

GANDIAN WAY OF DECOLONIZING INDIAN MINDS-AN EXPLORATION OF CHAMANNAHAL'S MAJOR NOVELS

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Chaman Nahal is the first novelist in the post-independent ethos who delineated Gandhi over realistically. Than other writers of the era. Here currently focuses on Gandhi's meekness, freedom from self righteousness, prudence, every perception, tolerance, proper respect for the living beings, belief in equality and fraternity and for bearance etc. Almost all the immersions of Gandhi's personality have been realistically explored by Nahal's veteran pen. Chaman Nahal has in variably dwelt upon India's socio-political scenario of nearly four Decades i.e. from about 1915 to 1952 in his magnum opus. 'The Gandhi Quartet' brought ...for thin 1993. 'The Gandhi Quartet' consists of Nahal's four foremost novels namely 'the Crown and the Loincloth'(1981), 'The Salt of Life' (1990), 'The Triumph of the Tricolour'(1993), and 'Azadi'(1975). This comprising of the four novels run into 2000 pages and consists of nearly 200 characters that have their own ethos whose back ground stretches up to every nook and corner of the country. There is no need to say that the whole time span taken up by Nahal in 'The Gandhi Quartet' thoroughly covers the beginning, upbringing, and flourishing of Gandhi's social cum political life in the country. All this show deeply Nahal was influenced by the philosophy of Mahatama Gandhi. Such as witty decision to start Satyagrah at the outset of his political career in India, his decision of the non-violent non-cooperation movement, his foresight to see the coming events, his views regarding untouchability, communal violence, position of women in society as well as Gandhi's failure to apprehend people's inability to remain non-violent. In the time of agitation, the failure of Kasturba and Jawahar Lal Nehru to unrest and him, Gandhi's failure in eradicating poverty, untouchability and in improving the conditions of women—all these facets of Gandhi's personality have been analysed realistically without any bias. The Gandhian whirl wind blew across the country during 1920-1947. Under the dynamic leadership of Mahatama Gandhi old political notion started vanishing from the scene and in turn new ideas and methods appeared, not only in political field but almost in every work of Indian life. Gandhi was no writer, nor was he at any time particularly interested in heart of writing, but he had to write or talk a great deal, even as we have to 'walk or eat or breathe'.

Gandhi is omnipresent, rather all pervading in the novels of Chaman Nahal. Through Gandhian ideology Nahal tried to portray the Indian civilization in the pre and post-independent India.

Gandhi laid stress again and again on moral and spiritual values in contrast to material advertisement, although this had its place too, he knew that too much industrialization must spelled is order to the seven lakhs of Indian villages and head opted the loincloth and the Savagram way of life because he felt that, for the teeming million of India, .no other life was possible–yet he know that even-such bare colourless life could be made reasonable full and purposive.

Gandhi stressed the importance of chastity, voluntary poverty, truthfulness and fearlessness. Chastity and poverty (or non-possession) was essential because sexual vice and love of money were deadly poisons: "Asnake-bite is a lesser poison than these two, because the former merely destroys the body, but the latter destroy body, mind and soul". Truth and fearlessness, of course, were basic to the passive resister, as may be seen from the word coined later, 'Satyagraha'(the Force which is born of Truth, the Fearlessness That is inseparable from Truth).

In 1942, Gandhi was to tell the British:"Quit India, and leave us to Godoranarchy".In August 1947,anarchy it was for a time in Bengal and in the Punjab; that eruption had to have its vent. The germs of the Gandhian political, economic, educational and ethical thought were already present in *HindSwarai*, and they called only for a little amplification or modification under the stress of actual events from time to time.

1. Realhome-rule is self-rule or self-control.
2. The way to it is passive resistance, that is,soul-force or love-force.
3. In order to exert this force, Swadeshi in every sense is necessary.
4. What we want to do should be done not because we object to the English. .. but because it is our duty to do so...I bear no enmity towards the English...¹²

Self-rule, self-mastery and self-realization came first; and these called for inner purification through celibacy or chastity (brahmacharya), dietic restrictions, fasting, silence, prayer, the adoption of a simple life, the ready acceptance of manual labour, the cultivation of fearlessness and Truth, and the voluntary rejection of material possessions. Not an easy path, of course, this steady ascent to the Satyagrahi's peak of realization.

Gandhi also said that, if the higher courage of Satyagraha was not possible, even violent resistance would be preferable to cowardly acquiescence. In 1947, head vided Nehru and Patel to rush with arms to the defense of Kashmir since quick demoralization had set in there. But his faith in the ultimate power of Satyagraha was like a rock of adamant. Even during the dark days of October 1938,Gandhi advised the Czech start Hitler *if they could* with the weapon of Satyagraha:

To Gandhi, national realization included the ending of political subjection and economic degradation, the removal of social inequalities and abuses like untouchability, caste arrogance, occupational prejudices, etc., the form of education, and giving new life to language and literature. These were, of course, largely inter-related problems, though they had to be attacked individually also. Satyagraha was to be the weapon that would win political freedom, and with it the other freedoms should come—and they would come only if the necessary effort were put forth.

Like Gandhi's economic insights, his educational insights too had a fundamental sanity of their own, especially in the context of the largely rural character of India and the chronic economic backwardness of the people. Soon after the introduction of Provincial

Autonomy in 1937, Gandhi put forward as a scheme that placed the main emphasis on education through a basic craft. One of the undesirable consequences of the British System of education had been the creation of an 'educated middleclass', divorced from the actualities of life in the country. A version to all forms of manual work was a byproduct to this education, and this in turn led to what Rajagopalachari has aptly called "the stupidities of the middleclass". If Tagore said at Shantiniketan, 'Live and Learn', Gandhiji said, 'Do and Learn'. Basic education was meant to make the child participate in the creative life of the region—the local crafts, industries and occupations and acquire an intimate understanding of his environment. Gandhi's ideas make no dead rigid system; as Vinoba Bhave once remarked, "If Communism is a solid and imposing structure of granite, Gandhism is an ever-changing amoeba". And yet, for a man who spoke and wrote so often and so much—there are several thousands of speeches, articles, letters, and records—so finite reviews and conversations—there is a surprising background consistency in his ideas that goes back at least to *Hind Swaraj*. Like Thoreau and Tolstoy, Gandhi too thought that modern civilization was making a mad jump towards self-destruction; but he also thought that the movement could be arrested if mankind made a determined effort in time. Such was Gandhi the prophet who espoused truth and defied violence, banished fear and unfurled the flag of Sarvodaya. His arrival on the Indian political scene meant a revolution in our ways of life and thought. It was not just a question of one leader displacing another; the entire outlook itself seemed to undergo an extraordinary change. Gandhi was a man speaking to men; he was more than an agitator or politician, he was the liberator, the Messiah, the Great Soul. If he was the 'Mahatma', he was also 'Bapu', everybody's friend and mentor. He asked, not for votes or for intellectual approbation alone, but for sacrifices. As Jesus had exhorted, Gandhi too asked his followers to give up everything and follow him.

Gandhi forged the weapons of Satyagraha and civil disobedience, lit a land bonfire of foreign cloth. In the immediate context, of course, the promised result ('Swaraj in one year!')

eluded realization .

Gandhi makes the ominous statement: If we are to receive self-government we shall have to take it. We shall never be granted self-government .Look at the history of the British Empire and the British nation; freedom-loving as it is,it will not be a party to give freedom to a people who will not take it themselves. Learn your lessons, if you wish to, from the Boer War. Those who were enemies of that empire only a few years ago, have now become friends...²³

Freedom will not be 'given' as a free gift; it has to be deserved, and 'taken'; but once this has happened, there will be peace and friendship between those who had earlier been ranged against each, other. Candid, brave, uncompromising, truthful, and, above all prophetic, the Benares speech stands at the head of Gandhi's revolutionary career in India, setting the tone to the utterance and actions of the following hectic decade culminating in 'Quit India' and independence and the martyrdom on the evening of Friday,30 January 1948.

Gandhi's ideology and vision is very much significant in the context of Chaman Nahal's novels because almost all the novel soft he author are based primarily on these ideologies and visions. Now coming to the analytical study of 'The Gandhi Quartet' which covers three decades of Indian history, from 1915 to 1947.'Azadi', which describes the last phase of the struggle for independence, was the first published. 'The crown and the Loin cloth' is the first of the three novels with Mahatma Gandhi as central character. Nahal presents Gandhi directly as well as in terms of the effect he has on the family of Thakur Shantinath,a landowner in a Punjabi village. This novel is set in the period from 1915 to 1922 and deals with many historical events such as Gandhi's return to India in 1915 and the Jallianwalabagh massacre.

The Second novel 'The Salt of Life' centers on Gandhi Salt Satyagraha of 1930. The heroine, Kusum leaves the ashram when she gets married Raja.Vishal Chand, the ruler of a small princely state in the Himalayas. Her son Vikram stays on with Gandhi and Participants in the Dandimarch. When Vishal Chand dies Kusum comes back to the ashram. Similarly,' The Triumph of the Tricolour',the third volume deals with the Quit India movement of 1942.The narrative style of the later novel is quite complex, integrating Indian modes of storytelling with western techniques like the stream of consciousness novel. But they lack the power of 'Azadi' which remains Nahal's best novel. Indeed it was a time of radical movement and Gandhi's involvement with the movement gave an impetus to the entire struggle for independence. As the novel gradually advances forward we find Gandhi as a non-stage character and his non-violent way to tackle the situation. He united the so-called faction working in their own way and according to their own ideologies and make them comprehend the dismal situation in India and how to fight factfully against the Britishers

in India.

In 'The Salt of Life' Chamal Nahal describes the impact of the Indian freedom movement, especially the 'Salt Satyagraha' on the family of Kusumand Raja Vishal Chand. The novel epitomizes the entire freedom movement which culminates in Salt Satyagraha.

The novel records in number of pages the multifaceted programmes of Gandhi throughout the country. This programme included practice of self-purification, truth and non-violence. One should love the enemy even while opposing his policies. By loving the enemy we should change his heart and make him our friends. Nahalal sore cords the economic, social, educational and political programmes of Gandhiji. The epoch-making Dandi-march of Gandhiji is the central theme in the novel. Through all the other programmes and movements Nahal is able to create the suspense and tension in the novel and the ultimately the dandimarch is the climactic point in the novel

Actually the Salt Satyagraha was a campaign of nonviolent protest against the British salt tax in colonial India which began with the Salt March to Dandi on March 12, 1930. It was the first act of organized opposition to British rule after 'Purna Swaraj', the declaration of independence by Indian National Congress. Mahatma Gandhi led the Dandi March from his Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi Gujarat to produce salt without paying the tax, with growing numbers of Indian joining him along the way. When Gandhi broke the salt laws

In Dandi at the conclusion of the march on April 06, 1930, it sparked large scale acts of civil disobedience against the British Raj salt laws by millions of Indians. Gandhi was arrested on May 05, 1930, just days before his planned raid on the Dharasana salt works. The Dandimarch and the ensuing Dharasana Salt Satyagraha drew worldwide attention to the Indian independence movement through extensive newspaper and news reel coverage. The Satyagraha against the salt tax continued for almost a year, ending with Gandhi's release from jail and negotiations with viceroy Lord Irwin at the second Round Table Conference.² Over 80,000 Indians were jailed as a result of the Salt Satyagraha.³ The campaign had a significant effect on changing world and British attitudes towards Indian independence⁴ and caused large numbers of Indians to actively join the fight for the first time,⁵ but failed to win major concessions from the British.⁶

As discussed in detail in the novel, the central characters are very much involved with the movement but the characters though appeared on stage, yet the movement made then obscure, rather minor in the context of the story. However, as Nahal further points out, the entire campaign was based upon Gandhi's principles of nonviolent protest called Satyagraha, which he loosely translated as 'truth force'. In early 1930 the Indian National Congress chose

Satyagraha as their main tactic for winning Indian independence from British rule and appointed Gandhi to organize the campaign. Gandhi chose the 1882 British salt act as the first target of Satyagraha. The salt march to Dandi, and the beating

Of hundreds of nonviolent protesters in Dharasana, demonstrated the effective use of civil disobediences as a technique for fighting social and political injustice.⁸ The satyagraha teachings of Gandhi and the march to Dandi had a significant influence on American civil rights activist Martin Luther King, Jr., and his fight for civil rights for blacks and other 'minority groups in the 1960's'.⁹

The Dharasana Satyagraha went ahead as planned, with Abbas Tyabji, a seventy-six year old retired judge, leading the march with Gandhi's wife Kasturbaa this side. Both were arrested before reaching Dharasana and sentenced to three months in prison. After their arrests, the march continued under the leadership of Sarojini Naidu, a woman poet and freedom fighter, who warned the Satyagrahis, 'you must not use any violence under any circumstances, you will be beaten, but you must not resist you must not even raise a hand toward off blows'. Soldiers began clubbing the Satyagrahis with steel tipped lath is in an incident that attracted international attention.⁵⁷ United Press Correspondent Web

'Not one of the marchers raised an arm to fend off the blows. They went down like ten-pins. From where I stood, I heard the sickening whacks of the clubs on unprotected skulls. The waiting crowd of watchers groaned and sucked in their breaths in sympathetic pain every blow. Those struck down fell sprawling, unconscious or writhing in pain with fractured skulls or broken shoulders. In two or three minutes the ground was quilted with bodies. Great patches of blood widened on their white clothes. The survivors without. Breaking ranks silently and doggedly marched on until struck down.'⁵⁸

Yithalbhai Patel, former speaker of the Assembly, watched the beatings and remarked, 'All hope of reconciling India with the British Empire is lost forever'.⁵⁹ Following attempts by the British to censor Miller's story it eventually appeared in 1,350 Newspapers throughout the world, and was read into the official record of the United States Senate.⁶⁰ Salt Satyagraha succeeded in drawing the attention of the world. Millions saw the newsreels showing the march. Time Magazine declared Gandhi its 1930 Man of the year, comparing Gandhi's march to these 'to defy Britain's salt tax as some new Englanders once defied a British tea tax'.⁶¹ Civil disobedience continued until early 1931, when Gandhi was finally released from prison to hold talks with Irwin. It was

the first time the two held talks on equal terms.⁶²

Actually, all the novels of Chaman Nahal bear the same trend of portraying the Indian National movement to its core. The non-violence movement together with the salt-satyagraha in the 30's gradually culminated in even a greater movement, in the Quit India movement of 1942.

In all the novels of the author. His proximity with Gandhi raises Ulysses' bow of criticism but his experience and vision altogether is successful in portraying the most significant movement of pre-independent India. He followed Gandhi as Raja Rao followed in his novels, but the most distinguished difference lies in their matter of treatment, especially of Gandhian ideology. Though Nahal has had some lapses in portraying Gandhi and the entire movement, yet it is a matter of great satisfaction for an Indian that, at least, he voiced the voice of a common man, who shrinks from uttering even a single word in the British dominion.

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