

Representation of Gandhian ideology in the novel of Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan, A comparative study

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Abstract: Gandhiji is regarded as 'Mahatma' by the Indian people for contributing to the Indian freedom struggle against British exploitation and oppression. He introduced non-violence and truth as a unique weapon to stand against the powerful British government. Gandhi was able to attract people with his strong personality and win their hearts with his persuasive tongue. He is regarded as an icon by the Indian people and remains immortal in Indian history. Raja Rao's 'Kanthapura' and Narayan's 'Waiting for Mahatma' provide a clear portrayal of Gandhiji and reflect his ideologies.

Keywords: Gandhi, non-violence, *ahimsa*

Discussion:

Raja Rao is a versatile post-colonial novelist in Indian English literature. His 'Kanthapura' is a political novel full of Indian themes and Indian characters. It is set from 1920 to 1936, when Gandhi turned the entire nation into freedom fighters. The story appears to be a laboratory of Gandhian thought and theory. It deals with the awakening of a village in south India

against British oppression. Gandhiji is living God's presence in this novel.

Gandhiji rejects distinction irrespective of caste, gender, sex, and religion. The chief protagonist Moorthy is a follower of Gandhiji and believes in equality among people. He tries to end the rigid social caste-based structure and unites the people of his village under a common religion. He makes no difference between man and woman and claims equal status.

Moorthy, like Gandhi, believes in non-violence and visits every house to mobilize people against the atrocities of the colonists. He believes that "Good ends can be achieved by Good means." (6). According to Moorthy, "there is one force in life that is true, and there is but one love in life that is the love of mankind, and there is one God in life, and that is the God of will" (52-53) Like Gandhi he tries to bring unity and integrity and for the upliftment of the poor and women in society. He persuades the villagers to boycott foreign goods and wear *khadi* and urges everyone to wear *charkha* and hand-woven clothes. The novelist writes, "Spinning is more purifying as praying." (3)

Moorthi persuades people to sacrifice their lands and assets for the liberation of their motherland. Through his relentless effort, he succeeds in bringing people together to fight against British oppression. He turns the entire village of Kanthapura into freedom fighters. The novelist vividly portrays the British oppression and Indian protest against it. In this sense, the novel may be called a Gandhian novel since the Gandhian principle is vividly described. The freedom struggle continues even after the arrest of Moorthy. He is portrayed as the 'Avatar of Gandhi.'

While addressing the Malgudians, Gandhiji says, "Ramdhun, spinning on the charkha and the practice of absolute truth and non-violence." (51). The Malgudians are influenced by Gandhian thought and patriotic enthusiasm. "Some people conveniently adopt patriotism when Mahatmaji arrives." (26)

Kanthapura is a striking example of the Gandhian impact that affected the people of a remote Indian village. The people of Kanthapura represent the masses of India struggling against British exploitation. Gandhiji is essential to the novel's theme and an inseparable character. R.K. Narayan's novel "Waiting for Mahatma" portrays the contribution of Gandhi and the nationalism of the Indian people during the freedom struggle. He describes the then national issues and provides the fragrance of Indian ethics, values, and culture. "Waiting for Mahatma" presents the details of Gandhian impact on

the familiar Indians during the freedom struggle. It was published in 1955 and is written with a national backdrop. The reader can find Gandhian impact on the characters like Sriram and Bharati. Both characters discard their revolutionary activities and decide to follow Gandhian ideology. The novel upholds traditional Indian values re-oriented by Gandhian thought. It bears a clear imprint of Gandhian influence.

Narayan heightens Gandhiji's emphasis on *khadi* by referring to it several times during the novel as if it is an integral part of Gandhi's philosophy. Gandhiji motivates people to use native products apart from foreign goods. "He does not need any public applause. "It is not enough for you to clap your hands and show appreciation for me. I am not prepared to accept it all so easily. I want you to make sure of a change in your hearts and minds and ensure that only love resides there. There is no residue of bitterness for history". (52). Sriram, the chief protagonist, is greatly influenced by the Gandhian ideal to boycott British goods. He observes the popularity of *the khaddar* business to make the Indian market strong. Mahatma says, "Nowadays I generally get up an hour earlier to be able to do this spinning a certain length is my most important work even my prayer comes only after that. I'd very much like you to vow to wear only cloth made out of your own hands each day".(67)

Gandhiji opposed violence from being used in the freedom struggle. He says

to Sriram, "Before you aspire to drive the British from this country, you must drive every vestige of violence from your system.....you must train yourself to become a hundred percent 'Ahimsha' soldier".(43). Sriram persuades his fellows to discard violence and adopt non-violence means while struggling against British rule.

"Waiting for Mahatma" portrays Gandhi until his last breath toiling hard to build his motherland. Most novel characters are subjected to Gandhian influence strong current. The novel supports Gandhian ideologies such as truth, non-violence, love for humanity, swaraj and Satyagraha, etc. Michel Pousse writes, "Narayan has stressed three points which stand out is Gandhi's philosophy, namely, life is a never-ending quest for truth, and secondly, individual peace can only be achieved within a well-defined social context and thirdly the reasons for the use of English language by Gandhi as means of communication."

Both the novelists use a fictional village to create a Gandhian 'utopia' imaginatively.

They adopt Gandhian methods of resistance by using a spinning wheel. The exciting feature of the novels is the participation of Gandhiji as a character. The novelists are influenced by Gandhian thought. They proudly and prominently project Gandhian ideology and love for humanity by portraying little Gandhis in their novel. Gandhiji has a recurring presence in both books.

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