



Footprints on the Sands of Time: Mahatma Gandhi's Enduring Legacy and Global Influence

Prof. Ajay Kumar Shukla

Head, Department of English, D.D.U. Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur, UP, India

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Abstract— *The legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, often referred to as the Father of the Nation in India, extends far beyond the borders of his homeland. His life and teachings continue to inspire and influence individuals and movements worldwide. This research paper explores the enduring impact of Gandhi's philosophy of truth, nonviolence, and social justice on a global scale. Drawing upon historical context, literary analysis, and contemporary relevance, the paper examines how Gandhi's footprints on the sands of time have shaped societies, politics, literature, and culture around the world. From his role in India's struggle for independence to his advocacy for human rights and peace, Gandhi's principles resonate in the 21st century and offer valuable insights into addressing pressing global challenges. Through an interdisciplinary approach, this paper seeks to illuminate the multifaceted dimensions of Gandhi's legacy and its significance in today's world.*



Keywords— *Mahatma Gandhi, legacy, nonviolence, social justice, global influence, literature, culture, contemporary relevance*

“Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sand of time”

This excerpt is from the poem "A Psalm of Life" by Henry W. Longfellow, a prominent American poet and educator of the 19th century. The lines emphasize the idea that great individuals can leave a lasting impact on the world by making their lives meaningful and purposeful. The metaphor of "footprints on the sand of time" suggests that our actions, like footprints, can be imprinted in the history of humanity, influencing and inspiring others. "Lives of great men all remind us," can be related to Mahatma Gandhi as he is considered one of the great men who left a profound impact on the world. Gandhi's life was dedicated to nonviolent resistance and social change. Like the lines in the poem, he aimed to make his life sublime by leading India to independence through peaceful means. Gandhi's philosophy and actions have left enduring footprints on the sands of time, inspiring movements for civil rights and

freedom worldwide. His life serves as a reminder that individuals, through their actions, can shape the course of history and leave behind a legacy of positive change. As is well said, "Aspire to inspire before we expire." These words resonate deeply with the timeless wisdom of Mahatma Gandhi, who dedicated his life to inspiring others through his actions and principles. As the saying goes, "One who wins without problems is just a victory, but one who wins with a lot of troubles is history." Indeed, this sentiment resonates deeply with the life and legacy of Mahatma Gandhi. Throughout his remarkable journey, Gandhi faced countless trials and tribulations, yet he remained steadfast in his commitment to truth, nonviolence, and justice. His victories were not merely triumphs in the conventional sense; they were milestones in the ongoing struggle for freedom and equality.

Before delving into a detailed exploration of Gandhi's enduring legacy and global influence, it is pertinent to reflect on some of his timeless quotes that continue to resonate with people across generations. **“Be the**

change that you wish to see in the world.” Gandhi is urging people to embody the principles and values they want to see reflected in the world. Rather than merely advocating for change or expecting others to take the first step, he emphasizes the importance of individuals taking proactive measures to bring about positive transformation. **“The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated”** . “जीवेषु करुणा चापि मैत्री तेषु विधीयताम्”. The quote emphasizes the idea that the moral progress and greatness of a nation can be assessed by observing how it treats its animals. Gandhi believed that the ethical treatment of animals is indicative of a society's compassion, empathy, and commitment to justice. The quote suggests that a nation's character is closely linked to its treatment of not only fellow human beings but also the treatment of the vulnerable and voiceless members of the animal kingdom.

“A man is but a product of his thoughts. What he thinks he becomes.”यद् भावं तद् भवति” **“Yad bhavam tad bhavati,”** which means You are what you believe, or You become as you think. It reflects the idea that an individual's thoughts shape their character and, consequently, their actions and destiny. **“Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.”**It implies that a sense of contentment and joy arises when there is coherence and unity between one's thoughts, expressions, and deeds. **“The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong”**. Gandhi suggests that forgiveness is not a sign of weakness but rather an attribute of strength. The idea is that it takes inner strength and courage to let go of resentment and animosity, especially when one has been wronged.

In literature, Gandhiji's principles have served as a wellspring of inspiration. Writers, poets, and storytellers have drawn from his ideals, weaving narratives that reflect the struggles, aspirations, and triumphs of the common people. His emphasis on simplicity, truth, and the power of the human spirit resonates in the written word, giving voice to the collective consciousness. Culturally, Gandhian values have become an integral part of the Indian identity. The emphasis on self-reliance, community living, and the pursuit of truth has manifested in various art forms, music, and rituals. Cultural expressions now often mirror the principles of simplicity, humility, and inclusivity that Gandhiji championed throughout his life. Societal transformation under the influence of Gandhiji is perhaps most evident. The call for social equality, eradication of untouchability, and the empowerment of the marginalized have left an enduring impact. His teachings continue to inspire social activists, leaders, and citizens alike to strive for a more just and compassionate society.

. Mahatma Gandhi, a pivotal figure in India's struggle for independence, was guided by a set of principles that profoundly influenced his philosophy and actions. At the core of Gandhi's beliefs was the principle of Ahimsa, or non-violence, which he considered to be the most potent force for social and political change. Through his practice of *Satyagraha*, or truth force, Gandhi advocated for nonviolent resistance, standing firm for justice and moral integrity without resorting to violence, even in the face of oppression. Central to Gandhi's vision was the concept of Sarvodaya, or the welfare of all, where the upliftment of the weakest and most marginalized members of society was prioritized. Gandhi also championed the idea of Swadeshi, promoting economic self-reliance and the use of local goods to strengthen local economies. Living a life of simplicity and asceticism, Gandhi exemplified humility and minimalism, eschewing material possessions in favour of spiritual wealth. He ardently fought against caste distinctions and untouchability, advocating for equality and social justice for all individuals, regardless of caste, creed, or gender. Gandhi emphasized the importance of constructive programs for social reform, advocating for positive action in areas such as education, sanitation, and economic development. He promoted the use of *Khadi* and village industries to empower rural communities and foster self-reliance. Gandhi upheld religious tolerance and harmony, respecting all faiths and advocating for their coexistence in building a just and inclusive society. Finally, Gandhi instilled fearlessness in individuals, encouraging them to confront injustice with courage and resolve, without succumbing to violence. Through his unwavering commitment to these principles, Gandhi left an indelible legacy that continues to inspire movements for peace, justice, and human rights around the world.

The Gandhian era, marked by the influence and ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, had a significant impact on Indian English literature. One can say that the novels of 1930s and 40s are based on Gandhian ideology and its impact on society. Gandhi was against “Art for Art's Sake”. He believed in “Art for Life” ‘s Sake”. For him, only art and literature based on truth helped men to rise upward. Thus, all his writings cherish Truth and high moral values. This period, roughly spanning the early to mid-20th century, was characterized by India's struggle for independence, social reform, and the transformative ideas propagated by Gandhi. Several themes and literary works emerged during this era, reflecting the socio-political climate and the ethos of the time.

In the realm of literature, Mahatma Gandhi's influence permeates various themes and narratives, reflecting the multifaceted impact of his principles on Indian society. In the context of nationalism and the

freedom struggle, R. K. Narayan's *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* portrays characters inspired by Gandhian principles actively participating in the nationalist movement, while Khwaja Ahmad Abbas's *Inquilab* reflects the fervor of the freedom struggle through characters embracing Gandhian ideals. Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay* delves into the impact of Gandhi's philosophy on characters navigating the tumultuous era of independence. Social reform and equality are recurring themes in literature influenced by Gandhi's ideals. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* not only portrays social inequality but also explores the transformative impact of Gandhian ideas on challenging caste hierarchies. Ismat Chughtai's "The Quilt" addresses social issues and inequality, reflecting the changing dynamics influenced by Gandhian principles, while Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers* explores the theme of social reform through characters affected by Gandhi's vision for a more egalitarian society. Literary works also delve into Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence and Satyagraha. E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* intricately weaves the theme of non-violence and civil disobedience, reflecting the Gandhian philosophy, while Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* incorporates elements of *Satyagraha*, offering a nuanced exploration of Gandhian ideals. Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* presents characters employing non-violent resistance as a response to societal injustices, inspired by Gandhian principles. Rural revival and self-sufficiency emerge as prominent themes reflecting Gandhi's vision for India. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* vividly captures the Gandhian vision of rural life, self-sufficiency, and cottage industries, while Ruskin Bond's *The Blue Umbrella* subtly reflects the simplicity and self-reliance associated with Gandhian ideals in a rural setting. B. Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh* explores rural life and the impact of Gandhi's call for self-sufficiency. Critiques of industrialization and modernity also find expression in literature influenced by Gandhi's philosophy. Rabindranath Tagore's *The Home and the World* critiques rapid industrialization, echoing Gandhi's concerns about unchecked growth, while R. K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* delves into the conflict between tradition and modernity, addressing the consequences of rapid industrialization. Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* critiques the impact of industrialization on societal harmony during the partition era. Women's empowerment emerges as a significant theme in literature inspired by Gandhi's ideals. Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* explores the changing role of women in the context of Gandhian ideals, while Nayantara Sahgal's *The Day in Shadow* portrays strong female characters engaging with the Gandhian movement for independence. Shashi Tharoor's *Riot: A Love Story* touches upon women's agency in the face of socio-

political changes, influenced by Gandhian principles. Regionalism and cultural identity are celebrated in literary works aligned with Gandhi's vision. R. K. Narayan's *Malgudi Days* celebrates regional cultures, reflecting Gandhi's emphasis on preserving cultural diversity, while Ismat Chughtai's "The Wild One" vividly portrays regional identities and cultural nuances, aligning with Gandhi's vision. Ruskin Bond's "The Room on the Roof" subtly incorporates regional flavors, embracing the diversity Gandhi sought to preserve. Moreover, literature serves as a medium for responding to historical events during the Gandhian era. Khushwant Singh's *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* responds to historical events like the Quit India Movement, contributing to the collective memory, while Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* captures the spirit of historical events during the Gandhian era, offering a literary perspective on the times. Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* engages with historical events, providing a literary lens through which the reader can revisit the era of independence.

Mahatma Gandhi, a figure widely discussed and extensively documented, authored numerous literary works. The majority of Gandhi's writings, comprising collections of his articles and speeches on truth and nonviolence, self-reliance and the spinning wheel, as well as his addresses to various audiences such as women, students, and royalty, were compiled into books. He communicated directly and expressed himself in eloquent English. Gandhi's proficiency in English may have stemmed from his fondness for reading English writers and the Bible, which honed his ability to choose precise words. Some English Viceroy's acknowledged Gandhi's straightforwardness and his mastery of English, praising his keen appreciation for the nuances of language. Gandhi asserted that he never spoke or wrote a word without careful thought. A professor at Oxford University, who assisted in drafting some of Gandhi's statements for the Round Table Conference, remarked, "I have never encountered an Indian who mastered prepositions as Gandhi has... I put considerable effort into drafting, and Mr. Gandhi would merely make a single prepositional change. It achieved its purpose, transforming my meaning into Mr. Gandhi's intended message."

Embark on a journey to unravel the profound legacy of Mahatma Gandhi through a meticulously curated selection of essential reads. These books offer unique insights into the life, philosophy, and enduring influence of one of the most revered figures in history. From Gandhi's own introspective narrative in *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* to Ramachandra Guha's exploration of his formative years in *Gandhi before India*, each text provides a distinct perspective on the Mahatma's remarkable journey. Delve into the deep bond between Gandhi and C.

Rajagopalachari in *My Dear Bapu*, or gain a nuanced understanding of his philosophy in Rajmohan Gandhi's *The Good Boatman*. Judith M. Brown's *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* and Makarand R Paranjape's *The Death and Afterlife of Mahatma Gandhi* offer insightful biographies and analyses, while Brad Meltzer's *I am Gandhi* serves as an engaging introduction for young readers. Together, these essential reads illuminate the timeless teachings and enduring legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, inviting every Indian to explore and reflect upon his profound impact.

Gandhi's thoughts, characterized by their originality and freshness, were not devoid of external influences that shaped their trajectory. A voracious reader, he immersed himself in a diverse array of literature spanning economics, ethics, philosophy, and ancient Indian texts. Drawing from the rich tapestry of Hindu tradition, Gandhiji often invoked examples and morals from Indian epics, the *Vedas*, the *Gita*, as well as Vaishnava and Jain literature. His intellectual horizons expanded during his time in England, where he engaged with prominent thinkers and gained insights into Christianity. Among the luminaries who left an indelible mark on Gandhi's philosophy was Leo Tolstoy, the Russian writer renowned for his advocacy of nonviolent resistance and Christian anarchism. Tolstoy's seminal work, *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*, deeply influenced Gandhi's approach to activism and resistance. Similarly, the ideas of English art critic and social thinker John Ruskin resonated with Gandhi, particularly Ruskin's concept of *Unto This Last*, which emphasized the moral responsibility of the wealthy towards society. This notion of trusteeship, wherein the affluent were regarded as stewards of their wealth for the greater good, found resonance in Gandhi's socio-economic ideals. Furthermore, Henry David Thoreau's essay "Civil Disobedience" left an indelible imprint on Gandhi's philosophy. Thoreau's advocacy for resisting unjust laws through nonviolent means struck a chord with Gandhi's principle of satyagraha, or nonviolent resistance, which would become a cornerstone of his approach to social and political change.

Gandhi's life serves as a profound testament, inspiring writers not only within India but across the globe. Authors from diverse backgrounds, including Ruskin Bond, Sarojini Naidu, Dominique Lapierre, George Orwell, Khushwant Singh, and V.S. Naipaul, have drawn upon his narrative, depicting the events of India's freedom movement and his pivotal role within it. Through anecdotes of non-violence and reflections on his extensive writings, Gandhi, affectionately known as *Bapu*, has left an indelible mark on the literary world. Viceroy Mountbatten once expressed a fear that echoed widely: "India, indeed the world, will not see the like of him again, perhaps for centuries." Martin Luther King Jr. echoed a sentiment shared by many, stating,

"If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable." Jawaharlal Nehru aptly described him as "more a man of the people" and a "warrior of the Indian peasant." Gandhi's most remarkable contribution lies in his successful transformation of non-violent resistance into an effective tool for championing democratic values: liberty, justice, and peace. Throughout his writings, Gandhi emphasized the universality of his non-violent beliefs, advocating for their relevance not only within India but also beyond its borders, for the pursuit of global peace and harmony. He believed that all art should be rooted in truth and that literature, serving to educate, enrich, and transform, holds immense value. Gandhi advocated for literature that uplifts individuals, nurturing their body, mind, and spirit, ultimately leading to self-realization and a deeper understanding of truth and divinity. Recognizing the plight of the marginalized, Gandhi stressed the importance of literature in providing solace to those suffering, emphasizing the need for simple yet powerful narratives to alleviate their hardships. At a literary conference, Gandhi questioned the purpose of literature, urging writers to consider the aspirations of the masses and the role of education in securing livelihoods. He envisioned a system where children learn while they earn and earn while they learn, viewing education as a form of insurance against unemployment.

The influence of Mahatma Gandhi transcends both fiction and non-fiction in Indian literature, spanning across various languages including English. M.K. Naik elucidates that Indian English fiction discovered some of its most compelling themes during the Gandhian era, with Gandhi serving as a wellspring of inspiration for writers and commentators. While Gandhi himself did not engage in literary pursuits, his life and teachings have inspired countless authors, from Mulk Raj Anand to Sarojini Naidu, each offering unique interpretations of his sayings. Dramatic portrayals of Gandhi's life in film and fiction range from Richard Attenborough's acclaimed film "Gandhi" to Indian English novels by Anand, Rao, and Narayan. Described by Naidu as an "eternal lotus" and a "guiding star," Gandhi's influence permeates the literary landscape of his time. Writers who were directly influenced by Gandhi or deeply inspired by his ideals filled their works with Gandhian themes, ideals, and anti-colonial attitudes. Gandhi's principle of high thinking and simple living resonated strongly with English authors like Anand, Rao, and Narayan, who depicted the impact of Gandhi's ideals on Indian society, particularly in villages and towns. The belief in adhering to Gandhi's words was prevalent among humble villagers, especially women, who revered him as a father figure. Characters in novels like *Waiting for the Mahatma* and *Untouchable* exemplify the transformative influence of

Gandhi's teachings, inspiring individuals to embrace tolerance and join the freedom movement. Gandhi's emphasis on social reform and his advocacy for the marginalized found expression in literature, heralding a shift in Indian literary thinking towards character and inner culture, and a renewed focus on the voiceless and the oppressed

Gandhiji's status as a prolific experimenter intrigued the curious minds of the West, leading to a fascination with his philosophy and actions. Early foreign writings on Gandhi by notable figures such as French writer Romain Rolland, Danish writer Allen Horrup, and English writers George Orwell and Edmund Jones, among others, shed light on the Western perception of the Mahatma. Rolland, in "The Man who Became One with the Universal Being," portrayed Gandhi as an exemplary nationalist and advocated for his influence on European youth. Orwell, in his depiction of Gandhi, subjected him to a trial until proven innocent, describing him as a "humble naked old man" whose spiritual power shook empires. Many Western writers, including William Rose Bennet, hailed Gandhi's commitment to non-violence as his greatest contribution, contrasting it with the brutality of violence. This recognition of Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence fostered a common understanding between the East and the West, as both sought inspiration from the ideals espoused by the Mahatma.

Mahatma Gandhi's teachings hold immense relevance in the contemporary world, transcending time and offering profound insights into addressing pressing global challenges. As a freedom fighter, philosopher, moralist, and spiritual practitioner of truth, Gandhi's principles continue to inspire and guide individuals and societies alike. In the 21st century, Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence (ahimsa) provides a compelling alternative to the prevalent conflicts and geopolitical tensions, advocating for dialogue, understanding, and empathy as means to achieve global peace. His emphasis on sustainable living, simplicity, and environmental stewardship resonates with modern concerns about climate change and ecological sustainability, promoting responsible consumption and local self-reliance. Gandhi's commitment to social justice, equality, and the upliftment of the marginalized remains pertinent in addressing contemporary issues of discrimination, inequality, and social unrest, guiding discussions on human rights and inclusivity. Moreover, his advocacy for economic self-reliance and the promotion of local industries gains significance amidst global economic challenges, fostering sustainable development and empowerment at the grassroots level. Gandhi's principles of ethical leadership, transparency, and accountability serve as a beacon in discussions about good governance, while his role in civil

rights and activism inspires contemporary movements advocating justice, equality, and human rights globally. His respect for all religions and efforts to promote interfaith harmony offers a model for fostering understanding in a diverse world, while his emphasis on personal responsibility, mindful living, and character-building remains poignant in addressing ethical dilemmas. Gandhi's vision of global citizenship, where individuals recognize their interconnectedness and assume responsibilities beyond national boundaries, resonates in discussions on international cooperation and the pursuit of common goals. In essence, Gandhi's teachings continue to illuminate pathways towards a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world in the 21st century and beyond.

Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, has frequently expressed admiration for Mahatma Gandhi and acknowledged the influence of Gandhi's principles on his leadership style. While Modi's political approach and policies differ from those of Gandhi, there are instances where he has sought to adopt or reference Gandhian ideals. One notable example is the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign), launched by Modi on October 2, 2014, coinciding with Mahatma Gandhi's birthday. This initiative mirrors Gandhi's emphasis on cleanliness and hygiene as crucial for individual and community well-being. Additionally, Modi has promoted khadi, similar to Gandhi's advocacy for the indigenous textile industry, by wearing khadi outfits and encouraging their use. In 2019, Modi initiated the "Gandhi 150" campaign on Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary, aiming to spread awareness about Gandhian principles and sustainable practices. Despite facing geopolitical challenges, Modi's government has emphasized diplomatic solutions and non-violent approaches to conflict resolution, aligning with Gandhi's principle of ahimsa. Modi's Digital India initiative, while different in means, shares Gandhi's vision of empowering individuals through technological advancements and connectivity. Modi's promotion of "Vocal for Local" and support for indigenous industries resonate with Gandhi's advocacy for Swadeshi and economic self-reliance. Moreover, Modi's focus on rural development programs, emphasizing financial inclusion and empowerment, aligns with Gandhi's vision of Gram Swarajya and the upliftment of rural India. While Modi's leadership style may diverge from Gandhi's in certain aspects, his acknowledgement and integration of Gandhian principles reflect their enduring relevance in contemporary India.

Mahatma Gandhi's enduring legacy and global influence are undeniable. His principles of truth, nonviolence, and social justice continue to resonate across borders and generations, inspiring individuals and movements worldwide. Gandhi's life serves as a testament

to the power of moral courage and steadfast commitment to principles in the face of adversity. As we reflect on Gandhi's legacy, we are reminded of the profound impact one individual can have on the world through dedication to noble ideals. In today's complex and interconnected world, Gandhi's teachings offer valuable insights and guidance on addressing pressing global challenges. Let us strive to embody Gandhi's message of peace, justice, and compassion, leaving behind footprints of positive change for future generations to follow.

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