



Colonialism and Postcolonialism: Influence of Mahatma Gandhi on Indian English Fiction

Banktesh Bahadur Saroj*

ORCID 0000-0002-4759-7604

Department of English, Hindu College, Moradabad 244001 UP, India

***Corresponding Author:** Dr. Banktesh Bahadur Saroj, bankteshsaroj.77@gmail.com

Assistant Professor of English Hindu College, Moradabad 244001 UP, India

Abstract

Aim: *Colonialism is a kind of strategy that belongs to the expansion of European political and cultural domination over most of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America that took place from the seventeenth century to the middle of the twentieth century. Colonial domination tries to establish a relationship with underdeveloped countries by using force, and economic, social or cultural dependence.*

Methodology: *The approach and methodology followed in the paper were Explorative and analytical.*

Outcome: *The rise of Mahatma Gandhi resulted in several changes in the lives of Indians during the freedom movement radicalized Indian politics by using the terms like Swaraj ahimsha and noncooperation.*

Conclusion and Suggestions: *Mahatma Gandhi evolves a program of struggle that greatly mobilized the masses and society such as industrialists, farmers, traders, students, lawyers, women, and the downtrodden. His idea of khadi and satyagraha greatly influenced the people. Many writers took his ideologies in literature Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, K.S. Venkatramani, K.A. Abbas and R.K. Narayan were much influenced by Gandhi. Gandhian ideas of resistance and morality have a worldwide impact which influences various atrocities. Gandhi planned to win the leadership of those parties and groups which fitted his great purpose to achieve Swaraj. His framing of the secular agenda is very valuable for the world.*

Keywords: Colonialism, Post Colonialism, Subjugation, Subaltern, Swaraj, Untouchability, Sarvodaya, Independence.

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Colonialism is the establishment, maintenance, acquisition, and expansion of colonies in one territory by people from another territory, N. Krishnaswamy Writes, "'Colonization' is generally (mis) taken mostly as a political process. The word 'colony' in English, according to etymological dictionaries, was borrowed from Latin and used in the sixteenth Century to mean 'Farm, settlement, landed estate, etc.'" (90). It is a process whereby the metropole claims sovereignty over

the colony and the social structure, government, and economics of the colony are changed by colonies from the metropole.

Colonialism is a set of unequal relationships between the metropole and the colony and between the colonists and the indigenous population. The colonial period normally refers to the late 15th to the 20th century, when European states established colonies on other continents. During this time, the justifications for colonialism included various factors such as Christian missionary work, the profits to be made, the expansion of the power of the metropole, and various religions and political beliefs. As Homi K. Bhabha writes in his famous paper, *Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse* persons like T.B. Macaulay wanted, "A class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern — a class of persons Indian in blood and color, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect, and also, "to form a corps of translators and be employed in different departments of labor". Hence colonialism, imperialism, and mercantilism are linked with one another. Colonialism is a kind of loot. Colonialism is a wholesale destruction, dependency and systematic exploitation, Producing distorted economics, socio-psychological disorientation, massive poverty, and neocolonial dependency. The psychological trauma that Okonkwo undergoes has been aptly described by Chinua Achebe in his novel *Things Fall Apart*:

Okonkwo/was deeply grieved. And it was not just a personal grief. He mourned for the clan, which he saw now breaking up and falling apart, and he mourned for the warlike men of Umuofia, who had so unaccountably become soft like a woman (165).

Colonialism is about the dominance of a strong nation over another weaker one. Colonialism happens when a strong nation sees that its material interest and affluence is the acquisition of the colonist, by brute force, of the extra

market, extra resources of raw material, and manpower from the colonies. The colonialist, while committing these atrocities against natives and territories of the colonies, convinces himself that he stands on moral ground. The colonizer becomes a so-called humanist, that to educate the natives is his Whiteman's burden; His basic assumptions in defense of his actions are.

The colonized are the savages in need of education and rehabilitation. The culture of the colonized is not up to the standard of the colonizer and it is the moral duty of the colonizer to do something about polishing it. The colonized nation is unable to manage and run itself properly, and thus it needs the wisdom and expertise of the colonizer. The colonized nation embraces a set of religious beliefs incongruent and incompatible with those of the colonizer, and consequently, it is God's given duty of the colonizer to bring those stray people to the right path.

The colonized People pose a dangerous threat to themselves and the civilized world if left alone; thus, it is in the interest of the civilized world to bring those people under control. As a result of this, the white Europeans ventured adventurously into the so-called underdeveloped countries in Africa and Asia and dominated a lot of geographical spaces there. They subjugated the natives and imposed their will at large on them. They eroded the natives, cultures, and languages, plundered the natives' wealth, and established their orders based on settlers' supremacy. Oppression is the basic ingredient of colonialism. Oppression dehumanized both the oppressors and the oppressed. Postcolonialism refers to different forms of representations reading practices and values (1). Meenakshi Mukherjee remarks, "Postcolonialism is not merely a chronological label referring to the period after the collapse of empires. It is ideologically an emancipatory concept, particularly for students of literature outside the western world (3).

Postcolonialism finds itself in the company of disciplines like woman studies, marginal studies, cultural studies, voices of subalterns and their identity, their orality, and gay/lesbian studies. These new fields of knowledge are classified under new humanities. Postcolonialism focuses on the global mixing of cultures and identities. It aims at Universal well-being and establishing universal brotherhood and sisterhood. Frantz Fanon denounces European myths of progress; he writes about the exploitation caused by the West:

Two centuries ago, a former European colony decided to catch up with Europe. It succeeded so well that the United State of America become a monster, in which the taints, the sickness, and the inhumanity of Europe have harrowed to appalling dimensions. Comrades, have we no other work to do than to create a third Europe? It is a question of the third world staffing all-new history of man, a history which will have regard to the sometimes prodigious these which Europe has put forward, but which Will also not forget Europe's crimes, of which the most horrible was committed in the heart of men and consisted of the pathological tearing apart of his functions and the crumbling away of his unity. And in the framework of the collectivity, there were the differentiations, the stratification, and the bloodthirsty tensions fed by classes; and finally, on the immense scale of humanity, there were racial hatred, slavery, exploitation, and above all the bloodless genocide which consisted in the setting aside of fifteen thousand millions of men. So, comrades, let us not pay tribute to Europe by creating states, institutions, and societies which draw their inspiration from her (*The Wretched of the Earth*).

Like Fanon, Mahatma Gandhi also represents a style of total resistance to the Political and cultural offenses of the colonial civilizing mission. Patricia Waugh writes, "As a leader of civil disobedience movements against the colonial occupation of India in the 1920s and 1930s, he developed several strategies which we might now associate with feminist and with post-colonial activism (342), Mahatma Gandhi says in his *Hind Swaraj*. "The English have not taken India; we have given it to them. They are not in India because of their strength, but because we keep them. They come to our country originally for purposes of trade. Recall Company Bahadur. Who made it Bahadur? (31). He Proceeds further, "We brought the English, and we keep them. Why do we forget that our adoption of their civilization makes their presence in India at all possible? Your hatred against theirs ought to be transferred to their civilization" (66).

Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak uses the term 'subaltern' (which means lower rank) for the colonized, the working class, blacks, and women. She is concerned with 'gendered subaltern' for example, the woman forced through a system of bonded labor, into Prostitution in the era of liberalization, Privatization, and globalization. Homi K. Bhabha's terms 'mimicry; ambivalence, hybridity, liminality, and 'the other' have revolutionized postcolonial discourse. The significance of Bhabha's theory lies in his suggestion that colonial authority is rendered 'hybrid' and ambivalent in the postcolonial era. The colonized other may now resist, assert, revolt, or rewrite. They praise and eulogy their negritude. The colonized 'other' may now assert like Coliban¹⁰, who tells Prospero:

You taught me language, and my profit don't
Is, know how to curse; the red plague rid you
For leaving me your language!

Once Prospero defines Caliban as a potential rapist of his daughter Miranda, he easily justifies taking the latter into forced servitude, as he explains in this exchange.

Miranda: Tis a villain, sir

I do not love to look on

Prospero: But as' tis

...He does make our fire

Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices

That profits us. —What ho! slave Caliban.

(111.12-16)

The fresh springs' brine-pits, barren place and fertile,

Cursed be I that did so! All the charms

Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you:

For I am all the subjects that you have.

Which first was mine own king, and here you stay me,

In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me the rest Oth' island.

(1.11.334-47)

Postcolonialism is related to social justice. Postcolonialism is also related to 'power dynamics', hegemony, and domination that never ends and perhaps began with Adam and Eve. Robert J. C. Young talks about an Iraqi layman saying, "They have everything, we have nothing. We don't want anything from them but they still want more from us. It is they who have been bombing us since 1920. (43). Why is it so that under western eyes the people of the Middle East are either oil producers or terrorists?

Thus, postcolonialism includes the politics of nationalist, internationalist, and anticolonial struggle (of diverse ideological orientations), modes of knowledge and concepts of social justice developed outside the west.

Postcolonialism claims the right of all people on this earth to the same material and cultural well-being, Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi (20 Oct. 1869 - 30 Jan 1948) was a very important political and ideological leader of India during the Indian independence movement. He was the pioneer of Satyagraha or resistance to tyranny through mass civil disobedience- a philosophy finally founded upon Ahimsa or total non-violence. He inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world. He is known as MAHATMA or "Great soul" Bapu or father and officially honored as 'Father of the Nation'. His birthday falls on 2nd Oct and is commemorated as the International Day of Non-violence. He was greatly influenced by Sermon on the Mount, and writers like Tolstoy and Thoreau. He has a great sociopolitical impact on India, He employed non-violent civil disobedience as a lawyer in South Africa since 1893. He agitated the South African movement's Asiatic [Black] Act and Transvaal Immigration Act. He championed the cause of India in South Africa and became very famous.

After his return to India in 1915 he set about organizing peasants/farmers and urban laborers and agitated against land- tax and colonial discrimination and exploitation. He led many nationwide movements against poverty, expanding women's rights, building communal harmony, ending untouchability increasing economic self-reliance, and above all achieving 'swaraj' or the independence of India from the English rules. He was imprisoned for many years on many occasions, in both South Africa and India. he also vehemently opposed alcoholism and other social evils. He believed in the ideal of Sarvodaya.

Mahatma Gandhi ji was a great communicator and mass leader and a great media man who has greatly involved in his journalistic activities to awaken Indian and challenged foreign domination. He influenced the mass by persuasion and communication as great men like Buddha and Ram Krishna Paramhansa did, he wrote *My Experiments with Truth*. He made popular to his journals "Young

India, Navjivan" Indian opinion and Harijan and affected the literary urban of India.

He reached the hearts of millions of rural population using means of "Padayatra" or mass procession and motivational speech. He communicated with the Indians by using religious symbols, and myths and affected Indians with his unique simplicity. Gandhi ji though not in-person in ideology teaching, views have reached the stage and hearts of people through various forms of Tamasa, Jatra, keertan, Nautanki, Pala, Yakshagana, Ramlila, Raslila, and street theatre. Thus "Gandhian consciousness' influenced India socially, culturally, and politically. Mr. M. K. Naik comments, "Indian writing in English literature of the Gandhian age was inevitably influenced by these (the then political and social) epoch-making developments in Indian life."The writers working in different languages in those days were mostly persons who were either influenced by Gandhi ji or had taken part in the independence movements. They were highly influenced by his ideals. Their writings were immensely burdened with Gandhi's idealism, lifestyle, teaching, and anti-colonial stands. The then newspapers 'Swadesh, Act], Abhyudaya, and Gyan Sakti, supported his cause and he was slowly turned into a divine entity, a Messiah. The demand for Swaraj was called Gandhi Swaraj or Mahatma Swaraj. Gandhi ji used myths, Puranas, Harijan, Keenans, and padayatras as primary tools behind his freedom campaigns and ideological betterment in the villages, their social life, and attitude towards life.

Mahatma Gandhi ji is introduced into English fiction in various ways. He appears as a character in Mulkraj Anand's Untouchable, The Sword and the Sickle and Little Plays of Mahatma Gandhi, and K.A. Abbas' Inquilab. RK. Narayans Waiting for the Mahatma and Nagrajanls Chronicles ofKedaram.Though Gandhi ji does not appear as a character in K.S. Venkatramani's Murugan, the Tiller, and Kandan, the Patriot or Rajarao's Kanthapura, Gandhi ji is the driving force and is

represented by an idealized character. Gandhi ji's followers in Bhabani Bhattachary's *So Many Hungers*, Mrs. Sagal's *A Time to be Happy*, and R.K. Narayan's *The vendor of sweets*. K.S. Venkatramani felt that Gandhi was more effective as a social reformer. In his novel *Kandan, the Patriot* "Kandan is an oxford graduate and gives entry into the I.C.S. but he gives up his covetous post and dedicates himself to doing some "Public work" which includes working for political freedom, social emancipation, and progress. Though Gandhi ji does not figure in the novel he dominates by proxy. In his ideals and aspirations that the hero of the novel implements. Kandan is a Patriot, as well as a social reformer. He joined the nationalists who are offering Satyagraha at Tarangambadi. He dies "when the Police open fire to disperse the Satyagrahis, Gandhian ideal "Sarvodaya" is mentioned in this novel.

Mulkraj Anand was influenced by Gandhi's love for the outcastes and his efforts to eradicate untouchability. Gandhiji is introduced as a character in *Untouchable*. He is objective in his portrayal of Gandhi. He makes the innocent victim, Bakha, listen to every word of Gandhi in rapt attention. He hopes that his misery and humiliation would come to an end. The hope of relief is presented by the machine flush system. In *The Sword and the sickle* Anand Shows how Lalu, the protagonist, though impressed by Gandhi's Peasant appearance and sincerity, refuses to be convinced of the effectiveness of Gandhi's nonviolent struggle. Although Anand' Characters are influenced by Gandhiji but the novelist questions Gandhian effectiveness to solve the problems of outcastes and farmers.

Raja Rao in his novel *Kanthapura* gives a vivid and faithful account of the impact of Gandhi on rural India. Gandhi ji is presented as an avatar of Lord Vishnu. People of Kanthapura believe that Gandhi ji is an invisible God and Moorthy is the embodiment of his life. Moorthy is a miniature mahatma, in a meeting he says, "To wear cloth spun and woven with your own God-given hands

is sacred, says the Mahatma". Moorthy is drawn towards the Congress activities led by Jawaharlal Nehru. Though Kanthapura is destroyed in the Physical sense of the word by the imperialist government. The villagers believe He will bring us Swaraj, the Mahatma, and we shall be happy."

In his short story, "The Cow of the Barricades", Raja Rao deals with the fight for India's freedom and Gandhi's impact on people. People do Satyagraha and remain Gandhian even if their leader leaves them or the Mahatma is defeated, Severely Criticized, or if the Sahibs put them behind bars. In his "The vendor of sweets", Jagan considers himself a staunch 'Stayagrahi', spins the Charaka' regularly, and equates himself with achieving Nirvana, like the Buddha, by following the principles of Gandhi sm.

In Nagarajan's *Chronicles of Kedaram* there is an impact of Gandhian idealism. Nirmala, under the impact of Gandhiji, begins to work for Harijan welfare and later she joined Gandhi in Sabarmati. So, it can be said the Pre-independence and Post-Independence Indian English novelists, K.S. Venkatramani Mulkraj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya, K.A. Abbas, Nagarajan are Profoundly affected by Gandhian philosophy and Idealism. Each of these novelists seeks to present Gandhi in his characteristic way.

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Dr. Banktesh Bahadur Saroj

Dr. Banktesh Bahadur Saroj is Currently Assistant Professor of English at Hindu College, Moradabad U.P. 244001. He teaches English literature at U.G. P.G. levels. He has worked as a Lecturer of English at Ramadhin Singh Inter college for more than a decade. He qualified for UGC NET in English and was awarded the degree of Ph.D. in English by Lucknow University. The title of his doctoral thesis was “Narrating the Nation in the select Novels of Chinua Achebe and U.R. Anantha Murthy”. The thesis is related to the ambivalent situations and cultural limbo and ethnicity of Post independent Nigeria and India in the light of Narrating the Nation. He has published research papers in the journals like Ijelr, Rjelal, and Criterion. He has presented a research paper in 11 International and National Seminars. His area of specialization is cultural and translation studies, Afro-American literature, Feminist Discourse, and Ethnicity.