



## Demystifying the Sainly Image of Gandhi: A Rhetorical Reading of Orwell's "Reflections on Gandhi"

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### Abstract

This paper analyses George Orwell's essay "Reflections on Gandhi" to explore how Orwell dwells on Gandhi's contradictory character traits between his saintly ideals and the pragmatic needs of humanism. This paper argues that Orwell intends to justify Gandhi as a humanist politician by demystifying the saintly image crafted through his physical attributes, autobiographical narratives, and the mainstream political discourse. To discuss this issue, the present study has made a rhetorical reading of the text and relies on the method of textual analysis. The findings of the study suggest that Orwell strategically employs persuasive techniques, including timely arguments, authentic portrayal of positions, evidence-based logical reasoning, and stylistic patterns to convey his perspective of humanist Gandhi effectively. Finally, this paper contributes to have a deeper understanding of his critique of Gandhi's persona and the broader implications to the political discourse such as Gandhism.

**Keywords:** Humanism, Gandhism, sainthood, rhetoric

### Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi, revered as an influential political leader, a champion of India's independence, and a proponent of 'Gandhism,' has captivated the attention of scholars worldwide and the general public alike. This fascination transcends geographical and cultural boundaries, drawing interest from both non-Western and Western audiences. Veena Rani Howard aptly notes that scholarly discourse on Gandhi often categorizes him into three distinct personas: "[a] political leader, a nonviolent revolutionary, or a spiritual figure" (380). Such depictions of him have formed the cornerstone of much of the existing literature on Gandhi. The extensive body of work in Gandhi's studies explores a multitude of themes, including his advocacy of nonviolent resistance, his moral character, acts of self-sacrifice, controversial aspects of his life, and his persona as a saintly figure, among others. Amidst this vast array of scholarship, George Orwell emerges as a scholar whose distinctive approach challenges conventional perceptions of Gandhi. Through his essay "Reflections on Gandhi," Orwell delves

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beneath the surface of the iconic ‘Mahatma’ image, unveiling the multifaceted nature of Gandhi’s personality eluded in the conventional analysis. Diverging from the typical narratives that often portray Gandhi as a saintly figure, solely focused on nonviolence and spirituality, Orwell’s essay depicts the complexities of his character attributes evidenced by the contradictory choices of his life’s principles and actions.

Lydia Fakundiny offers an insightful interpretation of Orwell’s unconventional approach in presenting Gandhi, characterizing it as “one mind resisting the conventional, the orthodox, the reductive views of its subject, a mind capacious and supple enough to honor the political achievements of a man whose basic values it dismantles and rejects” (297). Similarly, G. Douglas Atkins echoes this sentiment, describing Orwell’s portrayal of Gandhi as unconventional and finding both the saintly and human depictions of Gandhi as problematic. He argues, “I am inclined to expect a review; what I get is more capacious and more telling, the famous and lionized Indian figure starkly revealed as more narrower and limited than we thought. The true hero here is not Gandhi but the essayist himself, although Orwell pulls that off without a hint of either arrogance or presumption” (182). He further assesses the success of Orwell as: “The true hero here is not Gandhi but the essayist himself” (182). Both of these sources highlight Orwell’s achievements in conducting a meticulous analysis of Gandhi’s life and gathering evidence from both personal (his relation to his wife, his job as a lawyer in Africa, his aptitude for learning English or music, and his embrace of Hinduism) and political (his nonviolent in resistance campaigns, handling of Hindu-Muslim polarity, and his relationship with the British government) dimensions to portray Gandhi’s contradiction. By presenting such a comprehensive array of evidence, Orwell challenges the conventional portrayal of Gandhi and prompts a re-evaluation of his legacy.

Despite the praise for Orwell’s incisive critique, neither source examines what makes Orwell a ‘true hero’ (as argued by Atkins) in the light of a detailed analysis of the rhetorical strategies employed in the essay. This gap in scholarship presents an opportunity to explore how Orwell crafts his argument and persuades the readers to reconsider Gandhi’s image. Specifically, this study aims to investigate the rhetorical strategies that bolster Orwell’s critique of Gandhi and establish him as a significant voice in the discourse surrounding the critique of the iconic political figure.

To address this research gap, the paper sets out to explore the following question: What rhetorical strategies does Orwell employ to effectively challenge conventional perceptions of Gandhi and present a nuanced interpretation of the iconic political figure? To answer this question about Orwell’s use of rhetoric in “Reflections on Gandhi,” the present paper makes a rhetorical analysis of the text and aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of Orwell’s persuasive techniques and their impact on reshaping historical narratives.

### **Theory of Rhetoric and Orwell’s “Reflections on Gandhi”**

This paper draws upon theoretical concepts from rhetorical studies underpinning the constitutive elements of a text. These elements encompass a range of rhetorical components, including Kairos, ethos, logos, and pathos, as well as considerations of structure and style. Moreover, these theoretical elements intersect with other crucial aspects of rhetorical situations, such as the rhetor, audience, text, purpose, and contexts. By synthesizing these approaches, this paper aims to comprehensively understand Orwell’s persuasive strategy in “Reflections on Gandhi.”

The theoretical foundations of these rhetorical entities trace back to the classical thinker Aristotle, who defines rhetoric as “an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion” (Kennedy 78). Building upon Aristotle’s framework,

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca advance the theory of rhetoric with their concept of 'the new rhetoric,' which focuses on "the study of the discursive techniques allowing us to induce or to increase the mind's adherence to the theses presented for its assent" (4). Central to their theory is recognizing the audience's importance, emphasizing the necessity of fostering a 'meeting of minds' between the rhetoric and the audience to effectively advance arguments toward their intended goals.

### ***Kairos Analysis: Rhetorical Situation***

To contextualize a discourse, rhetorical theory provides a valuable tool known as 'Kairos,' a Greek term signifying the 'timeliness of an argument.' From this perspective, a compelling argument is characterized by a harmonious alignment with the broader rhetorical situation, encompassing its relevance and appropriateness within the specific context in which it is presented. In essence, every discourse, whether literary or non-literary, emerges within its unique socio-political and historical-cultural milieu. Various threads and exigencies within these contexts act as catalysts, compelling a rhetor to articulate and engage in a particular discourse that he or she intends to.

In terms of its meaning and significance, Longaker and Walker interpret Kairos as "surrounding conditions" (9) while Ramage and Bean et al. define it as being "attuned to the total context of a situation in order to act in the right way at the right moment" (74). James A. Herrick emphasizes that the proper choice of Kairos is a crucial factor in the overall success of an argument, involving the "consideration of all factors surrounding an event, including time, opportunity, and circumstances" (41). Herrick posits that Kairos encompasses more than mere 'timeliness'; it extends to "decorum or a concern for the words appropriate to the situation, the issue being debated, and the audience" (41). Thus, Kairos operates within broader rhetorical situations, addressing "a whole range of questions connected to the timing, fitness, appropriateness, and proportions of a message within an evolving rhetorical context" (Ramage and Bean et al. 75). In this sense, the kairotic situation of Orwell's essay is a posthumous portrait of Gandhi within the context of post-independent India in 1949, a year after his assassination. The forum where the essay originally appeared was the New York-based periodical *Partisan Review*, suggesting that Orwell likely aimed to engage American readers as his immediate audience. It is also evident that the nature of this forum significantly influenced Orwell's rhetorical choices in crafting this essay.

Regarding Orwell's selection of *Partisan Review*, Gita V. Pai correctly notes ". . . as a regular contributor, Orwell was already familiar with *Partisan Review*, a political and literary quarterly founded in 1934 and initially affiliated with the American Communist Party as a counterpart to the latter's New Masses; it would later become anti-communist, disillusioned with Stalinism and the Soviet Union" (54). Thus, *Partisan Review*, being a political-cum-literary forum, offered Orwell a platform to explore both the political and autobiographical dimensions of Gandhi in his essay. This choice significantly influenced Orwell's emphasis on the political and cultural agendas of minorities and his advocacy for equality and justice. Here, his alignment with the Labour Party is palpably reflected in the language and concepts he employs to characterize Gandhi, as illustrated in the following passage:

Colour feeling when he first met it in its worst form in South Africa, seems rather to have astonished him. Even when he was fighting what was in effect a colour war, he did not think of people in terms of race or status. The governor of a province, a cotton millionaire, a half-starved Dravidian coolie, a British private soldier were all equally human beings, to be approached in much the same way. (502)

Orwell's references to colonialism in India (501), racism in South Africa (502), Nazism and Hitler's violence in Germany (506), the Boer War between the United Kingdom and the Boers of the Transvaal (506), Stalinism in Russia (507), and the famine in Ukraine (507) serve not only as textual-contextual overlaps for the immediate and intended American audience but also as shared values, beliefs, and knowledge that reinforce the rhetor's central theme in the essay. Although disparate, these political references condensed in the essay help to construct a shared common thread of presupposed values, namely the spirit of political revolution for freedom and equality between the rhetoric and the audience.

Longaker and Walker highlight the importance of creating a common thread for shared understanding between the speaker and the audience and also for the persuasive efficacy of arguments:

Just as we develop a sense of the implied rhetor by noticing the kinds of presuppositions the text appears to depend on, so too do we develop a sense of the text's intended audience from those same presuppositions. The text addresses its intended audience as a person who shares certain values, beliefs, and knowledge. On the basis of these values, beliefs, and knowledge- or presuppositions- the rhetor and the audience can make certain kinds of judgment.  
(17)

As Longaker and Walker assert, Orwell skilfully draws upon the presuppositions or shared knowledge associated with themes such as sainthood, humanism, non-violence, and pacifism, all of which are integral to Gandhi's portrayal. Orwell refrains from explicitly defining these terms in the essay, assuming that they are already familiar to his audience. This approach fosters a rapport between Orwell and his readers, allowing for a more seamless engagement with the subject matter.

### ***Ethos Analysis: Character Building***

The credibility of a speaker or writer holds substantial weight in any argumentation. Essentially, they must earn the audience's trust to make an argument persuasive and compelling. Ethos, theoretically speaking, is constituted by qualities such as goodwill, honesty, fair-mindedness, intelligence, mutual respect, qualification, authority to speak, expertise, reputation, and knowledge, among others. The audience's inclination to either accept or dismiss the speaker's argument is often influenced by these characteristics displayed within the text. According to Longaker and Walker, "Ethos is the apparent character of the speaker – whatever inspires trust..." (45). Ramage and Bean et al. argue that constructing a proper ethos is essential in capturing the audience's attention in any persuasive piece of writing as they contend that

By grounding your argument in shared values and assumptions, you demonstrate your goodwill and enhance your image as a trustworthy person respectful of your audience's views. We mention audience-based reasons here to show how this aspect of logos— finding the reasons that are most rooted in the audience's values—also affects your ethos as a person respectful of your reader's views.  
(70)

Gandhi himself must have faced challenges in establishing credibility as a saint within the Hindu context of colonial India. His intentional choice of attire, which eschewed material luxury, could be seen as diverging from aristocratic and traditional Hindu values associated with wealth and status. However, Gandhi strategically adopted the image of a dedicated saint, perhaps aiming to gain the trust and respect of the political rebels of the time who sought India's freedom from British colonial rule. This appropriation of the saintly image may have been a calculated effort on Gandhi's part to strengthen his

leadership and inspire confidence in his mission for India's independence. However, Orwell finds this character of Gandhi contradictory, the evidence for which he draws on Gandhi's own self-portrayal in his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*.

Orwell further enhances his credibility as a knowledgeable scholar on the topic of his writing by incorporating the 'original' vocabulary from Gandhi's philosophy, along with translations for clarity. Some key terms include 'aanas,' 'brahmacharya,' 'satyagraha,' 'Nirvana,' 'yogi,' 'Dravidian,' and others. While Orwell could have opted to use only translated terms for English-speaking Western audiences, he deliberately includes the original vocabulary. This decision suggests his awareness of potential questions regarding his ethos from his audience, as it demonstrates his deep familiarity with Gandhi's philosophy and Indian culture, thereby strengthening his credibility as an authoritative voice on the subject matter.

In addition to this, Orwell's essay abounds with literary references to Gandhi's *Autobiography*, E. M. Forster's *Passage to India*, Louis Fischer's *Gandhi and Stalin*, Leo Tolstoy, among others, which serve to construct his own image of a learned scholar. He strategically cites these texts as evidence and logic to support his ideas in the essay. This rhetorical strategy prevents Orwell from appearing overly political in his depiction of Gandhi and aligns with the tone expected in the forum's context. Given that *Partisan Review* would have likely required him to adopt a subtle, literary, and philosophical tone rather than overtly political, Orwell's use of literary references reinforces his ethos as a thoughtful and erudite commentator. Furthermore, Orwell's ethos is further developed through the rebuttal statement that occurs at the end of the essay:

One may feel, as I do, a sort of aesthetic distaste for Gandhi, one may reject the claims of sainthood made on his behalf (he never made any such claims himself, by the way), one may also reject sainthood as an ideal and therefore feel that Gandhi's basic aims were anti-human and reactionary: but compared with the other leading political figures of our time, how clean a smell he has managed to leave behind. (509)

In the passage above, Orwell adopts a cautious stance by suggesting that sainthood was not a self-constructed attribute for Gandhi but one ascribed to him. Furthermore, the clause above, 'how clean a smell he has managed to leave behind,' construes Orwell as a fair-minded rhetorical persona. With this statement, he balances his consistent critique of the contradictory aspects of Gandhi's life and personality by offering a rebuttal. Orwell implies that despite Gandhi's flaws, when compared to other political leaders of Orwell's time, Gandhi emerges as the most admirable. This balanced assessment highlights Orwell's nuanced perspective and adds depth to his analysis of Gandhi's political legacy.

Reflecting on the controversial character of Gandhi necessitates Orwell to construct his position as an impartial and fair-minded rhetor, without which he cannot achieve credibility and gain the trust of his audience. Orwell appears highly conscious of this requirement throughout the essay, given that Gandhi, as a political leader and philosopher, elicits both reverence and scorn from a politically aware audience. To shield himself from potential accusations of bias, Orwell meticulously outlines many of Gandhi's contradictions in philosophy and lifestyle during the Indian independence movement. For instance, Gandhi projected himself as a "humble, naked old man" (501) while actively engaging in politics, a sphere inherently rife with "coercion and fraud" (501).

Orwell also highlights Gandhi's dual nature of appearing as a saint while possessing shrewd qualities akin to "a lawyer, an administrator or perhaps even a businessman" (501). He argues that Gandhi would not have entered politics if he had

been a genuine saint. Thus, he implicitly claims to have thoroughly studied “Gandhi's acts and writings in immense detail” (501), underlining his dedication to thoroughly examining his subject.

Gandhi's simultaneous portrayal as a nationalist and an indirect supporter of British colonialism in India is also explored by Orwell. He cites the evidence: “The British Conservatives only became really angry with him when, as in 1942, he was in effect turning his non-violence against a different conqueror” (502), which indicates Gandhi's complex relationship with colonial powers. Throughout the essay, Orwell's references to Gandhi's autobiography and external sources collectively contribute to his credibility as a rhetor, reinforcing his impartial and fair-minded approach to analyzing Gandhi's character and legacy.

### ***Logos Analysis: Falsity of Sainthood Rhetoric***

Logos is a logical reasoning attribute of a discourse central to a persuasive appeal. Logos appeal can also be recognized by several other commonly used terms, such as the subject, content, text, theme, and central argument. Longaker and Walker characterize it as “Logos is the reasoning itself—in direct argumentation, it is the stated reason or reasons and/or evidence given in support of a conclusion, it is the unspoken relationship between the speaker's statements and the conclusions (inferences) they encourage the audience to draw” (47). In a discourse such as an essay, logos exhibits its dominant power over ethos and pathos because establishing an argument with the power of content is instrumental for the audience's persuasion.

If his essay is approached from the given perspective, Orwell calls forth to figure out his intended goal, which contributes to understanding the reason behind how he utilizes the affordances of logical appeal. The central purpose of Orwell in the essay is to reveal the contradictions of Gandhi's life and philosophy. Beneath this purpose lies his intention to argue that Gandhi was more a human being with practical and humanitarian values, interests, and preferences than a saint. This goal sheds light on the rationale behind his utilization of logical appeal. This idea is indicated and qualified by the contexts of the post-second World War and post-independent era of India in which Orwell's essay occurred. This context urged many writers and politicians to affirm, prioritize, and uphold pragmatic and humanitarian values rather than saintly values of the spiritual and religious ones. This can be inferred from Orwell's biographical sources and his service as a police officer in the Indian Police Force in Burma from 1922 to 1927. His experiences during this period, as articulated in his renowned work “Shooting an Elephant,” likely disillusioned him with the atrocities committed by police officers, thereby shaping his perspective on pragmatic and humanitarian values.

In his essay, Orwell employs a deductive pattern of reasoning, beginning by establishing a general theory of saints and then seeking to evaluate Gandhi as a specific case. Orwell's universal benchmark for saintly characteristics asserts that “saints should always be judged guilty until they are proved innocent” (501). Subsequently, he examines Gandhi's attributes to determine whether his innocence aligns with this reasoning.

Orwell highlights two key aspects that challenge Gandhi's saintliness. First, Gandhi's “vanity” is characterized by “the consciousness of himself as a humble, naked old man, sitting on a praying mat and shaking empires” (501). Second, Gandhi's active involvement in “politics,” a domain inherently marked by “coercion and fraud,” disqualifies him from sainthood (501). Orwell provides other series of Gandhi's attributes as premises to see if he can still be logically proven as a saint. He states that Gandhi's advocacy of “home-spun cloth, ‘soul forces’ and vegetarianism” too were

immature and impractical as they were “not viable in a backward, starving, overpopulated” country like India (501). Susan Wolf’s perspective on moral sainthood also emphasizes that one’s life should be dominated by a commitment to improving the welfare of others or of society as a whole” (420). From this standpoint, Gandhi’s saintliness remains invalid. However, Orwell consistently probes the contradictions that challenge traditional notions of saintliness, ultimately portraying Gandhi as a fallible yet remarkably ‘normal human being.’

Orwell skillfully anticipates potential counterarguments and safeguards himself against possible charges by acknowledging the audience’s likely objections. In rhetorical discourse, recognizing and addressing counterarguments is essential. As Andrea A. Lunsford et al. articulate, counterarguments represent “an alternative positions or objections to the writer’s position. The writer of an argument should not only acknowledge counterarguments but also, if at all possible, accept, accommodate, or refute each counterargument” (869). For this, Orwell employs two strategic approaches to enhance his persuasive abilities. First when refuting counterarguments, he employs the standard clause structure of “although” or “though.” For instance, he mentions that Gandhi’s “natural physical courage was quite outstanding. . . . Although no doubt he was shrewd enough in detecting dishonesty, he seems whatever possible to have believed that other people were acting in good faith and had a better nature” (502). Second, he generously incorporates the strengths of Gandhi whenever possible. For instance, he gives due respect to the strength and courage of Gandhi as “though he came of a poor, middle-class family, started life rather unfavorably, and was probably of unimpressive physical appearance, he was not afflicted by envy or by the feeling of inferiority” (502). Furthermore, he praises Gandhi’s commitment to class equality, emphasizing “The governor of a province, a cotton millionaire, a half-starved Dravidian coolie, a British private soldier were all equally human beings [for Gandhi] to be approached in much the same way” (502). To bolster his argument, Orwell draws evidence from Gandhi’s autobiography, highlighting common youthful indiscretions and missteps. Whether Gandhi’s actions were virtuous or flawed, Orwell contends that these choices and life experiences align more with humanity than with sainthood. For instance, Gandhi’s ambitions to assimilate into Western culture—expressed through desires like wearing a top hat, taking dancing lessons, studying French and Latin, ascending the Eiffel Tower, and even attempting to learn the violin—underscore his fundamentally human nature (Orwell 503).

Even after these considerations, Orwell continues to maintain his critical respect towards Gandhi by arguing that “His [Gandhi’s] character was an extraordinarily mixed one” (503), which suggests the mixture of saintly qualities and normal human beings’ qualities. Orwell’s position in taking the mixed character, however, is unique in the sense that he finds basic earthly human qualities in Gandhi rather than otherworldly qualities like that of a saint. This is also reflected in his emphasis that as an ordinary human being, Gandhi had an experience of taking “a few cigarettes,” “taking meat,” “pilfering,” “visiting brothels,” “lapsing with the landlady,” and “having temper” (503). However, all these qualities were so minimal to Gandhi that, Orwell argues, qualify him to be proved as an average human being than a saint. Tina Steiner, a critic of Gandhi, also considers characteristics of a human being as relational to many situations, as mentioned above, and its defiance becomes a vain attempt. Steiner interprets it as conviviality, which “encourages living openly and porously, being kind to others and to oneself” (155). After these arguments, Orwell warns his audience not to equate Gandhi as a mere advocate of humanism. As in the previous sections of the essay, Orwell strengthens this claim by providing a series of reasons and evidence of what he avoided: “meat-eating,” “no

animal food,” “no alcohol,” “no tobacco,” “no spices,” “no condiments” (even vegetables as they may optimize sexual energy), “no sexual intercourse” (except for the purpose of reproduction), and “no close friendship” (friends are likely to encourage wrongdoing) (504).

Gandhi’s lop-sidedness towards humanism over celibacy and sainthood is also reflected in Orwell’s criticism of Gandhi for his “inconsiderate” treatment of his wife and children (505). This is evident in his critique of Gandhi’s idealism: “The essence of human beings is that one does not seek perfection,” and committing insignificant sins is natural and acceptable (505). Orwell seems to be impatient with the extremities of Gandhi for his obsession with saintly ideals in his argument that “No doubt alcohol, tobacco and so forth are things that a saint must avoid, but sainthood is also a thing that human beings must avoid” suggesting that “the average human being is a failed saint. . . . Many people genuinely do not wish to be saints, and it is probable that some who achieve or aspire to a sainthood have never felt much temptation to be human beings” (505). Thus, for Orwell, Gandhi is sometimes in-between but would have lived as a human rather than aspiring to be a saint, though he never claimed so.

Lastly, Orwell approaches Gandhi’s pacifism from a humanistic perspective, which he recognizes as unique. Despite notable conflicts like the Boer War and the First World War, Gandhi remained neutral, even in the face of merciless killing. When confronted with the mass killings of German Jews, Gandhi controversially suggested they would better “commit collective suicide” (506), a stance Orwell critiques. He draws this evidence from the secondary source, i.e., Mr Louis Fischer’s *Gandhi and Stalin*, which is inartistic reasoning as it comes to the category of “citations from authorities . . . [or] documents” (Longaker and Walker 48) and when employed, this approach enhances the persuasive power of Orwell in the essay.

Orwell deconstructs Gandhi’s humanist stance, arguing that his pacifism is not applicable beyond his own political domain, as “Applied to foreign politics, pacifism either stops being pacifist or becomes appeasement” (507). In his conclusion, Orwell offers his subjective judgment of Gandhi’s life and philosophy, expressing his lack of personal affinity: he admits to having “never been able to feel much liking for Gandhi” and experiencing “a sort of aesthetic distaste” towards him (508). This conclusion is based on the contradictory evidence and claims established throughout the essay. Just as in the beginning, Orwell concludes the essay in the pattern of deductive reasoning.

### ***Pathos Analysis: Examining Orwell’s Style***

The style of a discourse is closely linked to its artistic qualities and decorum. In the discourse like an essay, the specific characteristics of language contribute to its persuasive style. Longaker and Walker define style as “a name for the specific texture of the sentences, phrases, words, and even syllables of which a discourse is composed” (137). The meaning of a discourse is always impacted, enhanced, and influenced by the way it is presented or delivered to the audience. If the what-ness of a text is related to the logos, the how-ness is made by its style. However, this does not imply that the essence (content) and manner of expression (style) are separable. Instead, as Longaker and Walker further argue, “Style is not something added to the argument. It is the argument embodied” (137). While Longaker and Walker offer a comprehensive methodology for examining the style of a discourse, including “virtues of style,” “diction,” “figures of style and thought,” “rhythm,” and “types of style” (137), this analysis focuses on three aspects of Orwell’s specific style: repetition, parallelism, and dialogism, as these dominant stylistic features are limitedly exhibited in the essay.



Repetition of words or grammatical structures lends a parallel quality to the language of a literary text. According to Longaker and Walker, this rhetorical technique is employed “usually for emphatic effects or for a sense of elegance and balance” (147). Since this rhetorical style is also related to pathos, a rhetor can amplify the audience’s emotions and move them. Among different types of parallel structures such as anaphora, homoioteleuton (same ending), isocolon (equivalent sentence-part), chiasmus, anadiplosis (doubling up), zeugma, polyptoton, Orwell primarily utilizes isocolon, which involves the repetition of equivalent phrase or clause structures. The structure of the following statements can be one of the examples for repetition:

There was a time, it is interesting to learn, when he *wore a top hat, took dancing lessons, studied French and Latin, went up Eiffel Tower* and even *tried to learn the violin*—all this was the idea of assimilating European civilization as thoroughly as possible. He was *not one of those saints who are marked out by their phenomenal piety from childhood onwards, nor one of the other kind who forsake the world after sensational debaucheries.* (My italics 503)

In the first statement above, “wore a top hat” is parallel to “took dancing lessons” and contains an underlying triad (past verb + qualifier + noun). Its stately cadence imbues the idea with solemnity and grandeur, heightening the intensity of Gandhi’s journey through life and enabling readers to experience it with equal gravitas. In the second statement, ‘not one of those saints who are marked out’ is parallel to ‘nor one of the other kind who forsakes.’ Such parallel structures can be observed in many of the instances of the essay, including the following (where parallelism has been italicized):

*A few cigarettes, a few mouthfuls of meat, a few annas pilfered in childhood from the maidservant, two visits to a brothel* (on each occasion, he got away without “doing anything”), *one narrowly escaped lapse with his landlady in Plymouth, one outburst of temper*—that is about the whole collection . . . First of all, no meat-eating, and if possible no animal food in any form. . . *No alcohol or tobacco, and no spices or condiments, even of a vegetable kind*, since food should be taken not for its own sake but solely in order to preserve one's strength. Secondly, if possible, *no sexual intercourse.* (My italics, 503-504)

As stated above, this style of parallelism allows Orwell to develop his ideas at a flowing pace, allowing his readers to visualize the kind of journey that Gandhi underwent. Thus, this stylistic choice acts as a seasoning for Orwell's effective argumentation.

Another frequently employed stylistic device in Orwell’s essay is self-questioning, wherein Orwell, as the rhetor, poses questions regarding the issues he discusses concerning Gandhi’s various lifestyle choices and behaviors and subsequently answers these questions himself. Through this technique, Orwell aims to render his arguments more critical and persuasive. This style falls under the purview of dialogism in rhetorical studies, which involves using multiple voices to create a discourse resembling a two-way conversation between the speaker and the audience. Mikhail Bakhtin is central to this theory of dialogism, articulating its affordances in a discourse:

Dialogism is . . . central to all interactions between speaking subjects. Every utterance a person speaks is oriented toward an anticipated response. Individuals frame what they say by a foreknowledge of who will hear it, what they imagine listeners are thinking and might reply. Thus, dialogism is embedded in all meaning, and constant interactions between meanings affect and shape a single instantiation of meaning in a given utterance or word. (109)

Analysing Orwell’s essay from this perspective helps to see how he utilizes the style of dialogic rhetoric to reveal the plurality of images and actions embedded in Gandhi's character. The concept of dialogic rhetoric theorized by Bakhtin in his concept of

'general language' firmly holds Orwell's narrative. Holquist, with reference to Bakhtin's theory argues that "There is no such thing as a 'general language,' a language that is spoken by a general voice, that may be divorced from a specific saying, which is charged with particular overtones. Language means somebody talking to somebody else, even when that someone else is one's own inner addressee" (xxi). Orwell employs such notions of general language to explain Gandhi's contradictions in life using the structural patterns like 'on the one hand but on the other' throughout the essay.

Orwell employs the rhetorical strategy of questioning once in the essay's first half and five times in the second half. He uses the questioning style deliberately and consciously to create a dialogic engagement between the available sources and his own ideas, from which he draws information and insights for his essay. Orwell states, "It's Gandhi's virtue that he would have been ready to give honest consideration to the kind of questions that I [Orwell] have raised . . . ; and, indeed, he [Gandhi] probably did discuss most of . . . [those] questions somewhere or other in his innumerable newspaper articles" (508). In making this connection, Orwell enhances his rhetorical credibility by providing the context of his claims and their sources. In other words, the contradictions in Gandhi's character that Orwell establishes are not merely his own observations but are rooted in Gandhi's writings. All the questions Orwell poses to Gandhi are related either to Gandhi's saintly concerns or humanist dispositions. Some of the notable questions are:

Question 1: "[T]o what extent was Gandhi moved by vanity?" (501).

Question 2: "[T]o what extent did he compromise his own principles by entering politics?" (501).

Question 3: "[W]hat about the Jews? Are you [Gandhi] prepared to see them exterminated? If not, how do you propose to save them without resorting to war?" (506).

Question 4: "Is there Gandhi in Russia at this moment? If there is, what is he accomplishing?" (507).

Question 5: "[H]ow does one put . . . [non-violence resistance] into practice internationally?" (507).

Question 6: "Who is sane? Was Hitler sane? And is it not possible for one whole culture to be insane by the standards of another?" (507).

While examining the pattern of these questions, one can observe that they are all situated within either the theme of Gandhi's inclination towards sainthood or his gestures towards humanism. These questions posed by Orwell appear to be rhetorical in nature, as the answers are not necessarily anticipated by the audience, including Gandhi and his texts. Instead, they are either implicit within the questions themselves or provided by Orwell. Regardless of their nature, Orwell employs this style to render his arguments dialogic, making the essay multivocal. In other words, this technique allows Orwell to dramatize the plurality of perspectives about Gandhi. Without this approach, the essay would have been more subjective, biased, and limited to Orwell's overly personal assessment.

### **Conclusion**

A discourse about an iconic political figure requires both a critical stance and skills of intellectual and scholarly orientation. At times, it is also a challenge to create a unique and persuasive argumentative space in the discourse community of that scholarship. Orwell stands out as a successful rhetor in all those accomplishments manifested in his effective employment of the rhetorical elements of Kairos, ethos, logos, and pathos. His essay "Reflections on Gandhi," written and published in the context of post-independent India, was timely produced. Due to the Hindu-Muslim conflict and the partisan of India, Gandhi invited both praise as well as scorn. As a critic, Orwell also

maintains an identical position across the essay as it exhibits both the attributes of Gandhi's life and actions. Ignorance of one of these perspectives would weaken the persuasive quality of Orwell's essay. Orwell gains authorial credibility through his birth and growth in India and also his professional involvement as a police officer in Burma, even though, by genealogy, he was British. In the absence of these credentials, his critical observation of Gandhi would have been too political rather than literary. He utilizes these affordances critically, artistically, and persuasively throughout the essay.

To conclude, Orwell exhibits persuasive skills on the issues of Gandhi's life, philosophy, and worldviews through his logos and pathos appeals. In particular, Orwell centralizes his focus on the dual character of Gandhi: a saint and an average human being. While building his arguments on these two extreme poles, Orwell leans toward the latter, though he justifiably gives due credit to the former as well. Eventually, his persuasive energy would have slackened in the absence of stylistic features such as repetition, parallelism, and dialogism. On the whole, he has achieved his intended goal in the text due to the integrated contribution of all these rhetorical elements, as discussed in the paper.

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