

## Gandhian Influence

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*The Revolt of 1857 can be considered as the beginning of the protest against British rule in India. The time span of ninety years, from 1857 to 1947, can be regarded as the period of Indian freedom movement. The particular time period and its sentiments have been captured and reflected by many Gujarati writers in their literary works. The freedom spirit is further bloomed in literature after Gandhi's arrival and comparatively reflected more in the writings of authors impacted by Gandhi.*

**I**n *Sudharak Yug* (Reformist Era), Dalpatram wrote *Hunnarkhan ni Chadai* (Hunnarkhan's Invasion) and expressed his longing for freedom. Narmad has coined the word *Swadesh-abhiman* (The pride for the nation) and raised the zeal of people by writing— *Ya hom! karine pado fatheh chhe aage*. (Move forward. Victory is yours) Further, the *Pandit Yug* (Scholar Era) was a little passive in this regard and largely influenced by the new wave of education.

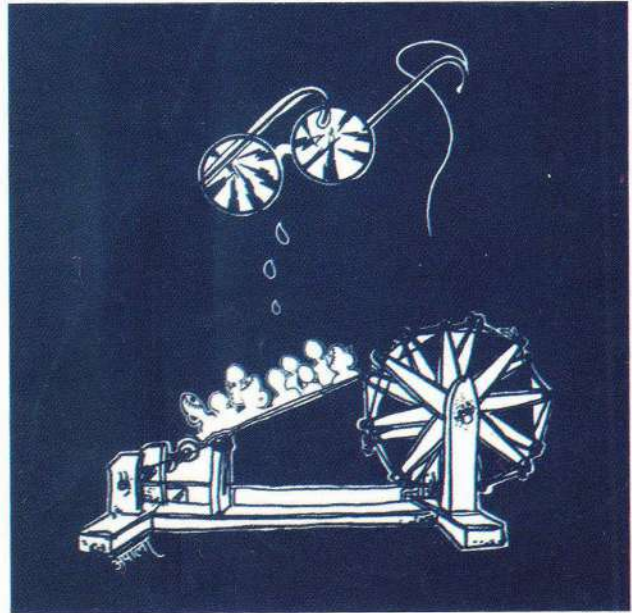
Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa in 1915 and founded Sabarmati Ashram in 1917 and Gujarat Vidyapith in 1920. These two institutions have played a pivotal role to initiate the freedom struggle in Gujarat. Many great scholars and writers such as Umashankar Joshi, Sundaram, Pandit Sukhlalji, Muni Jinvijayji, and Kakasaheb Kalelkar, were associated with Gujarat Vidyapith and contributed immensely to the field of Gujarati literature. Moreover, Zaverchand Meghani, Krishnalal Shridharani, Ramanlal V. Desai, etc., have also echoed the spirit of freedom struggle in their literary works.

Under the influence of Gandhian thoughts and the influence of Kakasaheb Kalelkar, Umashankar Joshi has penned several poems. Many of them reflect his quest for freedom and sometimes they come with agony. The poet interrogates in the poem *Gulam* (The Slave),

*Hun Gulam?  
Svatantra prakruti tamam  
Srushtibag nu amul ful  
Manavi Gulam! – Gangotri*

(Am I a Slave?  
The entire nature is free  
The precious flower of nature  
And Human is a slave!)

Umashankar Joshi, Kakasaheb Kalelkar, Sundaram, etc., have left their formal education and joined the freedom movement, and during this journey, they underwent imprisonment as well. At Visapur jail, Umashankar Joshi has written a one-act play collection *Sapna bhara* (The Stacks of Snake). In the poem, *Ek Chusayela gotala ne joyi*, the poet introduces his wish for becoming a tree of freedom.



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*Gandhi Yug* (Gandhi Era) was the era of Umashankar Joshi and Sundaram. The latter expresses his outrage in the verse:

*Ghanuk ghanu bhangavu,  
tu ghan uthav mari bhujja,  
Ghanuk ghanu todavu,  
tu ghan utav mari bhujja. – Kavya Mangala*

(Many things are to be destroyed;  
you uphold hammers, my arms  
Many things are to be demolished;  
you uphold hammers, my arms.)

*Sindhudo* poetry collection by Zaverchand Meghani— whom Gandhiji has acknowledged as ‘Rashtriya Shayar’, was captured by the British Government. *Sindhudo* was one of the finest examples of Gujarati literature that expressed the sentiments upfront. He voices out blatantly:

*Hajaro Varshani Juni Amari vedanao  
Kaleja chirati kampavati am bhaykathao*

(The age-old sufferings of us  
Painful and disturbing miseries of us.)

Other than poetries, the essence of freedom struggle was also caught in novels and plays. One of the remarkable novels in this regard is *Bharelo Agni* (The Fire Within) by Ramanlal V Desai. The novel was written with the backdrop of the 1857 freedom movement, though the central character of the novel, Rudradatta was influenced by Gandhian thoughts. The title itself is very suggestive as it represents the hidden agony of Indians against the British Raj. The spark within people was ignited by Gandhian thoughts and finally resulted in the form of a freedom movement. Another important novel is *Padar na Tirath* (Pilgrim places at the outskirts of the village) written by Jayanti Dalal. The novel revolves around a protest against the British government. Although it depicts violence, it also provides a subtle example of public agitation against the government.

***Mangal Pandey is a play by Jayant Khatri illustrating the 1857 Revolt. This is one of the noteworthy plays of Gujarati Literature depicting Mangal Pandey as a protagonist.***

Likewise, the novel *Padar na Tirath* turns out to be one of the most remarkable novels in Gujarati literature. The central character, Gopal in *Zer to Pidha Chhe Jani Jani* by Manubhai Pancholi ‘Darshak’ depicts glimpses of Gandhi; Darshak himself was also an active participant in the freedom struggle.

The plays *Zabak Jyot* by Krishnalal Shridharani and *Aaggadi* (The Train) by C C Mehta portray the tyranny of British rule. The play *Aaggadi* symbolises the exploitation carried out by the British. *Mangal Pandey* is a play by Jayant Khatri illustrating the 1857 Revolt. This is one of the noteworthy plays of Gujarati Literature depicting Mangal Pandey as a protagonist. The play revolves around strategies and plannings of the Revolt by Mangal Pandey, Nana Saheb Peshwa, and others against the British. During the freedom struggle, the world witnessed two World Wars. During this period, the tribal community of Gujarat also started protesting against the British Government. One of the tribal uprisings is known as *Mangarh Vighrah*. The play *Mangadh* has been written about this rebellion and has also been performed.

*Aathamu Delhi* (The Eighth Delhi) by Krishnalal Shridharani also depicts the agitation against the British Government. The poet wishes for the independence of the eighth Delhi which has been ruled by seven empires. In Pannalal Patel’s short-story *National Savings*, the native villagers are economically exploited by the British and the protagonist of the story, Ravaji, protests uniquely against injustice.

Many works of art have been written portraying Gandhiji, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and other freedom fighters. However, most of these plays are character-based. Three early eras of Gujarati literature— Sudharak Yug (Reformist Era), Pandit Yug (Scholar Era), and Gandhi Yug (Gandhi Era)— echo the ethos of the Indian freedom struggle and it has been reflected in various literary works. The freedom spirit further bloomed in literature after Gandhi’s arrival and comparatively reflected more in the writings of authors impacted by Gandhi. □