

## **Development Approach in Gandhi's Journalism: 'Young India and Harijan'**

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### **Abstract**

**Background:** Development journalism is an agent to change with no parameters for its exercise of content. As a keen observer and analyst of the socio-political, economic and cultural changes of Indian society, Gandhi extensively used journalism to connect the people across the nation adopting a unique style in all the newspapers he worked and placed the struggling nation at the centre of his writings. It instilled new thought processes in the minds of the ordinary people and the native elites to liberate themselves from the multiple oppressive forces.

**Materials andMethods:** The paper attempts to verify two specific characteristics of today's development communication which reflects in Gandhi's writings: (i) to carry the realistic images of a suppressed nation that help reflect the actual picture of the reality in the minds of the people and (ii) advocating alternate to the current condition and to dream for a better nation, where there is more justice and security with a sense of nationalism. The study analyses the contents in two newspapers, 'Young India and Harijan' to determine the nine characteristics of modern development journalism in Gandhi's approach.

**Result:** The writings of Gandhi highlights his ideas, solutions, new efforts and initiatives for a new India. All nine traits of development Journalism is clearly indicated in both the newspapers as idea, reflection of true reality, perception and participation of the people. It kept watching the society, alert the public, and also called for action.

**Keyword:** change, development, betterment, governance, freedom

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

When journalism evolved as a specific form of writing around mid-1800's, by reproducing the shortened version of a detailed reality of the society, its role also gradually ensued as a mediator. This intervention in personal and public affairs embarked waves of changes among its many stakeholders. Regardless of its size, newspapers contributed as sharers of information across many clusters of society and as powerful agent of mediator. This also occurred between state and respective social groups they represented as political activity which was the primary mechanism for mediating (Calcutt and Hammond, 2011). This natural and deliberate arbitration accompanied the new developmental approach stimulated by the industrial growth and capital which act as active accelerators of social system and human being to serve merely as objects to such capital. As the major mass medium of the time, newspapers mirrored this reality to the public, which were contradictory in aspects of use and exchange of value, social production and private appropriation<sup>ii</sup>. Gandhi started to use journalism in this context, encountering these disparities in the social system in which human capital relations were in contradiction and class division has taken the form of political party in the west and carried its reflection in the territories of developing countries including India.

In its growth, newspapers gradually gained much impression in its capacity to gather and present information and also orientation to capital. The growth of the newspaper also was in two dimensions, 'one within and the other, the development of the society surrounding it and building a sense of community' (Scott, editor of the *Machestar Guardian*, Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). Newspapers inform a particular individual reader, it may educate, stimulate, assist, or it may do the opposite and at the same time it may influence the life of a whole community (Guardian, nd, 38). At the same time, it is difficult to separate the concept of journalism from the concept of creating the community (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). This way, journalism has been more of a means to provide social connection along with knowledge. It builds a platform to relate to individual and to one another at the same time.

Journalism has the enormous potential to support the social order or to oppose it, by representing the human activity as intractable object and unfettered subject (Calcutt and Hammond, p 69 p, 4). Thus, it also can be used for new social relations of production and productive activity. It is evident that last century journalism was whatever was said by a press (or broadcast station now) generally carried the language of a government with

propaganda and a huge gap for the free flow of information. Thus, the main focus of newspaper was to use the human potential in building capital. This is being carried out with consolidation of facts and comments, where the comments were composed by the lead writers which can also be a subjective idea (social facts). Thus, the potential for intervention is used by the media owner, writer for strengthening an existing social order to change it.

The comments of facts can present two sides of a fact. One can be critically analysing the reality and secondly identifying the positive elements underlying within the system. This can be supporting the progress, setting the limits and configuring the developmental dimensions. For a newspaper or any news media, this is a day today ongoing activity and a presentation of reality or contradiction of a reality. In this process, the authors and publishers of newspapers played as outsiders not as participants to describe things people do and the kind of people they are. This non-participant role of the authors and publishers, eventually turned to be spectators (Calcutt and Hammond, 2011) added contradiction to its potential's role of continuous recreation of human beings as interrelated subjects.

News become the mediator when it takes a stand for any person or community.

*"Mediation is not a process that happens automatically. Nor it is a process that occurs only in logic. It is a social process characterized by historical human activity that mediates between the multiple clusters of direct relations among human subjects and the unified system of object- relations in which the self -same human subjects are related to each other only indirectly and in accordance with the continuous movements of capital to labour"* (Calcutt and Hammond, 2011). Mediation in news media started with historical factors and it took multiple form as the media progressed and penetrated into the community and to the business. In all its function, media takes the role of mediation.

**Developmental approaches:** Conventional approach to development is that the developmental measurements are treated at macro level and state is considered as the unit of development. Gradually development is looked at multi-level, and as series of effort, where the local economic and multicultural elements of development is emphasised. Regional inequality, ethnic mobilization and glocalization are viewed as measurements of development. Intersectional cooperation in development considers that development action requires the combination of state, market and society -led approach. Which includes, classical political economy, modernization, dependency, neo-liberalism and alternate development approach (Pieterse,2010). Effective use of discourse analysis which is an analytical instrument where an analysis can lead to a political position and knowledge of politics and finally in to action.

Development theories has multiple approaches. Varied approaches had shown its limitation to address the real development concerns. At the same time, these approaches emphasize that there need to have changes in the existing socio-political and economic structure. A shift in emphasis and perspective is a key element to bring changes in a system or a society. Perspective offers one angle on current trends in development and several trends are linked to changes (Pieterse,2010). Change includes improved living conditions, addressing power in equalities, and elimination of injustice (Melkote & Steeves,2015).

Development communication emphasizes the organizing value of communication rather than mere transmission of message, participative social action communication and identifying solutions to more just society.

## II. METHODS AND MATERIALS

Development as a discourse that is alien to Third world, which has stemmed from western, imposed by authoritarianism, with certain modern controls which is preventing or streamlining the local culture, grassroot interests and perceptions. The study examines two major works of Gandhi using discourse analysis, which guides to analyse, values, beliefs and assumptions used to generate meaning in historical contextualize engagement focuses to emphasise the context and the meaning used by an orator or emphasise writings and the articles published where Gandhi was an editor and writer in "Young India" from October 1919 to 1927, and "Harijan" February 1933 to 1934 are examined to understand the development concept and activities reflect in line with the modern understanding of development communication. The data is accessed from the Gandhi heritage communication. The published discourses align with the development concepts were analysed to determine its focus and perception.

**Gandhi's participation in newspaper:** Gandhi's participation in newspaper work differ from that of the number of other newspapers and the periodicals of the time.

As a keen observer and analyst of the socio-political, economic and cultural changes of Indian society, Gandhi extensively used journalism to connect the people across the nation. He did not follow the routine and the conventional style of constructing the story<sup>iii</sup>. Both as writer and editor Gandhi adopted a unique style in all the newspapers he worked where he placed the struggling nation at the centre of his writings, especially their sustenance and political freedom. He instilled new thought processes in the minds of the ordinary people and the native elites, that they need to be freed from the multiple oppressive forces. Hindus, Parsis, Christians, or Jews if

we wish to live as one nation, surely the interest any of us must be to the interest of all ( Young India, Vol:1. No.53, December 3, 1919), One thing that we need is undoubtedly freedom from British control in any shape or form, but freedom from such control of any other power is equally our need in terms of independence. (Vo,XI, Young India, Jan 3, 1929)

*"Our government of India will none be secure until we can convert the people of India"* (Vol. 1 no. 53 November 1999 )

Gandhi's journalistic writings stem from a society, where there is a need to correct the information asymmetries and enhance social assistance that would lead to build trust, enhance social mobility and social inclusion which is a key element in development according to Jutting and Prizzon states (2013). This can lead to building better economic policies and social stability (Narayan, 1999) and ultimately empowering the nation who are politically, socially and economically in a devastating condition.

The newspapers, *Harijan* and *Young India*<sup>iv</sup> where Gandhi was a writer and editor, reflected two specific characteristics of today's development communication: (i) to carry the realistic images of a suppressed nation that help reflect the actual picture of the reality in the minds of the people and (ii) advocating alternate to the current condition and to dream for a better nation, where there is more justice and security with a sense of nationalism.

Development journalism is an agent to change with no parameters for its exercise of content. When conventional journalism keeps its focus to report incidents and happenings of the time, this genre of reporting functions as a catalyst to social, economic and political change for the betterment of society. V Eshwar Anand refers its origin as the extension of agricultural sectors from The Philippines and India, where they narrated the new agricultural methods during land reformation. Later this style of storytelling focused to tell several dimensions of development. Today, development journalism covers wider areas of reporting such as, a need for power supply in a community, the development plans of the government or a private sector, requirements of sanitation facilities in an urban area, the multiple infrastructure requirement of an interior village, details of a factory which pollutes the nearby river, the unhealthy waste management in a housing colony and the like.

Being writer, editor and starting newspaper, Gandhi made rigorous efforts to inform his fellow citizen on the major policy of the rulers, political decisions and plans and its impact on the nation. The two newspapers *Young India* and *Harijan* carried his ideas and solutions and also new efforts and initiatives for a new India.

Gandhi believed that journalism is for the betterment of the society, he wrote in *Young India* that 'journalism is a service and not a means to acquire money'. He suggested the philosophy of resistance as strength, the complexity of economic and political oppression, unfavourable practices and decisions of the rulers on the nation, the need for awakening from the bondedness of practices like untouchability and superstition, need to educate all Indians especially the ordinary people and to keep the focus of education as the betterment of general public and not merely serving the needs and interests of the foreign rulers, treat women as dignified person and to support the 'outcaste' and their cause.

Throughout his public life, Gandhi remained as an independent thinker and kept his writings unbiased, yet with a specific emphasis to the socio-political and economic reality of the time.

As Gandhi preached for change, he also travelled across the country as an ordinary person to understand their life realities. He supported movements against *sati*, started campaigns for positive change, took steps to abolish untouchability to cleanse the Indian society from the oppressive forces within and outside. He also set examples and models and called people to act up on it. These consistent messages urged the people to think differently and opt for newer perspectives in their personal choices, matters related to religion and even politics. Gandhi also made sure that sharing certain positive experience can set good examples for others to replicate. The two major Indian newspapers *Harijan* and *Young India* where he was mostly associated, carried both success and failure stories of protests, new learnings from a political or community action, opening of educational institutions and efforts initiated to support the people. *Harijan* regularly published information such as the 'list of temples and wells opened for the 'untouchables, update on starting of schools and free hostels opened for the *harijan boys*, beginning of *purohit* classes for the children of Harijans to train them as priests to officiate at *Sanskaras*, starting Hindu Ashram for the education of *harijan boys* etc.:'<sup>v</sup> which were signs of positive changes. A distinct characteristics of development journalism is that it is a key to good governance. Apart from the conventional journalistic practices, it is also a pointer to the multiple stake holders and forces of a community. Further, it opens prospects to recognize the dynamism of a community, structure of a system and the pattern of information and service flow and the mechanism of resource management and its utilization. Another nature of developmental journalism is that it is meant to influence the decision-making process, disseminate new ideas and information and the execution of the government and other schemes.

Development journalists exercise the 'fundamental right to information' to narrate the stories from various sources as a means of empowerment and public action. Through which, they let the public know about the rights of the tax payers and its beneficiaries, right to education, basic health facilities, public distribution system and public policies which the ordinary people need to be informed. A good number of

Gandhi's writings carried these dimensions to educate the Indians on their rights and to constructively respond to those unjust forces.

While the stereo type reporting focuses on the immediate happenings and stories of importance to the time, the development reports are prepared after in-depth investigation. The development journalists travel beyond the conventional practices of reporting and take the people along. They need to be part of a real situation or a very close observer of the context and follow a particular situation. Thus, it is an exhaustible exercise, as it carries multiple dimensions in detail. Generally, novelty, prominence, entertainment and press releases cannot make a story idea for a development journalism. However certain development stories become prominent stories for the main stream and online media where a significant government decision or persons become key role players

Development journalism also breaks the traditional inverted pyramid style to tell the story. They are presented in the format of in-depth narratives using analytical and interpretative style and data to present the story. Here the target audience also are the beneficiaries who need changes or guidance help to adopt new ideas or strategies.

### III. FINDINGS

**Gandhian style and approaches in *Young India and Harijan*:** Gandhi's approach to journalism carried the nine distinct characteristics and perspectives of today's development journalism practice. His articles and narration portrayed the lives of Indians in general with specific references and interventions of different parts of the country. He wrote focusing both the ordinary people and the elite whose decisions and actions had huge impact on the people directly or indirectly.

Nine distinct characteristics of development journalism can be traced in Gandhi's newspaper writings:

1. It focuses to improve the socio-economic condition of the people. Several of his writings carried this perception. He wrote in *Young India* October, 6, 1920 that:

"I do not examine the duty of the capitalist. If the labourers alone were to understand his rights and responsibilities and confine himself to the purest means both must gain. But two things are needful- both the demands and the means adopted to enforce them must be just and clear. It is an unlawful demand which seeks merely to take advantages of the capitalists' position. But it is an altogether lawful demand when the labourer asks for enough wages to enable him to maintain himself and to educate the children decently. It is a national degradation when little children are removed from schools and are employed in earning wages. It is necessary for the labourers to develop their minds by receiving education and to educate their children".

(2) It carries people's perspective. Gandhi's journalism style just not carried the perspective of the people alone, instead it highlighted that, information can motivate them for public action, and be useful for personal and familial needs. A few of the writings on *Young India* below reveals the same:

"They do not feel as the others do that these wrongs show consciously that the sum total of the activity of the present Government is injurious to national growth... I feel that the nations' children suffer degradation in the government schools.

Labour and unemployment. I am inclined to think that this needs more diligent study than it appears to have given to it" (*Young India*, January 9, 1927).

(3) It has the potential for decision making and public participation: To make a decision in favour of a country with self-rule (*Swaraj*) and leading its people to an independent entity was the essence of all his writing approach. The following writings in *Young India* clearly states that concepts:

"India cannot be free so long as India voluntarily encourages or tolerates the economic drain which has been going for the past century and a half.....But we ought not to be dependent. India has the ability to manufacture all her cloth if her children will work for it (January 19, 1921)

The depressed class problem is a vital part of the cause. *Swaraj* is as inconceivable without full reparation to the 'depressed' classes as it is impossible without real Hindu- Muslim unity. ...The one who sincerely sympathises with a starving man is presumed to share such sufferings, and is not expected to shoot him when the latter shows symptoms of becoming mad through the pangs of hunger. The responsibility of for anarchy, if it does overtake India, will therefore rest with the Indian government and with those who support it in spite of its wrongs not up on those who refuses to perform the impossible task of making people forget vital wrongs and try to direct their anger in a proper channel" (May 9, 1921).

(4) It improves public participation: The education on non- co-operation and a nation-wide participation was the result of his consistent writing:

"I do not consider Non-co-operation to be a rebellion, because it is free form violence, rebellion in just sense is a duty, the extent of opposition being determined by the measure of the injustice done and felt... Non-cooperation will bring about cessation of all other activities" (Young India June, 2 1920).

Gandhi explained his attitude on untouchability and the urgent need to demolish this evil to build justice and for a free India. He wrote that 'untouchability is against the fundamental principles of humanity' (Harijan, February 11, 1933).

Gandhi justified the non-co-operation committee and their activity is voluntary and for a just cause.

'It is no fault in committee. It has been purposely restricted to those who are able to give their whole time and attention to the work of organizing Non- co-operation and in the process of ensuring obedience to instructions, other discipline and non-violence' (Young India, June 23, 1920).

"There is a non – violent boycott which we shall be bound to practise, if we are to make any impression. We must not compromise with what we believe to be an untruth, whether it resides in a white skin or a brown. Such boycott is a political boycott" (Young India Dec, 8 1920).

(5) It brings out the corruption of the rulers and be critical of the authority: The following is an example for this nature of Gandhi's newspaper writing:

"I must confess that I have read the Viceregal utterance with deep pain... I must respect fully call his mischievous misrepresentation of the attitude of the congress and the Khilafat organizations. In connection with visit of His Royal Highness. His Excellency does not realise what grievous wrong he is doing to his own people by confusing them with the British administrators in India" (January, 19, 1922).

(6) To help exercise the right to know development plans: Below is an example, where Gandhi expressed his strong views on the purpose of English education and English owned mills established in India, that they are not intended to help the Indians.

"It is my considered opinion that English education in the manner it has been given has emasculated the English- educated Indian, it has put a severe strain up on the Indian students' nervous energy, and had made of us imitators. The process of displacing the vernacular has been one of the saddest chapters in the British connection" (Young India, April 7, 1921).

"I am told that there are in India English-owned mills which do not admit Indian shareholders. If this information be true, I would consider cloth manufactured in such mills to be foreign cloth. Moreover, such cloth bears the taint of ill-will. However well-made such cloth may be, it should be avoided" (Young India, June 21, 1919).

(7) It carries knowledge of developmental reports and plans: Both *Harijan* and *Young India* regularly carried the ongoing happenings of the time which were closely related to the public and the rulers, and also the alternate efforts taken by the opponents. Besides this, *Harijan* regularly reported the updates of new development plans and other activities which would improve the social status of the community. The front page of February 11, 1933 lists one such updates:

"*Harijan* is being published by and for the servants of Untouchables Society at my request.... It is being published on the assumption that. It is necessary for the people in the different provinces to know the progress of the reform from week to week in the provinces other than their own..... This is a much-needed reform in which all classes should interest themselves".

Temples open: Berhampur, Madras, Bengal, Gujrat, New Delhi, Baroda (15 temples)

Wells opened: One well in Messrs, Four in Ladpur; Newly constructed in Kings way, New Delhi

Schools started: Two night schools in Angul and Jajpuralikas, Orissa, Two night schools in Mody Street Bombay, On night school at Royapettah, Madras city, One night school at Jhansi, UP; Utkal Board started free hostel in Cuttack ten Harijan boys receive secondary education, Boarding house Kaivalys Kutir, in Cuttack for Harijan students; Punjab Started purohit classes for children of Harijans to train them as priests; Hindu Ashram started as Amritsar for the education of boys. Harijan; March 4 1933 carried the update that Trichur (Cochin Municipality) has engaged three *Pulayas* as street sweepers, thus necessarily giving these lowest of the untouchable access to caste Hindu quarters.

(8) To keep track of the progress: A huge volume of Gandhi's journalism was to keep track of the progress of political situation as well as other movements that had connection with the Indian nation and to explain and interpret it to the people. Some of the titles of the writings which explains progress of Congress working committee and Swaraj in *Young India* are: The full details of congress working committee and its function, (June, 29, 1921); On All India Congress Committee (November 10, 1920), Hind Swaraj of Indian Rule (January 26, 1921) - A complete answer to Swaraj, The condition of Swaraj, explaining the challenges in details (February 23, 1921), Action oriented work – Accomplish swaraj in one year with Non- co-operation (September 22, 1920), What will kill non- co-operation ( February 16, 1921). One hundred women from Barisal, that they had become members of the congress (September, 15, 1921).

Otherwritings on tracking the progress are: details of people who were arrested at different parts of the country. Approaching non-co-operation as one of compelling co-operation as the struggle- 'The arrest of Lala Lajpatrai and Messrs. Lalkhan, Santanam and Gopichand in the Punjab, of Messrs. Phookan and Bardolai in Assam, Babu Jintendralal Banerji in Bengal, Maulana Mohiuddin and others in Ajmir, and Mr. Harkarannath Mishra ns in Others in Luknow means business. That Government is not tolerating non-no-operation (October 8, 1921).

(9) It offers alternate suggestions and plans to empower the people: Gandhi presented swaraj as the dream of the nation and non-co-operation as a way of protest and to influence the rulers. He explained the complete detail of Swaraj, and on co-operation movement through the newspaper to the public. The copies *Young India* Vol.1.No.49, 1919, Edited by MK Gandhi, and *Harijan* Vol.1, February, 11, 1933, Poona, establishes the same factors.

Gandhi recognized the role of women and took effort to bring them to the forefront. In *Young India* July 21, 1921 he wrote:

"How many of the NON- Co-operators in India do not regard women as objects of enjoyment? ... I am unable to subscribe that the treatment of women is a 'disease as bad as untouchability:

His approaches to the educational problem in (*Young India* 1919), on medium of instruction, was that:

"The best we can make of this government is to ignore its existence and to isolate it as much as possible from our life, believing that contact with it is corrupting and degrading. The movement is intended to end or mend the system they have force up on us (Nov. 17. 1921).

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Gandhian style of journalism was breaking the stereotypical journalism practices of the time which is proved to be "(Nov. approach had all the characteristics of development journalism defined and exercised in the twenty-first century. It kept watching the society as a whole, expressed its responsibility to serve the society as the primary responsibility. It focused to improve the socio-economic condition of the people, carried people's perspective, voiced the personal conscience out loud and also allowed others to do the same. It had the potential to lead the people to make decisions of their own. It demonstrates as a continuous forum for the public to know the government's development plans and actions, Gandhi interpreted the message to the language of the people and in their own context and kept the track of the progress. Both the papers continue to offer alternate suggestions and plans to the people which would lead to suggestions appropriate action in line with their betterment. It evident that the discourses are not one-time approach, instead, a persistent effort reflecting throughout his writings. Thus the news functioned as a mediator for the Indian community which was in need of economic, political and social freedom and to be empowered to attain self-reliance especially from the bondages of Political power of the British and number of social evil like untouchability, poverty and illitirecy. There is no doubt that it can be used as a model for the future journalism with a clear development perspective, informative and engaging the public which is the need of the time. As the technology driven modern journalism ignores multiculturalism and tend to leave behind those who are not part of trending, Gandhian Journalism is a model to re-focus and make journalism relevant and engaging with a clear development perspective for all developing countries.

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<sup>i</sup> See inside reporting, journalism studies

<sup>ii</sup> Journalism studies

<sup>iii</sup> Teun A. van Dijk, Power and the news media

<sup>iv</sup> started

<sup>v</sup> *Harijan*, February, 11, 1933, Poona

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