

## Influence of Gandhi Upon Literary Artists

**Sukanya Rani**

R.S.M. (P.G.) College,  
Dhampur (Bijnor) UP

### Abstract

M.K. Gandhi's thoughts are still a source of inspiration for scholars as well as politicians all over the world. Many thinkers changed their conduct of life after studying his autobiography *My Experiments with Truth*. Here Gandhi mentions how he felt impressed with the thoughts of ancient Indian saints and modern British thinkers. He studied the essays of R.W. Emerson and H.D. Thoreau. Thoreau's brief *Civil Disobedience* encouraged him to adopt the American weapon of civil disobedience against British imperialism. Gandhi had the mental and spiritual courage to express his thoughts on the issue of Swaraj with Sir Winston Churchill. Many British friends of India knew the nature of Gandhi as he knew to get his judgments followed by the Britishers. This he had experienced in his struggle for Blacks in South Africa. Basically he had gone there to contest a legal suit and later on decided to work hard for the fundamental rights of Africans. Due to his arguments and non-violent nature he ultimately succeeded there.

**Keywords:** Noncooperation movement, Disobedience Movement, British Imperialism, Casteism and democratic socialism.

Quite a few scholars assert that Gandhian movements failed every time. What was the result of non-cooperation movement, Civil Disobedience movement and Quite India movement? What did Gandhi achieve from these movements? G.S. Gill asks a question – Did Gandhi fail? Well, this is a controversial question. Quite often Pt. J.L. Nehru got offended with him as the former thought that the latter does know the methods of revolution. Gandhi kept quiet at such times as he was leading the revolution and did not want to offend one of his chief supporters. He knew that Nehru had studied the history of renaissance, French revolution, American revolt, Bolshevik revolution etc. But the practical side of revolution is not known to him. Nehru admits this fact in his autobiography.

Gandhi could win admiration of scholars as he practised whatever he prescribed for others. For example, he asked his supporters to adopt fair means for achieving fair ends. No decent aims can be achieved with foul means. For example, he asserted that total prohibition has got to be introduced in the country. If the people drink wine, they will lose their money as well as health. Many economists argued that prohibition means the loss of excise duty on mine. Well, Gandhi was not prepared to pay attention to the loss of excise duty, as national ethics was top important for him.

Pt. Nehru had observed the economy of advanced countries and hence wanted to establish heavy industries in every state for national economic growth. On the contrary, Gandhi gave the concept of cottage industries as he was aware of rural problems of the country. He regularly arrested for Panchayat Raj and the role of small scale industries. It does not mean that Gandhi was opposed to capitalists. It is well known that he was a permanent guest in the family of Birlas. But he gave the concept of Trusteeship and asked the capitalists to regard themselves the trustees of national wealth. Pt. Nehru had to accept Panchayat Raj system and declare facilities for small scale projects. Gandhi wanted to implement the principle of manual labour that he asked followers to adopt Charkha as the best means of income.

Needless to say that he adopted truth and non-violence as the basics tools of his life. He studied the *Gita* regularly and enjoyed reading *Ram Charit Manas*. On so many occasions he felt elevated for speaking the truth. He admitted frankly that a few chapters of the *Bible* changed the course of his life. Whenever he was arrested by the British authorities, he accepted the orders. However, he never encouraged the freedom fighters to adopt violent means for this noble aim. The result is that Indians still have healthy relations with the Britishers. When V.S. Naipaul visited India first time, he felt that Gandhi had failed in his mission. Then he wrote the book *A Writer's People : Ways of Looking And Feeling* (2007) and admired the fundamentals of the father of the nation. Here he analyses the influence of Gandhi upon various scholars and remarks.

'Gandhi's manys causes made him appear more universal than hew was.'<sup>1</sup>

As a prophet of peace Gandhi was against war. In the novel *Azadi* Chaman Nahal refers to the fact that Gandhi was a supporter of Hindu-Muslim unity. He requested Mohd. Ali Jinnah several times to give up the demand for a separate country in the name of Islam. He felt shocked when he got the reports of bloodshed due to narrow feelings of casteism. He never expected their bloodshed at the time of India's freedom. He went to Noakhali when riots broke out there. It is true that the broad-minded Muslims like Maulana Azad were with

Gandhi and Nehru. Due to people like Gandhi and Nehru India was declared a secular country.

As a follower of the *Gita* Gandhi was an active person. He asked his wife to follow the principle of non-possessiveness and hence donate all her ornaments for the nation. The bars of prison failed to shatter his nerves. R.N. Tagore, S.C. Bose, C.R. Das, Tilak, Pal, Gokhale etc. accepted his proposals most of the times. Since he led a detached life, he refused to be the president of Congress party. There is no denying the fact that Gandhi understood the needs of free India. he was glad to know that zamindari system was abolished just after freedom. However, he realized that Congress men were not prepared to go to villages for the reconstruction of the country. He felt shocked as leaders had no feeling of 'service above self'. They wanted to capture political powers for selfish purposes.

Bhabani Bhattacharya refers to the conflict between the thoughts of Gandhi and Nehru in *Shadows from Laddakh*. Here Satyajit opposes the growth of steel plant. But Bhaskar asserts that India needs big industries and a few villages have got to be uprooted. Nehru succeeded in the construction of several big industries and adopted the policy of democratic socialism. Bhabani Bhattacharya wrote a book entitled *Gandhi : The Image As It Grew* and described the socio-economic views of Gandhi here.

R.K. Narayan was a staunch follower of Gandhian principles. In the novel *Waiting for the Mahatma* he describes the life that his followers led in the camps. There is no denying the fact that Gandhi cut down his physical needs to lead a life of simplicity. Had he desired to earn money for his family he could have been able to do so. But it was fated otherwise. Even as a lawyer he was not prepared to tell lies. When he was brutally killed by Nathu Ram Godsey, he exclaimed – Hey Ram! He fought for the fundamental rights of Harijans as mentioned by several artists. Bharati loves Sriram from the depth of heart and yet asks him again and again to follow self-discipline and self-reliance. Gandhi ultimately gives them the permission to get married. He played a major role when Feroze, a Parsee by birth, wanted to marry Indira Nehru. He gave his name to Indira and Feroze and then they could marry.

When Gandhi left this physical world, Nehru said that the divine light has vanished from India. He had lost everything though the country needed his moral support in each work. His speeches have been published but his autobiography is a sublime piece of work. Khushwant Singh mentions in his Autobiography that he was badly shocked to know the news of Gandhi's murder and tears rolled down his cheeks. Manohar Malgonkar and Sahshi Tharoor mention various thoughts of Gandhi in their books. Gandhi led a noble life as knew the secrets of life and death. Sarojini Naidu aptly says :

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, .....

*The Lotus*

### **References**

1. V.S. Naipual : *A Writer's People : Ways of Looking and Feeling*; London : Pan Macmillan, 2007, p. 170