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Gandhian Impact on Indian Writings in English

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Abstract:

Gandhian ideals like *Ahinsa* (non-violence), *Satyagraha* (insistence of truth) and non-violent ways of struggle like boycott of English things and life style have had a tremendous impact on the political movements of the world. Even the life of Mahatma Gandhi was quite impressive, his saint-like austerity, limited needs that have instilled a new sense of pride and purpose for Indians and foreigners. The paper attempts to trace Gandhian influence on Indian Writing in English. Gandhi and his philosophy was unavoidable and inescapable for the Indian and foreign writers, philosophers and scholars. The paper is a sincere attempt to know Gandhi's influence on Indian literature in English. Mahatma Gandhi bears the permanent stamp on Indian life and literature. His ideology or 'ism' is his principles of his life. In few words I would now try to focus on the principles which Gandhi has followed in his life. These are *Satya* (Truth), *Ahinsa* (Non-violence), *Vishvashanti* (World peace), *Asahakar* (Non-cooperation). Weaving these principles in his life he practically implemented in his life. These words might seem very simple to pronounce, but are equally hard to keep or follow. There are number of literary works that are influenced by the Gandhian life and Gandhian philosophy. The present paper briefly discusses some of the important novels that reflect Gandhian life and philosophy.

Keywords: *Ahinsa* (non-violence), *Satya* (Truth), *Asahakar* (non-cooperation), *Vishvashanti* (world peace), *Satyagraha* (insistence of truth), Gandhian Philosophy etc.

Introduction:

Great men die physically, but continue to live in the memories of people by their actions and work. Mahatma Gandhi was one of such men among others. Like Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, and Mother Teresa, he left his an indelible impact on the Indian politics and life that could hardly be erased. Mahatma Gandhi's influence was not limited to political arena only but it influenced all spheres of life. Indian literature was not an exception to this. In fact, most writers relied to the themes of freedom fight struggle, independence of India and partition of India. Dealing with these themes negligence of Mahatma Gandhi was impossible. Mahatma Gandhi and his ideology dominated literature of twentieth century and continued to have its presence even on today's literature. Kai Nicholson observes in his book *A Presentation of Social Problems in the Indo-Anglian & the Anglo-Indian Novel*, "A character who has loomed large in Indo-Anglican fiction during and after his life time is Mahatma Gandhi." (Kai, 239). Gandhi's philosophy and life became an example and an ideal for most great people of the world to lead a comfortable life. Many great people like Nelson Mandela, Dalai Lama have confessed about the influence of Gandhian ideology and philosophy on them and their work. His influence was all pervasive and inescapable. Gandhian ideals like 'Ahimsa' (non-violence), 'Satyagraha' (insistence of truth) and non-violent ways of struggle like boycott of English things and lifestyle have had a tremendous impact on the political movements of the world. Even the life of Mahatma Gandhi was quite impressive his saint-like austerity, limited needs that have instilled a new sense of pride and purpose for Indians and foreigners. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar acknowledges Gandhi as a "formative influence on writers of the time." (Iyengar, 249). Men are remembered not by how long they lived, but

by the impact they live on the people's mind. When this is considered the influence of Mahatma Gandhi is unavoidable. John Haynes Holmes in Norman edited book, *Profiles of Gandhi*, mentions:

When I think of Gandhi, I think of Jesus Christ. He lives his life; he speaks his word; he suffers, strives and will someday nobly die for his Kingdom upon earth." (Haynes, 15)

The book further records the quotation of Martin Luther King:

From my background, I gained my regulating Christian ideals. From Gandhi I learned my operational technique."(King, 14)

Many great scholars hold a unanimous verdict about the greatness of the Father of India Mahatma Gandhi. It requires great sacrifice and selfless contribution towards one's nation and its people, then only one receives this kind of respect and honour from the people of the country. Mahatma Gandhi selflessly devoted his life for the well-being of his country people. His simple living a dhoti and a stick was his all asset. He stuck up to the principles he himself created all his life.

Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers!*:

So Many Hungers! by Bhabani Bhattacharya revolves around the theme of The Quit India Movement of 1942. The novel is not just about freedom struggle, but it also throws light on the societal situation of the time. Underneath the freedom fight it touches upon burning issues of poverty, politics, love and sex. The horrible and devastating incident of Bengal famine of 1942 and its consequences have been dealt in the novel. The novel has two different parts-different stories that are successfully inter-linked by the novelist in the end. The novel projects fight between Gandhi as the man and Gandhi as the vision. Rahul, the central character, represents Gandhi as the man while his Grandfather Desesh Basu (Devta) represents Gandhi as the vision. In the first part it is Rahul who is the central figure and it is Kajoli who leads the second part. The novel realistically presents the aftermath of the great famine of 1942. Bengal faced tremendous level of poverty after the famine and the novelist has tried to pinpoint the grave situation in Kajoli's attempt of becoming prostitute.

Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Music for Mohini*:

Another novel by Bhabani Bhattacharya carries the influence of Gandhian ideals. *Music for Mohini* is written with the theme of Indian freedom struggle. The novel stresses the importance of social freedom. Jaydev, the central figure, feels it necessary that political freedom is useless if society does not attain social freedom therefore Jaydev stood against the social injustices and attempts for social freedom. Jaydev wants to make his village Behula an ideal village-a good village society. He expects his wife Mohini to realize this dream by teaching to the ignorant and illiterate villagers. The novel is set at the backdrop of Bengal famine of 1942. The famine had badly affected the village Behula. People were dying of hunger and starvation. In this situation Jaydev tries to provide immediate relief to the villagers. Jaydev feels that it is the responsibility of young generation to strive for the development of the country. Thus Jaydev represents Gandhian ideals through his acts towards the society and the nation. Mahatma Gandhi was the ideal for the young Indian generation in post-independent era.

Nayantara Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh*:

Nayantara Sahgal attempts to provide a solution of non-violence to the violence erupted in Punjab through her novel *Storm in Chandigarh*. She strongly outbursts her disgust at the insane violence erupted in newly divided states of Punjab and Haryana over the issue of Chandigarh. Non-violence, she thinks is the perfect solution if the society is to prosper and peace is to be prevailed. Thus, Nayantara Sahgal shows her attachment to the Gandhian ideals in *Storm in Chandigarh*. The novel brilliantly juxtaposes two worlds: the personal world of man-woman relationship through the stories of Inder-Saroj, Jit-Mara and Vishal-Leela, and the interpersonal world of politics. Sahgal characterizes the veteran Home Minister last surviving figure of Gandhian era, which exerts his policies to retain political prominence in new political scenario. The novel also deals with issues like incompatibility in human relations due to misunderstanding, extra-marital relations and poverty. The novel edges on to the existential condition of human life. The novelist defines Gandhism in these thought-provoking words. Vishal Dubey, the protagonist, mused over such thoughts and was happy to note that in spite of the darkness all around, there were believers like his associates, in the cult of non-violence.

R. K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma*:

The novel, *Waiting for the Mahatma* by R.K.Narayan has a theme of Indian independence. The novelist has finely inter-woven two parallel stories: freedom fight and beautiful love story of Sriram and Bharati. Basically the story revolves around the character of Sriram who is common man living with his grandmother. Till his meeting with Mahatma Gandhi he was workless and purposeless. The speech of Mahatma Gandhi transformed him completely forcing him to join the freedom fight. He met Bharati, who was already working with Gandhi in this noble cause and was one of the active freedom fighters and disciples of Mahatma Gandhi. Subsequently he fell in

love with Bharati who also had same feelings for Sriram. When he asked for marriage, Bharati, under the influence of Gandhian thoughts answered him that she is ready to marry him when India gets freedom. Mahatma Gandhi had himself promised the couple that he will arrange their marriage. India, finally got independence, Sriram and Bharati were waiting for Mahatma to fulfill his promise. But before that Mahatma was shot dead by an anti-activist. Unfortunately Sriram and Bharati had to marry without the blessings of Mahatma.

Manohar Malgaonkar's *A Bend in The Ganges*:

A Bend in the Ganges narrates the saga of partition and its aftermath. It recounts the massacre, rapes, abduction and atrocities of millions of affected people by the partition of India. It describes the death of more than 2 million people. The novel accounts the life in Indian from the 1930s to 1947. This is done with the help of his three protagonists,- Gian Talwar, Debi-Dayal and Shafi Usman. The story of freedom fight goes along with the three different perspective of three different characters of different socio-economic and cultural background. Violence dominates almost every scene of the novel. The opening and the end stand contradictory in the novel. It opens with 'A ceremony of purification' describes burnings of Foreign clothes. Gandhi is the hero of this movement. In the last chapter too there is a burning but it is of cities which are on fire, Hindus and Muslim killing each other, is this ceremony of purification too?

Conclusion:

Mahatma Gandhi has exerted his indelible influence by his life and principles in India and abroad. He has set examples for the people to follow therefore his influence cannot be neglected by the writers. He is the need of every age. His life and philosophy ought to reflect in the literature of the world. If the world is to be progressed, if peace is to be restored, then Gandhian philosophy must be followed and observed by the nations of the world. Moreover, Gandhi as a political activist had taken some actions, appealed to people for some cause, these actions right or wrong have far-reaching influence in India and the world. In my view the recent Pulwama incident (15/02/2019) in which 44 Indian soldiers are martyred, is one of the consequences of Mahatma Gandhi's action during the partition time. Thus, Gandhiji continues to be reflected in Indian literature even in time to come. His principles of Ahimsa (non-violence), Asahkar (non-cooperation), Swaraj(self rule), have been appreciated and followed by many great people over the world. His autobiography *The Story of My experiment With Truth* is a guideline charter for many living persons in the world.

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