

Gandhian Ideals in Indian Literature

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Abstract- *Gandhiji is such a socio-political figure who is barely impossible for someone to forget or ignore. He has influenced every aspect of human consciousness and there is hardly any discipline that he has left uncommented. He is an immense source of writing himself and influenced different disciplines and many writers from different fields like history, politics, philosophy, literature, sociology etc. Gandhiji insisted on simple living and high thinking which was also reflected and highlighted by the literary English authors of the time, mainly Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K.Narayan, who in their novels, portrayed the magical influence of Gandhiji. In Indian writings in English from within the homeland, both Gandhi and Gandhism have undergone semantic alterations, redefining Gandhiji's relationship with the domestic imagination.*

Keywords: Gandhism, Philosophy, Sociology, Semantic, Redefining, Human Consciousness.

Introduction "There are innumerable definitions of God, because his manifestations are innumerable But I worship God as Truth only. I have not yet found Him, but I am seeking after Him. I am prepared to sacrifice the things dearest to me in pursuit of this quest. Even if the sacrifice demanded my very life, I hope I may be prepared to give it. But as long as I have not realized this Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it .. Often in my progress I have had faint glimpses of the Absolute Truth, God, and daily the conviction is growing upon me that He alone is real and all else is unreal. Let those, who wish, realize how the conviction has grown upon me let them share my experiments and share also my conviction if they can." **(Gandhi)**

The emergence of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) influenced Indian life and literature (Gujarati, English, Hindi), were quite often complementary to one another. Gandhi spoke the language of the common man, and was for the outcasts. His weapon was the weapon of truth and non-violence. He was for traditional values and against industrialization. He very soon turned himself into a medieval saint and a social reformer. Tagore called him Mahatma (saint). Gandhi became the theme of both poetry and fiction of cultural nationalism. He became an apostle of peace and idealism. Poets like Vallathol (Malayalam), Satyendranath Datta (Bengali), Kazi Nazrul Islam (Bengali) and Akbar Allahabadi (Urdu) accepted Gandhi as a challenge to western civilization, and as an assertion of the dignity of Asian values. Gandhian heroes swamped the fictional world of that time. Raja Rao (English), Tara Shankar Bandyopadhyay (Bengali), Premchand (Hindi), V.S. Khandekar (Marathi), Sarat Chandra Chatterjee (Bengali), Lakshmi Narayan (Telugu) all created Gandhian protagonists as rural reformers or social workers with moral and religious commitments. It was not the writers, but the people, who created the Gandhi myth, and

the writers, in their turn, used it effectively to mark a period of great awakening.

Gandhiji had a multi-faceted personality. It would not be an exaggeration to say that he had performed many miracles during his lifetime and his message was a source of inspiration and strength to the people for all times. Gandhiji was a psychologist in one sense and an idealist on the other as he could feel the pulse of India and its people on whom he could exert a tremendous influence and preach his Gandhian ideology. He realized that India being a religion-oriented country with a majority of half-literate and non literate population can only be motivated and mobilized through a traditional mode of communication and in addition, Gandhian Ideology was mainly based on traditional and labor oriented technologies. The folk or traditional arts of India have from the ancient times been used for moral, religious socio-political purposes. The inspiration and influence which our literatures of all languages have imbibed from him is well noted in the theatre, folk activities and literary writings based on his life, preaching, and Ideologies and of course his welfare activities nationwide.

Many novelists presented Gandhi and Gandhian ideology in their work. Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Bhabanji Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgaonkar, Chaman Nahal, Kushwant Singh, K.A. Abbas, K. Nagarajun, Attia Hosain, Kamala Markandaya, Anand, V.S. Venkatramani, Nayantra Sahgal etc. V.S. Venkatramani has depicted nationalistic revolution and freedom movement under the leadership of Gandhi in his novels, '*Murugan, The Tiller*' and '*Kandan, the patriot*'. '*Murugan, The Tiller*' deals with the Gandhian ideal of rural construction as a step for winning freedom. In it the novelist has attempted to sketch Gandhian Satyagraha. The central character, Ramu plays the role of an ideal man, having the aim of reconstructing Indian Village. The second novel '*Kandan, the patriot*', deals with the freedom movement under the Gandhian politics. Gandhi is represented by idealized character, Kandan, who leads the village people 'Drunk with wine of freedom.' Kandan becomes to the peasants of Akkur a "reforming Saint" endowed with a "glow of kindness in his face". He envisages a new order: "The whole system must be smashed and a new wave be built for all, where freedom and equality shall be the base of

life". Next novel 'My Brother's Face' by Gopal Mukerjee is a novel dealing with the violent freedom struggle, and the Gandhian value and idea of non-violence and non-Cooperation, the real ways to fight with the British to get independence. Anand's 'Untouchable' deals indirectly with an aspect of Gandhian struggle for freedom in the thirties. It reflects Gandhi's tireless efforts for Harijan upliftment and his view against attitude of the British Government with their 'divide and rule policy'. The novel focused on the untouchability, against which Gandhi was performing to abolish. Prof G. P. Sharma remarks,

"The novel thus deals with the Hindu social problem of untouchability against the political background of the time, depicting the same time people's faith in Gandhi as their leader in the national movement and his magnetic influence on the people. The novel ends with three possibilities for the redemption – conversion to Christianity, abolition of untouchability and introduction of flush latrines."

Anand's '*The sword and the sickle*' too concern with Gandhi's non-violence. The illiterate peasants and downtrodden, who

were influenced by the non-violence.” Inspired by Gandhism K.S. Nagarajan’s *‘Atwar House’* too reveals the influence of the national movement under Gandhi on the town. The novelist attempted to bring the national integration of various regions for the political awakening of people for the freedom of the nation. Raja Rao’s *‘Kanthapura’* (1938) depicts the national struggle of the Gandhian era. It is a picture of the impact of the Gandhian ideology of the non-violence, non-cooperation of an obscure village, in south India during the 1930’s. The small community of Kanthapura is shaken by the whirlwind of the Gandhian revolution. The character, Moorthy knows the Indian rustic mind is religious, and hence convinced ideology of Gandhi like an ‘avatar’ in the Hindu tradition and makes them plunge into the freedom struggle. The novel depicts political events like, Gandhi’s Dandi march, fast and Satyagraha by the villagers and their non-cooperation by not paying taxes. Formation of village congress community, the second Round Table conference, social programmes of the congress like, the abolition of untouchability, demonstration against drinking wine are remarkable in the novel. Almost the whole society in

Kanthapura comes under the spell of Gandhian ideology. Dr. M.K. Naik remarks, “Kanthapura is thus, a highly successful attempt to probe the depths to which the nationalistic uprising penetrated, the new patriotic upsurge fusing completely with the traditional religious faith and in the process rediscovering the Indian soul.”

Mulk Raj Anand’s *‘Morning Face’* (1968) is set in the early years of the 20th century with Gandhi having just entered the Indian stage, and cast a spell with his political utopia, ‘Hind Swaraj’. Anand seeks to capture the political scenario in its entity. Casting his net wide, he brings in other significant political developments of the period such as the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, the Simon Commission and the Indian resentment. R.K. Narayan’s *‘Waiting For the Mahatma’* too depicts Indian freedom struggle with Mahatma Gandhi. The second novel by R.K. Narayan *‘Vendor of Sweets’* too depicts the follower of Gandhi. In this novel Jagan is shown as a true disciple of Gandhi. He has high regard for Gandhi as his master. Though he earns a thousand rupees a day, he leads a simple life. K.A. Abbas’s *‘Defeat For Death’* may be called a nationalistic novel for its theme. The old man of seventy

undergoing a fast can easily be identified with Gandhi in his fast in 1942 in Jail. Through the month of the nurse of the wounded Negro boy Abbas declares “those who fight for freedom can never be suffer defeat.”The novelist does not name the old man but all that he does and says can be related to Gandhi. Manohar Malgonkar’s ‘*A Bend in the Ganges*’ is crowded with events from modern history, beginning with the Civil Disobedience Movement of the early thirties and ending in the post partition riots in Punjab. Between these two major events are packed all the exciting events of two decades: the boycott of foreign goods, the secret activities of terrorist groups, the outbreak of the second world war, the Japanese occupation of the Andamans, the British retreat from Rangoon, the long march of evacuees from Burma, the Bombay dock explosion, the dismemberment of India. In the novel Debi Dayal, a dedicated purposeful young man of high principles is juxtaposed with Gian Talwar, essentially a self-seeker and an opportunist. Debi Dayal’s belief is in violence while Gain has faith in non-violence.

Like other contemporary writers, Nayantara Sahgal, who is also one of the leading

pioneers of Indo-Anglican literature, tried her best to depict and accept the Gandhian perspectives and ideals. All the eight novels of Nayantara Sahgal have the ideology of Gandhi as their foundation and her approach to problems both personal and political, have been made under the impact of Gandhian ideology. “*A Time To Be Happy*” has the pre-independence background and here we come to know of the Gandhian programs of rural reconstruction that the narrator and Sohanlal are involved in. The narrator had not seen Gandhiji but his charisma had lured him to such an extent that he was prepared to renounce everything and work for the masses. The Gandhians here are a dedicated lot who do work with the zeal of a missionary.

“*In Storm In Chandigarh*”, Nayantara Sahgal shows an India that is bewildered in its retreat from Gandhian values. Not only on political front, but also on the personal level, there is a breakdown of Gandhian norms. Gayan Chand, the Chief Minister of Punjab and Harpal, the Chief Minister of Haryana, are in confrontation with each-other. Gyan’s insensitivity to feelings and emotions, his violent impatience, his ruthless attitude and communal and populist policies are all a

result of such an upbringing, while Harpal is more concerned with human beings than with bargains. He is a Gandhian doer and works for the reconstruction of Punjab. *“The Day In Shadow”* shows the full retreat of Gandhism but *“In Rich Like Us”*, Sonali who keeps the Gandhian torch ablaze. *“In Mistaken Identity”*, it is Bhaji who is Gandhian crusader. He is a towering personality who commands great respect amongst jail-mates and comes across as a man of integrity, honesty and tolerance by following the doctrines of Mahatma Gandhi.

The writers working in different languages in those days were mostly persons who had come either directly under Gandhiji's influence and many had taken part in the freedom movements, or they were highly influenced by his ideals. Their writings were immensely burdened with Gandhian idealism, lifestyle, his teachings and anti-colonial stands. Bhabani Bhattacharya specifically sums up the elements that the then writers incorporated from Gandhiji: “In every Indian literature a new thinking emerged. There was to be shift of emphasis from the rich to the poor, from the intellectual to the man of character and inner culture, from the educated to the illiterate

and the voiceless, and deep rooted in these re-evaluations was social reform.” Gandhiji's social activities were development oriented and his idealism was democratic, rural and homogeneous in nature. It was not only the literary writers who played an active role in reflecting the then Gandhi-mania of the entire country but also the nationalist Press and local newspapers and journals which portrayed the bhakti cult of the Mahatma through different anecdotes, feature articles, soft news and of course, snippets, thereby proving the immense popularity of the political figure who was slowly turned into a divine entity, a messiah who was sure to bring a revolution in human history as Buddha or Christ could. Newspapers like the 'Swadesh', Aaj', 'Abhyudaya', 'Gyan Shakti' and local dailies, pamphlets etc all contributed accordingly and respectively in portraying the local reactions in favor of Gandhiji and thereby popularizing him. The myth of the Mahatma was a result of the projections of the existing patterns of popular beliefs about the worship of the holy miraculous sages in rural India. Gandhiji's teachings became so popular that they were pronounced as everyday bread and butter facts and the more they got discussed the more did they gain in importance,

magnitude, and matter. Almost all contemporary novelists represent events which distinctly correspond to the examples of actual incidents and teachings that Gandhiji in real life encoded during his visits at various places. The crux of the morale or bottom spread of Gandhism, which the novels often portray by vicarious means and events are: Unity among all religions especially Hindu-Muslim Unity. People should not adhere to extremist means of protest, i.e. they should be non-violent and not use domestic arms like lathis, sharp weapons, and stop picketing and looting places. Stop the evil practices of untouchability, castism, enmity among classes, hatred, lying, swearing but spreading of brotherhood, love and unity among all races instead. Stop consumption of tobacco, ganjasmoking, gambling, stop swearing, using slang, whoring, and beating the womenfolk at home, sex crimes and the like. Boycotting foreign goods, educational, economic and legal institution. Take up the initiative to spin, weave, cultivate, study, learn and teach, control sex, family planning; lead a simple living, self-sacrifice and self-purification. People will not betray their help seeker; they should be honest, progressive and self-confident about their

country, resources and abilities. Believe in the truth, face the truth and supply it in life, realization of Swaraj, grace of God, strength of the united people when motivated towards one goal peacefully. The two verses of the “*Gita*” by which Mahatma Gandhi was permanently impressed are-

“dhyayato visayan pumsah.
sangas tesu.pa jayate
sangat samjayate kamah
kamat krodho bhijyte II. 62.
krodhat bhavati sammohah
sammohat smriti vibhramah
smritibhramsad buddhinaso
buddhinasat pranasyati. II. 63.”

Mahatma Gandhi remains a relevant thinker today not only because of his theory and practice of non-violence, but also because of the way he defended all his life political tolerance and religious pluralism. That is why Mahatma Gandhi has been portrayed in film, literature, and in the theatre also. Ben Kingsley portrayed Gandhi in the 1982 film *Gandhi* which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. The 2007 film, *Gandhi, My Father* explores the relationship between Gandhi and his son Harilal. Gandhi is also a

central figure in the 2006 Bollywood comedy *Lage Raho Munna Bhai*. The 1996 film, *The Making of the Mahatma*, documents Gandhi's time in South Africa and his transformation from an inexperienced barrister to recognised political leader.—Several biographers have undertaken the task of describing Gandhi's life. Among them are: D. G. Tendulkar with his *Mahatma. Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi* in eight volumes, and Pyarelal and Sushila Nayyar with their *Mahatma Gandhi* in 10 volumes. There is also another documentary, titled Mahatma: Life of Gandhi, 1869–1948 which is in 14 chapters and 6 hours long. The April 2010 biography, *Great Soul: Mahatma Gandhi and His Struggle With India* by Lelyvel contained controversial material speculating about Gandhi's sexual life. Because of this material, the book was banned in the Indian state of Gujarat, Gandhi's birthplace.

Through his long public career, Gandhi became one of the most influential spiritual and political leaders of the twentieth century, and his ideas have been adapted and implemented throughout the world in various social and political situations such as the struggle against apartheid in South

Africa, the civil rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in the United States during the 1960s, and the campaign for democracy in Eastern Europe and Russia during the 1980s. Gandhi's legacy in India, where he acquired the honorific title "Mahatma" (great soul Gandhiji, a source of inspiration for all, embodied himself as the apostle of truth and non-violence), continues to provide ideals for individual spiritual improvement as well as for social advancement and political equality.

Conclusion:

Thus, Mahatma Gandhi represents a figure of unique integrity, consistency and humanity. The point of departure of his life philosophy and the basis of his theory and activity in practice are freedom and welfare of any human being and prosperity of peoples and nations of the whole mankind. Non-violence is the elementary and indispensable condition for the materialization of these noble goals. These principles and values represented a permanent source of inspiration in Gandhi's guidance in his imaginative undertakings both in the struggle for freedom and independent development of India and the promotion of her role in the international

community. As a matter of fact, Gandhi's firm belief in the creativeness and openness of the people of India and his own active engagement for a peaceful and friendly cooperation among nations on equal footing, without any interference or imposition were inexhaustible sources of his personal wisdom and high credibility both as the father of modern India, as well as one of the major moral, spiritual and political international authorities of our times. His eternal 'MANTRA' will always be remembered-

“Raghubati Raghav Raja
Ram, Patit Pavan Sita
Ram,
Sita Ram Sita Ram,
Bhaj pyare tu Sitaram,
Ishwar Allah tero naam,
Sab ko Sanmti de
Bhagawan" - **Mahatma
Gandhi**

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