

## M. K. Gandhi, Media, Politics and Society - New Perspectives, Edited by Chandrika Kaul, Palgrave Macmillan

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This book (ISSN 2634-6575 / ISSN-2634-6583 electronic version) is part of series of Palgrave studies in the history of the media (<http://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/14578>). It is highly rich in content, many of facts presented and analysed in this book are either not known or not much talked in public space. As stated by Chandrika Kaul, Editor of this book “Mahatma Gandhi is one of the most iconic figures of modern history” and continues to be uniquely relevant even with passage of time. As Editor of Indian Journal of Leprosy, I might have just commented on chapter related to Leprosy alone. However, after going the book, I felt that this approach will be unfair to outstanding work done by other authors which helps us in better understanding of “Bapu” – the Father of our nation and Mahatma Gandhi to the world at large. Leprologists and other readers of our journal are also entitled to know these facts about this revered and inspiring personality.

First Chapter by Chandrika Kaul (University of St Andrews, Scotland) is the summary of themes covered in eight case studies featured in the book. Besides the important landmarks of life of Mahatma Gandhi and evolution of his thinking process, this chapter beautifully captures the outstanding aspect of his faith in and his interactions with media. These events are also

analysed by the other authors in chapters 2-8, and provide glimpses of historical events of Mahatma's life which contributed to social, political evolution of Indian people during the last century, influenced many a global movements and continues to stimulate and inspire many in the present generation.

Second chapter by Amelia Bonea (University of Heidelberg, Germany), in her own words, “re-examines Gandhi's prolific record as a political communicator from the perspective of the technologies of communication”. This chapter very elegantly examines his communication practices specially, the interplay of technologies of communication and media techniques that helped in conveying his messages to target persons/ audiences. This chapter also deals with shift in attitude of Mahatma Gandhi towards science and technology. The author has given several examples as how he used telegraphy for his political communication with collaborators, rulers and other key players in the process. This chapter concludes beautifully with lesson from Mahatma on this aspect, “if we can not escape technology - if we have to fight poison with poison, as he put it – we might as well make use of it critically”.

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Third chapter by Sanjiv Kakar (University of Delhi, India) examines the engagement of Mahatma Gandhi with leprosy. This analysis shows that Mahatma Gandhi contributed significantly to the modernization of attitudes towards scientific understanding and management of leprosy in those critical years from 1925 to 1948. Author beautifully synthesizes the historical events, which show the roles played by several eminent medical doctors associated with Christian Missionary Institutions / Organizations as well as Gandhian institutions such as Maharogi Seva Mandal and Kasturba Gandhi Trust. Contributions of British Empire Leprosy Relief Association (BELRA) and Gandhian Institutions to this entire evolution has been nicely brought out. Author has relied upon authentic published records of these events, views of Gandhi ji in publications like *Young India*, *Hind Swaraj* and others. There is interesting information about emerging knowledge of Mahatma Gandhi about leprosy - causation and transmission of leprosy, contributions of missionaries like Father Damien, doctors of Indian Medical Service, Leprosy Commission for India etc. The initial views of Mahatma Gandhi on Missionary Medicine, his visits and interactions with missionary doctors, scientifically sound and innovating doctors like Sir Leonard Rogers, Dr Issac Santra, Dr Muir, Dr Cochrane have all been presented and analysed very well. Historical roles played by Indian auxiliary of BELRA and many important Indians such as Manohar Diwan, TN Jagadishan, Vinoba Bhave, AV Thakkar, Baba Raghav Das, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Dr Sushila Nayar has been aptly captured. While many of us all the time remember the picture of Mahatma Gandhi nursing Acharya Purchase Shastri as a symbol of his compassion and fight against stigma in leprosy, few in present generation correctly understand the contributions of Mahatma Gandhi to modern evidence based scientific

management of leprosy. As Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Dr Sushila Nayar served as health ministers of independent India, legacy of Gandhi ji was passed on to the independent Republic. This chapter will thus inspire many in present and future generation of leprologists to continue the fight against leprosy by modern scientific tools and strategies.

Fourth chapter by Timothy S Dobe (Grinnell College, IA, USA) draws similarities between Mahatma Gandhi's own cosmopolitan vision and that of Hasan Nizami, a famous Sufi leader, journalist and Urdu writer of that period. This chapter has presented several historical facts from Nizami's publications on Mahatma Gandhi. Author has correctly remarked that many of facts about inter-religious, cultural, political and Islamic engagements in India, Asia and elsewhere have been overlooked and perhaps misunderstood. It is hoped that these facts and proper analyses would succeed in correcting stereotyped impressions in some sections of society. Nizami describes Mahatma Gandhi and Prophet Muhammad as "Rasul", messengers of God. After reading this chapter many readers will start searching for Nizami's Mahatma Gandhi ka Faisla and Gandhinama.

Fifth chapter by Sarvani Gooptu (Netaji Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata, India) provides glimpses of relationship between Mahatma Gandhi and Bengali Intellectuals alternating between attraction towards to him & his movement and conflicting opinion of some respected leaders from Bengal from time to time. The author has researched writings between 1920's to 1930's from reputed Bengali literary periodicals like *Bharati*, *Bharatvarsha*, *Bichitra*, *Narayan*, *Prabashi* and *Anand Bazar Patrika* to "trace this complicated relationship". According to the author this attraction to Mahatma was more related to his views and advocacy to address the socio-

economic problems of poverty affected people. Ravindra Nath Tagore's respect for Mahatma Gandhi has been nicely brought out by the author who has concluded the chapter with a quote of Tagore from Bichitra (1932), "The Mahatma is a great man, almost divine, a rare appearance in the world. I do not know if you have met him. but everyone recognises him as a Mahatma... Let us embrace that great soul."

Sixth chapter by Chandika Kaul (University of St Andrews, Scotland) is an interesting study of Mahatma Gandhi and Broadcasting. Starting from narration of events related to Gandhi's live broadcast to USA from London in 1931 to his second and last live address to refugees of partition in November 1947, (presented in Appendix). This chapter is a collection of many historical events related to establishment of radio network in India and relationship of Mahatma Gandhi with important broadcasters of that period. Several important events highlighted by the author show the cautious approach of Mahatma Gandhi towards media because of conflicting attitudes and double standards of Government in UK and their colonial rule in India. His relationship with important Indian and global media, coverage of civil disobedience movement (example Dandi March), his appeal to the world to support our freedom struggle, make very interesting reading. History of establishment of Indian Broadcasting company (IBC), All India radio (AIR) and reporting of events at that period by BBC and world press is fascinating. Author after in-depth analysis of material, has concluded that Mahatma Gandhi had admiration for global reach of this wireless technology, was happy to interact with individuals and broadcasting Institutions but was averse to work with them under imperial constraints.

In the seventh chapter, Gopa Sabharwal (University of Delhi, India) analyses how the

dominant idea of united India cherished by Mahatma Gandhi was confronted by the writings and critiques in Jinnah's New Delhi based newspaper "Dawn." Besides these deliberations, the author has nicely captured the evolution of Indian media landscape beginning from end of 18th century to early part of 19th century. The writings quoted in "Dawn", attempted to give political colour to all humanitarian efforts of Mahatma to depict him partisan and motivated to support only a particular section of Indian society. All these writings show the efforts of "Dawn" to fuel and sustain the social divide so as to justify the doctrine as well as agenda of Muslim League and its leader. To quote the concluding sentences of chapter – focus was "establishing differences rather than similarity". This narration will certainly interest many of the readers.

Eight chapter by Anjana Sharma (University of Delhi, India) describes as how iconography of Mahatma Gandhi was constructed and then deployed in 1947. Roles played by news papers like Hindustan Times and the Statesman are vividly described. The author has done excellent analysis of what she calls Gandhi phenomenon – struggle to imagine and build an united nation by protecting and incorporating the virtues of mutual respect and trust. Changing atmosphere around partition shows a mix of respect for his ideology, which is disregarded in their actions. Other painful events such as riots have been captured well. Magic of Mahatma was intact, reverence to him continued despite some being critical of his philosophy. This chapter concludes that. Mahatma Gandhi matters even more today than before.

Ninth chapter by Mei Li Badecker (Brooklyn, New York, USA) analyses the use and misuse of name and personality of Mahatma Gandhi in popular culture. His depiction in songs, television shows, public murals, varies, across the world. Based on

facts presented, the author has argued that Gandhi's public portrayal is often not an accurate representation of the man or his achievements. Author has presented very interesting material from Italy, Brazil, USA, and India, which shows the need to analyse the Mahatma in a dispassionate manner. There is a subtle message that some of those who try to show respect to him worldly, in fact do not follow his teachings and are not trustworthy. Author has opined that the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi remains "unrelentingly" positive. There has been a debate on difference

between pacifism and submissiveness however, this is not passive acceptance of injustice, as perceived by some. History shows that Mahatma Gandhi never lacked courage, and always sided and practised truthfulness.

To conclude, this book contains a wealth of authentic information about Mahatma Gandhi. It provides objective analysis of his thinking and actions, which shaped the history of that period. It has messages for all of us today and will be relevant even tomorrow. It is highly recommended across all spectrum of humanity.

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