

Impact of Gandhian Ideology on Gujarati literature

Sunita B. Nimavat

Assistant Professor, Department of English

Narsinhbhai Patel College of Computer & Management, Kadi, Gujarat, India

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 7

Issue: 3

Month: June

Year: 2019

ISSN: 2320-2645

Received: 08.04.2019

Accepted: 29.05.2019

Published: 01.06.2019

Citation:

Sunita B. Nimavat. "Impact of Gandhian Ideology on Gujarati Literature."

Shanlax International Journal of English, vol. 7, no. 3, 2019, pp. 34-38.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/english.v7i3.387>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

Abstract

In this paper, there is a reference to a few Gandhian principles and how various authors of Gujarati literature have been influenced by his ideology. Kaka kalelkar, Mahadevbhai Desai, Ramnarayan Pathak, Sneha Rashmi, Sundaram, Govardhanram Tripathi, Nanalal, Kanhaiya Lal Munshi, Jhaverchand Meghani, Manubhai Pancholi and how they get reflected in the works of Gujarati writers.

Keywords: Gandhian ideology, Gandhism, impact, Gujarati literature, influence, education.

Introduction

Gandhiji can be regarded as a true great man who influenced and will continue to influence people all over the world. He is truly a vishwa manav means a Universal man. This paper talks about influence of Gandhian ideology on Gujarati writers in particular. Gandhiji experimented with his life and that's why he is regarded as a spiritual scientist. This paper reflects over a few Gujarati writers like Kaka kalelkar, Mahadevbhai Desai, Ramnarayan Pathak, Sneha Rashmi, Sundaram, Govardhanram Tripathi, Nanalal, Kanhaiya Lal Munshi, Jhaverchand Meghani, Manubhai Pancholi and so on. This paper throws a glance at certain well known Gujarati works in which we find the influence of Gandhiji's ideology.

Impact of Gandhian ideology on Gujarati writers

After Christ and Lord Buddha, Gandhiji can be regarded as a truly great man whose influence will extend over centuries to come. Louis Fischer has rightly said that Gandhiji belonged to the whole world and he was truly a Vishwamanav (a universal man). His appeal goes beyond the barriers and boundaries of time and place. He remains the most influential personality during the twentieth century. Today, in the age of globalization, Gandhiji's views in different fields of life have become more relevant than before. Gandhian ideology and Gandhism (Gandhivad) are the words used frequently of which Gandhiji himself disapproved very strongly. Gandhiji was not a theoretician. Like a scientist, he made experiments in his own life. In this sense, he can be called a spiritual scientist. He considered life an unending search for truth, and for him, nothing was the final word. However, he left behind a body of certain basic ideals which forms an ideology that can be called Gandhian ideology.

Gandhiji subjected himself to rigorous self-examination. If he found even a tiniest of lapse in his part, he repented and prayed to God that he should never repeat it. He was a man of perfect purity, transparent honesty and genuine sincerity. He condemned not merely the lapse of action but even the lapse of thought. Gandhiji was completely self-less and egoless.

Other great qualities in Gandhiji were the qualities of forgiveness, tolerance and charitable dealing. He taught people not merely to forgive enemies but to love them. Gandhiji's non-violence and forgiveness are born out of courage. He called it abhay (fearlessness). He considered true courage as the attribute of soul, not the attribute of the body. In his own life, he had been assaulted several times by people who wanted to take his life. He not only forgave them but loved them with all his heart. Gandhiji was a pious man in true sense of the word. In times of troubles and difficulties, he turned to God for guidance and the guidance always came. Once he made up his mind, he did not swerve. These are some of the qualities that lie at the base of his ideology. Gandhiji himself wrote:

I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine, I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems... well all my philosophy, if it may be called by that pretentious name, is contained in what I have said. You will not call it 'Gandhism' there is no ism about it. And no elaborate literature or propaganda is needed about it.

Though Gandhism is not a doctrine or school of thought as Gandhiji himself has said, it contains several principles that make it an ideology. These are the eternal and universal principles enunciated in all religions, scriptures and by great saints and philosophers. What makes Gandhian ideology different is its practical application to almost all the problems of life –social, political, ethical and so on.

Gandhiji belonged to Gujarat and wrote mainly in Gujarati. His influence on Gujarati literature and thinking is quite prominent. Arya Samaj, Prathana Samaj, Brahmo Samaj and Theosophical Society influenced the educated Indians and literary artists. The last quarter of the 19th century was influenced by the British education and the Renaissance that took place in Bengal. However Gandhiji's arrival in India from South Africa was a turning point not only in political life of the country but literary world as well. The period from 1915 to 1948 in the history of Gujarati Literature is termed as Gandhi Yug (the Gandhi Era). Gandhiji wrote Hind Swaraj in Gujarati in simple, direct and precise language. He stated that the language of literature should be understood

even by the peasants and labourers. Simplicity and directness became the hallmark of the Gandhi Era in literature that replaced the heavy, pedantic diction of the Pandit Yug (the Pandit Era). Gandhiji's close inmates like Kaka Kalelkar, Kishorelal Mashruwala, Mahadev Desai also enriched Gujarati writings. Gujarat Vidyapeeth which was set up by Gandhiji also gave literary figures like Ram Narayan Pathak (1887-1955), Jhinabhai Ratanji Desai, 'Snehrashmi' (1903-1991) and Tribhuvandas Purushottamdas Luhar, 'Sundaram' (1908-1991). The reformatory zeal which was a prominent characteristic of Dalpat-Narmad Era continued in Gandhi Era as well. In the works of Govardhan Ram Tripathi, Ramanbhai Neelkanth, Nanalal (1887-1946) and Kanaiyalal Munshi (1887-1971), the social reforms advocated by the Bengal Renaissance and Gandhiji can be seen. For Gandhiji, literature was for the people, by the people and of the people. Literature that was distanced from life of the masses was no literature for him. He wrote:

For whose sake are we going to have our literature? Not certainly for the great gentry of Ahmedabad. They can afford to engage literary men and have great libraries in their homes. But what about the poor man at the well who with unspeakable abuse is goading his bullocks to pull the big leather bucket? ... Now I have hundreds of such folk for whom I want real life-giving literature.

Gandhiji made literature village-focused and put rural people in the centre. The deprived and the oppressed entered literary works for the first time with a new vigour. It highlighted the grandeur of the simple, rural and the ordinary. In Gujarati Literature, Gandhian humanitarianism was tinged with socialistic concern for the oppressed. In education also, the focus shifted to basic education, rural bias and child-centred education. Nanabhai Bhatt (1882-1962), Mul Shanker Bhatt, Gijubhai Badheka and Jugatram Dave made education and literature child-centred in true sense.

In journalism, Gandhiji set new standards by setting examples through Harijan and Young India. He wrote about the functions of a news paper in Hind Swaraj:

One of the objects of a newspaper is to understand popular feeling and give expression to

it; another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; and the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects.

K. M. Munshi was quite active as a statesman and he was in close touch with Gandhiji, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and the Congress leadership. He held important positions like the Agent General of Hyderabad, the Governor of Uttar Pradesh and the Chancellor of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. As a literary writer, he was always independent and differed from Gandhiji on many issues pertaining to literature and function of literature. His fame rests mainly on his historical novels which have been amply influenced by Alexander Dumas. His historical novels are tinged with romantic exuberance and often display complete departure from actual historical facts. His major works are Patan Ni Prabhuta (1916), Gujarat No Nath (1917), Rajadhiraj (1922), Jai Somnath (1940), Pruthvi Vallabh (1920-21) etc. Gandhiji was openly critical of Munshi's treatment of Munja, a romantic, valiant king. However Munshi the artist believed that literature cannot be and must never be the hand maiden of morality.

K.M. Munshi satirized the hypocrisy of Gandhiji's ashram inmates in his play Brahmacharyashram (1931). His novel Tapasvini presents the contemporary freedom struggle guided by Gandhiji with its multiple shades and nuances.

Ramanlal V. Desai (1892-1954) was a prominent Gujarati novelist who presented Gandhian ideology in his novels quite boldly and artistically. Divya Chakshu (1931) reflects the youthful gusto and ideals of Gandhian values and freedom struggle through the character of Arun, the son of a wealthy father. The novel weaves the Gandhian ideals of satyagraha, eradication of untouchability, patriotism, non-violence and love for the entire mankind. His another novel, Gram Lakshmi (1933, '34, '35, '37) is a bulky novel in four parts focusing on the protagonist's efforts for rural upliftment. Ashwin, an engineering graduate, decides to live in a small village and dedicates his life to the Gandhian ideal of rural upliftment. In the fourth part of the novel, the writer discusses Gandhism versus Communism. His famous novel Bharelo Agni (1935) portrays the mutiny of 1857 very effectively. The character of Rudra Dutt who preaches non-violence and

disarmament in the times of violence and bloodshed anticipates the advent of Gandhian ideology. Desai's later novels Kshitij (1941) and Pralaya (1948) show his disillusionment and despair at the utter demolition of Gandhian values in India and the world at large. These works almost border on cynicism.

Kaka Kalelkar (1885-1981) who hailed from Maharashtra was quite close to Mahatma Gandhi. In 1915 he met Gandhiji at Shantiniketan. He participated in Satyagraha movement under Gandhiji's leadership and worked at Gujarat Vidyapeeth. He was a great traveler and wrote travelogues like Himalaya No Pravas (1924), Brahmadesh No Pravas (1931), Ugamano Desh (1958) etc. He wrote fine collections of essays such as Jeevan No Anand (1936) Rakhadava No Anand (1953), Jeevan Leela (1956) and Otarati Divalo (1925). His essays depict his love for nature and wonder lust. His essays exhibit his keen observations and fine perception. As a Gandhian thinker, Kaka Kalelkar is quite original. Like Gandhiji, he opposes western imperialism but he envisions an ideal world with love for all living creatures. He was influenced by the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagwad Geeta. For him, true religion is an amalgam of the way of life, the criticism of life and the vision of life. It is a broad-based view of society. Kaka Kalelkar was an educationist who advocated liberal, secular education deeply rooted in ancient Indian culture but also imbibing the global outlook. He believed that like literature, education should never be hand-maiden of power or wealth. In his book Jeevan Bharati (1937) he discusses the function of literature and art. Like Gandhiji, he too believed that art should aim at social welfare and humanitarianism. He contributed to the propagation of Gandhian ideology through his writings.

Kishorelal Masharuwala (1890-1952) was also deeply influenced by Gandhiji's ideology. He worked as a registrar with Gujarat Vidyapeeth. His book Kelavani Na Paya (1925) explains Gandhian system of education. He also worked for Harijan after Gandhiji and other major national leaders were arrested and jailed by the British Government. His views on education are controversial. In his book Gandhiji Vichar Dohan (1932) he acts as an authoritative interpreter of Gandhian ideology. He

was a follower of Swami Narayan sect and his views regarding women are quite orthodox. Samooli Kranti (1948) is a revolutionary work written by Mashruwala in which he discusses religion, society, economic and political thoughts. In his book Gandhiji Ane Samyavad (1951) he discusses Gandhian ideology versus communism endorsing Gandhian values as a panacea for many evils of modern political and social life.

Mahadevbbhai Haribhai Desai (1892-1942) worked as a secretary and close inmate of Gandhiji. He was an able writer, journalist and translator. He worked with Young India and Navajivan. His diary that runs into fifteen volumes records Gandhiji's life, thinking and speech in minute details. He was rightly called 'Gandhiji's Boswell' and his alter-ego. He wrote a few books in English also like Gandhiji in Indian village (1927), With Gandhiji in Ceylon (1928), The Story of Bardoli (1929) and Gospel of Selfless Action or The Gita According to Gandhi (1946) etc.

Nanabhai Bhatt, Gijubhai Badheka, Jugatram Dave, Maganbhai Desai and Babalbhai Mehta were propagators of Gandhian ideology of education. Gijubhai Badheka wrote about children's education and also wrote for children. Jugatram Dave wrote Gandhiji and Balako Na Gandhiji explaining Gandhian philosophy for children and lay men.

Zaverchand Meghani (1896-1947) was a writer, journalist, orator and folklorist. He revived folk literature of Saurashtra by devoting his life to editing, compiling and researching folk literature and oral literature that lay scattered among the rural folks of Saurashtra region. His collection of poems Yug Vandana endeared him to people and earned him the title of Rashtriya Shayar (the Bard of the Nation). Zaverchand's poem Chhelo Katoro (The Last Goblet) was addressed to Gandhiji on the eve of his departure to London for the Round Table Conference. The poet requests Gandhiji to drink the last goblet of poison of humiliation offered by the British. The poet says to Gandhiji to go to England though it is likely that he might have to bear neglect or failure at the hands of the British. He says:

*Don't hold back father, witnessing our pain!
We have borne much, we shall bear more,
Don't shudder for us.*

Thus, Meghani was a bridge that connected the Gandhian Era with the later age of educated men of letters. He was not a follower of Mahatma Gandhi but a literary artist who reflected the trends, the pangs and contemplation of the age. The poets of the later age, Umashanker Joshi and Sundaram were also influenced by Gandhian ideology and socialism. They desired not merely independence of India but world peace, brotherhood and freedom from war, violence and inequality. Sundaram was a staunch devotee of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and his poetry reflects the influence of the philosophy of Aurobindo.

Manubhai Pancholi, 'Darshak' was a great novelist, historian and Gandhian educationist. He came under the influence of Gandhian philosophy and constructive work. As a historian, he was also influenced by Socrates' love for truth and democratic ideals of Greece and Athens. He believed that education could be the true key to social reconstruction. He worked at well-known academic institutions of Gujarat like Dakshinamurti and Lokbharati in various capacities. He wrote novels, plays and historical and contemplative prose works. His major novels are Bandighar (1946) Bandhan Ane Mukti (1939), Deep Nirvan (1957) Zer To Pidha Chhe Jani Jani (1954, '58, '85), Socrates (1975) and Kurukshetra (1991). Paritran (1967), Jalianwallah (1935) and Antim Adhyay (1983) are his remarkable plays. He wrote books on history, political ideology, education and literary criticism. In all his works, Gandhian influence is all-pervading. In Zer To Pidha Chhe Jani Jani, the character of Gandhiji has been introduced. The novel portrays the love story of an idealist young man and an intelligent and sensitive young damsel. In the background of the world wars and Gandhian freedom struggle, Darshak seems to reiterate the fact that what man must fight is war and not his human counterparts. Socrates is a great historical novel in which democratic ideals and love for truth are highlighted very artistically. His novel, Kurukshetra, portrays the evils of caste discrimination in the background of the Mahabharata story. Here and there we find glimpses of Gandhian values and the Gandhian system of education in the ashram of Dhaumya Muni. Caste discrimination and untouchability are the curses that the Hindu

society suffers from for thousands of years. Takshak, the Nag young man turns against the Brahminical system and joins Karna and Duryodhana to fight against the Pandavas. Dhaumya Muni is a true ancestor of Gandhiji who believes in equal treatment to Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. He aims at upliftment of the mountain dwellers and backward people.

Gandhian ideology and the life of Gandhiji still continue to attract writers and thinkers even in the present time. Dinkar Joshi has written a novel portraying Gandhiji and his eldest son Harilal in his novel Prakash No Padhchhayo . Harindra Dave wrote a novel Gandhiji nee Kavadi . Recently Jayant Gadit wrote Satya , a voluminous novel based on Gandhiji and his commitment to truth and non-violence. Narayan Desai, Mahadevbhai Desai's son gives discourses on Gandhiji's life and his message through Gandhi Katha. Rajkumar Hirani made a film Lage Raho Munnabhai featuring Sanjay Dutt who practices Gandhigiri to fight against exploitation, dishonesty and other modern evils. Gandhi's impact will continue to inspire writers, thinkers, educationists and film-makers in time to come also.

Conclusion

Gandhiji, a great man after Christ and Lord Buddha is considered to be a Universal man. Through his experiments with life, he developed ideology

that is known as Gandhian ideology. Not Only in India, authors of many nations are influenced by Gandhian ideology. Among such nations is India and Gujarati authors. Literary figures like Ramnarayan Pathak , Jhinabhai Ratan Bhai Desai, Tribhuvandas Parshottamdas Luhar are his contemporary who were influenced by Gandhiji's ideology. Reformative zeal was reflected in Dalpat –Narmad Era. Reflection of Gandhian ideology can be seen in the works of Govardhanram Tripathi, Ramanbhai Neelkanth, Nanalal and Kanaiyalal Munshi. Influence of Gandhian ideology is thus seen in various areas.

1. Gandhiji set new standards in journalism.
2. He also influenced Gujarati novelists.
3. He influenced education. He also advocated liberal, secular education.
4. Even today Gandhiji attracts writers and thinkers.

References

- Gandhi, M.K. *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. edited by Shriman Narayan, Navjivan Publishing House, 1968, Pp. 94.
- Gandhi, M.K. *The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. edited by Shriman Narayan, Navjivan Publishing House, 1968, Pp. 314.
- Gandhi, M.K. *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*. 1962, Pp. 19.
- Zaverchand Meghani. *Chello Katoro* translation by Shirin Kudchekar.

Author Details

Dr.Sunita B. Nimavat, Assistant professor, Narsinhbhai Patel College of Computer & Management, Kadi, Gujarat, India

Email Id: sunitanimavat@yahoo.com