CHAPTER 9

The Gandhi Image

Most of the novels dealing with the Indian struggle for freedom and its aftermath have introduced Gandhi or his ideology as one of the pervasive influences into their narratives. These novels reflect political events and issues centring mostly round Non-Cooperative movement, Khilafat Wrongs, Civil Disobedience movement, Hindu-Muslim Unity, 'Quit India' movement, the horrors of Partition and the Gandhian Myth. The image of Gandhi, significantly enough, is present in all such novels, though the details and emphasis may vary. Some of these novelists have attempted to turn the contemporary history of Post-Independence India into literature. Their novels also treat Gandhi by judging the Mahatma in terms of his followers. The present chapter offers a critical examination of novels where Gandhi figures as a pervasive influence directly or indirectly.

Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1956), "a tense, economic novel" is a brutal tale of horror centring round a Panjabi village Mano Majra at the time of the Partition of India (August 1947) which caused millions of people to flee their ancestral homes and the slaughter of innocent people as the boneful offshoot of the explosion of communal passions. Combining in him the twin strands of the sociologist and the journalist as the mere observer of facts, Khushwant Singh has chronicled "with biting economy of phrase, mathematical


precision and graphic detail" the holocaust that followed in the wake of the partition of the country. *Train to Pakistan*, thus, deals with the last phase of Gandhian struggle for India's independence, although Khushwant Singh seems to shock both his countrymen and the world at large with "his historically accurate expose' of the violent India so unlike the non-violent image fabricated and promulgated by Indian propaganda machine." 4

*Train to Pakistan* does not offer to tell a story; its chief protagonist is not a particular individual, but a village. The method employed is thus sociological and "his socio-cultural preoccupations define the matrix of the plot of this novel". 5

This graphically realistic tale of rioting, bloodshed, and murder on the Indo-Pakistan border is the poignant study of communal frenzy and the mob-insanity resulting thereof. The novel, by implication, breathes Gandhian echo of communal harmony and love and that "genuine human feelings are beyond artificial barriers of religion". 6 It is suggested implicitly that an intensely human problem can be solved only by change of heart, by an essentially moral and spiritual approach to it and not by politicians, policemen or soldiers. The individual love of one man for one woman is, what Hemenway calls, the spur which enables the village trouble-maker Juggut Singh to transcend religious

5 Kuleshtha, Khushwant Singh's fiction, p.123.
6 Meenakshi Mukherjee, *The Twice Born Fiction*, p.158.
hatred and show the dependability of love as the most significant factor in human relations. 7 Tarinaya rightly remarks that the novelist seems to suggest that somewhere, deep in their psyche, the people of the village are led to feel the human folly of erecting communal barriers. 8 It is as though the thousands of years of race-memories have not been obliterated, and in times of stress and strain, despite the external trappings of religion, their blood is conscious of what Gandhi had once remarked that every Moslem will have a Hindu name if he goes back far enough in his family history. Every Muslim is merely a Hindu who has accepted Islam.

The novel thus gives a lie to the two-Nation Theory which Gandhi repudiated repeatedly. Iyengar perceptively suggests that Khushwant Singh has "succeeded through resolved limitation and rigorous selection in communicating to his readers a hint of the grossness, ghastliness and total insanity of the two-nation theory and the Partition tragedy". 9 As one reads the novel, one can't help realising how silly is the two-nation theory. Mano Majra is a living example of Hindu-Muslim common grounds. Besides the three brick buildings in the village — the Mosque, Gurudwara, the money-lender Lala Ram Lal's house — there is one object that is venerated by all in Mano Majra. This is the three feet slab of sandstone that stands upright under a Keeker tree beside the pond. It is the local deity, the presiding deity of Mano Majra, like goddess Himvathy in Kanthapura to which

7 The Novel of India, p.51.
8 Tarinaya in Literature of the Past fifty Years, p.193.
9 Indian Writing, p.502.
all the villagers — Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, repair secretly whenever they are in special need of blessings. The novelist suggests that the people of the village are not fully aware that the British have left, and the country is divided into Pakistan and Hindustan. One doubts whether anyone has ever heard of Jinnah—but some of them know Gandhi. Imam Bakah, the Muslim priest tells Iqbal, the social worker:

If we have no faith in God then we are like animals, said the Muslim gravely. All the world respects a religious man. Look at Gandhi! I hear he reads the Koran Sharif and the Unjeel along with his Vedas and Shastras. People sing his praise in the four corners of the earth. I have seen a picture in a newspaper of Gandhi’s prayer meeting. It showed a lot of white men and women sitting cross-legged.

Even the notorious bad character Jugga has heard of Gandhi: “It is Mahatma Gandhi’s government in Delhi, isn’t? They say so in our village” (p.54). In Chundunnugger police station reporting room, just above the table is an old frame picture of King George VI with a placard stating in Urdu, bribery is a crime. On another wall is pasted a coloured portrait of Gandhi torn from a calendar. Beneath it is a motto written in English, honesty is the best policy. The communist worker contemptuously ridicules the followers of Gandhi as “cowardly banian money-lenders” (p.129). The police inspector derides Congress government for its “talking very loudly of stamping out corruption”. He observes that the followers of Gandhi are cunning and corrupt: “Ask anyone coming from Delhi and he will tell you that all these Gandhi disciples are minting

money. They are as good saints as the crane. They shut their eyes piously and stand on one leg like a yogi doing penance: as soon as a fish comes there — hurrup" (p.18). When magistrate Hukam Chand advises caution and restraint, the young police inspector blurs out: "Sometimes, sir, one cannot restrain oneself. What do the Gandhi-caps in Delhi know about the Panjab?" Imam Baksh voices out the reaction of the average villager when he says that freedom is for the educated people: "We were slaves of the English, now we will be slaves of the educated Indians or Pakistanis" (p.43). Iqbal, therefore, calls upon the peasants and workers to "get the bania Congress government out" (p.43), so that freedom might mean something to them.

Thus Khushwant Singh takes up the political aspect of the partition for granted, 11 as all that his villagers are concerned with is that 'it is Mahatma Gandhi's government in Delhi' and that 'people sing his praise in four corners of the earth'. The grim story of individuals and communities caught in the vortex of partition of India includes the movingly tragic affair between a Sikh peasant Jugga and a Muslim girl Nooran. The novel reads compellingly and reveals, rather indirectly, the derogatory image of Gandhi in the new India during the dust-whirl of the Partition.

I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale (1959), a novel dealing with the fortunes of a sikh family (April 1942 to April 1943) 12

11 Shakti Batra, "Two Partition Novels" in Indian Literature 18 (September 1975), 97.
offers insights into the life, customs and mores of the Sikhs against the background of a politically resurgent India. The novel is located in the disturbed pre-partition period and concentrates on the inner tension and external movements of a well-to-do sikh family in the Panjab. It was the period of the 'Quit India' conflagration, but the novelist weaves his tale round the relations between the bureaucracy and the people. The novel does not enhance our awareness of Gandhian struggle for Independence, although the action of the tale takes place around 'Quit India' Movement. It is difficult to agree with the assertion that the novel reflects "a vivid sense of time, place and the social milieu".\(^\text{13}\)

Khushwant Singh has offered a pedestrian delineation of 'Quit India' movement, and he seems to capitalize too much on "scenes of violence and sex with neither depth of character nor any insight into the causes that led to the blood-bath".\(^\text{14}\) All this ends in poor creation of art and a rather distorted view of contemporary life, much less "A vivid and exciting novel which presents a panoramic view of contemporary Indian life," as the blurb proclaims it to be. Khushwant Singh, suggests Kulasekhra, is a novelist without a vision. His indifference to values shifts his emphasis to facts. He relies exclusively on socio-materialistic interpretation of life and his tale fails to convey any thing beyond the deterministic control of his milieu. The novel, in spite of the pervasive

\(^{13}\) Iyengar, *Indian Writing*, p.504.

\(^{14}\) Verghese, *Problems of Indian Creative Writer*, p.119.
emphasis on graphic realism, lacks cohesion and organic development. In his exclusive concern with things as they are, the artist in Khushwant Singh fails to capture "the subtleties and surrounding nuances which light up the facts, and tend to describe and explain, rather than vivify and dramatise, write about rather than create".  

In *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* characters lack individuality, with the sole exception of Sabhrai, the matriarch of the Sikh family, and they tend to appear as chessboard pawns in a situation that claims the greater attention of the novelist. The art of creating convincing characters is lost in transliterated reality as the artist in Khushwant Singh yields ground to the sociologist and the journalist. Buta Singh, a senior magistrate, owes loyalty to the British. His son Sher Singh is a leader of a group of underground revolutionaries. Both are spineless and wooden characters. The novelist seems to take shelter behind the hackneyed platitude that the older generation stands for opposition to Gandhi and his 'Quit India' movement, while the younger generation is fully supporting the struggle. Buta Singh is anxious to be on the right side of the Government, but he allows his son to hobnob with the nationalists so that they may have the best of both worlds. When Taylor, the Deputy Commissioner, brings to the notice of Buta Singh the involvement of Sher Singh in the activities of a terrorist group of the students, the justification offered by Buta Singh reveals the sterility and servility of the

You are most kind, Sahib. He is a young man and you know what youth is! Hot and full of ideas. But he is all right. He is, as you say, Buta Singh's son. And through his hobnobbing with these Gandhi-capped Congress Wallahs and Red flag wallahs, Buta Singh knows what is going on in the city and whom to watch" (p. 29).

Buta Singh, later, begins to think in terms of bargaining with the British. Before that, loyalty to the Raj had been an article of faith with him. Things are beginning to change. The sociologist in Khushwant Singh interrupts the narrative to explain this change in Buta Singh who had been earlier mentioning the English King or queen in his evening prayer: "O, Guru, bless our Sovereign and bless us their subjects so that we may remain contented and happy" (p. 23). This change is as much due to Gandhi and his struggle as to the liberal Englishmen who not only make friends with Indians as equals but also openly express their sympathies with Gandhi and Nehru:

Things had begun to change. Gandhi had made loyalty to British appear disloyalty to one's own country and traditions. Larger and larger numbers of Indians had begun to see Gandhi's point of view. People like Buta Singh who had been proud of being servants of His Britannic Majesty were made to feel apologetic and even ashamed of themselves. Loyalty became synonymous with servility, respect for English officers synonymous with sycophancy. What shook the faith of people like Buta Singh was the attitude of the new brand of Englishmen coming out to India (pp. 23-24).

What Buta Singh considers as Englishman's sincerity is, in fact, the tact with which Taylor handles the delicate situation of Sher Singh's arrest.

Besides the double-faced Sikh magistrate, there is his colleague Wazir Chand whose family is similar to Buta Singh's,
except that it is Hindu and not so concerned with religion and ritual. The only evidence of religion in the house is a large colour print of Lord Krishna whirling a quoit on the mantelpiece of the sitting room. Wazir Chand's wife occasionally puts a garland of flowers round it and "touched the base of its frame as a mark of respect. She did the same to a portrait of Mahatma Gandhi which was kept discreetly away in the bedroom" (p.31).

Khushwant Singh's portrayal of Sher Singh, the terrorist and student leader, is in tune with his disdain for the nationalists. The picture is lop-sided and even ridiculous. The astute administrator Taylor calls for Sher Singh, but this invitation is taken as a special favour for the family by the spineless Sikh magistrate. Sher Singh is terrified into submission. Instead of wearing the militant looking open collared bush-shirt made of coarse hand-spun cloth, Sher Singh goes in a silk suit and tie. The regular callers of the Deputy Commissioners, the officials, informers and other toadies present there, express a sense of wonder at this belated change in the young revolutionary: "We used to ask how long will it be before this disciple of Gandhi will become his father's real son. Today in your European outfit you look like the heir of Sardar Buta Singh" (p.96). When the Deputy Commissioner asks Sher Singh about his politics as the President of Students Union, he stumbles for an answer. The friendly tone and praise of the Englishman has won him over completely. He is all gratitude for the kindness of the shrewd bureaucrat: "It is all the kindness of people like you. The students were being led astray by these communists and other political groups. At a time like
this, when the enemy is at our gates, we should be united and strong. The way the English are standing up to their adversities should be a lesson to us" (p.98). Taylor does not betray his feelings but speaks cool-headedly that things are not going well for the Englishmen but they can rely on friends. The Deputy Commissioner hammers his point straight: "The Sikhs have a long tradition of loyalty to the British. We trust them more than any other community in India. And you know, your father is my closest colleague. He is a very good man" (p.98).

Sher Singh realises that the Deputy Commissioner and the terrorists are at two extremes and presiding over the two extremes is his father with his conveniently dual morality: "Keep up with his both sides" (p.117). Sher Singh wonders if the opposing factors can't be combined into one harmonious whole. He visualizes scenes where his Nationalist and terrorist colleagues honoured him as their beloved leader, where Taylor read an address of welcome, and his father proudly looked on. Such are the dreams with which Sher Singh tries to dope himself.

Later, at a meeting held secretly at the residence of a terrorist colleague, Sher Singh chalks out the line of action to destroy means of communication. Before the meeting starts, they spread out the Indian tricolour flag. A picture of Mahatma Gandhi is set in the centre. Sher Singh declares that he will not take oath in the name of Gandhi as they are not launching a campaign of passive resistance. When Sher Singh is arrested for the alleged murder of a police informer, his father expects him to turn approver, but Sher Singh's mother exhorts him to stick to the path of righteousness. Sher Singh does not divulge the name...
of his associates and this is the only redeeming trait of his personality but the credit for all this goes in a large measure to his devout mother and her prayers.

The novelist has, however, tried to recreate a sense of contemporary situation, although he has not been able to transform this raw material into the related and the meaningful. The events of 'the Quit India' movement, we are told, shake the country. The arrests of the leaders including Gandhi are rumbles before the earthquake. Even the young children face the brutalities of the police as they picket the shops. The volunteers shout defiantly "Victory to Mahatma Gandhi" and wave the tricolour flags. As Madan goes to the bazar in Simla, he finds most of the shops shut. All European and some Muslim-owned shops on the Mall are open. He sees for himself how a national crisis has overtaken the people: "National volunteers in Gandhi caps came up the long flights of stairs to picket them. Knots of people collected at a safe distance to watch" (p.144).

*I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, thus, catches the accents of Gandhian Struggle for freedom but the novelist lacks consistency of tone and the quality of cohesion. He seems to concentrate on the clash of personalities and political commitments and the resulting strains on personal relationships.

Khushwant Singh thus introduces Gandhian revolution into his novels, although Gandhi is often cited more as a matter of form and convenience than out of deep conviction. Singh's emphasis is on the ironic portrayal of people's reaction to the teachings of Gandhi. His novels are an exercise in fictional recreation of the transitional India's turmoil but in his over-
enthusiasm for realism, he undermines the artistic value of his works.

Born and brought up in the stimulating surroundings of the great political family of the Nehrus, Nayantara Sahgal,16 "a writer of very sharpened sensibilities"17 shows a penetrating insight into human ecology through her novels, which portray the social and political history of the epoch through political narratives. Having politics as the central core of her being or as her primordial predilection,18 her novels have pervading political substrata. Prohibition, Cottage Industries, Spinning, Khadi, Non-violence and the Swadeshi movement and her penchant for quoting, not infrequently, from the writings of Nehru, though undermining the creative air of her novels, offer a slice of recent Indian history and tend to recapitulate Gandhian struggle and its aftermath. It is in this sense that Nayantara puts her intimate knowledge of the details of the political scene into excellent use.19

A Time To Be Happy (1954) that offers "an example of a susceptible sensibility preoccupied with the recapitulation of domestic and social events",20 does not hinge on politics for

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16 Nayantara Sahgal is the second daughter of Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, the younger sister of Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru.
for its main theme, as such; but ideals and ideologies of a nation which was fighting for its freedom are introduced in the picture of a family that the novel portrays. The action of the novel bustles through three decades, vouchsafing glimpse of the stirring forties and the early fifties. It is inconceivable that a story bearing on these times can be told without the intrusion of politics. The ageing bachelor, who is primarily a chronicler and not always a direct participant in the events, determines the point of view of the novel. The national movement intrudes into the narrative at various points. The narrator participates actively in the Satyagraha movement and spends some of his youthful years in jails. This justifies the appearance of characters like Sohan Bhai and Kunti Behn, khadi-clad social workers, in a novel concentrating otherwise mostly on the lives of the educated upper classes of society viewed against the changing pattern of history --- the Non-cooperation movement, August disturbances of 'Quit India' movement in 1942, the Bengal famine and the year 1947.

The narrator during his student days is impelled towards the national movement which "far from being a purely political one, was a great social organisation". This is why this scion of an affluent family, who "was never of a political turn of mind" is drawn towards Gandhi's national movement to "alleviate the awe-inspiring distress of the poor of our land" (p.6). For him it is the clarion call that draws him out of his adolescent

confusions although: "Its leader was just a name to me, for I had never seen him, but the words he spoke about village India, her desperate plight, her crushing burdens of debt, seemed to echo in the urban tragedy I saw all around me" (p.7).

When he adopts Khadi, he takes the first major decision of his life prompted by Gandhi. Gandhi made symbols of the lowliest commodities, salt and cloth, both vital necessities of life, and both heavily taxed. "Make your own salt", he said, and "spin your own cloth" (p.7). As a follower of Gandhi, the narrator has "his share of skirmishes with the authorities for defying the laws that Gandhi's "civil disobedience" campaigns bade his followers defy" (p.8).

Nayantara's frequent intrusion into the tale as an omniscient author deprives the novel of its pointedness as a piece of art but, nevertheless, makes it an "interesting social document". Tom, an Englishman, is simply aghast at the "outlandish" garb — that of loin cloth only — of Gandhi meeting His Majesty's representative in the Viceroy's House in New Delhi. To him Gandhi is an eccentric, who goes to attend the Round Table Conference in England in the same manner, travelling in the ship's second class and abiding by his usual strict regulations for living and eating. Pledged to non-violence, this "religious type", Tom thinks, poses no danger to the empire and the "picture of this unimposing looking chap dressed in nothing but a loin cloth and talking of freeing his country from the foreign yoke was vastly entertaining to Tom..."(p.11).

22 Meenakshi Mukherjee, The Twice Born Fiction, p.51.
Equating Gandhi with a wandering ascetic or a soap-box orator, Tom, however, concedes that Gandhi has tremendous influence, "and what he says is law, but that doesn't make him dangerous. It just makes him a nuisance" (p.11). Although convinced that the Raj would survive Gandhi as it had withstood opposition before, Tom fails to understand why people choose jail-going when they are given a choice between going to jail or paying a fine.

The narrator's sojourn to jail brings him into contact with Sohan Bhai, a prominent Khadi worker and supporter of Swadeshi. Earlier he has his contact with Kunti Behn, another social worker and an active congress member of the Legislative Assembly. Her barren simplicity and unkempt appearance identify her with the poor people. Her conversational reference to the non-consummation of her marriage is meant to convey Gandhi's emphasis on Brahmacharya: "My husband passed away when we had been married only three years, she offered conversationally. After that I became an active worker. I had no children. Our marriage was not consummated, you see, since my husband was a close follower of Mahatmaji" (p.58).

Spinning becomes the regular routine of the narrator after his close association with Sohan Bhai in the jail. Nootan, a student leader and another political prisoner who has been arrested for "seditious activities" believes that "spinning is outdated" in the machine-age and "Freedom won't come that way". It is his conviction that "You can't fight bombs with thread, not even hand spun thread" (p.82). The revolutionary ideas of Nootan, owing allegiance to the cult of
violence, are meant to provide a contrast and perspective to non-violence, Spinning and Swadeshi.

Sohan Bhai remembers vividly how Gandhi had sent him to mitigate the agony of the people in the streets. When Sohan Bhai is ready to follow after having put his belongings into one suitcase, Gandhi is pleased that he is unencumbered by possessions, and he can make common cause with the suffering humanity. He has not met the Mahatma again, "but the bonds he had forged with Gandhi's naked and hungry brotherhood had become his life's work" (p.86). Sohan Bhai joins the Congress, which, "though a political party, was also a channel of service, and renunciation was its slogan, as khadi was its badge" (p.84).

Nayantara suggests that a loftier and nobler aura hung over the India of that phase when the country was on trial to test its inner strength and resources to fight for its independence through the unique method of non-violence. Besides catching this spirit by concentrating on the direct participants, the novelist remains pre-occupied with the career of the protagonist Sanad whose story is "told with unmistakable political undertones". Later, the Sharanpur Club itself becomes symbolic of the vanished glory of an imperialistic regime. An attempt is made to give the personal narrative of Sanad a larger significance by relating it to events of national importance. Sanad's first posting in a British firm happens to be on August 9, 1942, the historic day when the 'Quit India' Movement was launched.

23 Rao, Novel and the Changing Tradition, p.50.
The magic of the Gandhi cap and the white man's allergy to its wearing by Indians have been adroitly dovetailed into the action through an interesting incident. An insignificant-looking fellow Raghubir, a clerk in a British firm at Sharanpur, one day comes to his office with Gandhi cap on. This is enough to infuriate his English officer. He explains that as he was coming to his office, some goondas were shouting slogans and threatening passers-by in the street. The poor fellow had no choice when they threatened to puncture his bicycle tyre in case he did not wear this cap. Back at his office he at once started to work, forgetting that he was still wearing the cap. A few days afterwards, the poor fellow is caught in a violent demonstration although he is not a trouble-maker. His mother sums up the mood of the violence that erupted from the 'Quit India' Movement: "Evil days had fallen on the country, she wept, when an innocent man was safe from neither the law-breakers nor the law" (p.138).

This Time of Morning (1965), her brittle, superficial second novel, offers a scathing portrayal of India's socio-political life after independence, although there is too much contriving, and the principal characters are hardly convincing. There are passages also that are too strongly political polemic to be well integrated into the novel. This Time of Morning is "thus not entirely successful as fiction. Nevertheless, the novel is valuable as history and as sociology". Personal

24 Premanand Kumar, Indian Literature Since Independence, p.57.
25 Lois Hartley, "This Time of Morning : a review", Literature East and West 10 (June 1966), 168.
and political ambitions criss-cross, but the action and characterisation do not seem to have been properly integrated. It is, therefore, observed with justification that "Mrs. Sahgal's feelings for politics and her command over English are rather more impressive than her art as a novelist".26

This Time of Morning surveys the lives of politicians and diplomats in the Capital of post-independence India, New Delhi — the political nadir of intrigue — where ministers and government officials jockey for power. The novel has, as such, "no pin-pointed theme or a definite plot. It is in a way a snippet from a certain section of Indian life, in the post-independence period, dealing with no particular problem in fulness or any relationship in detail".27 Political bickering, intriguing designs, sex and cocktail parties dominate the life to which we are introduced in the novel. Politicians like Kalyan Sinha, Hari Mohan and Kailash Vrind are juxtaposed with oily diplomats and societal butterflies, and the novelist's proximity to the seat of power gives her a ringside place to watch the animalia in Indian politics with a quizzical eye and competence of a slick artist. With digressive and sprawling narrative, the novel, however, looks like an omnium gatherum of all sorts of incidents, observations and details.

26 Iyengar, Indian Writing, p.474.
27 Shyam M Asnani, "The Novels of Nayantara Sahgal", p.43.
Though the action of the novel is set in the post-independence period, there are scenes when flashbacks occur, taking the reader to the days of the Gandhian struggle for freedom. These flashbacks are associated with one of Sahagall's major characters, Kailas Vrind who wishes to carry Gandhian values into modern politics, but he is constrained to resign his Cabinet post over the conduct of Kalyan Sinha, an aggressive opportunist, who has rejected Gandhian ideals in matters of policy and diplomacy. It shows how "far into the background of near oblivion the symbol of the Mahatma has receded in the eyes of some of the characters in the post-independence Indo-Anglian novels".28

Kailas belongs to the generation that has succumbed to the magic of Gandhi: "The fire, the dedication and single mindedness of the man in the loin cloth had attracted him, made him a member of the Congress, sent him to jail along with thousands of his countrymen, and trained and tempered something within him that might otherwise have developed haphazard and purposeless".29 What he loses of his legal practice, he has gained in manhood. Kailas knows that Gandhi as a human being, had demonstrated the glory and grandeur of human efforts. He was a pilgrim whose passion for truth "had burst the bonds of religion, refused the confines of sainthood and


and had spilled over instead into the mainstream of daily life, flowing into field and farm and factory" (p.82). Kailas's own awakening coincides with India's political awakening, and the events of his life are inextricably bound with this country's progress to self-government. He has watched a revolution take shape and mature — a revolution of values. Kailash recounts the saga of Gandhi's life in a nutshell, and traces his own link with it. Kailash's decision to abandon his lucrative law practice, is simply inconceivable for his father and mother but a strange turbulence has taken hold of the country and sensible men are resigning from government service and abandoning well-established professions. Young men are leaving the universities, while women are attending public gatherings, boycotting foreign cloth and liquor shops and courting arrest: "It was said that in the red light district prostitutes sat spinning in response to Gandhi's plea for handspun, hand woven cloth"(p.180).

People like Kalyan Sinha do not know what the struggle with the Mahatma meant. It was, indeed, an experience to have been on the Salt March to Dandi and to have sustained the blows of police batons and not to have retaliated. Kalyan Sinha calls these followers of Gandhi "crusading zealots" and rides rough shod over every rule of diplomacy. Kailas Vrind, the Gandhian follower, takes such brutal attacks to heart and withdraws from the political scene.

Nayantara offers a slice of life from recent history and thus echoes Gandhian struggle for freedom and its impact
on the enlightened sections of society. Her novels are a blend of political and personal histories but lack of cohesion often reduces fictional works to the level of journalism. Her characters can easily be equated with historical figures.

Kamla Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury* (1957), though essentially a love-story of an Indian girl Mira and an Englishman Richards representing race relationships, is also an attempt to reconstruct contemporary social and political consciousness culminating in the violent demonstration of national indignation at the alien rule during the 'Quit India' movement of the "never-to-be-forgotten year of Nineteen forty two". With the political turmoil of the 'Quit India' movement as the background, Kamla Markandaya, "a documentary novelist of India", 31 dwells upon the militant nationalism which brings in its wake passion, fury and ruthlessness, but the novel boils down to a study of the impact of the troubled national spirit of the early forties upon the fate of two lovers who are set against the larger historical background of freedom struggle. This fusing certain


individuals and the total national perspectives in terms of fictional art, *Some Inner Fury* projects a picture of Gandhian Age. In a prefatory note to the novel, Kamla Markandaya observes that "In the struggle for independence in India non-violence was the rule. This book is based on the exception". The novel is, therefore, a tragedy "engineered by politics", albeit the chief characters transcend the bludgeonings of economic or political mischance and assert the unconquerable spirit of humanity.

The socio-political novel, with Govind, the terrorist, as its focal figure, registers the havoc caused by politics in the lives of individuals. It diagrammatizes the emotional inner fury of Mira and the wider inner fury of the nation at large. *Some Inner Fury* is thus a novel of the Gandhian movement for freedom of the country, not because of its thrust on the activities of the terrorists, but because of its complete rejection of Gandhi's non-violence. It suggests, by implication and contrast, Gandhian stress on *Ahimsa* as the modus operandi of the national movement led by Gandhi although, as Naik points


34 Iyengar, *Indian Writing*, p.440
out, "much of the fury of the freedom struggle is lost owing to the prominence enjoyed by the love-affair between Mira and Richards". Besides the pervasive consciousness of the people, there are distinct echoes of the boycott of foreign goods, satyagraha and village reconstruction.

Mira, the narrator-heroine, learns from Roshan, a talented lady, a free lance journalist and a social worker, that her adopted brother Govind is "a member of the Independence Party". He "organises civil disobedience to the government" and "he goes further" (p.100). Roshan who is herself a fellow traveller of Govind, though in a restricted manner, offers satyagraha and even courts arrest to "get third-class travel conditions improved". She writes scurrilous articles about the mismanagement of the railway company, harangues people on station platform and organises passenger revolt. Later, when Govind seeks her active co-operation and help for himself and his associates — "Those who interest themselves in freedom" — Roshan echoes Gandhian stress on the purity of means: "Everybody is interested in freedom... only, we do not all agree on the means to the end, as I think you know too" (p.107). When Govind persists in saying that "Differences of opinion are not bars to service", she observes: "There is no power in violence... only destruction", and "I am not really interested in destruction" (p.108).

35 Indian Writing, p.365.
Roshan has been associated with Govind in many of his anti-government activities, and he often collaborates with her in writing her weekly articles. It was under Govind's tutelage that Roshan starts a boycott of British goods:

She stopped smoking, she gave up, regretfully, using lipstick... there was the time she sorted out all her British-manufactured georgette and chiffon saris and repaired with them to the maidan where she threw them on the bonfire which other women of her convictions had kindled and were feeding with similar fuel — thereafter wearing, not without some distaste, the prescribed rough homespun (p.148).

Despite all that Govind could say, she still keeps her English friends. There is a Gandhian touch in her argument. She does not like their government, but she has nothing against Englishmen as individuals.

*Some Inner Fury* is, therefore, a novel about the political turmoil of the 'Quit India' movement launched by Gandhi. It offers a representation of the violence that had erupted in the wake of the movement but catches some accents of Gandhian revolution, though authenticity is missing.

Aamir Ali's *Conflict* (1947) deals with the 'Quit India' movement, particularly the violence that erupts immediately after the arrest of national leaders including Gandhi, Nehru and Azad. The locale of the scene is the city of Bombay but shifts briefly to a village named Karegaon. The turmoil of the city of Bombay on the eve of August 7, 1942 when the All-Indian Congress Committee meets there to pass the historic resolution of 'Quit India' is graphically presented. But the slow movement of the plot and facile characterisation render the narrative sketchy and the novel breathes an air of sentimentality. *Conflict*, therefore, is an indifferently
written novel which is neither a readable story nor a powerful social document, much less an imaginative recreation of the never-to-be-forgotten year of nineteen hundred and forty two.

Conflict is the story of Shankar, a sensitive youth of village Karegaon, and his traumatic experiences in the whirlwind of revolution, but the lack of focus tends to make it a mere transcription of details without offering us any significant meaning or insight. Shankar, the unsophisticated village lad, is exposed to the stimulating college experience of political discussions, idealism and changing attitudes. His initial response to Gandhian call to give up studies is rather lukewarm. Speaking more for himself than for students in general, Shankar tells Mehta, the student leader: "It is rather difficult to expect people to give up their studies in order to spend their time in getting pushed around all over the place, as you and other workers do". 36

Heated discussions about the War draw Shankar out of his placid dreams, and he starts taking active interest in the affairs of the country. Rashid, a co-worker of Mehta, acquaints Shankar with Gandhi's paper 'Harijan' and the views of Gandhi and other leaders on the predicament of the nation. He gets converted to the cause of the congress and of Gandhi. The novelist takes care to suggest that Gandhi is extremely popular with the students, but the cult of violence also holds the sway with a few of them. Ram Chandani who professes to be "violently nationalistic" is, therefore, opposed to the politics of Mehta.

and Shankar. "All this non-violence is a mistake," he would say, "It may work on honest people, but not on these. You can appeal to their conscience, because they haven't any. The only argument they understand is brute force" (p.86).

The All-India Congress Committee decides to meet in Bombay on August 7, 1942. The students are greatly stirred, although some of them believe that "There should be a movement after the war, not now. That man Gandhi is getting too old" (p.86). The atmosphere is surcharged with rumours that Gandhi is going to abandon his creed of non-violence; while others think that he is merely relaxing it a little. A systematic campaign of propaganda is launched by the government that Gandhi is in league with the Japanese but is countered by the nationalists: "That is a lie. A damned lie. Don't you believe the propaganda of the British" (p.91). Aamir Ali frequently intrudes the narrative to make certain observations which, though quite pertinent, slacken the movement of the story. We are told that Gandhi's personality has immense appeal:

And Gandhiji was infallible. He knew what he was doing. He was a shrewd old Bania, and could be trusted to know the temper of the common people better than anyone else. If he said that the time was ripe for a movement, then the time must be ripe. Many of the things he had done in the past had been heartily condemned when they were being planned, but Gandhiji had carried them out and proved to the world how right they were. Take the Dandi march. It seemed a silly idea at first, but it had enormous emotional appeal, and won thousands on the side of the Congress. The movement would do the same (p.95).

Rashid sums up the role of Gandhi in the awakening of the people. They are now beginning to realise that all the misfortunes of this country are due to their slavery. Gandhi has caused this realization: "And Gandhi is the man who is
responsible," said Patel. "He it is who is making all these changes. Otherwise nobody would be realising" (p.104).

The novelist, then, records the eagerness of the people with which they listen to Gandhi's speech. He avoids putting any speech into Gandhi's mouth, but confines himself to a faithful reproduction of people's faith in Gandhi. It is of little relevance whether they understand the Mahatma or not. Gandhi has been forbidden by his doctors to exert himself, but he speaks for two hours. It is a rambling speech wherein he talks of his love of unity, his work and his hopes. There is no passion in his voice and no rhetoric in his speech: "It was not meant to incite, or to stir, but he merely spoke as he put it, like a Bania sitting in his shop, talking of the humble things that he knew" (p.105). Despite the growing darkness of the evening, people continue listening, but they are not excited by the Mahatma's speech. Perhaps there is more religion than politics in their listening: "It became a religious duty to hear this old and withered man speak, perhaps for the last time in public, and certainly for the last time with the eyes of the world focussed so keenly on him" (p.105). Gandhi seems to be the only person for the world to worry about: "They knew that he was the most important man in the country, that on him depended the future action of millions" (p.105).

In a well-planned scoop, Gandhi and other important leaders are arrested the same evening. The enraged people resort to spontaneous strike, and take out processions led by "white-clad Gandhi-capped men", shouting slogans which rend the air: "Britishers, Quit India!", "Shuroo hova hai Gandhi Raj!" "Inquilab Zindabad!", "Down, down, the Union jack. Up, up, the National Flag!" (p.122).
Gokhale, who goes underground, arranges student meetings and urges them to migrate to the villages, "for the movement must spread to the villages" (p.132). Shankar goes to his village to rouse the people against the government. The police adopts brutal measures to crush the upsurge of the people. Shankar's own people undergo unheard of sufferings, but he is now a chastened Satyagrahi. His decision to start the work of village reconstruction is the obvious echo of Gandhian message to return to the villages: "It is no use crying over spilt milk. What was written in our Destiny had to come. I will not repine. I will rebuild. I will live among my people and learn from them how to live, for that is what they know, and what I don't." (p.167).

Conflict, thus, centres round Gandhi and the 'Quit India' movement. Aamir Ali tries to portray the enthusiastic response of the people to Gandhian message which is scattered all over the narrative in a rambling manner. But the novelist betrays unsuresness and sentimentality with the result that Conflict fails to be evocative. It hardly rises above the level of sensational journalistic tract. The chief merit of the book is the presentation of the active participation of students in the Gandhian struggle.

D.F. Karaka's We Never Die (1944) is essentially a love story of a Hindu I.C.S. officer Ram Chandara and a Muslim girl Ayesha set in the back-drop of the Khilafat Movement and communal disturbances. The novel thus recreates the "silent
of Gandhian non-violent struggle for freedom while violent out-bursts of restive people and police repression coupled with communal frenzy re-tell the "pangs that nations have been born" (p.83).

Writing with felicity and charm, Karaka evokes scenes vividly, and seems to possess wide-awake contemporary consciousness. While dwelling on the problem of communalism in India, the novelist gives the reader an awareness of unrest that was sweeping over the whole of the country during the Khilafat movement. The marriage of a simple village girl Aeyasha to a sophisticated Hindu bureaucrat serving as the implied suggestion of the novelist to solve the problem of communalism is rather super-imposed, but the novel reads like competent journalism — racy, informative, interesting but hastily sketched. The novelist seems to be in a hurry to unfold a drama of human emotion in the background of the Indian struggle for independence, but the narrative moves rather sluggishly and is loaded with political discussions.

Aeyasha's village is in the grip of Congress movement. Some of the youths lead a procession to the red-brick house where the English sahib lives. The police opens fire and Aeyasha's mother, Saleema, dies as a bullet pierces through her body. Saleema's death embitters the outlook of her husband Mahmud Khan and awakens in him the feeling of national

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37 D.F. Karaka, We Never Die (Bombay: Thacker and Co, 1944), p.189. Subsequent references pertain to this edition of the novel and will appear in the text.
consciousness. The journalistic strains in Karaka interrupt the flow of events to comment that the young men are simply swept off their feet. They find a welcome release from the rigours of the academic routine and gain a sense of importance. They presume themselves to be "heroes forging history and paving the way for the liberation of their people" (p.80), although they are merely "adding to the general chaos and identifying themselves with the out-of-work workers, the self-appointed leaders, the sub-leaders and whole heap of dubious persons" (p.81).

Karaka evocatively describes the unrest of the people when riots break out everywhere. This chaos reaches a sort of crescendo: hartals are declared, shops are closed, workers are on strike and "as time hung heavy on their hands they frequently indulged in sporadic acts of vandalism" (p.78). Ordinary citizens are molested if they are found to be wearing foreign clothes. Patriotism thus gets mixed up with irresponsible hooliganism. Speeches are made on the need for adherence to non-violence, and the apostles of non-violence are cheered; yet when the speeches are over, "there would be some poor fellow crushed by the same non-violent crowd" (p.79).

The observant eye of the novelist is able to notice the ambivalence of the common man to the Hindu-Muslim amity enforced by the Khilafat movement. Ostensibly, the Muslim and the Hindu have found a common cause in the liberation of their people. There are touching scenes of mutual affection and maulanas are seen encircling pandits in fond embrace: "But in the little gullies, the side streets and bye-lanes, some fanatic Mussalman would rush out of a mosque and knife a handful of Hindus because they were playing music too near his place of
worship and in turn Hindu fanatics stonned Mussalmans because they said cow slaughter offended their religious feeling" (p.79).

The novelist is aware of the mass following of Gandhi. White Khaddar and Gandhi cap are the familiar badge of his followers. The meetings addressed by Gandhi are largely attended. Barkway, an English Officer, is simply fascinated by the way people are drawn towards their leader. Standing at a distance from the venue of one such meeting, the Englishman could see "a seething mass of men, Khaddar-clad, white-capped, squatting on the ground —— some thirty thousand of them packed so closely that from a far it looked as if a big, white sheet had been spread on the earth" (p.91). As Barkway discovers a "punny little man, huddled up, like a bundle in a third class compartment, sitting on a mattress with cushions to prop him up,"(p.92) it is difficult for the Englishman to believe that this man who "looked a seditious fakir" (p.92), could have been an Inner Temple lawyer.

Ram Chandra, an Indian member of the Steel frame of British imperialism, is touched emotionally by Gandhian struggle, although he cannot appreciate Gandhi's emphasis on non-violence. The struggle has awakened in him something that has long been latent, but the appeal is emotional: "It grips me. I know nothing will come out of it, because as a protest it's feeble. As a challenge it's futile. Properly analyzed, there's something emaciated about the whole idea of non-violence. It's a contradiction in itself.... It does not appeal to my judgement. The appeal, as it reaches me, is emotional" (p.95).

Barkway is more outright in voicing the impression that Gandhian non-violence leaves on him. He has never seen anything
like it before. He finds it more real than he had expected:

"I became more conscious of being an Englishman in India or an Englishman at all. Perhaps I got a glimpse of the struggle that was looking ahead of us" (p.99). Ram Chandra, however, feels convinced that the power of Gandhian movement must not be judged from the happenings in the streets. It is the beginning of a silent revolution in the minds of men.

The Englishman is still doubtful about the efficacy of non-violence as a means to attain independence from the foreign yoke. He exclaims: "You want always to do things like gentlemen — non-violent, forgiving, pious, holy. Well, freedoms were never won like that, you know" (p.171).

After having examined the Gandhian struggle for freedom in the context of the educated and the enlightened, Karaka seems to suggest that freedom consciousness has percolated to the grass-roots. Therein lies the success of Gandhi. A sense of self-respect, freedom, the right to govern oneself, and Swaraj have crept over the complacent lives of the people, shaking them from their sloth. It is a glorious feeling, though few know how it is all going to work out: "Men walked about feeling more important than they had done before. From unknown individuals among the millions, they began to feel they had a name and a place and a number in this scheme of living which was to be planned, where each was to have a present and a future and where equality would be keynote of life" (p.188).

People start experiencing a richness of the soul, which they said, "was more than wealth and power and all such material things" (p.189). Freedom seems to be just around the corner. People court arrests unsought since they are keen "to graduate
in nationalism and be accepted on their release as patriots" (p.189). Little men are, thus, going to be martyrs.

_We Never Die_ is a gripping tale of Gandhian revolution during the Khilafat movement, and is an attempt to present an over-all picture of people's response to Gandhi and his non-violent struggle. The novel enhances our awareness of Gandhian struggle. Gandhi is treated as an idea and a pervasive influence that has wrought the miracle of consciousness among the dumb millions. His identification with the masses is complete. But the novel breathes the air of a journalistic writing. All this information about Gandhi has not been properly integrated into the plot, and comments of the author and political discussions have not been subsumed into the main action. The novelist has sacrificed pointedness of tone and intensity of experience in his attempt to comprehend a total picture.

_In Transit_ (1950) by Venu Chitale is a socio-political novel which covers the significant period of 1915-1935 in the annals of the Indian national movement. The story is centred round a progressive Maharashtrian family which undergoes rapid transformation in the period of social change. The narrative, spread over a period of three generations, concerns the breaking up of the Hindu joint family but it also highlights the political happenings of the period. The novel, therefore, is a valuable social document in which the individual fortunes of the characters are subsumed in larger political changes sweeping the nation. There are thus glimpses of Gandhian revolution woven in the texture of the narrative as Chitale tries "to paint the complete picture of the renaissant India during the Gandhian era". 38

novelist shows how various political movements with their social ramifications draw young and old into their fold but the chief fascination for the youth is Gandhi and his Satyagraha.

Appraising Indian social life as a study in comparisons, the novelist refers to the Rowlatt Bills which "were condemned by Mahatma Gandhi as unjust, subversive of the principles of liberty and destructive of the rights of the individual". The Bills enrage the leaders of the nation but the indignation rapidly gathers force only when "Mahatma Gandhi, the hero of Satyagraha and non-violence, stepped into the arena"(p.95). The omniscient narrator hastens to inform the reader that Gandhi, after his success at Champaran in Bihar, is an acknowledged leader and he lends weight to the weapon of boycott already wielded by Tilak. The details of Gandhi's satyagraha at Champaran in Bihar and at Kaira in Gujrat provide perspective to Gandhi's leadership with a mass following. It is on the strength of his previous experiences that Mahatma Gandhi opposes the unjust Rowlatt Bills and he believes that "Non-violent resistance had to be offered, and he hoped the people would follow him" (p.96).

Abba, the patriarch of the family, shows sympathy and understanding for the national awakening fostered by Tilak and Gandhi but his younger brother Jahagirdar, strains in the opposite direction, as he feels that "the thrones of his godlings who ceremoniously bathed three times a day and recited prayers as...".

a matter of form were being usurped by the Saniya, this upstart Gandhi" (p.96). Abba's eldest grandson Dada is unable to appreciate Gandhi's non-violence, although he is not hostile to the Mahatma. Shyama, the second grandson of Abba, is too young to understand Gandhi's politics based on religion but he fasts for the whole day when Gandhi is arrested in April 1919 on his refusal to obey the official orders restraining his entry into the Panjab.

There are references to the report of the Hunter Committee on the Jalianwala Bagh massacre, Gandhi's role in the Khilafat movement and the consequent Hindu-Muslim unity and non-violent non-cooperation launched by Gandhi. The novelist grows poetic in her language and description when she refers to Tilak's death on the eve of the day Gandhi has decided to inaugurate the movement of Non-cooperation: "Now, when Tilak lay ill, his limbs and body still, did the force of his soul wrench itself free to travel forth to strengthen the Mahatma? The agony of a weakened body must cease at last, and the imprisoned soul escape and soar high towards its final destiny. The destiny of Tilak was Freedom whose soul he had searched and whose meaning sought" (p.137).

Gandhi rushes back from Sind where he had been "instructing the people on the plans for non-co-operation". He is to walk in front of the bier and carry the earthen bowl with the burning cow-dung, "the privilege of a son", as "who else was worthy of holding aloft and carrying the torch of freedom which scorches feeble hands?" (p.139). The novelist interrupts the narrative to comment on Gandhi, the soul of India: "The undaunted spirit of
this non-violent fighter seemed to grow and expand with the now liberated spirit of Tilak" (p.140).

Gandhian revolution sweeps the whole nation. Abba, who senses the historical change that "Politics is rapidly becoming everybody's concern", nevertheless, feels that "It is not easy for everyone to live as Gandhi does" (p.144). Gandhian influence has gone down to the grassroots. The grandchildren of Abba reflect this impact when Bhayya decorates a Ganpati idol with the Swadeshi cap, although he is amusingly called by the orthodox Pantoba "the first untouchable of the Wada" (p.146).

Ever since Tilak's death, Bhayya has taken to wearing Swadeshi. When the Ganesh festival is being celebrated in the Wada, Bhayya invites a singing-party and they sing national songs addressed to Ganesh. "They invoked the deity to awake and help India to rise and attain her full rights as a free nation, and the way to attain those rights, they sang, was in Non-co-operation and Swadeshi" (p.150). Later, following Gandhi's injunction, Bhayya takes a vow to burn all his clothes which are not Indian, even though he knows he cannot expect them to be replaced. This young follower of Gandhi does some regular spinning in his room. The rest of the children of the family contribute to the contemplated bonfire: "The prize pieces in the children's collection were the gold and silver brocaded turbans and pagaries of the Jahagirdar, his silk shirts and fine lawn handkerchiefs" (p.159).

Gandhi's call for National schools and National institutions gain ground and Bhayya decides to stop attending the Government-aided school. His passionate enthusiasm is disapproved by the conservative members of his family but he sticks to his guns.
Gandhi's visit to Poona draws out women for the national cause. Even the great-aunt Yamuna agrees that "now days bring new ways" (p.160). Gandhi's appeal for funds gets positive response from women who "pulled off their ornaments and poured them at his feet" (pp.161-162). Abba terms it as the regeneration of Indian society wrought by Gandhi:

I am an old man, but have been newly born at the age of seventy five. Grave things are ahead of the nation, and each one will have to play his own part in this new type of battle. I can be only behind the fighting lines. But I know that Bhayya is a soldier. I have to prepare him and after him Bal' Baban (p.161).

The narrative catches Gandhian accents when the awakened old man of seventy-five becomes a living embodiment of Gandhian principles of fearlessness, truth, non-violence, equality etc. Abba complains that the whole world is suffering from fear and selfishness. Fear, he explains in Gandhian vein, can divide not only the whole world into self-destructive fragments, but even an individual into a battle-field of emotions. Faith in God and sacrifice for one's fellow men should be the guiding principles, as he sees it: "I see in Gandhi that spirit getting triumphant and assimilated into his very fibre. His is one of the methods which the world must try to put into practice"(p.163).

As Tilak's successor, Gandhi inherits a threefold struggle, political, economic and social. The political battle against the foreign rule, economic problems of the poorer sections of society and removal of untouchability are, therefore, inter-linked in Gandhi's ideals and programmes. Abbas's brother Jahagirdar is critical of Gandhi's campaign against untouchability but he has to concede that Gandhi has swept the nation with him: "And what is more, there has to be Hindu-Muslim unity, and, can
you imagine it, the abolition of Untouchability. We shall soon find Untouchables presuming to aspire to be our equals. And all this just because that man in his loin-cloth has hypnotized the foolish leaders” (p.192).

There are, then, the details of Civil Disobedience movement, the boycott of the visit of the Prince of Wales to India and Gandhi’s fast for five days as a penance for the violence of the mob at Bombay. The novelist reproduces Gandhi’s letter written to Lord Reading, the Viceroy, from Bardoli and it enhances the authenticity of the tale. With the occurrence of violent incidents at Chauri Chaura, Gandhi suspends the programme of Civil Disobedience, although the enthusiasm of the Satyagrahis is gathering momentum. Then comes the famous trial of Gandhi at Ahmedabad wherein he makes an historic statement:

The only course open to you, the judge and the assessors, is either to resign your posts and thus disassociate yourselves from evil if you feel that the law you are called upon to administer is an evil and that in reality I am innocent, or to inflict on me the severest penalty if you believe that the system and the law you are assisting to administer are good for the people of this country and that my activity is therefore injurious to the public weal (p.221).

Gandhi attends the second Round Table Conference as the representative of the Congress although there is evidence enough of the repressive policies of the Government in India. Gandhi arrives back from the Conference to find the country in ferment and the Mahatma is arrested within six days of his arrival in India from London.

Venu Chitale has thus depicted the Indian political scene vividly. The novel is not simply a “good saga of Maharashtrian life, with all the intricacies of family customs and habits which are undergoing transformation in the period of social
change”, but a faithful reproduction of Gandhian revolution.

The novelist assiduously sustains the image of the Mahatma as a visionary, a prophet and a mighty leader, although she brings in at times the criticism of Gandhi and his movement by the orthodox and the Marxists. The novel is a significant social document but frequent documentary details, at times, give the impression of a journalistic writing.

The House at Adampur (1956) by Anand Lall (Arthur S. Lall), a career diplomat turned novelist, is a social novel set in the background of the Gandhian Age. The narrative has as its backdrop the freedom struggle of the country covering the period from 1930 to 1944. The personal and family perspectives of an affluent set of people are combined into the larger national horizons but the narrative lacks adroit composition and harmony as the incidents, however brilliant, appear to be disjointed. The novelist depicts vividly how Delhi was rocked by salt satyagraha and other events of the Gandhian age but the absence of the architectonic skill fails to make the story an integrated human drama. The redeeming feature of the novel, however, is the sensitive, at times ironic, portraiture of the impact of the Gandhian struggle on the intelligentsia and aristocratic classes of India. The House at Adampur is packed with social and political events of over a decade preceding independence and traces the involvement of rich landlords and industrialists in the freedom struggle but it does not rise to the height of an epic of renaissance India.

40 Mulk Raj Anand, "Preface" to In Transit.
The narrative begins with the elaborate naming ceremony of the grandson of Dewan Ram Nath, a wealthy citizen of Delhi, and the lavish feast which is attended, among others, by Jai Singh, a political activist and a follower of Gandhi. Jai Singh makes acquaintance with Geeta, the charming niece of the Dewan and Lena, a politically oriented young lady. They discuss political issues of the day. The Dewan is later lured to the pleasure haunt at Adampur by his philandering friend, Raja Muzaffar Khan who carries on his orgy with his mistress Ranu.

Then follows the narration of the activities of the political leaders, Dandi March of Mahatma Gandhi and the consequent unrest in Delhi. There is a severe lathi charge on the people gathered on the bank of Juma on the day of the Salt March. Jai Singh is seriously injured and Leena falls in love with him as she nurses him back to health. Leena's mother, Shanti Devi, is arrested but Delhi remains in the grip of the national movement, picketings, political meetings and police excesses. After the successful negotiations held between the political leaders and the government, the political prisoners are released in batches. Leena gets introduced to Parkash, an army officer, and they are married. Geeta marries a millionaire of Calcutta. The Dewan has developed a particular liking for Jai Singh to whom the delightful old patriarch bequeathes the estate at Adampur that the Dewan had purchased to find repose from the turmoils of the times with his mistress.

The novelist suggests that Gandhi is immensely popular among the people but Gandhi's non-violence is not fully appreciated by all the enthusiasts for freedom. There are the militant nationalists who "will assault some poor woman, burn a car or two, and thoroughly disgrace the Movement and the name of
Gandhiji is an interesting aspect of the narrative is that all these young political activists are drawn mostly from upper classes. Shabir Khan, whose "fringe of hair showed under a white Gandhi cap, and his shirt and tight trousers were of white hand-woven material" (p. 26), is an urban aristocrat, finely bred and sensitive. Geeta, is the only child of Pandit Brij Krishan, "a wealthy lawyer and a member of the inner circle of national leaders" (p. 5). Jai Singh, dressed "entirely in white hand-spun cotton material — shirt, loose trousers, and a short jacket", is a brilliant young lawyer with his Rajput heritage and background of a North Indian village. Leena is the darling child of a prosperous lawyer and her mother Shanti Devi is an active Congress worker.

The story begins when Bhagat Singh has been arrested and demonstrations for his release are being planned. The discussion at the Dewan's party centres round the issue whether the Congress party should join the demonstrations for Bhagat Singh's release. The novelist snatches this opportunity to examine critically Gandhi's emphasis on non-violence in respect of his followers. The narrator records that Bhagat Singh is a hero among all the young nationalists and also among "those of the older generation who wanted a more spectacular policy than Gandhi's constant insistence on truth and non-violence" (p. 9). Jai Singh, who professes Gandhian ideals, suggests that "the feeling for freedom" and "the conviction about non-violence" are not to be confused. There is mild irony in what he says:

Dewan Sahib, the point, really, is — which is deeper.

among the people, the feeling for freedom or the conviction that we must remain non-violent? I wish I could say that it is for conviction about non-violence, but in fact it is not. So, whatever the Congress may decide, the same people who take part in their programme will tomorrow go out and demonstrate for Bhagat Singh. That is what puts the leaders into a quandary. The best they can do is to reaffirm their belief in non-violence and not attempt to tell the people what to do about Bhagat Singh. Even the best rule cannot be forced on people, and certainly not the rule of non-violence (pp.10-11).

Anand Lall faithfully records how Swarajya has become the motto of the people, given to them by Gandhi. The term denotes not so much the right as the obligation to rule oneself. The understanding of the new urge is tested when Gandhi protests against the salt laws. There is an echo of Gandhi's call to the nation when the author says: "So Gandhi said that the people must ignore the laws and make the salt that they required for their own use. This was not to be done in secrecy, but openly; for, in making salt, the people would only be exercising an obvious right" (p.34). Gandhi is explaining to the whole country that the defiance of salt law would entail sufferings, but people must be prepared for it. There comes the news that on the 12th of March, 1930, Gandhi would set out on a march of the two hundred and forty-one miles from his ashram at Sabarmati, through the villages and towns to the sea at Dandi where: "He would manufacture salt in defiance of the law. To the people Gandhi announced, that when he reached Dandi, the whole nation was to join him in making salt. Thus the country — unarmed — was to match itself against the might of British Government" (p.35).

The novelist has portrayed a very sensible response of the people to Gandhi's call but this depiction has touches of irony in it. When the leaders met at Shanti Devi's house to draw up plans for Delhi's salt-making, the place is soon
surrounded by "shopkeepers, tailors, landlords, sweepers, lawyers, railway workers, bank clerks, petty hawkers, tonga drivers and teachers who had come to tell the leaders that the whole city, except some of the women and children, had decided to join the salt-making" (p. 35). Each day of Gandhi's march to Dandi brings a new awakening for the people. They visualize the faint lines of a future of freedom but each day they "trembled also with fear that the British Government would arrest their leader and cut off their hope" (p. 35). The image of Gandhi as a noble soul radiating peace and faith has, however, been evocatively recreated by the novelist:

Each day, tens of millions of people in the remote villages would hear of the march and feel their spirits rise into a sphere of freedom, and each day, by the hundred and by the thousand, the people of the villages and towns through which Gandhi walked, joined for a portion of his journey and felt the quiet, reassuring, and peaceful presence of this smiling man, which for ever remained with them (p. 36).

This image is further reinforced when Jai wonders at Gandhi's greatness to hold the people together and this greatness has stood the test of time. Gandhi has upset the thinking of the entire nation and this is, as Jai thinks, nothing short of a miracle: "Was the present reawakening no more than the masterful achievement of the great magician Gandhi, or was it also a deep realization among that for too long they had forgotten their heritage as human beings?" (p. 46).

On the eve of the day when Gandhi is to manufacture salt at the sea, there is in evidence throughout Delhi the excitement of preparations for salt-making. Leena's excitement rises to an extreme pitch, as she thinks that perhaps "the British would go to Gandhiji tomorrow and ask him to take over
the Government and then she and all the people could begin the actual remaking of their beloved India" (p.54). There is a touch of sly humour and mild irony in the narrative. It is decided that people would go to the banks of the River Jamuna and take water from the river which, on evaporation, would leave a residue of salt. But no one cares to remember that "the fresh water of the river simply did not contain any salt" (p.54). The details are simply funny: "Word of the plan spread quickly all about the city. From every house came the clatter of pots and pans in the search for the very brightest utensils to be used in the important ceremony of the morrow. Gay charcoal-burners were chosen and little bundles of charcoals prepared for extracting non-existent salt from the river" (p.54).

People chant the names of Ram and Allah and Gandhi, as they step out in the eager morning air on the great exodus to the river. The authorities are taken unawares, although some of them concede it to be a brilliant stroke "attributed to the evil genius of Gandhi" (p.54). The river is cordoned off from the city and an order prohibiting the manufacture of salt from the water of the river is hastily drafted and proclaimed. The main surge of the population is held back, but some of the early risers are already there on the river bank. They eagerly take water and boil it on their charcoal braziers till it burns away. The residue of sand and dust is triumphantly scrapped together. It is tasted and pronounced to be salt. It is a moment of fulfilment for them:

There were nods, smiles, and words of congratulation all around. Thus was Gandhiji's injunction obeyed, and the law was thought to have been well and timely broken. With great solemnity, little portions of the scrapings were put on small pieces of coloured paper and neatly
The crowd are lathi-charged and the injured "fell or limped about in large numbers" (p.58). This is followed by arrests of political workers. When Shanti Devi is arrested, Leena is left out but she weeps bitterly "not out of weakness but out of the frustration she felt in the face of the silly arbitrariness of the police" (p.81).

Gandhi's programme of discouraging the purchase and use of British goods evokes active response from the workers, but quite often the police would round up the ordinary citizens who stop to watch the drama of picketings. Jai and Leena are supervising the picketing of Mool Chand's fashionable store near Kashmiri Gate which sells all kinds of imported goods. The novelist objectively describes the involvement of the committed followers of Gandhi and the laymen:

There was a tense, unruly situation outside the store. Every five minutes the police arrested the picket lines, to an accompaniment of derisive shouting from the thousands of citizens who had gathered at the scene, and then, immediately following, would come the thundering cheer "Victory to Gandhiji!" as a fresh group of pickets took the place of those arrested. Often, persons from the crowd who happened to have stopped to watch and who were expecting to be at home in half-hour or so would have the normal course of their lives drastically interrupted by joining the pickets and being whisked off to the police lockup and then to prison for a year or so (p.89).

As the movement continues gathering strength, Government feels baffled and out of despair, arrests Gandhi from a hut near Bombay. It is argued in the official circles that "if Gandhi were put in heavily guarded segregation, the nerve centre of the Movement would be cut off from the people" (p.91).
The less scrupulous members of the Administration hope that Gandhi's arrest would provoke the people to violence, and that would justify the use of stern measures to repress the movement.

The people of Delhi are impatient "to express their resentment, despair, anguish, and anger" (p.91) at Gandhi's arrest. Leena voices these sentiments when she addresses Jai: "Jai, our test has come at last. Now we will find out whether this thing that Gandhiji has been trying to implant in us has taken roots" (p.92).

A protest procession is planned but the authorities proclaim the gathering of people at a public place as unlawful. So deep is the resentment of the people against Gandhi's arrest that they defy the order and treat the proclamation only as another instance of the arbitrariness of the Government. The entire population of the city moves to the park from where the procession is to start. People flow with the current of the human stream or "this moving metropolitan river" as the author calls it: "All shops and places of business closed as a protest against the arrest of Gandhi, and indeed there was no one now to tend them" (p.95). The administration looks on, exasperated and helpless, at the dense waves of people moving through the streets of Delhi and chanting the name of Gandhi. Leena warns the people against greater severity from the Government but almost utters Gandhi's words that their only response can be "to give up all connection with the foreign ruler — but to do so not only without any violence but also without any bitterness" (p.96).

The leaders thus passionately implore the people to stick unswervingly to Gandhi's rule of non-violence.

The leaders stress the injunction of Gandhi that no force
is to be used by those who accept participation in the movement as "it was the only way, said Gandhi, that those who used force could learn the futility and inhumanity of their weapons" (p.97). The police officers charge the crowd with their heavy steelheaded stanes and their rifles buts as they think it "an act of vital importance for the sur_v of the British Empire and for the glory of Imperial tradition" (p.97). This is followed by firing, unprovoked and indiscriminate. An utter disorder is created and in the melee one hears "the wailing of the wounded, and the shouting of their companions, and the call for help and mercy" (p.98). The active workers are later arrested from their places. The novelist portrays general resentment of the people against the repressive measures of the government to deal with the non-violent movement of Gandhi. Many a loyalist-Indian is shaken into awareness of the situation and there is generated a favourable climate for Gandhi. The Dewan has all along remained unconcerned about Gandhi but now feels that Indian Independence cannot wait long:

I thought the British were a sporting people. I thought they would never hit a man when he was down. But now, in front of my eyes, they arrest Gandhi when he is doing nothing. No, that is not quite right. Gandhi was only telling the people to be non-violent and to cast out all hatred of the British. Gandhi did not invent the demand for freedom. It started long ago, and it was bound to spread. Then couldn't the British see that Gandhi was their best friend, that he was saving them from much worse things? No, they couldn't --- and they have been stupid enough to arrest him (pp.104-5).

Later, the negotiations between Gandhi and the British break down over the issue of Communal Award. The British are exasperated by Gandhi's insistence on certain fundamentals like a broad-based franchise. The British pretend to provide
safeguards for minorities against the domineering Hindu majority. Gandhi simply takes down their list of these minorities, records "the population figures and added them up. They came to more than the total population of India!" (p.159). The rulers decide that there would be long-drawn-out recrudescence of the movement and promulgate new ordinances. Consequently, all those who have been recently released are again apprehended. Each follower of Gandhi is summarily tried and sentenced to a term of imprisonment twice as long as on the previous occasion.

The narrative, then, takes the reader to the 'Quit India' phase of Gandhian movement for the freedom of India. The novelist takes care to suggest how the villagers respond to the call of Gandhi as they are "eager to hear news of Gandhiji and Nehru and of the days when Swarajya (the rule of the truth — Gandhiji's phrase) would be achieved" (p.231). The alien rulers resort once more to all the repertoire of governmental action: "The leaders were hastily put in prison, the over-enthusiastic young people who carried on were shot down or apprehended, property was confiscated, and the country was reduced to a rough and harsh similitude of order" (p.230). A protest march is organised in Delhi but the police opens fire. There erupts general panic and "the women hurried to the fallen men and women. Some appeared to have been killed, for they lay still, but many groaned and the women quickly rushed to attend to them" (p.232).

The novelist describes how the 'Quit India' movement takes a violent turn in spite of the repeated emphasis on non-violence by Gandhi and his followers. There is trouble on the estates of the Dewan. The peasants join whole-heartedly in the movement
but disarm "the police at the neighbouring police station. They took the rifles and made a bonfire, and the ammunition they threw into the river. They decided to use the building for a school" (p.233). The very next day a large posse of police is sent to take charge of the situation. They levy a fine on the whole village and proceed to arrest all those who looked as though they might be ring leaders. The Dewan finds the tempo of things too swift for him: "These docile people of the village had never done anything without discussing the matter first with him, and now they had gone and attacked the manifestation of the power of the foreign ruler" (p.233). Later, when the news of Gandhi's release from prison arrives, the country interprets this news as "the capitulation of the British Government to their leader" (p.235).

The House at Adampur thus reflects the Gandhian struggle for freedom and the response of the upper classes of Delhi to the movement and its leader. The mood here is one of the strong attachment to and reverence for Gandhi but the affinity is largely sentimental. The affiliation of the young nationalists is not grounded on a thorough appreciation of Gandhian ideology. Gandhian revolution brings its reverberations in the placid lives of the feudal lords and the Anglicised Indians but there is no happy fusion of the political and the social aspects.

The above discussion of the novels clearly shows that Gandhi forms the recurring motif of the Indian novelists in English. Gandhian revolution and ideology provide background to the narratives, although the success of this fictional treatment is determined by the extent to which they have been artistically handled.
Too much documentation of details concerning the silent revolution of Gandhi makes these fictional endeavours socially significant but the journalistic trends are too obvious to be overlooked. Attempts have also been made to examine the relevance of Gandhi to the post Independence India but the lack of cohesion has deprived these narratives of their literary merit.