PREFACE

The study of what historian knows or thinks he/she knows about the past, and communication of this knowledge, the relation between knowing history and its communication in writing, is historiography.

A relatively recent branch of knowledge, historiography is a modern tool used by historians for the writing of history. Often, the terms 'historiography', 'the rhetoric of history', and the writing of history have been used synonymously. Historiography is different from collection of historical evidence, the editing of historical sources, the exercise of historical thought and imagination, the criticism of historical writing, and the philosophy of history, but it is related to all of them and overlaps some of them.

Broadly speaking historiography relates to:

i) historian's method of investigation, the nature of the weightage given to various sources, the technique employed, or collecting and presenting the data;

ii) to find out whether a set of events is studied as representing a pattern or each fact is treated as an isolated event;

iii) historiography also includes examining the manner of communicating what the historian knows, i.e., the rhetoric or the language that he/she uses to bring the past that he/she knows face to face with his/her reader in evocative or denotative manner.

Historiography deals with the history of ideas prompting the historian to adopt a particular line of thought. The objective is to understand the approach and ideology of a historian and to form an estimate of the work, to know about the technique adopted by him/her and assess his/her performance as a historian.

Historiography is important, particularly in so far as it helps in establishing objectivity in the available material. It further enables the student to critically assess, examine and understand historical event in its different dimensions and perspective. It also performs a corrective function. It aims at studying different versions of a
historical event. Accounts of events vary from one book of history to another, since the field of history allows the historian the freedom to depict, define and judge the event according to his own predilections. This results in the different versions of the same event being given in different history books. It is this variation which has necessitated the emergence of historiography.

In the historiography of Indian nationalism, Gandhi and his Satyagraha movement occupy a significant place. Indeed, any study of the Indian national movement would not be complete without taking into account Gandhi’s contribution. Moreover, he is the one individual in the twentieth century who has drawn, in his own right, widest and persistent attention of a multitude of writers.

From the turn of the century, Gandhi became the subject of writing by a variety of authors, and continues to be so. In the beginning, more serious work in this regard was done by western religious pacifists. Most of the writings on Gandhi by Indians appeared after his death. Gandhi’s birth centenary activities saw a spurt of literature both western and Indian. These were mostly the outcome of seminars, conference and symposia all over the world.

As is well known, Gandhi himself was a prolific writer, perhaps the most prolific of the twentieth century writers, who penned down so many trillions of words which the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India has put together in the ninety volumes of THE COLLECTED WORKS OF MAHATMA GANDHI. It took nearly three decades to complete this monumental project, which is a very rich research source material.

Apparently, if so much has already been written on Gandhi and the Indian National Movement then why the present study? What is its relevance?
Our premise here is that any study of Gandhi's life and work is not merely a study of history of Indian national struggle under his leadership, it also takes into account the cultural setting, the aspirations, the urges and the contribution of the people of India. A study of Gandhi thus merges into the history of nationalism in the subcontinent.

Since writing of history is, by and large, a reconstruction of the past at the same time it is project of the future, the present study attempts to assess the diverse viewpoints of eminently competent writers about the significance of Gandhi and his movements in the making of modern Indian history.

The essay opens with a brief examination of the ideological foundations of Gandhi's All-India Movements. In the same chapter, the three major campaigns waged by Gandhi - Non-cooperation movement 1920-22; Civil Disobedience 1930-34; Quit India Movement 1942 are cursorily explained since these are a constant refrain and point of reference in the pages that follow.

The literature on Gandhi includes biographies, reminiscences of encounters, history of Satyagraha movements and also that which treats Gandhi as the rallying point of Indian Independence Movement etc. These works come from the pens of Gandhi's admirers, supporters, followers, critics, associates, biographers, official historians and scholars. Accordingly their works would reflect the corresponding variety of approach adopted by them while addressing the same issue. This too naturally would apply to the interpretation. Hence, these are taken up, here, as separate categories.

Of many associates of Gandhi, Lala Lajpat Rai, Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajendra Prasad were in contact with Gandhi before he emerged as an All-India leader. Besides examining their works, attention has also been paid to that of writers like R.R.
Diwakar, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Subhas Chandra Bose. These leaders met Gandhi after he had become an established leader of the national movement.

M.N. Roy, Rajni Palme Dutt, Hiren Mukerjee, E.M.S. Namboodiripad - 'Leftist Writers' - and their writings form and altogether separate category for obvious reasons.

Pattabhi Bhogaraju Sitaramayya, Tara Chand and R.C. Majumdar - the 'Historians of the Times' - were in the drift of events, so their works have been advisedly treated as a separate set.

Sumit Sarkar, Judith M. Brown, Francis G. Hutchins - 'Later Historians' - have been included since their works are bound to reflect dependence upon other sources besides those of the Historians of the Times; moreover, their approach to the study of events would also be different, as they were away from the scene in terms of time and space.

Indispensable are the 'Memorists', such as Louis Fischer, Pyarelal, D.G. Tendulkar, for theirs are the earliest writings on Gandhi and have been used as a source by a majority of later writers.

In their own right later 'Biographers' - Erik H. Erikson, Robert Payne and B.R. Nanda - have been taken up as a distinct set of biographer-cum-historians, who wrote about Gandhi after his death.

Each chapter, in a manner of speaking, is complete in itself, as it concludes with a comparative analysis of the authors dealt with. However, at the end of the present study, an assessment of specifically common or special views of these distinguished authors has been attempted.

It is, indeed, interesting to compare the different masters in history - to borrow an expression from art - and to note the points of similarity and dissimilarity in the
technique which each of them employs. Historiography finds out the nature of the 'plastic material', i.e., the historical material which historian uses as the main body of his story, and the central theme that he/she proposes to portray at a given time and place. Historiography has emerged, in recent times, as a fascinating field of study since all facts come to us as a consequence of interpretative choices of historians that were influenced by the norms of their times. History is infinite. It is unfixable. Human beings are, all the time, trying to reduce the past reality to terms of certainty, but all that is done so as to render our own impression of it. No historical work, understandably, can reproduce more than a part of that reality, as has been shown by Peter Geyl in his DEBATES WITH HISTORIANS. He cites the reaction of a girl fresh from school, who says "such a lot of things seem to me such rot. History for instance, why it is quite different out of different books?" To which he would reply "That is its real interest!"