



The ideology, thought and writings of great men of letters shaped the great freedom movement of India. During the days of freedom struggle several men of letters produced creative works which inspired nationalism and patriotism among people. The paper aims to examine the vision of Tagore, impact of Mahatma Gandhi and anti-colonialism in Indian English writings before and after Independence.

The powerful patriotic spirit of Tagore's literary works brought him in the mainstream of the freedom struggle and earned him national wisdom. He not only gave importance on political

Tagore suggested the people of country to get freedom on humanitarian grounds. "It is my conviction that my countrymen will truly gain their India by fighting against the education which teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity". He opposed the ideas of nationalism initiated from West.

Tagore gifted to India her national anthem. The song generated a sense of national unity during the days of freedom struggle which made India stronger than before. He was a seer and national builder and his contribution of his songs to the national freedom was immense.

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## Study of English Writings in the Freedom Movement in India with Reference to Spiritualism, Gandhism, Anti-Colonialism

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freedom but also spiritual freedom. Tagore in his poem, "where the mind is without fear" writes:-

Where the mind is led by thee into ever-widening  
Thought and action into that heaven of freedom  
My father, let my country awake.

His works generated a spirit of liberating India from colonialism. He was on a poetic mission to save India from slavery. His works ignited passion and united people to dedicate them to the national struggle. He opposed the partition of Bengal along communal lines and hated the idea of division of his beloved state. He advocated for Swadeshi, composed soul – stirring songs, addressed meetings and led protest marches.

### **Gandhism :**

Mahatma Gandhi is such a socio-political figure who is barely impossible for someone to forget or ignore. He influenced every aspect of human consciousness and became a source of writing in different fields like history, politics, philosophy, literature, sociology and so on. Indian English Literature echoes 'Gandhian Consciousness' both in pre-independence and post-independence period. 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 novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, K.S. Venkatramani, K.A. Abbas portrayed Gandhi's ideals and influence of Gandhi on Indian villages and towns. Their writings were immensely burdened with Gandhian idealism, life style, his teachings and anti-colonial stands. Gandhi was represented as a sage by the Indian Congress in its political campaigns. He was considered as a saintly preacher and sincere freedom worker.

Gandhiji appeared to be a part and form of literary genre and he appeared in many dramas, novels stories and poems. His social activities and idealism were democratic, rural and homogeneous in nature. He insisted on high thinking and simple living which was also reflected and highlighted by the literary English authors of the time.

R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* reflects Gandhian ideology and influence on the people of country. The hero Sriram in the novel is a blind follower of Gandhiji. He joins the freedom movement but without understanding it. Narayan goes further with Gandhi's concept of Non-violence.

“Before you aspire to drive the British from the country, you must drive every vestige of violence from your system... you must train yourself to become a hundred percent *ahimsa* soldier.” (52)

Gandhi in the novel asked Sriram to become a non-violent soldier. He considers ‘English as the language of our rulers. It has enslaved us’ (16). He further says,

“I see before me a vast army. Every one of you has certain good points and certain defects and you must all strive to discipline yourselves before you can hope to attain freedom of

our country. An army is always in training and keeps itself in good shape by regular drill and discipline. We, the citizens of this country, are all soldiers of a non-violent army, but even such an army has to practice a few things daily in order to keep itself in proper condition. We have a system of our own to follow: that's “Ram Dhun”, spinning of the “Charakha” and the practice of absolute truth and non-violence (17)

Jagan, the hero of R.K. Narayan's *Vendor of Sweets* considers himself as a staunch Satyagrahi, spins the Charakha regularly, and identifies himself with achieving Nirvana like Buddha by following the principles of Gandhism.

Mulk Raj Anand came under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi and that's why he shifted himself from Blooms-bury to Sabarmati. Bakha in Anand's *Untouchable* is introduced before Gandhism in the end as redemptions from the social evils of untouchability and casteism. His life becomes tolerable after listening to the speech of Gandhiji.

Raja Rao's novel *Kanthapura* echoes Gandhiji's Swadeshi, anti-colonial protests, and need of eradication of social evils like untouchability, casteism, women backwardness and wine drinking. The coolies cry out; “Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai” .... And further “Gandhi Mahatma Ki Jai” as a source of inspiration, strength and will power. Moorthy, the central character echoes Gandhian mission.

So Moorthy goes from house to house, and from younger brother to elder brother, and from elder brother to the grand father himself, and what do you think? He even goes to potter's quarter and the weavers' quarters and the Sudra



quarter .... We said to ourselves, he is one of these Gandhi men who say there is neither caste nor clan nor family, and yet they pray like us and they live like us. Only they say too, one should not marry early, one should allow widow to take husbands and a Brahmin might marry a *pariah* and a *pariah* a Brahmin. (15)

Gandhiji is portrayed as Lord Krishna in the novel. He is considered to be 'a saint, the Mahatma, a wise man and a soft man'. All the village folk irrespective of their class distinction came upto the temple and swore the oath unanimously to serve the country "My master, I shall spin a hundred yards of yarn per day, and shall practice *ahimsa*, and I shall seek for the blessings of the Mahatma and the gods, and they rose and crawled back to their seats" (81).

K.S. Venkatramani (1891-1957) well known for the Gandhian theme in his novel *Murugan, The Tiller* (1927) is in favour of Gandhian economic policies. His second novel *Kandan, The patriot: A novel of New India in the Making* (1932) is about the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930s.

K.A Abbas's novel *Tomorrow is ours: A Novel of the India of Today* (1943) describes the issues of nationalism and untouchability through a female protagonist. Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers* (1947) sets in the context of Bengal famine and Quit India movement of 1942. His characters are deeply influenced by Gandhian philosophy.

It can be unmistakably said that Gandhiji introduced the national consciousness among people irrespective of class, caste and religion, not only through religious coated speeches or political campaigns but also bringing realization of the need of unity against the British to fight back

freedom by observing certain social, civic, psychological and behavioural changes in society.

#### **Anti-colonialism:**

Anti-colonial nationalism is another important trend that greatly influenced literature, thought and psychology of Indian minds. The term 'anti-colonialism' is defined as the politics or an ideology aimed at ending European colonial rule in the nineteenth and twentieth century in Asian and African countries. The colonizers wanted to create a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The class of interpreters who initiated and supported the nationalistic movement attempted to control the state bureaucracy.

The major Indian writers in English like Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Soshee Chandra Dutt and many others depicted the dominant themes of nationalist struggle apart from their civilizational, cultural and historical antecedents.

The anti-colonial nationalism openly came out in 1857 in the struggle against colonial East India Company. However after struggle, the contemporary Indian writers in English did not represent the 1857 struggle from Indian perspective in their fiction because after the rebellion, India was directly under the control of British regime.

The theme of anti-colonial nationalism is represented in Tagore's *Gora* (1909). Tagore's concept of nationalism doesn't ignore human quality in day-to-day social life. He believes that every Hindu should sacrifice his life for the attainment of freedom. In other writings Tagore was highly critical to those who are eager and hungry to gain political power without taking the masses together. His another book *The Home*



*and the World* set on the same frame of ideas expresses the various facets of the anti-colonial nationalist struggle in India against the colonial regime. He suggested of nationalism on humanitarian ground instead of nation. "It is my conviction that my countrymen will truly gain their India by fighting against the education which teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity". He opposed the ideas of the nationalism imitated from west.

Soshee Chunder Dutt (1824-86) was an early Indian writer in English and a radical anti-colonialist in his writings. His work *Shunkur* is the fictional representation of the resistance of 1857 struggle against colonial power. He has denounced the British occupation of India and in this novel he has provided an alternative myth to justify Indians' rebellion against the British imperial govt. His another novel *The Young Zamindar* (1883) also depicts the anti-colonial feelings in various parts of India.

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya (1838-94) also influenced the idea of Indian religious and secular nationalism through his writings. He uses religion as a powerful tool to raise the people against colonial rulers. He asserted that the idea of western nationalism reinforced the spiritual values of Indian nationalism. His novel *Anandmath* inspired many people to sacrifice their lives for the struggle of Independence which was banned by the British regime.

Tagore's broader idea of nationalism in term of spiritualism and anti-colonialism, Mahatma Gandhi's non-violence, truth, Satyagraha and ideologies and the note of anti-colonialism are the central themes that get focused in the Indian writing in English during pre-independence and post-independence period. These ideas are chiefly related to freedom in Indian context.

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