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## M. K. Gandhi's Satyagrahi Model of Journalistic Ethics

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### Abstract

Ethics is a branch of philosophy concerned with actions that are morally permissible and actions that are not. Ethics in media constitutes a normative science of conduct applied voluntarily. Satyagrahi model of journalistic ethics could help to establish the lost credibility of journalism and journalists; and that could pave the way for development communication for the development of the deprived.

Throughout his life's mission Gandhi treated newspaper and journalism as a responsibility and not mere communication or profit making business. Reader's voice mattered most for Gandhi. Indian Opinion and all his newspapers were tools of communication for change and for development of the deprived masses who struggled against the structures of oppression. Truth, accuracy, objectivity, fairness, balance and impartiality are the basic premise of Satyagrahi journalistic ethics. Gandhi's self restraint mantra is relevant in today's journalism when media ethics debate revolves round the infotainment media, stereotypes, depiction of violence, sex, vulgarity, privacy, right to reply, communal writing, sensational and yellow journalism, freebies and sting operations.

Gandhi was of the opinion that newspaper should not be used as a means of earning one's livelihood or profit. Satyagrahi journalism stands for popular participatory process of sustainable social- spiritual-material advancement for emancipation and empowerment. Satyagraha was a weapon for the deprived masses and Satyagrahi journalism an alternative model of developmental communication. Selfishness, anger, lack of faith, or impatience have

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no room while infinite patience, firm resolve, single mindedness of purpose, and perfect calm are essential qualities for Satyagrahi journalist. He emphasised the role of spirituality in the development and communication process. People's communication and mediums could re-energized by Gandhian Satyagrahi journalism model.

## **Introduction**

The word 'ethics' is closely linked to questions of appropriate conduct within society. Etymological meaning of 'ethics' goes back to the Greek 'ethos' meaning reliable character, virtuous people, proper conduct etc. Ethics is a branch of philosophy concerned with actions that are morally permissible and actions that are not. Ethics in media constitutes a normative science of conduct applied voluntarily. World over efforts have been made to set ethical guidelines, rules, norms, codes and principles to help journalists to make right choices when they are in a dilemma. This research paper is an effort to carve out a Satyagrahi model of journalistic ethics on the backdrop of Gandhian concept of Satyagraha that evolved in South Africa with 'Indian Opinion' playing a major role to devise it.

## **Media Ethics**

Media ethics are applied ethics which deal with the ethical standards of media which includes print, broadcast, film, theatre, art forms, internet and traditional media. Media ethics set guidelines, rules, norms, codes and principles for media. With changing forms and expanding reach of mass media, the issues pertaining with the media ethics have come to the fore once again. Ethics of entertainment and infotainment media, ethics of business media, media and democracy and changing ethical standards in global media network are being debated fiercely. Commercialisation of media and communication content, privacy, right to reply, communal writing, sensational and yellow journalism, freebies and sting operations have raised new ethical concerns.

Freedom of mass media is premise of the liberal democracy where media plays a role of facilitator and express people's voice. New trends, especially the media convergence and technological changes have brought new dimensions to the ethical debate. Efforts are being made worldwide to create norms and standards for media coverage. Though media has freedom to publish and broadcast information in form of news or entertainment it has to oblige to certain norms, rules and regulations.

The governments of nation states world over have made some provisions to protect rights of citizens but also independent bodies comprising of media professionals have eventually drafted norms and regulations. These are voluntary norms expected to be followed by journalists and media. In the age of media credibility crisis, these ethical norms are devised to help to restore the faith and confidence in media.

## **Future of Print Media**

The report 'Future of Print Media' by Press Council of India states that the press has great power in today's world and media which is looked upon as the fourth pillar of the state has

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acquired the power of making and unmaking individuals and institutions, shaping and moulding views of people, influencing course of events and of arousing and mobilizing public opinion. However this power could be constructive as well as destructive and hence the code of journalistic ethics is absolute necessity. ‘ The journalistic ethics are no more than individual and social morals which indicate, the rightness or wrongness, goodness or badness of the professional actions of journalists. Moreover, professional ethics are important for inner discipline. What may not be illegal may yet be unethical. The range and terrain on which ethics operate are higher than law. They are binding on all connected with the operation of the media’ states the Press Council report. (1)

The ethical debate in recent times is also revolving round the conduct of journalists with many of them involved in corporate and political lobbying and playing the roles of middlemen between government and business houses. Journalists reaping benefits of land, flats at concessional rates from government have become a common scenario. In fact many of the journalists in big cities like Mumbai where land prices are soaring, avail of the chance to procure government flats and then sell them at market rates. Journalists get company shares at a special price or given under quota. Journalists get bus, rail, and air transport at concession rates. Then there are foreign tours, financial assistance, funds for their organisations, gifts, nomination on various committees etc.

### **Media and Pluralism**

Monopoly in media ownership has posed a challenge to pluralism and democracy. Diversity of ownership, various sources of information and citizen’s access to various voices and opinions are a must in the pluralistic society. Pluralism is the premise of a democracy. Plural media ensures that diversity within a society is reflected in media.

Media pluralism consists of diversity of ownership and output in the form of content. The Press Council report states that monopoly over information, whether of private individuals and institutions or of the government is detrimental to democracy, for it may disseminate one-sided information and endanger fairness and objectivity. The corporate sector has entered the press mainly to do business like any other business, and to earn profits. Further, the corporate sector has invariably its other businesses to safeguard and promote and it has entered media business to use its power to further its other business interests. Media ownership across the world is now concentrated in the hands of a few groups and individuals who have massive economic capacity to invest. Survival of small and medium media houses, especially newspapers has become more and more difficult.

### **Monomedia Expansion**

Expansion or growth within a single media sector is referred to as monomedia expansion. In cross section media expansion, the media owner spreads his/her monopoly over more than one sub sector. The expansion of media either ways has created new power structures where owners with concentrated power in their hands influence the politics, governance and society. ‘Many Voices One World’ also known as MacBride report states that concentration of ownership in fewer hands has resulted in anxiety. Industrialisation has tended to stimulate a concentration in the communication sector through formation of oligopolies and monopolies

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in the gathering, storing and disseminating information. The media owners and contractual journalists serve the media power structure. The content, language, frames and discourse of mass media is directed by the power structures where the poor have little or no voice and space. On this backdrop this research paper is an effort to carve out Gandhian model of media ethics which could give new direction to the ethical code of conduct in journalism.

### **Satyagrahi Journalism and Journalist**

Gandhi called himself as journalist throughout his life. In fact he used various tools of communication to disseminate his message and in fact he was one the most effective communicator's who used ritual communication to win unprecedented support of the masses. The ritual definition of communication is linked with terms such as 'sharing', 'participation', 'association', 'fellowship' and 'the possession of a common faith'. 'A ritual view of communication is directed not towards the extension of message in space but towards the maintenance of society in time, not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs' states James Carey (2). The ritual definition exploits the ancient identity of common roots of the term 'commonness', 'communion', 'community' and 'communication'.

### **Gandhi's Use of Media**

Besides using various communication modes and mediums like intra-personal, inter-personal, group communication and also verbal and non-verbal symbolic communication, Gandhi successfully used the newspaper medium for communication. Gandhi was associated with Indian Opinion, Young India, Navjivan and in later part of his life with Harijan, Harijanbandhu, and Harijansevak in English, Gujarati and Hindi, respectively. Gandhi was an effective communicator-journalist as receivers of his message believed in his words as Gandhi was the embodiment of what he preached. His strongest weapon of Satyagraha, he applied as a parameter to his own life as mass leader and journalist communicator. Gandhi's concept of Satyagraha is an integrated concept and includes truth, non-violence, non-stealing, chastity or brahmacharya, poverty or non-possession, bread labour, fearlessness, control of the palate (asvada), tolerance, swadeshi and removal of untouchability-- basically a self-restrained life style model for an individual Satyagrahi.

### **Tenets of Satyagraha and Journalism**

For Gandhi Satyagraha differs from passive resistance. The passive resistance is conceived according to Gandhi as a weapon of the weak and does not exclude the use of physical force or violence to achieve the end, while Satyagraha is the weapon of the strongest and excludes the use of violence in any shape or form. Gandhi coined the word in South Africa as he wanted to distinguish his movement from the passive resistance. 'Its root meaning is holding on to truth, hence Truth-force'. I have also called it Love-force or Soul – force.. Satyagraha is a relentless search for truth and a determination to reach truth' said Gandhi (3). For him Satyagraha excluded the use of violence in any shape or form or in thought, speech, word, action or deed. The Satyagrahi journalist who relentlessly pursues truth could be traced in Gandhi's journalism and communication. Journalism is about facts, journalism is about truth and absolute truth. Exaggeration of facts, painting someone in negative colour, misguiding

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readers by blurring the truth, personal vendetta and selling page space for propaganda has no place in Satyagrahi journalism.

### **Gandhi's Satyagrahi Ethics**

Gandhi strictly followed Satyagrahi ethics as a journalist since the age of 21, when he wrote nine articles for the English weekly 'The Vegetarian' focussed on vegetarianism, Indian food habits, and customs and religious festivals. Since then throughout his strife and struggle Gandhi used his communication skills effectively. Probably he was one of the very few mass leaders who understood and utilised mass media for effective communication quite before the Western mass media theorists who preached media mantra and its magical effects to the developing nations. As soon as he arrived in South Africa he wrote about his insult in a court of law in a local newspaper to vent his anguish. Along with M.H. Nazar, a secretary of the Natal Indian Congress, Gandhi got involved in producing Indian Opinion in 1903 where the concept of Satyagraha was conceived and developed. Satyagraha and Indian Opinion were blended together to create a weapon for the common masses to combat oppression.

'Satyagraha would probably have been impossible without Indian Opinion. The readers looked forward to it for a trustworthy account of the Satyagraha campaign as also of the real condition of Indians in South Africa. For me it became a means for the study of human nature in all its casts and shades, as I always aimed at establishing an intimate and clean bond between the editor and the readers. I was inundated with letters containing the outpourings of my correspondents' hearts. They were friendly, critical or bitter, according to the temper of the writer. It was a fine education for me to study, digest and answer all this correspondence. It was as though the community thought audibly through this correspondence with me. It made me thoroughly understand the responsibility of a journalist, and the hold I secured in this way over the community made the future campaign workable, dignified and irresistible' said Gandhi.(4)

Throughout his life mission Gandhi treated newspaper and journalism as a responsibility and not mere communication, or profit making business. Reader's voice mattered most for Gandhi as editor.

In the traditional newspaper the reader's letters to editor is the only space available for communication between the reader and editor. As the leader of the editorial team it is responsibility of the editor to understand nerves of masses. Satyagrahi editors and journalists do not distance themselves from readers and live in ivory towers. Editorials sensing right mood of masses cannot be written in the air conditioned offices. Reporter cannot write stories closing his/her eyes to masses and losing contacts with them. 'The Journal Indian Opinion....was a powerful weapon in the armoury of Passive Resistance and continues to be the only recorder of accurately sifted facts about our countrymen in South Africa and of Passive Resistance movement. It is in no sense a commercial enterprise' Gandhi said in a letter to J.B. Petit, Secretary, South African Indian Fund in June 16, 1915. There was a phase when Gandhi contributed Rs. 1,200 per month to keep the paper going and ultimately he suffered loss of Rs. 26,000.

### **Role of Objectivity and Idea of Impartiality in Satyagrahi Journalism**

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The traditional journalism preaches objectivity and idea of impartiality. General meaning of objectivity means keeping personal beliefs, opinions, feelings, biases or prejudices out of the news. Another meaning associated with the objectivity is of presenting both sides of the story. Satyagrahi journalism is not objective in the traditional sense. Indian Opinion was not started to communicate happenings objectively. There was intension and plan behind the Indian opinion and Gandhi never hid it. In fact he was very clear in his aim to get involved in Indian Opinion. For Gandhi, Indian Opinion and all his newspapers he later started in his life were tools of communication for change and for development of the deprived masses who struggled against the structures of oppression. In the 'Young India' of July 2, 1925 he wrote that he had taken up journalism not for its sake, but merely as an aid to what he conceived to be his mission in life—the mission to teach by example and present under severe restraint the use of the matchless weapon of Satyagraha which is a direct corollary of non-violence.

### **Walked the Talk**

Gandhi as Satyagrahi journalists walked the talk. Conditions necessary for the success of Satyagraha included no hatred in heart against opponents and the issue must be true and substantial and the Satyagrahi must be prepared to suffer till the end for his cause, said Gandhi. In Young India (20-10-1927) issue he stated 'since Satyagraha is one of the most powerful methods of action, a Satyagrahi exhausts all other means before he resorts to Satyagraha. He will therefore, constantly and continually approach the constituted authority, he will appeal to public opinion, educate public opinion, state his case calmly and coolly before everybody who wants to listen to him, and only after he has exhausted all these avenues will he resort to Satyagraha' (5) 'Satyagraha is gentle, it never wounds. It must not be result of anger or malice. It is never fussy, never impatient, and never vociferous. It is the direct opposite of compulsion' said Gandhi. (6) Gandhi's writings reflected his Satyagrahi tenets. Even while writing against the cruel British Raj, Gandhi was never vociferous and violent in words.

At the age of 35 Gandhi took charge of Indian Opinion and in 1904 he took the paper to Phoenix farm, 24 kms from Durban. The Indian Opinion was a weapon for Gandhi in his struggle and a mirror where he reflected his own thinking. 'In My Experiments with Truth', he wrote 'Week after week I poured out my soul in its columns and expounded the principles and practices of Satyagraha as I understood it. I cannot recall a word in these articles set down without thought or deliberation or a word of conscious exaggeration, or anything merely to please. Indeed, the journal became for me training in self-restraint and for friends a medium through which to keep in touch with my thoughts.' (7)

### **Basic Premises of Reporting and Satyagrahi Journalism**

Accuracy, objectivity, fairness, balance and impartiality are the basic premise of reporting. It is a reporter's responsibility to pursue the truth and present facts as they are. Readers/viewers are entitled to know the sources of the story if there is no request for anonymity. No story or source should be quoted out of context. Satyagrahi journalist holds no malice or prejudice against anyone. While he writes the story the aim and objective for benefit of public at large is very clear. Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie of the Department of History, University of Western Cape states 'Indian Opinion and political activism on the part of its editors became an

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established tradition. This is what would, throughout the 20th century distinguish Indian Opinion from other newspapers that would arrive on the scene during the 20th century. All but one of its editors spent some time in jail.

This tradition began during the Satyagraha campaign between 1906 and 1913 which began because of attempts to impose passes on Indians in the Transvaal. The newspaper came into its own. In 1904 its aims had simply been to educate whites in South Africa about Indian needs and wants. From 1906 onwards it became a vehicle for challenging state laws and urging defiance of these when these were clearly unjust. It is this that elevates this tiny newspaper produced from a farm to one of world significance for it became linked with Gandhi's transformation to a mass movement leader and his philosophy of Satyagraha which can be interpreted as active non-violent resistance' (8).

The paper was produced in four languages - English, Hindi, Gujarati and Tamil. A series of articles on dietetics appeared in the Gujarati Indian Opinion, also the life sketches of great men and women. Every issue of these weeklies contained articles by Gandhi who wanted to educate the public opinion, to remove causes of misunderstanding between the whites and the Indians and to point out the drawbacks of his countrymen. (9) According to Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie, Gandhi left behind a tough legacy for his successors at Indian Opinion to follow. This was not a commercial undertaking; it was a paper for political, social and moral education. 'In the very first month of Indian Opinion, I realized that the sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper press is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole country sides and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within. If this line of reasoning is correct, how many of the journals in the world would stand the test? But who would stop those that are useless? The useful and the useless must, like good and evil generally, go on together, and man must make his choice' said Gandhi in his autobiography.(10)

### **Relevance of Self-restraint**

Gandhi's self-restraint mantra is relevant in today's journalism when the rise of infotainment media in the last few decades has resulted in a new ethical debate on effects and impacts of media. Imbibing of stereotypes, depiction of violence, sex, vulgarity and influencing the mass psychology are some of the ethical issues that have come to the fore today. The infotainment media, the broadcast material which is intended both to entertain and to inform has changed the entire outlook towards journalism. The infotainment has also penetrated print media. The newspaper has become a saleable commodity and the emphasis is on design and sensational titles, obscenity and vulgarity. The media race is to attract readers to inflate circulation figures which in turn are used to attract advertisers who play a dominant role not only in media economy but also media content. 'Journalism should never be prostituted for selfish ends or for the sake of carrying a livelihood. And whatever happens to the editors or the journal, it should express views of the country irrespective of consequences. They will have to strike a different line of policy if they wanted to penetrate into the hearts of the masses' said Gandhi. (11)

### **Concept of Development**

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Gandhi's journals never had any sensational topics and he wrote on constructive work, Satyagraha, non-violence, diet, nature-cure, Hindu Muslim unity, untouchability, spinning, khadi, swadeshi, village industries and prohibition. He stressed the need of reorientation of education and food habits and was a severe critic of national defects. (12) In fact Gandhi through his Satyagrahi journalism preached and promoted an alternative concept of development which is applicable in today's world. Gandhi in his writings placed the voiceless deprived masses at the core. The contribution to deprived people to make the social, spiritual and material advancement of their nations' communities, families and the next generation sets the ground to redefine and re-conceptualize the model of development which veers the focus from generalised concept of development to the development of the deprived.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Western paradigms and models of development failed to yield expected results and have become redundant in the Western world, the de-colonized nations especially in South Asia continue to pursue the 'West' in search of 'development'. Ignoring the fact that the basic premise of development is based on the wrong notion of development, the nation states continue the race for the growth rate, infrastructure, industrialisation, modernisation, urbanisation, global market etc which are signs and symbols of 'development'. This has resulted in the nations' dichotomy.

The 'development' gaps within nations have created nations of deprived within nation states. The nations of deprived are left far behind in the race of 'development' and the nation states want to put out of sight this 'poor ugly' face with cosmetic development. And hence the governments in the nation states are announcing programmes after programmes for poverty elimination; provision of funds are being made and even the global bodies like United Nations and World Bank continue to provide 'aid' for 'development' of the deprived. However, nothing has worked on the ground and the survival struggle for the deprived is intensifying with the structures of oppression in nation states and global bodies tightening the noose in the name of development and globalisation.

Satyagrahi journalists stand for the deprived who are suffering at the hands of power structures. In the mirage of 'development', Satyagrahi journalism stands for popular participatory process of sustainable social- spiritual- material advancement for emancipation and empowerment. Gandhi provided the weapon of Satyagraha to the deprived masses and his Satyagrahi journalism, an alternative model of development communication.

### **Gandhi's Expectation from Journalism and Journalists**

Though he has not categorised the concept of Satyagrahi journalist, Gandhi has dropped clear hints of what he expected from journalism and journalists. His rules for Satyagrahis are applicable to Satyagrahi journalists. The Gandhian Satyagrahi journalist will not harbour anger against anyone and in pursuance of truth he will suffer anger of opponents and put up with assaults but never retaliate with anger or lose his/ her balance and insult opponents. Here opponents are those who want to quell the truth. Journalist must not submit out of fear, of punishment. He/she should merely follow the truth and take it to the logical conclusion. Satyagrahi journalists never intend to embarrass the wrongdoers and his objective must be to convert and not coerce. Journalist should have inward conviction and must believe in truth and non violence as his/ her creed and have faith in the goodness of human nature which he/

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she expects to evoke by truth and love. 'The press is called the Forth Estate. It is definitely a power but to misuse that power is criminal. I am a journalist myself and would appeal to fellow journalists to realize their responsibility and to carry on their work with no idea other than that of upholding the truth' he said in Harijan (13)

### **Fight Till the End**

Most importantly Gandhi wanted his Satyagrahi to lead a chaste life and willing to fight till the end and be a habitual khadi wearer and spinner as it was essential for India. Today when journalism and journalists are on the verge of losing credibility in the eyes of the common people, Gandhian Satyagrahi tenets stand as a challenge for the individual journalist. Khadi wearing and spinning were the modalities Gandhi had worked out for pre-independent India and the essence of which still remains valid for journalists. Gandhi set a rule that a Satyagrahi must be a teetotalter and free from the use of other intoxicants so that his/ her reason should always remain unclouded and mind remain constant.

Satyagrahi journalist should mobilise public opinion. 'When public opinion is sufficiently roused against a social abuse even the tallest will not dare to practice or openly lend support to it. As awakened and intelligent public opinion is the most potent weapon of Satyagrahi' said Gandhi which aptly suits the Satyagrahi journalists who should write for public awakening. (14) The motto of the Satyagrahi journalist is of conversion by gentle persuasion and a constant appeal to the head and the heart.

Gandhi gives small but important tips like not wasting a grain of rice or a scrap of paper as it belongs to the nation and the Satyagrahi is only a trustee of the same. Gandhi observed that the reporting of speeches during his time was generally defective and wrong reporting results in much distortion and interpolation. He suggested that the best rule would be to send the proof of the reported speech to the speaker for correction and publish it only if the speaker has no suggestions to put in it. Selfishness, anger, lack of faith, or impatience have no room while infinite patience, firm resolve, single mindedness of purpose, perfect calm are essential qualities for the Satyagrahi journalist.

### **Mind and Body Health of the Journalist**

In the world of growing competition the mind and body of journalists need to be fit and fine. Like Satyagrahi, if journalist is not healthy in mind and body, he/she may fail to muster complete fearlessness. 'He ( Satyagrahi) should have the capacity to stand guard at a single spot day and night; must not fall ill even if he has to bear cold and heat and rain; he must have the strength to go to places of peril, to rush to scenes of fire, an the courage to wander about alone in desolate jungles and haunts of death; he will bear, without a grumble, severe beating, starvation and worse; and will keep in his post of duty without flinching; he will have the resourcefulness and capacity to plunge into a seemingly impenetrable scene of rioting....' (15)

### **Satyagrahi Newspaper**

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Gandhi was of the opinion that newspaper should not be used as a means of earning a livelihood. ‘ There are certain spheres of work which have a direct bearing on public welfare; to undertake them for earning one’s livelihood is fraught with danger – inasmuch as it obscures, and might hurt, the essential aim which one should put before oneself in taking to such an activity’ he said. (16) Gandhi believed that if newspapers are made an instrument of earning a livelihood and profit-making it would lead to a number of evils. Even during Gandhi’s period such newspapers existed and Gandhi had expressed his unhappiness over this trend.

According to Gandhi one of the objects of a newspaper is to understand popular feeling and to give expression to it; another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; and the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects. (17)

Gandhi’s views are significant today when the deprived and marginal communities are not represented as they should be in the main stream media. The representation of the Dalits, Advasi’s, minorities and marginal communities is meagre. Their contribution to socio-economic and cultural development is either neglected or ignored and their coverage is tinged with bias. The media and its makers play a role of facilitator to maintain the oppressive structure.

Information is said to be one of the basic functions of mass media. It was thought that the information scarcity was the root cause of many problems and with the mass media disseminating more and more information the basic issues would be resolved. However the media which is part of the structural oppression and a tool in hands of oppressors provides the information which builds the consensus for the oppression and justifies exploitation in various ways. Information comes with the perspective and information is dumped without any knowledge about its use. The diffusion through signs, symbols, sounds and images for personal and collective recreation and enjoyment is one of the functions of mass media today.

Recreation uses dominant signs, symbols, sounds and images to imbibe the dominant oppressive structures in the minds of the masses. Under the influence, the lower strata respect oppressive structure and yearn to be part of it. Media maintains equilibrium in the society and does not support the revolutionary ideas that could disturb the existing fabric of society. Mind-boggling information that comes in wraps hardly creates awareness.

### **Educating People – Primary Purpose**

‘Newspapers are meant primarily to educate people, and apprise them of current trends in the history of the world. This is responsible work.’ Gandh said (18) and insisted that the newspapers should not publish news until its truth is definitely established. ‘It is generally seen that the newspapers publish any matter they have without regard to its needs or importance just to fill vacant spaces. It is so in the West. The reason is most newspapers have an eye on profits. There is no doubt that newspapers have done great service to people and these defects are therefore overlooked. But to my mind then they have done equally great harm. There are newspapers in the West which are so full of trash that it would be a sin to read them. Many create ill-will among people with their prejudices. At times they produce bitterness and strife even between different families and communities’ observed Gandhi.

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(19) The scene in today's Indian newspapers industry is not different from what Gandhi has written about the Western newspapers.

Gandhi said that newspapers had become more important than scriptures for some people and they would lose nothing by giving up reading newspapers as real food for their minds and spirits lies in the scriptures and other good literature. He insisted that the newspapers should speak the truth without fearing the country laws and if newspapers are not able to do so they should pull down their shutters.

Gandhi observed that the established practice of newspapers was to derive income from advertisements rather than subscribers. Newspapers published advertisements of drinks and at the same time wrote editorials against drinking. Ill effects of smoking are communicated by the newspaper and at the same time the same newspaper carries advertisements of tobacco brands. Gandhi said, '... We must either put an end to this undesirable practice or at least reform it. It is the duty of each newspaper to exercise care in accepting advertisements for publication in its pages' he said. (20)

### **Duty of Newspapers**

Writing on the duty of newspaper in a country where laws put restrictions on freedom of writing Gandhi said, 'In order to get over this limitation our newspapers have evolved a style of writing which makes it possible to interpret what they say on a particular matter, which may seem to fall within the purview of these Acts (Gandhi was referring to Seditious Writing Act, Defence of India Act), in two different ways. Some have perfected this art to a science. But, in my opinion, this causes harm to the country. People develop a tendency to equivocate and fail to cultivate the courage to speak the truth. It changes the form of the language which, instead of being an instrument for expressing one's thoughts, becomes a mask for concealing them. I am convinced that this is not the way to educate our people. Both people and individuals must cultivate the habit of speaking their minds. Newspapers are in a position to impart such training to them'. (21) He suggested that the newspapers afraid of laws and who do not want to be entangled in it should stop publishing if they are not able to tell the truth. Gandhi said that a newspaper should not apologise for supporting people in their just struggle against oppression and should be ready to face action for the same.

### **Commercial Advertisements - Line between Advertisement and News Blurred**

Gandhi was against the commercial advertisements as advertisements eat space. 'We now feel that we should also discontinue the practice of publishing advertisements. We believed then that advertisements were a good thing to have but on reflection we see that the practice is wholly undesirable. Advertisements are inserted by people who are impatient to get rich, in order that they may gain over their rivals. They are also much in fashion these days that any and every kind of advertisement is published and paid for. This is one of the sorriest features of modern civilization, and for our part we wish to be rid of it. If however, we published non-commercial advertisements, which serve a public purpose, free of charge, they would fill the entire number each time, so we shall only accept them against payment. Other advertisements, we shall stop publishing forthwith' he wrote in Indian Opinion issue published on 4 September 1912. (22)

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Gandhi's views hold significance when the line between the advertisement and news is getting blurred. Advertising is meant for selling products by using persuasive language. Emphatic use of language with crispy catchy and easy lines attracts readers. Like news, advertisements are part of structural oppression. Earlier advertisers bought space in the newspaper and paid for it. Now they could directly pay to the owners for news. News and advertisements have become similar. Exploiting the hypothesis that people have faith in printed words, advertisers are buying the news space instead of advertising. There is a trend in media where business houses advertise in the newspaper and as return the newspaper publishes a story endorsing the product. Advertisements are not meant to make readers think. The sole purpose is to trap them. The news is not doing anything different than this. Media creates a mirage through news, advertisements and pursue the conversion of readers into consumers.

### **Paid News**

On June 8, 2010 the Election Commission of India wrote to chief electoral officers of the state and union territories about 'measures to check paid news during elections i.e. advertising in the garb of news'. The Election Commission has directed attention to paid news scenario. Paid news is 'assuming alarming proportions' as a serious electoral malpractice causing concern to the Commission in the context of conduct of free and fair elections. The commission asked to keep vigilance on paid news by making use of the existing provisions of law so that the incidence of paid news' or surrogate advertisements in print and electronic media in the context of elections is arrested. The cases of 'paid news' generally manifest in the forms of news articles/reports published about a particular candidate or a party eulogising them, or similar news articles/reports denigrating the opponents, both intended at unduly influencing the voters. But this is not restricted to the election period. The newspapers have started publishing paid news supplements to celebrate birthdays of politicians, business tycoons, god men and women. Gandhi's views on advertisement stand more relevant today than at any other time in history.

### **Spirituality in Satyagrahi Communication**

'Spirituality is not a matter of knowing scriptures and engaging in philosophical discussions. It is a matter of heart culture, of immeasurable strength...' said Gandhi. (23) Spirituality is at the centre of the Gandhian ritual communication. For every Satyagrahi in India, Gandhi had set essential qualifications like he/ she must have living faith in God. Gandhi believed that the divine powers within a human being are infinite and man is neither mere intellect nor animal body, nor heart or soul alone. 'A proper and harmonious combination of all the three is required for the making of a whole man' said Gandhi. (24) 'We shall not tread the beaten path, but explore new pathways to our goal. And what is the goal? Our goal is to establish the dignity of man. We have insulted man traditionally, in this country. That is why in spite of its wanton spirituality, we have been more often slaves than free men. Can spirituality tolerate slavery? And we have so many spiritual preceptors in our country with tremendous following! But why has our country been a country of subject people for most of its history? The answer is, we have never cared for the dignity of man as man, unlabelled man. Allow me to say that our country is not a country of spirituality, but a country of religiosity. Religion is

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not only different from spirituality, but sometimes, very often, it is anti-spiritual' said Gandhi. (25)

For Gandhi spirituality was part of his struggle. After initially denying spirituality a role in the development now there is greater acceptance to the fact that spirituality is here to stay and it has a role to play in the development and communication process. Some of the researchers are now engaged in locating the link that binds spirituality and development. 'Our reverence for life will be an index of our outlook on life. Both science and spirituality must together help us reach that consummation. Science without spirituality is reduced to a tissue of purposeless discoveries, and spirituality without science will lose itself in the waste of unrealistic speculation...' (26)

### **Sant Gadge Baba Village Sanitation Campaign**

The type of theology that actively supports development for personal and collective empowerment often is called liberation theology. The recent example where spirituality and communication were blended is Sant Gadge Baba Village Sanitation Campaign launched by the government of Maharashtra. The Maharashtra village structure is typically made of various components like caste, creed, religion, interest groups, and links. The Maharashtra government decided to launch the competition for cleanliness; chose to name the campaign after Sant Gadge Baba so that rural masses could identify themselves with the campaign.

A spiritual person becomes less interested in material things, was the basis of Gandhi's theory on sustainability and Gadge Baba epitomised this theory. Contrasting with the images of some of the spiritual leaders today, Gadge Baba was a social worker who rejected the saffron robe, preferred to live in the slum, slept under trees and accepted food for work.

The campaign triggered phenomenal change in rural Maharashtra and turned out to be the biggest campaign propagating environmental sanitation, personal hygiene and health measures, ever undertaken among the rural masses. This campaign led to the mobilisation of rural population to clean their houses, neighbourhoods and the entire village without any financial support from the government. It is estimated that in response to the campaign, in its first year itself, the total investment mobilised by communities was worth Rs. 200 crores with a Rs. 6 crore state investment.

### **Religions in Aid of Social and Economic Transformation**

If the religions of the world decide to fight against poverty and oppression as a common problem, if they share a common commitment to reinstate human dignity, it would be much easier to convince common people to join the development efforts. Paolo Freire successfully applied liberation theology in education and communication. He preached the theory that every individual wants to get free from internal and external oppression and the central purpose of development should be freedom from oppression. Freire ideated development communication as emancipatory dialogue. One of the examples in South Asia where spirituality is embedded with development is the Sarvodaya. 'Philosophy of Sarvodaya is based on Buddhist-Gandhian philosophy and its work is spread across all ethnic and religious communities. The sustainable empowerment of people through self-help and collective

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support, to non-violence and peace is the motto of the movement which is clearly rooted in Gandhian and Buddhist traditions, but actively engages people of all religions and ethnic backgrounds'. (27) In India there is need to study Mahatma Jotirao Phule's Sarvajanic Satyadharma and Dr. B R Ambedkar's Navyana Buddhism on these lines.

### **People's Satyagrahi Journalism/Communication**

As the press began to change into an industry, the trends also spread to Indian newspapers, which realized the importance of sound economics. Where the owners resisted the change, the newspapers had fallen between two stools. They were neither businesses nor service institutions, says G S Bhargava in his 'The Press in India: An Overview'. The transformation of press from a mission to service and ultimately to industry and consequent conversion of journalist from upholders of values and causes to industrial wage earners had profound effect on the quality and character of the profession. (28)

Commercialization, trivialization and vulgarization have grabbed space in newspapers. With the main stream commercial media not interested in deprived people and their development efforts, people's communication stands as option for the Satyagrahi journalism and communication. People's communication emerges out of need to communicate as other mediums of communication deny them required space and place. Gandhi's Indian Opinion was started as the then existing newspapers in South Africa failed to give voice to the suffering of Indian people. In the urge to communicate, people develop their own medium as they want to express, share, participate and reciprocate.

Mass media is now major business where communication has become commodity. The massive advertisement revenue dominates the content and controllers of media have agenda of priorities. In this scenario the people's communication which is controlled by people themselves becomes vital part of development communication.

### **People Communication**

Popular participation and sustainability of message are imperative in people's development communication. Overall the communication (despite being soft social science) is considered as field of experts where strategies are planned and implemented by the elite. Exact opposite is the people's communication which could be defined as -- 'evolutionary sustainable communication by the people for themselves'. The people's communication places people and their mediums at the core of entire communication process. People chose their medium and message and various factors contribute in making this choice. And to take alien idea as message to the people, or even to motivate, persuade and conceptualise, people's medium is the most appropriate way to achieve successful and sustainable communication. Other forms of communication including the mass communication can play role of facilitator in this process. People communicate within their families, groups, friends, society and communities.

People's communication takes many forms in various mediums. Community newspaper, radio, group discussions, chats, traditional folk arts, internet chatting, face books, blogs and twitters etc are some of the people's communication mediums where they have control over the content. In the South Asian nations strong presence of traditional people's medium to

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communicate never became part of the mainstream communication strategies. But still at grassroots levels people's mediums remain the main tool of effective communication. The need is to identify the people's medium of communication which they have chosen for themselves to communicate. This will facilitate the development communication process which intends to emancipate and empower people to facilitate popular participation in the process of sustainable development.

The new age media that have an integrated character of interpersonal and mass media has emerged as new people's communication mediums. It has become popular because of its communicative format. People are able to vent their feelings and can communicate through this medium. Popularisation of this new age media has forced other forms of media, especially broadcast and print media to become more communicative and allow people their space in communication. Newspapers and television channels are now on websites, chatting zones, face books, twitters, e-paper with feedback, blogs and concept of citizen journalist has become popular. Communication is not just technical process, it involves social- cultural-economic dimensions and is participatory process. And this needs to be emphasised in communication planning for development of deprived. The Satyagrahi communication has been success in many development projects like that of Tarun Bharat Sangh in Rajasthan and Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka.

The work of Tarun Bharat Sangh, and its founder Rajendra Singh in the districts of Rajasthan is not just about water-shed management but it is the local development and communication model for drought prone areas. From Bhikampura in Alwar district, this people-centred development model is spreading all over Rajasthan and other parts of India. Today one can see the river Arvari, dead for 40 years flow again. Other rivers Ruparel, Jahajwali and numerous other rivulets are flowing. TBS's 'people-centred' approach to development is based on popular participation of people who want to change their lives. Discussions, debates, consensus, local resources and final implementation are the key elements in this model. The wireless technology project by Magsaysay award winner Mahabir Pun in Nepal has brought revolution in villages in the Himalayan foothills of Nepal. Using Pun's 'tele-teaching' network where teachers now instruct students using internet. Internet is used for marketing village goods and the efforts are being made to use this technology in health sector. Gandhian Satyagrahi journalism could be re-energized using people's medium and communication.

## **Conclusion**

Is Satyagrahi model of journalistic ethics just a Utopia? Gandhi himself called the qualifications for Satyagrahis as 'illustrative' and not 'exhaustive', probably knowing that the number of Satyagrahis fulfilling these conditions might be very few. 'I have maintained that we would require a smaller army of Satyagrahis then, not that of soldiers, trained in modern warfare, and the cost will be insignificant compared to the fabulous sums devoted by nations to armaments' said Gandhi in Harijan ( 22-10-38).

A Small army of Satyagrahi journalists could definitely make a difference. There could be the general view that Satyagrahi journalism is probably possible only in alternate media and not

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at all in mainstream media. Then can one conclude that Satyagrahi journalism has no space left in mainstream media?

Late Sanjay Sangvai who created a well knit network of reporters to voice the Narmada Bachao Andolan, while talking in a national seminar on media and social action at Pune in November 2002 said that it is a fact that mainstream media is capital dominated but there is no point writing off the whole system as a lost cause. There are still some useful spaces within mainstream media, which can be used. These spaces exist because mainstream media needs coverage of such issues also, to survive in today's competitive environment. He added that there are always individual journalists who are conscious and have been pursuing issues as a part of their social conviction, professional ethics and public responsibility'.

The Satyagrahi model of journalistic ethics could help to establish the lost credibility of journalism and journalists, and could pave the way for development communication for the development of deprived.

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