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Gandhi: A Racist?: Vol. 1 How I Began to Dislike Gandhi (Volume 1)

Sabine von Herbert

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This is the first volume of the series: "How I Began to Dislike Gandhi". Mahatma Gandhi (Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi) is one of the most influential political figures of the twentieth century. Like many others in the West, Gandhi's ideas have captivated a young, bright, politically active girl from a western German city during the mid-1980s. More than anyone else Gandhi influenced her on her ideas on democracy, peace, non-violence, decentralization, equality, environmentalism, and justice. For two decades she followed Gandhi wholeheartedly. But when she began to read Gandhi's own writings, to her shock, she realized that her idol was not necessarily the same as she thought him to be. This book is a personal account of what she has found out-Gandhi to be a conservative, authoritarian, patriarchal, Victorian reactionary. In seven short chapters, this book polemically puts Gandhi in a new light, mostly by quoting from his own colossal writings that altogether comprise of around 49,000 pages. While this is not a biography of Gandhi in a conventional sense, this could be a thematic biography written in an autobiographical style. “How I Began to Dislike Gandhi” differs from other books on Gandhi on a few grounds. First of all, there are less interpretations in this book. Readers can reach to their own conclusions by reading what Gandhi said or wrote. At best this book is a systematic or thematic ordering of Gandhi's writings on those subjects that were crucial for the author when she embraced and later distanced from Gandhi. Secondly, this is different from most writings on Gandhi-they either want the reader to be a sympathizer or a hater of Gandhi. Here, despite the provocative title and overall theme of the book, it presupposes a balanced reader, not a fanatic follower or a rabid hater. The author wishes and hopes that the conclusion she reaches after reading Gandhi's writings would make sense to many fellow travelers. Thirdly, this book is written lucidly. It does not demand a significant understanding of Gandhi or India. It does not enter to any philosophical or ethical arguments. If at all there are some observations most of it is commonsensical. “This is only a reading of Gandhi, of some issues he dealt with, which were pertinent in my life for many years. This is a personal account of disillusionment and my survival of it. Of certain fundamental issues that form the basis of my everyday life-like what I eat, how I interact with others, how I share my body, and what I consume. This is a political autobiography of a commoner.” Sabine von Herbert is a pseudonym of an internationally published academic based at a German university. Interview with the author What made you write this book? After living a number of years thinking that I adhered to Gandhi's principles, all on a sudden I realized that I knew only a little about Gandhi. I was imitating Gandhi the film character. So when I read what he wrote I wanted to tell it to the world. I know a number of people who follow Gandhi would be shocked to read his opinions on race, caste or gender. What is the purpose? My purpose is very modest. I wish somebody had written this book before me so that I would have known about Gandhi more accurately. If I knew what is described in the book 10 or 15 years before, I would have led a different life. So, my purpose is to help others like me to make an informed decision before they decide to lead a life in a close connection with Gandhi. I think that sense-making is important before following any political ideas, or gurus. Are you angry with Gandhi? No, I am not. I am a bit angry with myself for not making necessary assessments before following a cult. I am not feeling bitter. But I am a bit disillusioned. Will you recommend anyone to follow Gandhi? If anyone wants to follow Gandhi, I'd recommend this book among their preliminary reading!

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