



Gandhian Ideology in Indo-Anglian Literature

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Abstract: -

Literature is the highest form of art that sensitizes a person's opinion and point of view. Literature has played a key role in the development of society. It shapes people's perceptions by focusing on specific characters or events. However, literature can never be separated from society as it is a reflection of existing trends, movements and personalities that we see in contemporary world. Gandhiji is one of such admired political personalities whose ideology – his philosophy on truth, nonviolence, Sarvodaya and Satyagraha – has inspired a number of Indo-Anglian writers to write with new fervour, dignity and confidence. There is hardly any area that had been left untrodden by Gandhiji, there is hardly any discipline that had been left un-commented by Gandhiji and it shows his versatility. He has influenced every aspect of human consciousness. He himself is an immense source of writing and has influenced a number of disciplines and many writers from different fields like history, philosophy, politics, literature, sociology and so forth have found their central themes from him. The teachings of Mahatma Gandhi have provided fresh material to the writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao et cetera, in whose works one observes active representation of social issues as well as Gandhian beliefs. Events and lives presented in the works of these Indo-Anglian writers are originally Indian and Gandhian ideology is the motivating force to them. In this research work the researcher discusses various Indo-Anglian writers and their works wherein Gandhian philosophy has played a vital role in creation of Indo-Anglian literature.

Keywords: - Literature, Indo-Anglian, Gandhian ideology, truth, nonviolence, Satyagraha etc...

No work of art can survive in vacuum and literature being a major form of art is the foundation of life and therefore no exception. It takes its raw material from the accounts of human beings. It cannot remain isolated from the contemporary movements or conditions. W.H. Hudson rightly says in 'An Introduction to the Study of Literature';

“Literature is the vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it ... It is, thus fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language.”
(Hudson)

In accordance with historical biographical approach a text is an expression of the times and circumstance for the duration of which it has been composed and no writer can disregard this influence. Likewise, the

prominent figures who have lived through the times definitely make their presence felt in the relevant texts and Mahatma Gandhi was one such figure who led the freedom struggle and a range of movements in pre-independence India. Gandhian epoch in Indo-Anglian literature began in 1920. He inspired everyone to develop a freedom consciousness and to fight for India's independence.

Born on 2nd October, 1869, Mahatma Gandhi earned the most desirable freedom for the nation through his belief in 'ahimsa' or non-violence, and innate faith in love for all. His firm belief in his ideology has influenced different world class democrats, social workers, activists and economists. In this regard M.K. Naik comments, “Indian writing in English of the Gandhian age was inevitably influenced by these (the then political

and social) epoch making developments in Indian life" (Naik). There was hardly any person who would have remained intact by this charismatic personality. Gandhian ideology stressed the need to revive national identity. Gandhi is correctly called 'thinker's thinker' as his thoughts have given the writers intellectual and moral passion. The political movements and activities led by Gandhiji have provided a suitable background to various literary works as well.

Indian English novels, before the entry of Mahatma Gandhi, have hardly reflected any social consciousness. These novels have merely reflected a romantic vision of life and there were no trace of realism. But with the appearance of this divine figure, Indian English writing acquired a new confidence. The love for country, fight for freedom and the problems of common men are the common issues of Gandhian literature. In 'Untouchable' by Mulk Raj Anand and 'Waiting for the Mahatma' by R.K. Narayan Mahatma Gandhi plays an exceptional role. In both novels, Gandhiji appears as a man rather than a mere ideology working through the text. M.K. Naik calls it "Gandhian whirlwind" and thus he is emerged as a mode of living and thinking.

Narayan's belief in Gandhian philosophy is reflected through the simplicity and purity of his language - the two principles which Gandhi adored himself. In 'Waiting for the Mahatma' Gandhiji appears as a star figure where the people are shown gathered in large number on the bank of the Sarayu to welcome this divine figure. We observe Gandhian

philosophy when he delivers his first speech to the gathering.

"I see before me a vast army. Every one of you has certain good points and certain defects, and you must all strive to discipline yourselves before we can hope to attain freedom for our country...We, the citizens of this country are all soldiers of a non-violence army, but even such an army has to practice a few things daily in order to keep itself in proper condition - We do not have to bask in the Left or Right. But we have a system of our own to follow: that's Ramdhun; spinning on charkha and the practice of absolute truth and non-violence" (Narayan).

The protagonist of the story is Sriram who joins the movement just to get Bharti, a social reformer. But later on, when he was touched by the magnetic force of the dynamic personality of Gandhiji, he renounces his lazy and aristocratic life style. His romantic vision is crushed when he visits the villages. He sees the ground realities and pathetic condition of poor. He develops love and sympathy for the oppressed. Gandhiji's belief in 'love for all' is expressed when he calls the Britishers 'misguided friends'. He says that he wants to win his enemy by love as it was of no use of getting freedom if he does not adore his enemy.

During the Gandhian era, the whole nation was coloured with patriotic spirit. People came out from their safety zone and took part in different political movements or social activities on one call of Gandhiji. He tries hard to eradicate a caste system and to

propagate 'swadeshi'. In this novel Sriram becomes the spokesperson of Gandhian ideology. In one such incident when the shopkeeper makes an insulting remark for 'khadi', Sriram furiously replies; "You may say anything about me but don't talk of this dress - it is - too sacred to be spoken about in that way". Although, at last Sriram gets involved in violent activities, his ultimate unification with Bharti is the victory of Gandhian ideology. He is completely fascinated by the heavenly presence of Gandhiji. Gandhiji was a national hero and people adored him for his activism. His 'Quit India Movement' won the nation freedom, which no one could.

Mulk Raj Anand had profound faith in Gandhian ideology and his '*Untouchable*' illustrates Gandhiji's deep influence of on the masses. He has talked about the social aspect of Gandhiji's multi-faceted personality. In this novel, the author has very effectively discussed the problems of the oppressed, downtrodden and lower strata conforming Gandhiji's belief that "Varna System' is a blot on Hinduism. Gandhian philosophy has been handled very greatly through the character of Bakha who is the protagonist in the story. He belongs to lower strata of society. Like Bakha, thousands of people have to go through the humiliation for no crime and have to survive with this maltreatment without complaining. In one such episode Bakha tells to his father that they think they are mere dirt as they clean their dirt. The novel expresses its strong disapproval of such malpractices. Despite his pathetic lot, Bakha hopes for better future. He has a faith in every word spoken by Gandhiji. He

thinks his misery and mortification would end one day and he rises against this oppression and discrimination. Through the character of Bakha, the author has reflected the individual potential to bring changes through willpower. Like Gandhi, Bakha becomes a visionary hoping for his rightful place in society.

Besides analyzing the influence of Gandhian philosophy on Indian English Writing, it is difficult to overlook Raja Rao's 'Kanthapura', a magnificent novel. It is an echo of Gandhi's freedom movement. The writer has given a larger angle of Gandhian ideology by placing him in the tradition of Rama, Krishna and Buddha. Kanthapura is a sensitive portrayal of the real Indian in the Gandhian era when the nation was struggling for freedom. Its social-political background presents the versatile personality of a great non-violent spiritualist Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Kanthapura is a political novel written in that crucial period when the country was very much influenced by Mahatma Gandhi.

Thus, Mahatma Gandhi gave a novel identity to Indo-Anglian Literature through his fascinating emergence. He was a national hero who has been given a prominent place not only in the literary genre, but also in the newspapers, magazines, anecdotes, featured articles, etc. In this world millions of people live and die unnoticed but some personalities create history through their inner qualities. His persona enabled a number of Indo-Anglian writers to stand at par with the world class writers.

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