CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION
Mahatma Gandhi was one of the greatest journalists of the 20th century. The service of Gandhiji as a journalist has not been properly exposed to us. He began to write articles for the vegetarian, an English weekly in England at the age of 21. South Africa shaped many of the ideas of Gandhiji and made a journalist of him. Gandhiji’s style was simple but effective. He used simple words and short sentences to drive his message and there was no ambiguity or confusion in what he wrote. He opened out his heart and shared his innermost thoughts and feelings with his readers which evoked an emotional response. Millions of people waited every week to read in their newspaper what he had written and what his message was for them. His compassion, humility, nobility and his concern for the poorest of the poor breathed through his writings. To Gandhiji, Journalism was an ‘Art’, an art which bears everlasting values of truth and service. Gandhiji says,

1 S.N. Bhatta charyya, Mahatma Gandhi the Journalist, Bombay, 1965, p. 8
2 Ibid, p 144
"I realised that the sole aim of journalism should be service."\(^3\)

While writing articles Gandhiji tried to guess the public reaction, whether that would hurt the feelings of the people\(^4\). Another important feature of Mahatma Gandhi, the journalist was his readiness to correct himself. Gandhiji, as an editor would correct himself publically if he found that some untruth had crept in his writings.

Gandhiji knew the power of the press very well. It could make or mar a case. If used judiciously a paper could do immense good to the people and in the hands of irresponsible people it would work havoc. He realised that those who controlled the press could create a public opinion. Gandhiji took the role to stand for the liberty of the press. Gandhiji was first jailed in India for his bold articles printed in Young India. When he was not allowed to express his deepest thoughts he stopped writing\(^5\).

While in South Africa, Gandhiji poured out his soul in the columns of "Indian Opinion" and through it he guided and unified the Indians. Gandhiji made his personality feel through the columns

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3 Mahatma Gandhi, An Autobiography, p. 239
4 S.N. Bhattarcharyya, op cit, p. 75
5 Anu Bandyopadhyaya, 'Mahatma Gandhi, Author Journalist, Printer, Publisher', p. 15
of 'Young India'. Young India and Navajivan, the journalist ventures of Gandhiji were published to educate the nation to win Poorna Swaraj through truthful and non-violent means. Gandhiji started the 'Harijan', while he was in prison to promote his campaign against untouchability. Gandhiji became disappointed with the 20th century journalism. To his great dismay Gandhiji found that newspapers could twist matters to suit their convenience. Journalists began to pick up bits of news from here and there and dish them up for the purpose of creating sensation. Gandhiji called this 'Backdoor Journalism'. An important phenomenon of 20th century journalism was interpretative news. Gandhiji did not like interpretative news, which to him was journalistic kite flying. He criticised newspapers which indulged in 'political Kite flying'. From the very beginning Gandhiji was against stunt in journalism. He hated false or exaggerated reports. 'To him means were as important as ends. Moreover, truth with him was God'.

6 Rangaswami Parthasarathy, op.cit, p.148
"The duty of the journalist is the same as that of the historian — to seek out the truth above all things and to present to his readers not such things as state craft would wish them to know but truth as near as he can attain it......7.

Fairness and objectivity are the hallmarks of journalism and a journalist should be truthful and independent not only of his management and union but also of his own predilection.

"Freedom of the media was in fact the essence of democracy. Journalists wield enormous influence in society and often serve as opinion makers8.

The free flow of democratic institution in a state can be verified through the nature and function of press and it can be seen as a litmus test to democracy 9.

7. Wickham Steed, The Press, Penquin, 1939, p.78 Quoted from Taya Zinkin’s ‘Reporting India’.

8. Quoted from the speech of Justice Sukhdev Singh Kang, Governor of Kerala at a seminar on Journalistic ethics organised by India Institute of Mass Communication vide The Hindu newspaper, 13, December 1997, Trivandrum.

In the introductory chapter the researcher had tried to outline the origin and growth of newspapers in the world, in India and in Kerala. The birth, growth and efflorescence of malayalam journalism has been described in this chapter. In the post independent era the Kerala newspapers attained full blossom and imbibed the international morphological aspects of journalism. The Malayalam newspapers attained circulation as well as readership. Two big giants in the field are Malayala Manorama and Mathrubhoomi with a circulation of 11 lakhs and 7 lakhs respectively.

“There is a beguiling logic in the idea that the more newspapers in circulation, the more quickly and thoroughly stories will spread\textsuperscript{10}.

To the Malayalies politics is the very breath of their nostrils, but as civilized men they prefer to fight their political feuds with the printed word. The state was prone to politics from the beginnings of the 20th century. In Kerala an appetite for political news had arisen by the 1920's\textsuperscript{11}. A newspaper culture took its origin in the state. The

\textsuperscript{10} See Discussions in Economic and Political Weekly vol XXII, No 14, 4 April, 1987. Robin Jefry - 'Culture of Daily Newspapers in India. p.610.

\textsuperscript{11} Robin Jefry, opcit, 608.
newspapers of Kerala has deep rooted influence on its mass. This opportunity was used by pressure groups with vested interests to the attainment of their ends through the printed pages of the newspapers. Many newspapers were either mouth pieces or sympathetic to the cause of the pressure groups and they influenced public opinion against the government\textsuperscript{12}. The pressure groups of Kerala with the aid and backing of the newspapers played a dominant role in the politics of Kerala during 1957-59. A newspaper is more powerful than thousands of bayonets\textsuperscript{13}.

In the succeeding chapter an attempt is made to streamline the credibility of newspapers, newspaper culture, morphology of press and operation of investigative journalism. The Communists who were hailed as ideologists in all perspective involved in a scandal known as Andhra Rice Scandal. This was a shocking news to the elite Kerala society. The investigative spirit of the Kerala journalists unearthed the hidden stories of the Rice Deal. It was a new experience to the people of Kerala. Even after the publishing of the Rice Deal Enquiry

\textsuperscript{12} C.N. Somarajan, Pressure Group Politics in Kerala, p.

\textsuperscript{13} Napoleon says that "Four Hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets". Quoted from Rodney Tiffen’s, News and Power, p.6.
Commission Report, a suspicion existed in the minds of the people. The researcher went through all relevant aspects of the Rice Deal. The coverage of the news of the deal belittled communist regime in the political society.

In the next chapter the researcher had tried to make an understanding of the communist ministry's attempt to purify the educational scenario of Kerala and how far the society and press responded to their effort. The Kottayam based newspapers stood for the cause of the educational interests of the church. They made the Education Bill as a sensitive affair,

"....they in a wild enthusiasm put out scoops on Kerala which resembled the stories of Allaudin's wonderful lamp."

The church hierarchy feared that through the Education Bill of Joseph Mundasseri, they will lose both their assets as well as social relevance in the Kerala society. The lofty ideals of the Bill were negated through journalistic talents. At the same time the dark side of the Bill was highlighted. The pastoral letters and the pulpit speeches covered by the newspapers made the people very sensitive to the issue and

14. R. Velayudhan, Kerala the Red Rainland, New Delhi, 1958
p 168.
made them religious minded. The net result was anti government feeling was generated in their minds.

The newspapers were able to command the Kerala public opinion against the Bill through its columns. Finally many vital clauses of the Bill were dropped by the government. Subsequent governments incorporated many of the provisions which were dropped by the communist government under public opinion.

In the last chapter, the researcher finds the impact of the press in accelerating the course of the Liberation Movement. The Press was able to create an impression among the minds of the multitudes of Kerala that the continuance of a communist regime in Kerala would eventually turn India Communist. Subsequently it created among the people a sense of fear that religious freedom would be lost, property rights would be lost and finally cultural values cultivated through the ages would be in danger.

The newspapers created a sense of discontent and disillusionment among the people against the government. The moment disillusionment came to the people, they reacted with force. They used the columns of the press for sharing their views. The feeling of security was inculcated by the fourth estate among the people. Their sensitive headings generated a feeling of collapse of
democratic institutions which was brought to this land through the epic struggle under the stewardship of Mahatma Gandhi.

Has the Press, by and large, kept up the standard preached and practiced by Gandhiji? Did the people of the country, for whom Gandhiji did so much and ultimately gave his life, practice truth? Or in other words, why should we expect some thing special from the journalists, if we do not expect the same from other segments of the community.

Journalism is not only a craftsmanship, it is a creative ability. It is not a journalist’s job to print news only, but to print what is ‘fit to be printed’. For that he has to combine in him the role of, among others, an educationist, sociologist and an economist. He will not only be well versed in subjects he is to deal with, but he has to understand their implications in the present context.

In the Kerala paradigm the press ran away from Gandhian ideologies and functioned as a fourth estate with all paraphernalias of vested interests. We may conclude that the Kerala Press was able to command public opinion for and against the governments which functioned in the post independent period.

15. S.N. Bhattacharyya, opcit, p. 168.