



**REVISITING GANDHIAN PHILOSOPHY: A CRITICAL STUDY OF R K NARAYAN'S
WAITING FOR THE MAHATMA**

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Abstract

R K Narayan's original "Waiting for the Mahatma" covers in considerable detail the years of political turmoil preceding the Partition of India, taking Mahatma Gandhi as one of its driving characters. The article attempts to dissect how the novel illustrates the role of Gandhi as a political leader and philosophical aide and the impact of his belief system and philosophy on other characters during the Indian freedom development. First, it pinpoints Gandhi's philosophical thoughts as recorded in his own writings and activities and afterward points out how those are integrated into the book. The article also investigates the attitudes of Gandhi's followers (as the characters of the novel) as well as those of the commoners towards his thoughts and activities. Thus, the study aims to offer a text-based analysis of the novel by revisiting Gandhian philosophy focusing, especially, on values of ahimsa, Satyagraha and peaceful resistance.

Keywords: *Gandhian Philosophy, R K Narayan , ahimsa .*

Introduction

Waiting for the Mahatma (1955), written after eight years of India's Partition, is the most political novel by R.K. Narayan (1906-2001) who is considered to be one of the pioneers of South Asian Writing in English. Albeit some of his contemporary novelists such as Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao somewhat brought a picture or presence of Gandhi in their respective novels for example Distant (1935) and Kanthapura (1938). Narayan in this novel presents the Mahatma as a real character, portraying different dimensions of his political and philosophical ideologies. Presenting Mahatma as a character in fiction is very difficult, considering the essentialness and energy of the person himself. Gandhi has been portrayed from several perspectives in the book. However, Narayan who was not a politically dedicated novelist has left the portrayal of Gandhi up to interpretations of the readers. A political thinker and man of activity, Gandhi was not an average philosopher. He survived his philosophy by driving the Indians to accomplish certain moral qualities to struggle against British colonization. His philosophical thoughts took shape as a result of the racial viciousness and persecution during his stay in South Africa from 1893 to 1914. After his visit to London in 1908 as a member of the Indian Delegation, during his return journey to South Africa on the ship he wrote the book Hind Swaraj (1909) in Gujarati (its English translation was published in 1910).

In this book, he sketched his political philosophy by begetting and clarifying the term "Satyagraha". Written in a question-answer format, the book was a reply to "the Indian school of brutality and its prototype in South Africa" (Gandhi, Hind Swaraj 13) who needed public freedom through acts of viciousness in response to provincial savagery. Gandhi thereupon took up peacefulness as his political philosophy throughout his life in any circumstance. He clarified the unique circumstance, "I interacted with every known Indian anarchist in London. Their bravery impressed me, however I felt that their enthusiasm was misguided. I felt that viciousness was no remedy for India's ills, and that her progress required the use of a different and higher weapon for self-protection." (on the same page.). Significantly, Gandhi distinguished savagery as one of social or public ills that would accelerate more viciousness, division, disorder and discrimination and not bring true freedom to Indians. Truth be told, his ideas of peacefulness as an instrument for political resistance against oppression and discrimination got worldwide recognition and could impact several worldwide movements such as the movement for backs driven by Martin Luther King in the US and the anti apartheid struggle in South Africa. Mahatma Gandhi could realize appropriately that the Indians were yet to be prepared morally for achieving and retaining the autonomy. The events before and after the Partition, most particularly his assassination before very long of the Partition testify to the way that most Indians who had joined the struggle for independence were not substantially transformed into Satyagrahis. Thus, what one might ask, was his philosophy inscribed uniquely in books and treatises, not in practice of the masses? Religious hatred against and persecution of minorities in the respective countries of the Indian subcontinent have been rampant ever since the Partition. Indeed, the entire world snared in chaos, brutality and disorder has since a long time ago forgotten the worth of Gandhian philosophy. In this unique circumstance, the article attempts to revisit Gandhi's philosophical thoughts and actions by investigating Narayan's "Waiting for the Mahatma" to make a point that the present world of disorder needs to know about the values of ahimsa, satyagraha and peaceful resistance.

In doing as such, we have separated the present study into two sections. The first section comprises major politico-philosophical thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi drawn principally from his own writings and activities during India's freedom struggle. The second section offers a text based analysis of the novel to assess how far, how elaborately, and how legitimately his philosophical, and political concepts are presented in the message. In doing as such, with reference to the novel, we will look into his speeches, his activities, his followers' attitudes towards his thoughts and actions, and overall reactions of Gandhian philosophy among the ordinary citizens.

Literature Review

Despite the fact that Narayan is the most discussed novelist among his contemporaries, "Waiting for the Mahatma" has remained the less discussed one. Cynthia VandenDriesen in her "R.K. Narayan's Neglected Novel: Waiting for the Mahatma" reflects on several aspects of the clever saying how this particular novel has remained very much unexplored, however it significantly bridges the political scenario before and after the Partition. Fakrul Alam in "Reading R.K. Narayan Postcolonially" states that the book "seems to do a postmortem on the roles played by Indians in their struggle for freedom and their consequence." (Imperial Entanglements 194). S M Hasan has brought up, "The novel distinctively

delineates the nature of Gandhian activation, the "Quit India" crusade, non-cooperation movements, the birth of Indian bureaucracy, and the emergence of neocolonial politicians just after the British left India." (110) Gandhi as a character of the novel has drawn a lot of consideration from the critics and commentators. Considering Narayan's treatment towards the character Gandhi and his views, the critics are sometimes separated as they would see it when they track him down as an ordinary character in the book. However, a top to bottom analysis of the portrayal of Gandhi in this under-explored novel is rare in previous studies. Satish C. Aikant states, "In the work, the portrait of Gandhi is not a point of convergence for the narration of political events or the overall effect of Gandhi on the masses; it is rather the story of the fixation of Sriram for Bharati and his pitiful embrace of Gandhian ideas for her sake". (93) Driesen claims that the novel has "a markedly picaresque quality" since Sriram, the central character does not show any significant change however he is "presented against a constantly evolving background". (364) In this regard, Aikant's remark is worth referencing, "A significant part of the narrative rests on the divergence between Gandhi's teachings and the manner where individuals embrace these in practice". (94) Driesen also points out that through the dubious and scrupulous followers of Gandhi, Narayan offers the reader "an impression of a cross-section of the kinds of responses evoked by Gandhi - skeptical, hypocritical, frankly hostile or simply indifferent". (364) Aikant argues that individuals seemed to be "remaining indifferent to, or simply uncomprehending of, his emphasis on fostering an individual self-awareness and vision and his extraordinary weapons of ahimsa and satyagraha to battle the British rule"; they embraced Gandhi's ideologies just when it suited them or served them a purpose. (96) In the same vein Jasbir Jain mentions how the ever so generous and compassionate Gandhi was very much aware of the hypocrites and opportunists that surrounded him. However, Narayan has been criticized to some degree for treating Gandhi like the hero who attains martyrdom for the sake of the real couple in the novel to track down cheerful completion. In this regard, Jain points out, "Gandhi, in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, is starting to lose his hold over his followers, some of whom get away from his policies towards revolutionary methods, tired of the pacifism of their leader. Furthermore Gandhi knowingly moves towards martyrdom at the hands of his people". (188) Alam points out, "when the movement ends it is easy to see that with the exception of a couple of Indians like Bharati most individuals like Sriram comes across have not changed by any means." (R.K. Narayan and the End of British India 82-83). Driesen has discussed the contrasting characters of the Mahatma and Sriram who, according to him, are a "saint" and a "shrewd" respectively. This parallel treatment of the two heroes in the novel, considering how Gandhi can never be less than a hero, regardless how much gravity he holds in the plot, has made Gandhi's own perspectives and philosophy stowed away from the readers. Exploring the representation of the Gandhian belief system or Gandhi as a character in Indian novels including *Waiting for the Mahatma* Jain concludes that now the focus is on "Gandhi the man". (190) However, he also has not explored finally Gandhi's epistemology and philosophy found in the original which we will feature in our present paper. Therefore, we will make an endeavor to further the discussion on Gandhi's philosophy and its portrayal in *Waiting for the Mahatma*. Allow us first to layout the major aspects of his philosophical ideas.

Theories and Concepts: Gandhi's Philosophy

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "My life is my message" when he was asked to give his message to the world (Burrowes). He was not such a philosopher who might recline against a chair for writing his

philosophical treatise. His philosophy is reflected mostly through his lifestyle, not merely through his written pieces. Precisely speaking, he developed as the most persuasive public leader of Indian struggle for independence through his firm philosophy of peacefulness and dynamic contribution with anticolonial movements in South Africa and India. A broad assortment of scholarly works, cultural rendition and even works in popular culture are accessible admiring or glorifying his philosophy. Criticism and counter arguments against his ideas are also prevalent. However, in any discussion on Gandhi's philosophy, as W.H. Morris-Jones comments, "It is important to grasp Gandhi's character as over every one of that of a man of activity, followed up on and acting, sensitive to the environment and eager to make his mark upon it as well". (17) In the course of his life the term "Gandhism" even appeared conceptualizing his ideas, activities and insights. However, he didn't approve any sect or school of philosophy in his name by asserting that "There is no such thing as 'Gandhism' and I would rather not leave any sect after me" (Beckerlegge 306). He further states, "Indeed, all my philosophy, assuming it very well might be called by that pretentious name, is contained in what I have said". (on the same page. 307). However, his philosophy was predominantly established on two universal concepts such as Satyagraha (hanging on truth) and ahimsa (peacefulness).

Satyagraha

Satyagraha means "clutching truth" or being focused on truth. In the most natural sounding way for Gandhi, Satyagraha is literally clutching Truth and it means, therefore, Truth-force. Truth is soul or spirit. It is, therefore, known as soul force. It excludes the use of savagery because man is not fit for knowing the absolute truth and, therefore, not skilled to punish. (Peaceful Resistance 22) Satyagraha essentially endows its followers with an essence of firmness while urging them to keep away from any form of anger, brutality or force. A person who adopts this lifestyle is known as a Satyagrahi. A Satyagrahi with his obligation to hanging on truth attains a force that he can use against anybody and any force in any circumstance. Gandhi further explicates, "Such a universal force necessarily makes no distinction among kinsmen and strangers, youthful and old, man and lady, friend and adversary." (Non-Violent Resistance 99). Yet, this force never implies any form of physical force as Gandhi strictly maintains, "There is in it no room for viciousness". (on the same page.). Rather, this force can be universally applied through ahimsa or love, which is the source of a Satyagrahi's psychological strength. It is designated "soul-force". Gandhi articulates so clearly, "Love does not burn others, it burns itself. Therefore, a Satyagrahi, for example a common resister, will euphorically suffer even unto passing". (on the same page.). Thus, Satyagraha conforms to democratic practice as Satyagraha by principle does not discriminate among individuals; rather, it is another form of self-sacrifice (a soul force). Besides, a Satyagrahi is charged with adoration, not with hatred. More than this, on different occasions, Gandhi himself elaborated on various dimensions of Satyagraha throughout his life. Gandhi set up ashrams where individuals trained practically in Satyagraha principles. A Satyagrahi was to take vows on certain principles that he/she must continue in his/her day by day, social and political life. The accompanying 11 principles were sent by Gandhi in 1930 from the Yeravda Jail to the members of his Ashram at Sabarmati – "Truth, Nonviolence, Chastity, Nonpossession, Fearlessness, Control of the Palate (craving), Nonstealing, Bread-Labor, Equality of Religions, Anti-unapproachability and Swadeshi." (Non-Violent Resistance 56)

Ahimsa

Ahimsa, a religious virtue in Jainism and Buddhism is one of the principle sources of Gandhi's Satyagraha. Gandhi formed ahimsa into "a modern idea with broad political consequences, as satyagraha" by drawing from both Western sources such as The Bible and Leo Tolstoy and Eastern sources such as the BhagavadGita. ("Satyagraha"). Gandhi who was ever inspired and directed by BhagavadGita wrote a commentary on it and derived the message of ahimsa in the light of his reading the Gita. By elaborating on this verse of the Gita "Accomplish your designated work yet renounce its fruit - be separated and work - have no desire for reward and work", he claims, "This is the unmistakable teaching of the Gita. He who gives up activity falls. He who gives up just the reward rises. In any case, renunciation of fruit not the slightest bit means indifference to the result." (The BhagavadGita: According to Gandhi 17). The philosophical base of Satyagraha also lies in the Gita. Gandhi in formulating his philosophy of Satyagraha borrowed from the verses of the Gita where the three guṇas (modes) such as sattva (goodness), rajas (passion) and tamas (ignorance) are described. (The BhagavadGita: According to Gandhi).

Non-violent Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience

Non-cooperation movement directed by the principles of Satyagraha during 1920s was derived from Gandhi's thought that the British were ready to rule India because of the cooperation of Indians (Hind Swaraj 34). Therefore, keeping up with non-cooperation with the government could be a compelling approach a step further to the way of India's autonomy. He upbraided Western products asserting that Indians were carrying poverty to their own country by purchasing the British products and in this manner Indian cash was being plundered (Hind Swaraj). A method of self-purification for the Indians is start making their own provisions and products. Therefore, the followers of Gandhi were urged to weave their own clothes with the assistance of "charkha", a spinning instrument. About Civil Disobedience in 1930s Gandhi clarified that his common disobedience is of a different nature from that of Henry David Thoreau. He guaranteed that he concocted the possibility of Satyagraha before he ran over Thoreau's essay named "Common Disobedience" (1849). Gandhi declared, The statement that I had derived my concept of common disobedience from the writings of Thoreau is wrong. The resistance to authority in South Africa was very much progressed before I got the essay of Thoreau on common disobedience... At the point when I saw the title of Thoreau's great essay, I started the use of his phrase to disclose our struggle to the English readers. Yet, I observed that even considerate disobedience neglected to pass on the full importance of the struggle. I therefore took on the phrase common resistance. Peacefulness [Satyagraha] was always an integral part of our struggle. (The Collected Works, vol. 67, 400).

Whereas passive resistance is chiefly applied by the oppressed and the aggrieved who can't afford armed or dynamic resistance, peaceful resistance, clarified by Gandhi, is not imagined as "a weapon of the weak.", yet rather a decision of the strongest. He stressed several times that "It is a development planned to replace methods of brutality and a development based entirely upon truth."(NonViolent Resistance 39). Gandhi further clarified the question of breaking law in peaceful noncooperation development, maintaining the self-pride of Satyagrahis - "It is contrary to our masculinity assuming we submit to laws repugnant to our conscience. Such teaching is opposed to religion and means slavery. Assuming the Government were to ask us to go about with no apparel, should we do as such?"(Non-Violent Resistance 38). Thus, Gandhi's philosophy of Satyagraha and ahimsa denotes a force of truth integrated into the peacefulness and non-cooperation movements. The followers of these virtues are supposed to be reborn

with self-purification and be ready for self-sacrifice. Gandhi stated, "Ever since 1921 I have been reiterating two words, self-purification and self-sacrifice. God won't assist him without these two. The world is moved by sacrifice... He (God) insists on the purity of the cause and on sufficient sacrifice therefore." (Non-Violent Resistance 286). Gandhi kept up with his philosophy of Satyagraha, ahimsa and peacefulness during all major upsurge under his leadership, from Swaraj to Non-cooperation to Civil Disobedience to Salt Satyagraha to Call for India's Independence lastly Quit India development. "Waiting for the Mahatma" basically focuses on the Quit India crusade during the Second World War, alongside periodical references to peaceful non-cooperation movements. Allow us now to trace the reflection of Gandhian philosophy in the anecdotal portrayal of political events in the book.

Revisiting Gandhian Philosophy in Waiting for the Mahatma

Like other major novels of Narayan, *Waiting for the Mahatma* is set in the anecdotal town Malgudi. Sriram, the protagonist of the novel is a secondary school graduate who lives with his grandmother after his mother and father passed away. Sriram is minimal informed of the outside world. His immaturity or naivety is apparent in the very first of the clever where he is occupied with conversing with his granny - "It will be your 20th birthday, despite the fact that you act as assuming you are a large portion of that" (Narayan 9). On an occasion he is attracted to Bharati, a girl of his age who is dynamic in Mahatma Gandhi's "Quit India" development, and becomes an activist himself not for his commitment to Gandhi's political philosophy and principles, however for his irresistible attraction to the Gandhian activist Bharati. Narayan seems to experiment with an ordinary folk like Sriram who is engaged with almost every one of the major events prompting Indian independence to underscore whether Gandhian philosophy was ready to transform most Indians. The first arrival of Mahatma Gandhi in the plot of the novel is very dramatic amidst a large number of crowd looking out eagerly on the bank of the River in a South Indian anecdotal city Malgudi. He addresses the crowd who have yet to settle down to focus on his speech. "I notice two men there talking,' blast Gandhi ji's voice. 'It's bad to talk now, when perhaps the one close to you is anxious to listen. In the event that you disturb his hearing, it is one form of himsa.'" (Narayan 28). So, Gandhi is there to speak about ahimsa by disclosing to the crowd how to have a disciplined existence and strengthen moral qualities so that they can accomplish freedom for their country. He firmly states,

We, the citizens of this country, are all soldiers of a non-violent army, but even such an army has to practise a few things daily in order to keep itself in proper condition: . . . But we have a system of our own to follow: that's Ram Dhun; spinning on the charka and the practice of absolute Truth and Non-violence. (Narayan 28).

That is, focusing on his concept of peacefulness and Satyagraha he tried heart and soul to bring about changes in his followers by urging them to change themselves from inside. One can see subterranean insect pioneer notes in Gandhi's clarification of using Hindi while delivering public speeches, "I won't address you in English. It's the language of our rulers. It has enslaved us." (Narayan 27). He always needed to make certain with regards to the pure confidence of his followers. He says, "I need you really to make sure of an adjustment of your hearts before you ever think of asking the British to leave the shores of India.... Assuming I have the slightest suspicion that your heart is not pure or that there is bitterness there, I'd rather have the British stay on. It's the lesser of two evils". (in the same place. 32).

However, against the protest from the British Raj that Indians would not have the option to keep law and control in the country after they left, he showed his firm obligation to his objective of getting the total autonomy for India while being completely dedicated to the principles of Satyagraha. That is the reason, he is putting emphasis on his followers accomplishing moral qualities so that he can tell the British, "Please pass on this country to be overseen or mismanaged by us, that is purely our own business, and return any time you like as our friends and distinguished guests, not as our rulers," (on the same page.). Gandhi could understand individuals' intentions and read their minds (Narayan 80). In the novel Gandhi is on some occasions disturbed with disorder and indiscipline. He tried hard to teach his philosophy of Satyagraha to individuals however most of them were not completely responsive to his call. The novel depicts in several places the tumultuous nature of crowds, which is rather very normal in Indian contexts. The original reads, "The crowd was so noisy that Mahatmaji needed to remonstrate a few times. At the point when he held up his hand the crowd subsided and stood by to listen to him. He said discreetly, "This is sheer lack of order, which I can't praise. Your Chairman is reading something and I am in courtesy bound to know what he is saying. You must all keep calm". (on the same page. 42). Albeit the novel portrays the Mahatma as a character, it does not entirely or chronologically recount to his story, but instead the story of Sriram's peregrination into a confusing world of affection, loss, and politics. Sriram is awed during his first gathering with Mahatma, seeing him as an individual "completing several things at the same time."(Narayan 67). Gandhi himself used to spin his charkha to make his own khaddar clothes. As a busy leader, he is viewed as multitasking –

While his hands were spinning, his eyes perused a letter held before him by another, and he found it possible too to put in a word of welcome to Sriram. Through the back door of the hut many others were coming in and passing out. For each one of them Mahatma ji had something to say. (Narayan 67)

Spinning a certain length is his “most important work” (Narayan 67). He even made his followers take vows that they would make their own khaddar clothes by spinning charka. He tells Sriram,

I'd very much like you to take a vow to wear only cloth made out of your own hands each day.” (ibid.).

Thus, the novel depicts Gandhi as a pragmatic leader and philosopher who used to eat, sleep, walk, talk, listen, spin and do every single human movement and urged his followers to do likewise as no work should be considered inferior. It is not just a method of nurturing democratic spirit in oneself, however becoming self-reliant and growing self-respect in him/her, which is one of the prerequisites to be a Satyagrahi. Most importantly, making own clothes was a typical task for all kinds of people, which denotes egalitarian practice among the Gandhian activists. Besides, the demonstration of weaving clothes by using charkha is one of the symbolic manifestations of Satyagraha personality. Therefore, actually renunciation for Gandhi and self-restraint, are two core values of Satyagraha, is pleasing in the book. Narayan very subtly gives a clue that Gandhi took firm stand for the rights of the untouchables. During his Malgudi crusade he pays a visit to the abodes of the untouchables and spends time with them. The untouchables or out castes are as usual forced to live in hovels outside the town on the banks of the river, which is "probably the worst area in Malgudi town" (Narayan 37). On caste issues Gandhi has been criticized for his inconsistent statements and reluctance to abolish Casteism and Varna system however

he personally didn't practice the rituals of distance. In the novel while Gandhi is offering fruits to a lot of children in Neel Bagh, the palatial building of the Municipal Chairman, he spots a distant kid who is standing apart from the rest, on the very edge of the crowd. Mahatma "had the youthful urchin hoisted beside him on the divan."(Narayan 48). He is "a small dark individual with a protruding tummy and wearing nothing over his body aside from a cast-off knitted vest, grown-up size, loaded with holes, which reached down to his ankles." (on the same page.). This episode invites severe reactions from individuals present there. "The Chairman was bewildered"; his "blood bubbled" and he feels "little inconvenienced with Mahatmaji himself". (on the same page.). To the Chairman it's anything but a problem to show warmth to the poor, however in no circumstance he could tolerate the presence of "a dirty kid, an unapproachable". (on the same page.). This reaction results from strict adherence to Casteism that most Indian Hindus couldn't disregard. Sriram's grandmother also shows the same reaction, hoping that Gandhi "tried to bring untouchables into the temples" (on the same page. 62). Despite the fact that Gandhi was confronted with severe opposition from Vaishnavas and other radical Hindus, he made attempts to bring about reforms regarding the existing caste system. SujayBiswas asserts, "In the two words and actions, Gandhi attacked, distanced in ways that was radical for a 'caste Hindu'himself". (71) It won't be irrelevant to specify that differing from Gandhi on the caste issue, Babasaheb Ambedkar professed the end of the entire system by "distinguishing the problem as the "symptom" of the entire system, the symptom which must be resolved via abolishing the entire system."(Zizek). Be that as it may, Gandhi acknowledged the system as essential and basic, calling the outcastes or untouchables euphemistically "Harijans" (children of God) and "permitting them to 'experience passionate feelings for themselves' in their embarrassing personality, to acknowledge their degrading work as a respectable necessary social task, to perceive even the degrading nature of their work as a sign of their sacrifice, of their readiness to do the dirty occupation for society." (in the same place.). In "Waiting for the Mahatma" Narayan projects a sense of humour into Gandhi's character to show that he was a man living on this very earth. At the point when Sriram, in his natural clumsiness, says, 'Yes. My grandmother is very old.' Mahatma replies with humour and individuals start snickering.

"Yes, she must be, otherwise how might you call her a grandmother?" People snickered, Sriram too participated in this laughter out of politeness."(Narayan 69).

Besides, Gandhi enjoys the organization of children. When in the large house of the Municipal Chairman he is offered fresh oranges, he beckons to a young man to come nearer. The other boys promptly follow him and Mahatma offers every one of them oranges. The tray is soon vacant and more oranges are supplied. The Chairman feels upset because "The occasion was forming into a children party."(Narayan 47). Gandhi's sacred and saintly picture is also provided in the book. He could impact and mesmerize individuals with his strong personality. His silence portrayed in the novel would assist the readers with understanding the gravity of his character (Narayan 69). Besides, a sort of tranquility and spiritual harmony is created by his presence. Sriram is fascinated and charmed by the serenity reflected through Gandhi's observation on the excellence of nature. (on the same page. 68). At the point when Sriram finds Bharati entirely associated with Mahatma Gandhi's cause, he makes up his brain to join the development. However, he at last becomes aware of his limitations when he is confronted with something philosophical requiring full concentration, commitment and self-sacrifice.

He could not grasp what he [Gandhi] was saying, but he looked rapt, he tried to understand and concentrate. This was the first time he felt the need to try and follow something, the first time that he found himself at a disadvantage. . . . This was the first time he was assailed by doubts of his own prowess and understanding. (Narayan 30).

Sriram then, at that point, gets the message from Gandhi's speeches and from Bharati that he has to tell "the absolute truth and nothing less than that and just that" in any circumstance (Narayan 71). Besides, he has learned that he can't harm anyone and do anything excessive; he should keep up with self-restraint since Gandhi insists on controlling the gazes of youngsters. (in the same place. 29). However, it does not seem so easy to Sriram to leave his home and grandmother and join the peaceful resistance. At the point when Mahatma asks him, "What precisely would you like to do?", he loses his sense of reason, being jam-packed with "a rush of ideas" and can't form a sentence to offer a response. (on the same page. 70). Then, at that point, finally his subconscious desires for getting Bharati"jerked the sentence out of his lips, and he said, 'I like to be where Bharati is.'" So, Bharati is his definitive inspiration whose name (Bharati, "the daughter of India") was given by the Mahatma after her father was martyred during 1920s non-cooperation movement(on the same page, 58-59). Thus, it is significant that Sriram guiltlessly admits the truth that he is with the Mahatma because of Bharati and her organization. Sriram becomes a changed man in Chapter Two of the book. He spends a lot of time with Bharati and Gopad getting instructed and trained in Gandhian principles. He is currently "an accredited member of the group" (Narayan 87). For the first time in his life he visits "real villages" and is occasionally treated with respect by the villagers. (in the same place.). He learns to spin the charkha and weave his own khaddar clothes. In this phase of the Quit India crusade individuals were asked to burn the foreign goods in their possession in protest against the British Raj. Getting completely engaged with the mission, Sriram burns his old clothes and firmly declares, "I won't ever again wear clothes spun by machinery". (in the same place. 99). He writes to the Mahatma, "Burnt my old clothes today. Spun 40 count. Bharati satisfied."And gets a prompt reply from him, "Very pleased. Keep it up. God bless you". (on the same page.). Through self-sacrifice his heart gets purified and he discovers his self that liberates him from his existential crisis. "He believed he had seen and reached another plane of existence". (on the same page.). Bharati is always there to show him spinning, yet in addition numerous other things. It is Mahatma Gandhi who truth be told instructs Bharati to prepare Sriram to be a true Satyagrahi. Sriram is even advised to consider her as his "Guru" however he seems reluctant to take Bharati seriously. (on the same page. 100-101). Nevertheless, they make their political and philosophical journey together. Sriram takes shelter in an unwanted sanctuary on "the higher reaches of Mempi Hills" to keep away from consideration from the police. Presently he is not with the Mahatma but rather he feels that his movements are being observed by him; that is, he can feel the presence of the Mahatma (Narayan 94). One day Bharati comes to inform him that the Mahatma has been in prison since the August of 1942, the year when Gandhi declared the Quit India Movement (on the same page. 100). She further instructs him to go for the Quit India mission, providing him with a jar of paint and a brush". (on the same page. 100-103). By writing "Quit India" on every divider, every tree and every spot of near and far villages Sriram tries to make the British understand that they are not required in India; they must leave India. Sriram gets blended experiences of proceeding with Quit India. He is sometimes opposed, ridiculed and surprisingly instructed by the loyalists (who were faithful to the British Raj) and the villagers; again he gets respect in some places. The original gives very details of the reactions and opposition of the villagers through some humorous descriptions in Chapter Two. For

instance, a town teacher advises Sriram to write "Calm India" by adding an extra "e" before "t" instead of "Quit India" because he thinks what individuals "need in this country is not a "Quit" program, however a "Peaceful India". (Narayan 104). Nevertheless, Sriram goes on "getting things done in a machine like manner", entering forests and villages to pass on Mahatma's message. (on the same page. 109). Sometimes, he writes, "Quit India" however "it was trailed by loyalists altering it with: 'Don't' or an 'I' before 'Quit'". (in the same place.). Sriram feels confused and disheartened by observing the sheer carelessness of the commoners to the grand cause of Indian freedom. His frustration is thus presented in the book, "All his own action seemed to him meaningless. He should return to the comfortable isolation of Kabir Street ..." (on the same page. 124) On the other hand, Sriram's encounter with Mathieson, an English owner of tea estates reveals the reaction of 'Quit India' among the British traders and the political and economic reality of India. However Sriram all over utters Gandhi's message that "you must leave India", Mathieson makes his argument that the English would rather not quit India; rather some of them think that it is their right to live in India as long as they wish since they are creating jobs for poor Indians (Narayan 111-115). In response to his rationale, Sriram, however, retorts in angry tone, "You are doing it for your own profit. You think we must be your servants and nothing else,... Aren't you afraid? You are isolated, assuming the Indians choose to throw you out, it may not be safe". (on the same page. 114).

The novel presents Sriram as a pure person. On an occasion, he becomes aroused by Bharati's tender touch and shows his madness to have her at any cost (Narayan 131). The outburst of Sriram's repressed desire proves that he is like some other people having a wide range of weakness and desire. At the point when Sriram insists on marrying her as early as possible, she tells him that without Mahatma's consent she can't marry him. In a way that would sound natural to her, "Bapu has better things to do than tracking down a husband for me. Indeed, as Gandhi would like to think, "A couple of Indians need to marry at the present time [the season of public movement]" (Mehta 55). A close reading of the novel reveals that Sriram differs with the Mahatma in his attitude towards ladies. Sriram, like most Indian men considers ladies to be just wives. (Narayan 100-101). However, Gandhi with his philosophical thoughts and activism contributed greatly to the mission of female training and women empowerment in India. In the most natural sounding way for him, "When lady, whom we call abala, becomes sabala, every one of those who are helpless will turn out to be powerful." (The Collected Works, vol. 70, 206). After the Quit India development became widespread across the country and all the Congress leaders including Mahatma Gandhi were imprisoned, Gandhi from the prison issued instructions for his followers to surrender to the nearby police headquarters instead of resorting to viciousness. At the point when Bharati brings Mahatma's message to Sriram and informs him that she will surrender to the police headquarters, Sriram for the first time refuses to submit to Gandhi's order with an excuse for seeing his grandmother before going to prison. He then, at that point, encounters with a mysterious character Jagadish who comes to visit him in his stowing away and introduces himself as a public worker. With a promise to make arrangements for meeting Bharati secretly in the Slaughter House prison he instigates Sriram to do underground activities. Sriram feels fortunate and impressed when he hears Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's voice on a rundown radio brought by Jagadish, "Men of the Indian Army, be patriots. Assist us with freeing our dear Motherland. Large numbers of your friends are here, having enlisted in the Indian National Army which is poised for attack on your borders. We are ready. We shall soon be across, and afterward you can join the battle on our side." (Narayan 148-149). Jagadish who claims to be a follower

of Subhas Bose speaks very prudently about Gandhi. He does not say that Gandhi is wrong however tries to justify his direction by clarifying that as Gandhi's definitive objective is freedom, the means should be devised suitably by the activists. He argues, "It is not his line. In any case, when the results turn out satisfactorily, I am sure he'll say, 'You progressed admirably, my kid'."(Narayan 169). However, Sriram feels dicey. He can't think independently about the Mahatma's political philosophy without the assistance of Bharati. He admits, "I'm not sure. Just Bharati knows precisely what Mahatmaji will say or think ... " (on the same page.).

Conclusion

Waiting for the Mahatma is a rewarding read as the major historical facts regarding India's freedom and subsequent events in the presence of Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophy are presented in a clear narrative. Through the novel, Narayan suggests that after the Partition the message of the great leader was cast aside by the personal passion and self-interest of a large number of his followers. The consequence of deviation from Gandhi's idealism implies the post-partition turmoil of religious riots, hunger, and unscrupulous politicians like Natesh and Jagadish. However, Sriram's portrayal as an ordinary Indian man turning into a man of self-restraint and self-sacrifice through an exciting journey of self-discovery is very comprehensive. Gandhi's presence as one of the major characters in the original opens up scope for revisiting Gandhian philosophy. Besides, one can appropriately guarantee that Narayan's portrayal of a female protagonist Bharati with great success conveys Gandhian philosophy in the most steadfast manner. Setting her in all the process of freedom and naming her Bharati symbolizing India itself. Narayan presents a dependable follower of Gandhian teaching unlike other characters of the book. Thus, the article has examined how Gandhi has had an all-pervasive presence throughout the novel with his dynamic characteristics and ideologies that he utilized in trim youthful minds such as Bharati, Gopad and Sriram. What's more, it has brought out the major philosophical traits that Gandhi preached such as Satyagraha, ahimsa, his treatment of unapproachability, and lady empowerment, etc. It has also directed out his dedication and responsibility towards his philosophy of peacefulness, love and self-sacrifice that would earn him respect and reach him to his objective of establishing a British-free India as well as an India that can govern itself. Through literary analysis of the novel this paper has illustrated that Mahatma Gandhi was a cordial, compassionate and practical man with his sense of humor which he so suitably put to use now and again. We have endeavored to do justice to R K Narayan's novel in our study of its characters including Mahatma Gandhi himself and reached the conclusion that the text. It is indeed a mirror reflecting different dimensions of Gandhian philosophy at its best. At last, we couldn't yet reiterate what Gandhi asserted with regards to himself, that his life was his message.

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