



Gandhian thought on Management of Newspapers

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Abstract: Mahatama Gandhi's association with Indian Opinion (in South Africa), Satyagrahi, Young India, Navjivan, and the Harijan are classical example of ethics and value based journalism. These newspapers are great source to know Gandhi's views on various issues. Gandhi had contributed a lot as a journalist in South Africa. Gandhi used his Managerial skills not only during the freedom movement but also in running the Newspapers. Gandhi had become popular on political scenario and when Gandhi was touring India, he had realized that freedom cannot be achieved without economic prosperity and social emancipation of the millions. He believed that news should always be written in an unbiased way and it should not be written to show favoritism towards any party or person.

Key words: Mahatama Gandhi, Young India, Harijan, freedom, Newspapers

Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi well known as "Father of the Nation". Familiar to every Indian as a person responsible for India's Freedom from the British rule. Very few people know how much stress and strain he has undergone while getting freedom. He used several means in order to achieve his ultimate end of getting freedom to India. One among such important means was the newspapers published by Gandhi. Gandhi also known as modern management guru because he used all managerial skills and principles like Organization, Planning, Co-ordination, Control, Budgeting, etc., while managing the newspapers. He selected Newspapers as a right choice to motivate, mobilize and educate the Indian masses towards the freedom movement.

Gandhi could achieve high moral and ethical standards due to his managerial skills. We all know Gandhi as a man of principles, discipline, and dedication to his work and a brilliant strategist and all these qualities Gandhi achieved due to his managerial skills that he had. Gandhi was a great manager and it is well reflected through the

newspapers like Indian Opinion, Harijan, Satyagrahi and Young India. From the very beginning he showed a remarkable grip over each detail in running the newspaper. From typesetting to printing, from content to layout, from packing to posting and from collecting of subscription to overall budgeting, Gandhi had a great command. The aim of this article is to explain about how Gandhiji used his managerial skills in running Newspapers and mobilize and motivate the Indian masses towards getting India's freedom.

Gandhi and Newspaper

Mahatama Gandhi's association with Indian Opinion (in South Africa), Satyagrahi, Young India, Navjivan, and the Harijan are classical example of ethics and value based journalism. These newspapers are great source to know Gandhi's views on various issues.

Indian Opinion: Gandhi started the publication of 'Indian Opinion' in 1903 and the first issue of Indian opinion was published on June, 04, 1903. The prime objective of Indian opinion was to protect



the Indian interest and it was such a challenging task considering that there was no other medium of communication.

The objectives of the Indian Opinion were:

- a) to provide news to all the sections of society in their own language
 - b) to advocate their cause
 - c) to provide the information of the events happening in India
 - d) to contain contributions from competent writers, Indian as well as Europeans
- c) to cover all the aspects on social, moral, intellectual issues

Most of the articles written by Gandhi in Indian Opinion were unsigned. Indian Opinion was published in four languages namely English, Gujarati, Tamil and Hindi in the interest of the British Indians living in South Africa. Indian opinion was foolscap sized three column and filled with discriminatory regulations involving Indians. The journal also provided space for the letters to editors of the local newspapers. Gradually, Gandhi became solely responsible for Journal's management and policy but he didn't mention his name as editor. Although Gandhi faced financial burden but he had no regret for this. In December, 1904, the Indian Opinion entered into a new phase when Gandhi made it clear that the workers were to look not to the present but to the future; not to their pockets but to paper first. Gandhi rather declared that policy of the journal was service.

In 1905, there was the outbreak of plague in Johannesburg and Gandhi was consistently writing on the problems faced by the people. Gandhi was continuously fighting against the disabilities suffered by the Indians in South Africa. The major disabilities were:-

- a) Restrictions on immigration and trading
- b) Travelling in trains and cabs
- c) Walking on footpaths
- d) Racial arrogance and trade policy.

The objective of Indian Opinion was also to inspire the people and Gandhi used to write the biographies of great man and women like Tolstoy, Lincoln, Mazzini, Elizabeth Fry, Florence Nightingale, Ishwar Chandra VidyaSagar, and Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

Gradually the Indian Opinion became the mouthpiece of South African Indian on the issue of Registration policy by South African government where Indians and other Asians had to mention important physical identity masks and thumb impression on the certificates, failing which they were to forfeit their right of residence and liable to be fined or imprisoned. Struggle against registration started all over and Indian Opinion played a key role in the struggle. Although Gandhi had reduced the size of the paper, but he couldn't sort out of financial problems. On the issue of advertisement the Indian Opinion explained its readers that their aim is not to make money out of newspaper.

The Gujarati edition of the Indian Opinion on December 31, 1913



remarked on the Satyagraha and paid tribute to the people associated with it and also mentioned to give Hindi and Tamil news in the paper. We can see in spite of various problems like financial, administrative pressure, Gandhi continued to publish Indian Opinion to serve the people. He didn't compromise on any front because the sole purpose was to serve the people and no wonder Indian Opinion continued to publish after Gandhi's departure from south Africa but it lost much of its weight and popularity.

Satyagrahi and Young India

Gandhi had contributed a lot as a journalist in South Africa helped him when arrived in India in Jan, 1913. Journalism was not a profession in India at that point of time except Anglo-Indian press. Gandhi said that advertisement had no to play and papers had to rely on sales promotion and financial aid from individuals. Although Anglo-Indian press was technically superior but it wasn't popular among the Indians on the other hand. Indian newspaper was popular among Indians but there was dearth of professional approach & quality of printing. The eminent writers and freedom fighters were using the press as a medium for the dissemination of their views and ideas. Mrs. Anni Beasant's New India, Maulana AbulKalam Azad's Al Hilal, BalGangadhar Tilak's Kesarietc all focused on respective personalities and at times it looked views paper rather than newspaper. This trend was further developed by Gandhi and his views papers can be considered as the story of Indian struggle for independence. His newspaper started the political movement that was based on moral values.

The circumstances were not that favorable to publish and run newspaper in India due to Government's orders and policies during those days. Two acts, first Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1913, and Second Defense of India Regulations of 1914 were made to check the Indian newspapers and forced them to stop criticizing the British Government and due to the security policy of the Press Association of India, most of the newspapers preferred to close down that to submit to the Government orders. The Government took coercive action against 963 newspapers and printing press between 1917 and 1919. Apart from this, 173 new presses and 129 newspapers were killed at birth due to demand of heavy security and over 500 publications were prohibited within that period.

After World War I, the Indians were waiting for Home Rule, as promised by the British Government but India got the Rowlett Bill. The entire century was annoyed and rose against it. According to the Rowlett Act, not only the publication of 'Subversive document' but its mere possession was made a punishable offence. Gandhi was completely annoyed like any other Indian and he emerged as rebel in the eye of the British Government. An unregistered weekly 'Satyagraha' was started under the editorship of Gandhi to protest against the discriminatory and biased policies of the British Government. It started publication from April 7, 1919. The newspaper was to be published on Mondays.

Non-cooperation was everywhere in all spheres. The country was ablaze. Situation was going out of control of the leaders. In the Satyagraha of May 6, 1919, Gandhi cautioned people, citizens



of Bombay particularly, to understand fully the significance of 'hartal' before they would observe it to show the outward evidence of their deep affection for Mr. Horiman.

When Satyagrah was called off Gandhi didn't stop and he continued to educate and inform the people mostly through leaflets, but very soon he got a bigger and better forum. A group of young India was offered to Gandhi. He accepted it. Young India was soon converted into a weekly and it was brought from Bombay to Ahmedabad. The Navjivan was first appeared on 7 October, 1919 and Young India followed suit, after that day Gandhi was the editor of both and Mahadev Desai and Shankarlal Banker were printer and publisher. The journals were priced at an anna each. Gandhi started to write his views freely and turned Young India and Navjivan into a views paper as Gandhi wrote in the editorial of the first issue of young India, "They enabled me freely to ventilate my views and to put heart into the people". When Gandhi was the editor of the Indian Opinion, his views were different and little soft to the British Empire but by this time his hopes in British justice had devastated.

Gandhi's editing of the Navjivan, in Gujarati, provided language papers a reputation, they had lacked. In virtually all the provincial language papers started to be published. In a few cases they showed the largest circulation in the country. This circulation was not only limited to towns: it traveled down to remote corners. Newspapers appointed reporters in many distant places to get news from the villages.

By this time, Gandhi had become popular on the political scenario and when Gandhi was touring India, he had realized that freedom cannot be achieved without economic prosperity and social emancipation of the millions. Hence during the political movement such as Khilafat and Non-cooperation movement, Gandhi was also writing on equally other important issues like Swadeshi, Hindu-Muslim unity, non-violence, moral and values, place of vernaculars, responsibilities and duties of a citizen etc.

Gandhi also provided concession in his writing and had no hesitation to publish the arguments of his critics. In the issue of Young India dated 18 December, 1920, Gandhi wrote, "The columns of Young India are open to all who have any grievance against non-cooperation".

The Young India published the manifesto on freedom of opinion and it stated that, "it is the inherent right of every one to express his opinion without restraint about the propriety of citizens offering their services to or remaining in the employ of the Government". In the same issue, under the title 'Expression of Opinion', he explained, "when in any movement violence is religiously eschewed, it is an attempt to crush public opinion, and such the present repression has become".

When Gandhi was released in April 1924, he wrote a series of articles in Young India and discussed about his experience of his prison life. Very soon he started his prime job that was to be the editor of the Young India and Navjivan and in the issue of the young India dated April 3, 1924, Gandhi wrote in this



regard under the caption 'Reader past and present'.

Gandhi was consistently fighting for the liberty on suit press and when Bombay Chronicle had to pay a fine for a defamation. The Young India did not pay the security money demanded by the government and as a result the press was confiscated and printing of the journals stopped. Gandhi was in prison but he used to write on line or two to every inmate of the Ashram. His weekly letters to other inmates appeared in the Young India. The Young India restarted publication in March, 1931 and in the first issue Gandhi wrote about the objective of the newspaper .

The Harijan

Gandhi consistently wrote on various issues through the newspapers he edited and published because apart from achieving freedom, Gandhi's goal was to awaken the people and reform the society. It is in his context that the paper Harijan was started and it first appeared on February 17, 1933 and was printed at one anna. Sri R V Sastry became the editor and the weekly was published under the patronage of the servants of untouchable society. Ten thousand copies were printed for the first issue. The context of the Harijan was basically devoted to untouchability. In next page, there was column titled, 'To the Reader, in which Gandhi said, "Since the movement has a world-wide significance and seeks the sympathy, if possible, of the whole humanity, it is necessary to keep the world acquainted with its implications and progress". He further commented that, "That no advertisements are being taken for the

upkeep of the paper. It has to depend solely upon the subscriptions received".

In the issue of September 24, 1938 of 'Harijan', Gandhi had written, "Harijan is not a newspaper; it is a views paper representing those of one man. In the Harijan dated July 19, 1942, Gandhi addressed the readers that they need not to worry if the Government decides to suppress the newspaper and cease its publication, he explained that one can suppress the newspaper but not the message that it had spread.

After Gandhi's arrest on August 8, 1942, the Harijan closed down and all copies, old and new confiscated by the Government. After three and half years Gandhi was released on May 6, 1944 and Harijan was revived on February 10, 1946. Gandhi was thinking of closing down the Harijan and he mentioned about it in a letter to Sardar Patel in July 1947, there he wrote, "I also feel that Harijan should now be closed. It does not seem to me to be right to give contrary guidance to the country". Gandhi straightly asked to his readers about the need of the publication of the Harijan. Gandhi wrote in the Harijan of September 28, 1947 under the caption 'My Duty'.

When Gandhi was in Noakhali to restore peace, the charge of the Harijan was temporarily given to two of his colleagues, who soon resigned. But Gandhi still wanted to take up the responsibility if the trustees agreed. Gandhi came to Delhi in May, 1947 and resume writing for the Harijan after a gap of six month. He wrote till 1948. the end, which came on January 30, 1948. The next issue of the Harijan dated February 3, 1948 carried a photograph of



Gandhi on the front page and DrRajendra Prasad wrote in a signed editorial, ' Out of the Ashes'.

Gandhi and the Management of Newspapers

Gandhi used his Managerial skills not only during the freedom movement but also in running the Newspapers. Gandhi was a good manager in the management of newspapers. Looking at Gandhi's other involvement it is important to understand how did he manage to have right sort of coordination among workers and effective administration of office details. Gandhi achieved high ethical standards by setting up examples and in the early days of the Indian Opinion, he was doing almost everything single handed. Gandhi personally trained some workers when he was running the Young India and the Harijan. He always kept a watchful eye on each detail. Gandhi had realized success of a newspaper did not depend only on qualitative content but also on efficient management.

Gandhi was well aware of the fact that in spite of excellent editorial and rich content circulation was also important to run a newspaper and for this it needed great management skills at each strategic point. Gandhi implemented new things for the success of his newspapers. He introduced a new tone in his correspondence unlike the official firm and extremely synthetic in an average newspaper office, he used simple and direct language. It was shortand very to the point.

Gandhi always executed whatever he planned and when he was away from his team, he kept constant touch with

them through his letters. When Gandhi was associated with the Indian Opinion in South Africa, he was constantly in touch with his assistant Sri Chhaganlal Gandhi the letter date September 27, 1905, he wrote, "There is a letter from Hemachand to-day saying that a notice dispensing with his services has been served on him. I have thereupon sent a telegram asking that he be not discharged. I do not think I shall be able to train Gokuldas for Gujarat in two months. He seems to be very weak in Gujarati".

Without Gandhi's advice nothing could be done. In his letter to Shri Chhaganlal dated September 30, 1905, he wrote, "Anandlal writes, that it has been decided to hire an office in Mercury Lane. If this is so, it should not be done. I feel it essential that should be consulted before such changes are introduced". He would also take him to task for failing to carefully scan through the paper. In his letter dated October 5, 1905, to Shri Chhaganlal he wrote, "You still do not publish all the notices from the Gazette. I have found these from a casual glance at the paper carefully scrutinize the Gazette henceforth.

In his letter of April 7, 1906, to Shri Chhaganlal he gave priority to book keeping. In the same letter he gave indication of recruiting new hands for the press, as he writes "there are so many details to be attended to by me whom I cannot without information from you. Motilal writes to me saying that there is a new arrival from Bombay. His name is Dhoribhai. He says he knows the press work well. He offers his services at \$4 per month and free loading. It is worthwhile knowing him".



Gandhi always took the arrangement of newspapers seriously and kept on advising his associates. He wrote to Chhanganlal in this context in his letter dated February 17, 1906 that "You should divide the Gujarati pages into sections and see that, as far as possible, a particular type of material always appears in the same place". He further wrote on March 4 that "You should have the same arrangement in the Gujarati section as you have in the English. The leading article should come first, followed by the smaller leaders. After that should come the translation of articles on important subjects etc. followed by letters like the 'Johannesburg Letter' and last of all, Reuter's Telegram".

Gandhi gave instructions on advertisements: In his letter of April 6, 1906, Gandhi mentioned how space for the advertisement also needs to be taken seriously as well as he instructed not delay the matters and in this regard he wrote to Chhaganlal,

It is noticeable that later on Gandhi discontinued taking advertisements for his papers. Gandhi tried to get the details of everything and personally ensured the smooth functioning. He wrote a letter to Sri Chhaganlal in January 5, 1907.

Gandhi was open minded and accepted new things to his newspaper but he prepared to move continuously. Although other contemporary newspapers were using various methods to boost the sale of papers as Lord Beaverbrook in a page one announcement, admitted that between March 1st and June 30, his London Daily Express spent more than 1,000,000\$ in gifts and prizes to get new readers or about 2\$ per new

subscriber. But Gandhi was applying unconventional ways to promote sale for the Indian Opinion. He addressed his readers in this context in the Gujarati section of the newspaper under the caption 'Suggestion to Readers'

Gandhi made an appeal to the readers on behalf of the management to get a subscribe option of the newspaper so that it can increase the number of pages and render their services for the benefit of the society as a whole. In this regard he wrote in the issue of October 12, 1907.

Gandhi also explained in the same issue to its readers that their aim is not to make money out of it, but increase in number of pages will also increase the expenditure and their encouragement in the way of subscription will help them deliver better service than that it doing.

Gandhi's newspaper suggests that his purpose of journalism was to serve the society in all respect and inspire the mass for a greater cause. He talked to the people in their own language to communicate the message. His overarching concern for addressing the communication needs of the general public became evident when he expressed that English alone could not be a medium of the newspaper. Hence, it is clear that Gandhi's practice of journalism set high ethical and moral standard by practicing mass oriented and value based journalism.

Conclusion

Though Gandhi faced several problems and challenges in running the Newspapers, he continued to publish his newspapers to serve the people without compromising on providing free and fair



journalism. It is not enough to maintain the quality of papers but also efficient management is also required while running the Newspaper. In this direction he not only coordinated workers but also given some training to improve their abilities. He felt that publication of paper should not be solely for commercial purpose but service orientation is also most important. He has overcome all the above said problems with his managerial skills and abilities. Undoubtedly Gandhi is a role model to modern managers of this century because he built ethics even in his role of a journalist and followed the same until his last. Gandhi said that Management has to follow certain ethics and values while running the Newspapers. Unfortunately in present day society they are not following the same. For an example in Andhra Pradesh there are two largest circulated Telugu Newspapers one is Eenadu started by Ramoji Rao and other Sakshi by Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy S/o of Late Dr. Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy. There is a general impression among the people that Eenadu Newspaper is in favour of TDP and Sakshi naturally pro-Y.S.R. party started by Jagan. One Newspaper makes Jagan as target another as N. Chandrababu Naidu. Finally, news should always be written in an unbiased way and it should not be written to show favoritism towards any party or person.

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