

review is well elaborated, leaving no questions unaddressed as to the motivation behind the project. The conclusion could perhaps have served better as an introduction to better ease the reader into the deep recesses of literary anger, instead of saving the best for the last. The volume also benefits from the inclusion of an original perspective on *Natyasastra*, and perhaps (along with Stauffer's work), could have benefitted even more from addressing the more feminine forms of anger coming from either the literary greats (who, in this volume, are all men, except Brontë) or even better, women philosophers and theorists, which is why it seems as though the burden of the virile, bestial and sublime anger falls on men of intellect alone. Overall, the volume is not only a welcome addition to Anger Studies, but also one of the very few volumes that can be found on the same, within the realm of literary studies.

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GANDHI AND THE IDEA OF SWARAJ. By Ramin Jahanbegloo. New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2023. 113 pp.

“Gandhi’s project, therefore, was to transform the contingency of all the individual moments of the path of spiritual self-cultivation, political maturation, and moral growth into a historical necessity. This enterprise was not understood by him only in a sense of recalling moments of glorious Indian past, but also an effort to construct a future that opened up room for further epistemic diversity and civic toleration. This was not mere idealism.” (Jahanbegloo 23).

In his text *Gandhi and the Idea of Swaraj*, the author Ramin Jahanbegloo takes upon himself to look into the intricacies of Gandhian thought while situating them within a particular relation of human existence. This relation is drafted into a fundamental design of what M K Gandhi termed as *swaraj*. Indeed, *swaraj* was/is a design, both political and personal in praxis, outwardly manifestable from within the materiality of an anti-colonial struggle as it borders upon the contentions of a nation (particularly during the post-colonial times) or within what may constitute nationhood. It threatens its conceptualization in synonymous terms with political independence and yet admits to a ‘spirit’ beyond such a reductive definition. ‘Swaraj’, to Gandhi, is practiced in life, in actions, intentions, thoughts and thus has an ‘everyday’ resonance to it. Hence the term posits itself on the questions of sovereignty, of the self, the other, the nation and all those matrices that lay within these. This very question around sovereignty musters the central thrust in Jahanbegloo’s text as he explores the myriad relations which exist between sovereignty and *swaraj*.

The text is neatly divided into five chapters with an introductory note and a conclusion. The introduction engages with two of the most constant and vital themes in Gandhi: that of experimentation and that which concerns the idea of ‘truth’. This section explores the various nuances of Gandhi’s belief systems, if they could be condensed into a system at all, in relation to his socio-cultural and anti-colonial understanding. Jahanbegloo problematizes Gandhi’s notion of ‘truth’ which has largely been conceived as an “outcome of a human experience and not necessarily a predicate of principles of a system of thought...” but finds an “universalizable” aspect of it which, as he argues, is by no means “exhaustive”. The author denies Gandhi to be a philosopher in the stricter connotation of the term but finds “epistemic humility” across his literary (speeches and writings) corpus which, he argues, revolves around a politics of “patience”. Jahanbegloo rightly notes, as Akeel Bilgami did, that Gandhi had refused to ‘theorize’ his ideas and indoctrinate his followers with them. Gandhi was the figure of the ‘exemplary’ who might be imitated to apprehend his values. In this discussion, Gandhian

ideas on self-governance is posited in relation to the discourses of European enlightenment philosophers like Kant and Montaigne which also expands into his anxiety of cognitive enslavement both in the contexts of epistemology and within the domain of political realities.

This anxiety, to the author, defines Gandhi's 'politics with conscience'; that which he discusses in the first chapter of his text. The chapter, entitled as "Politics with Conscience: Parrhesia and Maturity", traces back the forms of discussion and debate during the Greco-Roman classical period. He explores the forms of democratic practices in Greek city-states, particularly Athens, and the culture of what he records as 'truth-telling'. Such truth-telling, known as *parrhesia* in Greek, was eulogized in Athens and Jahanbegloo finds a suitable successor of such cultural ethos in Gandhi. The author re-reads sections from figures like Socrates and Pericles in this context and marks the curious, almost obsessive relation of truth to politics in M K Gandhi.

The second chapter, "Swaraj: Empathetic Emancipation and Common Humanity" proposes to look into values like empathy, toleration, courage, active but non-violent protestation in relation to sacrifice and suffering and the possibilities of undercutting the divides which exist between personal and political spheres of life. These issues have been explored in relation to the greater question of what may concepts like 'freedom' or 'independence'. The author notes that *swaraj* is not synonymous to any of these two terms. This insufficiency of language to define what *swaraj* meant to Gandhi leaves more room to inquire for a more inclusive and a more experiential thought-form which would remain for a time to come but with its seeds in the present. Such experiences, as Gandhi himself reiterated, are not abstract but collected from quotidian incidents and from their impressions which are casted on the self. Such impressions are subjected to both the test of conscience and reason (to Gandhi, reason and conscience bordered upon one another) and thus the author attempts to locate it with a Socratic methodology. This forms the deeper part of his pursuit in the third chapter entitled "Satyagraha: Socratic Self-Examination and Nonviolent Citizenry".

Jahanbegloo's examination culminates in what he calls the "anti-political politics of Gandhi" which, to him, is the manifestation of one's own conscience. The author cites the Czech artist-cum-president's essay "Politics and Conscience" to emphasize on the requirement of 'dissent' as the "opportunity" and "duty" to testify and apprehend every experience. He draws in a careful but curious psychological possibility of relating the (un/sub)conscious layers of human mind with the values which both stem out from then only to govern them in turn. In this chapter, "Anti-Political Politics and Internal Democracy", the author perhaps puts up the most significant part of his argument where he argues for an idea of "shared sovereignty" in Gandhi. This sovereignty establishes its variability in striking a dialogue with the self, the 'other' and the government. The final chapter is a detailed elucidation of the possibilities at such politics which he believes to lay in the Gandhian 'moral obligation' to disobey and protest. Almost echoing Levinas' ethical encounter, the author finds 'care' (notably a Heideggerian term) as central to the politics of Gandhi. In conclusion, all these facets of Gandhi's moral economy are condensed into the possibility of a realization; that of an internal unity of all beings.

This text has attempted to look into the deeper nuances of Gandhi's thought as it refers back to a significant corpus of Gandhi's essential writings. However, the most important contribution of the text may lay in its subtle resonances which engage in a dialogue with many theorists/philosophers and Gandhian scholars and spearhead it further. For instances, Jahanbegloo's notion of 'shared sovereignty' in Gandhi may speak back to Ajay Skaria's understanding of 'unconditional equality' and the dismantling of the self as a rigid or composite being. Jahanbegloo notes that sovereignty of the self is always in question with the sovereignty of others and of the whole cultural spirit within mankind. Similarly, the author discusses bravery (which Gandhi himself discusses a few times to contest the validity of non-violence) which adds on to Skaria's notions of 'immeasurable suffering' both for the othered figure and for truth. Another instance may be noted in Akeel Bilgrami's understanding of Gandhi as the exemplary and not the political leader/teacher that one conventionally finds in a statesman. The 'openness' of Gandhian thought that Jahanbegloo discusses in detail, quite

into a recurrent theme, may re-define Satish Acharya's perspective towards what Acharya calls as the "normative thought" in Gandhi or what Shasheej Hedge's marks as the notion of writing as opposed to philosophy (or judgement) in Gandhi. Finally, the very significant aspect of what the author calls as Gandhi's "anti-political politics" may be deliberated in conjunction with Reinhard Fred Dallmyr's optimism regarding the 'future' of democracy.

Therefore, this text is an important contribution to farther original and critical discourse in Gandhian scholarship and an attempt to reflect on the politics of democracies which seems so important in contemporary terms.

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THE MORAL IMAGINATION OF THE MAHABHARATA. By Nikhil Govind. New Delhi: Bloomsbury, 2022. 172 pp.

In the timeless expanse of Indian literature, the *Mahabharata* stands as a monumental epic, a narrative tapestry woven with threads of virtue, vice, and the intricate dance of destiny. In the scholarly voyage undertaken by Nikhil Govind in *The Moral Imagination of the Mahabharata*, the timeless verses of the *Mahabharata* are transmuted into a nuanced exploration of the moral imagination, with a particular emphasis on the quartet of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha*. As the author deftly navigates the labyrinthine corridors of this ancient narrative, the reader is beckoned into a contemplative odyssey that transcends time, resonating with echoes of ethical dilemmas and existential quandaries that remain as pertinent today as they did millennia ago. With erudition as his compass and the literary tradition of *Mahabharata* as his literary kaleidoscope, Govind invites us to traverse the landscape of righteousness, material prosperity, desire, and spiritual liberation, challenging our perceptions and beckoning us to engage with the profound ethical calculus that animates the heart of this epic tale.

The book is thematically organised into four chapters based on the quartet of the primary goals of human existence, i.e., *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha*. This book adds to the extensive spectrum of critical discourse on the *Mahabharata*, however, what sets it apart from the rest is that in dealing with the four-fold values of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha*, the author does not presume the terms to be self-evident. Govind engages in a critical investigation of these concepts as he argues that contrary to the popular notion, nothing about the quartet is fixed in stone. In fact, these terms are fluid in their functionality and are contingent on the context they appear. In the introduction to this book, Govind highlights the centrality of the four-fold values in the narratological schema of the *Mahabharata* by stating that Vyasa intended *shanta rasa* and *moksha* to be the primary objectives of the narrative. "The ultimate meaning of the *Mahabharata* thus appears very clearly: the two subjects intended by the author [Vyasa] as primary are the *rasa* of peace and human goal of liberation" (1). However, unlike Vyasa, Govind professes that each of the four-fold values holds equal importance within the narratological framework of the *Mahabharata*.

The primary thesis of this book expounds that though the quartet of life goals may appear, at a cursory glance, to be in contradiction to one another, they are, in fact, complimentary to each other. The inherent conflictual tendencies of the four-fold values stem from their soteriological orientation in case of *dharma* and *moksha*, on one hand, and the worldly/materialistic orientation of *artha* and *kama*, on the other hand. The inherent contradictions of the quartet engender the moral anxieties that permeate the text of the *Mahabharata*. As Govind ponders, "Are these two aims — especially