

“A Study of Interpretation of Gandhism in Select 21st Century Biographies on M.K.Gandhi”

Final Report of the Project

I. Introduction:

Biography is one of the oldest literary genres. A biography is a depiction of the life of a person by another. The roots of the biographies go back to the Ancient times. The European biographies were initially written on the life of religious and royal persons. However, the inception of biographies in the Islamic literature began the process of secularization of biographies. Along with the biographies there existed the tradition of Hagiographies, the written accounts of the saints, sages and martyrs. In the Modern times biography became humanized as *men* with non-religious background became its subjects. In the 20th century there was seen a spate of biographies, especially in America.

M.K. alias Mahatma Gandhi has been an inexhaustible source of inspiration, debate and discussion all over the world. South Africa and America have already witnessed the successful movements carried out by Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King, Jr. There have been thousands of followers of Gandhism in India and outside India. No ism in the world has been as flexible as Gandhism, since anybody can talk about Gandhian philosophy at any place and at any time. As a result, there have been hundreds of biographies written on the Gandhian philosophy and practices. A study of the interpretation of Gandhism becomes necessary in the context of the rapid changes the world is undergoing. The revolution in the world of information and technology has its own strengths and weaknesses. Thus, it is a matter of great interest to assess the worth of Gandhism in the 21st century scenario.

Prof Bidyut Chakrabarty’s “M.K.Gandhi: A Historical Biography” and Rajmohan Gandhi’s “Mohandas: A True Story of a Man, his People and an Empire” are the representative biographies of the 21st century. Prof Chakrabarty has depicted the political philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, whereas Rajmohan Gandhi, being a grandson of the subject, has made a comprehensive attempt at portraying the life of Gandhi.

II. Biography: Retrospection

Biography as a literary genre has its own significance and distinction. Biography is an account of someone's life written by someone else. The term biography had its origin in the late 17th century. It has come from the French *biographie* which is supposed to have been taken from the Greek *bios* meaning 'life' and *graphia* meaning 'writing'. Thus a biography is an elaborate account of a 'subject's' life. It is more than simply a narration of birth, education, works, relations and death; as it presents the subject's experiences of these events. Biography is different from a profile or a resume, since it incorporates the aspects of the subject, the experiences and an analysis of the subject's personality.

It all began in the 1st century AD with Plutarch's "Parallel Lives" depicting the lives of noble Greeks and Romans in pairs. There are portrayed 21 such pairs of subjects in the book. The intention of Plutarch in these depictions was to explore the influence of the character- good or bad- on the lives and destinies of the famous men. Plutarch had an ethical interest in these famous men and the historical interpretation is its corollary.

During the Medieval Period biography had assumed the religious dimensions. It was called Hagiography. Hermits, monks and priests used this historic period to write the first modern biographies with subjects like: fathers, martyrs, popes and saints. These works were meant for motivating the people and provoke conversion to Christianity. One secular example of secular biography of this period is the life of Charlemagne by one of his courtiers. The Islamic civilization of the Medieval Period produced biographies on a large scale with the advent of paper and the beginning of the Prophetic biography tradition.

In Europe by the late Middle Ages biographies moved away from the Church and they started to be chiefly written of kings, knights and tyrants. Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1469) was written on the life of King Arthur and the Knights of his Round Table. As a consequence of the prevalence of Humanism, in the following years, the writers were motivated into focusing the secular subjects such as artists and poets. One such vital contributor to this genre was Raphael Holinshed (c. 1580). His "Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland" published in different editions but was first brought out in 1577 in two volumes. William

Shakespeare is said to have derived the themes for some of his plays from the second edition of *Chronicles* published in 1587. The 16th century witnessed the decisive development in printing and an increase in literacy; which gave a boost to writing and publishing. It was during the reign of Henry VIII that biographies in English started to appear. Izaak Walton (1594-1683) was an English writer who wrote a number of short biographies under the title “*Walton’s Lives*”. The book presents the lives of John Donne, Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker, George Herbert and others. Walton was very much interested in angling and the subjects in these biographies were his angler friends.

In the 18th century Samuel Johnson brought “*Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*” (1779-81). This book contains short biographies and critical evaluation of fifty-two poets, most of them belonging to the contemporary times. The most vibrant of these biographies are of John Milton, John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Joseph Addison, Jonathan Swift and Thomas Gray. His *Life of Richard Savage* is believed to have been one of the innovative works in the history of biography. He began with the sole intention of advertising the poets in the French *Miscellanies* tradition, but went on to make them quite pleasant. James Boswell wrote “*The Life of Samuel Johnson*” (1791). This book is a milestone in the development of the modern genre of biography. There are critics, like Harold Bloom, who have termed this work to be the greatest in English language. However, there is an opinion that goes contrary to the earlier belief, as it doubts whether Boswell’s work can at all be called biography, since he takes a lot of critical liberties with the life of the subject.

During the 19th century biographies began to flourish due to new publishing technologies and an expanding reading public. The paperback editions of the popular biographies were published for the first time. Biographies became more and more popular in America too. The focus of attention in biographies shifted from republican heroes to self-made men and women.

The 20th century biographies were dominated by the innovations in the fields of psychology and sociology. The death of the ‘great man’ theory of history reflected in the emerging mindset. The sociological biographies analyzed the subject’s actions in the context of the milieu and downplayed the individuality. The developments in the sphere of psychoanalysis led to a more penetrating and comprehensive understanding of the subject. The biographers gave more emphasis on the childhood and adolescence of the subjects. The concept of national heroes

and narratives of success disappeared. The new school of biography had iconoclasts, scientific analysts and fictional biographers. Some of the prominent biographers of the century were Lytton Strachey, Gamaliel Bradford, Andre Maurois, and Emil Ludwig. The 1920s witnessed a boom of biography. By 1929 nearly 700 biographies were written in America. The first dictionary of American Biography was also published. This century witnessed another important turn in the biographies, viz. women's biographies. Nancy Milford's "Zelda" (1970) is supposed to be a beginning of a new period of women's biographies.

The 21st century has given rise to the multimedia biography, which is becoming more popular than the traditional literary forms. There are documentary biographical films and commercial films on the lives of famous persons. The television networks such as Biography Channel, the History Channel and the History International realize the culmination of this 21st century trend in biography. The on-line biographies are catching the attention of researchers, students and laymen.

Gandhism is not a matter of invention, as it is an outcome of a series of discoveries made by Mohandas Karamchand alias Mahatma Gandhi while dealing with the individual and national issues. Gandhi was motivated by Leo Tolstoy, John Ruskin, H.D. Thoreau, the Bible and the Geeta. He fought at different levels right from the individual up to the levels with national and international dimensions by virtue of his peaceful tools: non-violence, non-cooperation, Sattyagraha, and fasting among other ways. Gandhism in the present century has the potential for galvanizing the world rife with mind-boggling violence, human rights violation, atrocities, corruption and degrading standards of life. It is a fact that the teachings of Gandhi inspired the nonviolent movements in the USA under the civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. and in South Africa under Nelson Mandela. The latest case that speaks volumes of the relevance of Gandhian philosophy is the reference made by Malala Yousafzai during her speech at the United Nations meet. She spoke of Gandhi, Frontier Gandhi and Mother Teresa to be the source of inspiration for overcoming the atrocities perpetrated on women in Pakistan. She further asserted that she wouldn't follow the cheap tactic of retribution, but she would peacefully resist violence. This is a big example in reiterating the relevance of Gandhism in the present century and the ages to come.

III. Gandhism in Bidyut Chakrabarty's "M.K.Gandhi: A Historical Biography"

In the Introduction of this book Prof Chakrabarty presents a brief account of the life of Mahatma Gandhi. It also includes a critique of the writings by Gandhi. The writer says that *Hind Swaraj* by Gandhi is the most systematic exposition of Gandhi's ideas on state, society and nation. It takes stock of the *Nai Talim*, the educational philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, which he called 'education by means of a craft'. The writer also makes it clear what this biography is *about*. This biography is an attempt at presenting Gandhi with his two-fold agenda: is opposition to the Imperial rule and is protest against the social orthodoxy. The distinction of this biography is made clearer by the writer who says that this book, instead of focusing merely on the personal life of Gandhi, seeks to grasp and conceptualize the evolution of ideas in the context of anti-colonial nationalism.

The book is divided into six chapters which cover the socio-political strategies evolved by Mahatma Gandhi. The first chapter deals with the evolution of sattyagraha and Ahimsa. It was in South Africa that Gandhi laid the foundation of his future political campaign in India. After having championed the cause of the indentured labourers in South Africa, Gandhi came back to India to perfect the strategy of non-violent resistance. His protest against the Rowlatt Act in 1919 was of national dimensions. The sattyagraha launched in South Africa Gandhi reiterated that 'the strength of a sattyagrahi lies in human suffering.' Gandhi confirmed that even before the Sattyagraha began the sattyagrahis knew that they would have to suffer even unto death. Finally, Gandhian passive resistance gave a jolt to the racist South African government. Another aspect of the movement in South Africa was Gandhi was able to mobilize the Indians with diverse racial and communal backgrounds against the exploitative rule. It was here that Gandhi first fully analyzed the aspects of the Western civilization. His establishment of the Natal Indian Congress, the ambulance corps during the Boer war and the Tolstoy Farm are all considered to be attempts at protesting against the exploitative civilization. Returning to India in 1914 Gandhi undertook a tour of the nation and comprehended the Indian situation. The I World War began in 1914 and the conditions rapidly changed. Gandhi started his campaign in the nation through regional movements like the Champaran sattyagraha in 1917, the Kheda sattyagraha in 1918, the Ahmadabad textile mill strike in the same year and to top it all he undertook the first of his 17 *fasts unto death* in March 1918. For Gandhi sattyagraha was based on three principles: sattya

(truth), ahimsa (non-violence) and tapas (self-suffering). Gandhi gave the evidence of his being an apostle of non-violence by withdrawing the movement, which gave rise to violence.

The second chapter takes an elaborate stock of the non-cooperation and civil disobedience movements undertaken by Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi not only set the agenda of the national movement, but also gave rise to the second-line leaders who were instrumental in realizing his strategies. The two movements launched by Gandhi between 1919 and 1932 galvanized the Indians into a mass protest against the imperial regime. The most important aspect of these agitations was the participation of the farmers and workers on a large scale. This period made Gandhi a national leader with mass base and *Mahatma*. As the Congress was at the forefront of the battle, the Muslim League began to strike different notes. But Mahatma Gandhi was the only leader of the times who was looked upon as a mediator between these two dominant communities. Prof Chakrabarty is quite critical of the result of these movements, when he says that these movements couldn't acquire the desired goals set by its organizers. Although it incorporated the masses, a majority of the Muslims didn't support it, since the Muslim League was not interested.

The third chapter deals with the Quit India movement of 1942. The movement, according to the writer, was totally different from the earlier movement. This was a critical juncture not only for India but for nations at war. The Nazi and Fascist forces were threatening the sovereignty on the one hand and the international peace on the other. The Vardha convention of the Congress came out with a resolution that the British government allow independence to India, so that the war against militarism was justified and the nations in slavery were freed to defend themselves. The open rebellion of 1942 was quite new for Gandhi. Although he launched the movement, he couldn't totally control it because of his imprisonment. Nevertheless, the movement proved two important facts, 1. Gandhi was a mass leader, who inspired the activists despite his imprisonment, and 2. The local Gandhians played a key role in motivating the activists into sustaining the movement. However, once more the Muslims didn't participate in this movement, as the 1940 League convention had made a demand for Pakistan under the leadership of M.A. Jinnah.

The 4th chapter tells us that Gandhi was not consistent in his ideology. He himself confessed this on many occasions that he had to change his policies from time to time according

to the circumstances. However, his staunch belief in the basic precepts like sattyagraha and ahimsa were unwavering. This brings us to the essence of Gandhism i.e. *ahimsa*. Non-violence to Gandhi was both passive and active love, refraining from causing harm and destruction to living beings as well as positively promoting well-being. Sattyagraha is not passive resistance, but *intense activity by the people*. Prof Chakrabarty enumerates the various forms assumed by Gandhi's sattyagraha- 1 Non-cooperation, 2 Civil Disobedience and 3 Social emancipation. Gandhi exhorted that before Indians aspire to drive the British from this country they must drive every vestige of violence from their system. Nevertheless, Gandhi himself said that if there were only a choice between cowardice and violence, he would prefer violence.

The 5th chapter is dedicated to a comparison between Gandhi and his companions. The writer has included two important personalities of the times viz. Rabindranath Tagore and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. It is a fact that both these persons were not involved in the nationalism movement in the widest sense of the term. Dr Ambedkar analyzed Gandhism in the context the latter's religious and social philosophy. Tagore's interpretation of Gandhism was influenced by parameters which were both indigenous and western. The common feature shared by Gandhi and Tagore was about nationalism, which according to both of them was a by-product of the western thinking. It was hardly applicable to the Indian situation. Dr Ambedkar argued that Gandhism was paradoxical in that it opposed the foreign rule but at the same time it permitted the domination of one class by another within. Gandhi defended that *untouchability* was not a sanction of the religion, it originated in satanic mind-set. On Dr Ambedkar's demand for the separate electorates for the backward communities Gandhi said that that would further disintegrate the nation already under turmoil. The writer says that the British government took advantage of the social division in India and with a view to weaken the strength of Gandhi made Dr Ambedkar the representative of the Dalits at the Round Table conferences. The 6th chapter in the book puts forward the Gandhi in his last years, i.e. after the Quit India Movement subsided. The title of the chapter indicates Gandhi as a marginal leader when the political developments in India and outside India reached their climax, since the II World War was getting its violent culmination and the freedom struggle got splayed in the wake of a series of events which couldn't be controlled by any leader or party. Although Gandhi was marginalized, he was not passive. He went to the riot-hit places to pacify the angered people due to partition. When the nation was celebrating the dawn of freedom, the Mahatma was at grief. At the end of the books

Prof Chakrabarty concludes by answering the question of Gandhi's relevance in the context of the globalizing society. His writings in *Harijan* and his book *Hind Swaraj* show him to be against the industrialized civilization and idea of nation state. His concept of trusteeship caused a lot of debate. However, it is essentially a moral theory which seems to be quite relevant in the present context where business does require a moral and ethical basis. His concept of nonviolence has been quite remarkable in the present times. The Directive Principles of State Policy are said to have originated in Gandhi's idea of distributive justice. His notion of democratic decentralization is reflected in the Panchayati Raj system. His concept of *oceanic circle* which consists in interdependence of villages and economic well-being of individuals is quite admirable.

IV. Gandhism in Rajmohan Gandhi's "Mohandas: A True Story of a Man, his People and an Empire":

Rajmohan Gandhi's "Mohandas: A True Story of a Man, his People and an Empire" is a biography of epic proportions. It is different from scores of biographies written by Indian and non-Indian lifewriters. This is not simply because of the fact that Rajmohan is the grandson of Gandhi, but because of the insights and the empathetic attitude of the writer that the book becomes so unique. It is an elaborate portrait of Gandhi, the Man and the Mahatma. The biographer brings a sustained research to bear upon the narration of the life of a person of national and international dimensions.

This biography is divided into 16 chapters which bear the stereotypical titles, but what they incorporate is quite amazing. Rajmohan Gandhi begins with a neatly done preface which starts on the note of *true* Gandhi. The aim of the writer is to identify the true Gandhi. The term Gandhi has assumed the dimensions of a metaphor. It can be seen in calling someone who follows the principles of truth and non-violence to be a Gandhi and the riot mongers of 1984, 1992 and 2002 to be the assailants of Gandhi.

One of the features of *Mohandas* (the biography) is that the biographer has not only narrated the deeds of Gandhi, but also compared it with his speech and writing. The most frequently quoted book is of course "The Story of My Experiments with Truth". This strategy not only brings out a series of contradictions in Gandhian practices, but also throws light on the

circumstances responsible for them. After taking an elaborate stock of the childhood and education of Mohandas, the writer takes us to one of the decisive episodes in the life of Barrister M.K.Gandhi viz. his long and fruitful stay in South Africa. Along with depicting the professional and later on political participation of Gandhi in South Africa, the writer makes us aware of his domestic situation there. Gandhi's sons were not admitted to any formal school, since Indians were not allowed in the schools run by Christian missionaries. Hence, the children were taught at home. As the thrust of this book is on Gandhi the man, there is hardly any glorification of Gandhi as a husband or father. He didn't spare his wife and children many times, if he saw them deviating from his doctrines. At the end of this chapter we are shown Gandhi's insistence on simplicity and the reaction given by Kasturba.

The chapters 4, 5 and 6 are about Gandhi's fight against the racial government in South Africa. Gandhi's visit to this nation in the African continent was essentially professional in the beginning, however, it ceased to be so in the course of time. Gandhi rose to the status of a leader against the domination of the white government. He was getting out of the pomp and pageantry of the western education and culture, and rapidly getting under the impact of the transcendentalist thinkers such as H.D.Thoreau and R.W.Emerson, and the thinkers like John Ruskin and Leo Tolstoy.

The 7th chapter brings us to Gandhi in India. Gandhi was returning to India, a *nation* divided by castes, creeds, cults, sects, religions, languages, races and what not. This was going to be the *Karmabhoomi* of Gandhi, who had been away for two decades. Rajmohan Gandhi quotes Rudyard Kipling's assessment of the Imperial expansion in Asia, especially in the Indian subcontinent, due to decline of non-British powers and the social divide and the royal slavery. Once again in keeping with the refrain Rajmohan depicts Gandhi as a growing leader and father with disagreeing sons. Gandhi went headlong into the national struggle for independence with the practical experience of an *emerging* philosophy. Gandhi's intervention in Champaran case was the first step to the future long-term battle. Rajmohan, besides focusing on the immediate mission Gandhi planned and executed in Champaran, throws light on Gandhi's sense of humour. The occasion was the onslaught on Kasturba by a prominent white planter called Irwin by saying that she had started a bazaar under the pretence of a school. Gandhi replied by calling Irwin to be unchivalrous to blame Kasturba, who (Gandhi deemed) was one of the most innocent women

walking on the face of the earth, and this he said although *she happened to be his wife*. With the entry of Gandhi on the political scene of India, the politics of the nation got changed.

From the 8th chapter on Rajmohan Gandhi relates Mahatma Gandhi's outstanding contribution to the nation. The Indian National Congress, after having witnessed a divide for length of time, got united under Gandhi's leadership. The non-cooperation movement launched against the Rowlatt Act of 1919 was essentially an experiment Gandhi performed on the indigenous soil. He had made it clear speeches and writings that if the movement took a violent turn, he would be the first to leave it. In the wake of the Khilaphat Gandhi wrote a letter to the Viceroy Lord Chelmsford showing disapproval of the European stand on the Khilaphat, his bias for the Hindu-Muslim unity and defense of the non-cooperation movement. The chapter also underlines the tools viz. khaadi and charkha which Gandhi created for the dissemination of his strategies. The impact of these tools was so intense that for a period even Muhammad Ali and his mother also wore the khaadi clothes. Rajmohan Gandhi says that there were created two poles during this period in India, one was the Raj and the other one Gandhi. In one of the wonderful debates viz. Gandhi versus Tagore we come to know how Gandhi was keen on opposing the ready-made clothes from the west and how he preferred self-reliance. Tagore took an objection to the use of the prefix *non-* in the movement. Gandhi replied that it was a movement for acquiring an honorable cooperation with the Raj. However, the non-cooperation movement had its own anti-climax in the massacre of 22 policemen at Chauri Chaura where the angry mob shouted the slogans *Mahatma Gandhi ki Jay*.

The following chapter delineates the period between 1922 and 1930. This was the time for building the battle for independence anew. For a length of time he had been kept in Yeravda jail where he read profusely and planned for writing a few books, one of them was his autobiography. The interlude was over and Gandhi once again came out with his new movement, the civil disobedience. It was an assault on the white government with salt. On 12th March 1930 Gandhi undertook the historical march to Dandi to break the salt law. In a letter to the Viceroy he made his 11 demands, one of them being release of the political prisoners except those who were accused of murder or attempted murder. This once again illuminates how Gandhi was orthodox on the issue of non-violence. The chapter concludes with Gandhi's opposition to the British government's decision of creating separate constituencies for the backward people of the Hindu

religion. He went on a fast unto death on this issue and finally the Poona Pact was signed between him and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, the leader of the Dalits. In his exhortation Gandhi made an appeal to the *caste* Hindus that they had to put the promise of a social reformation within the religion so that the downtrodden members were done justice. The 11th chapter narrates the Mohandas of the mid-1930s. He would intermittently in and out of prison. This was the time when the British government had adopted the policy of repression. Leaders were jailed and thousands of activists were kept behind the bars. The suspension of the civil disobedience was shocking and Pandit Nehru made it clear that the Congress was not able to digest it without grudges. Hence, there were reasons why Gandhi decided to resign from the Congress. Gandhi moved from Vardha Ashram to Sevagram, where a majority of the people was untouchable. He treated the villagers with the remedies he knew.

The 12th chapter begins with the furthering the process of democratization of the provinces in India. The Muslim League was growing stronger in the provinces in the northern parts. And there was a growth in the intensity of separatism. M.A.Jinnah was not mincing matter about his two-nation theory and on the other hand the Hindu conservatism was on the rise. Gandhi was against the two-nation theory of Jinnah. He went to Peshawar in 1938 and 1939. He spoke to the Muslim audience at Islamia College and asserted that Islam believes in the brotherhood... and the brotherhood of all. He was accompanied by the Frontier Gandhi viz. Ghaffar Khan during these tours. The following chapter is about the Quit India movement. With the beginning of the II World War and the British government demanding India's support, Gandhi promised non-violent support, but he made it clear that the Congress Working Committee would take the final decision. The masses didn't want India to support the alliance in the War, unless the nation was made free. Gandhi argued in Harijan that India never had the need for two nations. However, Jinnah's obsession with Pakistan was supported by the leaders of the orthodox Hindus and the deprived classes. The early 1940s were quite challenging for Gandhi, since the world was at war, the situation of India was miserable and there were deaths of near and dear ones. One of the demises that shook Gandhi greatly was Jammalal Bajaj's. After the Cripps fiasco Gandhi came out with his Quit India move. On 8th August 1942 at the Gowalia Tank grounds in central Bombay the AICC passed the resolution for the Quit India movement. As a result the government started a series of arrests and Gandhi, before going to jail, gave a message to Pyarelal that the activists must be made to wear the slogan *Do or die*, so that the

violent elements would be identified, if needed. Agha Khan Palace was the place where Gandhi had been kept under detention along with his companions. It was here that Mahadev Desai and Kasturba departed.

The last three chapters in the book present the Gandhi in his declining health and without the steadfast companions. He had been the heart-throb of the Indians for more than two decades. Now with the War reaching a violent climax, the Congress gaining grounds and the Muslim League speeding towards its destination of a separate, Gandhi was left with a marginal role. In 1946 freedom seemed round the corner. Riots broke out in Bengal and Gandhi went right away to pacify the embittered people. Finally, the long-awaited day independence came, but not without dividing India into two halves. Gandhi was at grief, but kept doing his task of calming the people who were enraged by this astounding phenomenon.

V. Comparison and Conclusion:

The two biographies under present research are different from each other. Prof Bidyut Chakrabarty's "M.K.Gandhi: A Historical Biography" essentially deals with the political philosophy and practices of Mahatma Gandhi, whereas Rajmohan Gandhi's "Mohandas: A True Story of a Man, his People and an Empire" is an elaborate life-sketch of Gandhi which basically deals with the life and deeds of Gandhi as a man and a Mahatma. The preface in "M.K.Gandhi: A Historical Biography" briefly presents the life of the subject consisting in Mohandas's family, education and his academic stay in London, whereas the preface in "Mohandas: A True Story of a Man, his People and an Empire" is very precise and it chiefly possesses how the biographer has made a realistic attempt at portraying the life of Gandhi.

Prof Chakrabarty has analyzed Gandhi's strategies in South Africa. It was just a beginning of a long-drawn-out struggle that Gandhi was expected to undertake in his life. He was decisively influenced by H.D.Thoreau, John Ruskin and Leo Tolstoy. What he did in South Africa was an experimental endeavour, nevertheless it was founded on a staunch belief in humanity. His visit to South Africa was based on professional demands but the continuation of his stay there was his choice, which emanated from his inherent passion for the well-being of others. Prof Chakrabarty attaches a lot of importance to Gandhi's stay and struggle against the racial government in South Africa. To him this period was quite vital not only from Gandhi's

point-of-view but also from India's view-point. On the other hand, Rajmohan Gandhi not only illuminates the vitality of Gandhi's stay in South Africa, but also presents in detail the domestic life of the subject. While carrying on the battle for the poor coloured people in South Africa, Gandhi had a family to look after. His frequent bickering with his wife and children tested his principles and values from time to time. However, he is shown to be very insistent and at times very adamant on his views. The conflict between Gandhi and Kastur got very intense when the social practices of Gandhi couldn't be easily digested by Kastur. A time came when she had almost given all up, but she somehow gradually got initiated into the beliefs and practices of an unrelenting husband.

The next stage in the biographies is Gandhi's return to India. Prof Chakrabarty, according to the objectives of his writing, analyzes the beginning of the Gandhian leadership in India's freedom struggle. His emphasis is on the Gandhian principles of *sattya*, (truth), *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *tapas* (self-suffering). The complex process of sattyagraha has been elaborately assessed by the biographer. Rajmohan Gandhi too goes for a detailed analysis of the Gandhian doctrine of non-violence. Mahatma Gandhi was so insistent upon non-violence that he would not hesitate in withdrawing mass-level movements, if they were stigmatized by violence. As it happened in the very first organized movement, the Non-cooperation movement in the wake of the Rowlatt Act, launched by Gandhi in India. The violent developments irked Gandhi and he called off the nation-wide agitation of his own accord. There were strong differences of opinions between Gandhi and his very close and intimate associates including his successor Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel, CR, Subhash Bose and several others. Both the biographies have effectively brought out the contradictions in Gandhism. They put forward the way Gandhi planned his programmes, made changes or sometimes withdrew them inviting the adverse reactions from his fellow participants. However, the strength of Gandhi was his indefatigable faith in truth and non-violence.

The biographies further the tale of Gandhi by way of analyzing the other important movements he undertook viz. the Civil Disobedience movement and the Quit India movement. Prof Chakrabarty is of the opinion that although these movements had mixed results, one significant outcome of them was the way the entire nation was galvanized into a strong protest against the British government. Rajmohan Gandhi on the other hand gives the details regarding

the developments which marked or marred these movements along with the details about the domestic situation of Gandhi. Gandhi was considered as father of the nation, but he had his own sons to look after. Besides his sons he had developed intimate relations with some his younger associates like Maganlal, Mahadev Desai, Jannalal Bajaj, Manu Gandhi, etc.

The Quit India movement is said to have been the grand finale of the national freedom struggle. In spite of the fact that Gandhi had resigned from the Congress, the people of India and the Congress commonly fought tooth and nail for the liberation of India. The situation was quite critical as the II World War has begun. Within India the Muslim League had made its intentions about Pakistan quite clear and it offered its support to Britain at War. The Hinduist organizations were playing the tune of a Hindu nation. Gandhi, despite his severing himself from the Congress, was still a national source of motivation. Prof Chakrabarty throws light on the slogan given out by Gandhi viz. *Do or die*. Rajmohan Gandhi notes how Gandhi was quite careful in asking the activists to bear the proof of their participation as Quit India participants with the sole intention of curbing the possibilities of violence. However, the national and international conditions were so complex that the movement didn't last long. But the desired aim behind the movement, which consisted in letting the Raj know it's time to quit India, was realized.

In the concluding chapters Prof Chakrabarty explores the conflicting relations between Gandhi and Tagore, and Gandhi and Dr Ambedkar. Tagore was under the impact of the western civilization and Gandhi was essentially a *nativist*. Dr Ambedkar couldn't reconcile himself to the Gandhian interpretation of the caste system in Hindu religion. Thus, these persons who had their own roles in shaping the destiny of an emerging nation couldn't share similar philosophy or practices. Rajmohan Gandhi goes for a painstaking depiction of Gandhi as a man. During the detention of Gandhi with his associates at Agha Khan palace in Pune there occurred the demise of two of his very intimates, one was Mahadev Desai and another was Kasturba. Gandhi was shaken within and without when the riots broke out in Bengal. He had planned to visit Pakistan in February 1948, but he fell to the bullets of an extremist on 30th January that year. Rajmohan Gandhi finishes the biography by indicating Gandhi's assassination was not an end to Gandhism, but Gandhism has been released for the ages and the continents.

The two biographies thus earnestly illuminate Gandhism, which is a complex of Gandhi, as a man and a Mahatma, his philosophy and practices, the experiments and influences, the tradition left for generations to come.