Chapter - II

Ch. I
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The pre-independence period marked for the nationalist movements in the country. There were many associations concerned with freedom struggle and a Congress party, which started freedom struggle. One year before the Bengal famine of 1942, Gandhi had launched his historic ‘Quit India movement’. All Indians were participated in freedom movements. Gandhi’s ideals aroused freedom consciousness among the people of different social starata to the masses at the grassroots level in the country. Politicians and freedom fighters of that time wanted to make our country free from the iron hands of Britishers.

Bhabani Bhattacharya's So Many Hungers' is "not only the last political novel about the freedom struggle of this period but also one of the best of this category."¹ 'So Many Hungers' was published in 1947, the year India achieved freedom. The author had witnessed closely the entire national movement. It deals with India's struggle for freedom in the early nineteen forties. It records vividly the Bengal famine of 1943 and 'Quit India movement of 1942 and Civil Disobedience. About the novel, Dr. Bhattacharya says:

"The great famine swept down upon Bengal. The emotional strings I felt (more than two million men, women and children died of slow starvation amid a man-made scarcity) were a sheer compulsion to creativity. The result was the novel, 'So Many Hunger'."²

The novel presents a real picture of the contemporary national and international scenes. It offers graphic details of the man-made famine and the freedom struggle during the Quit India movement under the leadership of Mahatma
Gandhi. The novel clarifies the cause, which was responsible for national movements, instead of merely depicting the movements itself.

The Bengal famine of 1943, which crushed millions under its devastating truculence forms the major part of the novel's plot. Then there is hunger for power and freedom, the Second World War, with all its fury and brutality, forms the other important segment of the novel's plot. And the third variety is the hunger for freedom: and the 1942 Quit India Movement provides the novel another thread of plot. With hunger for freedom, there are many minor hungers too: hunger for health, security, fame and wealth, greedy in nature. At several places in the novel and also in other novels, Bhattacharya used the word 'hunger' as a refrain. In this novel 'hunger' is to “the peoples hunger for food and freedom.”3 The twin hunger for food and freedom is the central theme of the novel. It is an authentic record of the mass uprisings and acts of Sabotage in the wake of Quit India Movement.
When the Second World War broke out, the British government sought Indian's co-operation. For this the Indian National Congress set precondition of the independence of India. After the failure of pre-condition, the National Congress demanded the establishment of provisional National Government at the center. On turning down of this proposal also by the British Government, the Congress launched the Civil Disobedience Movement in October 1940. After realizing Britian's still negligence, the congress demanded an immediate end to the British power and adopted the 'Quit India Resolution' in August 1942. The Viceroy of India banned the Congress and initiated drastic repression. Mahatma Gandhi and the other prominent leaders were arrested. This arrest resulted in a mass revolt and recourse to violence. About the situation in Calcutta during the pre-independence period, Bhabani Bhattacharya remark:

"For ten days the city was in the grip of revolt. A sudden thunderstorm on a dark, deadly gulf of time? For that movement the jap stood firm on the doorstep of Bengal, poised for attack. The national movement
could no longer wait and watch the peril and mark time."  

Bhattacharya has portrayed the realistic picture of the nationalist movement for freedom. Rahoul represents awakened Indian, about their thought for freedom struggle and the Second World War. Rahoul shows sympathy to Britian in the Second World War to support democracy against Fascist. He hopes that Britian, fighting for democracy would not deny India the same. That was the reason why the leaders of nationalist movement offered cooperation in the World War.

"India would not hurt Britian in the grave hour of trial. That would not be ahimsa, true non-violence. The national movement had more morality than strategy."  

'So Many Hungers' begins with Britians declaration of war against Germany. The plot of the novel is woven out of two main stories-the story of young scientist, Rahoul and his family, and the story of the peasant girl, kajoli and her family. Chandrasekharan remark:
“Rahoul’s story is a representation of the struggle for freedom. And the sad tale of Kajoli is likewise a pathetic record of what happened to more than two million men and women who became victims of a famine which was not an act of God, but which was brought by the rapacity and selfishness of profiteers and the indifference of an alien Government.”

The two stories, Rahoul’s and his family at Calcutta and Kajoli’s from Baruni are joined by the common character Devesh Basu, the grandfather of Rahoul and the head of Basu family, and Godfather of Kajoli and her family too. The novel depicts how Gandhiji’s message of truth, non-violence and fearlessness as the weapons to attain independence to the country has inspired characters, like Devesh Basu and his grandson Rahoul. Gandhian ideology instilled in them patriotic zeal and a spirit of sacrifice for the sake of Country’s freedom.

Rahoul and his younger brother, Kunal are the sons of Samarendra Basu, a lawyer, living in Calcutta. Samaraendra’s father Devesh Basu, a Gandhian Character,
does not live with the family. This small family represents middle class Indian society with its variety and contrasts. Rahoul has a D.Sc degree from Cambridge. Before going for the education to Cambridge, he had contemplated joining the independence movement and seeking arrest like thousands of other young men. But his father manages to send him away to England. This story begins with the gradual development of Rahoul as a freedom fighter on Gandhian path, under the guidance of his grandfather Devesh Basu. Chandrasekharan remarks about his role as a freedom fighter.

"He is a staunch nationalist and he can not forget the hypocrisy of the foreign ruler who talk about the Four Freedoms which, so far as India is concerned, do not include the freedom to be free." 7

Rahoul at the time of his education in Cambridge become very upset, when he learns that the war was gradually spreading in Bengal. He believes that the death of millions of young men will surely bring about a new world order. He is optimistic about the values of life. His brother,
Kunal, a self-seeker joins the army. The novelist has presented a peculiar equation within the Basu family: the father and the son Kunal on one side, and the grandfather Devesh and the grandson, Rahoul on the other. This equation provides an artistic balance in the novel, and it also projects a conflict between selfish and greedy British rulers and Indian profiteers, and freedom fighters ready to sacrifice and aspire human dignity.

Samarendra and Kunal do not have any hint of patriotism. Samarendra, a lawyer is quite opposite in nature and ways of life to his saintly father. He is greedy and only aim to please British rulers to earn titles and to accumulate a huge wealth. He forms a ‘cheap rice limited’ and collects rice and hoards it, and later on sells it at very high Price, when millions of people become victims of famine. Rahoul is caught on the horns of a dilemma, like the intellectual Indians, whether to pursue higher studies or to join the Nationalist Movement. He is arrested for his involvement in the movement; but released due to his research on cosmic rays. Rahoul is unable to get the double standards of the
British. They are “the champions of freedom abroad were the eaters of freedom in this land.”

The bridge between two plots is Devesh Basu, a Gandhian character. He is seventy-year-old retired teacher in Bengal’s countryside village of Baruni. He is an embodiment of Gandhian principles of love, truth, Satyagraha, non-violence and non-cooperation; which makes the village call him ‘Devata’. He undergoes in prison several times for the participation in the freedom movement. He is truly Gandhian character in precept as well as in practice. Devesh Basu fired with patriotism and full of love for the common and rural people, settles down in a village called Baruni, instead of living with his family in Calcutta. The people of the village have much respect and affection to him. He inspires and awakens the villagers about their subjugation and degradation, created by British Empire. He makes them ready to fight against foreign rule and to achieve full freedom. They all join freedom movement, Civil-Disobedience movement under the guidance of Devata, the Protagonist. Early in the novel, Devata is arrested due to his active participation in the freedom movement and taken to
jail. At that time, he speaks to the villagers: “the supreme
test has come. Be strong. Be true. Be deathless.”9 Devesh
Basu accepted the Gandhian attitude about village welfare,
and hence he is always involved in the country folk of
Baruni village, instead of living luxurious city life of
Calcutta with his family. He becomes one of the family
members of Kajoli’s family. He lives simple life. Village
people are “the core of his being, his blood and bone.”10
Realizing the backwardness and darkness of rustic peoples
around him, he dedicates his life to village reconstruction
mainly through an evening school in order to educate them
into an awareness of their birthright, “the right to live as
human beings.”11 He loves villagers as his own children and
sacrifices himself for their welfare. He shapes the lives not
only of Kajoli but also of the peoples of the entire village.

Devesh Basu also influenced and inspired Rahoul to
fight for the freedom of country. Devata’s humanitarian view
is embarrassing. He never hates the English people. He
stands against the British rulers, not the British people. He
tells Gandhi’s own words to Rahoul.
"Why should you fight the people of England? They are good people. The people are good everywhere. Our fight is with the rulers of England. Who hold us in subjugation for their narrow interests."12

He advises to the villagers not to use violence and "... do not betray the flag. Do not betray yourselves. We stand or fall with our inmost faith 'ahimsa... Be strong. Be true. Be deathless. Bandematram!"13

After Devesh Basu's arrest in the Quit India Movement, villagers and Kajoli, with her family migrate from Baruni to Calcutta in search for food and shelter.

Freedom fighters use hunger strike as a spiritual weapon to fight injustice. They demonstrate 'Satyagraha' by resorting to hunger strike. Devesh Basu undertakes a fast unto death in the prison for the sake of freedom struggle.

Rahoul's words of admiration for his grandfather brings us his character fully, "So loving, so gentle! and yet firm and majestic, a true veteran of the national movement. Three times he had gone to prison, seven times in prison. Devata the village called him. What wonder?"14
Bhabani Bhattacharya has depicted another embodiment character, Rahoul, a hero of the novel, with his humanitarian outlook. The story begins with the character, Rahoul, who heard the news of the war in Europe. The novelist had a keen observation of the incidents. When Rahoul heard about the war, he was very much disturbed, due to the aim of war. Rahoul, a young scientist, plays the role of upper middle educated class, who were involved in freedom movements to attain the independence to India, instead of doing any profession for themselves. They wanted to spread nationalism and to awake the whole India about the slavery and subjugation.

Rahoul's character grows with the progression of the novel. He comes across many shocks of national suffering and exploitation of Indians by the British. He is so affected that he plunges into freedom struggle by giving up his profession. Being a professor of Astrophysics, research in the cosmic ray, Rahoul could have easily led a comfortable life. His father, Samarendra Basu also tries to keep him away from freedom struggle. His wife, Monju, too pleads,
"All men are not made alike. Your true place is with your books, your mathematics, your strange instruments in the college room."\textsuperscript{15} But he is influenced and inspired by Gandhian message and his grandfather, Devesh Basu, and starts to think,

"He knew in his spirit the hungrys too. In his blood and spirit he had so many hungrys!"\textsuperscript{16}

He feels, "the voice of India echo in his blood throb."\textsuperscript{17} The growing horrors of the global war, the mounting cruelties of the alien government on the innocent people of India, and the multiplying sufferings of the rural folk – all these affected him and lead him to suck into the national movement for independence. When he comes across an incident, in which the police kicking and abusing freedom fighters in a procession and trampling under foot the national flag. He becomes angry and challenges the police only to find himself in the prison. There he declares, "We must stand ready to carry out Gandhi's command, Do or die."\textsuperscript{18}
The imprisonment of Gandhi and Nehru’s brave Statement at his trial in Gorakhpur prison, influence of Devesh and his own arrest – all these have had the effect on him that he becomes an active freedom fighter. He feels the voice of India echo in his blood throb and he becomes an irrepressible patriot.

“Rahoul was no hero-worshipper. His ideas have been shaped on the anvil of reason, and emotion had no visible place in the process. Yet that one personage who India knew to be her man of destiny stirred his depths.”

Rahoul, an intellectual viewed ideologically the pre-independence India’s critical condition, freedom struggle and hunger for food, due to man-made famine. He upholds the nationalist standpoint during the turmoil of Quit India Movement. Chandrasekharan remarks:

“Political freedom is not only a cry for one birth right but also a cry for freedom from all sorts of exploitation.”
Rahoul's heart is with the people of rural Bengal who are the victims of famine, created by selfish traders and the British Government. The leaders of the people are arrested one after another and imprisoned. The arrest and trial of Nehru in Gorakhpur had stirred the country, and the trial instilled the courage and heroism in the minds of the people. And it results into their involvement in freedom struggle. There is a realistic and fearful picture of exploitation of rural peoples by the traders and the British Government, by collecting the rice forcefully from them, for the sake of Second World War. And due to artificial famine, villagers start to migrate in search of jobs and food. The novelist has portrayed a very vivid picture of destitutes, in which woman lying on the railway platform giving suck to a baby dies, and the dead body lies there for several hours. The baby continues to suck the breast of the dead mother. Rahoul comes in contact with several migrants and help them. He convinced that a foreign government is incapable to solve the problems of the country, and hence freedom is an imperative need.
Many students participated in national movement. But due to lack of strategy, their frustration turn to violent reactions. "The students were on the edge of revolt. The danger was that once out of restraint, they would take up terrorist tools."\(^{21}\) The novel gives the expression of nationalistic fervour of the villagers in hoisting the national flag and the cruel firing by the police at them. Chapter seven of the novel gives the detail description of the Quit India movement. It begins with the Quit India Resolution passed on Aug. 8, 1942. And in the next morning all leaders of the movement are arrested and put in jail. This event aroused the villagers to plunge in the movement and "sixty thousand men and women (in prison)... A thousand killed, twice as many wounded. Many had been hanged after a hurried trial."\(^{22}\)

When students in large numbers join the Quit India movement, Rahoul feels that it is his prime duty to the nation. Rahoul seeks the advice of his grandfather, Devesh who is in prison in Dehra Dun, and then takes plunge. He addresses the students in a welfare society meeting and
holds the British responsible for the famine. He demands the British to leave India soon.

"... Quit India, cried the two million dead of Bengal ... 'Quit' cried all India. You have done us some good along with much evil. For the good you have done you have been paid full. The accounts have been settled. Now for God's sake, Quit."²³

Rahoul's wife who has been opposing earlier for his involvement in the freedom struggle she also by then looks completely transformed. She tells her husband at the time of his arrest by police, "I too shall go your way soon...... I am not the silly thing I used to be, you know that."²⁴ Rahoul fully apprehends the fierceness of the devastation effected by the foreign rule, and is able to understand the remote consequences of famine and contemporary struggle. This indicates a political reawakening of the society and their hunger for fully freedom. "The more their eyes redden with rage, the more our eyes open." ²⁵ The song of Tagore shows the determination of the people to fight off their slavery and to attain a new dawn.
Rahoul is surprised by the spirit of the freedom fighters in the prison. He senses a secret and excited triumph in their voices.

"Freedom could not drop from the skies, nor be asked from, lands beyond seas, but there, in the vast swamp of suffering and struggle, would it break into bloom, growing out of the seeds of the spirit."²⁶

All the freedom fighters sing a patriotic song of Tagore:

"The more they tighten the chains, the more the chains loosen!"²⁷

Rahoul is the spokesman of the nationalists. On one hand he sympathies with Britian's resistance to, and a fight against the Fascism and aggression, and on the other hand, he demands political independence to India. The nationalists sympathy with Britian created from fear that if England fell to German attack, her freedom loving people might be enslaved. However the nationalists had half hearted sympathy with Britian during the World War because the British rulers were not willing to declare
freedom to the Indians. Rahoul reflects the dilemma of nationalist leaders.

"That was Rahoul's dilemma of national movement. That was the dilemma of every thinking India."^28

Rahoul expresses clearly Nehru's point of view about helping England in the war and demanding for independence. Gandhi was firm and uncompromising posture as far as the question of Indian independence was concerned. Rahoul expresses Gandhi's stand.

"A free India will throw all her great resources into the great struggle... Freedom will enable India to resist aggression effectively with people's united will and strength behind it."^29

Thus the novel portrays the events of Indian national movement when people, in town and villages, fought for complete independence of the country. Rahoul's character and his activities are the representatives of Indian freedom struggle. Govind Prasad Sarma remarks about the novel:
"Instead of merely depicting... the national movement superficially, this novel goes deeper unlike others of its kind and reveals the agony of slavery of the whole nation."\textsuperscript{30}

Another plot/story of Kajoli and her family represent the predicament of simple villagers and the effect of man-made Bengal famine to them. Kajoli is an innocent girl of fourteen in the beginning of the novel. She lives in her ancestral mud thatched house in Baruni. Kajoli is presented by the novelist as an individual and a class. She represents the men and women of rural village, who are totally subjugated and suppressed by traders and British Government, by creating artificial famine. She lives with her father and mother, who remain unnamed in the whole novel. Her father and elder brother, Kanu are in prison for having taken part in the civil Disobedience movement, like thousands of rural people in the whole country.

Kajoli is highly idealized woman fully representing the image of the new woman too heralded by Gandhian thought.
Due to famine, Kajoli with her brother and mother leaves Baruni for Calcutta in search of food. The novelist has sketched a realistic horrorful picture of migrated villagers and their critical condition. On the way to Calcutta, Kajoli is raped by a kind but sex-starved soldier and she barely escapes a cruel death at the hands of a bloodthirsty jackal. After a brief comfortable stay in a hospital, Kajoli is back with her mother and brother, Onu on the streets of Calcutta. In a desperate attempt to provide food for herself, her brother and mother, she decides to become prostitute. But at the last moment, she is able to save herself from this degradation by reminding the brave words of her godfather, 'Devata': “Kajoli, you have made your pronam to the flag. You are a fighter.” and starts selling the newspaper ‘Hindustan’ – symbolizes the awakening of the people for the national hunger – independence.

Political violence and nature’s ferocity drains off all her energies. But all this degradation is only at the physical level. Her spirit remains unbroken. Her description rightly says, “A living tricolour!” Her suffering leads her to born a new woman. Like Rahoul, she cares more of her country
than herself. Kajoli stands for strength and complete the role of woman as Gandhi wished.

The novel presents a faithful record of changing scenes and shows a marked impress of Gandhiji's views and personality. It is repeated several times with the Gandhi's concepts of truth, non-violence, non-cooperation, village upliftment, and Charkhas etc. Devesh Basu, famous as 'Devata' among the villagers, like Gandhi, induced an indomitable courage into the people who would survive the calamity. The inhabitants of Baruni are engaged at his arrest and attack the police. The national movement stretches over a large portion of the novel and forms a very significant part of the theme. Though the main focus is on the Quit India Movement, the other phases of the movement, such as Civil Disobedience Movement, and breaking of the salt law are also briefly mentioned. Quite early in the novel, the Civil Disobedience Movement is described. Devata, a great Gandhian leader organizes peasants and fishermen, and inspires them to make salt from Seawater and defy the law. Thousands of villagers are arrested. The movement spreads over the entire country.
People are prepared “To break the salt law and he rushed into prison.”33 In a very short time, it becomes a mass movement. People of all classes irrespective of caste, creed and sex plunge into it.

Another novel of Bhabani Bhattacharya *He Who Rides A Tiger* too has the same background of the previous novel, ‘So Many Hungers’ i.e. Bengal famine of 1943 and National freedom struggle of 1942. This novel too deals with the theme of hunger, born of the World War II with the famine of 1943. Both novels, ‘So Many Hungers’ and ‘He who Rides A Tiger’ have Bengal for their fictional locale. In this novel, the treatment of hunger is more effective by showing trials of Kalo and his daughter in the face of hunger.

The novelist treated the theme of quest for freedom with the hunger for food and hunger for worldly pleasures and material possessions. Quest for freedom seems on various levels- political, social and individual. There are numerous casual references to the Indian freedom struggle, especially the Quit India Movement. Through Viswanath, we
realised how the prison cells are chocked with 'Quit India' Men. Counters people in sheer quest of freedom are relentlessly tortured and imprisoned. The novel too presents many aspects like - the Social, religious and economic with political. The novel deals with the contemporary Indian life rooted in the degrading political and economic system in the caste-ridden society. The political situation in the country of pre-independence period is shown by the references to the Quit India movement, imprisonment of people for loving motherland, defiance of bans, hunger strikes in jails. There are also references of the World War II and the threat of Japanese invasion, as a background of the novel. The casual attitude of the thoughtless British soldiers towards hunger stricken people suggests the exploitation of Indians by British. Kalo, the major character in the novel, is the representative of thousand Indians affected by the man-made famine and have to leave the native place Jharna in search of food and employment. Kalo is an honest blacksmith, quite happy with his humble profession. But famine uproots him from his native place, Jharna and forces him to go to Calcutta. On his way to Calcutta he finds
himself in trouble. Because of hunger he steals and eat bananas in the railway to save himself from hunger death. When presented before magistrate, instead of sympathizing, he is sentenced for eating bananas. This sentence suggests the cruel attitude of British rulers towards Indians.

The economic aspect concerning hunger for food arised due to the Bengal famine of 1943 forms the prominent part of the novel’s background. Kalo’s story of protest shows us the ordeals of countless destitutes and their hunger, which leads and, gives them the courage to rebel in an emphatic way. The destitute Viswanath join the procession of starving people to raise the cries “Food for all, work for all and jail for the rice profiteers” suggest the anger against British and local authority. They demand to establish democratic values. With hunger for food there are hunger for worldly pleasure, material possession and economic profit – democratic rights. The hopeful vision of a democratic India at the end of the novel, we find the spirit of freedom flowing through the veins and arteries of everyman and woman, including the prisoners who shout the slogans like ‘Quit India’, ‘Jai Hind’ and ‘victory to India’.
Another character, Biten, entitled his name according to his number B-10 in the jail. He is jailed due to his involvement in political freedom struggle. He stands for the ardent patriotic freedom fighters. Biten protests against the callous treatment given to the hungry by the British authorities. The agitation of desperate people due to hunger is remarkably described in the novel. Bhattacharya described the protest against hunger becomes a broad-based movement with which all patriotic people begin to identify themselves with and merged with the larger movement for national freedom.

Vishwanath, a minor character is always shown with his heroic struggle in the novel. As Biten says, the entire story is "A legend of freedom, a legend to inspire and awaken."35 In the novel, Indians are tortured and imprisoned simply because they demand political freedom.

"Imprisoned for no crime save the one of loving their country and asking a better way of life for it, a life free from hunger and indignity, a life built by hard
self-denial which was a joy because each iron today was the frame work of a secure happier tomorrow.\textsuperscript{36}

The novel also deals with the theme of social freedom. The novelist has sketched bitterly the ill treatment and superstition in Hinduism. Kalo, the major character of this novel takes revenge of false Hindu religion by performing the role of fake pujari of Shiva temple. The novelist exposes the wicked practices of the hollow Hindu religion. By playing miracle, kalo exposes the social freedom.

\textquote{You have triumphed over those others and over yourself. What you have done just now will steal the spirit of hundred and thousands of us. Your story will be a legend of freedom, a legend to inspire and awaken.}\textsuperscript{37}

The novel presents a true picture of Indian society and politics before independence. The Bengal famine and the Quit India movement are the inspiring sources behind the novel. The novelist intends to focus on freedom at each and every level-political, social, religion, economic and individual.
The next novel ‘A Goddess Named Gold’ also deals with pre-independence India. Though it was published in 1960 and focuses on post-independence national consciousness, and regrets that the present freedom is not that which Gandhi sought after, but has many references of pre-independence political freedom struggle and turmoil. The novel starts a hundred days before Independence Day. The novelist has selected a location of a village, Sonamitti-symbolically India-‘Sone ki chidiya’.

The novel deals with the theme of freedom. It depicts the villagers including women involved in the freedom movement. We find women freedom fighters are more patriotic and powerful than other women in Bhabani Bhattacharya’s work. Like earlier novels of Bhabani Bhattacharya, in this novel too, we find the background of Bengal famine and Quit India movement. Freedom movement and Gandhi, the expansion of education and the people coming in contact with modern ways of life, bring the changes in their consciousness of the Indian villagers. Under the influence of Gandhi even peasants join the movement and strive for political and economic freedom of
the nation. Early in the novel, the Quit India Movement of 1942 is mentioned through the memory of women.

"Gandhiji touched our spirit as it slept. Wakened, we became the equals of our men folk.... Wherever we went, women came flocking out of field, barn and kitchen to cry with us 'Quit India.'"\textsuperscript{38}

There are six female characters, known as 'Cow house Five' titled according to the place where these women use to meet. All these six women are from different age and classes, having the patriotic zeal. These women are all ardent nationalists-imprisoned for participation in the Quit India movement. In this feminist organization for freedom movement – Munni, Champa, Meera, Subhadri, Sohagi and Lakshmi, decide to launch a strike against the Seth, on the basis of Gandhian Satyagraha. The mood of these women and their way of thinking reflects the temper and spirit of India before independence.

With freedom struggle, there are also references of social freedom, eradication of superstition, evils of corrupt
practices and greediness of profiteers. Meera, the heroine of this novel is living with her patriotic grandmother. At the age of eleven she joined the Quit India movement for which she was arrested. She is the leader of the ‘Cow house Five’, feminine association. She suggests a protest march of the village women to the samsundar’s shop demanding a hundred saris at a fair price. Samsundar is an unpatriotic and profiteer like Samarendra Basu in ‘So Many Hungers’. He stands for greedy profiteers, who are supporters of British rulers for the sake of wealth.

Bhabani Bhattacharya has sketched a Gandhian character, Atmaram, grandfather of Meera. Atmaram stands for certain values and ideas. His voice seems symbolic working against the evil powers – which subjugates the humble people. He is a patriotic, nationalist and appears as the voice of Mahatma Gandhi. He plays a vital part in this novel, which deals with India’s freedom. It may very well represent the father of the nation, a homeless wanderer with large crowds. He is respected and admired by people. He tells the people about the celebration of Independence Day. The freedom people will celebrate, is the real touchstone.
He explains the meaning of 'taveez' at the time of celebrating Independence Day and advises:

"Remember, friends, all this can not be cheaply won. The miracle drop upon us. It is we who have to create it with love and with sweat. Freedom is the means to that end."\textsuperscript{39}

And further he warns about the future,

"Freedom is the beginning of the road where there was no road. But the new road swarms with robbers."\textsuperscript{40}

Meera, the heroine is the symbol of the goddess i.e. Mother India possessed by Gold. The village Sonamitti is also symbolic to suggest richness of India endangered by greedy - and selfish British rulers. The amulet offered by Atmaram symbolizes the freedom and hope to save India from looting its richness - unity, equality and freedom too.

The novel also lays emphasis on the idea that freedom is not merely political freedom, but freedom of the mind. Atmaram defines freedom as 'a state of the mind'.

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The novelist focuses on various evils, which are rooted in the country and wishes to eradicate it with British Empire – to enjoy full freedom. In the novel, we find number of times the use of Gandhian expression: ‘to wipe every tear from every eye.’ This novel also gives a glimpse of the novelist’s vision of the future India and expresses the dangers of facing the country, and the duties of citizenship. Sohanlal gives the advice that no one in a free country should be content to live on charity. Sohanlal tells Meera:

“We must demand what should be ours, the right to live as human beings.” He warns that it is wrong to expect that freedom will act like magic and solve all our problems for us. He feels one major task is to eliminate the unpatriotic exploiters of different types. The building up of material resources alone will not make us happy or secure.

“You can not have gold enough to save all India! It is the fight with the Seths that will save India, not a miracle, not armfuls of gold.”

In the novel, Bhabani Bhattacharya tried to show the women’s participation in freedom struggle and their
awareness about their rights, status, and their demand for full freedom – equality, brotherhood and justice by all means.

Turning towards Chaman Nahal's 'The crown and Loin cloth', which published in 1981, deal with pre-independence political freedom struggle and Gandhian movement. It is the most ambitious work, next to 'Azadi' by Chaman Nahal. He took the vast panorama of history and has gone further back in time and portrayed a period of the struggle for independence – the Non-Cooperation movement of 1920-22, the protests and Gandhian movements with Jallianwalla Bagh incident. There are also references of Kasturba Gandhi, Nehru, Nehru's jail.

Chaman Nahal portrayed the real picture of freedom struggle but nowhere he advocated or criticized. It highlights the three important periods of the Gandhian Age – the Non-cooperation movement of the early twenties; the salt satyagrah and early thirties; and the Quit India Movement of early forties. In his delineation, we find that he directly portrayed English – historically and fictitiously and
the intention of Indians about British. He remained always impartial and never gave his opinion.

In the novel, we find English and Indian characters; lead us to see both pictures i.e. British rulers and Indians with their attitudes about each other and the country. The novelist also sketched Gandhi as a character in the novel. In the historical English characters, we find the most important General Dyer, the typical 'diehard Blimp.' He represents the extreme specimen of white arrogance to whom the colored natives were execrable vermins to the ruthlessly exterminated.

The historical English character Brigadier – General Reginald Dyer, through which the novelist has shown the vivid attitude of British rulers towards Indians and India. Though he was born in India but he always remains a foe of the Indians. Nahal remarks “He known it to be anything but treacherous? Its people. Its landscape. Its season and climate. Its cities – yes its cities, especially.” and he feels about the Indian climate, "it was the very incarnation of cruelty that heat." His attitude suggests his negative
approach towards India and Indians. He could not tolerate the ‘slimy Indians’ who could bear the heat and find time to think God and related matters. He hates the Indians for “born-black creatures who could only be called human by an extension of the term. Their bodies ever sweating. Their brows knit with worry. Their limbs with skinny. Their chests ribbed, skeleton-like.” Dyer’s attitude and hatred reveals the cruel and unsympathetic attitude of British Empire, and the degraded, critical condition in health, economy and slavery, due to the foreign ruler during the pre-independence period of India, and the political dimension of the country. The average life span of an Indian was twenty-four, and Dyer thought to be less than that. He felt if Indians lived longer, then they would only use their scheming minds to plot against their rulers. Dyer was so doubtful that he believed inside those "sweaty, slimy bodies, their heads simmered with intrigue.” With this, Dyer used to hate the Indian towns, due to the unsystematic building structure – which creates troubles to the British soldiers.
Dyer thinks about Gandhi "the arch villain!" According to him Gandhi created troubles in the British government. The novelist has sketched the influence of Gandhi in the whole country, and whatever movements used to arise for the sake of freedom due the influence of Gandhi and the awakening of the peoples about their slavery. The whole country came together due to non-violence concept of Gandhi. Dyer would have "finished him with his own hands" if Gandhi would proceed to the Punjab.

The cruelty of Dyer was seen on the day of the Jallianwalla Bagh tragedy. The Indians, he believe, are "fit to be thrown to the wolves." He speaks bitterly about Indians to Ashby, the Assistant commissioner. He trains his soldiers to kill the Indians who will remain present at the meeting and asked them to fire at such places where the mob is thickest. Dyer beat Sunil, the Gandhian follower mercilessly a few hours before the meeting. More than five hundred Indians were shot dead in Jallianwala Bagh. He had fired straight at the crowd without warning, and killed as many as possible. There were mass arrests, mass torture,
and mass abuse everywhere in the Punjab after the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy. He ordered the electric and water supply to be cut. And he "confined people to their homes and forbade them to go out, even to bury their dead." Dyer did much injustice with Indians. His hatred and evil action aroused the people to demand country's freedom. Through Dyer's character, Chaman Nahal presented the attitude of British Empire and the Indians subjugated, critical condition, which was the result of foreign rule. The novelist unfolded British view and Indians aspire of freedom through the character of Dyer.

Another English character created by the novelist is Kenneth Ashby, ICS officer, who is sedate, sensible and sympathetic to Indians. He was the Assistant commissioner of Amritsar district; but later on became Deputy Commissioner of Lahore. Ashby was only for seven years in India while Dyer was for fifty-five years. He was sympathetic for Indians. He protested against the shooting of Jallinwalla Bagh ordered by Dyer on the ground that many of the people in the meeting might not be rebels at all. They might have come from other parts of the country to visit the
Golden temple or see the cattle fair or the Baisakhi the Indian New year Day. He also attempted to save Sunil at the time of beating him under the order of Dyer. Through Ashby's character, the novelist tried to give the sympathetic and reasonable attitude of some English authorities and the picture of downtrodden community, who were still unaware about the human life, their identity and about country. Though there were many reforms and awakening movements started by Rammohan Roy, Aurobindo Ghose, Tagore or Gandhi; but the country folk of remote areas were aloof from national awakening. Still they were untouched from national fervour. Ashby thinks "Hindus and Muslims as communities posed no threat to the Raj; their communal frenzies could be easily controlled and channelized in useful direction. The real divide was between the intelligentia and the common man who lived in the villages." He liked the various festivals of the Punjab and took part in the Holi, Baisakhi etc. He loved Indians and felt "they were so trusting, so undemanding. What sense of humour they had - humour in spite of the poverty." He believed that "India
should get freedom, but only through the goodwill of England, not by opposition to it.\textsuperscript{53}

In the end of the novel, he learns the threat to the British Raj from Indians. He realized that the hold of the Raj has gone. His love with Indian woman and his mingling with Indian peasants show his positive attitude and friendly nature.

In the novel we find many British characters. Through which we can easily get the political upheavals and cruel way at thinking of the Rulers. For example Prince of Wales, Richard Winshaw, Captain Smith, Rehill, the superintendent of police, Amritsar, Hornmen, who protest against Dyer’s cruelty, Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, viceroy, who was attacked by Indians with a bomb in 1912 but remained unhurt.

The novelist too portrayed Indian characters, to give the realistic Panorama of India and freedom movement of political leaders in the pre-independence India. In Indian characters, we find both patriotic and unpatriotic, opposing the British rulers and supporting or loyal to the British.
Thakur Shanti Nath, a rich landlord owed everything to the British. His father too was supporter of British, and due to greedy and unpatriotic nature of both, they collected much wealth nearly 2000 acres of land. He feels 'Superior' to other common Indians. After the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy also Thakur Shanti Nath did not stand against the British Raj. His Son, Sunil, the Gandhian follower is against the British rulers. He becomes fully active freedom fighter to attain independence as early as possible. But Shanti Nath, like Samarendra Basu in 'So Many Hungers' by Bhabani Bhattacharya remains the supporter of British. "His whole edifice had been built on the munificence of the British. If he was their alley to power, they were his allies to power, to power and money. He had to uphold whatever they did. And you think these half-clad politicians would win against them, he asked." It was not happy to learn that his Son, Sunil had been moving with "these dhoti wallas and topiwallas" freedom fighters of congress party.

At the end of the novel, we find change in the nature of Thakur, but still think positively about the British Raj. He exposes his gratitude towards British by conveying the
developments and stability to land made by British. He asks:

"In what respect are the English and the Indians divided? They are pledged to self-rule for India, eventually. To me the goal of Gandhi and the English appears to be identical. Why are we out to vex them then? Strikes, hartals, mass meetings, jail going – it seems meaningless, when what we want is almost promised to us." 56

In the novel, we find the freedom struggle through the characters like Sunil, Rakesh and prominently, Gandhi. Sunil, the fourth Son of Shanti Nath became a follower of Gandhi. He influenced by the teachings of Gandhi and the incident of Gandhi’s hartal which bent the British rulers. He says to his wife, Kusum “The Sahibs and officers on horse back couldn’t look at the crowd-straight, so humiliated were they at this display of unity. They covered their heads with their topsis...It’s the birth of new era.” 57 Sunil and his patriotic friend Muzzaffar Ahmed are the representatives of youngers of India from different classes and religions, come together to make the land free from the clutches of the
foreign rule. Muzzaffar Ahmed, a schoolmaster represents the Muslim league associate, was also struggling for freedom. They think, "Through struggle alone can we free ourselves. We have to jolt the British into an awareness of what we want as a nation." According to them English were only plunderers. Muzzaffar says, "We offered them gold. They plundered us!" And Sunil asks his father, "Can you, father mention the name of one Englishman who has openly advocated independence for India?" We find the equation between Sunil and Gandhi. His wife to seems parallel to Kasturba Gandhi.

Rakesh, a revolutionary freedom fighter portrayed by the novelist on the path of Bhagat Singh, Lala Lachpat Roy etc. He was dismissed from the school because of his revolutionary views. He openly says that the British could be driven out of India only by force. After his return from London, he seems a confirmed terrorist.

M.K. Gandhi, a legend, a central figure creating action and reaction among the other characters. Chaman Nahal portrayed Gandhi both as an individual and as a symbol. In
the opening chapter of the novel, we find Gandhi’s personality and his background. He has no faith in British rulers. There is also a reference of his threw out of the British office of Rajkot in 1892. Gandhiji the affirmative political leader that the British “May beat the life out of him, but they couldn’t bend him.”\textsuperscript{61} Gandhiji didn’t believe in violence while fighting against the British. Gandhiji felt sad about the Jallianwalla Bagh incident. The whole country was humiliated. Gandhi supported British in the Second World War, but his faith in British shattered after the War for the Britishers did not keep their promise to set India free.

The non-co-operation movement was advocated by Gandhiji. He wanted the Indians to use and wear only what was produced in India. “The British had destroyed the local industry. The raw material was now shipped from India to England and manufactured goods were shipped back to India.”\textsuperscript{62} In the novel there are references of young India’ and ‘Navjivan’ in which Gandhi attempted to awoken the Indians about their subjugation and cruel power of British to motivate the peoples for freedom struggle.
Gandhi always viewed objectively. When he came across a bridge constructed by the British across the Yamuna to connect Delhi and other regional places. It reminded him about the past art of India, by which the Red Fort, the Taj in Agra was constructed. And he thought about the British, “No, the British could take acclaim for nothing in India; their stay here has been purely functional, devoid of beauty.”

Thus the novel ‘The crown and Loincloth’ by Chaman Nahal, is a novel of pre-independence political turmoil. Having a vast panorama of political events, the novelist has portrayed the moving picture of freedom struggle, and hence we find much fastness in their relation.

In other novels ‘Azadi’ and ‘my True Faces’ also we find some references of political events of pre-independence India. ‘Azadi’ is prominently deals with the partition theme, but the background and some references of movement has touched the novel. In the novel, we find historical character – Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah having the fictional touch. For example Mahatma Gandhi’s address in Sialkot in 1929, the
account of Gandhi’s tour of the Punjab, Gandhi’s release from prison in 1944, Quit India resolution of 1942, release of Nehru and other congress leaders, the Simla conference of 1945, British Parliamentary Mission and the British Cabinet Mission of 1946.

“Arun and Munir had first met Davidson in 1945. Gandhi was released from prison in 1944, but Nehru still inside at that time and the Quit India resolution of 1942 was very much alive in the mind of every English man... and Bill Davidson maintained all along the Indian leaders were pushing things to fast.”

Nahal too focused on feelings of Indians toward the British in the pre-independence period. Lala Kanshi Ram, the major character in ‘Azadi’ views: “He hated them for what they had done to his country and wanted azadi.” With this, he also respects the British like, Thakur Shanti Nath in ‘The crown and Loincloth’:

“But deeper down, he also admired the British – in any case he enjoyed the safety of the British Raj and hugged it. All said and done, the British had brought some kind of
peace to this torn land.”66 Again we find the change in Lala’s mind like the Indians. Under the influence of Baljit Raizada, the nationalist editor of the Urdu daily ‘Inquilab’, Lala Shout: “Oh! They are Kutai; they’re dogs – these Angrez, Kutai! Kutai! Kutai!”67

Early periods of freedom struggle are shown through Lala Kanshi Ram and Chaudhri Barkat Ali. Chaudhri recalls the meeting. He and Lala Kanshi Ram attended to hear Gandhi’s speech in 1929.

Chaman Nahal too depicted the picture of exploitation of India by the British. Baljit Raizada wrote in his daily ‘Inquilab’ that for the parades and bands the British shipped tones of gold form India to their “bunder motherland, where ruler bunder kings and queens.”68 According to him “the British king was not a king but an Ali Baba.”69 And England was really filled with the loot of the world by their robbers.

In ‘My true faces’ only British rulers greedy and unsympathetic attitude is sketched. Kamal, the hero of the novel says, “…those houses the British built all over the
country for their comfort on the money of people whom they pushed into one-room huts, etc.”

Gandhian view also delineated in the novel about his dreams of ‘self-reliant’ and ‘Swadeshi’. “Gandhi wanted to make India a self-reliant nation—a truly Indian nation.”
References


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5 Ibid P.50


7 Ibid P. 11

8 B.B.: ‘So Many Hungers’ P.41

9 Ibid P.73

10 Ibid P.89

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12 Ibid P.26, 27

13 Ibid P.101

14 Ibid P.34
15  Ibid P.19
16  Ibid P.150
17  Ibid P.12
18  Ibid P.67
19  Ibid P.41
21  B. Bhattacharya: ‘So Many Hungers’ P.112
22  Ibid P.110
23  Ibid P.212, 213
24  Ibid P. 213
25  Ibid P. 205
26  Ibid P.214
27  Ibid Quoted P.215
28  Ibid P.42
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30  Monika Gupta: Quoted, ‘The novels of B. Bhattacharya’, P.32
31  B. Bhattacharya: ‘So Many Hungers’ P.269
32  Ibid P.99
33  Ibid P.21
34  B. Bhattacharya: ‘He Who Rides A Tiger’
35  Ibid P.242
36  Ibid P.167-68
37  Ibid P.232
39  Ibid P.303
40  Ibid P.119
41  Ibid P. 176
42  Ibid P.197
44  Ibid P.78
45  Ibid P.79
46  Ibid P.
47  Ibid P.85
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49  Ibid P.71
50  Ibid P.111
51  Ibid P.90
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53  Ibid P.96