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# Book Review on “Why I Assassinated Gandhi: Nathuram Godse by Virendra Mehra”

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RANVEER SINGH RATHORE<sup>1</sup> AND KRITI SANADHYA<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*As much as the saying ‘Don’t judge a book by its cover’ is correct it doesn’t go on with titles which are pretty obvious with their content, as the case of our book in hand. For those who are familiar with our nation’s history of pre and post-independence eras, the title is all they want to connect to what, in one’s opinion was one of the darkest and most unfortunate events of independent India. Like John F. Kennedy, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and many more renowned world leaders, Mahatma Gandhi was also bound to the same fate of the infamous assassination by Nathuram Godse, who was vehemently aggravated by the actions of Gandhiji allegedly being partial in favor of the Muslim community and Pakistan.*

**Keywords:** Politics, Partition, Assassination, Court, Statements.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Originally the book is an outcome of compilation of different sources and aspects, including statements presented in the court, adroitly edited by Virendra Mehra, focusing on that one major event that shaped the future of the newly independent State of India.

Talking about the book cover and setting (*this might differ depending on the publication*), it has been perfectly edited with a huge title on the front cover along with a picture of both Nathuram Godse and Gandhiji above a note that says – “*Ban for the publication of the statement given by Nathuram Godse to the special court was lifted by the Bombay High Court in 1968.*” The background colour used is black, which perfectly goes with how dark role this piece of event plays in the history of our great nation.

The back cover ensures to exhibit Nathuram Godse’s inclination towards nationalism along with a statement by one of the three judges who pronounced death sentence to Nathuram Godse, which in a way are suffice to surge reader’s curiosity to dive into the book and give it a well deserve read.

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<sup>1</sup> Author is a student at Jaipur National University, Jaipur, India

<sup>2</sup> Author is an Assistant Professor at Jaipur National University, Jaipur, India

## II. THESIS

Being a compilation of Gopal Godse's (Nathuram Godse's brother) work regarding Nathuram Godse's statements pronounced in the court and Justice G.D. Khosla's memoir, this book very systematically and efficaciously presents each and every aspect and events preceding and succeeding the ugliest chapter of the post-independent Indian history viz. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi ji.

The book starts by focusing on the event of assassination and the whole procedure of arresting the accused and the other conspirators in addition to Nathuram's answer to the Charge-sheet filed against him, in which he explains Gandhiji's politics, his role partition and interference in government's decisions post-independence.

Moreover, the arguments put forward in the special court have been mentioned along with the sentencing each accused was awarded. Not just that, the events up until their execution are mentioned all along the exchange of letters between Nathuram Godse and Ramdas Gandhi (one of Gandhi's sons). Not to forget the Will of Nathuram Godse concealing rather unfeasible last wish.

Furthermore, the profiling of all the accused has been done briefly, so as to give an idea of them to the readers. At last referencing from Justice G.D. Khosla's memoir has been added which to a great extent describes the whole event in a gist, concluding with an impactful statement. Lastly in epilogue, Nathuram Godse's last speech to the court is mentioned as it is.

## III. BODY

*“My life also came to an end simultaneously with the shots fired by me at Gandhiji. I am prepared to concede that Gandhiji did undergo suffering for the nation. I shall bow in respect to the service and to him.*

*But even this servant of the country had no right to vivisect the country by deceiving the people. I do not desire any mercy to be shown to me. I do not wish that any one on my behalf should beg mercy towards me. If devotion to one's own country amounts to a sin, I admit that I have committed that sin. If it is meritorious, I humbly claim the merit thereof.”*

- *Nathuram V. Godse (November 1948)*

The above mentioned excerpt is from the concluding statement of his answers to the court, it is pretty clear how deeply and strongly Nathuram Godse was connected with Gandhiji and the act of assassination he committed, so much so that he whole heartedly and bravely accepted his committal of the act solely and how in his opinion he stood straight, fair and bold.

Moving ahead, the scene of the event of assassination has been described in brief and main reason has been put forward to make the reader aware of the pretext of the whole book. It has been explained chronologically how the trial was going on and how the Chief Prosecutor Shri C.K. Daphtary tried his best to prevent Nathuram Godse to read his part of speech/statement. It gives a clear idea about how the political and social tension in the ambience at that time in the country or for that matter whole world was.

In furtherance to that, this book seeks to present the statement of Nathuram Vinayak Godse at the Red Fort trial in its unabridged form. Before that an introduction to the events, details of investigations and the formation of the special court are given. The proceedings after the statement was completed, the judgment, the appeals and events till 15.11.1949 when Nathuram and Apte were executed, are presented.

During the course of overall compilation and editing of the book one thing which in my opinion had strongly been focused on by the author must have been the neutrality in putting the bare facts in an effort to feed the readers with undressed facts so that they can fabricate their own point of view, and that's one of the toughest and most important factor in writing a book which deals with any historical event and that too in this case an event of infamous assassination.

The events are quite extensively described in the first part of the book with dates and major recent incidents in relation to Gandhiji and his policies towards the nation post independence, affecting the lives of huge amount of people on both sides of the borders, his appeasement policy of the Muslim sect and his interference in the decisions of the Government of India through his hunger strike tactics are all presented as reasoning to elucidate that mindset of Nathuram Godse. Some previous failed attempts of attack have also been mentioned in this part so as to please the reader with connectivity of affairs.

The next part of Police Investigation deals with the framing of charges against Nathuram Godse and the arrest of other alleged conspirators. The date wise data provided is quite detailed and thus provides with a sense of authenticity and concreteness to the facts in order to gain trust of the readers although somewhere or other the tone becomes quite monotonous but owing to theme of the book it's very much expected and thus adds little to its criticism.

***“There was no legal machinery by which [Gandhi] could be brought to book ...I felt that [he] should not be allowed to meet a natural death.”***

***~ Nathuram Godse***

The sub-part I is the exact copy of Nathuram Godse's statement of answers to the charge-sheet filed against him which has been directly obtained from the official records for the publication

over which the ban was lifted in 1968 by Bombay High Court. On account of the statement itself, it can be very well said that those were extensively and skillfully prepared legal statements with strong arguments and counter arguments in order to help Godse to put forward his perspective efficiently and effectively.

The sub-part II (i.e. *Gandhiji's politics x-rayed*) has been further divided into two different sections, the former section is that part of his statement which discusses the role of Gandhiji and his policies & decision. The later part in addition to the previous one describes 24 such incidents which in a way were essentially shaping the future of pre independent India. In his words – ***“I shall now describe briefly the enormous mischief done by the slogans and the nostrums which Gandhiji prescribed and followed, in pursuance of his policy, the fatal results that we now know.”*** Hereby are some of those incidents that were described –Attack on Arya Samaj, League taking advantage of War, Cripp’s partition proposal accepted, Hindi v/s Hindustani, Vande Matram not to be sung, Congress surrenders to Jinnah, Ambiguous statement about Pakistan, Ill advice to Kashmir Maharaja, Mountbatten vivisects India, Gandhiji on Cow slaughter, Removal of Tri-color Flag, and many more!

With loads of information the same pace of exerting influence to put forward his point of view, in regards to how Gandhiji with his ‘non violence’ and ‘Hindu muslim unity’ notion was coming out to be threat to the country more than an asset. He tactfully presented his arguments which directly addressed public’s sentiments, for instance highlighting the issue of extreme atrocities Hindus had to bear due to partition and aggravating due to the statements of Ghandhiji as to how Hindus must die from the hands of their ‘brethren’ ( fanatic Muslim community of Pakistan)!

***“My confidence about the moral side of my action has not been shaken even by the criticism leveled against it on all sides. I have no doubt honest writers of history will pay my act and find the true value thereof on some day in future. AKHANDA BHARAT AMAR RAHE, VANDE MATRAM”***

***~Nathuram V. Godse***

The calmness in his temperament is clearly visible and can be felt and even sympathized with, which seems to be his utmost priority and hence can be said that his motive was fulfilled. As of now the book has completely justified the stand Godse took while putting forward his opinion, presenting his words unabridged and untampered definitely pays off, as it most accurately presented the facts and thus gives complete autonomy to the reader to formulate his/her thoughts and opinions.

The later parts of the book contain few exchanges of letters between Nathuram Godse and Ramdas Gandhi. The actual copies of the content those letter has been provided in sequential order, this section explores a whole new experience for the readers as unlike the previous parts it provides with two different chain of thoughts to shake up their mindset.

***“My ashes may be sunk in the holy Sindhu river when she will again flow freely under the aegis of the flag of Hindustan. That will be sacred day for us.”***

***“It hardly matters even if it took a couple of generations for realising my wish. Preserve the ashes till then, and if that day would not dawn in your life time, pass on the remains to posterity for translating my desire into reality.”***

***~Nathuram V. Godse***

Above mentioned lines are extracted from the Will of N.V.Godse. These statements proved to be in my opinion very efficacious tool in bringing down the reader’s sentiments to the desired level. The following paragraph is a part of Justice G.D. Khosla’s memoirs, a part of which has been mentioned in the last part of the book so as to affix utmost credibility to the book as a whole.

***“The audience was visibly and audibly moved. There was a deep silence when he ceased speaking. Many women were in tears and men were coughing and searching for their handkerchiefs.”***

***“ I have however no doubt that had the audience of that day been constituted into a jury and entrusted with task of deciding Godse’s appeal, they would have bought in a verdict of ‘not guilty,’ by an overwhelming majority”.***

***- Justice G.D. Khosla***

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

**RATINGS ~**



To sum it up all in a gist we shall once again go through the whole points of critique I have jotted down till now. To begin with the cover page, it is well designed and well equipped with illustration to give an unambiguous idea about the book’s content. At very few but significant point of times the loads of facts turns out to be a little monotonous, but owing to the nature of content it could be overlooked.

The writing style and neutrality is appreciated as it leaves a great impact on readers to develop their own chain of thoughts. The different sources which have been compiled up in this book are vast and each gives a holistic view which ultimately leads the reader to Nathuram Godse’s

point of view and indeed it creates a conflict in one's mind, whether to approve what's politically correct or to consider what has ever kept hidden!

The referencing provided throughout the book is accurate enough; the book is very well written, edited and compiled. Provided the current political scenario in our country one might get curious enough to read such books, thus, it is definitely recommendable. Being such a political issue, with this style of writing and a sufficient amount of illustrations, this book is certainly capable of captivating the reader's interest up until the very end.

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