**Gandhi; His Body and Politics**

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**Abstract**

This article explores and analyses the charismatic leadership of M.K. Gandhi possessing the inspiring image in the Indian history. It concerns with the power of spirituality, knowledge of history and the self that gives people insights into life for the change and identification. Gandhi has been an icon who influences people to come up with dynamic-self. Being inspired by Leo Tolstoy and Buddha, Gandhi rightly understood the power of meditation, yoga, deep patience and incessant struggle that became the greatest weapon for him to uproot the tyrannical reign of the British from India. Based on Indic way; self, performance and rituals, the research explores and analyses the veiled fact of the sacrifices, passion and cognition of Gandhi, the body and its power. The performative body is acknowledged identical to the realized, knowledgeable and conscious body that helps people to understand the politics and the body of Gandhi that has been the synonymous of powerhouse and resourceful human power. Being vegetarian, truthful, sincere, obedient and revolutionary for the changes, Gandhi has been an inspiration and god man in India.

**Key words:** Performative body, Hind swaraj, ritual, meditation, colony, culture, self

**Introduction**

As political and ritual conventions are the repositories of knowledge and being aware, Mahatma Gandhi wanted the change in India by training his body and inspiring others to do so in *Hind Swaraj*. Gandhi presents to be alert and conscious as he expresses the reality of the use of meditation, yoga and continuous exercises of brain that makes him psychologically and spiritually stronger. He proposes an opinion that a person can be a sharp sword if s/he controls and understands the hostile factors of the society. He regards the faith and determination as the important forces to bring changes in body, society and the nation. Gandhi believes in performed and moralized body that concerns and brings good fortunes for human beings. He argues that human beings’ desire for salvation and knowledge are the means of enlightenment that makes them realize who they are. Gandhi believes that changes can be brought through performing and training the body.

The thoughts and ideas of performance of self are determined by the necessity, condition and structure of the society which helped Gandhi to understand the intention of the arrival of British in India in the form of business people. He analyses the corrupt nature of British and gullibility of Indians. The Indians suffered and struggled for the salvation and spirituality which was supposed to be the means of acquiring divine power. He expresses his concern about physically and mentally trained body that must have been powerful to conquer the contemporary British emperors. Being spiritual and religious by nature, he adopted a meditative and righteous path to inspire the common people in India. His gesticulation, dress up and speech suggests that he has got a magical power to perform in the nation which made a public aware of their colonization. As a result, he performed the *Satyagraha* as a stern tool of struggle in the Indian history to establish *Swaraj.*

To become an exemplary of a performative and enlightened body that could fight against the British, Gandhi intentionally trains his body in *Hind Swaraj* that figures him out to establish an image of the man of his words because he had promised his mother to remain vegetarian thorough out his life. He believes that the supreme power of controlling one’s personal desire for the betterment of the whole nation is the supreme act. Therefore, he adapted the divine power following the fast unto death strike many times to bring his discontented friends together. Such acts strongly provided him spiritual and intellectual power to fight with the tyrannical forces. He hints how much importance the position of performance is of an individual in the nation building. He clearly expresses the pureness of one’s heart because one can speak the truth and performs for an action honestly like Gandhi. Acharya expresses: “The zeal of the *jive* (individual self) to continuously march forward along with the path of progress is god-gifted; it is the search for unalloyed joy, everlasting beatitude” (2014.p.50.). He asserts that self-confident makes the body perform and inspire others to challenge the evil forces of the society. He posits that every individual has capacity of achieving the divine power and connection to the god. Therefore, an individual can train his/her body and move forward thinking positively.

Likewise, universal and performative reality of the hero has been portrayed in the lives of Gautam Buddha, Gandhi and other divine personalities of the world. They had to face many difficulties and incommunicable situations in which they performed their leadership ability. Campbell says: “A majestic representation of the difficulties of the hero-task, and of its sublime import when it is profoundly conceived and solemnly undertaken, is presented in the traditional legend of the great struggle of the Buddha” (2008, P. 24). He brings history and struggle of Buddha to prove the heroic acts of Gandhi. Gandhi got innumerable pains and sufferings that cannot be counted and communicated as Buddha hood and enlightenment cannot be communicated but only the way of realizing the enlightenment.

**Methodology**

This article analyzes the culture, civilization and the then conditions of the society, which makes politics as a means of achieving independence, freedom and emulating the tyrannical rule that rely on the theoretical tools of Indic way; self, performance and rituals.It explores the conditions of Gandhi, the people, practices and the structure of the society as well as the strategies, administrations, tendencies and policies of East India Company in colonizing India.The article draws upon the key concept of "performance theory" targeting mainly on performance put forward by Richard Schechner which works to create confident and skill of performance. While focusing first on performance and later on the politics, the central theme of this article is the performative body and politics that are actually deeply interwoven with culture, practices, bodies and spaces that cannot be thought of separating from one another.

**Gandhi as a Conscious Body**

Gandhi’s body has been symbolized as a conscious body. He has been worshiped in India because he has got the quality of a hero. His image in India has provoked people to assimilate his/her action, philosophies and life style. Furthermore, Campbell asserts: “The tendency has always been to endow the hero with extraordinary powers from the moment of birth, or even the moment of conception. The whole hero-life is shown to have been a pageant of marvels with the great central adventure as its culmination” (2008, P. 60). He says that a common person can become a hero when she or he possesses revolutionary kind quality and does adventurous activities for the best moment of the society. In fact, the self-determination is the power driven machine that makes an individual strong enough to understand one’s place in the society.

Having understood the circumstances and events of heroism, one can have power to rule one’s own self. Gandhi asserts: “I would have acquired mastery over myself, would have been freed from vice and would have become happy” (1938, P. 112). The quote states that one should understand her/his self-controlling power. First one should rule over oneself along with self-respect and self-honored that is the supreme means of getting satisfied. Moreover, the self-understood and self-controlled person can master over the devil factors of the society. Such concept pushes Gandhi into the world of revolution against the British so that he proved his heroism.

In addition, Axel Michaels and Christoph Wulf’s theories the body in religion and philosophy as a person leads austerely simple life and abstains from the normal pleasure of life or denies herself or himself material satisfaction. Wulf expresses:

Yoga, fasting or mortification; which primarily try to control natural body references such as clothing and nakedness, eating and drinking, walking and sitting, sleeping and being awake, as well as talking and remaining silent. But as a result of the humble and devotional surrender to a god, it also leads to ecstatic forms of expression, whereby the body is predominantly to the fore. ( 2009, P.43)

In the course of acquiring the spiritual power, the body gets a lot of sufferings and denies many materialistic pleasures which are supposed to be the obstacles of acquiring power. Wulf theoretically formulates the means of training like Yoga, fasting and mortification that make people overwhelming. Such heroic actions bring numerous problems and sufferings in the life of a hero. The body of a hero has been deprived of clothing, eating and drinking, walking and sitting, sleeping and talking. During this time s/he has to suffer a lot. In the case of Gandhi, he trains himself such a way that no power would harm him. He has been a hero possessing all the required qualities whereas the British villain who gets defeated at last because of the spiritual power of Gandhi.

**Body and its Power**

The article explores Gandhi as a revolutionary body who never bows in front of tyranny and corruption. He fights for the truth and independence. It shows that Gandhi is in the favor of non-violence and non- co-operation. As a matter of fact that the campaign of awareness program of Gandhi has made him god man and worshipped not only in India but also in other parts of the world. In *Hind Swaraj* the glance of the history of India, he presents the revolutionary ideas and a stand for the revolution and change in the society that was colonized for years and his positive attempts establishes the prosperous and independent India. He makes the people feel free and liberated in their status and position so that they can be the nation lover. "The principal of non-violence and love was enunciated by Buddha and Christ centuries ago”(Gandhi 1938.p.131). Moreover, he follows the path of Buddha and Christ that was tough as theirs was the scenario of religion whereas his political and performative. He gets the turning point in enlightening in his life while confronting with the English people and being discriminated like second citizen in his own country that is the entrance of Gandhi to enter the state of revolution.

The interpretation of Gandhi, his life style and struggle for the independence have been internalized in the world. Having the fragile body, he utilizes his most powerful body to establish the independent India. Actually, the body of any person possesses enough power but for that one has to analyze its miracle and divine power. God has given the equal power to everybody so that they can own the revolutionary ability for change. It is universally believed that the human beings desire for the new test and changes in the life, administration, attitude and the governance. Even there are many changes in the life of Gandhi from his birth time to the death. Each and every minute people live with the changes, by the changes and for the changes.

It will take long practice to standardize the meaning and content of this term. But the means thereof is self-purification and more self-purification. What western thinkers often lose sight of is that the fundamental condition of non-violence is love, and pure unselfish love is impossible unsullied purity of mind and body. (Gandhi 1938.p.156)

Gandhi further adds that he has to do a lot of struggle because of non-violent revolution that is more self-purification. A non-violent revolution is a revolution using mostly campaign with resistance, including various forms of non-violent protest. It is an effective campaign of civil resistance. Nevertheless, he says that the basic meaning of non-violence is pure love, which is impossible. His revolution is seen in speech, body, dressing and walking. He wears typical dress and speaks Hindi language that is the identity and custom of Indians. His philosophy brings change. He gets changed because of the geo-politics of British rulers. He is not totally blind to the traditional thoughts rather critical. He encourages the people to participate in every sort of ceremony and demonstration so that they can have the sense of revolution observing them. He adds that everybody has equal right to feel and know the condition of their home. After analyzing their status, people can perform their revolutionary body and ideas. They must be engaged in some sort of work that brings some changes. On the verge of revolution, Gandhi becomes revolutionary along with enlightened one who establishes the politics for independent India. Catherrine Owens Peare Quotes the entirely revolutionary ideas from his book *Mahatma Gandhi 'A biography for young people*':

Gandhi was changed due to study and experience from the time.When as a boy he had first seen the poverty of Indian villages he was becoming more and more conscious of human suffering. The treatment he had received when he first landed in South Africa had made him angry. Then, as he grew more mature and was influenced by the religious studies, he realized that anger was wrong, that it solved nothing. Investigating the hardships of Indians in this new land stirred him still more deeply, and he began to feel personally helping them. (1950.p.234)

Peare draws the attention of education and experience that change the people from a simple to revolutionary such as Mahatma Gandhi. Journey of Gandhi From Rajkot of India to England, South Africa and other parts of the world along with the major cities of India like Bombay and Delhi that open his third eye that means made him enlightened and conscious of the condition of India. The study proves that the observation of poverty in Indian villages and exploitation of the innocent people makes him revolutionary and conscious of human suffering. Moreover, the misbehavior with Gandhi in South Africa and India makes him angry that turn him into revolutionary. In addition, Peare finds the facts that suffering, struggle and anger turn into power when people are educated and conscious through which people perform their power and knowledge like Gandhi.

**Power of ‘I’**

Being conscious, Richard Schechner reveals the power of ‘I’ self along with the performance training. “Performance training is the development of a number of communicative skills plus learning how to arouse the two extremes of brain activity without canceling out the center ‘I’ self (Gandhi 1938.p.90). He acknowledges the idea that ‘I’ self is an immunized power that makes one internally strong to be winner and hero. A performative person has all the qualities of a hero as s/he is skilled at communicating so that s/he becomes successful in her/his heroic acts. It is thought that the communicative power of a person makes her/him a great orator and leader. In the case of Gandhi, he possesses an excellent communicative talent. Therefore, he used to inspire the people with his communicative skill delivering the speech to them.

In addition, Schechner alludes that performance is the combination of two entities like brain and body. It can be presented in mediators, shamans and leaders. Such psychological transformations can be a temporary or permanent. For external art work, the performative spectators can be: “The conventions or given of a genre, stretching, distorting or inventions of new conventions and brain-centered psycho physical transformations of self”(1977.p.234). He states that behavior with people; daily activity and any assembly need brain and body. It means the self is the center of brain and body. It can symbolize for the revolution and change because any person starts analyzing her/his identity when s/he gets self-motivated and becomes aware.

Jaffery C. Alexander explains that the cultural performance is the social process by which actors make others conscious. He elaborates that social actors anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their services. “Actors present themselves as being motivated by and towards existential, emotional, and moral concerns, the meaning of which are defined by patterns of signifier whose referents are the social, physical, natural and cosmological worlds within which actors and audiences live”. (2011.p.256)

According to Alexander, a person can naturally be emotional towards her or his country and society because they aspire for the identity and the existence. Society and nation are the cultural texts in which the social actors perform to make the audiences and observers know the facts of there. Gandhi in *Hind Swaraj* presents the facts of the nation which was in the hand of tyrannical people. Being a representative of the nation, Gandhi politically fights for the existence of the people as well as culture in India.

**Gandhi Stands for the Change**

Gandhi proves himself that he wants changes at any cost that he wishes India to be independent, free, peaceful and developed nation. He takes oath to bring change in thoughts, infrastructure, understanding and behavior between Indian and British rulers. Since the childhood, he has been fighting against the ill factors of the society whether hypocritical people of his own country or the tyrannical rulers of English Emperor. His revolutionary habit and thoughts made the Indian people awakened about the salt tax; hidden purpose of British rulers and their destiny His statement claims that the passion of independent India does not give him sleep:

We are still twisting our limbs and are still restless, and just as the state between sleep and awakening must be considered to be necessary, so may the present unrest in India be considered a necessary and therefore, a proper state. The knowledge that there is unrest will, it is highly probable, enable us to outgrow it. Rising from sleep, we do not continue in a comatose state, but according to our ability, sooner or later, we are completely restored to our senses. So shall we be free from the present unrest which no one likes. (Gandhi1938.p.221)

The state of unrest in Gandhi struggle for change in the country. The knowledge in Gandhi helps to understand his revolutionary power. That is why he wakes up India against The British rulers. His revolutionary ideas and body stimulates the mass. His speech and simple dress inspire others too, to be revolutionary because that is entirely dynamic and new practice in India. His unique, simple living and high thinking behaviour perform to be revolutionary body at home, railway station, court, prison, huts and mass of the people. His politics has been observed on the basis of the performative and enlightened notion. People have been hypnotized with his ideas, thoughts, dressings and behavior.

Similarly, the article shows that the elements of performance are spectacle, audience, stage, actors and plot. The spectacle is a powerful and ritual occasion like funeral of Gandhi and his pain and suffering while fighting for freedom. In politics, the political ideas are the raw materials drawn from the everyday experiences of the social life. Indian people are supposed to be the audiences as well as participants who encouraged Gandhi participating in the political movements. The whole nation is the stage when Gandhi performed in the historical setting of India. Because of such actions and plots, Gandhi made audiences moved aroused. This live performance releases the catharsis in public. They emotionally and nationally become changed and agreed with Gandhi. The Indian people are socially bound with the performance of Gandhi.

Theoretically, performative body means the realized, acknowledged and ritual body that has “challenge of efficacy” (Schechner 1977.p.354). That possesses the ability of changing the colonized society into free society through the struggles. The phrase ‘performative body’ can be understood separately. One can understand the performative means the critical, revolutionary and aware whereas the body context, people and physical domain. Gandhi asserts the fact that the revolutionary body has to do struggle and get a lot of challenges. Therefore, the performative body has the power of changing the mind set of people and establishing the independence of the nation.

**Implementation of Performative Body**

The article points out how the performative body performs and the performance occurs in *Hind Swaraj*. Gandhi possesses the performative body and brings people together. This is why people contribute their best to help Gandhi by involving in performance. Politics and cultural identity are the outcome of the performance. Gandhi, his beliefs in religion, ritual and the way of behaving with people and dealing with the British rulers show his performative power. As a matter of fact, Gandhi is a powerful symbol of unity and freedom for the people in India. During the revolution, people are evoked through rituals; *Satyagrah* and fast unto death of Gandhi. In short, self-control and confidence of Gandhi perform a vital role in establishing independent India. This also means the presence of Gandhi stands for ritual that brings the wave of change and awareness in evoking and establishing identity of the performers. “Ritual is prescribed in formal behaviors for occasion not given over to technological routine, having reference to belief in mystical beings and power” (Turner 1966.p.77).

Based on Turner’s ideas, this research admits that *Satyagrah* and fast unto death of Gandhi are destined to evoke common people and weaken the psychology of the British rulers. Such performance of Gandhi is combined with human feelings and emotions. He is strong internally and psychologically so that he never loses his beliefs and confidence. This article asserts that Gandhi performs his performative body through dress up, philosophy, movement and action in *Hind Swaraj*. Such performance immunizes Gandhi and his whole community to fight against the British rulers. Having got influenced and motivated with Gandhi, the Indian politics, cultural identity and behavior of common people got changed. As a ritual process gets changed in accordance with time and place and so does culture because they are the products of the society. The performance of Gandhi and his practices like *Satyagrah* and fast unto death occur in accordance with the nature of British rulers in *Hind Swaraj.* The relationship between patience and spiritual power of Gandhi brings out the various ways of examination in which his personal experience, interaction with different people about the history of India is notable. In fact, the British rulers showed the inhumane behavior and monopoly to native people. Moreover, he articulates on the entire struggle of independence in India. Gandhi posits himself in a powerful tool that becomes sharp and bold whenever he faces the challenges and difficulties during the revolution. What the research paper argues that Gandhi presents himself as a prophet, philosopher, revolutionary and a charismatic performer in *Hind Swaraj*.

**Conclusion**

What emerges from the discussion of my findings is that the curiosity, education and meditation make Gandhi to perform his role in Indian politics to erupt the pre-established British rule from there. His nature of curiosity and learning enact different scenarios in his hometown where he gets encountered with the cruel nature of British rulers. In fact, the performative body is acknowledged identical to the realized, knowledgeable and conscious body that helps people to understand the politics and the body of Gandhi that has been the synonymous of powerhouse and resourceful human power. Being vegetarian, truthful, sincere, obedient and revolutionary for the changes, Gandhi has been an inspiration and god man in India.

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