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# INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE AND GANDHIJI'S IDEOLOGICAL INFLUENCE ON INDIAN WRITERS

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**Abstract:** Creativity and inspiration are the two defining factors for most writers and their craft. But while creativity is largely the process of generating original ideas, inspiration is random. Sometimes it comes from the simplest of things and persons like the life of Mahatma Gandhi. Poetry, prose or drama: fiction or nonfiction Gandhi is everywhere. There are indeed only a handful of iconic personalities who have caught the imagination of as many writers as Gandhi has. Even 70 years after his death, the process has not stopped, but only gained momentum. I personally feel that the relationship between Indian English Literature and Gandhiji is still left untold at certain historical, social and cultural ends and so I would like to make a modest attempt in re-inventing the ideological influence of Mahatma in the light of the then Indian English Literature especially through the writings of R.K. Narayana's fictional works that perfectly justifies the impact.

**Keywords:** Indian-English Fiction, Ideology, Cultural Values, Gandhian Influence, Pre Independence Period, Gandhism, Philosophy.

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**Introduction:** "A humble, naked old saint sitting on a prayer mat, attempting to shake the British Empire by utter spiritual power", and "shrewd person beneath the saint" and asserts that his ideals of spirituality, spinning wheel and vegetarianism had narcissist undertones. However, the praise worthy elements in Gandhi, "Even Gandhi's worst enemies would admit that he was an interesting and unusual man who enriched the world simply by being alive. This thinker and philosopher's ideological message never exempted any Indian writers, "From Mulk Raj Anand to Sarojini Naidu, Dominique Lapierre to George Orwell and Khuswant Singh to VS Naipaul, almost all "during-Gandhi", "post-Gandhi" and contemporary writers have somewhere referred to the life of "Bapu" in their works. In doing so, they have brought different interpretations to his sayings and sketched fictional characters on his principles and composed verses on his thoughts to inculcate the ideology of Gandhiji in contemporary society.

### Objectives of the Study:

1. To convey the knowledge of Gandhian Ideology
2. To create insight in to Indian-Anglo writers views of our traditional society.
3. To induct sense of Indian community and idealistic view of Gandhiji.

**Methodology:** Analysis of the study is based on the inductive method which is called inductive reasoning to derive the sense of cultural and ideological conflict in modern generation and the ideological impact of Gandhiji on the growing society from western influence.

Data has been collected from primary and secondary sources. The writings of R.K.Narayan especially "Waiting for Mahathma", and other books are taken in to consideration as primary data. The writings of Indian Anglo writers like Mulk raj Anand, Rajarao, and other contemporaries. The published Journals and other writings of social reformers have been taken as secondary source.

**Need for the Study:** The changing trends in Indian literature is galloping over the traditions and nativity of Indian narration. This flaw in Indian narration has to be evoked through reviewing and memorizing the originators of Indian English writings. In this context the socio cultural ideology of Mahathma Gandhi is an example which is carried in pre-independence writers like Mulk raj Anand, Rajarao, R.K.Narayan and so on. In the present study emphasis has been given to study and analyze

cultural and ideological influence of Gandhiji in Indian English writers during independence struggle. The analytical study on "Waiting for Mahathma" by R.K.Narayan remains the best example to derive proper conclusions in this regard.

**A Historical Back Drop of Indian English Literature:** The Indian English fiction has had a meteoric growth during the dawn of the millennium year and the writing in all genres of literature has gained momentum, particularly the Indian novel, the doyens of the Indian writers like R.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and their ilk promoted the conventional mode of writing. The crusaders of the contemporary and modern era include Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth and many more. They elucidate and substantiate strength of the emerging modern voice of India, which has the vibrancy and energy of a gushing artesian along with an unmatched resolve to experiment and explore new avenues of writing novels. A host of contemporary post – colonial writers like Rushdie, Arundati Roy, Meena Alexander, Anita Nair and Jhumpa Lahiri have initiated the process of decolonizing the 'Colonial English' and using it as a medium to express Indian thoughts and sensibilities with a distinctive Indian style.

The freedom movement spearheaded by Gandhi inspired a flurry of activity in the literary world. The need for an autonomous independent country led to an explosion of creativity which sought to appeal to the masses to take up the cudgels and out the British from the Indian soil. Therefore, there was a flourish of novels in both regional as well as in the national stream. This burst of energy in regional literature, laid the ground work of fine – tuning and enhancing the vibrancy and the scope of the Indian English Fiction. English has acquired a rare privilege and popularity in India especially among the elite and the middle classes. It has definitely become a convenient medium to express the intrinsic talents of the writers.

**Gandhiji's Persona and Ideological influence on few Indian English Writers:** Indian writings on Gandhi and Gandhism have also undergone tremendous change during this process from almost mystical being of the during-Gandhi era to a historical being with human vulnerabilities. It was inevitable that Mahatma Gandhi had to take over the movement of freedom, after the death of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Gandhi held the nerves of millions of the downtrodden as he was the motto of the Indian National Movement. It was the period of Civil disobedience movement when Indian Writing in English could reach to its acme. Before that there was neither a single novelist who could show his artistic genius. It was then the period of self-awareness, and it might not be just a coincidence that the very offspring of the phase were three greater ever novelists of Indian Writing in English. These three were Raja Rao, Mulkraj Anand and R.K.Narayan, the three triumvirate of Indian literature in English. As all the political as well as social activities of the age were revolving around Gandhian philosophy, no literary works of art, could escape itself from the very breeze of the period.

Gandhiji was so much a part and form of any literary genre of that period that he made appearance in many dramas, novels, stories and in poems. Indian English writers 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 revaluations was social reform."

The freedom movement spearheaded by Gandhi inspired a flurry of activity in the literary world. Mahatma Gandhi, the saint revered by the world without a doubt, has left a great mark on Indian literature and the literature produced in the 'golden age' of Indian prose fiction glorifies his ideology in a very great breadth. Many impressions of Gandhian philosophy, and beliefs and truths are found in the books of that day. So, here are some examples of brief survey of fictional novelist's writings. The dual combination of independence movement and nationalist consciousness gave much impetus and spur to the outflow of novels in which affection for motherland was the crux and this served to invoke the patriotic sentiments of the masses. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*(1938), K.S.Venkataramani's *Kandan*, *The Patriot* (1934 ) and Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*(1935), *Coolie* (1936), *The Sword and the Sickle*(1942 ),

revolved around the varying themes of the independence struggle. Post – Independent India also produced number of novels involving the causes and aftermaths of the freedom movement. The novels that belong to this category include Nayantara Sahgal's A Time to be Happy(1952), Khwaja Ahmed Abbas' Inquilab(1955), R.K.Narayan's Waiting for the Mahatma(1955) etc.

Kanthapura: The debut novel by much respected Indian novelist Raja Rao, Kanthapura was published in the year 1938 when the freedom struggle of India was at its peak. There were youths from across the nation who was willing to join the freedom movement and do something for the motherland. Though indirectly, the leader of the masses, Mahatma Gandhi is present in the novel all the way. Moothy, the central protagonist in the novel, is inspired by the Gandhian philosophy of unity and non-violence and that every person is equal and they must unite to boot the British rule out of the country. This novel will take you close to the thoughts and ideas of the Mahatma of Indian independence struggle.

Untouchable: This is a novel published in 1935 and written by one of India's greatest novelist, Mulk Raj Anand, who would rather be remembered as a novelist for the marginalised people in the over-enthusiastic age of the critics to come. In this novel, though Gandhi is not present entirely, there is the mention when he comes to deliver a speech on the need of ending untouchability in the country. His presence has been widely glorified by Mulk Raj Anand and Bakha, the central protagonist, feels like he has almost found the solution to the problem he had. The symbolic presence of Gandhi ensures so many things in the novel.

Women novelists have played a crucial and momentous role in enhancing the quality and quantity of the Indian English Fiction. They have further added the woman's perspective and feministic dimensions to the novels. These rich contributions have widened the spectrum of issues deliberated in the novel. The contributions by women writers cannot go unnoticed. Among the women writers Sarojini Naidu, the great poetess charmed the readers with her writings. Feminism themes have also been used by authors like Nayantara Sahgal and Rama Mehta. Regional fiction theme has been aptly used by Kamala Das, Anita Nair and Susan Viswanathan. Novelists like Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai captured the spirit of Indian cultures and its traditional values. Sarojini Naidu, in her sonnet on Gandhi, describes him as an eternal lotus who is a source of guidance and strength for billions: "O mystic Lotus, sacred and sublime/ In myriad-petalled grace inviolate/ Supreme o'er transient storms of tragic Fate/ Deep-rooted in the waters of all Time".

**Reflections of Gandhian Ideology in R.K.Narayan Writings:** The works of RK Narayan critical for his exploration of Gandhi as subject. "Known for his direct approach in handling his subjects, in Gandhi's case too, Narayan has used his wit at its best to 'demahatmise' Gandhism. For instance, Gandhi is seen as an oblivious yet dominating character in Waiting for Mahatma with eyes closed to what is around and busy playing the dynamics of 'self'. In Narayan's The Vendor of Sweets, too, Jagan, the protagonist, comes across a hypocrite Gandhian, symbolising Gandhi's failure to reach the masses". Waiting for the Mahatma: In this novel by R. K. Narayan, Gandhi is himself present as a major character and he plays an important part. The lead character is Sriram and his counterpart in the novel is Bharati. Just to woo Bharati, Sriram joins the freedom movement which is led by Mahatma Gandhi and he truly transforms. There are interesting instances in the novel which involve Gandhi directly. You must read this classic Indian fiction and you will enjoy it without a doubt!

**An over view of, "Waiting for Mahathma":** The basic them of his novel "waiting for Mahathma", (1955) was the impact of Gandhian thought on the ordinary Indian. The novel written in the background of Gandhiji's image of freedom and free India shows a living picture of the Indian National Movement. The visit of Mahathma gives a cheerful atmosphere in the villages which the writer reflects in Malgudians when Gandhi visited to address the Nationalism and the concept of freedom for India as one Nation. Shriram the young guy waiting for Mahathma but his granny appears restless at the idea of Gandhiji's 'temple entry for untouchables'. The Chairman of Municipal Committee appears with anger filled face when Gandhi becomes a street urchin by allowing a slum child who sweeps the streets who sits on his divan. This narration in "waiting for Mahathma", resembles Narayana's artistic reflection of

Mahatha's impact on social events and religious faiths during the time of freedom movement. This daring portrayal of Mahathma's image as a Nationalist and religious reformer influencing the young guys like Shriram and his beloved Bharti and stand against the traditional faith of the old generation. This background fabrication in the novel shows how the writer trying to convey the skilled and intellectual leadership in Gandhi in bridge up the generation gaps in culture and traditions.

The novel narrates the good picture of the National Movement with coloring of 'patriotic love story' which highlights the Movement with the impact of Gandhian ideology on contemporary Indian society. The writer handle the plot with the device of 'patriotic love story' to portray the Gandhian ideology and its impact on contemporary society conveying the theme of 'Art for Art Sake'. Narayan as a writer tries to achieve the determined goal by using the Art of language in picturing the ideology and the image of Gandhi as a Nationalist and a freelance freedom fighter to create not only free India but a culturally and religiously reformed India. The conflict and justification of the characters with different faiths but to fight and dream for free India like shriram who follows Gandhian philosophy and Granny who hates the ideology of Gandhiji and his philosophy. On the other hand his skill in compromising the generation with present trend by convey the love of Rosie who come from the background of 'devadasi' that has hated and looked down by traditional generation under the ideology of Gandhiji. The individual approach shows how Narayana is different to the contemporary writers in picturing Gandhian philosophy. Such is the scene in R. K. Narayan's 'Waiting for the Mahatma', where we find the hero Sriram becoming a blind follower of Gandhiji and joining the freedom movement but not at all understanding what Gandhian is actually about. There are people who still remain a Gandhian even if their leader leaves them or the Mahatma is defeated, severely criticized or if the Sahibs put them behind bars. But Gandhism is presented as the end, and redemption from the social evils of untouchability and casteism.

**Conclusion:** Gandhiji's social activities were 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 Indian history never saw such an upsurge of faith, unity in action, united will, community feeling and social development, without any expensive spending as in the Gandhian Age from the grass root level. He had a well formed conception about the motherland and her people, their needs and their mind set which helped him to attain millions of disciples and act as a positive social worker with the help of traditional ways of communication. This genre of novel has perfectly justified the influence of Gandhiji on Indian society as a united unit. Scopes for further research lies in the fact whether Gandhiji's motives, ideals, teachings etc. and their consequences were right or not but it must be undoubtedly concluded that nothing but such tactful means of communication through the fiction of novel.

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