CHAPTER VI

GANDHI IN BENGALI LITERATURE

After discussing Bengal's response to the Gandhian political thought we shall in this brief chapter refer to the extent to which Bengali literature responded to the Gandhian movement and ideas. It appears to us that the impact of the Gandhian movement on the Bengali literature was not so prominent as that of the revolutionary movement of militant nationalism. The death-defying courage of the revolutionaries fired the imagination of the creative writers much more intensely than the law-defying moralism of the Gandhians. In the burning patriotism, dangerous adventurism and romantic idealism of the revolutionaries the writers and poets found exciting materials for their literary creations which the charkha movement and non-violent ashram life of the Gandhians could not supply. Nevertheless, the Gandhian movement left its unmistakable imprints on various branches of the Bengali literature which might serve as an indicator of Gandhi's impact on Bengal. We shall examine here briefly this impact along with the impact of other political movements that arose in Bengal during this period.

Immediately after entering the field of Indian politics Gandhi created a tremendous enthusiasm among the people of the country, and this was fully reflected in the Bengali literature. The first book on Gandhi's life and ideas in Bengali language was possibly written by Jogesh Chandra Mukhopadhyay. His book,
Mahatma Gandhi - Jiban O Abhimat Sangraha, (Mahatma Gandhi - Life and a collection of His Ideas) was published in 1918 from Pani-trash in Howrah district. During the period 1918-25 a number of Bengali pamphlets, written both in prose and in verse, mostly in a spirit of hero-worship, became extremely popular among the masses. In his pamphlet Narayan Chandra Mukhopadhyay compared Gandhi with Srikrishna who helped the Pandavas in the Kurukshetra war. Nabin Chandra Saha in his book Mahatma Gandhi ; Avatar O Yugolakshana (Mahatma Gandhi : Prophet and Spirit of the Age) described Gandhi as an incarnation of God in the form of Kalki, and he tried to establish his conclusion by interpreting various passages from the Puranas, the Koran and the Bible. Satish Chandra Das Gupta also raised Gandhi to the position of God by writing in verse Mahatma Gandhir Ashtottara Satanam. These books and pamphlets had no literary value, but their contributions in popularising Gandhi and his non-cooperation movement among the Bengalis cannot be overestimated. Satyendra Nath Majumdar's six booklets on Gandhi and his non-cooperation movement published during 1920-21 belonged to a different category. Their approach was political, and they contained rational analysis. Majumdar defended Gandhi against the criticism of Rabindranath, Bipin Chandra Pal and others, and explained the unique character of his movement. He compared swadeshi movement of Bengal with the Gandhi movement in South Africa, and

1. Many of the Hindu Gods and Goddesses have "ashtottara Satakam" or 108 names which are written in verse.
showed how the latter was morally superior to the former. In 1921 Manojmohun Bose wrote the drama Yugabatar Gandhi (Gandhi: Prophet of the Age) which was published from Mymensingh, now in Bangladesh. The first Bengali novel on Gandhian ideas was written by Mammatha Kumar Roy. His book Natun Dheu (New Wave) was published in 1924. Shortly after its publication Upendranath Gangopadhyay wrote his novel Rajpath. Sureswar, the hero of this novel, believed in Gandhism, and through his activities and ideas the author tried to place before the readers of Bengal the excellence of the Gandhian thoughts.  

We shall now discuss the impact of Gandhi on the works of the outstanding writers and poets of Bengal who flourished during this age.

Satyendranath Datta (1882-1922) was the first important poet of Bengal who was inspired by Gandhi's activities. In support of Gandhi's struggle in South Africa he composed the poem "Ijja-ter Jannya" (For the Sake of Honour). The poems "Charkhar Gan" and "Charkhar Arati" did try to popularize Gandhi's Charkha cult among the Bengalis, and the impact of Gandhi's drive against untouchability was found in the poems "Sudra" and "Methar". In his famous poem "Gandhiji" which was published about one year before his death, Satyendranath Datta compared Gandhi with Buddha.

2. This paragraph is based largely on Chittaranjan Bandyopadhyay, "Bangla Sahitye Gandhiji" (Gandhi in Bengali literature) in Sailesh Kumar Bandyopadhyay (ed.), Gandhi Parikrama (Mitra and Ghosh, Calcutta, 1376 B.E.), pp.395-398, 408-09.
Christ, Socrates, Tolstoy, Muhammad and others. Gandhi's non-violence was also an important source of inspiration for the poet. His premature death was certainly a set-back for the cause of Gandhism in Bengal.

Through his literary works Rabindranath placed before the people the ideal of non-violent resistance to tyranny and injustice, but this ideal was conceived by him, as we have already mentioned, before the advent of Gandhi in the Indian public life. In Southakuranir Hat (1883), Rajarshi (1887), Bisarjan (1890), and Prayaschitta (1909) we find his preoccupation with the philosophy and technique of non-violent non-cooperation. This philosophy was developed in his play Muktadhara (1922) written after Gandhi had launched his non-cooperation movement. In Peritran (1929) also Rabindranath upheld the same ideal. The ideal of non-violence which is found in Rabindra literature must not be regarded as an impact of Gandhi's non-violent movements. Gandhi's experiments with non-violent mass movements were regarded by Tagore as self-defeating, because, they were, according to him, motivated mainly by negative sentiments and sustained largely by racial hatred. In his two short stories, Namanjur Galpa (1925) and Sanskar (1928), we find a witty criticism of the supporters of non-cooperation. We have discussed the difference between the approach

4. These two stories are included in Rabindra Rachanavalii, Vol.VII, pp.716-728.
of Tagore and that of Gandhi in Section A of Chapter V, and there we have seen that in spite of differences, Tagore held Gandhi in high esteem, and had profound regard for his idealism. This regard was fully expressed in his book Mahatma Gandhi. In his poem "Gandhi Maharaj" Rabindranath paid a warm tribute to Gandhi and his disciples. The impact of Gandhi's movement against the age-old evil of untouchability is, however, found in his lyrical dramas Chandalika (1933) and Kaler Yatra (1932).

Just as Rabindranath admired Gandhi without accepting his programme, so he appreciated the courage and sacrifice of the Bengal revolutionaries without endorsing their methods. His views on the revolutionary movement found a clear expression in his novels, Ghare Baire (1915) and Char Adhyay (1934). The short stories "Shesh Katha" (1937) and "Badnam" (1941) also bear testimony to his appreciation of the heroic virtues of the revolutionaries. The hero of the short story "Badnam", Anil Mitra, left India and went to Afghanistan to carry on the freedom struggle from abroad. The story which was published in June 1941 had startling similarities with the escape of Subhas Chandra Bose from India through Afghanistan in the early part of the year. It may be mentioned here that in January 1939 Rabindranath dedicated his lyrical

5. For the views of the revolutionaries on Char Adhyay see Chinmohom Sehanabis "Rabindranath O Biplabi Samaj" (Rabindranath and the Revolutionary Group) in Raghurib Chakrabarty (ed.), Rabindranath, Nazrul O Bangladesh (The World Press, Calcutta, 1972), pp. 137-139.

drama *Tasher Desh* to Subhas Chandra Bose. Though they were not composed for any particular group, Rabindranath's poems supplied inspiration more to the revolutionaries than to the Gandhians. When they started for the raid of the Writers' Building in December 1930, Dinesh Gupta and Badal Gupta drew strength and courage by reciting a famous poem of Rabindranath. 7

Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay (1876-1938) was possibly the most popular writer of Bengal during the Gandhian period of Indian politics. He joined the non-cooperation movement of Gandhi with great enthusiasm and, as we have seen earlier, he defended the Gandhian programme against the criticism of Rabindranath. He remained President of the Howrah District Congress for 15 years, from 1921 to 1936. After the arrest of Gandhi in 1922 Sarat Chandra wrote an article under the title "Mahatmaji" which was published in the journal *Narayan* in its Baishakh issue of 1329 B.E. 8 It was an eloquent tribute to the moral approach of Gandhi in politics. Gradually Sarat Chandra's ideas were, however, radically changed, and he became one of the greatest critics of Gandhism in Bengal. In


most of his novels he discussed various aspects of the social problems of rural Bengal and raised his voice against all kinds of social injustice and oppression. His radical approach and non-conformist views made him extremely popular particularly among the people belonging to the younger generation. His most renowned political novel was *Pather Dabi* in which he tried to describe the ideas and activities of the Bengal revolutionaries. He described the character and exploits of Sabyasachi, the central figure of the novel, in the light of stories he heard from Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay about the leaders of the revolutionary movement of Bengal.9 Though Sarat Chandra was a member of the Congress, he always maintained close relations with the revolutionary leaders of Bengal. He was intimately known to Hem Chandra Ghosh, the supreme leader of the Bengal Volunteer group, Sachin Sanyal of the Anushilan Samiti, Barin Ghosh, Upendranath Bandyopadhyay, Amarendra Chattopadhyay, Bipin Ganguli and others. He gave financial assistance to Surya Sen, the leader of the Chittagong Armoury Raid.10 Before the publication of the *Pather Dabi* in the form of a book in August 1926 it was serialized in the journal *Bangabani*, and it became so popular among the people that 5000 copies of the book were said to have been sold within seven days after its publication.11 The book was so exciting and it inflamed the people against the British to such an extent that it came to be regarded as

the Gita of the revolution.\textsuperscript{12} It tried to popularize some socialist ideas and it contained a severe criticism of the Gandhian approach. The book was naturally prescribed by the Government soon after its publication. Along with '\textit{Father Dabi}' Sarat Chandra started publishing another novel almost simultaneously in the monthly journal \textit{Basmati} under the title \textit{Jagaran}. It was published in the \textit{Basmati} during the period 1330-1332 B.E., and the \textit{Father Dabi} was published in the \textit{Bangebani} during 1329-1333 B.E. This novel had also a political significance and it was written from the Gandhian point of view, but it failed to create any impact on the people of Bengal. It remained incomplete, and was never published in the form of a book.\textsuperscript{13}

Sarat Chandra influenced Bengal not only by his novels but also by his essays and speeches. In an essay on the Hindu-Muslim problem he described the Hindu support behind the Khilafat movement as a great deception. The Khilafat movement, he wrote, was not only meaningless for the Hindus, their sympathy for it was an eyewash. It was an eyewash because the Hindus, he pointed out, were not in the least interested in the restoration of the Turkish Empire. The massive support which Gandhi in return secured during this time from the Muslims was regarded by Sarat Chandra as a 'tamasha' - a great fun. The Hindu support to the Khilafat movement under Gandhi's leadership was, in Sarat Chandra's language, an attempt to 'bribe' the Muslim for ensuring their cooperation behind the swaraj movement of India.\textsuperscript{14}

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\textsuperscript{12} Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Roy, \textit{Saber Alakshey}, n.7, p.130.
\textsuperscript{13} For the novel \textit{Jagaran} see \textit{Sarat Rachanavali}, Vol.III, pp.436-472.
\textsuperscript{14} The essay with the title "Bartaman Hindu-Musulman Samasya" (Present Hindu-Muslim Problem) was published in \textit{Hindu Sangha Asvin} 1333 B.E., and it is included in \textit{Sarat Rachanavali}, Vol.II, pp.472-476.
another article written after the Calcutta Congress of 1928 Sarat Chandra criticised the Charkha cult of Gandhi in unequivocal terms. Referring to Rabindranath's earlier opposition to the Charkha he wrote: "We can now understand why the poet expressed so much grief in those days". He admitted that Charkha might improve slightly the economic conditions of the people, but it was difficult to understand, he wrote in his characteristic style, how this would make them strong enough to bring swaraj by driving the Britishers out of the country. In this article he ridiculed the blind followers of Gandhi in Bengal who tried to imitate him in all minute details. He humourously referred to a big khaddar merchant who, following the example of Gandhi, established an ashram, started taking goat's milk, adopted his loin's cloth and at last decided even to pull out his teeth in order to make his Gandhi-like appearance perfect. "This devotion", he wrote, "was unparalleled, he appears to have defeated even the scientist Prafulla Ghosh"15 (He referred to the Gandhian leader Prafulla Chandra Ghosh of the Abhoy Ashram). In the office of the Servant, a paper of the Gandhian group of Bengal, Gandhi once asked Sarat Chandra whether he believed that the Charkha would facilitate the attainment of swaraj. Sarat Chandra gave a clear reply in the negative and he was reported to have said: "I think the attainment of swaraj can be helped

15. This article under the title "Nutan Programme" (New Programme) was published in the monthly journal Benu in Asvin 1336 B.E., and is included in Sarat Rachanavali, Vol.III, pp.483-486. It was written by Sarat Chandra not in his own name but under the pen name Sri Parasuram. The Benu was a journal of the Bengal Volunteer group of the revolutionaries and Sarat Chandra was closely associated with it. His famous novel Bipradas was published in this journal serially. See Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Roy, Sabar Alakshay, n.7, p.129.
by soldiers and not by spiders". C.R. Das also once asked him
the same question and Sarat Chandra frankly stated that he did
not share the Gandhian faith in the charkha. In his Presiden­
tial Address at the All Bengal Youth Conference in December 1929
he supported the demand for the boycott of British goods, but con­
demned the charkha economy. "It is not possible to defeat the iron
machinery with the wooden charkha; even if it is possible, it would
not pave the way for the human welfare", he declared. Referring
to Gandhi's views on the restriction of human wants he said that
the philosophy of renunciation would encourage a mentality of with­
drawal and resignation, and would bring the general human beings
to the level of beasts.

Like many nationalists of Bengal Sarat Chandra was also in­
fluenced by socialist ideas, and he criticised Gandhi from that
angle too. In a brief article on the political situation of the
country he wrote in 1934 : "He (Gandhi) is really afraid of socia­
lism. He remains surrounded by the rich and the merchants. How can
he accept the socialists? It cannot be denied that the real weak­
ness of Gandhi lies here".

Like Sarat Chandra, Nazrul Islam also joined the non-cooperation
movement of Gandhi, but his poetic genius did not remain satisfied

16. Sachinandanan Chattopadhyay, Sarat Chandrer Rajnitik Jiben,
n.11, pp.101-102.
17. Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, Swadesh O Sahitya (My Country
18. For the full text of the speech see Sarat Rachanavali, Vol.V,
pp.503-509. The title of the speech is "Taruner Vidroho"
(Revolt of the Youth).
19. This article, published in Nagarik, Puja Number, 1341 B.E.,
with the Gandhian ideals. Essentially a poet of revolt, Nazrul felt passionately against all cant, injustice and oppression and tried to express himself more with the fire and sword of a revolutionary than with love and compassion of Gandhi. Restless and impatient, he, with his songs and poems, raised a storm with the determination of destroying the system of oppression rather than converting the heart of the oppressor. Some of his poems which were included mainly in the book Agnivina were composed by Nazrul in the context of Khilafat and Non-cooperation movements, and they contributed much towards popularizing these movements among the people of Bengal. Later on, he was attracted more towards socialism and revolutionary nationalism, and there remained little trace of the Gandhian ideas on his literary works of the subsequent period.

In 1922 he became editor of the Dhumketu, a new journal with radical and pro-communist views. It was published twice a week, and it had a brief but stormy career. A number of essays and poems of Nazrul were published in this journal each of which tended to emit fire and inflame the blood. In "Duhsashaner Raktapan", a poem published in the Dhumketu of 27 October 1922, he openly

20. Under Nazrul's editorship only 21 issues of the Dhumketu were published during the period August-November 1922. See "Dhumketur Nazrul" (Nazrul of Dhumketu) in Abdul Aziz Al-Aman (ed.), Nazrul Rachana-Sambhar (Haraf Prakasani, Calcutta), Vol.III, Appendix, p.5, fn.1. The Rachana-Sambhar was published in seven volumes and hereinafter it will be referred to simply as Nazrul Rachana-Sambhar.

Nazrul was arrested when he was editor of the Dhumketu and during that period the journal was looked after by Amresh Kanjilal and 11 more issues were published.

In 1931 a new weekly journal under the title Dhumketu was brought out under the editorship of Krishnendu Narayan Bhowmik. In this weekly Dhumketu also a number of essays, poems and songs of Nazrul were published. For a list of Nazrul's publications in Dhumketu - both in the earlier biweekly and then in the weekly - see "Dhumketur Nazrul" in Nazrul Rachana-Sambhar, Vol.III, Appendix, pp.93-96.
advocated a violent struggle against tyranny and oppression. In an editorial of Dhumketu Nazrul begged for at least one man from each family to take part in the country's feast of revolution. He asked the atheist, the violent and the rebel to rise up and sacrifice their lives for independence of the country. He was prosecuted for his poem "Anandamayir Agamane", published in the Dhumketu on 26 September 1922, and was sentenced to one year rigorous imprisonment. In the written statement which he read before the court in his defence. Nazrul referred to the trial and conviction of Gandhi and compared it with that of Jesus Christ. In the

21. Duhsashan was the brother of Durjodhana, the leader of the Kauravas, who in the Hindu epic Mahabharata stood for injustice and oppression. The Pandavas who represented the cause of justice and righteousness defeated the Kauravas in the Kurukshetra war, and Bhima, one of the five pandava brothers, sucked the blood of Duhsashan. Duhsashaner Baktapan which means the sucking the blood of Duhsashan, therefore, implied a righteous war over the forces of evil. This poem has been included in Nazrul Rachana-Sambhar, Vol.VII, pp.246-249 (Poetry Section).

22. Dhumketu, 7 November 1922, editorial.

23. Anandamayi or Goddess Durga is worshipped by the Hindus every year and She, according to the Hindu mythology, killed Asura, the embodiment of all evils. This poem is included in Nazrul Rachana-Sambhar, Vol.II, pp.127-130 (Poetry Section).

24. It refers to Gandhi's trial of March 1922. He was arrested after the Congress adopted the famous Bardoli resolution following the Chauri Chaura incident.

25. The statement of Nazrul was published in the Dhumketu in its issue of 27 January 1923, and is reproduced in full in Nazrul Rachana-Sambhar, Vol.II, pp.138-143 (Story-Essay-Correspondence section).
pom "Anandamayir Agamane", he, however, condemned the philosophy of love and non-violence against the enemy, and invoked Goddess Anandamayi to appear in her fierce form to start a bloody war against evil and to cut to pieces the fake theory of love preached by the impotents. But it is remarkable to note that even in this poem Nazrul referred to Gandhi who was then in jail and compared him with Vishnu and expressed the fear that his message might become emasculated in the hands of the hypocrites (that is, the followers of Gandhi who were then known as No-changers). In spite of his tirade against Gandhism Nazrul held Gandhi in high esteem. After Gandhi's release from jail in February 1924 he came to Bengal in 1924-25 and on that occasion Nazrul composed two important poems/songs on Gandhi, namely, "Banglay Mahatma" (Mahatma in Bengal) and "Charkhar Gan" (Music of Charkha). During this time he met Gandhi personally, and Gandhi, it is said, was very much impressed when he heard the song "Charkhar Gan" in Nazrul's own voice.26

Shortly after this, Nazrul, towards the end of 1925, was entrusted with the responsibility of running a new weekly journal Langal (Plough) which was the official organ of the Labour-Peasant Swaraj Party formed in Bengal within the Congress in 1925 with left-wing nationalists and pro-communist elements.27 Its first


27. Mani Bhusan Mukhopadhyay, an old friend of Nazrul, was the editor of this journal only in name. See "Nazruler Jiban O Sahitya" (Nazrul's Life and Literature) in a note on the poet, appended ... Contd.
issue which came out in December 1925 contained Nazrul's famous poem "Samyabadi". In it he visualized a society where people of different communities and religious groups would live in perfect harmony and cooperation. Nazrul's two well-known poems, "Krishaker Gan" and "Sabyasachi" were published in the second (1 January 1926) and third (8 January 1926) issues of the Langal respectively. In "Sabyasachi" we find a direct condemnation of the charkha cult and he appealed to the youths to realise the futility of seeking independence through spinning yarn. In 1926 the name of the journal Langal was changed into Ganavani and Muzaffar Ahmed, the well-known communist leader of Bengal, was made its editor. On his request Nazrul translated the International song of the communists into Bengali and it was published in the Ganavani of 21 April 1927. 28

Though Nazrul was closely associated with the nascent communist movement of Bengal, his poetic imagination was not restricted by its doctrinaire approach. His was a message of revolt against all oppression and sectarianism and his iconoclastic spirit led him to support both the communist and the revolutionary nationalist movements. Though his explosive biweekly Dhumketu had a clear communist flavour, it was regarded by the nationalist Yugantar group


as a mouth-piece of its own ideas.29 "Kuhelika" was one of the few novels written by Nazrul and it was intended to serve the purpose of the revolutionary nationalist movement. In order to attract the Muslims towards this movement he created in the novel a revolutionary Muslim character, Jahangir, who was initiated to the movement by his own school teacher.30 The battle of Balasore where Jatindra Nath Mukhopadhyay and his associates were killed fighting the British in 1915 was immortalized by Nazrul in the poem "Naba Bharater Haldighat" (Haldighat of New India) where he asked the "non-violent Buddhas" to see the excellence of the "violent Buddhas" who could sacrifice their lives as easily as they could take the lives of the enemies of the country.31 By "violent Buddhas" Nazrul obviously meant that in spite of their policy of violence towards the enemies of the country, the revolutionaries had all the qualities of heart which were associated with the name Lord Buddha, the apostle of non-violence. The martyrdom of Gopinath Saha, who, as we have seen earlier, killed Ernest Day in 1924 mistaking him for the Commissioner of Police, Charles Tegart, led Nazrul to compose his poem "Sabdhani Ghanta" or "Sarbanasher Ghanta".32 The death of Jatin Das (September 1929) after a prolonged hunger strike of

31. For this poem see Ibid., Vol.IV, pp.24-27. In the famous battle fought at the Haldighat Pass in 1576, Pratap Singh of Mewar was defeated by the imperial army of Akbar but his conspicuous bravery on the occasion earned for him immortal renown.
63 days at Lahore jail provoked Nazrul to write a poem "Jatin Das" in inflammatory language invoking Mother Sakti to arise and take up arms.33

The songs and poems of Nazrul gave the revolutionary movement of Bengal a strong impetus. He was the only man in the field of Bengali literature who suffered imprisonment exclusively due to his literary activities. Five of his books were prescribed by the Government.34

In Satinath Bhaduri's novel Jagari the influence of Gandhi is found most prominently. The novel had four important characters - the father, mother and two sons, Niloo and Biloo. The father was a devoted follower of Gandhi - he gave up his government service, converted his house into an ashram, used charkha regularly, fought against untouchability and tried to remove illiteracy. The mother as a devoted wife followed the example of her husband and adopted a Gandhian way of life. The two sons, brought up in this Gandhian atmosphere, were, however, attracted towards the left politics. Niloo became a communist and Biloo joined the Congress Socialist Party. In 1942 during the Quit India movement three members of the family - father, mother and the Congress Socialist son - were arrested and sent

33. For the poem "Jatin Das" see Ibid., p.273 (Poetry Section).
34. They were Agnivina (1922), Yugavani (1922), Bisher Banshi (1924), Prolay Sikha (1930) and Chandrabindu (1930). See also Hafique Islam, Nazrul Jivani (Bengali Department, Dacca University,1972), pp.605-606. He, however, had omitted Agnivina from the list of Nazrul's books prescribed by the Government.
to the same prison. The elder son Biloo was ultimately sentenced to death for violent activities (the execution, however, did not actually take place) on the evidence of his own communist brother. When the father came to know of it he tried to control his emotion by concentrating his mind to the charkha, and said: "God! Mahatma! give Biloo's mother the strength to bear this grief". And the mother exclaimed: "Gandhiji, what have you done to me?" The impact of Gandhi was unmistakable in the novel, but it also showed that the younger generation could hardly be attracted by Gandhism. The two sons, in spite of the strict Gandhian atmosphere in the family, were drawn towards the left politics. In another novel under the title Dhorai Charit Manas, Satinath Bhaduri showed how the uneducated and primitive people of the 'Tatma' clan took Gandhi as an incarnation of God with mysterious supernatural power, and how his influence actually strengthened their evil practices and superstitious customs.35

Among the prominent writers in the field of Bengali literature in the Gandhian period, Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay was the only person who accepted Gandhism as the philosophy of his own life. In his boyhood he came under the influence of the revolutionaries and he had direct contact with Nalini Bagchi of Chandernagore group.36

later on he was attracted towards the Gandhian movement, took an active part in it and suffered imprisonment. In Bhatri-devata he described how Sibnath, once a great champion of the revolutionary cult, was gradually converted to Gandhism. The Gandhian ideas were explained by Tarasankar in this novel through Sibnath in a clear and forceful style. The revolutionaries were also given an important role in this novel, and their courage, sincerity and tenacity of purpose were duly praised. The influence of Gandhian ideas is found in many other novels of Tarasankar — Kalindi, Ganadavata, Panchagram, Sandipan Pathala, Arogya Niketan, etc. His book Naba Mahaprasthan Upakhyan written after the assassination of Gandhi was a passionate plea for the triumph of non-violence over violence. The tragic murder of Gandhi inspired many contemporary poets of Bengal — Premendra Mitra, Jibamanda Das, Buddhadev Basu, Vishnu Dey and many others — to pay their homage to the high priest of non-violence who paid the highest price for his convictions. Gandhism was highly controversial but Gandhi was above all controversy.

This brief study of the nature and development of Bengali literature during the Gandhian period shows that though Gandhism had its impact on Bengali literature, it could not become a dominating force. The Bengali literature was profoundly influenced by the struggle for
national liberation, but as one writer has put it, when the country became involved in a nation-wide non-violent struggle under Gandhi's leadership, it was not adequately reflected in the Bengali literature. Militant nationalism which arose in Bengali literature earlier continued to remain the major dynamic force during this period also. Gandhism with its central idea of non-violence entered into the Bengali literature more in opposition to than in alliance with militant nationalism. These two forces remained distinct and separate. While promoting militant revolutionary nationalism Sarat Chandra and Nazrul, for example, had to denounce Gandhism. In Bengali literature militant nationalism remained in friendly terms with socialism rather than with Gandhism. Though Rabindranath was a critic both of nationalism and Gandhism, his literature helped the militant revolutionary nationalists more than the Gandhians. "Tagore, too", wrote Gordon, "was concerned with the achievement of strength and vitality and with disproving the British view of the Bengali. Tagore also had much more understanding of the revolutionaries than had most non-Bengalis, 37

including the Gandhians. Although he condemned the use of violence as yet another false short cut to freedom, he saw that all Bengalis bore responsibility for the culture and politics which brought men to such actions. 38 The Gandhian movement could not derive much nourishment from the Bengali literature. It did not find any book which may in any way be compared with the Father Dabi or the Anandamath of the militant nationalists. The Anandamath of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay written in an earlier period and Father Dabi of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay written during the Gandhian period may be regarded as the highest products of the revolutionary nationalist trend in Bengali literature. There was in fact no such Gandhian trend in it. In this respect we find in Bengali literature more or less a true reflection of the actual conditions existing in Bengal.