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Gandhi Bashing: Why Some Indians Love to Hate Gandhi

Anupma Kaushik

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Gandhi is greatly admired by some and detested by others says historian Ramchandra Guha.¹ Einstein had once said that "Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth." His prophesy has come true but in a negative sense as Gandhi bashing has become fashionable today. As director of the popular movie *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* Rajkumar Hirani says, Gandhi bashing was a fashion till I watched Attenborough's Gandhi.² The reason may be that some people feel powerful or get a high by criticizing great men and women. These are the people who do not have the will, vision and capacity to sacrifice their personal gains to a larger interest and think that if they cannot sacrifice their self interest then others too cannot do it. Such people always ask why Gandhi did not do this or he could have done that too. Such people today find it difficult to accept the fact that a selfless man, who strongly believed in his principles existed. Such people have stopped believing that selfless altruistic people can exist. They reject the idea of a man standing up for his principle in the toughest of situations. They convince themselves that Gandhi must have benefitted by doing this somehow and probably they are hearing only one side of the story. They are sure that people like Gandhi cannot exist in reality as they do not actually see many such souls in day to day lives and hence are ready to say and believe the worst about Gandhi. Moreover they themselves are guilty because they were weak when they had a choice between instant gratification and long term principles. When such people get the technology to air their views they can easily put their views on a public platform in the form of articles, books and also on social media. The problem is that they read a few lines and pages or hear someone say a few lines and start thinking that they know Gandhi and can make statements authoritatively. Some people also think that Gandhi bashing makes them look cool as this idea is contrary to mainstream thinking. They do not take time to read from authoritative sources and have a distorted image which they further propagate. Those who have read some authoritative work on Gandhi think that he was too serious and great. People do not realize that he was a normal principled person and who could not be expected to execute miracles like stopping the partition of India. As Dr Abhijat Joshi, writer of the popular movie *Lage Raho Munna Bhai* says: "it was important for us to dispel the myth about Gandhi being a sedate, ascetic person. We wanted to show his other side – witty, humorous, light-hearted and creative".³

Another reason may be the misuse of his name and legacy by politicians in independent India. The politicians who came to power used his name to gather votes and then indulged in corrupt practices hence his name got tarnished too. The sectarian politicians and their supporters who thrive on sectarian support see every issue from a sectarian point of view. They have created or chosen their leaders or idols from a sectarian perspective. To

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