

## Reflection of Gandhian Philosophy in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*

Smt. Swati Eknath Kamble, Kamala College, Kolhapur.

---

### Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi struggled for the purpose of Indian freedom and development. He became a very great starting point of writing and influenced different fields of knowledge and writers from different fields like philosophy, politics, history, literature, sociology and so on. Indian English Literature has great force of meeting blow of Gandhian philosophy. The great Indian trio – R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao has explored Gandhian thoughts in their writings. Their novels follow Gandhian philosophy and his principles of Non-violence, Truth, Brotherhood, Satyagraha and his views on untouchability. The present research paper is an attempt to study Gandhian philosophy in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*. In *Untouchable*, the views of Gandhiji give a hope for a good living for the downtrodden.

**Key words:** Gandhian philosophy, social issues, influence, impact.

Mahatma Gandhi is not only a universal figure but also an immoral one. He became first a national and soon enough an international leader of immense political and philosophical significance during the pre and post – independence phase of India. He struggled for the sake of Indian freedom and development. He became an immense source of writing and influenced different disciplines and writers from different fields like philosophy, politics, history, literature, sociology, and so on. According to K. R. Srinivasa Iyenger:

Gandhi is too big to be given a minor part: on the other hand, he is sure to turn the novel in a biography if he is given a major part. The best thing for the contemporary novelist would be to keep Gandhi in the background but make his influence indirectly. (Indian writing in English)

Indian English literature before and after independence was greatly influenced by Gandhism. Writers and readers' interest gave birth to Gandhian literature. The great Indian trio – R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao and many other writers explored Gandhi's thoughts in their writings. Gandhian philosophy includes Truth, Non-Violence, Satyagraha, Simplicity, Love, Brotherhood etc. All these very well established by R. K. Narayan in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Mulk Raj Anand in *Untouchable* and Raja Rao in *Kanthapura*. These writers are mostly who have deliberated upon social issues or problems prevalent in their respective societies and the most prominent personality, who had a great influence on diminishing and alleviating them is Gandhi, hence his incorporation is an inseparable part of such literature. The present research paper studies and understands the reflection of Gandhian philosophy in Indian English Literature, with special focus on the writing of Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*. All the characters of this novel start their journey in the search of truth and way of life. Sometimes these characters fail as they have not followed Gandhism but if they are hailed, it is all because of following Gandhism.

Mulk Raj Anand's works reveal prominently the deep impact of Gandhian ideology. He has emphasized more and more on social problems of poor, oppressed, downtrodden low caste of the Hindu society and their inhuman exploitation. His novel *Untouchable*, published in 1935, covers the time of pre-independence era when poverty, castism, superstition and exploitation of untouchables were predominated. Mulk Raj Anand has also focuses on the theme of inhuman exploitation of the lower class by the higher section of the society. This novel describes a single day in the life of the protagonist, Bakha, who belongs to a sweeper class. He is exploited by everyone on the account of his lower caste. The people of his caste are not allowed to go to temple and other public places. If they touch anything that thing gets polluted. They have to stop or change their direction if someone from high class is coming or going from the same way. A high caste Hindu slaps Bakha just because he accidentally touches him. He becomes violent when his sister tells him that the priest tried to molest her. But his sister stops him because she knows that nobody is going to listen to them. Bakha feels helpless and disgusting by the behaviour of the people towards the lower class. He gets peace of mind when he hears Gandhi talking about the welfare of untouchables. His speech gives him a hope for the better future. In his speech Gandhi ji says:

As you all know, while we are asking for freedom from the grip of a foreign nation, we have ourselves, for centuries, trampled underfoot millions of human beings without feeling the slightest remorse of our iniquity. For me the question of these people is moral and religious. (136)

Innocent Bakha did not understand these words in the beginning and got confused. But soon he got the meaning when Gandhi says, "I regard untouchability as the greatest blot on Hinduism"....(137). Bakha feels that at least someone is there for him and his class. Bakha gets fully influenced by Gandhi when he hears him saying, "... Two of the strongest desires that keep me in the flesh are the emancipation of the untouchables and the protection of the cow ...." (140). But soon all Bakha's hopes are seemed broken when N. N. Bashir, a Barrister-in-law criticizes Gandhi and his philosophy. He calls Gandhi humbug. But Bashir, a young poet who edits Nawan Jung comes forward favoring Gandhian philosophy. He says:

He has his limitations but he is fundamentally sound. He may be wrong in wanting to shut India off from the rest of the world by preaching the revival of the spinning-wheel, because, as things are, that can't be done. But even in that regards he is right. For it is not India's fault that it is poor: it is the worlds fault that the world is rich!....(142).

He tells Bakha about the invention of flush system. It gives a ray of hope to the disappointed and helpless Bakha and people of his community. He explains the importance and use of this flush system that with the help of this; "sweepers can be free from the stigma of untouchability and assume the dignity of status that is their right as useful members of a casteless and careless society" (146). The novel gives a hope of the better life of the untouchables.

The novel, *Untouchable* is best for analyzing how Gandhian philosophy is reflected in Indian English Literature. Gandhi's vision was to eliminate poverty, castism,

untouchability and superstitions which were prominent that time along with India's independence. The novel *Untouchable* follows the views and philosophy of Gandhi and his principles of non-violence, brotherhood, truth, satyagraha and his views on untouchability. In *Untouchable* Gandhi's thoughts give a hope for a good living for the downtrodden.

**Reference:**

- Gandhi, M.K. An Autobiography or *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Amar gupta and sons,2013.
- Iyenger, K. R. S. *Indian Writing in English*. Delhi: Sterling Publication, 2005.
- Anand, Mulk Raj. *Untouchable*. New Delhi: O. U. P.,8<sup>th</sup> edition. Reprint 2002.
- Sharma, Sudarshan, *The Influence of Gandhian Ideology on Fiction*. September 2017.