INTRODUCTION

MYTH

The word 'Myth' has often suffered a wrong connotation. In general parlance it means something false, fictitious and far removed from reality, and history. However, with the advent of psycho-analytical approaches to criticism a fresh evaluation of the concept of myth has also been possible. Myth, to-day, need not be a blatant tale of some fictitious character in some fictitious past; it could be a memory of the past told in a fictitious way. As Theodor Reik says, myth is 'not a story told as history but history told as story.'¹

Fall Myth, for the ancient Hebrews, was not a story but history. In other words it is a narrative of a real experience in the past. What we call myth to-day is not an imaginary tale but a real life experience of the primordial society.

Ira Fragoff writes: "Myths are held to be the direct expressions of the collective unconscious. They are factual tales produced, treasured and controlled by a collective working, thinking of the religious community."² Thus myths are the treasure houses of our

recorded values in the past.

C.G. Jung says "The collective unconscious is the matrix of myth." The collective unconscious is a large, amorphous, creative area deep within the person wherein dwell our repressed and forgotten contents. These contents are called 'collective' because they are not personal acquisitions but cultural.

The collective unconscious contains certain common motifs and instincts. They are evoked under the stress of creative endeavour. These contents, motifs and instincts of the collective unconscious try to reach the personal unconscious, which is concerned with our personal day to day life. While resurrecting, they assume the shape of universal images. They become archetypes.

The instinct that Right becomes victorious and Wrong gets defeated, is always present in our collective unconscious. Such instincts, under the stress of circumstance, gathering some quantum of psychic energy to justify great physical and mental prowess, reach the personal unconscious. These archetypes are given some names like Rama and Ravana. Its functioning and impact

3. C.G. Jung, Collected Works Vol. VII.
(New York, 1953) P. 339.
is too well known to need special mention. This analogy can be extended to any mythical character, fighting the inner duel of right and wrong, kindness and cruelty and so on. Great personalities like Martin Luther King, Mohandas Gandhi and Mother Theresa come in the same range, but in due course of time, assume symbolic expressions of the inner unconscious drama of the psyche, which becomes accessible to man's personal consciousness by way of projection that is mirrored in the lives of such individuals. The activities of such persons certainly have a deeper layer of meaning other than the obvious. This could be ascertained by the behaviour of the primitive society. The primitive man is not interested in the objective explanation of the obvious, but he has an imperative need to assimilate all outer sense experiences to inner psychic events. It is not enough for a primitive man to see the sunrise or sunset. These external observations must, at the same time, be a psychic happening. The sunrise, in its course, must represent the fate of God or a hero, who in the last analysis dwells no where except in the soul of man.

So, myth is a reality, it is a body of belief expressed through some archetype. Gandhiji was not only an individual he was an archetype, a symbol of truth and non-violence. This belief of the followers
make Gandhiji a myth. All great personalities have been mythicised in this way. The personal consciousness or empirical psyche of an average man is dominated by the collective unconscious of the great. Thus all great men have dual personalities, the mythic personality being more powerful than the historical or biological personality.

**MYTH AND HISTORY:**

History relates to the obvious and myth relates to the unconscious. The Great personalities like the Buddha, Christ, Gandhi etc., assimilate both the types in themselves. Therefore they have dual personalities, one historical, the other mythic. Thus the historical Christ is different from the mythicised Christ. The historical Gautum was like any other Indian prince, but the mythical character of the Buddha matters more to humanity. In the same way Mohandas Gandhi was a biological phenomenon in human form, but Mahatma Gandhi who was the very embodiment of Truth, Non-violence and other noble qualities, who swayed the Indian heart and mind for many years reminding one of the Gita's saying:

"भैरवायाम् मुझ मुझे। "[4] (I take birth age after age).

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Such persons have a power and energy of their own. They move and speak, they perceive and have purpose, they fascinate us and drive us to action, which is sometimes, against our will. They inspire both creation and destruction, a work of art or an outburst of mob frenzy. They are like a hidden treasure of energy upon which mankind ever and anon has drawn and from which it has raised its Gods and demons.

The dual personality of a mythic character springs from the dialectic of "the Hegelian logic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis." Claude Levi-stress, in this statement says that the structure of myth is a dialectic, which means a logical statement of oppositions, and when restated, become clear and give rise to another kind of opposition. This antithesis gives rise to the dual personality. The historical personality is the outcome of the personal unconscious and the mythical personality is the product of the collective unconscious. So there are two Christs, two Gandhis and two Caesars and so on.

The mythical Christ is more important to us than the historical Jesus Christ. There are many

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decisive reasons why one should put the mythical figure of Christ in the foreground to which the events in Palestine serve only as relief.

It was essential to show that at the bottom of that myth there was some historical or rather pre-historical truth. It is not important whether a reconstructed reality existed a few thousand years earlier or later, whether in Africa, America or India. On the same ground the mythical Adam is more important to us than the potentially real human being, who might have committed parricide. The more we learn about and understand the times and works of the historical Christ the more He seems to be just one Jewish prophet, a teacher among others. The more we think of Him as a mythical figure, the more He gains an almost unique figure. The historical Jesus, viewed as a representative of his nation and men, seems to shrink. The mythical Christ grows to a gigantic form and reaches to heaven.

This is true of Gandhiji also. The historical Gandhi is a London trained Indian barrister, who led the freedom struggle of his country. But the Mahatma, with his unique weapons like Ahimsa, Non-co-operation, Truth, Love etc., transforms himself into a Saviour Myth. The hero or saviour myth represents a model of...
the accomplisher of the way, who is a pioneer of salvation, opening the path for others. Such examples of warrior heroes like Rama in India or more peaceful figures like Jesus are many in history. Albert Schweitzer, Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King have been widely regarded as the heroes of the twentieth century.

THE GANDHIAN MYTH:

The Gandhian myth is an instinctual process of creating the Mahatma out of the dry stuff of history. The myth making process displays a culture-specific and shared-semantic system, which enables the members of a culture-area to understand each other and to cope with the unknown. It is necessary to understand the 'Semantics' of the Gandhian myth in order to interpret it correctly. The Semantics in the myth are 'nation', 'national consciousness', 'Mother India', 'Ahimsa', 'Satyagraha' and so on. People in colonial India were ignorant of secular political institutions, new political roles and political vocabulary. For collective uprising they needed the Semantics of a New Apocalypse. People then were not 'individuals' with mature personalities fit for revolt. They were only role-fixed persons of a traditional society where the new Semantics had no meaning. Gandhiji gave meaning to this no-meaning-collectively.
Gandhiji became a myth not by himself or in himself but in the mind of the people. This unconscious mind of the masses is the fertile ground for the creation of the Gandhian myth. While commenting on the situation of how the unconscious mind of the illiterate Narasiga immediately responds to Gandhi's fight with the red man, C.V. Venugopal writes in *The Indian Short Story in English*:

"And to him, Gandhiji, determined to free the mother from the clutches of the red man, attains divine height."

In this way the Gandhian myth is formed. Under Gandhiji the first political act of the Indians became a self-discovering, self-forming and self-fulfilling act. The mythicising process of Gandhiji was to build the national consciousness in the Indian mind, while doing so he was greatly influenced by Thoreau in American Renaissance, Ruskin for industrial exploitation and Tolstoy's sublimation of romanticized peasant life. Therefore the Gandhian myth is a process to breathe awareness in the mind of a culture-specific people and to provide them with the 'Semantics' and 'New Apocalypse' so that they can discover each other and relate themselves with the past.

How the Gandhian myth operated on the Indian mind is an interesting thing to know. The archetypes like 'Divine Father', "Earth mother", 'world-Tree', 'God in disguise', 'Cultural Hero' are universal and ageless. Under the stress of circumstances these archetypes assume human shapes of Rama, Krishna, Bharatmata and so on, depending on the cultural context. These personalities play on the popular emotional strands of the people. These figures wield the charismatic power over their followers. People believe that such personalities are capable of redeeming the golden past. It happened in the case of Gandhiji also. Gandhiji was identified with the cultural hero or the saviour hero in Indian mythology. Here the myth operates as a body of belief within which the society can find its orientation.

Many Indian writers have used this Gandhian myth in their writings because Gandhiji set the hearts and minds of Indians afire. Not only that but eminent writers like K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar named a particular period in Indian literary history as the 'Gandhian Age' and Dr. M.K. Naik calls the strong influence of Gandhiji 'The Gandhian whirlwind'. Thus the Gandhian myth renders a vision of life in which the vivacity and spontaneity of imagination give an added intensity to the literary experience.
Gandhiji with his selfless service to humanity endeared himself so much to the world populace that after his assassination, as Shakuntala Raina says, "The flags of all nations were spontaneously ordered to be flown at half mast, though he was only a private individual and no head of state ".

Whatever the Critics may say, for an impartial observer here is something new, something revolutionary, which if it can be repeated and contended, holds the seeds of future possibility of moralizing and humanizing international political relations. For Indians he was a patron-saint whom we could pray 'Lead kindly light, amidst the encircling gloom.'


the mythical Gandhiji, who possesses a charismatic power. Charisma is not a set of qualities but a relationship between the leader and his followers. This mythical character who is at once a liberator and fighter, sets afire the imagination of the writers. His great exploits, his life, even his words become a source of creative endeavours. Many Indian English novelists have been fascinated by the mythical personality of the Mahatma and have brought it into their novels for their fictional exercise. Gandhi here is distinctly different from what one sees in the umpteen historical accounts of the great man.

It would be interesting to know why at all the mythicised Gandhiji is given more importance than the historical Gandhi. It was because at the bottom of that myth, there exists some historical or prehistorical truth. The personality of Gandhiji becomes an embodiment of that truth. Hence the mythicised Gandhi becomes more important and that is why he becomes the subject matter of creative writing. Sometimes he is identified with the Saviour hero like Rama or Krishna and sometimes with a religious teacher like the Buddha, and so on. The writers who write with the history of their country in their bones were directly concerned with the immediate problems like political oppression, the economic
sufferance. They found a Saviour hero in Gandhiji and adored him.

Some writers compared him to Lord Krishna who killed the Serpent Kalia and Liberated the people. Writers like Raja Rao in Kanthapura expressed this situation through the Gandhian myth. Leaders and heroes are mythicised out of sheer expectancy that the particular leader would free them from their sufferings. They praise him. They raise him very high. If it is not done people cannot follow a leader. The followers must be confident that their leader has some extraordinary power.

Some critics might object that the mythicised Gandhi has been described in very glowing colours in some novels and that, not being an objective assessment of Gandhiji, cannot be treated as art. Myth itself is an art form. Myth has been the great source of classical literature. If a nation loses its myth-consciousness, that would be a great loss not only to its literature but to its culture. Man cannot live in a cultural vacuum; he needs myth which relates him to his country's past. Twentieth-century persons like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and so on stood for certain lasting values like Truth, Love, Non-violence, and Satyagraha.
So they have been mythicised. Loss of myth-making capability is a great loss in the field of literature. By and large the Indian writers in English have not fully explored the Indian myth in their creative writings. India, probably, is one of the last civilizations that continues to sustain the pagan world-view. Myth feeds and nourishes the pagan world-view. Myth holds communities together and assigns new meanings to life. Absence of Myth is a dangerous deficiency the modern Indian literature suffers from. P. Lal in his article 'Myth and Indian Writing in English' says:

"The majority of the writers in the Indian Languages to-day seem to have reached this dead end. Many of the Indian writers in English feel that the composite serum of Sigmund Freud, D.H. Lawrence, Jean Paul-Sartre, Saren Kierkgard and Che-guevara will, if injected in strong dose, revive a moribund literature. Absurd. It is only when the revival of one's own myth-value takes place." 9.

Certain writers like Manohar Malgonkar pull down Gandhiji from his mythical stature. Some writers of fiction praise him for his saintliness and moral

9. Lal P. 'Myth and The Indian Writers in English' in Aspects of Indian Writing in English Ed. M.V. Naik (Dharwad, 1975) P. 122.
uprightness, whereas some others blame him for the same reasons. Gandhiji's militant non-violence appears to Malgonkar the 'Philosophy of sheep and the creed of cowards'. This misapprehension of Gandhiji's philosophy is due to two reasons. A lack of understanding of history and secondly, a lack of apprehension of the mythical personality. As Mrs. Sahagal wrote in her letter to Jasbir Jain dated 19th November, 1976, "The rulers who do not understand our history go terribly wrong and even grotesque in judgement and action."

This is applicable to the writers also. Malgonkar (in the portrait of Debajyalin Send in the Ganges) fails to notice the power and potential of Ahimsa due to some bias. Gandhiji does not advise anyone to run away from the battle field. He preferred violence to cowardly fleeing. Though Gandhiji was an apostle of Ahimsa, he advised Nehru to use violence to drive out the intruders in the Kashmir Valley, soon after the partition of the country. This being the reality how can it be said that Gandhiji's Ahimsa makes Indians sitting ducks. Ahimsa was not an effort to emasculate people but to oppose war-mongering.

Secondly, Malgonkar seems to be confused due to a contradiction in the words and deeds of Gandhiji
regarding Ahimsa. He strictly prohibits violence, but on the other hand he allows it too. Such antithesis, no doubt, would puzzle any one. But it should be recalled that there is a third stage called synthesis, beyond the first two stages of thesis and antithesis, in the lives of a mythical character. Out of the clash of the first two a new synthesis, a new reality springs, which represents a full dialectic growth of a mythical character. What appears to be contradiction in such characters in fact is an attempt to resolve the contradiction and to arrive at a new reality. Writers, who fail to understand this, misjudge a mythical character.

**INDIA NEEDS GANDHI:**

In the distraught and distracted world of to-day India needs Gandhiji again because all the non-Gandhian models have failed to restore peace and prosperity. Gandhiji has to play a special role to achieve world peace. Gandhiji's teachings were the teachings of love, Truth and Ahimsa. These are ever fresh cardinal principles. The need of these principles is all the more to-day, especially to India. And the Mahatma is needed to initiate them.

It is not necessary to accept Gandhiji blindly. He too did not want it, Gandhiji's teaching was not a
closed dogma. His life was a play on the open stage with nothing to hide. But the essential Gandhiji cannot be compromised with because it is based on eternal truth. His other concepts like industrialism etc., could be given a second thought to suit the present situation. It is necessary because the thinkers of all the ages have left the need of rethinking of their values. To transvaluate values means to talk to the great dead and to seek their opinion. We must sense their original psychological state and put questions in good humour. After receiving pure vibrations of their thought, we must confidently strike at reality.

This thesis is an attempt to compare and contrast the two Gandhis, by placing the historical Gandhi and mythicized Gandhiji side by side. In the process of imaginative recreation some of the Indian English novelists have raised Gandhiji to the status of a messiah. The purpose of this study is to understand how Gandhiji is mythicized and what purpose does this mythologized Mahatma Gandhi serve. This Mahatma Gandhi gives birth to some ideology, cuts new patterns of life and discovers new scales of values. The historical Gandhi acts and the mythical Gandhi
interprets those actions with reference to the society. In the subsequent chapters an attempt is made to show the interaction of these two Gandhis on each other and how the mythicized Gandhi links the nation's past with its present.