CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

And then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths; like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes; like a whirlwind that upset many things, but most of all the working of people's minds. He did not descend from the top; he seemed to emerge from the millions of India, speaking their language and incessantly drawing attention to them...¹

The exuberance of Nehru in these words, hailing the coming of Gandhi on the political scene of India, is understandable. It is because Gandhi actualised his age and the collective unconscious of the people found a voice in him. Olive Schreiner asked Havelock Ellis: "Have you ever known a whole nation to speak at the same time? Mr. Gandhi, I know, was India and India was Mr. Gandhi."² The disturbing question today is, whether we have squared a living voice of the people into mere abstractions, "a hyperbole of the old, the heroism of the nostalgic."³

GANDHISM: A DEFINITION

An attempt to systematise Gandhi's thought and capsule them in one word as 'Gandhism' may not be in tune with Gandhi's pronouncement. At the Gandhi Seva session at Saoli in 1936, he stated:
There is no such thing as 'Gandhism' and I do not want to leave any sect after me. I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. I have simply tried in my way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems. Well, all my philosophy, if it may be called by that pretentious name, is contained in what I have said. You will not call it 'Gandhism', there is no 'ism' about.

This confirmation, anyhow, strikes a different note from his earlier statements. In Karachi Congress (1931), he said: "... they might kill me but they cannot kill Gandhism. If truth can be killed, Gandhism can be killed." But what Gandhi refers to as 'Gandhism' is winning Swaraj by means of truth and non-violence. It is neither a system of philosophy nor a rigid dogma. Gandhi expressed the same in his speech on Feb.22, 1940 at the Gandhi Seva Sangh at Malikanda (East Bengal): "Let Gandhism be destroyed if it stands for error. Truth and Ahimsa will never be destroyed, but if Gandhism is another name for sectarianism, it deserves to be destroyed." Thus, Gandhism finds an equation in Truth and Ahimsa.

Gandhism is not an intellectual exercise, either in metaphysics or in political philosophy. It encompasses various institutions of life with the whole objective to preserve the dignity of man irrespective of caste, class, creed, race, religion, or country. It is all-inclusive: It is a political creed, an economic doctrine, a religious outlook, a moral precept and above all, a message blended with humanitarianism. "Humanism takes its origin from the
rebellion of man against inhuman condition and its single aim is the aim of recovery of man's lost humanity."^7

Gandhism may be viewed as the right way of living, starting in religion and philosophy and extending its application to socio-economic and political life, in order "to discover new truths everyday."^8

Analogical to his "square of Swaraj", one may visualise a "square of Gandhism", with its objectives arranged like this: At one end you have political independence, two ends, one is moral and social, and the other corresponding to dharma i.e. religion in the highest sense of the term.

RELEVANCE OF GANDHISM

The basic conviction of the present study is that Gandhism is evolutionary and, therefore, relevant to all times, and more so immediately to ours. "Gandhi would have been marked as a political leader of least significance if he could not have moved with the times and reflected the historical urges and aspirations of the Indian masses."^9

As B.R. Nanda in his biographical essay on Gandhi writes:

In a time of deepening crises in the underdeveloped world, of social malaise in the affluent societies, of the shadow of unbridled technology and the precarious peace of nuclear terror ... Gandhi's ideas and techniques will become increasingly relevant.^10
Projecting the relevance of Gandhism into the future, Alvin Toffler, a scholarly futurist, has a chapter entitled "Gandhi with Satellites" in his powerful book The Third Wave which portrays the violent changes now battering our world. In his vision, the future is designed with a new balance struck between the advanced world of science and technology and the developing world of rural masses. To realise this objective, he suggests that "Gandhi with satellites" is the only means to bring the desired transformation of the society:

"Yet an increasing number of long-range thinkers, social analysts, scholars, and scientists believe that just such a transformation is now under way, carrying us toward a radical new synthesis, Gandhi, in short, with satellites."

That Gandhi has a vibrant message in these days of grim warnings, is confirmed by the analytical focus on Gandhi in contemporary media and literature, and in social and political writings. Richard Attenborough's classic film 'Gandhi' provided a fresh opportunity to millions in India and abroad, to recapture the legendary quality and feel the permanence about him.

Martin Luther King, the black Baptist Minister who led the Civil Rights Movement in the US from the mid 1950s until his death by assassination in 1968, acknowledged his indebtedness to Gandhi in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech in 1964: "Gandhi was probably the first person in
history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere to check up interaction between individuals, to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale. It was in this Gandhian emphasis on love and non-violence that I discovered the method of social reform that I had been seeing for so many months."  

India today has to turn to Gandhi more than ever. The unevenness of development, the hopelessness that faces large blocks of society, the immorality that has crept into all walks of life, the way religion is turned into politics, the eruption of communal clashes and the enormity of violence unleashed, call for a return to Gandhism. Prasanna, the eminent contemporary playwright in Karnataka, recalls the shock waves that shivered the nation on December 5, 1992 when Babri Majid was demolished. He explains what prompted him to write and stage the play "Gandhi."

I am a leftist. During the last three years, with the collapse of Communism and the creation of a highly consumeristic society, I have felt a spiritual anguish. It is not that I have now rediscovered Gandhi to fill the void. The problem is that for the last 40 years various political parties from the Congress to the Jana Sanah had hijacked Gandhi. I thus did not want to have anything to do with once again on December 6 last year. The event shocked me. I realised that we were somehow responsible.
Prasanna's statement endorses the fact that wittingly or unwittingly, India is in dire need of the return of Gandhi.

The merging of myth and history in Gandhi accounts for the unification of an astute sage and a politician of genius in him. Gandhi is "built of tremendous opposites" a unique combination of ultimate ideals and immediately realizable objectives. Buddhadeva Bhattacharya observes on this distinctive trait of Gandhi:

And there emerged two Gandhis - one philosophical and the other practical politician eager to come to grip with the realities, with a keen sense of the objective.

Thus, Gandhi cannot be valued either as a traditionalist or a modernist person. Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose puts it down: "Gandhi kept himself rooted in the past, and yet tried to carry India forward in directions radically different from ancient tradition."

This explains why Indians followed Gandhi on their collective journey towards liberation. As pastmaster in political strategies, he identified the most crucial and demanding needs of the time and rapped mythical resources in the Indian tradition for successful application.
MYTH AND HISTORY

The epic struggle which Gandhi spearheaded could win freedom for India without taking to arms and blood-shed, just relying on the collective unconscious of the people. The unseen and unheard secrets out of the womb of time are thrown out at certain points of history and at these points myth and history intersect. As Nicholas Cords and Patrick Gerster explain in *Myth and the American Experience*: "at given points, they (Myth and historical experience) can become one and the same thing. Myth becomes reality precisely when man reacts as if the myth were true and bases his beliefs and conduct upon it."

The present study emanates from the view that the Indian myth and history merged in Gandhi and became a reality. The mythic aspect of Gandhism relates itself to the depth and vastness of the consciousness of his people that spoke through him in a language intelligible to all and sundry. Writing under the title, 'Indian Question', Mr. M. N. Brailsford remarks: "When Gandhi spoke, India for the first time heard itself thinking aloud. His dominating idea had been hers for thousands of years." His power to express what India has been in its mythopoeic consciousness, makes Schreiner to remark: "It was as though the collective unconscious of his country was muttering and mumbling through him...... The tones, though gentle and caressing, had in them an undercurrent of oceanic thunder." We can
term this rare quality of Gandhi as "elemental identification". It is said of him: "Here is a man who has ceased to be one of us and has become an elemental being." The elemental identification addresses itself to the basic values and insights which are central to the tradition and not to its contingent beliefs and practices.

The Central values of Indian tradition are "insights which collectively constituted its traditional wisdom and cultural capital with centuries of lived experience behind them." These form the "rigorous communal science" and historians call it 'collective wisdom' attributing a moral significance to history.

Gandhi's concept of history enshrines one of his fundamental beliefs. He was convinced that "Human society is a ceaseless growth, an unfoldment in terms of spirituality." Por Gandhi, spirituality is not an escape from life but is realised through the ordinary activities of life: "I do not believe that the spiritual law works on a field of its own. On the contrary, it expresses itself through the ordinary activities of life. It thus affects the economic, the social and political fields." Gandhi conceived that "the fundamental direction of progress in history is a moving towards ... from the days of ..,"
The functioning of Truth and non-violence being natural, they are not recorded. What is recorded, therefore, is only a record of interruption of history. Therefore, Gandhi wrote: "History is really a record of every interruption of the even working of the force of line or of the soul ... History, then, is a record of an interruption of the course of nature. Soul-force, being natural, is not noted in history." Historical incidents of war and conquest occur in those periods when truth and non-violence are not adhered to.

But Gandhi believed in divine determination in history though it cannot be confused with fatalism. Akin to Collingwood’s Christian view of history in The Idea of History, he trusted in the power of spirit over matter ... the hints of the course . . . out by Karma. Hence, he avers: "Ultimately it is the Unseen Power that governs the course of events – evening the minds of men who make those events."

The crisis of his country is to be viewed in moral and social terms alike. The challenge that Gandhi put up is spirituality in action. Therefore, Gandhi spiritualises politics and raises social action to religion.
TRUTH AND NON-VIOLENCE

Gandhi believed that the sum total of the energy of mankind is to lift us up, and the progress of humanity works through the twin principles of Truth and Non-Violence. Truth is the goal and non-violence is the means to achieve it.

Gandhi is a quester after Truth. Truth or the concept of Satya occupies a prominent place in the social ethics of the Hindus. "The word Satya (Truth) is derived from 'Sat' which is indestructible and all our activities should be centered on truth. The term 'God' is rather an appellation to Truth. Truth need not assume shape or form at anytime, yet when it is made to do so in order to meet specific human needs, it is called Isvara of God and assumes a personal connotation. Hence Gandhi states:

"I say that Truth is not because god is without form and so is Truth but because Truth is the only comprehensive attribute of God. Other attributes are only partial expressions of the Reality that is God."

The absolute Truth can be glimpsed in and through particular instances of life. Gandhi's existential quest for Truth is in fact the key to his understanding and interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita. He sees the aim of the Gita as a call to action. But since according to Hindu teaching, actions by themselves land men to the empirical samsari world - the endless cycle of birth, death and
rebirth, there is a need of discipline and disinterested action, "Where there is no hankering after fruits of action, liberation is to be achieved."^9

In the sense of absolute Truth, Gandhi identified it with God. But the individual's liberation is in finding the relative truth in and through particular instances, by living upto the truth as he sees it: "Truth resides in every human heart, and one has to search for it there, and to be guided by truth as he sees it."^30

If Truth is the end, non-violence is the means to achieve it. Both are one and the same. Ends and means are not to be separated. Hence, Gandhi said: "Ahimsa is my god, and Truth is my God. When I look for Ahimsa, Truth says, "Find it through me" when I look for Truth, Ahimsa says, "Find it Through me."^31

Non-violence is 'Soul-force' or the power of the godhead in this. One becomes god-like to the extent of realising non-violence in thought, word and action. Non-violence demands the uttermost selflessness. Selflessness means complete freedom from a regard for one's body. Gandhi gave to the term 'Ahimsa' positive and active values. He said:

Ahimsa is not merely a negative state of harmlessness but it is a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer. But it does not mean helping the evil-doer to continue the wrong or tolerating it by
passive acquiescence. On the contrary, love, the active state of ahimsa requires you to resist the wrong-doer by dissociating yourself from him even though it may offend him or injure him physically.

The efficacy of regenerative concepts sourced by tradition is in their applicability. To make them applicable, Gandhi had to revive and redefine them with a new vocabulary and meaning. His redefinition is a critical dialogue between the traditional and modern values. Thus, when he found Ahimsa as a negative and passive value, he charged it with the power of the Christian concept of Caritas. When he found the concept of Caritas too emotive and led to worldly attachments, he redefined it in the light of the Hindu concept of anasakti (spiritual detachment, non-attachment). This is called "double conversion": "Christianisation of a Hindu category after suitably Hinduising its Christian components yielded the novel concept of an active and positive but detached and nonemotive love.”

Thus, the richest insights of the Indian tradition are given a new meaning in fusion with the permanent values of the west resulting in the ecumethical view of the world. This is a 'fusion of horizons' of thoughts and values.

In the new Shastra that Gandhi gave to the world prescribing Truth and Ahimsa as its cardinal principles, any political or social crisis is the inevitable result of a
moral crisis. Gandhi stated that "The English have not
taken India; We have given it to them," India's crisis
under the alien rule was moral in nature, and therefore, its
regeneration was to be attained through moral purification
of every individual in the country. Gandhian critics are
aware of this vital fact:

Since Indian crisis was moral in nature, Gandhi argued
that the process of its regeneration required
atmashuddi or purification of the national soul by
means of a sustained national tapasya. Thanks to its
karma over the past few centuries, its soul had lost
its' 'sattvic' tendencies and acquired tamasic ones,
and needed to mount a massive national yajna or 'moral
revolution'. Unlike a social or political revolution, a
moral revolution could not be undertaken over the heads
of its intended beneficiaries and entailed a personal
commitment and an intense soul-searching on the part of
every Indian. The programme of national atmashuddi has
to be so designed that each of them was able to
participate in it and 'purify' himself.  

SWARAJ

Swaraj is Gandhi's Indian term for liberation. It
occurs hundreds of times in Gandhi's writings. Swaraj was
first used in the name of the nation by Dadabhai Naoroji.
It is infinitely greater than and includes independence.
For Gandhi, Swaraj meant the freedom of the lowliest. He
said: "Swaraj means freedom for the meanest of our
countrymen." He also wrote: "To it has but one meaning:
the eradication of the poverty of India and freedom for
every man and woman. Ask the starving men and women of
India. They say that their Swaraj is their bread."
Swaraj of a people means the sum total of the Swaraj (self-rule) of individuals. And such swaraj comes only from performance by individuals of their duty as citizens and national rights are an extension of individual human rights. Swaraj has a moral foundation and is consistent with the principle of Ahitnasa.

SATYÄGRAHA

Satyagraha provides the means to attain Swaraj. Satyagraha is a recourse to truth-force or soul-force. "holding fast to truth", "adherence to truth", and "Insistence on truth". Gandhi coined the word in South Africa to express the force that the Indians used there for full eight years and it was different from passive resistance. Prof. N.K. Bose defines Satyagraha as a way of conducting war by means of non-violence. Satyagraha is a technique for resolving conflicts according to the nature of the unit of action, pitted on each side as follows:

1. An individual versus another individual or an individual pitted against a group.
2. A group pitted against another group
3. A community versus the state.

Satyagraha is demonstrated through various forms of non-cooperation which may include strike, hartal, boycott
and resignation of offices and titles. Civil Disobedience refuses to obey the immoral laws of the state, the civil resister denies the existence of the established authority.

Fasting as a Satyagraha method was undertaken by Gandhi "to come face to face with God by crucifying the flesh." Such fasts of Gandhi left deep impact on Public life because of the position he enjoyed. Gandhi said: "I have been driven to the conclusion that fasting unto death is an integral part of Satyagraha programme, and it is the greatest and most effective weapon in its armour under given circumstances."

Gandhi advocated fasting by the acknowledged leader of a community to atone for the evil deeds of his followers so that their sense of shame and guilt will be awakened and their moral and spiritual impulses will be mobilised for redemption purposes. Taking the case of untouchability, Gandhi regarded it as a blot on Hinduism and his verdict on it is one of guilt and condemnation. Firstly, it was a sin of disbelief in God. Secondly, it was a sin of irreligion, a sin against religion in so far as untouchability was a prostitution of religion. Thirdly, untouchability was a sure death of Hinduism, as the two cannot go together. Lastly, it was a sin against the Harijans. Hence, he advocates the upper castes to atone for the atrocities they have perpetrated against their fellow-beings.
Moreover, Gandhi took the traditional Hindu practice of fasting as a protest, combined it with the Judaic concept of representative leadership and the Christian concepts of vicarious atonement and suffering love, interpreted and reinterpreted each in the light of the others, and developed the amazing notion of the voluntary crucifixion of the flesh. 44

Noble as the goal, is, the means also should equally be of a high moral order. For Gandhi, "Means and ends are convertible terms" and "if one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself". Non-co-operation, Civil Disobedience and Fasting were his efforts to perfect the means to attain the relative truth in thought, word and action. Moreover, Gandhi was never tired of talking about means and ends and of laying stress on the importance of the means.

Gandhi's attempt to unify the ideal and the actual, the spiritual and the political, the past and the present by giving a new semantic twist to traditional terms, brought him in conflict with the Indian tradition. Gandhism despite its roots in tradition, differs from it, as explained by Parekh:

Hindu culture did not give pride of place to the active service of fellow men; he (Gandhi) made sevadharma its very essence. It was indifferent to the struggle for justice and equality; he insisted that this was the only path to *moksha* in the modern politics - dominated
age. For centuries Hindus had lived with the evil practice of untouchability; he declared war on it and shook its moral roots.

A leader should be morally great and more purified than others. The more spiritually developed a person is, the more he can master his sense and will be endowed with the capacity to tap and mobilise the higher impulses of his fellow beings. A Gandhian leader may be defined as:

one that was 'pure' and self disciplined, deeply rooted in Indian civilisation, familiar with the vernacular mode of moral discourse, capable of conversing in Indian languages, devoted to the service of ordinary people, willing to live and work in the villages and leading a life of brahmacharya.

An individual's liberation is in merging his cause with the wider and larger cause of the society:

"the individual has to die for the family, the family has to die for the village, the village for the district, the district for the province and the province for the country, even so a country has to be free in order that it may die if necessary for the benefit of the world."**

POINTERS FOR ANALYSIS

From our survey, the following postulates may be deduced to serve as pointers to Gandhism.

1. Any social crisis is reflective of the moral crisis of the situation.

2. A moral solution needs the soul-searching and purification of every individual because "the sin of one is the sin of all."
3. Self-purification is through constant cultivation of cardinal ethical virtues like Truth, Ahimsa or love.

4. The individuals who could provide leadership should be morally higher than others.

5. The comparatively more pure are used to atone for the less pure:

6. Self-suffering was the test of political maturity for freedom. One has to demonstrate one's capacity and readiness to suffer if liberation is desired.

7. The sacrifice and suffering should be in terms of larger cause and unselfish requirements.

8. Non-violence is an indicator of inward freedom to which the outer freedom would be in exact proportion.

9. Non-violence spiritualises the means and the spiritualised means would be used for spiritual self-purification.

IMPACT OF GÁNDHISM ON INDO-ANGLIÄM NOVELS

Gandhism has not left any department of thought unexplored. With its wide sweep of issues ranging from untouchability to Brahmacharya and multi-dimensional approach to life, it was strong enough to take upon itself a form of imagined life clearer than reality. Its charismatic ideology had a compelling force on those Indian novelists in whom the yearning to amend the human races was great. In some of their works, "the accumulated verismilitude of selected episodes put to shame the pride of documentary history."

The advent of Gandhi and the national upsurge, like hot streams, coursed through the veins of the Indian thinkers. It awakened the society into self-awareness and provided a
fertile soil for literary writers. As K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar commented: "Life could not be the same as before, and every segment of our national politics, economics, education, religion, social life, language, and literature acquired a more or less pronounced Gandhian hue." The liberating force of Gandhism was felt in all three aspects of the literary works. In tune with the new thinking, the literary paradigm shifted from the rich to the poor, from the intellectual to the men of indigenous culture and from the educated to the voiceless.

Viney Kirpal briefly surveys the galaxy of novelists from 1930s to 1970s:

The 1930s gave 'the old masters' .. Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, the forties Ahmed Ali and G.V. Desani, the fifties a crop that included Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Jhabwala, Kushwant Singh, Attia Hossain and Bhabani Bhattacharya. The sixties yielded novelists like Shagal, Anita Desai, Joshi, the later 1960s and 1970s also saw the emergence of gifted group of poets, translations and plays and a couple of new novelists."}

The pre-independent novels presented a faithful picture of freedom movement, the Gandhian ideology and its impact on society. K.S. Venkatramani's Murugan: the tiller (1927) deals with the Gandhian ideal of rural reconstruction as a step towards winning 'swaraj' while his Kandan: the Patriot (1932) depicts the national struggle and the attainment of Swaraj. K. Nagarajan's Athawar House (1937) and The
Chronicles of Kedaram (1961) portray the social changes brought by the Indian renaissance and reflected the hectic period of freedom struggle interspersing it with a family chronicle.

Directly inspired by Gandhi, Mulk Raj Anand is concerned with the basic elements in Gandhian values and approach. The Coolie (1936) is a Gandhian critique of industrialization and exploitation of an orphan boy reduced to the lot of a "coolie" in Bombay. Two leaves and Bud (1937) explores the theme of colonial, economic and racial exploitation perpetrated by the British. Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable (1939) concerns with the evil of untouchability in the Indian society. Creating an archetypal image of the untouchable, this novel portrays an individual's struggle to release himself from the excrescence of the customs and beliefs of the community. The Oid Wotnan and the Cow (1960) symbolises the resurgence of the liberated Indian womanhood of Gandhian reformist philosophy.

R.K. Narayan's Swami and Friends (1935) focusses on the educational system of the 1930s and the novelist disapproves the religious, racial, and cultural discriminations. His work The Bachelor of Arts (1937) speaks of social inequality and economic and racial exploitation. Mr. Sampath, The Financial Expert, (1952) and the Man Eater of Malgudi (1961) depict the change in the post-indep
India, but the thematic concern remains the same and seeks the same Gandhian referent. *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955) shows the nature and extent of Gandhian significance and impact on the average Indian. R.K. Narayan exemplifies the Gandhian act of self-less service, renunciation and equanimity in *The Sweet Vendor* (1967).

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) microscopically concentrates on the Gandhian evolution of the 1930s. Gandhi's birth is presented in terms of mythical birth as an "avatar* of Lord Krishna. The impact of Gandhian thought on the villages in India marks the matrix of this novel. *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) explores India's cultural past and is presented through an intense personal and spiritual quest. It provides a pattern of contrast and mythical frame of reference for exploring India's confused identity after independence.

The ethical and moral outlook of Bhabani Bhattacharya in his novels is unmistakably drawn from the Gandhian vision of life. *So many Hungers* (1947) enshrines the noble ideals of Gandhian self-sacrifice and renunciation for the liberation of the motherland. *He who Rides a Tiger* (1954) attempts to study the misery of the poor and the cruelty of the rich. *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966) seeks to establish an ideal village, Gandhigram, founded on the Gandhian principles. It contrasts Gandhism with industrialism and
suggests that the Gandhian philosophy of peace and non-violence seems to be outmoded. *In a Dream in Hawai* (1978) enunciates the Gandhian ideals against the commercialization of Indian religion and philosophy abroad. *A Goddess Named Gold* (1967) records, the Gandhian concept of freedom from 'ignorance, superstition and poverty,'

Nayantara Sahgal's novels are more pervasive, though less explicit in the exposition of Gandhian values. *A Time to be Happy* (1957) embodies the enthusiasm and optimism of India just after independence. *A Time to be Happy* (1958) presents Gandhian movement of the forties. Her novel *From Fear Set Free* (1962) pictures the novelists' life after independence. *Storm in Chandigarh* recalls to our minds the vexed and insoluble problem of the division of the Punjab. *This Time of Morning* (1965) relates the beginning of disillusionment to a decade or soon after independence. Later, in *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969) Sahgal depicts the story of a fast deteriorating political situation around the beginning of the sixties. *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977) clearly approves the technique of non-violence for solving social and political problems. *Rich Like Us* is apparently about the Emergency, and the political events of the mid seventies.

Kamala Markandaya exhibits the impact of science and technology over agrarian India in *The Coffer Dams* (1969).
Her fiction is of particular interest, because it crystallizes various literary directions that the quest for identity has taken since the thirties.

That Kamala Markandaya was deeply influenced by Gandhian concern for the poor and the lowly is testified by her works A Handful of Rice (1966) and Nectar in a Sieve (1984).

Khushwant Singh depicts the tragic circumstances leading to India's partition in 1947 in his novel Train to Pakistan (1956). There is a thick layer of disenchantment and disillusionment in his novels.

Manohar Malgaonkar in Bend in the Ganges (1964) depicts the terrorists' activities before India's independence and the butchery and bloodshed of the partition days.

To sum up, the Indian novelists of the 1930s were concerned with the national upheaval of the time which extended upto the fifties. In the mid 50s, India played an important role in promoting world peace and a great sense of well-being and self esteem were generated. Moreover, the economic growth and general prosperity in the country were considerable. The national pride which was the general mood of the country, suffered only a temporary set back due to the Chinese invasion in 1962.
The early 1970s marked a turbulent period in Indian history. The disturbing events were the Bangladesh war and India's intervention, the Emergency in 1975, and its attendant threats to the Indian democracy, economic decline, shortages and strikes. These unnerving experiences were a blessing in disguise as there was a sudden realisation of the importance of the individual in the reality of history.

The 1980s witnessed India's obvious visibility in the International arena. India hosted the Asian Games for the first time; took up the leadership as the chairperson of NAM, CHOGM and SAARC, and Richard Attenborough's film on Gandhi was a thumping success and renewed the global interest in Gandhism. There were rapid strides in Science and Technology. All these events contributed to the making of the image of perceived self-importance which was mirrored in the New Indian novels of the decade.

The eighties saw a bursting forth of a cluster of novels with a searching analysis of contemporary life. Rushdie's Midnight Children (1981) took the literary world by storm and its impact has influenced many writers with regard to narrative techniques, post-modernist vision combined with the Indian oral narrative style.

Chaman Nahal preoccupied himself with the vision of independence and the painful partition of the country, and its aftermath. The Crown and the Loincloth (1988) turned to
Mahatma Gandhi for its treatment and symbolises the hopes and aspirations of millions of Indians striving ceaselessly for freedom.

Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate* (1986) a poetic novel revolving round the search for love, affection and a sense of belonging, bagged the Sahitya Academy Award. Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich like Us* (1985) dealing with the days of Emergency, and *Plans for Departure* won the Sinclair Fiction Prize and the Commonwealth Prize respectively.

Upamanyu Chatterjee's *English August* and _Aja Indian Story* (1988) and Ranga Rao's *Fowl Filcher* (1987) were runaway hits. Mulk Raj Anand's *The Bubble* and *Sunrise in Fiii* (1988) and Chaman Nahal's *The Salt of Life* are full of vitality, creativity and the element of the new.

Anita Desai's three novels, *Clear Light of Day*, *In Custody*, Baumgartner's Bombay are distinctly different from her earlier works in technique, tone, voice and manner. Shashi Deshpande's *The Park Holds No Terrors* and That *Long Silence*, Namita Gokhale's *Paro* and Nina Sibal's *Yatra* represent the Indian woman's search for identity and self-realisation.

The novelists of the eighties are characterised by their ability to face life in the harsh, to confront it unflinchingly and yet to laugh at the lighter side. The
works have a vast emotional, political, cultural, geographical and historical sweep. The feminist perspective of the women novelists is a new dimension added to the richness of the novels.

From among the works of the eighties, five novels from five distinct writers are selected for analysis in the present study:


RÄTIONALE FOR THE CHOTCE

They belong to the second half of the eighties and cover a short period of five years (1986-1991). The study justifies the valuable observation made by Sujit Mukherjee in his Monograph titled Some Positions on a Literary History of India, that it is only by reducing the period of examination of recent literature to the minimum possible, that the smallest developments may be noted. In the whirligig of modern times, issues are complex; changes are swift; and approaches are manifold. The short period endears itself to a deep study of Gandhism as a counter message to the meddling issues of our times—eruption of violence, casteism and impaired democracy. Truth and non-
vilence as propounded by Gandhiji are the organising principles of all these selected novels.

The choice, again, relates itself to the historical compulsion of our times to return to Gandhi and his therapeutic message. The span of time 1985-1991, is historically significant as marking a temporal phase between two most ruthless incidents that rocked the whole country. On October 31, 1984, Indira Gandhi was assassinated at her residence in Delhi by two of her own security guards. The fundamentalists growing unchecked demolished the Babri Masjid on Dec. 6, 1992. As the structure of the Masjid was pulled down by frenzied communalists, it signified the virtual eolapse of the values for which Gandhi was martyred. It evidences the spread of a cult of the gun instead of the cult of dharma or non-violence which Gandhi advocated.

Indira Gandhi’s assassination was followed by the massacre of Sikhs which took a heavy toll of precious lives. Communal and caste-conflicts have been on the increase. The naxalites attempted to subvert the systera and the separatists operated virulently in Jammu and Kashmir. The brutality with which Rajiv Gandhi was killed is repvtgnant to any morally sensible person. The lot of women, imaged as goddesses in religious literature, is no longer better. The domestic violence and sexual harassment have become daily
occurrences. Lack of scruples among political leaders and abuse of power have precipitated a degenerated democracy. The situation is the result of a complex inter-mixture of social, economic and political factors. Thus we are at a point in time, to examine ourselves and retrieve the values we have lost. "Back to Gandhi" is the appropriate solution to our problems.

The present thesis is a sincere attempt of a scholar in this line. There are no full-length critical studies available on the novels selected and even reviews are found to be scanty. Yet the prolific speeches and writings of Mahatma, the social commitments of the novelists and the contemporaneity of the content analysed are expected to be sustaining factors of the analysis.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework for analysis is patterned on the quest myth which involves an archetypal journey. The archetypal stages of the journey are, as defined by Joseph's Campbell in The Hero with a Thousand Faces, the departure, the journey and the return.
chaos. The initiation phase incorporates the road to trials, the encounter with the dragons or antagonistic forces. The hero in his journey, approaches, confronts, and slays or is slain by the paralysing dragon and either is defeated or wins the ultimate boon of inexhaustible life, joy, and wholeness. Upon the hero’s return, the kingdom is rejuvenated.

The quest myth may adopt any form of narrative: "Romance, tragedy, irony and comedy are all episodes in a total quest-myth." The nature of the quest of the protagonist is analysed in terms of the myths adopted and the Gandhian ideals reflected in the novel.

Gandhi himself was a quester after Truth and all through his life, he has experimented with Truth and been inventing strategies of non-violence to kill untruth of any form. Thus he made his life an archetypal journey. His departure to South Africa at a time when India was wholly under the British regime signifies the mythic hero crossing the threshold of his mission to slay the dragons that afflict the society. In the South African society, for the first time, Gandhi learned the use of moral weapons that tradition and western education have given to him. The dragons that confronted him were apartheid, inhuman suppression, denial of human rights, racism, etc. Slaying those dragons, he returned to his community i.e. India
where his mission was to heal the wounded Bharat and regenerate her.

Gandhi used most powerful weapons -- Truth and non-violence to combat the life-negating forces. For liberating the country, he risked his own life as a martyr. He was killed by the paralysing inner dragon of the country fundamentalists. Souls like Gandhi do not die but return to the society and the world, in the form of their life sustaining ideals. But acceptance of their return is in the hands of the posterity. Acceptance is life affirmation and rejuvenation of the sick society ridden with factions. If not, it will be waiting for Mahatma for the innocent few.

Gandhian ideals are found operative in the five novels selected for study.

The eradication of untouchability which occupied a prime place in the Gandhian programme of action is the focal theme of Outcast and The Light from Heaven. Though the cause is Gandhian, the means adopted differ and hence the lively contrast we have between the two works.

Khadi and The Bullet and The Sait of Life juxtapose violence and non-violence. The thirties which fermented with the spirit of nationalism provide the situational context, in both the novels. Though the struggle for India's Independence was largely non-violent, it was constantly
vitalised by a relatively small but vocal terrorist movement. In these two novels, Gandhi figures as a dominant character who has conviction in Ahimsa and the revolutionaries who hold violence as the effective instrument to attain the same objective of freedom, serve as foils to each other. Gandhi is recast as the major character in *The Salt of Life* whose voice is heard throughout in *Khadi and the Bullet*.

Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novellis* a multi-dimensional critique of Gandhism both in colonial and post-colonial India. Tharoor himself comments on the theme of the novel: "The Great Indian Novel is an attempt to retell the political history of 20th century India through a fictional recasting of events, episodes and characters from Mahabharata." Political facts and fictional events are successfully interwoven giving us an illusion of reality and pleasurable shock of recognition. The historical Gandhiji finds a fictional equivalence in the major character of the novel.

Bhismagangaji taken from the great epic the Mahabharata, the presentation of characters and events created by the superimposition of the political events of the 20th century on the structure provided by the epic cut across and transcend the spatial and temporal limitations.
The research study has a division of five chapters. The present chapter serves the Introductory purpose.

The following chapter II examines the milieus in which the protagonists are placed and the call they receive to heal themselves and their wounded societies. This subsequently leads to their response to the call and their breaking of the fetters of a status-quoist society and entry into a wider world of chaos and trials.

Balan, the brahmin youth in The Light from Heaven suffers from an intense guilt of the sin that his ancestors have committed. He is haunted by an inner urge to atone for their crime of untouchability. Hence, he responds to the call of catharsis and spiritual cleansing. He crosses the Brahminfold and all its concomitant rites and rituals. He throws away the sacred thread which is symbolic of his Brahminism in order to become one with the untouchables in spirit and action.

Sambal in Outcast, a chandal by birth, is on a bid to work for the human dignity of his people. The socially downtrodden were denied of entry into the temple. Sambal's father was brutally tortured by the upper castes, just because he offered hibiscus flowers on the temple steps. Though Sambal's cause is as noble as that of Balan, the
violent means he resorts to, swerve away from the Gandhian path of Truth. Putki, Sambal's love, serves as the alter-ego or consciousness of Sambal in this novel.

In *Khadi and the Bullet*, Savitri, hailing from an elitistic and anglicised family, is gradually drawn into the vortex of a terrorist group. For the cause of the nation, she associates herself with the 'party of violence' and is prepared to take to arms. She steps out of her rich, pompous and secured home and enters a world of political and social turmoil.

In *The Sait of Life*, Kusum, another protected daughter of a rich family and widow of a revolutionary, joins Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram. Here, she responds to the call of self-suffering and identifies herself with the greater cause of independence. Her marriage with Vishal Chand, the Prince of Lambini, is symbolic of her entry into the world which waits for her redemptive actions.

*The Great Indian Novel* structures an astonishing parallel between the historical Gandhi we know and the fictional character, Gangaji. Gangaji is an heir apparent to the throne of Hastinapur. But, he renounces his claim to the throne and vows to be a celibate. He devotes himself to the pursuit of Truth. Renunciation is indeed the beginning, the middle, and the end of his life. The call of renunciation beckons Gangaji not to the otherworldly
to Karma Yoga which spiritualises all political and social causes. After completing his duties as the regent and bringing up the heirs to the throne, he renounces his regal life, quits Hastinapur and founds an Ashram on a river bank where he could practice his action-based asceticism.

Chapter III examines the journey undertaken by the questers in all the five novels. The inner and outer dragons they confront exist in their psychological and social realms. In the characters who toe the line of Gandhism, dragons are slain and reconciliation is effected in the end.

Balan, in *The Light from Heaven*, undertakes a journey of self-purification which, in other words, is a spiritual identification with his fellow-beings however low and mean they could be. He humbles himself and affirms the divine spark in every human being. To complete his identity as an untouchable, he marries a scavenger girl. Balan's unflinching determination to purge the sin of his ancestors sustains him in the most arduous journey of spiritual and social atonement.

Sambal in *Outcast* burns with a consuming passion to win social equity and human dignity for his people who have been inhumanly suppressed and humiliated for ages. But the process of execution is characterised by violent and
destructive means. It is true that his objective like that of Balan is to attain high valuation for the lower castes, His whole life is a series of confrontations and struggles to free his people from their age-old dumbness and exploitations. But all his endeavours to destroy the social dragon of inequity are devoid of the sustaining moral force and his mission is a pursuit on spiritually maligned and destructive lines.

Savitri in Khadi and the Bullet demonstrates a terrorist's enthusiasm and youthful impetuosity as she starts on the journey towards freedom of the country. Even the death of Chandrasekar Azad, the leader of the revolutionary group did not deter her spirits. She is hardened to the extent of planning to form an 'one-woman' army. This daughter of a highly westernized family becomes a fugitive and faces the harsh realities of life and is buffeted from place to place. These trials test her fortitude, humility and perseverance.

In The Sait of Life, Kusum energises, and recreates everyone she comes across in her march to liberation. Gandhian actions and methods find a reinforcement in Kusum's life. She exemplifies 'shakti', the Goddess of power and creation, when she halts the train in defiance of an alien supremacy, demonstrates Salt Satyagraha, leads the
picketing, etc. These encounters develop in her the brave qualities of spiritual sustenance: inner vitality, independence, and affirmation.

The journey of Gangaji in The Great Indian Novel is an exact replica of Gandhi's pilgrim progress towards Truth. Life-denying forces ranging from deep-rooted caste discrimination, social inequalities, gender injustice, socio-political and economic subjugation mount his way. But, his moral armoury consists of potent weapons like satyagraha, fasting, prayers, penance, marches, picketing, boycotts, civil resistance and non-co-operation. Gangaji is convinced that means should justify the ends and both should not compromise with untruth. At every point, the journey of Gangaji merges with Gandhi's experimental journey of truth and both with the country's journey towards freedom.

Chapter IV details the accomplishments of the guesters. The depth and spread of their achievements are in tune with their potentialities, the needs of society, and the means they adopt.

Balan's life in The Light from Heaven has established that occupation has to be delinked from caste labels. His journey reconciles spiritual catharsis of a Brahmin youth with his social identification as an untouchable. Sambal in Outcast could not accomplish his objective since his means
are untruthful. Unhealed and unregenerated, he is not reconciled with realities. Rather, he sits on a pile of explosive dynamite cases ready to kill and be killed. In Khadi and the Bullet, Savitri's youthful wild ways find a truce with life. She returns to her father's house mellowed and matured with a sane knowledge of the world. In The Salt of Life, Kusum rises to the stature of 'shakti', endowed with creative, protective, redemptive and recuperative powers. Finally, she returns to the Sabarmati Ashram with the ultimate realisation that the salt of life lies in the ceaseless suffering of seif.

In the case of Gangaji, The Great Indian Novel, his accomplishments do not measure up to his ideal expectations as people fail to cognise the spiritual purport of his actions. Though his non-violent struggle against the British Raj brought freedom to his people, it is sadly accompanied by the vivisection of the country into India and Karnistan (Pakistan) and the violence that erupted between Hindu and Muslim communities. His Satyagraha campaigns brought redress to, the exploited peasants and factory workers but exploitation still rears its head in different other forms. The civil disobedience and epic salt march turned the cause of liberation into a broad based mass movement. Yet, his moral crusade to abolish centuries old crime of untouchability has failed as the discrimination
between the uppercastes and the lowercastes is "soul deep." In utter humility, Gangaji remarks that he has failed to effect the desired transformation in his people. After Gangaji's death, the country has been fragmented ridden with communalism, dictatorial governments which mock the parliamentary democracy, regionalism, terrorism, linguistic chauvinism, subversion of the constitution, and exploitation of the poor.

The concluding Chapter V summarises the various conduits through which Gandhism has been absorbed and artistically transmitted in the five novels under study. It is proved that though the questers are in pursuit of the same ideals for which Gandhi has risked his life, their success or failure in realising their objectives are in accordance with the means adopted. In Gandhian thought, means justify the ends and both should belong to Truth alone. The chapter also confirms that what is imperative today is to conscientise people about the permanence of Gandhian values and their adaptation to our social, political, and moral needs.