The novels discussed in the preceding chapters constitute not merely the impressive core of Indian fiction in English, but also reflect the interest evinced by its leading practitioners in Gandhi, his ideals and programmes. Though each of the novelists responds in a distinct manner to Gandhi and his movements in terms of imaginative projection, his fascination for Gandhi forms a part of his artistic sensibility and Gandhi may well be called recurring motif in Indo-Anglian novel.

The study of the novels, so far examined, has amply borne out two facts. Gandhian revolution, his ideology and the followers of Gandhi provided rich material for fiction. Secondly, each novelist has carved for himself a system of aesthetic responses, which enables him to transfer this reservoir of literary material from the plane of historical reality to that of creative imagination. As a corollary to this, the Indo-Anglian novelist writing in the twenties and the thirties appeared to be conducive to imaginative work only in so far as he was inseparable from the national upsurge in general. All the creative output of Indian novel in English bearing on this period of national life is, therefore, largely a projection of national consciousness primarily enkindled by Gandhi.

Being in the midst of the turbulent times, the novelists of this period reflect the contemporary situation in all its perplexity, excitement and contradictions. Gandhi figures prominently in all such works, appearing either as a character or theme or providing background to a personal narrative. There is, however, no gainsaying the fact that while articulating
the general experience—both emotional and ideological— the
novelist has mostly identified his subjective compulsions with
the national experience at large. But the private and public
truths of the felt-life has been artistically integrated in
a few works only. The absence of synthesis reduces many a
fictional endeavour to the level of mere documentation of the
contemporary phenomenon which offered a conglomeration of the
inter-action of various forces, albeit Gandhian ideology was
the prime mover.

The treatment of Gandhi cannot, thus, be regarded as
final or comprehensive in any sense for the simple reason that
any such treatment becomes a projection of the mind. Personal
prejudices and imperfections have, therefore, entered the
accounts of quite a few novelists, Narayan, Anand, Malgonkar,
Khushwant, to quote only a few. There is another factor which
has conditioned the creative talent of the post-independence
generation. The changing values have contributed to the
growing critical stance adopted by the writer and the modern cre­
ative writer is, by and large, critical of Gandhi. Such
enthusiasts often gloss over the fact that what may be regarded
as merely a myth today, was believed in and adhered to during
a particular period in the recent past and the fact remains that
Gandhi symbolised the resurgent India against the foreign rule
and the Western Civilization. This assertion can be corroborated
from the fact that a large majority of creative writers plunged
into and swam along the sweeping current of Gandhian thought,
though it cannot be denied that the repeated occurrence of the
name of Gandhi or of his favourite ideas or expressions often
tend to be a ritualistic response or a mere exercise in drifting
with the mainstream.
Gandhian motif has manifested itself in many forms and disguises in the myriad impulsions of contemporary or recent history as rendered into art. The struggle for independence woven out of the fabrics of social reconstruction, Gandhi's elaborate exposition of his ideals of Truth, Non-violence, Satyagraha, emphasis on Village Reconstruction and economics of Khaddar have been discussed, described and assimilated into the plot-structures of many novels. Gandhi's denunciation of what he called a Satanic Civilization, the banishment of corporate living of village community and rural handicrafts consequent upon the rapid growth of industrialisation and urbanisation, Hindu-Muslim Unity, crusade against untouchability and solicitude for the poor and the downtrodden have constantly intrigued the creative talents of Indian novelists in English. Likewise, Gandhian campaigns, the Non-Cooperation movement, the Khilafat movement, Civil Disobedience movement, particularly the Salt Satyagraha, Individual Satyagraha, the 'Quit India' movement have been rendered into several works directly as theme or indirectly as background to human drama. "Kandan the Patriot, Waiting for the Mahatma, So Many Hungers, Kanthapura, Inquilab, I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale, A Time to Be Happy, Some Inner Fury, Conflict, We Never Die, In Transit and The House at Adampur" fall in this category. Gandhian shadow looms large over novels dealing with the Partition of India and its aftermath. "Waiting for the Mahatma, A Bend in the Ganges, Inquilab, and Train to Pakistan" can be considered in this respect. A very familiar technique adopted by some of the novelists, predominantly post-independence writers, is to identify Gandhi with the Congressmen and to examine Gandhian ideology rather uncharitably in terms of
the failings of Congressmen as the pale copies of their mentor. Anand, Malgonkar, Khushwant, Nayantara and Lall are some of the novelists who have adopted this pattern. Gandhi and his ways have been viewed from the standpoint of the terrorists, the leftists and other detractors of the Mahatma in quite a few novels like The Sword and the Sickle, In Quillah, A Bend in the Ganges and I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale.

Gandhi's personality, his insistence on the purity of means and spiritualisation of politics have dominated the narrative of several fictional endeavours, wherein Gandhi appears in person as a saint-figure or a warm-hearted human being but rarely as a politician, or where some prototype of Gandhi holds the sway. Significantly enough, Gandhi, the Mahatma, has captivated the imagination of almost all novelists discussed in the preceding chapters. He has been dealt with affection, admiration, veneration and even with irony and satire. There were historical reasons for it. Gandhi, the Mahatma, preceded Gandhi, the politician, or the Father of the Nation. Gandhi won the adulation of the people by his saintliness, self-abnegation and austerity. It was this aspect of Gandhi that received universal homage at home and abroad and the novelists have caught this aspect in their almost lyrical effusions and pictures of Gandhi's adulators. Another inference that can be drawn from it, is that the saintly personality of Gandhi was accepted by the people with an uncritical mind and also with a good deal of credulity, blind love and even their craving for the miraculous. The Indo-Anglian novelists have created this image in their works with an eye on his popular appeal. Another explanation of this can be that the creative writers, like the masses, were filled with wonder at the unique personality of
Candhi and their instinctive reaction was one of reverence towards his saintliness, if not towards his thought. The reaction of the creative writers can thus be likened to that of the primitive people who instinctively showed reverence to the might of inscrutable Spirit. The image of Gandhi as the reforming saint, has, however, been over-drawn and over-painted.

It seems that most of the novelists have proceeded along certain clearly demarcated lines. Popular image and physical personality of Gandhi are points of reference worthy of mention in this context. The details of his physical appearances bear close approximation to the popular portrait of the bespectacled old man in the loin-cloth. The essential ingredients of this sketch are retained even though the impression gets coloured through the jaundiced eyes of the leftists, the terrorists or the loyalists when Gandhi is depicted as "a little lop-eared, toothless man with a shaven head". His long nose "bridged by a pair of glasses, expansive forehead, clean-shaven head with its protruding hairs" and loin-cloth have been faithfully sketched by Anand (Untouchable), (The Sword and the Sickle), Abbas (Inquilab), Nayantara (A Time to be Happy), Karaka (We Never Die) and Ramir Ali (Conflict). Besides capturing the magic of Gandhi's personality "the man in the loin cloth" that had an immediate appeal to the Indian psyche, for as a Mahatma and a saint, Gandhi was an object of veneration, an attempt has also been made to balance this adulation by incorporating Englishmen's reaction to the "outlandish garb" of loin cloth of this "religious type" or the "wandering ascetic". Another aspect of these portraits is that Gandhi has been presented in the
image of an old man. The irresistible impression that one gathers from this delineation is one of artificiality and conventionality.

Gandhi as a character figures in quite a few novels but he has not been assigned the central role in any narrative. Untouchable, A Sword and the Sickle, Waiting for the Mahatma, Chronicles of Kedara and Inquilab present Gandhi as a character. The physical appearance of Gandhi finds prominent delineation but greater emphasis is laid on the popular image of Gandhi as a saint-figure. In a couple of novels he is treated as persuasive human being invested with a boisterous sense of humour. A more significant device adopted by some novelists has been to create characters as prototypes of Gandhi or his veiled representations. Venkataramani (Kandan the Patriot), Bhattacharya (So Many Hungers; A Goddess Named Gold; Shadow from Ladakh), Raja Rao (Kanthapura), Zutshi (Motherland) and Chitale (In Transit), have followed this pattern conspicuously. Gandhian prototypes have been quite convincing and appealing with the exception of a few cases but Gandhi as a character has not been successfully created. The novelists are not to be censured for this, as it would be a practically impossible task for a novelist, particularly a contemporary one, to do justice to a person of Gandhi's towering eminence. He has been too close to them in space and time to be invested with the film of distance and the consequent dispassionateness that alone can render any historical character in literature aesthetically alive. There is the inevitable possibility of Gandhi's dominating a work if space and importance proportionate to his greatness were given him, or suffering injustice if a man of his uncommon greatness were made to appear only in a casual episode.
Indo-Anglian novelists have, by and large, recreated Nehru's image of Gandhi as "the powerful current of the fresh air, a beam of light that pierces the darkness and a whirlwind that upsets many things, but most of all the working of people's mind" into their fictional endeavours, though they achieve a limited success with the exception of Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*. Despite an aura of sentimentality radiating from the Gandhi-figure in a large corpus of works, the fact is easily brought home to the readers that Gandhi stood for social resurgence. He was the undisputed leader of the Indian people and his struggle for independence meant immense emotional appeal for all classes. He inculcated fearlessness among the dumb millions and prepared them for voluntary sufferings and sacrifices. The atrocities perpetrated on the patriots, sufferings and sacrifices of the Satyagrahis stemming from their sense of fearlessness, assiduously infused by Gandhi, violation of the unjust laws of the land by peace-loving citizens leading to the confiscation of their properties by the government, abandoning of lucrative careers and prestigious posts by the enlightened Indians, adoption of Swadeshi, wearing of home-spun Khaddar and spinning of Charkha form the warp and woof of the novels and point historically to the psychological transformation wrought by Gandhi.

Almost all the novelists have dealt with Gandhi's immense popularity with the people, although he has been introduced in the narrative with different ends in view. Gandhi finds a place in the scheme of the plot as a character, a symbol, an idea or a myth but his popular mass appeal is common to all works. This popularity is suggested in two marked patterns. There are novels which suggest Gandhi's popularity indirectly by showing that the
characters exhibit their firm faith in Gandhi's ideals, while in other novels there are frequent references to or statements of his being the most favourite leader of the day. One significant aspect of Gandhi's popular appeal is the image of a saintly figure or a reformer that most of the novelists have sought to project. No serious attempt seems to have been made by any novelist to project Gandhi solely as a political figure or a human being. People everywhere show their acquaintance with the movements that Gandhi led from time to time and they are shown to have rallied round him but they obey him as they would have followed a divine being. It is the mass appeal dimension to Gandhi's figure that seems to have impelled the novelists to put Gandhi's popularity to literary use.

An examination of what may, for the sake of convenience, be called Gandhi-novels, reveals two conspicuous patterns in the writer's approach to the problem of rendering Gandhian ethos into art. Some novelists have made vigorous delineation of Gandhian revolution by observing it in microscopic details. Secondly, certain writers have exploited Gandhi merely as a device to fix the narrative in a particular span of history. An objective and analytical account, rendered indispensable to the internal pattern of the story, offers testimony to the novelist's sense of historical truth but that happens rarely. In quite a few cases the human drama and the political milieu do not really come together and the resultant picture of Gandhian revolution remains blurred. Nor do the characters in the
narrative come to life as they lack the healthy glow of the living flash. Despite long extracts from Gandhi's writings and frequent use of the favourite ideas of the Mahatma, these novels betray an air of artificiality and extracts thus incorporated into the body of the novel tend to be fictional excrescences. Such works are didactic in tone and expository in character but they contain brilliant cataloguing of information about Gandhi and his times.

The distinctive feature of the majority of novelists lies in creating romantic pictures of Gandhian revolution. Venkataramani, Bhattacharya, Nayantara Sahgal, Amir Ali, Karka, Chitale and Zutshi have made conscious efforts to weave significant utterances of Gandhi and the events connected with him into the fabric of their works. As exposition of Gandhian revolution and ideology, their works are significant addition to Gandhian literature but their impulse towards projecting Gandhi as the only measuring rod reduces their tales to the level of romance and melodrama. There remains something elusive and mysterious about these stories which otherwise could have been memorable pictures of the period. Attempts have also been made to present anti-romantic and even ironical and satirical pictures of Gandhian revolution. Narayan, Malgonkar, Nagarajan and Khushwant Singh fall in this category. The note of irony is generally dominant in the novels dealing with Gandhian politics of the post-independence period. Narayan's treatment of Gandhi in Waiting for the Mahatma is marked by a strong undercurrent of irony with respect to the response of average Indian to Gandhism but he makes his picture
lively by presenting Gandhi as a warm-hearted human being in his relations with ordinary followers. Khushwant Singh's irony is more on the surface and reflects satirical bias as he portrays the reactions of his characters to Gandhi and his struggle for freedom. Malgonkar paints a highly satirical portrait of the followers of Gandhi but his bias is too obvious to be missed. Added to his hardened prejudices is the melodramatic note that mars the artistic value of his works. His characters are not firmly grounded in Gandhian ideology and his presentation of Gandhian revolution is highly coloured.

Gandhian revolution has also been faithfully recorded in a few novels with realistic touches but such accounts give the inevitable impression of journalistic writing as the renderings of Gandhian movements have not been artistically integrated with the fictional contents of the work. Prominent among such novelists is Abbas but the journalistic trends are quite noticeable in the works of Venkataraman, Bhattacharya, Khushwant, Karaka, Zutshi, Aamir and Nayantara also. At times, one gathers the impression that a newspaper file of back-numbers is being perused rather than a work of fiction.

The finest assimilation of Gandhian revolution into fictional contents is to be seen in Raja Rao's Kanthapura which probes the impact of Gandhi on the rustic minds. By mythicising contemporary reality, Raja Rao offers a literary transcript of the cataclysmic impact of Gandhi. Legends, religious faith and myths are aesthetically attuned to the local colour of the tale which can be read as a legendary history of an obscure village Kanthapura during the 1930's. The digressional method of story-telling with the old
grandmother as the narrator and quick tempo of action make
the tale lively. The novel may, rightly, be called a Gandhi
Purana, although Gandhi is not introduced as a character in
the story. The Gandhian prototype who typifies Gandhian
movements, spiritualization of politics and the social reforms
of the Mahatma, is veritably the local Gandhi. The entire
action of the novel is sustained by the spirit of Gandhi whose
image as that of a divine being and a reformer catches the
imagination of the rustic people. Gandhian revolution is
adroitly fused into the narrative and Kanthapura remains the
most successful attempt in Indian novel in English at treating
Gandhi and his campaigns regarding the resurgence of the country.

Attempts have also been made to present contrast
between Gandhian ideology and other forces but these novelists
have not been able to deal convincingly with the conflicting
ideologies in artistic terms. Anand, Bhattacharya, Malgonkar,
Abbas and Markandaya have made conscious endeavours to weave
the clash of ideologies into their narratives but the novels
lack artistic coherence. Anand's The Sword and the Sickle
centres round Gandhian revolution and Communist ideology but
the ambivalent attitude of the novelist accounts for the
confusion that mars the aesthetic appeal of the book. Both
Gandhi and the Communists are presented ridiculously by
Anand's resorting to obvious satire and cheap irony. The
novelist; seems to be interested more in projecting the
foibles of Gandhi and his followers on the one hand and the
revolutionaries on the other and less in delineating the
dilemma of the hero who drifts along the path of violence in preference to Gandhian non-violence. All this happens under the stress of circumstances and the ideological convictions are hardly skin-deep. The inability of Anand to portray a memorable picture of the clash of ideologies remains an artistic enigma which is difficult to explain or rationalise.

Bhattacharya exploits the background of the Chinese invasion of 1962 to assess the relevance of Gandhism by concentrating on the confrontation between Gandhian ideology and the modern industrialism in *Shadow From Ladakh*. This is an ambitious work that presents the challenge between two contrary thoughts and ways of life. The novelist's suggestion is that synthesis of the two is the only answer to the challenge but the reconciliation and integration of industrialism and Gandhian approach is suggested in a very conventional manner. The protagonists opt for synthesis not out of any ideological compulsions but by the force of romantic love. Ideological motif apart, Bhattacharya seems to make a distinct suggestion that Gandhian austerity and asceticism tend to generate anti-life tendencies which should be rejected as unnatural restraints. The shadow of romantic love falls rather heavily on the clash of ideologies but the novel is an exciting tale of significant interest.

Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* also offers a clash between Gandhian ideology of non-violence and violence of terrorists but the ideological conflict is coloured by the vengeance with which Malgonkar treats Gandhi and his followers. A laboured attempt has been made by the novelist to project
terrorists as men of character in contrast with the imbecile and unscrupulous followers of Gandhi but the study fails to be artistically satisfying and emotionally appealing. Gandhi's followers are deliberately painted in dark hues. The novelist tries to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of non-violence as a way of life but its credibility is marred by manipulations of coincidences and a heavy dose of melodrama in the action-packed narrative.

Abbas makes a reference to the divergent standpoints of Gandhi and the revolutionaries in Inqilab but the confrontation does not receive a sensitive appraisal. The polemical catch-words of Marxian criticism of Gandhi and his ideology find a place in the comprehensive recording of the national scene but an absence of dramatic concentration and large scale introduction of politics and political figures reduce the novel to the level of reportage. Kamla Markandaya suggests by implication the clash between Gandhian non-violence and the violence of the terrorists in Some Inner Fury but the love story and the ideological clash lack artistic coherence and the maelstrom of political upheaval tends to be vague and shady.

Gandhian motif has, thus, been strikingly dominant in Indo-Anglian novel, although only a few novels have been artistic accomplishments where balance between the fictional values and Gandhian ethos has been maintained. Numerically, the novels sound quite significant and impressive but the qualitative out-put of Indian novel in English is far from being outstanding and authentic. Pedestrian delineation of
Gandhian revolution and a tendency to take an easy recourse to reportage coupled with deliberate attempt to romanticise the movement deprive these works of their brilliance as pieces of art. Quite a few novelists betray their utter confusion in their response to Gandhi, while some have distorted their perspective by their personal prejudices and over-indulgence in melodrama, satire or irony. Some of the novelists have treated Gandhian ideology as a medium to measure life but they have not been able to integrate properly the material pertaining to Gandhian revolution with the fictional narrative. It is indeed difficult to state categorically that Indian novel in English has done justice to Gandhi and his movements. Nearness to Gandhi and his movements can easily be listed as the justification for the inability of the novelist to create memorable pictures of the age but this argument cannot be unreservedly valid for all. Much of the routine or amateurishly bad writing points to a sad conclusion that a large number of the creative artists have, besides taking their craft non-seriously, shown a superficial understanding of Gandhi and his movements.