

## Impact of Gandhian Thoughts on English Writers : A Riview

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**Abstract:**

Gandhian thoughts have had a significant influence on Indian English literature, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indian writers such as R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and Khushwant Sing have incorporated Gandhian principles viz non-violence, truth, and social justice in their works enthusiastically.

Gandhi's emphasis on the use of simple and accessible language also influenced Indian English literature, leading to a shift away from the use of highly ornate language towards more straightforward and relatable writing styles which became a remarkable feature of writings of Indian authors afterwards.

In addition to this, Gandhi's ideas about the importance of self-realization and spiritual growth are reflected in the words of Indian English writers such as Rabindranath Tagore and Sarojini Naidu, who explore themes of inner reflection, personal transformation, and social change in their writings prolifically.

Thus, Gandhian thoughts have had an immense impact on Indian English literature, shaping its themes, styles, and sensibilities till the date.

**Keywords:**

Gandhian thoughts, influence, inspiration, philosophy, Indian English Literature.

**Introduction:**

The influence of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy and ideas on Indian English writers is a topic of great significance. Gandhi was a pivotal figure in India's struggle for independence from British colonial rule, and his ideas continue to shape society of India and it's culture today. Number of Indian English writers have taken inspiration from Gandhi's thoughts and have used his ideas in their literary works as well as have become disciples of his teachings.

One of the remarkable influence of Gandhi's thoughts on Indian English literature is the emphasis on social and political issues. Many Indian English writers like R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and Arundhati Roy, have written about social and political issues i.e. poverty, injustice, and inequality in their works. These themes were central to Gandhi's philosophy, and his emphasis on social and political reform has been a remarkable influence on Indian English Literature.

**Impact of Gandhian Thoughts on English Writers:**

One of the important aspects of Gandhi's influence on Indian English writers is his focus on non-violent resistance. His philosophy of non-violence or 'ahimsa' was a revolutionary idea that influenced a number of Indian writers. Some writers like *Mahasweta Devi*, *Arundhati Roy*, and *Salman Rushdie* have used non-violent resistance as a theme in

their works. They have explored the idea of peaceful protest and resistance that was central to the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi's emphasis on the importance of the individual and the idea of self-realization has also influenced Indian English literature. *Rabindranath Tagore* and *R.K. Narayan* have written about the importance of personal growth and self-realization in their works. They have explored the idea of individual freedom and the importance of living a fulfilling life, which was a central theme of Gandhi's philosophy. Similarly, rejection of materialism also has attracted many Indian English writers. They have explored the idea of simple living and the rejection of material possessions. They have written about the importance of living a simple life and the negative impact of materialism on society. *R.K. Narayan* and *Manohar Malgaonkar* have explored these themes in their works.

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the influence of Gandhi's ideas continued to be felt in English literature. One of the most significant writers to engage with these ideas was *Salman Rushdie*. His novel "Midnight's Children" reflects his engagement with the themes of non-violence and social justice. The novel is set in India, and it explores the struggles of the country to achieve independence and social justice. *Rushdie's* use of magical realism in the novel is also a reflection of his interest in Eastern philosophies and his engagement with Gandhi's ideas.

One of the most prominent Indian English writers influenced by Gandhian thoughts was *Raja Rao*. His novel "Kanthapura" is a prime example of how Gandhi's philosophy influenced Indian English Literature. The novel is set in a small village in southern India and tells the story of how the villagers, inspired by Gandhi's ideas, unite to fight against the British Colonial rule. The novel is a powerful tribute to the Gandhian ideals of non-violent resistance and spiritual renewal.

*Mulk Raj Anand* was also greatly influenced by Gandhi. His novel "Coolie" is an example of how Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence inspired Indian English writers to address issues of social injustice and inequality. The novel tells the story of a young boy from a lower caste who is forced to work as a coolie to support his family. *Anand* uses the novel to highlight the injustices faced by the lower castes in India and to advocate for their rights.

India's greatest literary figure *Rabindranath Tagore* was also influenced by Gandhi's philosophy. In his book "The Religion of Man," he discusses the importance of non-violence and how it can be used to bring about social and political change. *Tagore* was also a strong advocate of cultural nationalism and believed that India's cultural heritage was an essential part of its national identity. His writings reflect a deep respect for India's rich cultural traditions and a desire to preserve and promote the same. *R.K. Narayan* was also influenced by Gandhi's philosophy. He wrote "The Guide," a novel about a young man who becomes a spiritual leader; and *Nissim Ezekiel*, who wrote poems that reflected Gandhi's ideals of simplicity and truth.

### **Impact of Gandhian Thoughts on British Writers:**

Gandhian thoughts emphasize non-violence, self-reliance, and social justice, have had a significant impact on British literature too which can be traced through various literary genres and periods, from the works of writers in the early twentieth century. Gandhi's ideas gained popularity in England, particularly among writers who were concerned with social values. The Bloomsbury Group, a group of writers and intellectuals who were prominent in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, were some of the earlier supporters of Gandhi's ideas. Members of this group including *Virginia Woolf* and *E.M. Forster*, were impressed by Gandhi's emphasis on self-reliance and non-violence.

Virginia Woolf's novel 'To the Lighthouse' is an example of the influence of Gandhi's ideas on English literature. The novel is concerned with the internal lives of its characters, and it reflects Gandhi's belief in the importance of individual self-reliance. The character of Lily Briscoe, a painter who struggles with the balance between art and life, embodies this idea of individual self-reliance. Woolf also addresses the themes of non-violent resistance and social justice in her novel "Mrs. Dalloway."

The next writer who was influenced by Gandhi's ideas was Aldous Huxley. He was a member of the Bloomsbury group, and his novel "Island" is a reflection of his interest in Gandhi's ideas. The novel is set on an isolated island where the inhabitants live according to principles of self-reliance and non-violent resistance. Huxley uses the island as a utopian vision of a society that is guided by Gandhian principles.

In the post-World War II period, writers continued to engage with Gandhi's ideas. One of them was *George Orwell*. He was critical of Gandhi's ideas in his essay "Reflections on Gandhi," but he also acknowledged the importance of non-violent resistance as a political strategy. Orwell's novel "Animal Farm" can be read as a critique of Gandhi's belief in non-violence as a means of political change.

*Doris Lessing* was a member of the Communist Party in her youth, but later she became disillusioned with communism and turned to the study of Sufism and other Eastern philosophies. Her novel "The Golden Notebook" reflects her interest in these philosophies, as well as her engagement with Gandhi's ideas. The novel is concerned with the themes of social injustice and self-reliance, and it reflects Gandhi's belief that individual self-transformation is necessary for social change, as he himself spinning khadi to wear i.e., *swadeshi* and avoid foreign clothes.

Thus, the influence of Gandhian thoughts on Indian and British English writers was profound and far-reaching. Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, truth, and simplicity helped to shape Indian as well as British English literature and encouraged writers to address issues of social and political significance. As a result of which, Indian English literature became a powerful tool for social change and a testament to the enduring legacy of Gandhi's ideas. In addition to this, his emphasis on the importance of the individual, and the rejection of materialism has influenced many Indian writers. These themes have become an integral

part of Indian English Literature and continue to shape the literary landscape in India even today.

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