievances known to the governments in South Africa and in Britain and to the people of India; second to make the Indians in South Africa aware of their own shortcomings and try to overcome them; and third to eliminate the prevailing distinctions between Hindus and Muslims and among Gujaratis and Tamilians and others. Gandhi wrote in one of the initial issues of the journal “the British rulers in India ... follow a different policy. They do not desire that we should come together and become united. Here in South Africa these groups are small in number. We are all confronted with the same disabilities...we can easily essay an experiment in achieving unity.”

The journal was quite interactive and readers were always invited to contribute their opinion and suggestions on crucial issues. In fact, the style of Gandhi’s struggle, passive resistance, got an Indian name through a campaign in the Indian Opinion. Looking for an apt name for his technique of struggle, Gandhi invited suggestions from his readers. There was an overwhelming response and finally ‘sadagraha’ was chosen which was modified as ‘satyagraha’ by Gandhi. This example reflects the wonderful ability of Gandhi in involving the masses constructively and instilling in them a sense of participation.

The files of Indian Opinion incorporates a series of the growing images of the Gandhian spirit. In the early editorials only a mild protest against the racial segregation is seen. At the initial stage Gandhi had firm faith in the British Constitution which was gradually shattered. Indian Opinion continuously carried a
vivid portrayal of the sufferings of the Indian community in South Africa. It successfully attempted to educate public opinion and indicated the line of duty that every Indian was required to follow in order to assert his or her basic human rights.\(^{32}\)

There existed a close link between the readers and the editorial office of Indian Opinion. Gandhi was himself in close touch with the readers through the regular correspondence column. The readership was not large enough—merely 1,100—but every issue had a group of eager readers making its reach to a much wider audience and furthering the cause of Gandhi’s satyagraha.\(^{33}\)

The editorials, and columns of letters apart, *Indian Opinion* carried several features of popular interest. It had contributors writing from abroad also. Gandhi also kept Indians in South Africa informed about the progress of freedom movement in India. He wrote in strong protest against the Bengal partition and encouraged the boycott of foreign goods by Indians in South Africa. He supported the adoption of the *Vande Mataram* as the Indian national anthem. Gandhi called it “a passionate prayer” and published it in Gujarati and Devanagari scripts in the *Indian Opinion*.\(^{34}\)

**THE YOUNG INDIA**

The success of *Indian Opinion* in educating and awakening the Indians in South Africa had been epoch-making and Gandhi knew it. He felt the need for a similar organ after he intensified his campaigns against the British rule in India, a couple of years after coming to his motherland in 1915. This need became more pronounced after Gandhi launched his satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act and the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre in 1919.

Gandhi took the editorship of *Young India* in 1919, which was published by the management of the *Bombay Chronicle*.\(^{35}\) The objective of the *Indian Opinion*, as declared in the newspaper, was a ‘desire to promote harmony and good-will between the different sections of one mighty empire.’ But by the time Gandhi became associated with the *Young India* and *Navajivan*, his hopes in the British justice was
shattered. He was becoming more and more conscious of the true nature of colonialism and was preparing the country to fight injustice through satyagraha, as practised in South Africa.

Gandhi thus spelt the policy of Young India: “Apart from its duty of drawing attention to injustices to individuals, it will devote its attention to constructive satyagraha as also sometimes cleansing satyagraha. Cleansing satyagraha is a civil resistance where resistance becomes a duty to remove a persistent and degrading injustice such as the Rowlatt Act.” Young India in no time became a medium of aggressive campaign against the injustices of the British government.

Gandhi poured out fire through his pen. He sincerely felt that the alien government had no right to govern. He wrote a number of fiery articles like ‘Tampering with Loyalty’ and ‘The Puzzle and its Solution’ on the pages of Young India to arouse the Indian masses. Besides the journal was also used to educate the masses on various socio-political and economic issues of national and international importance. Gandhi used articles by renowned personalities of the freedom struggle on various issues. The journal was also used as a forum for intellectual debates, for example the debates between Gandhi and Tagore on Khadi and scope of education.

In brief, the Young India, was a true mirror of colonial India and reflected and reacted on everything concerning Indians.

**NAVAJIVAN**

Navajivan was a regional journal in Gujarati, published alongwith Young India under the editorship of Gandhi. Outlining the purpose, Gandhi once wrote in March 12 issue of the Young India, that it was published “for the sole purpose of educating the nation to win Purna Swaraj through truthful and non-violent means.” Its fate was ceased with that of the Young India.
A couple of years after the Young India and Navajivan were silenced, Gandhi felt the need for another journal. But this time for a different reason: to help him in his crusade against untouchability. Born in 1933, the paper initially carried items solely devoted to social issues. “It will be solely devoted to the Harijan cause,” Gandhi wrote after being released from prison in May 1933, “and will scrupulously exclude all politics.” So much so that there was a complete blackout of important political news of the day; there was no mention of the Congress session and the Government of India Act of 1935.

The Harijan became a mouthpiece for the Harijan movement and village industries. The paper published useful extracts from books on rural problems. However, the tide of surging nationalism in later years did not let Harijan maintain its focus. Increasingly, it started carrying the messages of non-violence satyagraha of Gandhi and became a chief messenger of the Quit India Movement. The slogan of ‘do or die’ given by Gandhi during the movement was reached to the masses through the Harijan. It became a fiery propaganda vehicle so much so that soon after the arrest of Gandhi on 8 August 1942, the Harijan was closed down. However, even after that, Gandhi’s message seemed to be echoing: “The Harijan may be suppressed, its message cannot be, so long as I live. Indeed the spirit will survive the dissolution of the body ad somehow speak through the millions…” The millions did speak, and Harijan lived up to its cause!

HIND SWARAJ

One of Gandhi’s seminal work is Hind Swaraj which was written in Gujarati and published in a book form in Gujarati in January 1910 by Gandhi’s own international Printing Press, The English translation by Gandhi himself came out few years later.

Hind Swaraj is written in the literacy genre of dialogue: a dialogue between a newspaper editor and a reader. It was addressed to a mixed audience: the expatriate
Indians who were attracted to terrorism and political violence, the extremists and moderates of the Indian National Congress, the Indian nation and the English. As to why he wrote the book he said, there was first of all the consequent urge to communicate. Secondly, he wanted to clarify the meaning of Swaraj. Thirdly, he felt it necessary to respond specifically to the ideology of political terrorism adapted by the expatriates. Fourthly, Gandhi was anxious to teach the Indians that modern civilization posed a greater threat to them than did colonialism. Fifthly, he wanted to contribute towards the reconciliation of Indians and Britons. Finally, Gandhi believed that through *Hind Swaraj* he would be able to give Indians a practical philosophy, an updated conception of *dharma*, that would fit them for life in the modern world.  

*Hind Swaraj* was the seed from which the tree of Gandhian thought has grown to its full stature. No wonder that it has been called ‘a very basic document for the study of Gandhi’s thought’, his ‘Confession of faith’, a ‘proclamation of ideological independence’, and the nearest he came to producing a sustained work of political theory.

**A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT**

In a small, white-washed house in Porbandar, on the coast of Kathiawad in western India, Mohandas Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869. His parents were Karamchand Gandhi and Putlibai. He was small and dark, yet this was no ordinary child. He was to fight and overcome a great empire and, without taking to arms, set his country free. He was to be called the “Mahatma”, or the “Great Soul”. Having led his people to freedom, he was to lay down his life for their sake.

At the age of seven he was sent to a primary school. He was shy and books were his sole companions. Mohandas was only thirteen when he was told that he was soon to be married. His parents had already chosen his bride, Kasturba. After passing his high school examination, Mohandas was to go to England to study and become a lawyer.
On September 4, 1888, Mohandas left Bombay for England. In London, young Gandhi found everything around him strange. His attempt to be an Englishman lasted only about three months, then he gave up the idea. He soon became a serious student, and concentrated very hard on his studies. On June 10, 1891, he was called to the bar. Gandhi was admitted as a lawyer and the next day was formally enrolled in the High Court. The following day, June 12, he sailed for India.

Gandhi, after returning to India, set up his practice as a lawyer in Rajkot. Soon, however, he was disgusted with the greed and the pettiness that he found among the lawyers. Gandhi realized that it was difficult for the poor and the humble to get away from such things. It was then that an offer came to him to go to South Africa on behalf of Dada, Abdulla & Co.

The opportunity to see a new country and new people excited Gandhi, and he accepted the offer. In April 1893, he left Bombay for South Africa. Gandhi reached the port of Natal towards the end of May, 1893. The first thing he noticed was that the Indians there were treated with very little respect. Gandhi spent three years in South Africa meeting the Indians and talking about social injustices. He was now a well-known figure, everyone recognized his frockcoat and turban. His practice was going very well and he knew that the people there wanted him with them.

Gandhi was becoming more and more involved in public activities, his way of life became simpler. It was 1901, six years after Gandhi had brought his family to Durban, that he felt his future activity lay not in South Africa but in India. Upon his arrival to India, Gandhi went on a tour of the country. The annual meeting of the Indian National Congress was being held in Calcutta under the presidentship of Dinshaw Wacho. Gandhi attended the session. It was the first contact with the Congress which he was to lead so gloriously in the future.

Gandhi settled down in Bombay and started practice as a lawyer. He did well, much better than he had expected. In December 1902, however, a cable reached him from South Africa requesting him to return. Joseph Chamberlin, the Colonial Secretary,
was arriving from London on a visit to Natal and the Natal Indian Congress wanted Gandhi to present their case to him.

Gandhi reached Natal in time to lead the Indian deputation, but the Colonial Secretary gave the deputation a cold reception. Gandhi now decided to stay in the Transvaal and fight the color bar, which was becoming such an ugly situation there. In August 1906, an ordinance was issued by the Transvaal Government requiring all Indian men, women, and children to register themselves and obtain a personal certificate bearing name and thumb impressions. This card was to be carried by all individuals at all times and had to be shown on demand. Anyone failing to produce the certificate was liable to be fined, or imprisoned.

Gandhi saw here the need for passive resistance, or “satyagraha.” To the people, he explained his concept of satyagraha. First, he said, they must be prepared to observe nonviolence. The authorities would take all measures to put down the agitation. They might use violence, arrest people, and send them to jail, but all this must be faced without resistance.

A big bonfire was lit, and more than two thousand certificates were burned. Many Indians openly crossed the border into the Transvaal, where their presence was illegal. Gandhi and many of his compatriots were imprisoned several times in the course of the agitation. When Gandhi was released from jail, the Indians held a meeting and decided to send a deputation to England to acquaint the British Government with the real situation in South Africa. Gandhi and Seth Haji Habib were asked to go to London and present the grievances of the Indians. Accordingly, they went, but the mission was a failure. They returned with grim determination to fight to the bitter end.

Gandhi found the Government relentless in its actions against minorities. There seemed no solutions in sight. He had to take further measures. In October of 1913, Gandhi organized a march of over 6,000 Indian workers from the Natal mining area
into the Transvaal, although crossing into the Transvaal without a permit was not allowed by law.

Gandhi and many other Indians were imprisoned. The “satyagrahis” were beaten and flogged to force them to go back to work, but without success. Gandhi had aroused in them the spirit of quiet, dignified resistance.

Soon the movement of passive resistance, or satyagraha, spread all through Natal and Transvaal. The Government did not know what to do, because none yielded to their cruel treatment. In December 1913, Gandhi was released, but he would not give up the struggle. Gandhi had been active in South Africa for twenty-one years and had contributed much to the welfare of the Indians of South Africa. Gandhi now felt that his mission in South Africa was over, and he wanted to return to India.

Gandhi was back in India after twelve long years. A great reception awaited him in Bombay. In May 1915, an “aashram,” was established in the village near Ahmedabad. Gandhi named the new institution “Satyagraha Aaashram.” A simple uniform style of clothing was worn by all who lived there. They took their food together in a common kitchen and strove to live as one family.

For two years, Gandhi had traveled extensively and had talked at different places. He now wanted to start some work connected with labor. His interest first centered on the problem of indentured labor, the system under which poor, ignorant laborers were enticed away from India to work in British colonies.

With the passive resistance, Gandhi started a great agitation on this issue. He went to Bombay and consulted all the Indian leaders there. They fixed May 31, 1917, as the last date for the abolition of indentured labor. He then traveled throughout the country; meetings were held in all important places. Everywhere there was a great response. As a result of the agitation, the Government announced that the system of indentured labor would be stopped before July 31, 1917.
Gandhi first conceived the idea of an all-India strike as the beginning of the satyagraha movement. The leaders at once took up the suggestion and gave much publicity to the forthcoming strike. The date was fixed for April 6, 1919. The people had received only short notice for the strike, but it turned out to be most successful. That was the first great awakening of India in her struggle towards independence from the British.

In Bombay, the strike was a great success. All over India the strike was observed. Gandhi had asked the people again and again to be peaceful and not to be provoked to violence by the Government's actions. In spite of this, violence broke out in many places. There were disturbances in Ahmedabad and also in Punjab, so he decided to go to these places to promote a non-violence system.

In Punjab the situation was very critical. The leaders were trying to keep the people peaceful, but the stern measures of repression taken by the authorities had few parallel in history. It was announced that a meeting was to be held in a garden called Jallianwala Bagh, to protest against the Government's actions. General Dyer took no measures to prevent the meeting. He reached the place soon after the meeting began and he took with him armored cars, and troops. Without giving any warning he ordered, “Fire till the ammunition is exhausted.”

The garden was surrounded by walls and buildings and had only one exit. At the first shot, the exit was jammed and there was no hope of escape for the crowd. There were between six and ten thousand people there. The soldiers fired over sixteen hundred rounds into the unarmed mass of people. Once a garden, it was now a scene of merciless massacre. The words “Jallianwala Bagh” became a synonym of massacre.

Gandhi's influence on the Indian people was steadily growing. The old leaders, many of them with liberal policies, were vanishing from Indian politics. By the close of 1920, Gandhi was the undisputed leader and head of the Indian National Congress.

In 1928, peasants in Bardoli, Gujarat were agitated by grievances and Gandhi advised them to resort to satyagraha and the non-payment of taxes. A new determination, to
force the Government to act, filled the minds of the people. Jawaharlal Nehru was elected President of the Congress at the insistence of Gandhi. India now demanded full independence. The whole country was excited. Everyone waited for the go-ahead from Gandhi. After two months of suspense, a salt satyagraha was announced by the great leader. The salt tax was to be attacked and the salt laws were to be broken.

On March 12, 1930, at 6:30 in the morning, thousands of people watched as Gandhi started from his ashram with seventy eight volunteers on a march to Dandi, a village on the sea coast 241 miles away. For twenty-four days the eyes of India and the world followed Gandhi as he marched towards the sea. The Government did not dare take the risk of arresting Gandhi. With each passing day, the campaign grew. Hundreds and thousands of people joined the procession. Men, women, and children lined the route, offering flowers and shouting slogans for the victory of the march.

The march ended on April 5 at Dandi. Gandhi and his selected followers went to the sea-shore and broke the salt law by picking up salt left on the shore by the sea. Gandhi then gave a signal to all Indians to manufacture salt illegally. He wanted the people to break the salt law openly and to prepare themselves for non-violent resistance to police action. All over India people swarmed to the nearest sea coast to break the salt law.

The Government waited for sometime before taking any action, and then the retaliation began. Gandhi was arrested. Gandhi's arrest had created a great sensation in India and abroad. Representatives were sent from all parts of the world to the British Prime Minister asking the Government to release Gandhi and make peace with India. The Government under pressure, at last released Gandhi. As soon as Gandhi was out of prison he asked for an interview with the Viceroy, Lord Irwin. The interview was immediately given. Gandhi and Irwin met, but the two men seemed to have come from two different worlds.

In August 1942, the All-India Congress Committee met in Bombay, and was presided over by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Again, the demand to set up a provisional
Government was made. The “Quit India” resolution was drawn up and passed by the meeting for presentation to the Government. Nehru moved the resolution and Sardar Patel seconded it. The resolution also announced the starting of a mass struggle on the widest possible scale.

The Government did not wait for the mass movement to begin. Overnight Gandhi was arrested, and also many other leaders in various parts of India. Gandhi was confined to the Aga Khan’s palace in Poona. With the leaders in jail, India did not remain idle. “Do or die” was taken up by the people. There were mass movements everywhere, great outbursts of violence throughout the country. People began to destroy government buildings and whatever else they considered to be symbols of British imperialism.

All over India there were strikes and disorder. Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, attributed all this to Gandhi. Gandhi had incited violence, he claimed. In a long series of letters to Lord Linlithgow, Gandhi tried to persuade him to retract this charge against him. Failing in this, Gandhi decided to undertake a fast as “an appeal to the Highest Tribunal” against the unjust charges. Gandhi fasted for twenty-one days in February 1943. It was a great ordeal, but he survived.

A few weeks later Gandhi was taken seriously ill with malaria. The Indian people demanded his immediate release and the authorities, believing that he was nearing death, released him. Gandhi was slowly restored to health.

The demand for Indian independence had now grown into a world-wide question. Apart from India’s own attitude, America and other countries pressed Britain to grant freedom to India. Two months later in May 1945, the Labor party came into power in Britain and Attlee became the Prime Minister. A few months later, the British Government announced that they expected to grant self-government to India as soon as her internal problems could be solved.
This was a victory for India. It was a victory for non-violence. Britain, defeated by the peaceful revolution, could not hold onto India any longer. Britain agreed to a planned withdrawal from India, without bitterness and in friendship.

All through his life Gandhi had worked for unity between the Hindus and the Muslims. But he had not had much success. There was a large section of nationalist Muslims in the Congress, but the heads of the Muslim league were drifting further and further away. Gandhi was not the man to give up hope, however, and he pursued his efforts to bring about a settlement. On the other hand, Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League, was hostile to the idea of unity. He demanded a separate Muslim state before freedom was given to India. “We can settle the Indian problem in ten minutes if Mr. Gandhi agrees to the creation of Pakistan,” said Jinnah. “Cut me in two,” cried Gandhi, “but do not cut India in two.”

In February 1946, the British Government sent a Cabinet Mission to India. The task of the Cabinet Mission was to study the situation and suggest what should be done. After careful consideration, the Cabinet Mission issued a statement proposing the withdrawal of British authority from India. They wanted a united India. On June 3, 1947, Attlee, the British Prime Minister, announced the plan for partition. The Congress and the Muslim League accepted it.

Thus on August 15, 1947, India's long struggle and suffering for freedom was over. A new nation, although split in two, was born.

Gandhi had never given his approval to partition, but when it was done he accepted it and did everything possible for the attainment of Hindu-Muslim friendship. Yet the tension between Hindus and Muslims continued to increase. As a result of the partition, over seven-hundred thousand Hindus, Sikhs, and other non-Muslims in Pakistan, fearing the Muslims, left their homes and set out towards security in India. From India, about the same number of Muslims, fearing the Hindus, left their homes for Pakistan. The miseries on the mass migration, one of the greatest in history,
were manifold. Fifteen-hundred thousand people on the move were exposed to starvation, disease, and massacre on the way.

Gandhi decided to do penance by fasting, which he thought would bring about change in the attitude of the Hindu fanatics. The fast began on January 13, 1948. There was gloom all over India at the news of Gandhi’s fast. People thought that he would not be able to survive another fast. The whole world watched as Gandhi, seventy-eight years old, fasted to save his country from destruction. On January 18, a peace committee, representing all communities, met and signed a pact pledging unity and the protection of life, property, and faith to the Muslim minority. Gandhi was informed of the pledge and he broke his fast.

On January 30, after a midday nap, Gandhi woke up at 3:30 p.m. The whole day he had a stream of visitors. Gandhi left his room at 5 o’clock and went towards a prayer-meeting. He passed through a cordoned-off path, accompanied by Manu and Abha, his grand-daughters. As he was walking along, a youth, named Nathuram Godsey, came forward as if to seek his blessings. He stood in front of Gandhi and at point-blank range fired three shots in quick succession. All the bullets hit the great leader. Gandhi fell, uttering the prayer, “Rama, Rama.” Gandhi was dead.

The assassination jolted the world, and all who learned of his death were shocked. Nehru told the country of Gandhi’s death, his voice choked with emotion: “Friends and comrades, the light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere. I do not know what to tell you and how to say it. Our beloved leader, Bapu, as we called him, the Father of the Nation, is no more. Perhaps I am wrong to say that. Nevertheless, we will not see him again as we have seen him for these many years...”

“The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for these many years will illuminate this country for many more years, and a thousand years
later that light will still be seen in this country, and the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts...”

**STRATEGY OF COMMUNICATION FOR MOBILIZATION**

Gandhi was an effective communicator. He judiciously used oral and print media in mobilising public opinion against the mighty British Empire. We make an attempt to study the style and strategies of communication that Gandhi used for mobilisation.

This study consists of two parts. In the first part, we discuss the pattern of mass communication as used by Gandhi. In the second we look at the Dandi March as a communication strategy for mobilising people.

**PATTERN OF MASS COMMUNICATION**

Gandhi used religious and cultural idiom in his pattern of mass communication. Gandhi had drawn his model from the folk culture and the *Bhagvad Gita* and given it a new meaning in terms of detached social action. Singularly he derived his terms and symbols from Hindu traditions. Like Vivekanand, Gandhi attempted to filter certain elements of the tradition which he considered as ‘pure and fundamental’ and rejected others as accretions. He emphasised on the pure source of tradition and on the inherent equality as postulated by the philosophy of the identity of all life expressed in the *Upanishads*, which is to Indians an intimate and ever present thought. This was the basis of Gandhi’s communication with the Indian masses and it was at the same time his message. He formulated new forms of communication. Gandhi believed that in colonial situations the assertion of national identity, even of national existence, is not so much a matter of desirable future, but a case of asserting historical and abstract rights of which the country concerned has in the past been deprived by the foreign colonial power, a point dealt in greater detail in chapter 5.

Gandhi created significant meaning in his messages, which conveyed a new egalitarian ethic for political relationship and mass participation. In doing this he
chose carefully his formulations by assessing their effect on the people.\textsuperscript{48} Gandhi was aware that the meaning conveyed should be traced back to certain aspects of social belief and culture so that his symbolic action would have a strong universal impact. We will see this in detail in next section while analysing Gandhi’s Dandi March as a communication strategy.

Gandhi use of symbolic expression ushered is a new style of communicating with the people by using \textit{sanskritik} traditional idioms. He gave a new meaning to the religious idioms to mobilise people.\textsuperscript{49} The idioms used by him were symbolic and they conveyed a mental cultural concept, which was shared by people belonging to the same culture.

We take an example in the term \textit{Ram Rajya}. The term was used to project Gandhian concept of a moral society; it was a reformation of the Hindu conception of a golden age. All Indians even in the smallest village know the epic \textit{Ramayana}. Gandhi explained this in a speech in the Congress Faizpur Session in 1936. “\textit{Ram raj} is the Kingdom of righteousness. By \textit{ram raj} I do not mean Hindu raja. I mean by \textit{ram raja}, divine \textit{raja}, the kingdom of God... the ancient ideal of \textit{ram raj} is undoubtedly one of true democracy.”\textsuperscript{50} To arrive at the genuine experience of \textit{ram raj} is an essential part of the reality behind the word democracy, because the symbol ‘Ram’ allowed a wide diffusion of knowledge among the illiterate masses. Ram is the context of Gandhi’s method of symbolic expressions not the epic. It has penetrated all of India and therefore Gandhi idioms had a great appeal for the masses.\textsuperscript{51}

Same holds true of his idiom \textit{Swaraj} which means self rule as well as self control exercised by the individual. This can be attained if there is complete freedom from all evils such as anger, hatred and so on, which arouse violent action. \textit{Ahimsa} is a necessary concomitant of such self-control. Therefore, the only way to alienate British rule, according to Gandhi, was to implant non-violence of love into the self. Free the self thus and make it rule. He said, “We can see that if we become free, India is free. And in this thought you have a definition of \textit{Swaraj}. It is \textit{Swaraj} when we learn to rule ourselves.”\textsuperscript{52}
The spinning wheel was another traditional symbol used by Gandhi to involve the common people in his work. It was both a political instrument for inviting the masses in the freedom struggle and the symbol of protest against British imperialist exploitation of the Indian economy. It stood as a symbol for work and income for millions in villages in the seasons when there was no work in the fields. This was an effectively conceived strategy of combining a message and a channel of communication, because Gandhi’s symbol attracted the attention of the masses to a concrete situation at hand and at the same time conveyed a general meaning of self-reliance. The making of handspun cloth or Khadder was therefore also Swadeshi in its full meaning. Khaddar being an indigenous product of the culture, it carried the message to the people to realise for themselves the dignity of labour and the importance of indigenous product.

It was also a first concrete step to bring the masses out of the miserable poverty in which they were living, and at the same time its use was also meant to hinder the sale of British textiles in India.

_Daridranarayan_ and _harijan_ were the other two terms, which were used by Gandhi as symbols. The first meant that God (Narayan) resides in the poor (daridra). Its use by Gandhi stimulated an awareness among the masses that there is none higher and none lower. The keynote is the humanistic message that God (Narayan) has assumed the role of the poor (daridra) and the lowly and the downtrodden; therefore it stresses the ideas of brotherhood and equality. The term _harijan_ “appropriately focuses attention on removing the stigma of untouchability and it emphasises both equality of all Indians before God and before law.”

Gandhi’s use of reformulation of the traditional idioms comes closest to Philip Wheelwrights theory of ‘Plurisignation’ which is perhaps the most suitable model in Western terminology for explaining Gandhi technique. Wheelwright says, “Plurisignation chooses some unitary word or phrase or image in such a way and puts
it in such a context that it tends to refer to, or at least suggests two or more, meanings at once.”

The inherent meaning of Gandhi’s idioms led to a deeper understanding of other meanings. For instance, the key element in his idiom harijan is the identity of all life which, interpreted correctly implies human dignity and an egalitarian ideal. “Gandhi’s use of words or signs such as salt, charkha, swaraj etc., are close to semiotics model of communication as generation of meaning by means of messages in which a sign or a symbol is the centre. It was the act of signifying which created a mental concept common to all members of the same culture.” In the end we may say that the way Gandhi selected and used the language that was made available by Indian tradition was crucial for mass dissemination and for popular reconstruction of the rest of the concepts underlying his message. His message generated a meaning that appealed to the cultural sensibility of the listener that in turn stimulated interpersonal communication. This message of socio-political relations conveyed by idioms like Swaraj, Swadeshi, Harijan etc. would be effectively communicated to the masses because these signs were rooted in their socio-cultural experience.

Thus Gandhi’s system of formulating symbolic expression was rooted in the essential tradition of Indian Philosophy. However, it would be a mistake to assume that Gandhi relied only on traditional symbols. “He utilised traditional symbols and norms to mobilise the people by at the same time he added many modern features to his leadership...” Gandhi became a cultural force inducing mass mobilization for the independence struggle and social change. The channels of communication for the dissemination of his ideas were the traditional communications tools like bhajans (prayer meetings) as well as his speeches and writings. He reformulated the language in such a way that it converted his ideas into a concrete image, which sustained the imaginative perception of the audience; thousand listened to him and responded spontaneously. His words could feed back into the culture new forms of language (words like Swadeshi and Harijan) generating multiple meanings. This was the symbolic expression constituting Gandhi’s mode of mass communication.
The Dandi March (Salt Satyagraha) was a meticulously planned event. To understand its dynamics and use as a communication tool, we have to examine how Gandhi visualized the event, why he chose salt, why he decided to march and why he selected Dandi as the destination.

After the Lahore Congress of 1929 had authorized the Working Committee to launch a program of civil disobedience, the latter invested Gandhi with full powers to launch the movement at a time and place of his choice. Gandhi was already desperately in search of an effective formula for the movement. By the end of February, the formula began to surface as Gandhi started talking about salt: "There is no article like salt outside water by taxing which the state can reach even the starving millions, the sick, the maimed and the utterly helpless. The taxes constitute therefore at most inhuman poll tax the ingenuity of man can devise."

The plan for the launch of civil disobedience movement by breaking the salt law was brilliantly conceived. “Gandhi along with a band of 78 members of the Sabarmati Ashram, among whom were men belonging to almost every region and religion of India, was to march from his headquarters in Ahmedabad through the villages of Gujrat for 240 miles. On reaching the coast at Dandi, he would break the salt law by collecting salt from the beach. This deceptively innocuous move was to prove devastatingly effect.”

Salt had a great significance and by choosing it for civil disobedience movement Gandhi “in one stroke fulfilled all the criteria he had set himself.” As a substance of common use salt cut across all the differences_religious, caste and class. It provided Hindus and Muslim a platform for a joint struggle on an economic issue; it was a symbol of exploitation for the poor; for the rich a struggle against salt laws gave an opportunity for symbolic identification with mass suffering. Additionally salt had a great emotional appeal. In West too there was a long tradition of opposition to the salt tax. “But it was the cultural appeal of salt which was Gandhi’s trump card. In both
Indian and Western tradition, salt is the symbol of all that is vital to human life. Thus salt lends itself to linguistic and metaphoric use by Gandhi.

Despite its appeal Gandhi knew that he needed to introduce salt in an effective way to attract maximum appeal. So he decided for a march. “A march would give him the opportunity to arouse the people in the countryside through which he passed.” It would enact a live drama thought Gandhi, and would evoke great interest in national and international press.

Like salt, the march too has a place of significance in Indian tradition. Pilgrimages to holy places were made on foot and viewed as penance and such pilgrims were revered. In Western and Indian mythology marches are associates with determination, righteousness and sacrifice for a good cause. The Bible describes Moses leading his people to the Promised Land, Jesus leading his followers to Jerusalem, Rama leaving home to honour his father’s pledge, and Gautama renouncing his home in the quest for enlightenment. “Gandhi used this association to great effect”.

The desire to choose Dandi as the destination to break the salt law was taken after much deliberation. It was felt that the itinerary of the march give an opportunity to rally the public in entire Gujarat and give time for the impact to spread to the rest of the country.

The salt satyagraha was planned in less than a month’s time. It was conceived in mid-February and conducted in mid-March, and the final act performed on April 6. The massive mobilisation, which the event achieved, was possible not only because of the issues it addressed but also due to the support of a network of trained workers. This network did not develop overnight but over years of grass root constructive work. Now at the time of crisis students and teachers of the national schools and colleges researched the salt laws, the Khadi workers and Gandhian ashram inmates wrote articles explaining the issues and practical instructions on salt manufacture and the village workers explained the nature of the struggle to the rural masses and later courageously produced underground newspapers. Along with political training, these
workers, many of whom were women, were trained to develop their communication skills. They were taught to use prayer meetings for the politicisation of the masses. After devotional activities, articles from the journals *Young India* and *Navajivan* were read out and explained to prepare the audience for the coming struggle. They were taught *bhajan* and songs, which would be useful for consciousness raising.\(^72\)

The print medium too was well developed before the march begun. Gandhi had taken over the editorship of *Young India* and *Navajivan* after coming back from South Africa. He was simultaneously developing the network of workers for distribution. When the time for Satyagraha came, these weeklies with their established readership were made to carry the message of salt. Gandhi also consciously maintained contact with the world press. In the days before the march, despite hectic preparations he spared time for foreign journalists. They were the only channels through which the struggle could be publicised abroad. He was very conscious of the power that the press possessed and was particular about being quoted accurately. “He used to insist as a pre-condition that his messages and statements should be published without the slightest alteration.”\(^73\)

The three elements of salt satyagraha, march and Dandi with their historic, symbolic, metaphoric and linguistic associations were used to great effect by Gandhi to propagate his vision of Swaraj among his Indian audience and to gain the sympathy of his audience abroad.

Gandhi included in his co-workers people from all parts of the country, giving the group a truly all-India character. By selecting Abbas Tyabji and Sarojini Naidu to replace him as leader in the event of his arrest, he symbolically conveyed his regard for Muslims and women. Thus Gandhi used the structure of the march itself to communicate the united India that he envisaged.

During the 25 days of March, Gandhi made great use of speeches. During his tour he visited 40 villages and at each village he gave a speech, reaching an estimated 5 lakh people. In these speeches he presented salt as the epitome of British exploitation and attempted to exhort people to break the law.\(^74\) Gandhi used the speeches as an
occasion to attract women to the movement. He used examples from mythology
referring to the courage of Sita and Draupadi.

The symbolic imagery related to salt, march and Dandi was infectious. It was echoed
in the writings of foreign journalists who compared Gandhi for Moses and Jesus and
in the articles by Mahadev Desai who drew parallels between Dandi march and
Buddha’s mahabhinishkraman. Songs were another way of stirring people. The
importance of these media can be gauged by the fact that the British tried to counter
the Satyagraha by systematically choking the means of communication. Ordinances
were promulgated to ban the press to curb the growing influence of Gandhian
newspapers. British arrested Gandhi as his speeches were making great impact.
Congress leaders and village level workers were also arrested. “Letters and telegrams
were of course censored but the British police relentlessly pursued the editors of the
underground newspapers which replaced the outlawed nationalist press.”

Civil disobedience movement thus reflected how Gandhi used traditional symbols
along with the print media for effective mobilisation.

GANDHI AND THE PRESS FROM SOUTH AFRICA TO NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

Gandhi sojourn with journalism started with his first paper Indian Opinion which was
started in South Africa. In order to ventilate the grievances of Indians and mobilise
public opinion in their favour, Gandhi started writing in and giving interviews to
newspapers. He maintained a list of friendly papers with gave him wholehearted
support. He focussed on open letters and letters to the editor, but soon realised that
occasional writings and the hospitality of newspapers were inadequate for the political
campaign he had launched.

Gandhi had all the qualities of a good journalist. Gandhi made known the ideals he
had set before himself as a journalist in his autobiography. He wrote, “the sole aim of
journalism should be service.” He further stated that reference to the abuses in the
states is undoubtedly necessary part of journalism and it is a means of creating public opinion. I have taken up journalism not for its sake but merely as aid to what I have conceived to be my mission in life. Gandhi defined the objects of a newspaper as, “to understand the popular feeling and give expression to it: another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments, and the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects.”

The genesis of Gandhi’s reliance on mass media and his usage of newspapers/Journals to generate public opinion and political mobilisation can be traced back to his struggle in South Africa.

The Indian labours who had gone to South Africa and the merchants who followed were denied the right to vote. They had to register and pay poll tax. They could not reside except in prescribed locations which were dirty and congested. Gandhi soon became the leader of the struggle against these conditions and during 1893-94 was engaged in heroic though unequal struggle against the racist authorities of South Africa. It was during this long struggle, lasting nearly two decades, that Gandhi evolved the technique of Satyagraha based on truth and non-violence.

As early as 1896 the roots of the Satyagraha took shape in Gandhi’s mind. In the ‘Green Pamphlet’ he pointed out that his method in South Africa was to conquer “hatred by love.” In 1899, Gandhi held out the hope: “…victory must be ours, for ours case has been universally regarded as just, our methods moderate and without reproach.” And to achieve this victory Gandhi resorted to Satyagraha.

When the Satyagraha struggle commenced, Gandhi became involved in the publication of weekly Journal Indian Opinion, published in English and Gujarati. It made a significant contribution in educating Indians and instilling in them courage to resist injustice. Satyagraha in South Africa would probably have been impossible without it. According to Gandhi through the “medium of this paper we could very well disseminate the news of the week among the community. The English section kept those Indians informed about the movement who did not know Gujarati and for
Englishmen in India, England and South Africa *Indian Opinion* served the purpose of a weekly newsletter.\(^8^1\) Gandhi considered *Indian Opinion* as an effective instrument for mass mobilisation.

Gandhi also regularly wrote for the local white press to clarify the Indian stand and expose the partisan and anti Indian policies of the South African government. In a letter published in *Rand Daily Mail* on 6-8-1910, Gandhi wrote: “Will you permit me to correct some statements made in your leading article on Lord Amphill's action in the House of Lords on the passive resistance struggle?... May I remind you that passive resistance commenced in 1907 when the question of priests, doctors and lawyers had not come up for public discussion, and when it did arise, it simply arose in order to forcibly illustrate the injustice that had been done by the Government in not conceding the demands of the community.” In the same letter, he had written. “Passive resisters who are not criminals in the ordinary sense of the term have been sent to a penal settlement, like Diepkloof, where the ordinary privileges of prisoners are withheld in my opinion is undoubtedly a glaring instance of treatment.” This reflects Gandhi’s concern for highlighting issues through the press.

In fact, the files of Indian opinion hold a series of the growing images of the Gandhian spirit.\(^8^2\) The early issues carried petitions and prayers. There was appeal to reason and expostulation. The great bulk of editorials of *Indian Opinion* contained a mild protest against racial segregation. For, at this stage Gandhi had “firm faith in the British constitution.”\(^8^3\)

However, with the passage of time as he realised the harshness of the Empire, Gandhi had to change his stand. “In this monstrous injustice to be really done?” he asked, in regard to the anti Indian regulations which were steadily growing in number. “Even at the eleventh hour... we cannot abandon hope that the better nature, he truer self, of our white brokers will yet assert itself.” He kept on repeating this hope in numerous editorials until at last exasperated, he said. “Perhaps in the Transvaal, people are living in the Middle Ages”.\(^8^4\)
He had already alerted every Indian in South Africa to be ready for self-sacrifice for the sake of the whole community whose fate was hanging in the balance. He appealed, "individual differences must be sunk in the face of common danger. The slightest deviation... would bring us down the precipice, because the opposition set up against us is overwhelming." 

After moving its office and printing press to Phoenix, Indian Opinion continuously carried a vivid portrayal to the sufferings of the Indian community in South Africa. It attempted to educate public opinion and simultaneously indicated the line of duty that every Indian must follow in order to win his elementary human rights. Close communion linked the editorial office with the readers of the journal. The correspondence columns were a good training ground for Gandhi himself. It was as though the entire community of the Indians thought audibly with him through the piles of letters the mails brought. Indian Opinion hardly every had more than 1,100 subscribers, but each copy had a group of eager readers and passed from hand to hand. In fact, Gandhi adopted this style in all his future journalistic endeavors.

MULTIPLE LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION

It is relevant here to mention the core of Gandhian strategy of the use of media of communication for political mobilisation. Gandhi used to maintain multiple levels of communication. Firstly, he used oral tradition of communication where he relied on techniques like prarthna sabha, speeches and one-to-one meeting. This helped him understand the masses well. This, in turn, led to concept formation for Gandhi, concepts about people’s perceptions, attitudes, needs and aspirations. Having established a rapport with the masses through oral communication, Gandhi proceeded to strike a rapport with the social and political elites of the society. Here he relied on the print medium. All essence of his writings, though intended for the masses, were grasped first by the literate elite class or the ‘attentive public’ and then filtered down to the masses which ultimately helped in shaping public opinion and political
mobilisation. Thus along with multiple levels of communications, Gandhi also used multi-pronged mobilisation strategy.\textsuperscript{87}

Gandhi returned to India in 1915 at the age of 46. He was keen to serve his country and his people. He first decided to study Indian conditions before deciding the field of his work. He found the ground ready for action in 1919 that was a watershed year in Indian history. Discontentment was brewing all over the country for several reasons. The Rowlatt Act, the \textit{Jallian Wala Bagh} Massacre and martial law in Punjab had belied all the generous wartime promises of the British. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms that was announced towards the end of 1919, with their ill-considered scheme of dyarchy satisfied few. The Indian Muslims too were angry when they discovered that their loyalty had been purchased during the war by assurances of generous treatment of Turkey after the war – a promise British statesman had no intention of fulfilling.\textsuperscript{88}

Gandhi was in close touch with the Khilafat leaders for quite some time. He was sympathetic to the Khilafat cause because he felt that the British had committed a breach of faith by making promises feat of had no intention of keeping. In February 1920, Gandhiji suggested to the Khilafat committee to adopt a programme of non-violent non-cooperation to protest the government’s behaviour. On June 9, 1920, the Khilafat committee at Allahabad unanimously accepted the suggestion of non-cooperation and asked Gandhiji to lead the movement\textsuperscript{89}. Prior to this in May 1920, All India Congress Committee in a meeting decided to convene a special session in September to enable the Congress to decide on its course of action.

Meanwhile, the non-cooperation movement was launched formally on August 1, 1920, after the expiry or the notice that Gandhiji had sent to the Viceroy in his letter of 22 June in which he had asserted the right recognized ‘from time immemorial of the subject to refuse to assist a ruler who misrules’.\textsuperscript{90}

The Congress accepted non-cooperation as its own in its special session of September. The Non-Cooperation programme proposed by Gandhi consisted of
surrender of titles and honours, refusal to attend government functions, boycott of
government affiliated schools and colleges, gradual boycott of courts, refusal of
military to serve in Mesopotamia, a complete boycott of the reformed council and
boycott of foreign goods, besides others. Gandhi promised that if the programme
was fully implemented, Swaraj would be ushered in within a year.

The Nagpur session of Congress in December 1920, where non-cooperation
resolution was passed, thus committed the Congress to a programme of extra-
constitutional mass action. Many revolutionary terrorist groups, also pledged support
to the movement. In order for the Congress to fulfill its new commitment,
significant changes were introduced in its creed and its organisational structure. The
goal of the Congress was changed from the attainment of self-government by
constitutional and legal means to the attainment of Swaraj by peaceful and legitimate
means. The new constitution of the Congress, the handiwork of Gandhiji, introduced
other major changes—the working committee was reconstituted with 15 members;
Provincial Congress committees were to be organised on a linguistic basis;
membership was reduced to four annas per year; and so on.

The adoption of NCM by the Congress, which was initiated earlier by the Khilafat
conference, gave it a new energy and from January 1921, it began to register
considerable success all over the country.

After having conceived the programme of non-cooperation, Gandhi took a whirl wind
tour of the country to popularise his ideas of non-cooperation. He addressed hundreds
of meetings and met a large number of political workers. Along with this he
strategically used the press to add impetus to the movement. He had also taken over
the editorship of the journals Young India and Navajivan by then. Introducing the two
journals to his readers Gandhi wrote: "...with much striving I have formulated some
principles for my life and put them into practice... it is my sincere aspiration to place
these principles before India and share my happiness with her. A newspaper is once
means to that end..." He further wrote, "The agitation against the Rowlatt Act was an
object lesson in Satyagraha. Hence 'Navajivan' will keep it alive before the public."
In these journals Gandhi freely ventilated his views and also used them to educate the public on Satyagraha.

Gandhi used these journals to inform the masses on many aspects during NCM. For instance in an article ‘The Doctrine of the Sword’ in the Young India, Gandhi wrote: “Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is law of the brute... I have therefore returned to place before India the ancient law of self-sacrifice. For Satyagraha and its offshoots, non-cooperation and civil resistance are nothing but new names for the law of suffering.”

In speech after speech and in editorials after editorials, Gandhi explained ceaselessly and untiringly the nature of this movement. “The movement of non-cooperation is nothing but an attempt to isolate the brute force of British from all the trappings under which it is hidden and to show that brute force by itself cannot for one single moment hold India.”

Thus Gandhi adopted various techniques for mobilizing the masses, such as extensive tours and padyatra, speeches at public meetings, effective journalism, prayers and bhajans, fasts, brahmcharya and swadeshi, fighting for the rights of minorities and especially untouchables etc. “Gandhi touched every heart and every aspect of Indian life. He mobilized the masses and directed their struggle for complete freedom and reconstruction of the society.”

Gandhi writings were quite forceful and were written with conviction. They left a deep impression on his readers. Thus he wrote once in context of non-cooperation in Young India: “our non-cooperation in neither with the English nor with the West. Our non-cooperation is with the system the English have established, with the material civilization and its attendant greed and exploitation of the weak. Our non-cooperation is refusal to cooperate with the English administrators on their own terms.” He asked the English: “Come and cooperate with us on our terms, and it will be well for us, for you and the world.”
However, Gandhi was aware of the mood of the masses and the sentiments that prevailed. He was quick to warn his countrymen about any form of violence through his journal. “Violent resistance,” Gandhi wrote, “is itself non-cooperation and it is immoral because of its violence. It becomes moral when it is non-violent. Non-cooperation with evil is a sacred duty.” Gandhi advocated non-cooperation based on non-violence. “The active state of *ahimsa* requires you to resist the wrong doer.”

Gandhi was quick to respond to the different forms of participation by different section of the society during the peak of NCM. The 19 January, 1921 issue of *Young India* for instance had the following item as a flier (the top news): “Students strike in Calcutta. The latest information to hand about the great students’ strike of Calcutta is that nearly 8,000 college students are on strike. The following colleges are affected: some wholly others partially. (1) Bangabasi (2) Ripon...”

This was not only a great morale booster for the students struggle in Bengal but also inspired students groups in other parts of the country.

This caption was followed by a long letter titled ‘To Young Bengal’ written by Gandhi himself that was carried over in the second page. Gandhi wrote “I have just read an account of your response to the nation’s calls... I had expected no less: I certainly expect still more .. You have taken the step. You will not recede.”

Gandhi exhorted the youth in the same letter, “We cannot get *Swaraj* if not one class in the country is prepared to work and sacrifice for it. The Government will yield not to the logic of words. If knows no logic but that of brave and true deals... You dare not go back without hurting yourselves and the case.”

Through the letter was addressed to the students, it had message for all sections of the society and touched upon socio-political and economic aspects. Thus he had something to convey, as a mature editor would do in times of crisis, to those inclined towards violence: “Intolerance is a species of violence and therefore against our creed. Non-violent non-cooperation is an object lesson in democracy. The moment we are able to ensure non-violence, even under circumstances the most provoking, that
moment we have achieved our end, because that is the moment when we can offer complete non-cooperation.”

The next issue of the *Young India* had one and a quarter-column report, titled ‘The Student Movement in Calcutta’, on the front page. It was basically a news report and contained all the facts and figures about the protest movement, besides explaining the style and method of student’s struggle. This was certain to inspire and train other such movements in other parts of the country.

As the NCM progressed, cases of assault on people increased. Gandhi would immediately know the importance of publishing something like brutalities of the British administrators on the freedom fighters. Thus one of the pages of January 12, 1912 issue of *Young India* had an item titled ‘Summary of Reports of Repression’. Besides the news of ‘Cases of assault at Secunderabad’ on volunteers, brave tales of ‘two wives’ of the secretary of Sitapur District Congress Committee, and beating up of two reputed ‘Zemindars’ of Hajipur in Bihar, the summary contained details like number of workers sent to jails from Chittagong. “It has sent 355 workers to jail up to now, including one Congress President and two secretaries. The third secretary is on trail. The fourth is now holding office. Number of arrests and imprisonment. October - 31; November - 18; December upto 10th - 12... Of the industrial prisoners one is a Mohamedan gentleman aged about 80, the president of the Khilafat Committee.”

During NCM Gandhi vehemently propagated the need for restoring the local economy for resorting to activities like home spinning that would reduce the dependence on foreign cloth. In an article ‘The Duty of Spinning’ in *Young India*, Gandhi wrote: “Just as we cannot live without breathing and without eating, so is it impossible for us to attain economic independence and banish pauperism from this ancient law without reviving home spinning. I hold the spinning wheel to be as much a necessity in every household as the hearth. No other scheme that can be devised will ever solve the problem of the deepening poverty of the people.”
Gandhi advocated the boycott of foreign cloth. The boycott, as Gandhi conveyed to his readers through his journal, was “as necessary for national existence as breath is for life.” Equally powerful were Gandhi’s views on subjects like untouchability, Hindu Muslim unity and other socio-political issues. “The removal of untouchability means the abolition of the fifth caste. There should therefore be no objection to a Panchama boy drawing water from the common well of a village and to his attending its common school. He should freely exercise all the rights of a non-Brahmin,” wrote Gandhi. He also appeared anguished at the atrocities. In an article in Navajivan, his Gujarati Journal, Gandhi wrote that cruelties to the untouchables constituted ‘an outrage grosser that that in the Punjab against which we have been protesting.’ ‘We... segregate them... drive them to live on the outskirts of the village, (are) not concerned whether they live or die... give them food left over by others’.

Thus Gandhi touched upon a whole range of issues in his journals. Combined with his other communication strategies, Gandhi’s journal greatly helped in the mobilization of the people. The massive participation in the movement of a wide section of people confirms the success of Gandhi’s strategies.


The concept of Charismatic arbiter has been proposed by J.P. Nettl in his book Political Mobilisation A Sociological Analysis of Methods and Concepts, Faber and Faber, London, 1967.


Quoted in S.N. Bhattacharyya, op.cit, p. 39.

Sharda Prasad, H.Y.: Gandhi As Journalist, op.cit.

This observation was made by Shri Rajiv Vohra, Chairman, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, in an interview that the researcher had with him.


Sharda Prasad, H.Y.: op.cit, p. 5.


Suchitra: op.cit.

Gandhi M.K.: Young India, 12-6-1924, 199.


Young India, 8-10-1919


Quoted in Bhattacharya, Bhabani: op.cit. p. 38.

Ibid.

Indian Opinion, April 23, 1906.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Bhattachrya, Bhabani: op. cit. p. 43.

Gandhi took the editorship of Navajivan at the same time.


Ibid.

Harijan, May 13, 1933.
39 Quoted in Bhabani Bhattacharya: op.cit. p.62.
40 Ed. Anthony J. Parel, op.cit, pp. xv, xvi.
45 This part is an edited version of a biography of Mahatma Gandhi as it appears on the site: http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~vdk/pranami/gandhi.htm. This site gives credit to “The Story of Gandhi”. Author: Rajkumari Shanker, Publisher: Children's Book Trust, New Delhi, 1969, for the same.
46 This part is heavily borrowed for Indira Rothermund, Gandhian Pattern of Mass Communication. New Quest 75, May 1989. pp. 159-163.
47 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
53 Chopra, Pran: The Sage in Revolt, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, 1972, p. 37.
55 Sagar, Peter: In an article in the Tanzanian daily, ‘Standard’, 2 October 1969.


60 Fiske, J.: op.cit., p. 49.


62 Chopra, Pran: op.cit. p. 38.


65 Ibid.

66 Ibid., p. 271.

67 Suchitra: op.cit. p. 743.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid. p. 744.


74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.


Ibid., p. 104.


Bhattacharya, Bhabani: Gandhi The Writer, op.cit, 40.

Indian Opinion, January 7, 1904.

Indian Opinion, January 21, 1904.

Ibid.

Bhattacharya, Bhabani, op.cit, p. 42.

This model has been proposed by Dr. Anand Kumar, JNU, during a discussion with the researcher. 1999.

Chandra, Bipan, et.al.: op.cit., p. 184.

Ibid, p. 185.

Ibid.

Bose, N.K: op. cit. p. 146.

Chandra, Bipan: op. cit. p.186

Ibid., p. 187.

Ibid.

Young India, 28 July 1920.


Ibid.

199
99  Young India, 19 January 1921.

100  Ibid.

101  Ibid.

102  Ibid.

103  Ibid.

104  Young India, January 12, 1922, Navajivan, Ahmedabad, 1985, vol. iv, 1922, p. 27.

105  Young India, 2 February 1921, op.cit, p. 35.

106  Young India, 6 July 1921, op.cit, vol. III, p. 212.