



Gandhian Literature and Its Impact in Present Day Society

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Abstract

Gandhi was the most prominent figure and the main subject of discussion especially for Indo Anglican writer. He is not only a universal figure but also an immortal one. During the pre-Independence phase of India, Gandhi became first a national and soon enough an international leader of immense political and philosophical significance. It is a matter of pride that such a magnanimous personality like Gandhi was born in India. He is being talked about in every field be it politics, philosophy, history and literature. Gandhian literature began pouring in from all corners, native as well as outside. Even today Gandhi continues to have a dominating presence in the literary world and in fact literature that ignores Gandhi attracts critical attention. Though his treatment in the post-Independence phase has undergone changes from that in the pre-Independence times, nevertheless, what is certain is that Gandhi can never be separated from Indian Literary Writings.

Key words: politics, philosophy, history, literature

*A nation's culture resides in the hearts
and in the soul of its people.*

-Mahatma Gandhi

Narration

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was the preeminent leader of the Indian independence movement in British-ruled India. Employing nonviolent civil disobedience, Gandhi led India to independence and inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world. He is called the Father of the Nation. 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 favour 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. Gandhi-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. As a result of this many new things got assimilated in the name of the Mahatma and rumors made room in accordingly, thereby increasing his popularity by leaps



and bounds, that neither the Mahatma nor the Congress circulated. Stories like Mahatma walking through the fire unhurt, the Mahatma bringing independence in 1921, Mahatma insisting vegetarianism and condemning fish and meat in people etc. were some common subversions made in Gandhi's name. Gandhiji insisted on high thinking and simple living which was also reflected and highlighted by the literature

Gandhi's complete works were published by the Indian government under the name The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi in the 1960s. The writings comprise about 50,000 pages published in about a hundred volumes. In 2000, a revised edition of the complete works sparked a controversy, as it contained a large number of errors and omissions.^[233] The Indian government later withdrew the revised edition.^[234]

Gandhi was a prolific writer. One of Gandhi's earliest publications, *Hind Swaraj*, published in Gujarati in 1909, is recognized as the intellectual blueprint of India's independence movement. The book was translated into English the next year. Gandhi wrote this book in his native language, Gujarati, while traveling from London to South Africa. In the book Gandhi gives a diagnosis for the problems of humanity in modern times, the causes, and his remedy. The Gujarati edition was banned by the British on its publication in India. Gandhi then translated it into English. The English edition was not banned by the British, who concluded that the book would have little impact on the English-speaking Indians' subservience to the British and British ideas. It has also been translated to

French.^[2] *Hind Swaraj* allows the reader to fully grasp that he envisioned a time when Indian Independence was a reality that could be embraced. Even in the earliest of stages, Gandhi believed that Indian Independence was only possible if seen as a byproduct of a search for truth. In his work, it is apparent that spiritual freedom is the foundation upon which political freedom is based. It is this basic premise that Gandhi brings out in *Hind Swaraj*. The idea of being able to speak to the Indian people, as a nation or a group that does not exist as servants to the British, is another striking element of Gandhi's writing that makes it a distinct work of the Independence Movement.

Gandhi also wrote several books including his autobiography, The Story of My Experiments with Truth of which he bought the entire first edition to make sure it was reprinted. The Story of My Experiments with Truth is the autobiography of Mohandas K. Gandhi, covering his life from early childhood through to 1921. It was written in weekly instalments and published in his journal *Navjivan* from 1925 to 1929. Its English translation also appeared in installments in his other journal Young India. It was initiated at the insistence of Swami Anand and other close co-workers of Gandhi, who encouraged him to explain the background of his public campaigns. In 1999, the book was designated as one of the "100 Best Spiritual Books of the 20th Century" by a committee of global spiritual and religious authorities.

In "The Story of My Experiments with Truth", Gandhiji has talked about all those experiences which he experienced in life. He has talked his experiences in



chapters. Gandhiji has written about his birth, childhood and his education in London. During his education in London, he faces many difficulties. His living in London can teach the reader how to live life. How to save our time and money? How to be loyal towards our vows? The reader can get all the answers of these questions easily in this book. His all experiences in London were marvelous because these all experiences became a lesson for Gandhiji and gave a wonderful courage to him to fight against the difficulties. By these experiences the reader can also learn that "how to live among the unknown people."

The fasting of Gandhiji gets huge reaction from the multitudes in the novel. The people followed him like a first of a restive volcano. Gandhiji's weapon of the fast makes our alleged weakness a defence and attains significant victory. At last, he recognizes that the only way to bring his ideologies to life is by being prepared to die for them which eventually become the strength of the national movement. At this point, the author compares and criticizes the present day's 'relay fast' that is the weapon of today's politicians, which many people take it in turn to miss their meals in public. The weapon has now become a politician's bane. The value of The Great Indian Novel as a political novel with a thesis can seldom be exaggerated. It is a post-colonial statement on the hideousness of the colonial ethics. It's ironic vision seems to serve to emphasize a political standpoint which both indicts colonialist exploitation and craves for a truly viable democratic alternative to emerge in India. In certain parts of the work it even tends to give up the ironic tone and becomes a direct and scathing attack against the colonialist

practice. In the way it exposes the wrong economic policies pursued after Independence, the mismanagement of the country under Indira Gandhi and the dark days of Emergency and the later failure of the Janata politicians to provide a successful alternative, the novel becomes a document of manifest socio-political criticism. And in its examination of the unhappy and traumatic turn of events of the post-Independence period it almost conceals an elegiac tone, which arises from the painful recognition of a colossal failure that awaits every Indian experiment. The conclusion of the novel, therefore, reveals, in its plea for a rediscovery and reinterpretation of India on the basis of dharma, its lineage to the novelist's own political perspective which is far from cynical and hinges on positive intentions.

Gandhiji did not believe that the ideal of peace could be realized in society so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions remained. In nature all men are born equal in the sense that they have a moral right to equal opportunity. But it is also true that all do not have equal talent. Some will have the ability to earn more. Gandhiji never wanted to cramp talent by preventing people endowed with superior talent from earning more but he suggested that the haves should use their talent and bulk of their earnings not on themselves but give it to have-nots as a trust, for the good of society. Perhaps the largest thing Gandhi is well known for throughout the world are his contributions to society. He strongly believed that his Indian people deserved equal rights and better living conditions. His little action of standing in front of the tanks was talked about all around the world, just as Gandhi's accomplishments are. Gandhi isn't



famous for his contribution to the Hindu religion, he's famous for what he contributed to the Indian society, which affected the whole world and still does to this day.

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