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Gandhi In His Time And Ours: The Global Legacy Of His Ideas



Synopsis

Gandhi was the creator of a radical style of politics that has proved effective in fighting insidious social divisions within India and elsewhere in the world. How did this new form of politics come about? David Hardiman shows that it was based on a larger vision of an alternative society, one that emphasized mutual respect, resistance to exploitation, nonviolence, and ecological harmony. Politics was just one of the many directions in which Gandhi sought to activate this peculiarly personal vision, and its practice involved experiments in relation to his opponents. From representatives of the British Raj to Indian advocates of violent resistance, from right-wing religious leaders to upholders of caste privilege, Gandhi confronted entrenched groups and their even more entrenched ideologies with a deceptively simple ethic of resistance. Hardiman examines Gandhi's ways of conducting his conflicts with all these groups, as well as with his critics on the left and representatives of the Dalits. He also explores another key issue in Gandhi's life and legacy: his ideas about and attitudes toward women. Despite inconsistencies and limitations, and failures in his personal life, Gandhi has become a beacon for posterity. The uncompromising honesty of his politics and moral activism has inspired such figures as Jayaprakash Narayan, Medha Patkar, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Petra Kelly and influenced a series of new social movements—by environmentalists, antiwar campaigners, feminists, and human rights activists, among others—dedicated to the principle of a more just world.

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Customer Reviews

For many years David Hardiman has been a leading scholar of the Indian peasantry. Now he has

written his view of Gandhi and his politics. The Gandhi he presents is ultimately a man of high moral courage. But this is not to say that Hardiman has no disagreements with him. In his opinion Gandhi presented a "dialogic" vision, emphasizing tolerance and diversity of opinions. Hardiman then discusses such subjects as Gandhi's views on nationalism, the origins of his non-violent resistance, his criticisms of modernity, his views on sex and the family, his attitude towards the untouchables and the "tribal" minorities, his campaigns against religious hatred, the fate of Gandhian politics after his death, and the influence of Gandhi on the wider world. What can we say about such a work? There are some flaws. The use of Bakhtin to support Gandhi's "dialogic" stance is a bit fashionable. The fact that *Hindi Swarj* is written in a dialogue does not necessarily mean much for its open-mindedness. After all, both Plato and Galileo used dialogues, but they both clearly meant to express one particular viewpoint. Hardiman says Gandhi supported Polish resistance in the second world war, but the reference is to a secondary source. Indeed, there is no systematic discussion of the Second World War, surely the acid test for any pacifist. The discussion of Gandhi's international influence is also weak, looking as it does at Petra Kelly, Martin Luther King, and others, including, somewhat oddly, Malcolm X. Hardiman's scholarship is rather thin here, relying on Stephen Oates' biography of King to discuss the American civil rights movement, and ignoring such key scholars as Dittmer, Garrow, Sugrue and many others.

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