

# Mahatma is the Message<sup>1</sup>: Gandhi's Life as Consummate Communicator

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When Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated on 30 January, 1948, he was “a private citizen without wealth, property, official title, official post, academic distinction, scientific achievement, or artistic gift” (Fischer, 1982, p. 19). Not a commander of armies, no sporting prowess, and unimpressive public speaker. Balding, bespectacled, and brown, he was barely 5' 5" tall.

Riding this unassuming persona was a “giant” of a man: a spiritual leader, a political strategist, a development practitioner and economist, a social worker, a reformer, a champion of the downtrodden, an author, journalist, lawyer, arbitrator, activist, agitator, nurse, and healer. Born Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in 1869, the fourth and last child of his father's fourth and last marriage, the world knew him as *Mahatma* (“great soul”). To his people, he was *Bapu* (“father”). Monikers aside, Gandhi's occupations and avocations, quest and pursuits, represented an integrated whole.

Anchored in ancient Hindu Vedic wisdom, he sought and experimented with truth as a moral scientist.

Gandhi mobilized millions with his message of *ahimsa* (“non-violence”), acts of self-suffering, and his daily ritual of spinning. His rhetorical frame was armed with *dayabal*, the “force of compassion love,” heaped equally on his adversaries and admirers<sup>1</sup>. Insisting on truth (“Satyagraha) in thought, action, and creed, he fought the sin while loving the sinner, bringing an ethical and moral dimension to persuasion never quite witnessed before.

This article investigates Mahatma Gandhi's life from the disciplinary lens of communication arts and science. It reflects on his communicative “acts” which mobilized a nation, bringing new language, rhetorical frames, and understandings to the study of social movements, symbolic persuasion, and civil public discourses.

## **Salt, Satyagraha, Suffering**

### *Integrated Communication Praxis*

On the afternoon of April 4, 1930, “a balding, diminutive, bespectacled, dhoti-clad barrister-cum-journalist [Mahatma Gandhi] completed a much publicized and anticipated 241 mile walk from his ashram in Sabarmati” to Dandi, a coastal town in Western India known for its salt deposits (Chaudhary & Starosta, 1992, p. 2). Walking with Gandhi were tens of thousands — a moving column 2-3 miles long, and leading them were his 78 personally-trained disciples, who started the journey with Gandhi 24 days previously. Gandhi and his firm-footed fellow marchers, all donning the homespun garb of the Indian peasantry, looked like a brigade of peace soldiers, armed with the philosophy of *satyagraha*, and on an open transparent mission: to defy the oppressive British tax laws on the production and consumption of salt in India (Weber, 1997).



*Gandhi on his 241 mile Salt March with his followers*

The next morning, on April 5<sup>th</sup>, Gandhi and his followers bathed in the Arabian Sea, followed by the ritualistic morning prayers. Journalists from all over the world jockeyed for positions around the Mahatma, poised to capture the historic moment. It came quickly. Surrounded by his followers, Gandhi bent down and scooped up a lump of mud and salt from the beach, raised his hand, and claimed it as his own. The crowds roared, cameras clicked, and in that moment Gandhi had broken the British-imposed salt ordinance. This symbolic gesture signaled to the tens of thousands on the beach at Dandi, and hundreds of thousands, on beaches along India’s 4,000 mile-long coastline, to collect saltwater in vessels, and boil it to produce one’s own salt (Singhal, 2010).

Gandhi’s iconic Salt March against British taxation on salt was an open, peaceful protest on behalf of 400 million poor Indians. Prior to beginning his march, Gandhi wrote to Lord Irwin, the British Viceroy in New Delhi, noting that much like water and air, salt was a naturally-available commodity essential for human survival, and one that the poor — who toiled in the fields — needed it most and could least afford. He wrote: “I regard the salt tax to be the most iniquitous from the poor man’s standpoint”.<sup>1</sup> Gandhi labeled his fight against the salt laws as one of “right against might.”

Only when Irwin declined (rather derided) Gandhi's call to repeal the salt laws, was the march undertaken, and in full company of journalists, personally invited by Gandhi from the world over. As the number of marchers swelled day-by-day over its 24-day journey, and as news of the march spread – from the hinterlands of India to the august chambers of the British Parliament and US Congress — world public opinion rose sharply in favor of the marchers' cause. A long, peaceful march, involving a large number of people and spread over 24 days of progressive action, invites public attention, engagement, and involvement. The spectacle is akin to an unfolding drama, a gripping duel between the powers of good and evil, the saintly and the demonic (Homer, 1956).

Why is he marching? Why for salt? Will he reach the sea? How many more miles does he have to go? Will he really break the law? Will the British administration not arrest him? Such questions were endlessly discussed and debated in the global, national, and local media, creating an interpersonal buzz of the likes not seen before. Gandhi, the communication strategist, knew the value of educating and galvanizing public opinion in support of the nation's cause. Akin to Moses leading the Jews out of Egypt, or the Great March of Mao Tse-Tung in China, the Gandhian Salt March

evoked collective feelings of strength, power, unity, and dignity among the oppressed and subjugated masses of India (Merriam, 1975; Singh, 1979; Verma, 1990; Weber, 1997).

Gandhi's Salt March, like his other *satyagrahas*, was strategically integrated with a series of other protests and agitations that disrupted or completely shut down British-controlled saltworks, mills, and shops. Notable among these was the Dharasana Satyagraha,<sup>2</sup> a non-violent raid of the Dharasana Salt Works in Gujarat. Hundreds of unarmed *satyagrahis* peacefully approached the main gate of the salt works, protected by an armed contingent of policemen, who had laid out barbed wire around the salt pens. Webb Miller, an American journalist, an eyewitness to the beating of *satyagrahis* by steel-tipped *lathis* (wooden clubs) reported<sup>3</sup>:

They went down like ten-pins...with sickening whacks of the clubs on unprotected skulls.... Great patches of blood widened on their white clothes...I felt an indefinable sense of helpless rage and loathing, almost as much against the men who were submitting unresistingly to being beaten as against the police wielding the clubs...

Miller’s story about the selfless suffering of *satyagrahis* was read by tens of millions around the world, and discussed and debated on radio, in political forums, and in tea and coffee saloons. It appeared in 1,350 newspapers throughout the world and its text was officially admitted into the minutes of the U.S. Senate as documentation of British savagery in its prized colony of India (Singhal, 2010; Weber, 1997).

Miller’s story helped clarify for the world that there was nothing passive about *satyagraha*. The premise of Gandhian *ahimsa* (“non-violence”) was not just about “not hating”. Rather it was about loving, and that too — active loving. The

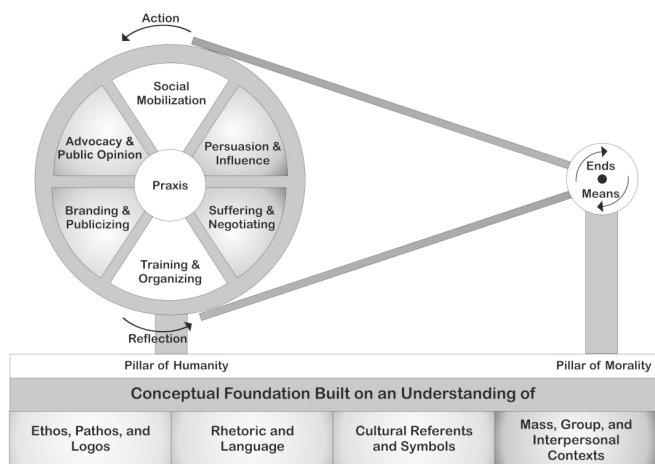
women who tended to their felled *satyagrahis* in Dharasana also lovingly offered water to the hundreds of tired and thirsty policeman wielding their clubs in the hot April sun.

The compassionate and loving response to sickening brutality on the grounds of Dharasana Salt Works exemplified the Gandhian notion of *dayabal* – a force that persuades through compassion and love. By putting one’s body on the line, and lovingly accepting its suffering at the hand of the oppressor, Gandhi laid a framework for an ethical and moral basis for persuasion. *Dayabal* acts beyond reason, moving one’s heart and soul.

### Wheels, Pillars, and Foundations

#### *Communicative Actions, Reflections, and Concepts*

The Salt *Satyagraha* is illustrative of the various conceptual components undergirding Gandhi’s integrated communication praxis (shown in the form of a spinning wheel). In this section, we briefly describe its various components –wheels, pillars, and foundations. In a subsequent section, we explicate some of these components in even greater detail.



A Conceptualization of Gandhi’s Communication Praxis

The rotating bigger wheel represents Gandhian communication praxis as a *core* activity, shaped by an ongoing cycle of *actions* and *reflections*. The reflections may lead to adjustments in actions, keeping the wheel in motion. Gandhi's autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth*, as the title suggests, is about life as praxis, steeped in actions and reflections.

The Salt *Satyagraha* also emanated from such a cycle of actions and reflections. The selection of salt as the rallying point was derived from Gandhi's daily "bread" labor i.e. spinning cloth, working the farm, tending to animals, or cleaning latrines (Gandhi, 1994). Reflecting on these daily actions, with beaded brows of salty-perspiration, for which the British taxed the laborer, Gandhi realized salt was a universal commodity that the Indian masses needed, and for which they could be unified and mobilized for symbolic action against unjust British laws.

The upper half of the Gandhian praxis wheel shows the three desired *outputs* (ends) of communicative actions: (1) *Advocacy* for just laws and educating and influencing *public opinion* about it, (2) *social mobilization* of all sectors, strata, and institutions, and (3) *mass persuasion* through direct and indirect actions.

The lower half of the Gandhian praxis wheel, shows the necessary communicative *inputs* (means) by which

the desired outputs (ends) can be achieved: (1) *Branding and publicizing* the message, (2) *training and organizing* committed cadres in small and large groups, and (3) *suffering* (to influence) and *negotiating* (for conciliation and forward movement).

The actions and reflections in Gandhian communication praxis are governed by (depicted as the smaller hinged wheel) an abiding belief in the circularity and purity of both *means* and *ends*.

The undergirding structures holding the wheels of Gandhi's communication praxis are the *pillars of humanity and morality* i.e. making a moral commitment to serving humanity where the needs are most ubiquitous. To operationalize this notion, Gandhi was clear: "I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and weakest person whom you have seen, and ask yourself if the next step you contemplate is going to be of any use to that person"<sup>1</sup>

Further, the pillars and wheels of Gandhi's communication praxis rest on a rock-solid *conceptual foundation* comprising of an understanding of Aristotelean notions of *ethos, pathos, and logos*<sup>2</sup>, *rhetoric and language use, cultural referents and symbols, and mass-mediated, group, interpersonal, and intrapersonal contexts*.

## Spinning the Connective Yarn:

*Charkha* and *Khadi* as Participation, Protest, and Progress

“I believe that the yarn we spin is capable of mending the broken warp and woof of our life.”

*Mahatma Gandhi  
on the charkha*<sup>3</sup>

It is no accident that the conceptual model of Gandhian communication praxis is illustrated as a spinning *charkha*. The *charkha* (or “spinning wheel”) is essentially a hand-cranked spinning device used to make thread and yarn. The *charkha* represents a rich metaphor of Gandhian communicative wisdom: a non-verbal symbol of village labor, human dignity, self-reliance, self-discipline, social cohesion and mobilization, as also standing for actionable participation, protest, and progress (Bean, 1989; Singhal, 2008).

Up until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, until the Industrial Revolution gathered “steam” in England, cloth production was India’s premier industry, a major employer, and revenue generator. However, the policies of the British East India trading company and later the British colonial administration systematically destroyed the spinning and dying of cotton cloth by Indians, moving cloth

manufacturing to their mills in Manchester and Leeds. The result was massive unemployment and poverty in India, and a ruralization of India as former clothing workers were forced to move back to villages (Singhal, 2009).

Gandhi made hand-spun, hand-woven cloth (*khadi*) the centerpiece of his program for Indian independence (Bean, 1989). He spun his own yarn on a *charkha* (spinning wheel) each day, and urged the poor, the unemployed, and people from all walks of life to do the same. For farmers, who engaged in productive labor only during agricultural seasons, the *charkha* equated to food and wages. Gandhi noted: “The spinning wheel alone will solve, if anything will solve, the problem of the deepening poverty of India.”<sup>4</sup>

*Khadi* was a quintessential communication message, a daily statement made by (rather, worn by) all Indians, cutting across caste, religious, region, and social class differences. Its mass appeal — especially for the poor, rural, and marginalized in India — was *swadeshi*, the production of, and pride in, indigenous products (signifying self-reliance).

In the Gandhian vision, the *charkha* symbolized much more than the wheel and wages of the spinner. The *charkha* was at the center of his village reconstruction ripple, connecting both

economically and socially the village farmer, weaver, dyer, washerman, blacksmith, carpenter, and citizen-consumer (Singhal, 2010).

The Indian National Congress, at Gandhi's urging, voted to require its officers and workers to spin and wear *khadi* and to boycott foreign cloth. The spinning wheel was adopted as the symbol of the National Congress, and placed in the center of the party's flag.

The *charkha* was, quintessentially, integrated Gandhian communication praxis in action.

### **Personal Influence and Moral Authority**

#### *Being the Change You Wish to See*

"A small flaw in his own behavior was announced from the housetop as a "Himalayan blunder".

Narayan Desai<sup>5</sup> on Gandhi's life as an open book.

A woman once came to Sevagram Ashram in Wardha asking Gandhi to persuade her little boy to stop eating too much sugar<sup>6</sup>.

"Sister, come back after a week," Gandhi said.

Puzzled, the woman left and returned a week later.

"Please do not eat too much sugar, it is not good for you", Gandhi told the little boy.

The boy's mother asked: "Bapu, why didn't you say this to him last week? Why did you make us come back again?"

Gandhi responded: "Sister, last week, I too was eating sugar. First, I had to try to see if it was possible".

For Gandhi, there were no gaps in thought, creed, and action. Actions should match words. "Be the change you wish to see," he emphasized.

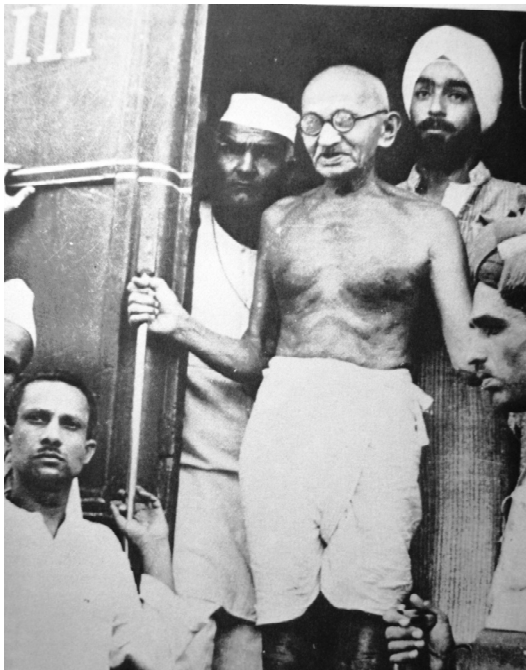
Gandhi's credibility and moral authority (the Aristotlean notion of Ethos) came from such actions, vesting him with immense power to mobilize, persuade, and influence. Ralph Waldo Emerson emphasized that such power emanated from Character — a force which acts directly by presence, and without means.<sup>7</sup> This latent power is not flashy, nor vested in official positions or titles, but is natural like light and heat, and characterized by "greatness," "virtuosity," and "magnetism." Gandhi would draw multitudes in his prayer meetings, marches, and on train stations; long lines and jostling crowds vied for the Mahatma's *darshan* (sighting) — a visual communion with a higher spirit.<sup>8</sup>

## Living, Marketing, Publicizing “Authenticity”

“He did not descend from the top; he seemed to emerge from the millions of India, speaking their language, and incessantly drawing attention to them and their appalling condition.”

Jawaharlal Nehru<sup>9</sup>

Once a British reporter mockingly asked Gandhi: “Mr. Gandhi, why are your train journeys in India in Third-Class? Surely, you could afford first-class?” Gandhi’s polite response: “I travel Third Class because there is no Fourth Class.”



*Gandhi, in a dhoti, traveling Third-Class*

One may argue that no one understood branding, marketing, and publicity better than Gandhi. In fact, Gandhi went a step further: He authentically embodied, lived, and reinforced his “brand” in his daily actions.

What was the Gandhian “brand” — his quintessential, distinguishing image — in the minds of people? What expectations, feelings did he evoke in public? How did he embody, live, and reinforce this brand in his daily actions, his interactions, his garb, his routine?

Here are but a few glimpses of the Gandhian “brand”:

Consciously living a life premised on few possessions and voluntary simplicity, consistent with the Hindu principle of *aparigraha* (non-possession). It meant traveling Third-Class (as there was no fourth class), no unnecessary expenditures, and hard manual labor under the hot sun.

Voluntarily residing in the poorest and hottest part of India, Wardha, in the State of Maharashtra, in an ashram community called Sevagram (Village of



Service), where his daily actions involved the upliftment of poorest-of-the-poor through education, spinning, sanitation, nutrition, civic engagement, and self-governance.

Purposely wearing a hand-spun *dhoti* ("loincloth"), the attire of Indian farmers and male laborers, Gandhi's garb symbolized an unmistakable identification with the poor. Winston Churchill aptly described the Gandhi "brand": "A half-naked fakir."

Gandhi's performative poverty was "contagious and infectious in a wider public and political space".<sup>1</sup> A walking, talking, spinning, cleaning, and toiling billboard, Gandhi, the "indefatigable publicist," understood the attributes of good brands (Mazzarella, 2009).

The Gandhian "brand" was not directed to affluent customers but rather cultivated to appeal to, and resonate with, the 400 million poor, impoverished Indians who lived in its remote villages. Gandhi's "branded" message was carefully constructed, targeted to a segmented audience, and enacted and fulfilled in his daily routines. Like all good brands, the message and the messenger resonated with their constituents.

## **Arbitration, Conciliation, Compromise**

### *Condemn the Sin, Reform the Sinner*

Throughout his life, Gandhi "remained a barrister" demonstrating a "respect for correct procedure, evidence, and rights".

*Rudolf and Rudolf (1967, p. 25)*

What does Gandhi's communication praxis teach us conflict resolution, conciliation, and compromise? When Gandhi settled his first legal case in South Africa, he did so by arbitration, i.e. out of court. He even persuaded his client, Dada Abdullah to take payments from the losing party, Abdullah's cousin, in installments so as not to ruin him. In so doing, Gandhi learned first-hand the value of mediation, conflict resolution, and compromise. These early experiences would deeply influence Gandhi's conciliatory conflict resolution approach.

After settling his first case by arbitration, Gandhi emphasized: "I had learned the true practice of law. I had learned to find out the better side of human nature and to enter men's hearts. I realized that the true function of a lawyer was to unite parties driven asunder" (quoted in Rudolf & Rudolf, 1967, pp. 36-37).

So, as opposed to advocating for adversarial approaches, Gandhi believed that “solutions based on compromise were better because they rested on mutual confidence rather than institutionalized conflict”. This thread of conciliation, compassion, and compromise, i.e. “avoiding conflict to find areas of agreement that could produce settlement,” remained central to his conflict mediation approach (Rudolf & Rudolf, 1967, p. 37).

In 1918, Gandhi arbitrated a wage dispute between textile mill owners in Ahmedabad and factory workers who were locked in a stalemate. The factory workers wanted a 35 percent increase in salary; the mill owners’ best offer was 20 percent. The stalemate continued for several months; both parties were hurting and no viable solution seemed to be in sight. Gandhi stepped in with a culturally-acceptable solution that reframed the existing problem and saved face for both parties. The factory workers received their desired 35 percent increase the first day (hence satisfying their demand), 20 percent the next day (mollifying the factory owners), and then a perpetual 27.5 percent increase, the arithmetic compromise (Gardner, 1997).

Gandhi believed that unjust rules, laws, and institutions must be reformed or abolished. That sin, corruption, injustice must be made visible and condemned without condemning the sinner or oppressor.

## Rhetorical Frames and Language Use

### *Naming and Enacting New Realities*

“You are born an untouchable, but I am an untouchable by adoption.” By choice, that is.

*Gandhi<sup>2</sup> to Ambedkar, a leader of untouchables*

How does one construct a persuasive argument? How does one appeal to a person’s reason, emotion, and spirituality? How does one increase the likelihood of being taken seriously? What is the power of naming? How does language affect the construction of our realities? Such concerns fall in the domain of rhetoricians.

Gandhi life and communication praxis would suggest that he was a rhetorician of enormous stature, pushing the boundaries of logic, affect, argumentation, naming, and language use. He was a coiner of new terms, new language, and new arguments to create new uplifting realities (Homer, 1956).

Gandhi coined the term *satyagraha* (insistence on truth), a framework for persuasion which employed moral means to achieve moral ends. In the *satyagrahi*’s rhetorical frame, persuasion is viewed as a process of transforming opponents to a higher state of consciousness, not simply defeating them through argumentation (Rudolf &

Rudolf, 1967). A *satyagrahi* believes that by willingly inflicting self-suffering an advocate eventually, over a period of time, can sway the adversary. The Gandhian rhetoric of *satyagraha* has strong parallels with, for instance, Christ's death on the cross i.e. through one's actions of suffering willingly, one can atone for the sins of others.

From a rhetorical lens, *satyagraha* can be looked upon as "moral jiu-jitsu" in which the reciprocity of action (by the oppressed) and reaction (by the oppressor) is interrupted; the rules of engagement change, and new possibilities for redemption of both the oppressed and the oppressor become possible. By countering violence with non-violence, and hatred with compassionate love, one could fight the evil and save the evildoer (Fischer, 1982; Chaudhary & Starosta, 1992).

Gandhi's rhetorical repertoire drew heavily from both the West and the East: from two millennia of Vedic Hinduism texts, to his British training in law, and his several decades of uninterrupted experience as a practicing journalist (Chaudhary & Starosta, 1992; Chaudhary & Bryan, 1974)). The distinguishing aspect of Gandhi's rhetoric was his unshaken belief the moral character of the rhetorical enterprise. His rhetoric was made up of moral practice with moral claims.

Gandhi understood the power of naming in constructing new social realities, especially for the weak, the vulnerable, the marginalized, rejected, or overlooked. Such groups are generally muted — with a limited vocabulary to name their experiences. Gandhi labeled the poor as *daridranarayan* (poor but godly) and the low-caste untouchables as *harijans* (children of god). These new rhetorical frames were backed by, and made visible through, visible civic actions. For instance, when traveling, Gandhi consciously lived in *harijan* neighborhoods, drank from their wells, cleaned their latrines, and escorted them to Hindu temples, a place that was out-of-bounds for them. He would argue: "How could children of God not be welcome in God's home?"

Gandhi wanted untouchability removed, root and branch (Deats, 2005). When he established Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad, he invited the family of Dudabhai, who were untouchables, to live in the ashram. This created a huge stir in the ashram and outside of it, especially among its financial supporters. Donations ebbed. An untouchable living among them — eating, drinking, and working with them — was too much for the refined sensibilities of higher caste Indians (Desai, 2008). But Gandhi persisted, true to his rhetoric. He believed untouchability was a scourge that had to be removed. He adopted Dudabhai's daughter, Laxmi, as his own, announcing it from a rooftop

(Deats, 2005). Some years later, Gandhi personally supervised Laxmi's wedding to a higher caste ashramite.

Other shunned and marginalized individuals found refuge in Gandhi's ashrams. Gandhi admitted Parchure Shastri, who suffered from leprosy into Sevagram Ashram in Wardha, and in open view nursed him and gave him daily massages. Then he would go and clean the latrines, a task normally reserved for the untouchables.

In addition to coining new terms, Gandhi was adept at grafting new meanings to old terms (Desai, 1999). So, asking for *Swarajya* was not just about asking for "self-rule"; but it is also included a *satyagrahi's* commitment to "rule over self" (Desai, 2008).

### **Harnessing Cultural Referents and Symbols<sup>3</sup>**

#### *Meanings, Morals, and Mobilization*

What can one learn from Gandhi's communication praxis about understanding, appropriating, and re-enacting ancient spiritual and cultural practices to influence today's world? How can one tap into the power of cultural consciousness, symbols, and rituals for meaningful ends?

Gandhi's communication praxis was steeply anchored in ancient Hindu religious and cultural practices. His genius lay in taking such practices — fasting,

prayers, sacrifice, and fire worship — and turning them into meaningful techniques of struggle, protest, advocacy, social mobilization, and mass persuasion<sup>4</sup>.

Gandhi fused ancient Indian moral and cultural values with pragmatic politics, subscribing to the ancient Hindu notion of being a *karamyogi*, one whose self-effacing action can lead to spiritual liberation<sup>5</sup>. Well versed in the thousands of years of India's rich cultural heritage, Gandhi knew that the Indian ethos, that dictated life on a daily basis in its 700,000 villages, "believed in the immortality of the soul rather than the adoration of the body."<sup>6</sup>

Gandhi's bodily practice (or body politic), rooted in cultural practices, represented a doorway to public communication with a view to social change. He embraced poverty, chastity, self-denial. He would often undertake a fast-unto-death, and as his body suffered in full public view, the "intensity of his personal sacrifice, magnified and focused by the massive authority of his public iconicity," compelled masses to his moral point-of-view.<sup>7</sup>

For Gandhi, fasting<sup>8</sup> was also a method for influencing political policy and social attitudes not possible through ordinary speech and negotiation (Merriam, 1975). The self-denial and self-suffering was indicative of one's self-resolve. During the last four decades of his life,

Gandhi undertook 15 public fasts, championing causes ranging from mill workers' rights, to removal of untouchability, for communal harmony, and once even for being allowed to do menial work in prison.

Gandhi's last fast, launched on January 13, 1948 (18 days before he was assassinated), was against the appalling rioting that followed India's partition. After the formation of Pakistan Gandhi drew up eight demands — all favoring the Muslim state, and unless they were agreed to by India, he would fast unto death. Gandhi's health (he was 78 years old), deteriorated rapidly. Each day tens of thousands of hushed spectators filed past his weakening body. Speeches, telegrams, and editorials around the world expressed hope for his survival. After five long days, with Gandhi on the brink of death, communal leaders accepted all his demands.

Steeped in the Indian cultural ethos, whether for Hindus or Muslims, Gandhi knew that fasts spoke the "language of the heart i.e. the willing sacrifice of the human body, slowly, over time, stirred not just human pity but also its moral conscience.

Gandhi's communication praxis demonstrated a keen grasp of the traditional cultural referents and symbols. Spinning, fasting, prayer meetings,

chastity, self-suffering were derived from the collective reservoir of India's cultural and spiritual past. He harnessed them for meaningful and moral ends.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, Gandhi was a consummate communication strategist and practitioner. His communicative "acts" mobilized a nation, bringing new language, rhetorical frames, and understandings to the study of social movements, symbolic persuasion, and civil public discourses.

We conceptualized communication *praxis* as being an integral component of Gandhian life, emphasized by the Mahatma's own words: "My life is my message." Like the spinning wheel, his life moved through an ongoing cycle of *actions* and *reflections*, powered by just and virtuous means and yielding humanistic, ethical, and moral ends.

When it comes to embodying communication praxis, Gandhi has no equal. Communication practitioners, scholars, and strategists must understand the debt they owe to a life keenly observed.

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### **End notes**

<sup>1</sup> This essay draws upon and builds on the author's previous writings on Gandhi, including Singhal (2008; 2009; 2010) and Papa, Singhal, and Papa (2006). I am grateful to Professors Pradeep Krishnatray and Rita Kothari of Mudra Institute of Communications Arts (MICA) in Ahmedabad for their encouragement and initial guidance on this project. Aversion of this piece was prepared for a proposed volume tentatively titled, *Rethinking Gandhi* which did not materialize.

<sup>2</sup> See Suhrud (2002; 2008).

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.thenagain.info/webchron/india/SaltMarch.html>

<sup>4</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharasana\\_Satyagraha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharasana_Satyagraha); Desai (1999; 2008); Fischer (1982; 2002).

<sup>5</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharasana\\_Satyagraha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharasana_Satyagraha); also see Weber (1997);

<sup>6</sup> quoted in Deats (2005, p. 120)

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle's treatise on persuasion and influence was based on three attributes: (1) ethos, the influence of one's character i.e. source credibility, (2) pathos, the influence of affective and emotional appeals, and (3) logos, the use of reasoning and arguments (for more on Aristotle's rhetoric, see <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.1.i.html>).

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.mkgandhi.org/epigrams/c.htm>

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.mkgandhi.org/epigrams/c.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Narayan Desai (1999, p. 8)

<sup>11</sup> See Easwaran (1997, p. 159)

<sup>12</sup> See Emerson, R.W. (1844). Essay on Character. <http://www.emersoncentral.com/character.htm>

<sup>13</sup> See Carlson (1986), Desai (1999), Ghosh (2007), Rajmohan Gandhi (2006). Desai (1999) notes that in 1933-34, as he traveled across the country for the cause of Harijans, an estimated 1.2 million experienced his *darshan*.

<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.mkgandhi.org/storyofg/nehruong.htm>

<sup>15</sup> See Rudolf and Rudolph (1967, p. 44).

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Desai (1999, p. 129).

<sup>17</sup> See Merriam (1975) for an outstanding essay on Gandhi's symbolic actions and non-verbal persuasion, an incredible resource for this section.

<sup>18</sup> See Merriam (1975); also Chaudhary and Bryan (1974).

<sup>19</sup> See Merriam (1975); Rudolf and Rudolf (1967); Desai (1999).

<sup>20</sup> See Desai (1999, p. 159).

<sup>21</sup> See Mazzarella (2009) for an outstanding essay on Gandhi's iconicity and the negotiation and appropriation of the Gandhi "brand."

<sup>22</sup> Fasting's persuasive potential lies in the universal phenomenon of hunger, to which all people can relate, especially the peasantry who faced recurrent famines (Merriam, 1975).