

CHAPTER – VII

RELEVANCE OF GANDHIAN APPROACH IN THE JOURNALISTIC TRENDS

Muckraking journalism is almost certainly a causality today. Journalistic approach must change according to the times and technology. But at the same time, the aberrations must be corrected. Then only the newspapers can regain the trust of the reading public. It is a fact that people are hungrier for information than ever before. The credibility, impartiality and reliability of news items will help the papers for its healthy existence. Newspapers offer a kind of credibility and expertise that other outlets of news can't match. Rupert Murdoch, the media emperor said recently, "Readers want what they have always wanted; a source they can trust. That has always been the role of great news papers in the past. And that role will make newspapers great in the future."¹

This study of mine has brought to light major aberrations of journalism. They are sensationalism, trivialisation of news items, undue importance given to advertisements, ignoring ethics for economic benefits, loss of the credibility of newspapers giving views disguised as news and over politicisation. Commercialisation of newspapers converted the journalistic field into, an arena of business. Even venture capitalists and media tycoons are competing in this field. Commercialisation converted news and newspaper to a product or commodity. The educational value and purity of news is ignored. It is a fact that newspapers are becoming a product prepared according to the demand of the market.

The real goals of the media were ignored. It is a fact that in course of time media insisted on certain objectives discarding some others so much so the objectives of the media and the society differed

on issues. The present trend seems to be imparting information and providing entertainment discarding many other objectives of media. At the same time, media especially print media it seems have failed to perform their expected duties and to achieve their objectives. They have neither conducted a deep opinion-research, nor had taken all the needs of the society into consideration. Further, it has not bothered to take public opinion into account nor has it aired public opinion in full. Objectives very often are not set by people, but by media themselves. This trend does not appear to be helpful for a healthy society and democracy. Our media does not rise to the higher levels in order to become participatory and interactive. There is a gap between the objectives of newspapers, its unlimited scope and actual practice. The news papers fail to generate favourable and balanced opinion among the people.²

There are so many things which the print media could effectively do more than any other media. Communication wise and functional wise it has several advantages. Television and other media are almost incapable of giving analysis, write-up, features and editorials. But it is sad that the print media is refraining from giving the details of news items. The mediemen have little insight or interest to guide the society. They forget that the objectives of the media are to inform, to educate, to transform, to restructure the society.... etc.

Mahatma Gandhi here gave us a great example of ideal journalism through his four publications 'Indian opinion', 'Young India', 'Navajivan' and 'Harijan'. The Father of the Nation can be considered as the Father of Indian journalism. We saw that the Gandhian journalistic experiments are value based. He himself said this: "I have naturally formed the habit of restraining my thoughts. And I can now give myself the certificate that a thoughtless word hardly ever escapes my tongue or pen. I do not recollect ever having

had to regret anything in my speech or writing. I have thus been spared many a mishap and waste of time.³ We had seen in the former chapters that the specialties of Gandhiji's journalistic attempts. They show us an example of journalism both with high standard of practical and ideal values. If we imbibe them, we can easily be remedied the aberrations of contemporary journalism. Analysis of contemporary situation taught us that it is not desirable. The basic lesson which Gandhi gave to journalists in the introductory part of 'Hind Swaraj is relevant today than ever. He wrote: "One of the objects of newspaper is to understand the popular feeling and to give expression to it; another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; and the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects."⁴ The three functions mentioned here are also the functions that he had proposed for his newspaper, Indian opinion.⁵

Gandhi never believed that his own stand point alone is correct and all others are wrong. He always welcomed various ideas and ideologies from everywhere; in his own words he always kept open the windows of his house for them. He never considered that whatever the newspapers gave were true. He criticised such a view entertained by many newspapers in Hind Swaraj: "To the English voters their newspapers is their Bible. They take their cue from their newspapers, which latter are often dishonest. The same fact is differently interpreted by different newspapers, according to the party in whose interests they are edited. One newspaper would consider a great Englishman to be a paragon of honesty, another would consider him dishonest. What must be the condition of the people whose newspapers are of this type?"⁶ Such attempts are considered as malpractices in journalism by Gandhiji. He said they are insuring the valuable press freedom.

Gandhi was a journalist who had many unique qualities. He believed in the purity of both ends and means. To him, what is ethically wrong will not be right in any other way. He was a journalist who stood by and fought for the millions of poor people in India. He wrote in 'Harijan' that India lives in her seven lakh villages, not in her urban centres. He wrote in Young India that the planning must begin at the grass root level. Here we can see that his integrity in all the fields of his life. His political, social, educational or religious approach was not against to his journalistic approach. A journalist who believed in truth force, a man of absolute non-possession, a warrior of unfearful fights, a person with uncompareable will power and a saint among politicians taught us that education and communication are tools. A tool can be used well or abused. "The same instrument that may be used to cure a patient may be used to take his life, and so may a knowledge of letters. We daily observe that many men abuse it, and very few make good use of it, and if this is a correct statement, we have proved that more has been done by it than good. ⁷Now we can evaluate how Gandhi used this divine instrument in the coming articles. And it is a search for the answers of our journalistic problems of the day. There was not a single day in which Gandhi wrote something in his life. He wrote important things even when travel by train. This continuous writing helps him in his own growth. He was a product of making, so it is relevant expose his approach as a solution to our contemporary problems.

Article 1. Editorial Trends and Gandhian Views

Media can instill higher values in individuals and the society. It can also introduce new visions and virtues. So the media has the responsibility to give news and views congenial to the creation of such an atmosphere. It has to resist all kinds of enticements and

temptations. The media must not act as promoters of consumerist culture now prevailing in every field of life the world over.

Reporting must be impartial. But at the same time it must side with the cause of justice. Now we are seeing the reports are going hand in hand with power. Some reporters are not giving balanced news or views. Reporting is not a pure historical documentation even though journalism is called as the primary history of events. News is defined as an account of an event, or a fact or an opinion that interests people. Anything that people want to read is news, provided it does not violate the canons of good taste and the laws of libel. So news is that which the greatest interest for the greatest number of people. So news must be an accurate and timely intelligence of happenings. It includes the inspiration of happenings and the result of such happening. It comprises all current activities of general human interest and the best news is that which interests the most readers.

But Gandhi was a person who never searches news as we define the term today. His words are big news to world media in his time. At the same time he gave his views and opinion in his publications instead of news. The conventional values of news such as progress disaster, eminence, novelty.... etc. did not attract Gandhi. He never hunted for news; but he himself was a news source. Gandhi insisted that a reporter should always double check the facts with at least a second source. As an ardent votary of Truth he was in tune with the factual reporting. But at the same time he was accepting the practice of some exaggeration in journalism to increase readability without sacrificing truthfulness. He said, "If I am true to myself, if I am true to mankind, if I am true to humanity, I must understand all the faults that human flesh is heir to." ⁸ Such a factual reporting was against all sorts of sensationalise practices in journalism. Here no news item will be sensationalised or trivialised. At the same time it will extend to the

goodness of the society with a human touch. Reasonable intelligence, ability to write with extra ordinary speed, a sociable personality, variety of experiences, a temperament of work hard, tolerance permitting objective observations of people and events, firm determination, wide range of interests, self discipline.... etc. are some of the qualities of Mahatma Gandhi as a journalist. These are accepted as the qualities of a good reporter or editor. Gandhi showed us how a good journalist simply takes a position as an unbiased witness in reporting events and accurately interpreting the facts. He did not give importance to news as we consider it today.

(i) Factual Reporting

Gandhi believed that the press must enlighten people. For this the reporting must be factual. The media can be used to enslave a nation. At the same time it can also liberate the nation. Gandhi showed us the later. The press can be employed to disseminate either truths or false hood. In the history of the world we can see the press has successfully resisted most overt attempts at control, with the aid of some enlightened public officials and leaders like Gandhi. Yet this is a battle the press must continue to fight. Equally important for the press in a free society is its relationship with the people, because they keep the press in business. Readers and subscribers are the life blood of the press. As a member of a free enterprise system open to anyone who cases to venture into competition, a newspaper must maintain the confidence and respect of its readers, or its competitors will take over. In this regard also factual and truthful reporting is an inevitable necessity for a news paper

The function of the newspaper editorial department is to gather news from various sources as it occurs and to write it into readable interesting form, to edit it, and display it in the newspaper. Secondary

functions of the paper are to instruct or influence the public through editorials and special articles and to entertain by means of special columns and write-ups. Gandhi gave greater importance to the second function. For this he was truthful and factual fully. We can see the perfectionist approach in his writings. Some times we can see that he is writing the same truth repeatedly in his journals. He himself said: “I believe in what Max Muller said years ago, namely, that truth needed to be repeated as long as there were men who disbelieved it.”⁹ Now newspapers are venturing into the fourth dimension with database – enhanced news presentations and sophisticated use of digital news resources. The traditional was often described as a two dimensional news product. The web is said to introduce a third dimension with depth of presentation through layered content, branching links, multimedia and interactivity. In all these planes, the importance of factual reporting does not diminish because everyone wants to know the truth. Most of the newspapers have experienced the evaporation of information value in their own way. “Inaccurate and misleading news items are curse of our time”- Experts in communications opined.¹⁰ Even in this age of fourth dimensional journalism the basic values put forward by Gandhiji are relevant. Journalists like Kerry J. Northrup, Technologies Editor, Infra accepts this. The old comment of C.P. Scott, “Facts are sacred and comment is free” is still valid. To conclude, we can quote Gandhiji who become one of the symbols of values in this country, “I can see that in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth, truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists. Hence I gather that God is life, Truth is light. He is love. He is the Supreme Good.”¹¹

(ii) Treat the News as it Deserves

We saw in the preceding chapters that news is a sacred thing. It must treat as it deserves. Do not add spice to the news because it is

against to the theories of journalistic ethics. In society, journalism must aim at the 'good of all and happiness of all'. It is nothing different to the concept of sarvodaya put forward by Gandhiji. The practice of sensationalising and trivialising news is related to and aimed at circulation hike. This is nothing, but pure business. Gandhiji's life was a ray of hope in this darkness. He lived his own life as a world teacher, inspired the people of the global community to do likewise including in the field of journalism. Fearless and biasless approach to news is considered as the highest value of journalism. Gandhiji showed us that if we want peace and prosperity in individual, social and national life we must learn to live the life of truth and non-violence, spirituality and science, fearlessness and biaslessness. In this approach there is no scope for conflict or competition with each other. ¹² The world today is ripe with discord and disintegration. Political differences are also assuming gigantic violent eruptions comparable with those amongst religious, sectional and caste divisions. Fear complex and violent methods are increasingly manifesting themselves in the social as well as economic fields. This is not only found in India but it pervades the whole world scene. It is not possible to have any single ideology or philosophy acceptable to the whole world or in such a vast country as India. This is but natural. It is possible to have different shades in thinking even amongst those having their base in 'Truth and Non-violence' and believing in the 'Purity of Means'. However it is a matter of great concern that there appear differences and tensions amongst those working for identical objectives. Influenced by such a situation in the country, and the world we are all passing through a strange psychological phase. In this context, truth must prevail. So the importance of communication with truthfulness becomes an absolute necessity. So every journalist has the duty to treat the news as it deserves. Each news item needs an appropriate treatment. But the

chord of truthfulness (to Gandhi God) must tie each of them. Then friendship of heart persists even though differences of opinion exist in the society. Each journalist has to act on this golden principle.

(iii) Journalism with a Human Touch

Mahatma Gandhi was one of the simplest persons who lived a very simple life in the world. Every action of his was untainted with hatred, malice or ill-will. No wonder he is addressed by the intelligentsia as Dharmic Gandhi, Socialist Gandhi, Ahimsa Gandhi, Secular Gandhi, Democratic Gandhi.... etc. In fact, he was all these and more. The most important trait in his character was the human he lent to all his actions. Gandhian period gave a hope for the future not only to our country, but to the whole world. But the post independent realities tell a different tale. Every walk of life, including politics and journalism has demoralized and become self-centered. Devaluation of Gandhian values is taking place even in his country of birth. We have for then all about him except perhaps the prefix 'Mahatma'. We ignore common man in every decision. Human rights violations are quite ordinary in our time. We put Gandhi in currency notes, photos, statues and icons. He was a political, social, economic, educational and journalistic crusader. But we gave him forceful martyrdom in all the fields of life.

Modern journalism is fast degenerating into a medium for the glorification of personalities and people wielding power and money. Even antisocial elements are extolled. Almost all people ignore or forget the 'Daridra Narayanas'. Gandhi, the sage of mystic wisdom prophetically and philosophically knew that charity and justice have both a place in the imperfect human society. He was a dreamer and a practical man of action at the same time. He bore malice with none and was willing to compromise with his enemies. For him non-violence

is the law of life and knew full well that use of force could take us nowhere. His roots go deeper than those of the ordinary run of men, for they draw their strength from the perception of the inner beauty and purpose of things, from the invisible life which goes beyond the life of this world but which alone ennobles and explains it. Gandhi's journalistic approach was an expression and extension of this moral force and goodness. So he was in partisan with the marginalised groups in the society. As the former British M.P. Philip Noel-Baker rightly pointed out, "Gandhi was a man whose greatness belonged not only to his life time but history. He was the friend of the poorest, the lowliest and the lost."¹³

Gandhi was a person who wrote even with his small paper pencil and unprinted portions of old calendar sheets. Thus the Mahatma gave the great message that all natural resources must be preserved for the future generations. Such a journalism or journalist is not common in the history of world. Today almost all news papers and newsmen are ignoring the value of environmental protection and preservation of natural resources. All papers are becoming professionally designed papers. They display news items and photos as goods displayed in a good super market. These papers lost their life though they can attract the readers (Consumers). Everyday a good newspaper must come with a difference in news as well as display. Each situation needs a different approach. The basic values must not be changed. Then only the life of the paper must be enriched. The umbilical chord of divine human touch in journalism must be kept sacred. Our newspapers and magazines must become more human and humane.

Article 2. Economic Trends Influencing Journalism and Their After Effects

A new trend in journalism is that it becoming more and more business today. It has accelerated the decline in prestige of the editors. Editorial control has fallen and editor becomes only a public relations officer. The mass media is forgetting mass realities. The managements control on editorial section has increased and the relevance of the market is amplified. The news tends to cope with the need of the market. Both globalisation and liberalisation are have become straws, that break the camels back. Newspapers have started dumping copies in airports, railway stations, bus stands, everywhere. They're no longer looking for readers; they're looking for eyeballs.

It is an age of corporocracy in the journalistic field. It devalues journalism for economic benefits. Some times even untruth is publishing for overcoming the opponent paper. Gossips are becoming the part of media activities. Great ideas and ideals were ignored for the success in the market. The integrity, impartiality and creative mentality was loosing from the journalistic field. Some of the papers are trying to create forced circulation. Prof. Frank Thayer, expert in newspaper business management at the University of Wisconsin was writing about this: "When a newspaper dealer or newspaper boy, takes and pays for more copies than he has customers, he is said to 'eat' the left over."¹⁴ Prof. Frank Tayer styled the 'eaten' papers as 'indigestible' which result in unnatural or 'forced' circulation. This shows the circulation was between the papers.

The market influence decreasing the self-criticising power of the media. It is also a threat to Press Freedom. Technological advancement in the field of media made it a business which needs huge capital. To attain and ensure the sound economic condition almost all dailies

deteriorated journalistic ethics. Money motive interests are not go hand in hand with journalistic ethics and professional heights.

The journalism in pre-independent period had only one aim – India's freedom from the British rule. So almost all the dailies, especially the papers of Gandhi, were published with a missionary zeal. In the sense those dailies are free from all economic bondages and links. They are fighting for freedom courageously. The writings of Gandhiji had the power to produce a great effect on the government and the people and largely contributed to the growing national mindedness in the country. He profoundly influenced also the standards of journalism as a profession in the country. He enlightens the people and prepares them for initiating activities for freedom. Gandhi was never run his publications in loss. At the same time he did not want to make money from them. His basic economic concepts influenced his journalism also. Here we can see the solutions of economic problems which the media face today.

Newspapers, magazines, T.V. Channels now compete with one another in wooing the readers and the viewers holding out incentives and gifts. When a newspaper has to entice the reader with gifts other than their own products, it shows the low level to which it has stooped. These extraneous incentives are just trade gimmicks and unworthy of the traditions of the fourth estate. It is stated here that because of the emerging commercialisation and capitalism. The merit of news is ignored and such economic trends must be unwarranted. It is unethical and would cut the roots of the Fourth Estate.

Gandhiji's economic concepts are based on three basic assumptions: (i) Every person has an inherent right to live (ii) The intellectual labour is spiritual. So the intellectuals must not leave bread labour (iii) Moral and the materials progress do not go together. With this broad concepts Gandhi approached journalism. So he fully

avoided paid advertisements. He was also against to the commercialisation of news papers.

(i) Journalism is Not for Sale

We saw that communication is a divine boon to man from God. It is not a commodity to sell in the market place. Today 'mega' papers trying to kill 'mini' papers by selling news items. News papers compete each other with a vigorous spirit. Some media persons and journalists are selling news space by accepting money. Papers are deteriorating to 'pay-pers'. Newspaper is considered to be a messenger who reaches information with justice. But today it degrades as a commodity in the market.

The marketing network of newspapers, money power of them, the social influence, and the place of media in the minds of millions always tends journalism to become a big business. But really, it is the fourth estate of democracy. The social crusader aspects of newspapers must be preserved. It based on the goodwill and the curiosity in the minds of the people.

Newspaper is a big business. But it is not like any other business. It is not surely profitable also. It needs new content – mix every day. A new newspaper must compete with the age old papers in the market from the beginning itself. The forced circulation must not be become natural circulation in the ordinary case. Some newspapers are giving free as a part of the circulation war. These free copies, 'Sticker copies', Complimentary copies etc... are part of the forced circulation. The increase of nuclear families, the advancement of technology and marketing strategies increased the circulation of newspapers. They are becoming information packets, study guides and service columns to boost up the circulation. But in quality wise the newspapers are not improved so much. Here we saw the improvement

of business but not of journalism. It is the time of wholistic approach in every field. Like wholistic medicine, wholistic journalism and wholistic information must be provided. It is the necessity of the era.

The advertisement war is another field of competition. Journals are attacking each other for selling ad-space. For space marketing, the circulation figures become a tool. Both print and visual media depend on advertisements for survival. Those who give the big advertisements (Advertisers) ultimately govern the media too. Thus the media world is indirectly controlled by capitalist forces and hence much of the ownership of newspapers is with them.

Everyone keeps dividing journalism into serious and non-serious journalism – It's a bogus division. What is called non-serious journalism, is in fact, a very serious business proposition, or at least it's perceived as that by the media owners. They divide journalism into what is serious and what makes reverse.

Here also Gandhi's concepts are different. To him, journalism was a sacred mission and a tool to service. He never go before advertisements or advertorials. He was a man who visualised village oriented economy, trusteeship, theory of bread-labour, economic equality and harmonious relations between capital and labour had been convinced of necessity of decentralised political and economic system. He believed that journalism must also stand for decentralized political and economic system. Accumulation of wealth is not considered as a glittering experience by him. He believed in the welfare of all and production by the masses in the society. Decentralised economic system can be sustained only through decentralised political system.

As an ideal journalist Gandhi showed us that one can run a paper with only collecting subscription rate. As we know, the

establishment cost in those days is too lesser than that of today. But even then the example showed by him is relevant. When some printing units were not ready to publish Gandhiji's journals in fear of the British authorities, the two co-workers of Gandhiji, Anasooya Ben and Maganlal Gandhi started a press. It was Navajivan Mudranalaya. Rs. 6000/- was its production cost. The copy right of Gandhiji's works are owned by this publishing house even today.

Competition is a by-product of any business. While not consider journalism as a business, Gandhiji avoided all sorts of unhealthy competition. He was a journalist who gave importance to the service angle of journalism. He taught things with his media. For this he consciously and purposefully ignored the other two duties of the media – to entertain and inform day to day events. In an approach based on service there is no scope for commercialization. Business approach will destroy the very essence of journalism itself. Gandhi foresightedly visualised this long ago.

Localisation of news is a common phenomena today. It lose national and international perspective. This kind of localisation is for increasing business and so parochial. Earlier it was all national and the reader didn't know what was going on at the grass roots and therefore were taken by surprise by ground realities. Now the pendulum may be swinging the other way. Again, this is the lure of the market and so not good for healthy journalism.

(ii) Ethics First, Everything Else Next

Gandhi considered ethics as primarily important in journalism. Everything other had only secondary importance. He write: "I wish these correspondents and the news agencies will, instead of making the publication of news a matter merely of making money, think of the public good. Premature publication of news indirectly obtained by

means not always straight ought not to be the function of journalists.”¹⁵ He always insisted on the checking of news items to increase its authoritativeness. He added, “I know that mine is a voice in the wilderness, though I speak with the authority of an unbroken experience of practical journalism for over twenty years, if successful conducting of four weeklies can be regarded as such. It was a hard struggle, but I found in the field of journalism as in many others that the strictest honesty and fair dealing was undoubtedly the best policy. Any short cut is longer at least by double the length sought to be saved for there must be a retracing. I say all this not for the sake of the struggle in which I would value the co-operation of journalists whether they approve of or oppose my methods of political warfare.”¹⁶

He considered the highest ideals like truth and non-violence with primary importance. He wrote, “Young India will be stale when truth becomes stale. The pages of Young India can only, illustration the utility and the necessity of non-violence in dealing with the questions that engage public attention. So much for the central policy of Young India.”¹⁷ Gandhiji believed that the readers also have an ethical role in newspaper reading. He considers it as a ‘Yajna’ or ‘Sadhana’. The ethical aspect is more important than all other aspects of journalism. He advised, “Readers, you don’t read Navajivan for mere pleasure. You read it in order to understand your post of duty in the great Yajna which is in progress in our country. If the readers of Navajivan realize their duty, you may rest assured that Swaraj is as good as in your hands.”¹⁸

Gandhi’s ethical stand was directly related to sarvodaya (the welfare of all) and the upliftment of the poor. In theory, journalistic approach should tend in favour of the downtrodden segment in the society. Now everyone neglects the poor. 70% of the population is ignored. These people in the country are a forsaken lot, lost in poverty

and misery is living in neglected day and night. No developmental journalist seeking their problems. Almost all correspondents say that we don't want to talk to them, because they don't make news. Media ignore common man until the elections, when they screw the media's happiness. Here we can see a journalist who always consider and stand for the millions of 'Daridra Narayana's in this country. Many asked Gandhi why he does not start a newspaper in English. He answered: I shall convey my message to villagers who lived in small huts and to farmers and weavers in this country. For this, I shall use their own language."

Gandhi's articles mostly dealt with topics which he considered of vital interest to the progress of the nation. It is considered opinions on the burning topics of the found expression in the columns of his journals. The Hindu-Muslim unity, the abolition of the drink evil, the promotion of Khadi and other village industries, the large scale use of the spinning wheel as a means of supplementing the income of the semi-starving and half - employed village peasants in India,.... etc are his topics. Almost all these topics are directly related to the actions of that great karmayogi.

Gandhi insisted on that everything written in the papers are based on first hand information. Writers must narrate only their own experiences. What was sheared here and there must not be reported. The purity of printing letters must be kept. The pure, plane and simple personality of Gandhi was against to all sorts of unethical practices which we see today's journalism. The transparency and integrity of journalist Gandhi was extraordinary. It is based on his spiritual strength and height.

Gandhi was not a journalist who gave what the people wanted. He never tried to fulfill the interest of the people. He was leading the people in the direction which he believed, would lead them to a better

life. His readers are also accepted this way of life. The social commitment of the media is decreasing. Many other interests are taking its place. But it is not desirable trend because all media activities are socio-cultural in nature. So it must be ethical and moral.

(iii) Avoid Advt-Culture

It is a fact that Gandhiji avoided all sorts of advertisements from his publications. It is an ideal stand. Today, it is not easy for newspaper establishment to take such a stand. Primarily, newspapers become a huge industry. It needs large scale investment. Secondly, the establishment cost and maintenance cost of newspapers are also very high. In this situation the only thing which is practical is to avoid the advertisement culture of the media.

The undue importance attached to advertisement is a comparatively novel phenomenon. In the competitive field of advertisements each media tries to canvass more and more advertisements. Now this competition leads to unhealthy practices such as adulteration and fabrication of news. For advertisements, even press freedom and journalistic ethics is curtaining. It is a fact that advertisements help indirectly the readers to get the newspaper in low price. But for this the great principles, practices and age old traditions of journalism must not be buried. Journalistic field become very complex in nature now because of the above said advertisement culture. Advertisement is purely a commercial matter. It must not be allowed to destroy the editorial supremacy and social commitment of the media. Today, the capital forces and the commercial tycoons are killing gradually, the professional excellence in journalism. The only remedy of this is to control the media by the public. Media can control the public in democracy. Vice-versa is also possible. Readers must become media literate and conscious. Editorial must not be changed

into content-mix and editor must not be allowed to change to content-manager. Matter disguised as news is only advertisements. It must be realized and resisted using tooth and nail. Some managements use contractualisation, casualisation, hire and fire system etc. to control the journalists as their will. The readers must show them that journalistic work is a creative work. At the same time responsible journalists must realize that conflicts, competitions and sensationalism do not make a valuable newspaper. The value of the media is not lies in the peeping to the public life. Journalism is a business which must not tend to be more business'.

The 'paid news syndrome' which we see today is a by-product of ad-culture. It makes the field corrupted. The basic approach of most of the media owners is that 'everything is for exchange and exchange is for profit'. This will create a situation which led to the loss of credibility of the media. The pressure in the workplace due to the ad-culture on additional sections will also affect the matter of fact reporting. Capital, journalistic creativity, work efficiency and reliability must go hand in hand. All money motive hidden agendas must be avoided.

In each advertisement, there is an element of cheating, by and large. This is against to truth. To Gandhi, the empire of Truth has not limits and knows no relaxations. Modern life, However has made numerous and extensive inroads upon it. Advertisement is become inevitable in the progress of any business today. Gandhi was preternaturally careful to avoid situations that might compromise or weaken his adherence to truth. With a will that no bribe can buy and no threat can bend, he upholds the supremacy of his conscience. Dedicated in body and soul to the service of mankind, he will seek no good however great or glittering, except by methods wholly consonant with his own conception of right or truth. He protests against people following him blindly and accepting his decisions without

endeavouring to make them their own. Yet so weak is human nature that in the wide circle of his influence, people too readily surrender their individual freedom and so falter with truth. The Mahatma's devotion to the goodness of truth in her various phases.

As we saw later, Kerala is a land of high media literacy, media consciousness and media vigilance. But here also the ad-culture is not less. The advertisement portion in newspapers is increasing. The in-house advertisements of newspaper houses also take a considerable portion of the newspaper. Here also as major part of the total revenue is realized by selling space to advertisers, a reader can buy a newspaper at less than its cost of production. Here media is bringing about modifications to meet the changing tastes of readers and demand of advertisers. Selling space is becomes easier if the newspaper has a good circulation. In Kerala, the major two newspapers are having circulation figure above 12 lakhs. The purchasing power of people in this state is also high. So advertisers are attracted to the publications largely.

The editorial content of a newspaper has a marked influence on the decision of advertisers. The editorial content must provide an environment for selling advertisement space. Some readers consider advertisements as an integral part of the newspaper. It cannot be died that advertisement has communication and informative value. It also give some valuable information to readers. But the control must be on the editorial items. The newspaper is basically meant for reading. It is not fully meant for commercial purposes. The power of news items and editorial content make a newspaper more worthful. This will indirectly cause the success of advertisement section also. Thus we can empower a paper without spreading advt-culture.

Article 3. Political and Social Trends of Print Media and Their Influences

The newspaper industry is not only a commercial organisation but also an important socio-political institution. A newspaper has two sides: One side it is a business like any other business and has to pay for its raw materials and ensure return on its investment, on the other it has socio-political obligations. It reflects and influences community life, socially, politically and economically. It, therefore, enjoys a special position in the body politic of a nation. Socio-economic changes are invariably accompanied by tension and sufferings in various forms in the society. Newspapers have a role in removing these tensions.

Gandhi believed in the spiritualisation of politics. But he was firmly committed to the equality and tolerance of all religions. This was his approach to journalism also. Gandhi derived his politics from religion but in struggling against religious divisions and fanaticism and in emphasizing the relationship between national unity and spirit of tolerance, he took the struggle for secularism forward. He made it clear that state should have nothing to do with religion, which is a personal affair. He gave the state the responsibility of looking after secular affairs like welfare, health, communication, foreign relations, currency, etc.

Media is now 'manufacturing consents' for their political motives. Global corporate media is creating opinion in favour of corporate economic – capital powers. In India, also there are some such attempts. The repetition of lies, deviating facts, trivialisation or exaggeration of news, over sensationalisation, etc., are usual practices in our media. These tendencies and trends must be avoided. Now media exaggerate local issues and ignoring global problems. Gandhi takes approaches that 'think globally and act locally'.

From media, society expects facts. But the reader gets the versions of media owners and journalists. Developmental journalism is ignored today. Socially thinking, development journalism is a tool for social justice and development of the society. A developmental journalist can inform the rest of the world about important issues within developing nations. Looking at the strengths and weaknesses of a country may also help to identify ways in which the nations can be helped. When development is used as a propaganda tool, however it become very dangerous. In Kerala, we are seeing such a trend also. Journalists must avoid the temptation to promote a particular political party, politician, social organisation, religion, or a certain business house or businessman. They should not attempt to gain cheap popularity. The pursuit of truth is the only way that a journalist should owe allegiance to. Gandhi as an ethical journalist believed in this.

Irresponsible reporting, politically biased approach and over importance to politics in newspapers are against to Gandhian journalistic philosophy. Each journalist must be a political and social crusader. They must show the people the path of duty while they insisted on securing their rights. Gandhiji emphasised it in the objectives of Indian Opinion. "We (the workers of Indian Opinion) write impersonally and no one on the staff of this journal claims any glory over the matter. We therefore think it but rights to take the public into our confidence. The journal (Indian Opinion) is a great instrument of education. It is necessary for every Indian to look upon the journal as belonging to him, not as something mine." ¹⁹

Mahatma Gandhi's greatest contribution to Indian politics and society is lies in the unique method which he had prescribed and employed for fighting wrongs. He considered both in life and in journalism, our strength lies not in concealing our weakness but in

knowing and combating it. He made us to realize our own strength through Truth and Non-violence. His approach based on these two pillars of Gandhian Philosophy and journalism is capable for remedying the political and social aberrations which we face today.

(i) Be Positive – Politically and Socially

Gandhiji has elevated politics to the sublimity of religion, charged the conflicts with a high ethical and humanitarian touch. Gandhiji is unique in political history. He was invented an entirely new and humane technique for the liberation struggle of an oppressed people and carried it out with the greatest energy and devotion. The moral influence which he has exercised upon thinking people through the civilized world may be far more durable than would appear likely in our present age, with its exaggeration of brute force. For the work of statesman is permanent only in so far as they arouse and consolidate the moral forces of their people through their personal example and educating influence. For this educating value Gandhi conducted newspapers. As Albert Einstein rightly pointed out he is a beacon to the generations to come.

Gandhi clearly defined the objects of his journal Indian opinion. The objects of the journal ('Indian Opinion') were threefold: "first, to make our grievances known to the Government, to the whites here in South Africa and in England and to the people in India, Secondly to tell our people of their own short comings and to exhort them to overcome these and, thirdly – and this is perhaps the principal object to eliminate the distinctions as between Hindus and Mohammedans and also those among Gujaratis, Tamilians and Calcattawallas prevalent here." ²⁰ Here we can see the outlook of Gandhi on political and social problems. Gandhi is not only for India a hero of national history whose legendary memory will be enshrined in the millennial epoch. He has not only been the spirit of active life which has breathed

into the people of India the proud consciousness of their unity, of their power and the will to their independence.

As a journalist, Gandhi's sincerity was transparent, his devotion to truth was inexorable. Sacrificing everything himself, he could ask anything of others. Material considerations, worldly cares and ambitions, vanished from his life. The spirit, as manifest in truth and love, possessed him. 'My creed' says Gandhi, 'is service of God and, therefore, of humanity... and service means pure love'. It was an enlightened approach in politics and in journalism and hence new. This great soldier of liberty, great seer of human destiny, martyr of the world's sorrow, prophet of the world's hope and sage of mystic wisdom always stands for practical steps in politics and in journalism.

Now technology and working practices changed in the field of journalism. Internet and other media competing with newspapers for giving more and more views and news. Developmental journalism got importance than ever before. Media become one of the major part of creative democracy. The credibility of the media got primary importance. Social commitment decreased than that of the time of Gandhiji. Globalization and internationalism got more and more importance in the field. Social security, human rights, environmental issues etc. become more discussed in media. So approaches in positive direction become needful.

Gandhi was a journalist who had acquired considerable knowledge on various topics. He combined much diversity with a magnanimous touch of unity. He understood the working of the human mind. He was an inventor of a unique kind. His unique ways of protest, struggle, emancipation and empowerment were all positive in nature. This must be relevant today. Gandhiji explored all the dimensions of the human psyche – its capacity to willingly accept

suffering, even unto death, not to attain the kingdom of heaven, but a better world here and now, through social and political change.

We saw that Mahatma Gandhi was a multi-faceted personality to an unusual degree. He was a man of peace who did not hesitate to fight for what he believed to be right; a political strategist who shunned conventional politics and held no office; a thinker and a philosopher who was a man of action. He adopted himself to changing situations without compromising or abandoning his basic values. He respected tradition, yet he was an iconoclast. He embodied spirituality. But his was a spirituality rooted in service to an empowerment of the disadvantaged and underprivileged. He was impatient for cataclysmic change. Yet he shunned violence in any form as an instrument to force the pace of change.

The essence of Gandhi's political and social philosophy was the empowerment of every individual positively, irrespective of class, caste, colour, creed or community. We now recognized that political liberty must go hand-in-hand with economic progress. The political discourse, these days, is centered on a global war on terror. And indeed, terrorists who target innocent men, women and children deserve no quarter. But today's enemies are not just individuals, they are also ways of thinking and perceiving the world itself. Countering violence with even more violence provides not durable solution. Gandhi's greatest lesson to the world was that we must not be act destructively. Gandhi knew that violence only begets violence and spirals on. Non-violence, non-cooperation, non possession.... etc are negative terms conventionally. But Gandhi made them politically positive terms. He was considered as a saint among politicians and a politician among saints. He spiritualised politics. But now we are politicising everything including spirituality. Journalists must be

aware of that and take precautions against this over politicisation. In the next sub-article we shall discuss it more clearly.

(ii) Avoid Over Politicisation

Gandhiji was basically a man of politics. If we compartmentalise the actions of his life, political activities got the major portion of his time. But he always avoid over politicisation from journalism. He was a politician who deviated his writings from mere political subjectiveness. So the questions are not whether Mahatma Gandhi's this journalistic approach is relevant or not. The real issue is whether we have the courage and strength of mind to follow in his footsteps, whether we are prepared to live our lives by what he preached and most importantly practiced.

Even while discussing major political issues, Gandhi used his strong sense of humour. He said, "If I had no sense of humour, I would have committed suicide long ago." ²¹At the same time he reveal his political motives and objectives through his publications. "The chief aim of Hindi Navajivan was to propagare non-violent non-cooperation. It was the translations from Navajivan and Young India." ²²

Gandhi did not stick to the infallibility of his own views and beliefs. He believed in the free expression of various opinions. He strongly advocated the freedom of expression and in the liberty of the press. "The restoration of free speech, free association and free press is almost the whole Swaraj", He wrote. ²³Gandhi was a patriotic man. At the same time he was beware of over patriotic approaches both in politics and in journalism which become injustice. "I work for India's freedom because my swadeshi teaches me that, being born in it and having inherited culture, I am fittest to serve her and she has a prior claim to my service. But my patriotism is not exclusive; it is calculated

not only not to hurt any other nation, but to benefit all in the true sense of the word.”²⁴

Today, news papers are politicising news items. In that sense, we can call them ‘views papers’. As a result of this over politicization, sometimes even false news items are got printed. The organs of political parties are fully ‘ignoring the opposite view.’ Almost all media are ignoring the political attempts of the poor and the marginalised. Today the distinction between journalism, public relations, advertisements and entertainment is eliminated. This also made the newspapers politically biased. Most of our present newspapers are just like the ‘Pravda’ of the old Soviet Union. They gave only one view and so partial in politically.

Journals and journalists must be angels and apostles of democracy. They must be vigilant to give a balanced view. It is necessary for the sustenance of a healthy democracy. For this, all newspapers must go hand-in-hand with as a united community. There was no time in history when the media was absolutely impartial in functioning.. But now politicisation is increasing and search for truth decreasing. Many press laws enforced both by the government and the media owners worsen the situation. Some journalists exaggerates or trivialise political incidents according to their political will. Both these tendencies are harmful to a healthy society and must be avoided.

(iii) Enlighten Politics by the Press

By using the social changing power, the media can enlighten politics. For this, committed journalists should report truth. Trivial sensationalism should be avoided. First of all, we must admit that there are other important areas of life existing outside politics. Then go out and report on exciting things that happen there. There are no simplistic solutions to enlighten politics. Only through

professionalism, dedication to duty and truth, and ultimately love for the people and the country can improve things.

Responsibility, creativity and vision will change the present situation. All reporters have a solemn duty to inform, to pass on what they know and see. Right to information is slowly emerging as a basic right of the citizens. Many persons use the law of right to information now. It is one of our basic rights. So the press must adhere to truth and truth alone.

The difficulty in journalism is what is important for whom. The important events for the ordinary people often are not significant enough for the planners and politicians of this country. What is often projected as important is therefore the political advantages of a few, which make people disillusioned and sarcastic. For example, the ISRO espionage case in Kerala. Even now most people don't know what the truth is. What one can say generally is that, events from all walks of life should get prominence. More objectivity should be brought in, by getting people from diverse spheres of life to express their views on important events and report them objectively. Never twist news and views of people. Never resort to manipulation of news to suit ones interest or to create sensation. Reporters should really take the trouble to investigate and find out the truth. Newspapers should take a stand for and on behalf of people. Instead of crass commercial interests, sensitivity to the marginalised and oppressed should be developed. Monitoring structures like the Press Council should be more vigilant and take stringent action against unethical approaches. By these committed journalists can enlighten politics especially power politics. They have to fight against corruption and inefficiency. Gandhi gave a broad definition to politics. But now we are giving importance to peripheral political activities in our newspapers. Almost all papers giving importance to conflicts and lip-services. But Gandhi believed in

a kind of 'enlightened politics' based on constructive activities. He said, "All constructive activity is in a sense part and parcel of the politics of the country."²⁵ This kind of a politics must be supported by newspapers. Thus press can enlighten politics. Both must be based on certain principles and ethical codes. Gandhiji again explained that I have sacrificed no principle to gain a political advantage.²⁶

Gandhian political, social and journalistic approaches were rooted on the existing social order but it propounded certain new elements suitable to the changing world order. He provides a methodology for solving problems. This novel mode of fight against injustice and evil gradually found favour with people – all over the world.

The first Press Commission (1954) itself gave some guidelines against over politicisation. But even now we are not practising those guidelines. The human liberative values must be preserved. Do not tarnish the privacy of political personalities. In broad sense justice, equality, socialism etc. must be propagated by the media. Then only the press can enlighten politics and so become more fruitful to common people.

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