INTRODUCTION

Gandhian ideals and programmes during the struggle for freedom and even afterwards have greatly influenced the creative response of Indo-Anglian novelists. Imaginative literature bearing on the theme has, therefore, been quite prolific, but it has not received the serious critical scrutiny it deserves, though there are references to this aspect in certain books on the subject.\(^1\) The proposed venture is an attempt to offer a systematic, analytical and comprehensive examination of the aesthetic response of the Indian novelists in English to Gandhi and his ethos.

The Indian novel in English has been a relatively delayed manifestation of modern Indian sensibility. Ever since its rather uncertain but significant start in the twenties,\(^2\) it has been a vehicle of social change.

---


2. Following Srinivas Iyengar, Meenakshi Mukherjee recognises Bankim Chander Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife*, serialised in a periodical in 1864, as the first work (The Twice-Born Fiction (1971), p.33). In a recent study G.P. Sarma refers to *A Journal of Forty-eight Hours* (1835) and *The Republic of Orissa* (1845) as the earliest works. (Nationalism in Indo-Anglian Fiction (1976), pp.xviii-xix). These are, however, stray attempts as Indo-Anglian novel made its presence felt only in the twenties with the publication of Murugan the Tiller (1927) and Kandan the Patriot (1932). There was no school of Indo-Anglian novel before 1927.
Contemporary social reality and national aspirations of political independence have quite often provided stimulus to the novelist to render his emotional involvement in and awareness of the national scene into fiction. The credo of nationalism fashioned by Gandhi has, thus, been the forte of the creative writer since the twenties and thirties.

With the emergence of Gandhi on the political horizon of India, the social and political awareness among people percolated to the grass-roots of Indian society. The revitalization and consciousness of social milieu, thus achieved for the first time, sought expression in literature, particularly the novel which transcribes social scene better than any other literary form. Since Gandhi was the major driving force behind this regeneration of Indian society, he profoundly permeated the consciousness of the Indian writer. Literature written during these days was bound to bear the counter-signature of Gandhi: "So profoundly did Gandhi impinge on the Indian consciousness that no writer, unless he was like Jane Austen, impervious to the storm that was raging outside could have found it possible to be involved in the creative process without Gandhi's entering it overtly and obliquely".  

The Indo-Anglian novelists deal with one aspect or the other of the non-violent struggle for freedom fought under the banner of Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. It cannot,
however, be denied that the Movement had occasionally taken violent turns as, for instance, in August 1942. There were communal riots in 1947 in the wake of the decision of Partition that caused untold misery to millions of people — Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Non-violent Non-cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, particularly the Salt Satyagraha, Quit India Movement and horrors of Partition of India form the background of many an Indian novel in English. It is a significant fact that the image of Gandhi or the echo of Gandhian revolution is present in almost all such novels, though the details and emphasis may vary.

The Gandhian myth and the saga of Satyagraha have definitely influenced and fostered the growth of the Indo-Anglian novel. To call it merely a political novel\(^4\) is perhaps to minimise its significance in the Indian context. The national movement was not exclusively a political struggle. With its thrust on total emancipation of the masses, Gandhian movement turned out to be an all-pervasive emotional experience for the people. The Indian struggle for freedom also withstood the pulls of the terrorists, and other political activists. Gandhian ideology carried different meanings for different

---

\(^4\) Political novel as a genre defies precise definition but it is generally a work of fiction which is mainly devoted to a treatment of political ideas. Characters, action and setting in such a work are firmly grounded in politics. Irving Howe suggests that "by a political novel I mean a novel in which political ideas play a dominant role or in which the political milieu is the dominant setting". Irving Howe, Politics and the Novel (New York: Fawcett Publications, 1967), p.19.
people. Whereas it was a way of life for some, it was an expedient strategy for others. The devout followers looked to Gandhi as a saint and regarded his philosophy as something sacrosanct, whereas his detractors ridiculed him and made light of his adherence to Non-Violence and Truth. The Indian novelist in English has tried to identify and filter the accents of this heroic age through his creative endeavours.

Even when the novelist is not projecting a favourable image of Gandhi and his movement, he cannot remain unmindful of Gandhi who, to reproduce Falstaff's words, is "not only witty in myself, but the cause that wit is in other men". As a catalytic agent, Gandhi stirred the creative urge of the novelist and "bestrides almost over the entire field of Indian writing in English in several forms, appearing either as a character or a subject or a pervasive influence upon the social and political scene depicted by the writer".  

Indo-Anglian novel thus owes its development to the dynamic credo of Gandhi whose struggle for freedom heralded a spurt in Indian novel in English. The overshadowing of the Indian scene by Gandhi in the thirties' happily coincided with the significant output of Indo-Anglian novel. Its identity as a distinct school of Indian fiction was established when the major voices in Indian novel in English — K.S. Venkataramani, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao —

received attention in India and abroad. The pioneers of Indian novel in English bear the impress of Gandhi's personality and his movement.

The novelist's fascination for Gandhi was not simply confined to his personality — a curious manifestation of folklore, history, legend and mythology — and his revolution in the political life of the country. His concern for rural reconstruction, removal of untouchability, khadi, prohibition etc. held the sway with a large number of creative writers. Gandhi not only provided character to Indian novel in English but also new themes. The Gandhian influence is reflected in the "shift of emphasis from the city to the village," or in the implied "contrast between the two — urban luxury and sophistication on the one hand and rural modes and manners on the other."6

It is, therefore, pertinent to attempt an analysis and evaluation of the Indo-Anglian novels in terms of the response of the creative writers to Gandhi.

Before we think of the scope of the work in hand, an explanation of the term 'Indo-Anglian' is called for. Iyengar labelled the original creative writings in English by the Indians as 'Indo-Anglian Literature'. Now this term elicits general acceptance, while some still regard it as inappropriate and infelicitous. Iyengar takes upon himself the responsibility

of giving the term currency, but denies having invented it. He explains that the term was used as early as 1883 to describe a volume printed in Calcutta containing 'Specimen Compositions from Native Students'. It was later used in reviews and articles. Iyengar states: "I merely gave general currency to the name when, in 1943, I adopted it as the title of my first book on the subject written for the P.E.N. All India Centre." Chalapati Rao, however, claims that it was James Cousins who gave this name to Indian Writing in English.

Justifying the term Indo-Anglian, Iyengar argues that the word "Anglo-Indian" has a racial connotation. It is sometimes used with a snigger, and evokes chee-chee feeling. It cannot be used in any other context like literature. Indo-English is suitable, but cannot be used conveniently both as an adjective as well as substantive. "Indo-Anglian", Iyengar concludes, is reasonably handy and descriptive, and serves our purpose well enough.

V.K. Gokak redefined the term, drawing, thereby, a clear distinction between the terms 'Indo-Anglian' and 'Indo-English'. Indo-Anglian literature comprises the work of Indian writers in English, while Indo-English literature consists of translations by Indians from Indian literature into English.

---

7. Indian Writing, p.3
Of late, there has been a conscious preference for the appellation 'Indo-English' to 'Indo-Anglian'. John B. Alphonso-Karakala argues that Indo-Anglian "would suggest relations between two countries (India and England) rather than a country and a language". But Alphonso-Karakala, like Dorothy Mary Spencer in her *Indian Fiction in English: An Annotated Bibliography* (1960), has included in his study English translations of fiction written originally in Indian languages. Thus ambiguity, if any, in the use of the terms 'Indo-Anglian' and 'Indo-English' arises largely out of the inability of the critic to demarcate clearly the two branches of literature — literature written originally in English and the one translated into English. Following Gokak's differentiation I restrict the appellation 'Indo-English' for the English translations of regional Indian novels and opt for the term 'Indo-Anglian' to refer to Indian writing in English. The present study will, therefore, take up the works of writers, who, though of Indian origin, have written originally in English. All novels translated into English from the regional languages, even when the translation is claimed to have been done by the author himself, have been, thus, excluded from the purview of the study.

Within these confines I have chosen a period of forty years from 1927 to 1967 for the study for obvious reasons. K.S. Venkataramani's *Murugan the Tiller* (1927) is the earliest

---

Indo-Anglian novel to imaginatively render Gandhian ethos, particularly his plea for rural reconstruction, although Gandhi neither appears as a character nor finds a direct mention in the text. R.K. Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967) remains to date the latest novel that treats Gandhian ideas significantly wherein Narayan presents a follower of Gandhi in ludicrous lights and seems to suggest that post-Independence generation has almost rejected Gandhi. Thus the delimitation of the period (1927-67) includes all the major novels written in an atmosphere generated by Gandhi's movements and programmes. Moreover, the chosen period of forty years is a relatively productive period of Indo-Anglian novel and the novels merit critical considerations. Enough time has, of course, elapsed for us to examine the novels published in the period in perspective and with detachment.

The study begins with a brief appreciation of Gandhi's personality, ideals and programmes so as to provide a context and perspective for examining the response of the creative writers in the succeeding chapters. Novelists have been taken up for discussion in a chronological order: for the sake of convenience, K.S. Venkataramani (1890-1972), Mulk Raj Anand (born 1905), R.K. Narayan (born 1906), Bhabani Bhattacharya (born 1906), Raja Rao (born 1909) and Manohar Malgonkar (born 1913) have been examined in separate chapters devoted exclusively to their works. Their creative output and achievements call for such chapterisation. Novels wherein Gandhi figures as a character are discussed in one chapter, whereas another chapter is devoted to such works as have the Gandhian background or the Gandhi image common to all. Because
of the non-availability of standard editions of the works, the available editions have been used and cited.

It is not the purpose of this study to assess the contribution of a novelist to the Indo-Anglian fiction in its entirety or to attempt an exhaustive study of all the Indo-Anglian novels which were published in the period under review. The explicit purpose here is to examine the response of the creative writer to Gandhi and his ideas. The envisaged work involves only the assessment of the fictional treatment of Gandhi. As such, it is neither the intention nor the design of the work to offer a critique on Gandhi, his ideals and programmes or the historical events which are referred to directly or indirectly, although it would be the burden of the study to examine how artistically they have been rendered into novels. The present work is going to be a purely literary study and the tools of assessment would be the tools of literary criticism, particularly of novel as an art form.