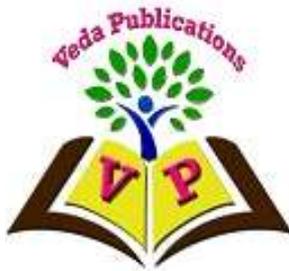


**GANDHISM IN THE WEST**

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*(Asst. Prof. of English, KVR Govt. College for Women, Kurnool (AP))***ABSTRACT**

The paper is an attempt to find the image of Gandhi in the West besides throwing light on his image and the activism and how it influenced the people of the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Mahatma Gandhi's strong resolutions to embrace the path of Non-violence and Satyagraha made him enjoy the universal reputation. His political activism became a role model.

Keywords: *Gandhi's Image, Garb, Media, Dandi Satyagraha, Gandhian Influence.*

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M. K. Gandhi, universally acclaimed as the symbol of anti-colonial struggle, a prophet of love, influenced the West through his tireless advocacy of non-violence and made the westerners emulate him. The 1960s are the golden age for the westerners as they embraced Gandhian ideology for their social movements. Thus his influence had an impact on the fields of education, environmental studies and film making. His garb placed him always in the centre of the lens and at times he was also figured atop public platforms, seated alone or gazing down upon his lieutenants in the Indian agitation. Quite often Gandhi was frozen in a remarkable array of acts such as, cradling an infant, frowning, spinning, walking, reading, dictating, mourning, visiting, recovering from sickness, posing with celebrities, meeting mill

workers, speaking to crowds, raising funds and distributing alms.

The immense craze to represent Gandhi crossed from the newspapers to art gallery. Gandhi's form was seen in statues, plaques, sculptures and painted portraits. Katherine Mayo's *Mother India* quoted Mahatma misleadingly. "His political methods considered 'mystic doctrine of spiritual war using the language of hate besides protesting the theory of love.'" Similarly in late 1930s, British civil servant Lord Meston commented that Mr. Gandhi has been happy in his biographers. Murrel Lester puts it, "All over the world, it is known that Mr. Gandhi stands for the poor, works for the poor, half starves himself for the poor. He has become a poor people in far distant lands a sort of symbol." The U. S. president Harry



Truman honoured Gandhi as a symbol of 'brotherhood and peace.'

The Daily Express also depicted the Mahatma as "nothing less than the personification of a ruthless and fiery rebellion in India." In the U. S. the name of Gandhi was widely understood as a direct symbol of "the anti-colonial struggle." News Week Magazines obituary for the Mahatma agreed that his "toothless grin and bony diapered body has symbolized India itself for 25 years." Western preoccupation with Gandhi's appearance was certainly the occasion for disparagement or ridicule. But it was an opportunity also to press forward with a cultural challenge to explain a choice, to refuse the powerful and to put the British 'out of face.' For a people struggling for self-rule, such victims are not lightly discarded. The 'Gandhi craze' might have trivialized the man and obscured the wider dynamics of the Indian rebellion. But once a symbol, Gandhi could never be fully imprisoned and once a celebrity he could never be completely ignored.

Both the countries the UK and the US were engrossed in Gandhi's activities. Gandhian campaign surfaced out in both societies of UK and US and became the first examples of Satyagraha in the West to stimulate independent attention and even inspire emulation. The image of Gandhi originally misunderstood with respect to his ideas and actions and it took several decades of intellectual exploration that westerners began to experiment with Satyagraha. Americans and Britons were equally shocked by a rebel in dhoti and shawl but intrigued by his saintly vows and oratory. Most of the westerners met him not in an eastern ashram or upon a London street corner but at the homely breakfast table. He was 'front page-top' in the argot of the newsroom, a frequent accompaniment to westerners' morning tea, coffee, toast, cigarettes. Mohandas Gandhi was among the many personalities who were caught up in the relentless circulations. Winston Churchill memorably dubbed him a 'half naked fakir' a phrase widely cited by others.

For Gandhi, the dhoti and shawl were symbols of simplicity and Indianism. He explained to a journalist from the News Chronicle that in India several millions wear a loin cloth. That is why he too wears a loin cloth himself. They call him half-naked.

He does it deliberately in order to identify himself with the poorest of the poor in India. When challenged as to the appropriateness of his attire, the Mahatma took the opportunity to turn the question around. As he rhetorically asked the Daily Herald "When Englishmen visit India, do they forsake their European clothing and adopt our eastern dress, which is much more suitable to the climate?"

It was salt Satyagraha that triggered the most intense and enduring discussion of Gandhi and his methods in the metropolitan world. Sayagraha itself merely reflected the poor human material. It was believed to be the revival of an ancient Hindu practice.

I had resolved that I, Mahatma Gandhi
On saintly toe would daintily tread to Dandi.
Where on the far shores of the Arabian ocean
I'd make the poor salt and make a rich commotion.

At once the Press entire took up the chorus
And pestered every mile that lay before us;
The press entire, becoming shrill and shriller
Published each day some more exciting thriller;
They soon grew indiscreet and indiscreeter,
Sugar was sweet, but contraband salt was sweeter.

(From Sean Scalmer's *Gandhi in the West*)

Gandhi invoked the necessity of education in his campaign for Satyagraha. Gregg translated Mahatma's ideas into the universalizing language of modern psychology in "The Power of Non-violence" wherein he gave the clarity about Satyagraha that his readers found most welcome. In Britain and the US people began to apply Gandhi's methods for the first time; the tools of Satyagraha, crossed from East to West. The campaigns were organized by the political institutions. It is therefore in the design and functioning of specifically non-violent organizations that we might expect to discover more robust form of Gandhian continuity.

In the middle years of 20th century, non-violent westerners inaugurated a clear tradition of protest activity. Its central elements were Gandhian in origin: an appeal to the conscience of wrong doers, an insistence on complete non-violence and a willingness to bear physical assault as legal penalty



without complaint. The sit-ins and boycotts, marches and campaigns of this time were all identified with the birth of a new left. The period is best understood as a mass experiment in the Mahatma way.

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