CHAPTER - V
EMERGENCE OF NEW INDIA.
PART- I

The ship of India's independence was launched on perilous seas in August 1947. The immediate fruits were bitter and bloody, but they were the inevitable results of communal frenzy. Describing the scene of the birth of a nation, India, Lord Ismay, Chief of Staff of Lord Mountbatten, wrote "India was a ship on fire in mid-ocean with ammunition in her fold". This was not the India of Gandhi's dream indeed!

Any one observing the contemporary scene in India, would hardly believe that the man called Mahatma Gandhi, for over three decades, strode its enormous territory like a colossus, was controlling its political convulsions and trying to change its age-old economic and social disparities, reviving its ancient spirit. There is hardly any trace of the mark that such a tremendous personality left either among most of his contemporaries or his successors. What kind of India are we living in to-day? What are the causes for this deterioration? Do we feel the necessity of bringing the Gandhian ideals back in to 1. Collins Larry & Lapierre Dominique, Freedom at Midnight (Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi), P-81.
practice? These are the questions a chunk of the Indian intelligentsia has been asking.

To say that the Gandhian teachings have not had much influence on the country's political pattern, excepting for a few fringe concessions on paper, like the proliferation of fasts by all sorts of political and spiritual quacks, undertaken at the least provocation and broken by the lamest excuse, is not saying anything more than the commonplace. This regrettable conclusion forces itself on us, since the character-crisis that has overtaken the country is so depressing that under no stress of imagination could it be said that, neither were Gandhian means tried nor were his ends achieved.

Gandhiji has been understandably the outstanding figure among the social reformers of modern times. He accepted the truth and other values pronounced in our ancient texts, for social purification. His advice was accepted by his contemporaries because these values were adopted in a rational form. With these values as the basis, Gandhiji tried to effect social reforms. Other reformers wanted an industrialised society but Gandhiji wanted the Indian society to change materially as well as spiritually, with the ultimate objective of an ideal society, a society of economic and moral equilibrium.
INDUSTRIALISM, ITS MALADIES AND THE GANDHIAN WAY OUT.

In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhiji opposed the introduction of machinery, particularly in villages. Further, he gave six reasons why he opposed machines:

1) Introduction of machinery is incursion of the Western Civilization.  
2) It brings in materialism and multiplication of insatiable wants.  
3) The evils of industrialisation will further multiply.  
4) A gulf between cities and villages will be created.  
5) The evils of capitalism will be ushered in and  
6) Lastly, if the Indian masses are to be employed, it is through the village handicrafts and not through machines. Gandhiji feared that machines will corrode the simplicity of rural India. He opposed not so much the machine or industrialisation, but the acquisitive spirit of the industrial culture. Gandhiji often said that he was aiming not at the eradication of machinery but at limiting it.

All the ills that afflict the world to-day can be summarised in two words, poverty and alienation. The developing countries face the former problem whereas the developed countries the latter. The poor nations are producing generations with defective brains and bodies and the developed countries are increasingly facing the problem of disorder of consciousness. We admire western
materialism but we forget that the Western man, caught up in the rat-race of materialism, is totally alienated.

In his book *Gandhi To-day*, J.D. Sethi writes that abject and ruthless materialism breeds the following alienations.

"(1) Alienation of man from his work.
(2) Alienation from the commodities he produces.
(3) Alienation of consumption from production.
(4) Alienation of man from social organism.
(5) Alienation from his social beings."

If we add two more, it would give a clear picture of why Gandhiji opposed big but centralized industries.

(6) alienation of man from nature and
(7) alienation of man from his innerself.

Therefore Gandhiji suggested that small, decentralised units, village wise, rather than big, centralised industrial concerns, were the remedy for an agricultural country like India. Big industries help a few families grab most of the national income and the poor become poorer in the process. Abject materialism breeds alienation which can be seen in the industrially advanced countries. So Gandhiji's

2) Sethi, J.D. *Gandhi To-day*.

(Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979) P-51.
indigenous method of two-tier economy of cottage industry and small scale industry, was a good solution for these maladies.

Thirty years or more of Indian politics has clearly demonstrated the vacuum and futility of all the revolutionary methods borrowed from the West. Indian society is more aimlessly convulsed today that it was any time before. There are conflicts of caste, class, language, capital cities, river waters and so on. The main reason for all these conflicts is our alienation from ourselves, from the society and from our fellow beings, and secondly, because of consumerism as our basic value-system.

THE GANDHIAN CRITIQUE OF INDIAN POLITY:

Gandhiji once remarked that he was a politician trying to be a saint. He did not subscribe to the popular notion that politics is the last resort of a scoundrel, or that politics is a dirty game. Any game is dirty if dirty people play it! Gandhiji defined polity as some kind of a system of oceanic or concentric circles, rather than a pyramidal one. In the pyramidal system there is a kind of categorization of society, some privileged class being on the apex and the less privileged people at the bottom. In his oceanic theory the circles moving away from the centre are not independent, but part or extension of the former circles. Though the Gandhian
critique of Indian polity appears to be simple it is difficult to practise as it requires a national charac- ter and the correct interpretation of history.

There is a tendency to compare Lenin with Gandhi on the issue of social and political revolutions. Lenin is the Marxian Gandhi and Gandhi is the non-violent Lenin, and both of them did not believe in absolute violence and absolute non-violence. Gandhiji's aphorism is that non-violence is better than violence and violence is better than cowardice. K. Seshadri writes in his article 'Relevance of Gandhian thought to the contemporary situation' that Gandhiji taught his followers, 'If they are to preach the mission of peace, they must first prove their ability in war.' This was a wonderful discovery but it was true! A nation that is unfit to fight, cannot from experience, prove the virtue of not fighting. Violent struggle against demoniacal rule is not bad. Abject surrender to such a rule is cowardice. Non-violence was not merely a tactic to suit the genius of the proverbially weak and backward Indian people. It was his unshakable faith on which no compromise was possible.

3. Seshadri, K. 'Relevance of Gandhian thought to the contemporary situation' in Gandhi Centenary Papers Ed. Dr. K.S. Saxena (Bhopal, 1964) P-112.
When India is spending hundreds of crores of rupees on defence, how can it be called a non-violent country of Gandhiji's dream? K. Seshadri writes again,

"It is a naked and ugly truth that for all the jingoistic talks by the hot heads in the country India cannot but remain militarily weak and this will stifle the natural economic development."

We can afford to have many mill stones round our country's neck, but we should not chant Gandhiji's name in defence of them. Moreover, if Gandhiji's non-violence is a creed and a faith, there can be no concessions to it. One cannot be non-violent before the powerful British government and use ruthless methods of violence to quell the internal tension in the independent country now. It is not the Gandhian ideal of non-violence of the strong but the attitude of a bully who cowers before a strong enemy and threatens the weak countrymen.

All that one can say is Christendom is not as Christ wanted it, Russia as Lenin wanted it, America as Lincoln or Washington wanted it nor India as Gandhiji wanted it. Gandhiji gave strength to the weak and the just to stand up against the high and the mighty, not in a fit of violence and impotent anger, but in a peaceful.

courageous and righteous indignation and make the adversary feel his inferiority on a moral plane.

THE GANDHIAN GOAL OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC REFORMS

The problems of social change in India are vast, complex and difficult. The simultaneous existence of many centripetal and centrifugal forces, along with the age-old customs and religious misconceptions, make the problem more complicated and also retard the progress of society. The main contribution of Gandhiji lies in awakening the social consciousness about the necessary changes.

The present day rulers of India have deviated from the teachings of Gandhiji on the following lines:

1) As against the development of small scale industries advocated by Gandhiji, they have laid increasing emphasis on an economic development through large scale industries.

2) They have practically given up Gandhian non-violence even in domestic affairs.

3) They have also abandoned the idea of returning to the concept of self-sufficient villages or village republics.
It is not easy to practise Gandhian ideals of social changes. The fundamental Gandhian means to bring about a social change in India rest on the reformation of man himself. If all individuals are morally reformed, the Gandhian goal will be achieved. The major components of socio-economic changes of the Gandhian concepts are:

1) 'Welfare of all', but the First Planning commission defines its objective as 'the greatest well-being of the largest number'.

B.M. Bhatia in his article 'A critical survey of I Five Year Plan' observes,

"What is wanted is not an expensive Americanised type of programme of rural reconstruction in a selected few areas, we must have a countrywide development programme covering not only every village even every hamlet."\(^5\)

2) The Commission guarantees material development but Gandhiji wanted both material and moral progress.

In order to inculcate the moral fibre in the materialistic society, Gandhiji advocated the idea of trusteeship. The rich and the intelligent people in the country should act

as trustees of their possessions and use their money or intellect for the welfare of the have-nots.

Another area with which Gandhiji was intimately connected was the social reforms. In Gandhiji's opinion the caste system and untouchability, with all their attendant evils, constitute an important component of the social heritage of India. Education is another area from where Gandhiji has been pushed into oblivion. His idea of basic education has been discarded to favour the century-old education system of churning out clerks, which does not help creative and critical thinking, nor is it relevant to the needs of a changing society.

THE POSITION OF WOMEN

Gandhiji strove to enhance the position of women. Education, jobs, legislative measures regarding the Hindu Law and the question of inheritance etc., have had some effect on the already waning joint family system. Formerly, the joint family offered security to the children, the aged and widows and thus formed a sort of social insurance. But due to rapid urbanization, occupational opportunities, the impact of technology and western values, there has been a change in family relationships. It is this breakup of the established joint family and the movement towards the
'Biological family' that constitutes an important feature in the social change in India.

Gandhiji went to the extent of saying that India's Salvation depends on the sacrifice and enlightenement of her women. The ideal marriage, in his opinion, leads to spiritual union through the physical. He said that the wife is not the husband's bond slave but his companion, helpmate and equal partner in all his joys and sorrows. Gandhiji deplored male chauvinism and said that woman must be as free as man to choose her own path. It is heartening to think that the Indian government made provisions for equal educational and occupational opportunities, for men and women. But despite Gandhiji's crusade against the dowry system it has continued. Man's mind must be purged pure for the success of such laws. That is what Gandhiji was trying through temperance boards and youth organisations. As Gandhiji sincerely tried to enhance the position of the untouchables in the society, he also tried to set women free from the age-old bonds of many types.
TOWARDS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF GANDHIJI

Stanley Jones remarks that "Gandhi, in falling was like Newton’s apple falling, illustrating something universal". It is a fact that we did not understand him fully much less his political philosophy. Gandhi can be evaluated in terms of the hypothesis he laid down for practice before himself. J.D. Sethi mentions them in *Gandhi To-Day*.

"1) To win independence for India, by involving the masses in a struggle that was profoundly civilizational.
2) To rouse Indian masses against social inequalities and exploitation.
3) To reorient those eternal values, for which all great social philosophers have worked."

Gandhiji has successfully gone through the first two stages of his political career, but as regards the third stage we have gone away from Gandhiji.

Consequently, the interest in Gandhiji, once again has emerged from three reasons:

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1) The capitalist world has reached a point of crisis precisely because its massive technological and economic growth has created a gap between this growth on the one hand and the value-system on the other.

2) Even in communist countries, a huge economic and political power becomes centralised in the hands of a small minority, the state. It reduces the majority to a sub-human level even though well-nourished. J.D. Sethi makes an interesting observation,

"Marxists rejected Gandhi long ago reading him the wrong way as they have done Marx, according to the best known marxist Louis Althusser, reading Das Kapital upside down".  

3) Gross poverty, absence of development, external threats to their independence, decline in democratic spirit and the total frustration of the third world countries have revived interest in Gandhiji. It is easier to-day to be a marxist, an anarchist, a liberal than to be a Gandhian.

A historic personage's relevance is marred in two ways, one by his being far behind his time, the second when he is born far ahead of his time. The first is the reactionary and the second is the visionary. The charismatic character combines both. It happened with Gandhiji.

7. Ibid. p-29.
It would be the worst distortion of history to say that the visionary Gandhiji wanted to return to the primitive society with a human face. His model of development was value oriented, not consumption oriented or commercialized. Therefore in the language of materialism, Gandhiji has been described as the one advocating primitivism.

Within four decades of our independence, the moral and material corruption has been written in enormous proportions on the foreheads of our social and political workers. The main instrument of this elite-corruption in India is the undue emphasis laid on the consumption oriented plans and policies. An elite, which is not austere in its living, cannot enjoy legitimacy with the masses. Such a corrupt elite is the legacy of the first three decades of the Indian politics. If we want to eradicate this social and political hegemony, the Gandhian approach, which suits the Indian genius, is the only way out. So Gandhiji is relevant to-day.

But how to return to Gandhiji from the point where the nation is standing to-day? It is impossible to think that the power-elite, bureaucrats, politicians and businessmen can dedicate themselves to that path. Gandhiji's revalidation will have to come through the groups which
are outside the governing power-elite, including the government Gandhians. These Gandhians have ignored their master,

1) by keeping themselves away from political life, thus avoiding elite-mass dynamics.
2) by their failure to develop and float Gandhian thoughts.

On the contrary they have resigned to seclusion and built Ashrams on government grants. The power-elite helped them deliberately to vanish into seclusion because their intervention might tilt the balance of power against them.

The Indian power elite is one of the cleverest in the world and to fight it with Gandhian methods is not easy. The Neo-Gandhians, as we may call them, because they wish to re-initiate Gandhism, should fight the neo-colonialism of the West, imperialism of the East and above all the internal exploitation of the masses by the elite.

THE RELEVANCE OF GANDHIJI TO-DAY

The relevance of Gandhiji cannot be decided just because he was a saintly person and a great leader of India. His relevance depends on conceptualizing his ideas, putting them in the form of a structure and testing them in actual experience. If Gandhism satisfies all these tests, Gandhiji shall have to be called back, not
as a God, but as an action-philosopher and guide that he always was.

Jesus was almost forgotten after his crucifixion. Buddha’s message was blockaded after his Mahanirvana, likewise Gandhiji was also forgotten for about a quarter of a century. Now every one hears the rumbling of Gandhiji’s ghost from all corners of our country. More than casual interest is aroused in him to-day.

Gandhiji was forgotten because the Gandhian followers were fascinated by the Nehru regime. The early success of the Nehruvian model of economy was the result of the momentum of an economy which had remained stagnant for a long time. But that model was un-Indian and elitist, as such it was bound to fail. J.D. Sethi writes,

"As a result of this the Nehruvian model of politics and economics, which he put into practice as against the Gandhian model, collapsed because of internal contradictions".8

So a renewed interest has arisen not because of the conflict between the two models, but of the fact that the Nehruvian model has failed and the Nehruvian era has come to a tragic end. It is this failure of the developmental

8. Ibid, p-3.
models borrowed from the West or East, that has pushed Gandhiji again at the centre. For these reasons Gandhiji has become relevant again.

**GANDHISM: A GRAND ALTERNATIVE**

The Indian intelligentsia is debating to-day whether Gandhism is a spent force or whether it can provide an effective alternative to the polities that have failed. Mixed reactions are heard. G.P. Mishra writes in *Gandhi in To-day's India*:

"The application of the Gandhian model of development in the context of changing rural India, cannot work successfully for providing social justice, without the existence of the Gandhian type of rural economic and social framework."


V.M. Dandekar writes in the same book,

"The Gandhian path is not an alternative path of reaching the same goal of economic development which the country has pursued in the past thirty years."

10. Ibid, p-91.

With Satyagraha as the means and socialism as the objective to be reached, Gandhiji certainly offered an
alternative to the class war and proletarian dictatorship. His idea of Sarvodaya — Welfare of all, includes not only the humble, the lowly and the last but also the capitalist and the landlord. Gandhiji never disliked the landlord and the capitalist because his target of attack was always the system and not the persons. Gandhiji believed that through non-violence, it is possible to transform the relations between the classes and masses. The elite-class was the real danger to the type of socio-economic order Gandhiji wished to usher in. If this class is rendered ineffective through Sarvodaya, then the goal of building a classless Indian society would be possible.

V.K.R.V. Rao while writing in support of the Gandhian means and goals comments,

"To each according to his needs is the first principle of distribution in Gandhian socialism... All this must sound romantic in this hard headed age of atom-bombs. Nevertheless, it may be useful to outline the Gandhian alternative to many 'isms' that have so far failed to answer the unsolved problems of new social orders that all of us all over the world are desperately searching for."\(^{11}\)

\(^{11}\) Ibid, p-173.
The Gandhian alternative is Sarvodaya, a classless society, a system of production that does not fail to make use of science and technology for creating an economy of abundance, but does not, in the process, either kill individual incentive or striving for more and more material-goods; a system of distribution that will ensure the minimum, not aiming at a universal equality of the arithmetical kind, but will nevertheless ensure that all private property or talent, beyond the minimum, will be used as a trust for the public.

Gandhiji evolved the theory of trusteeship asking the people to act as trustees of the property and talent beyond their minimum use. The theory of socialism, through trusteeship, is the alternative Gandhiji presented to the scientific socialism and communism, evolved by the Western or Eastern thinkers. Therefore Gandhiji's socialism is not the first nor even the second cousin of Marxism. Gandhiji's reply to the unsolved problems of the new social order was derived from the traditional wisdom of our country.

While complimenting Gandhiji on his novel method of resolving conflicts between self-reliance and Universalism Jayaprakash Narayan writes in his 'Foreword' to J. D. Sethi's book *Gandhi To-Day*,
"In his Swadeshi he tried to evolve dialectical relations between self-reliance and universalism. To Gandhi there was no conflict between the two. Gandhiji's dialectics is not a matter of conflict between two irreconcilables, instead it is a matter of transforming antagonistic conflicts and contradictions through the technique of Satyagraha and mass struggle...We need to-day a model Swadeshi on the Gandhian lines."12

For these novel and indigenous methods, Gandhiji is called a revolutionary. T.K.N. Unnithan in his book Gandhi in Free India calls him a dual revolutionary,

"He was a dual revolutionary because he wanted to change not only the goals but also the means."13

For Gandhiji, ends and means were convertible terms. The adoption of Swadeshi and non-violence as the means of change, added to his stature of a revolutionary.

12. Jayaprakash Narayan, Gandhi To-Day, foreword, p-X.
The pre-Independence Indian English novels have a monolithic approach viz. they depicted only one aspect of the national life, that is the political upheaval in the country. But after Independence socio-economic concerns, crisis in character and their resolution, social, cultural, political and psychological factors became the major pre-occupations of the fiction writers. In other words the fictional approach to life changed from a monolithic to a pluralistic one.

Almost all the significant novelists have written on Gandhiji. Their points of view are not identical, as also their approach. Manohar Malgonkar puts forth many pro-British viewpoints. Mrs. Sahgal, though true to the party of Independence, is highly polemic in her approach. Mrs. Jhabvala puts forward the social issue saying that, those who once fought for freedom, have no voice in the contemporary society. Khushwant Singh who dwells on the human problem of partition manipulates human tragedy to implement a sharp attack on the rulers. Kamala Markandaya is inclined towards presenting the rural society. Mulk Raj Anand adopted the humanitarian attitude and Bhattacharya, a typical Gandhian himself, fictionalises
different Gandhian ideals like Ahimsa, Fast, Celibacy, Machine Versus Cottage industry etc. Raja Rao, a celebrated child of the Gandhian era, depicts the Gandhian impact on a small rural society whereas Chaman Nahal takes the view that whatever has happened is inevitable and the holocaust at the time of partition is the baptism of a new nation. R.K. Narayan takes a detached artist's stand. Other less significant novelists wrote on different aspects of our national life which was stirred by the Gandhian Movement.

However, be it the humanitarian aspect of Gandhian thought that Anand and Bhattacharya have absorbed or the spiritual aspect which Raja Rao deals with or the social aspect depicted by R.K. Narayan, it is the Gandhian vision of life that ultimately emerges from the novels, of linking India's present with its past through the Gandhian myth and symbols. Rama Jha remarks,

More over a historical perspective and the Pan-Identity that the Gandhian thought symbolised, helped Indo-Anglian novelists to see the present in the context of the past and link it with the future. Moreover, this historical perspective and the realistic approach in their novels derive from a live myth that Gandhi provided to these novelists. 14

Gandhiji appears directly in some novels whereas his ideas and ideals are expressed through Characters in some other novels. In the absence of the real Gandhi, many local Gandhis adorn the prominent place in the novels. Novelists might have disagreed with Gandhiji himself on many issues, but all of them agree on one point; that he was a great soul. He was a true Mahatma for whom there was no hiatus between ethics and politics, between private morality and public policy. The Gandhian way is a humanistic way based on durable foundations like truth, love, chastity, honest labour, simple living and equal sharing and so on. Such was Gandhiji, the prophet of modern India. Soon after Independence he was relegated into the background. Some intellectuals went to the extent of saying that Gandhiji is a spent force, so he is irrelevant to-day. Gandhiji is more relevant to-day because all his models were based on truth, non-corruption, service, sacrifice and similar values and the other models which were brought against them have failed miserably. Industrialism alienated people from their surroundings, people lost their identity and became rootless. Again, industrialism created a cynical elite class, which is on the apex of the social order and at their hands huge wealth is concentrated. After Independence more and more people are pushed below the poverty line and the gap between the
haves and have-nots is ever increasing. These disparities between the rich and the poor compel us to look for a better alternative life-style that suits India. Gandhiji's socialism through trusteeship or Sarvodaya will be a viable alternative at this juncture.

Nayantara Sahgal's novels have the Gandhian values as the basis for the personal and political problems. According to her the Gandhian values have a three fold attraction. Their reliance on tradition, freedom for the individual, and dependence on moral values. Such a value system which has material as well as moral basis is the need of the day.

INDUSTRIALISM, ITS MALADIES AND THE GANDHIAN WAY OUT

It is a popular misconception that Gandhiji opposed industrialism. He was not against machine but its acquisitive spirit. He confessed that he did not aim at eradication of machines but he wanted a control over the wild spreading of it. He also emphasised that the introduction of machinery should be accompanied by decentralization of industry. Mechanization was inevitable in this century. Gandhi knew it well. Nayantara Sahgal puts it in this way:
"Mechanisation", Gandhi said, "was inevitable when there was dearth of labour. Gandhiji was not against that kind of mechanisation for an individual to add to his efficiency without turning him into its slave".15

A similar fear of Satyajit in Shadow from Ladakh came to be true when Bhasker Ganguley, the manager of Steel town, decides to uproot Gandhigram. Bhasker says that Gandhigram is not a reality but just an idea. Even as an idea can be transported to some other land, Gandhigram can also be transplanted to some other area, making room for the steel plant. The two votaries of mechanisation and Gandhigram respectively debate over this problem. Annexing a village is annexing a way of life. Bhabani Bhattacharya writes,

"There could not be two Indias, back to back, gazing at opposite horizons, ready to march off and get further and further apart". 16

This is what Gandhiji resented most.

In Gandhigram Satyajit attempts to achieve the ideal of community life, as the outgrowth of the combined teachings of the philosopher-poet Tagore and the diplomat saint Mahatma Gandhi.

In Kamala Markandaya's novel *Nectar in A Sieve* the problems of pollution of the vernal atmosphere of the countryside, bad smells and clamours of industries, alienation of man from his surroundings, big exodus from village to the cities for 'a handful of rice' and the corroding of human values—all this has been authentically described. Mrs. Markandaya expresses her dissatisfaction over ruining the peace and plenty of rural India, but at the same time she is ready to compromise with the new situation. Rukmini, Nathan's wife is not ready to accept the changing social order when her husband advises her to accept the same, she says,

"Never, never."

"Foolish woman" he tells her, "There is no going back. Bend like the grass that you donot break."17

For more terrible than physical hunger is the negation of self-respect. In times of drought or flood, people can live on roots and leaves, but when industrialism, in its mad speed swallows the rented land of the small holders, cultivated over years with a forlorn hope that one day or the other they would be able to buy it, where should they go? The despair of such thousands of small

17. Markandaya, Kamala, *Nectar in A Sieve* 
land holders is expressed through Rukmini thus 'while there was land, there was hope. Nothing now, nothing whatever.'

In this way industrialisation jolted the peaceful countryside population of India out of joints. Though the farmers were attracted towards the industry in the beginning they were disillusioned later. Therefore Gandhiji propagated a controlled use of machinery. 'Swadeshi' was the magic word Gandhiji gave in lieu of big industries. That is the Gandhian way out of industrial evils. At places the clash between the two ideologies becomes so obvious that both of them appear to be inevitable to modern India. In *Shadow from Ladakh* Sumati, a Gandhian, says to Bhasker, the supporter of industry,

"We also believe in action."

'Bhasker: "you are out of context in history."

'Sumati: "May be we live ahead of times."

"May be we live in an age yet to be born."'  

This prophetic vision of Gandhiji has come true now. Having suffered the maladies of industrialization, such as the ever increasing gap between the rich and the poor, alienation, disturbance of the peaceful village life,

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now the 'advanced' world has realised that there was pith and point in what the Mahatma said. The startling revelation comes through the dialogue between Bhasker and Sumati,

"Bhasker says, "Having attained our industrial target, we must return to the spinning wheel."

Sumati: "Return? There can be no return. Feed your spirit while you feed your body. Or else your spirit will not survive. You cannot do both things one by one." 20

Here the author seems to suggest that the wedding of both the ideologies is the new order for the present day society.

Bhabani Bhattacharya puts forth a novel idea in his book. He seems to hold the opinion that both Gandhi-gram and the steel plant can live side by side. This is the new social order that is going to be ushered in. There need not be a clash between the two ideologies but the capacity to accommodate each other for the good of the country.

THE GANDHIAN CRITIQUE OF INDIAN POLITICS

Ram Krishna in Mrs. Sahgal's novel The Day in Shadow says,

"Indians needed no new star to follow. They need faith in themselves... The corpse Jesus blest rose and walked. That was the miracle Hinduism must perform to-day, touch and transform the lives of millions and give them a basis for action, not merely a scripture or ritual."

As was done by Christ, Gandhiji also touched the cold, inactive ignorant and timid Indian and he started walking. Gandhiji taught the Indian to stand against injustice. He instilled in him faith and firm determination.

Vishal Dubey in Storm in Chandigarh declares,

"Gandhian politics had also meant the open decision, the open action. No stealth and no furtiveness and therefore no shame. Every act proudly performed in the sunlight. If all that had been worth anything thought Dubey, it will have been disbursed over this country, down deep into our blood. Or perhaps that was there; it had always been from where Gandhi had drawn it up like water from a well to banish the thirst of defeat and despair."

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22. Ibid, p-239.
What Mrs. Sahgal suggests is that the Gandhian frankness and openmindedness, either in discussion or in decision taking, is fast disappearing from our political and social life. In each of her successive novels, the retreat from Gandhian ideals in the contemporary political situations seems to be more and more final. It is significant that Mrs. Sahgal wrote in 'Sunday standard' of November 1969, that if the spirit of the Mahatma survives anywhere 'it is certainly not in India'.

There are but a few reasons as to why we are moving away from the Gandhian way of politics. One of them is the age-old orthodoxy, which stands in contrast with secularism. The second reason could be a wrong kind of rulers, who do not understand the history of the nation, but somehow have entered politics. Mrs. Sahgal holds the opinion that the rulers of the country who do not understand the history of the people go terribly wrong, even grotesque, in judging them. In The Day in Shadow all this ignorance of the rulers is shown boiling down to the fact that the people in power are the wrong kind of people who believe that -

"It was time to throw away sentiment, the weak worn out liberalism of the past, time to bury-Gandhi and write a new page of history".23

Such rulers have understood neither history nor Gandhi. They want to bury Gandhi and at the same time they cannot dispense with him; also. They know very well that -

'no one could capture and hold the masses without it'.

The contradiction is apparent. The people who want to bury Gandhi, still want him here because Gandhi alone can capture the masses and command their votes. This opportunism is expressed by Raj Garg in *The Day in Shadow*. 'The Gandhi image sat farcically on the ruling party'.

The Gandhian critique is more explicitly revealed by Usman in *A Situation in New Delhi*. Usman embraces hostility to overcome it. He has the Gandhian courage to resign and dissociate himself from power and to lead a new revolution, asking those who wish to accompany him to pledge to peaceful action. While violence is born out of despair, Usman's non-violence is born out of strength.

We find the touch of the Gandhian critique in Mira's concept of non-co-operation in *This Time of Morning*. She thinks the movement took the participants by guts and steeled every nerve and fibre of the individual.

24. Ibid. p - 186.
25. Ibid. p - 10.
"It trimmed and toughened you. And while it had finished with you it said, 'Now cry if you dare!
And you didn't. Not because the tears were not there, welling like a flood in your breast, but because you were too proud to shed them".26

Thus everything preached and practised by Gandhiji was 'a baptism of fire' which only the courageous alone could receive.

THE GANDHIAN GOAL OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC REFORMS

In the early morning of a new nation's life, there are many things to be talked about. A new order replaces the old causing disorder, not only in the physical environment but also in the psychological realm. The new way of life calls in doubt the old traditions. The root cause of all the decay in our social life lies in our national character, suffering from a well organised disease called 'post-colonial trauma', from which it might take generations to recover.

Industrialism created a big gap between the rich and the poor.

"A river has flown between the rich and the poor. There is no boat to take the poor to the other bank".²⁷

says Bhabani Bhattacharya. This statement summarises the economic situation in the country after independence.

In From Fear Set Free Mrs. Sahgal writes that Gandhi had shifted the political spotlight from town to village, jolting the town-dweller into an awareness of peasant's existence and plight.²⁸

But after independence the reversal started. The peace and simplicity of peasant life were disturbed. In Nectar in A Sieve the tannery symbolises the relentless growth of materialism, as it swallows the land of the poor tenants. Its growth is stupendous. But the hospital, a benevolent institution, grows with agonising slowness. Nathan and his family were evicted to accommodate a tannery. This is the story of every Indian village. There are other disparities of the castes and classes too.

The history of caste-marks is also as interesting as of the castes in India. People have been divided into many sects due to caste-marks, though they belong to the

²⁸ Sahgal, Nayantara, From Fear Set Free, (Hind Pockets, New Delhi) p-25.
same religion. In the new social order that was emerging under the influence of Gandhiji such things had no place. This old feud between the two sects of Iyengars was resolved to the satisfaction of both by 'the wily old man' Mahatma Gandhi in Nagarajan's *The Chronicles of Kedaram*. He advised to apply the caste-marks of both the sects on the forehead of the temple elephant. It means Gandhiji advised them to live together happily instead of wasting their energy in futile quarrels.

In *Athawar House* K.Nagarajan poses another problem of intercaste marriage of Venkataramani Aiyer, the Tamil Brahmin and Sona the Maharastrian girl of Athawar House. What we see in Venkatramani is the spirit of compromise, which is also the spirit of Nagarajan's ethos. An objection was taken to their marriage because Sona was educated. It means education among women was a taboo and it could be overcome by broad-mindedness. In fact it was a welcome sign to have a girl educated, but the society did not permit it then. Nagarajan seems to attach great value to the evolution of right attitudes required in the changing social order regarding female education and inter-caste marriages.

Bhabani Bhattacharya demonstrates the futility of caste in his novel, *He who Rides a Tiger*. Kalo, the blacksmith, puts on the sacred thread. He knows that he
is breaking an age-old religious tradition, 'putting it on had involved a moral struggle'. The deep psychological anguish of Kalo reveals that he was feeling guilty of doing that act. But when he broke the caste, no thunderbolt fell from heaven. Chandralekha, Kalo's daughter, also feels that whenever her father broke the caste-barrier unharmed, he also exposed the falseness of the notion that castes are ordained by God. But what is significant is that the hold of caste is so strong on the mind of Kalo that by way of breaking the caste-barrier, he was, as if, riding a tiger. 'He could not dismount, lest the tiger pounce upon him and eat him up'.

THE POSITION OF WOMEN

Why Gandhiji talked about the emancipation of women is well reflected in the words of Vishal Dubey in This Time of Morning,

"Whatever woman had had once in India, had been lost in the mist of antiquity. In its place there had been the figures of humanity, neck bent, eyes down cast, living flesh consigned to oblivion".

The changing social order, under the impact of Gandhiji,

30. Ibid - p- 221.
31. Sahgal, Nayantara, This Time of Morning (Orient Paperbacks, New Delhi, 1965) p- 130.
had liberated women from being mere 'cabbages'. This new order was paving a better way of life for women, even in politics.

Sohagi in *A Goddess Named Gold*, speaks in terms of equality with men.

"Gandhiji touched our spirit as if slept. Wakened, we became the equals of our men folk. proud, chins up, we marched in a column of our own across the meadow of Pipli, onward to Kanhan. 'Quit India!' we shouted to the Engrez aliens in one big voice."32

In *Music for Mohini* we find yet another role of women described. Mohini feels that the village-city intermarriage is wrong. But Rooplekha replies,

'It is as though we made a bridge between two banks of a river. We connect culture to culture".33

In *Mohini* herself we find the new spirit of India, 'Don't bow down to the world. You are New India'.34

Obviously it is the Gandhian reaction to male Chauvinism.

34. Ibid. p - 203.
the position of women; some times the woman was even symbolically referred to as the spirit of Mother India.

Religion was not an obsession with Gandhiji. His religion was universal not personal. It is strange to observe that though Gandhiji opposed the caste and the class system, he upheld the Varnashram Dharma or the classification of the Hindu Society. The Varnashrama, according to Gandhiji, was the most scientific stratification of the Hindu Society, on the basis of vocations. He claims that no other ancient or modern society has such a perfect stratification. But later this stratification reached such a low stage that even Gods were classified as Brahmin's Gods, Sudra's Gods etc. Bhattacharya caught this ironical situation here, 'As if Gods are Brahmin by caste.' Gandhiji opposed this madness. He did not want goods growing like independent institutions. Religion to Gandhiji was an ethico-moral question. Therefore he was criticised by the Hindu fanatics. Gandhiji followed the moral content of religion. His prayers had an anointing effect on his perturbed soul. All this is true, but more true was Gandhiji's God, an incarnation of Love and Truth.

35. Ibid. p- 242.
Gandhiji, even in his fall, exemplified some universal Truth. Love and Non-violence are those universal values Gandhiji lived and died for. Without understanding the significance of his life, it is likely that some people might say Gandhiji died a defeated man. It fell to his lot to see his ideals, which he cherished life-long, crumble before his eyes and he could not do anything. Neither could Jesus do anything except praying God to forgive them, because they did not know what they were doing.

Like many other leaders of consequence, Gandhiji was also nearly forgotten for over a quarter of a century. Now that the rat race of materialism he came to a dismal end, there has arisen a dire necessity of understanding Gandhiji better. A question to be asked is why at all such great persons are often misunderstood? It is for two reasons. Either they are far behind their time or are far ahead of their time. Charismatic characters like Gandhiji combine both these characteristics in themselves. This apparent contradiction is the grand antitheses of history. Such characters build their hypothesis on the basis of past traditions, history and beliefs. If history is believed to be a continuous process, such antitheses
do have a solution in history itself. If atrophy of human experience takes place, then the reality appears distorted.

Raj Garg in *The Day in Shadow* comes to the conclusion that Gandhiji did not involve 'enough people deeply or long enough.' In a bravado to prove that the Gandhiji-led-freedom-struggle was not a revolution at all, the Marxist critics of Gandhism say that the freedom struggle was not mass oriented but class oriented. In plain words Gandhiji started this trouble at the behest of a few bourgeois classes. Their interest was commercial than national. If India became free they would have a market for their productions. This is an unsound proposition because it is like reading the Indian history upside down. Gandhiji's struggle was certainly mass-oriented. Every city, village, hamlet even the Adivasis, far away from the present day civilization, also participated in the struggle. The next question they ask is if the freedom struggle was mass oriented why then did revolution not take place? Revolution did not take place because the means used by Gandhiji in the struggle, Non-violence, Non-co-operation etc., were forged out of love and not swords and guns which destroy everything. Secondly, Gandhiji did not want to destroy contemporary social order, which

a revolutionary struggle generally does. Thirdly, Gandhiji
does not bear any enmity towards the British people. He
was against imperialism but not the people who represented
it. So Gandhiji's struggle was more an evolution than a
revolution. Through the length and breadth of this ancient
country, Gandhiji wielded power over three decades. This
is what makes the legend out of the dry stuff of history.
It obviously happened to the people at the time of Christ
and of Gandhiji here.

Non-violence is another ideal wherein Gandhiji has
been grossly misunderstood. The epigraph of Manohar Mal-
gonkar's novel *A Bend in the Ganges* reads,

'This non-violence, therefore, seems to be due
mainly to our helpless. It almost appears as
if we are nursing in our bosom the desire to
take revenge the first time we get an opportunity.'\(^{37}\)

For Shafi, the revolutionary and the freedom fighters like
Debi Dayal and Basu 'Non-violence is the philosophy of
sheep, a creed of cowards.'\(^{38}\) While commenting on this
aspect of the novel G.S. Amur writes -

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37. Malgonkar, Manohar, *A Bend in the Ganges* (Hamish

38. Ibid. p. 19.
"It is, obviously, a part of the novel's strategy to discredit non-violence and to demonstrate its ineffectiveness in the context of a life situation."  

The author has obviously missed the point that Gandhi had stated time and again that the bravest of the brave alone can wield this weapon. The tendency to remain non-violent suits that person, who has the capacity of punishing the wrong doer, when he sins against the principles of peaceful co-existence. It should be noted with care that Gandhi preferred violence to cowardice. He preferred war to cowardly fleeing. Soon after partition, when Pakistanis intruded into Azad Kashmir, Gandhi advised the use of force to force them out. This is not against Ahimsa. Emperor Ashoka, the apostle of non-violence, used violence when the people of Taxila revolted against the revenue collector. Would this example not suffice as an answer to those who question why a non-violent country maintains an army at all?

**THE RELEVANCE OF GANDHIJI**

As the Gandhian values were primarily derived from the holy texts of India, and as they were further influenced by the scriptures of the East and West and also the individual intellect of the best known persons in human

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civilization, they have become relevant, revered and responsible to change the destiny of an individual or a nation, if followed in their true spirit. The failure of these values at a juncture does not reveal their weakness, but the weakness of the human material that handle it. Nayantara Sahgal illustrates this in her novels. Jasbir Jain, in her book on Mrs. Sahgal writes, *"In her personal life Nayantara refused to believe that non-violence was a spent-up force even when she was confronted with the partition of India and its aftermath."*40

When the process of civilization had been so slow, it was unrealistic to imagine that Ahimsa, the approach of love and peace, the final stage of a refining process, could be arrived at so suddenly.

The world in which the Gandhian principles were honoured and the world to which Gandhiji was just a name to both these worlds Mrs. Sahgal was introduced. In *This Time of Morning*, we meet the post-Independence generation, to which freedom is not a dream but a reality. This generation lives beside the one which had suffered to achieve freedom. People like Kalyan Sinha rejected the Gandhian world whereas people like Harimohan and Somnath

adhered to the Gandhian spirit in name but not in reality. But fundamental problems like — the validity of non-violence against violence, material priorities against human values, remain to be answered. Kalyan Sinha, an anti-Gandhian, feels that because of Gandhiji Indians are backward and dominated by the past. Impatient for progress and intolerant of sacrifice, Kalyan Sinha fails to understand that there are other values also like freedom from fear, free and forthright communication and comradeship, which were the 'Oxygen' of understanding Gandhiji. These can save human life from stifling violence social, political and personal. These have no place in Kalyan Sinha's value system.

On the other hand Kailas belonged to the generation which succumbed to the magic of Gandhiji. The fire, the dedication and the singlemindedness of the man in the loin cloth had attracted him.

"A singularly fortunate generation, Kailas felt, for whom ideals and actions had been happily wedded, and the goal achieved". 41

In this way there are two sets of characters in Mrs. Sahgal's novels. The first is highly materialistic, which does not pay any heed to the values and the Gandhian ways of non-

41. Sahgal, Nayantara, This Time of Morning (Orient Paperbacks, New Delhi, 1965) p-15.
violence, truth and change of heart etc., and the others who were Gandhian in principle. Persons like Kalyan Sinha, Sumersing and Harpal are the social climbers, morally corrupt and an insensitive elite-class. Therefore Kailas Vrind says,

"What we have to-day is not government. It is a police regime to maintain law and order. Government will begin when this man and that one and that...arouse some concern and are given a chance to live like human beings". 42

The people at the helm of affairs are alien to the situations in this country. Rootless as they are in themselves, they fail to evoke genuine concern between people and people. This alienation and estrangement between the rulers and the ruled is the major concern of Mrs. Sahgal.

Rulers may not be omniscient, but they are expected to know the history of the land over which they are ruling. They should understand the people, their problems, their mind, their capacity to act and react to certain national situations. Calling Gandhiji a stumbling block in the rapid progress of nation does not add to any body's grace, unless it is proved historically. Kalyan Sinha feels that the Mahatma had emasculated the country.

42. Ibid - pp - 42 - 43.
There would have been a revolution like any other if not with guns, then with sticks and stones, teeth and nails and there would not have been anomalies to contend with to-day, this oil-and-water regime that could commend no singleness or unity of purpose."43

The people who contend that it was wrong on the part of Gandhiji to oppose revolution, appear to be ignorant of the processes of revolution. Revolution is not a street quarrel that can be started with bricks and stones. Revolution takes place out of man's intolerance to corruption, exploitation and erosion of human values. It is not always the swords and guns but ideologies, preachings and practices also cause revolution. The gross misunderstanding of Indian history, makes Kalyan Sinha speak this hotch-potch Marxian assumption, that there could have been revolution with bricks and stones. In The Day in Shadow, Raj speaks about the link between the people and history and the unique situation which leads to revolution. There are rare times, when ordinary men get linked with big events of history, under the leadership of a great man. The intimate and the personal affairs, get mixed with the stupendous upheaval of history. What happens without also happens within. Then every man says 'I was there.'

43. Ibid, p-133.
It happened to me. This is the takeoff point of revolution. This 'Thus far and no farther' attitude came to the Indians under Gandhi. The same had happened to the people under Jesus. He too did not use swords, stones and bricks but a revolution did take place.

In *Storm in Chandigarth* we find bewilderment on the part of the people and the ministers, for having retreated from the Gandhian path. This retreat was filtered down into the personal life of Saroj and Inder and the confrontation between the two chief ministers of Punjab and Haryana, Gyansing and Harpal respectively. The question involved is, should the weak always bow down to the strong or the oppressor, or should he claim his right to live? Nayantara Sahgal bears out the message for her readers that one should take a firm stand courageously against injustice and tyranny. This is the meaning of non-violence and the post-Independence generation is expected to learn this all over again. The retreat from Gandhism seems to be in full effect in *The Day in Shadow*. The official policy of India is inclined towards the Soviet nation, indifferent to the country's future interest. The new breed of politicians are an unscrupulous lot, represented by Sumer Singh, who live in a narrow, closed world, indifferent to human feelings. Gandhian politics meant open decision and open action.
Gandhian values have not outlived their utility. In fact they are of greater relevance in the present context. Mrs. Sahgal thinks that non-violence is an active and powerful force. It may have been used ineffectively on some occasions, like the misuse of fast, but still it remains a potent force if used in an organised way.

Socialism through trusteeship is Gandhiji's contribution to Independent India. The elite-class is the real danger to the type of socio-economic order Gandhiji desired to usher in. If this class is made to see reason, then the goal of building an Indian society as a classless and casteless society will be possible. Sarvodaya through trusteeship is the way to achieve this. It is this Gandhian alternative that now needs serious consideration at the hands of the world, which is desperately seeking a new world order based on justice and equality. The essence of that alternative will be Truth and Non-violence, love in place of hate, service in place of self and conformity by moral conviction in place conformity by physical coercion.

India to-day stands on the threshold. Either it goes down the road to elitism, industrialism, consumerism and inevitably towards cultural dualism or it goes on the Gandhian line of equity, austerity, justice and
service, which are the essential traits of a new civilized society. In the forthcoming Chapter some conclusions have been arrived at to visualise the type of society Gandhiji wanted to usher in and the role of Gandhian myth in visualising the society.