CHAPTER - II
BIRTH OF A NATION
PART - I

COLONIAL INDIA:

As early as 1884, Sir John Strachey, I.C.S., in a lecture at the Cambridge University remarked,

"This is the first and the most essential thing to learn about India that there is not and never was an India; that men of Bombay, Punjab, Bengal and Madras never feel that they belong to any great Indian nation".¹

The feeling of oneness does not come to the Colonial people. It comes to the people who have enjoyed solitude in a nation.

Nations are built in solitude. Until the middle of 19th C. India rarely had the solitude to become a nation. It was a colony of the British Empire. In the political sense a colony is either (a) a settlement of the subject of a state beyond its frontiers or (b) a territorial unit, geographically separated from a state, but owing allegiance to it in some specific and tangible way. It is defined thus:

¹ Mehrotra S.R. Towards India's Freedom and Partition (Vikas, New Delhi, 1979), P.133.
Colonialism is the establishment and maintenance, for an extended time, of a rule, over an alien people, that is separate from and subordinate to the ruling power.

Colonialism passes through three stages, the mercantile stage, the stage of free trade and finally the stage of decolonisation. All the forces opposing colonialism and sapping its vitality grew in strength in the inter war years i.e. between the two world-wars. The success of the Russian Revolution inspired a world wide net work of agitation against imperialism. The possession of colonies, so far a matter of pride and privilege, now became a sin. The first world war exposed the inner rottenness, the bankruptcy of the old colonial system. This exposure had its effects on the popular sentiments in India. The wrong notion of inevitability of the British Power over colonies was shattered, but the racial pride of Saxon-superiority still held on. Churchill declared that he had not become His Majesty's First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire. However, the first labour Prime Minister Attlee recognised the right of India to be free. This expedited the end of colonial era in India.

2. International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences
Vol. III. P-1.
INDIA: A CLASSIC COLONY

M.A. Darling, an I.C.S. officer, said,

"The most arresting fact about India is that her soil is rich and her people poor."  

How can one explain this paradox of extreme poverty amidst plenty, the arresting economy, the stunted economic growth after two centuries of rule by the most technically advanced and highly developed industrial power? It is this failure to develop the productive resources of India that finally sounded the death-knell to the British Empire in our country.

India had been conquered formerly many a time, but these conquests were for a change of political regime only. These conquests did not affect the basic economic structure of the country. This stubborn survival of the economic structure of the pre-British society was due to the fact, that none of the invaders introduced a new mode of production higher than the feudal mode, on which the Indian economy was based. But Britain had already overcome feudal economy and integrated itself into a modern nation.

3. Dutt R. Palme, quoted in India To-day (MacMillon, Bombay, 1949) P-21.
The significant question then is, why was there no development in India when it was ruled over for two centuries by the then most industrialised country? The backward aspects of British India's economy and society were not the leftovers from the rich feast of past history, but they were the well-structured part of a modern economy. As Bipinchandra says:

"The basic fact is that the same social, political and economic process that produced industrial development and social and cultural progress in Britain, the metropolis, also produced and then maintained economic underdevelopment and social and cultural backwardness in India."4

Thus the colonisation relations were primarily economic.

The autarchic nature of the Indian villages were destroyed by the masters, and the millions of trained artisans and craftsmen, spinners, weavers, potters, tanners, smelters and smiths, crowded themselves into agriculture. In this way India was transformed from being a country of combined agriculture and manufacture into an agricultural colony of the British. India was further impoverished, as R. Palme Dutt writes -

"1) by the Company's colossal direct plunder, 
2) by the neglect of irrigation and public works, 
3) by the introduction of British land system, and 
4) by the direct prohibition or heavy duties 
on the imports of the Indian manufacturers".

THE RISE OF NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS:

There could not evolve national consciousness under such conditions of exploitation. National consciousness is a specific kind of group consciousness or group solidarity, which constitutes a bond between the members of the group, in regard to the pursuit of certain aims. Therefore, national consciousness is believed to be constituted of (a) a collective mentality (b) human groups actuated by tradition, interests and ideas, (c) certain national aspirations like religious and cultural unity, freedom from un-national concepts, originality and individuality, a national language and a striving for honour and distinction.

John Strachey remarked that India was never a nation. But no less an eminent historian than V.A. Smith wrote that despite many diversities, subjections and backwardness, India was a nation:

"India, beyond all doubts, possesses a deep underlying fundamental unity.....this unity transcends the innumerable diversities of blood, colour language, dress, manners and sect".  

This unity in diversity, is the bedrock of India's cultural life. Gandhiji prevailed upon these norms of Indian life and gathered all the Indian people, at least for sometime, around him.

Indians, who received Western education and whose minds were nurtured on the writings of Milton, J.S. Mill and Mazzini, who read about the American war of Independence and the French Revolution, could not but cherish aspirations for the ultimate emergence of an independent and united India.

**BIRTH OF A NATION;**

"When in the course of human history, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds, which have connected them with another and to assume among other powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's god entitle them".  


This declaration of American Independence points out that colonial people aspire for freedom because it is the law of nature and of nature's God. Indians naturally wanted freedom because congenital and willing slaves are a rare phenomenon. Due to the devaluation of human being, the sense of living together and to be proud of belonging to a specific culture, race, group, territory and language was lacking among the Indians then. National consciousness does not develop among such people. J.S. Mill rightly describes a nation as follows:

"If people are united among themselves by common sympathies, which do not exist between them and any other people, to desire to be under the same government, and to desire that it should be government by themselves or a portion of themselves". 7A

All this is to say nothing more than that as a result of a multitude of historical, political, economic and social forces, a sentiment of unity grows within groups of people, which expresses itself in devotion to what is called a nation. In other words, by the word nationalism, a sentiment unifying a group... 7A. Mill J.S. Quoted by Dutt R.Palme in India To-day. P.9.
of people, who have common history and aspirations to live together as a separate group is indicated.

There is another argument advanced by the imperialists that if there is an Indian nation, the credit should go to the British, who built up India into a nation, and not to Gandhiji, who is called the Father of the nation. This is too tall a claim. The democratic evolution of the modern age, which developed in many lands, including England, is not the peculiar patent of the British people. The American Declaration of Independence, the French Revolution with its gospel of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, the Russian revolution in 1917, have all contributed to the birth of the Indian nation. More important than all these is the struggle of the native Indians, through an organisation called the Indian National Congress, under the shrewd stewardship of Mahatma Gandhi. The Indian National Movement sprang from the conditions of imperialism and its system of exploitation. Finally, the rise of the Indian bourgeois class and its growing competition against the dominion of the British bourgeoisie is also responsible. Gandhiji declared that to attain Swaraj by peaceful and legitimate means was his aim because it was a crime against man and God to submit any longer to the imperial powers. Thus the Indian nation in the real sense was born.
The Indian National Congress became instrumental in rousing national consciousness in the hearts of the Indians. The National Congress was brought into being under the guidance of the British Polity. It was a secret plan, pre-arranged, as an intended safety valve, safeguarding the British rule against the rising forces of popular unrest in India.

The formation of the Indian National Congress was a hesitant but an organised effort towards national movement. Another important thing this institution did to the country was that it provided a common platform, at least in the beginning, for the people of all castes, languages and regionalities. The first few years passed without much heat being generated and thus the imperialist plan was successful to some extent.

In the second stage, progressive non-violent non-co-operation was launched by Mahatma Gandhi. G.K. Gokhale invited Gandhiji from South Africa because he knew that Gandhiji alone, of all the Indian leaders, had mass appeal. At this stage of agitational politics, Gandhiji was the Archangel of the congress.
Gandhi the prophet, by his personal saintliness and selflessness, could unlock the doors of the hearts of the masses, where the moderate bourgeois leaders could not hope for an entrance. This Jonah of revolution; this general of unbroken disasters, was the mascot of the Indians in each wave of the national struggle. The struggle would continue until the said wrongs were righted and Swaraj established. On 26th January 1930, the first Independence Day was celebrated throughout the country, at which a pledge to struggle for complete independence was read out. It is "a crime against man and God to submit any longer" was the general feeling created by the congress among all Indians. Before Gandhiji came, the congress was an elite organisation, but it was Gandhiji who turned the attention of this organisation towards rural India. Thus, congress became the real representative political organisation of our country.

FORMATION OF THE GANDHIAN MYTH:

How does one explain the phenomenal success of a London trained Indian barrister, who is acclaimed by his devotees and admirers as the greatest Indian after the Buddha and "perhaps the greatest figure in human
history after Julius Caesar and Jesus Christ? He was not a great commander like Napoleon or Alexander, not a politician occupying great positions like Chancellor Bismark or Gladstone, not an academic philosopher like Kant or Shankar. Nevertheless, he was a great man. M.K. Naik summarises the Gandhian impact on the Indian Society before Independence thus:

"He was no erudite scholar, by no means an original thinker with a razor sharp mind, nor a brilliant theoretician. But solidly grounded in the ancient tradition, he possessed a profound moral earnestness, which enabled him to rediscover the ethical values of this tradition, and with his convictions supported by similar trends in ancient and modern Western thought, he boldly applied his findings to the political and social realities of colonial India".

It can be said that there were two roots of Gandhi's great leadership; his devoted character as a giant or the prophet or the Mahatma, the second was his selfless dedication to the cause of uplifting and emancipating the Indian masses. Gandhiji had the noble

attributes of a teacher and a prophet of mankind. Therefore Romain Rolland called him 'the saint Paul of our times'.

The true revolutionaries in human history are not the dictators and warriors but great teachers, philosophers and scientists, who cause evolutions in the society by the accumulated impact of their teachings. Hence it can be said that the real revolutionaries were not Philip of Macedon but Plato, not Caesar but Cicero, not Clarendon but Newton, not Hitler but Gandhi.

Gandhiji was an inspired soul and a man of deep love and faith. In a distracted world, his deathless spirit symbolizes his quest for moral redemption and the liberation of moral power. For ages he will be remembered and reckoned as the prophet of the Divine Kingdom of truth, love and peace. He was a wise man, who may be regarded to have heralded the dawn of a spiritual epoch in human history.

Gandhiji embodied the best qualities of the mythological heroes in the past, celibacy of Rama,

statesmanship of Vidur, Ahimsa of Buddha and love and tolerance of Christ. Gandhiji was a living myth. Therefore, C.D. Narasimhaih writes that the Gandhian myth 'Unites our age with the mythical and legendary past of India'.

THE NEW APOCALYPSE OF A MYTHICAL CHARACTER:

Great religious teachers, heroes, and political leaders are believed to have Charismatic power, on the strength of which they change the course of history. Such persons first formulate certain policies and slogans and then command public support by way of floating these slogans among the people. Such catch words or phrases are legitimations, grounded in a relationship of loyalty and identification with which the leadership is followed. Men follow him because he is able to magnetize them. He evokes or plays upon some strands of intellectual and emotional predispositions. He also professes to offer the realization of certain values in action.

Every mythical character floats certain apocalypses in order to create political, religious or national consciousness among the masses. Apocalypse is a revelation or a vision, predicting the future shape of events, by means of symbolism, to the faithful followers. It is a new idiom with peculiar semantic characteristics. When such apocalypses are floated, people gather round them, inhale them and act upon them. Such apocalypses galvanize the inert community. Gandhiji, as the leader of the masses, knew it instinctively. His war cries 'Quit India' and 'Non co-operation' and so on were such slogans. These slogans are a 'Schema' built by such mythical characters in the subconscious mind of the people.

In a colonial state, people are unaware of secular political institutions like democracy, freedom etc. They are not 'individuals' with mature personalities, fit for political uprising. They are only role-fixed individuals of the traditional society, in which concepts like 'freedom' 'nation', 'democracy' have little meaning. With his mythic personality and such revelations, the leader promises to fulfil the needs of the people. Gandhiji opened up big possibilities and immense scope for the new meaningful activities to the 'no-meaning-collectivity'. People rally round such
slogans and are prepared to die in their fulfilment. Gandhi was not a cog in the wheel of history as the Marxist critics would call him, but a messiah who used his apocalypses as lubricants to render speed and direction to the wheel of history.

The second part of this chapter attempts to show how the historical Gandhi has been mythicized by the Indian English novelists.
India suffered under the colonial government, as the rulers cared little for an overall development of the country. Colonialism has always been resented for its anti-human attitudes. The forces against colonialism began to have their sway between the two world wars. As a result the will to maintain colonies steadily declined.

The literature dealing with colonialism is wide ranging and diverse and reflects the changing nature of the colonial problems. In India colonial literature is of variegated nature: of social reforms, of cultural emancipation, of western education, of rapid means of communication, of economic pursuit and of divide and rule policy of the British. Most of all, the economic exploitation by the British rulers is often reflected in the Indian English novels. In his novel Ingilab, K.A. Abbas explains this point through the hero Anwar.

"The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom, but has based itself on the exploitation of
the masses, and has ruined India, economically, politically, culturally and spiritually."\(^11\)

India had been destroyed. Customs and Currency had been so manipulated as to heap further burden on the peasantry. Politically, India's status had never been so reduced as during the British regime. Culturally, the system of education had torn us from our moorings and our training has made us hug the very chains that bound us. This situation again has been emphasised by K.A. Abbas,

"Tell me Mahatma Gandhi... what is the basis of your grievance against the British?" the Mahatma continued to ply his wheel as he answered. In one word exploitation. They are sucking the life-blood of India."\(^12\)

Many Indians accepted the British rule as a boon from heaven. This servitude on the part of the Indians is echoed in many novels. Such people not only accepted the alien rule, but took pride in being the slaves of it. In a bravado of proving their loyalty to the crown, they did not hesitate to open fire on


\(^{12}\) Ibid, P-261.
Indian men, women and children, their own kith and kin. They beat mercilessly even the female folk. Eulogy of the crown was considered a privilege of the Indian servants of the British Raj. In Bhabani Bhattacharya's *A Goddess Named Gold*, Hoosiarsing, the constable, threatens the women, who take out a procession,

"Women, the lion will roar over India, as the Sun rises and the Moon sets and even the Stars twinkle."

One can understand Hoosiarsing because he was a servant of Imperialism, but what about the people like Lala Kanshi Ram in *Azadi*, an independent businessman, whose attitude was no different?

"All said and done, the British had brought some kind of peace to this tornland.... and the British had somehow made a nation of us."

This is the class of people who carried on their business with the help of local English authorities. They felt that the national movement might drive the British out and their livelihood would be in danger. This was a typical bourgeois mentality.


There were others, who took a sensible view of the Raj for lesser or higher gains, like Ronu and Lalith Chatterjee, Harilal Mathur, Harish and the social climbers like Vir Das in Mrs. Sahgal's *A Time to be Happy*. Gobind Narayan, a traditionalist, stands outside the Gandhian movement to say,

"... to be lived, daughters married and sons established in good jobs. These goals could best be achieved by taking a sensible view of the situation, accepting the Raj and using it to one's advantage."  

A passive acquiescence developed among some classes of people to such an extent that they offered themselves very religiously to their masters. This mental slavery was due to the superior political and social status of the English people. The Indians were so much unnerved, that they had no courage to 'hit back' even when insulted. Manohar Malgonkar presents, in his *Combat of Shadows*, such a picture in Mr. Sarkar.

"He was the ideal Indian Subordinate, the kind of man totally incapable of thinking in terms of hitting back - in the last analysis - the kind of man on whom the business of the empire rested"  


M.K. Naik also has written about this slavish colonial acquiescence in his article, "Commonwealth novel in English."

"In fact All about H. Hatterr is probably the most complete exploration of colonial experience in Indo-English fiction. Employing the strategies of symbolism and realism in ascending order one would see Hatterr's dog Jenkins and end with Hatterr, the cultural underdog himself."17

In Jenkins, Desani seems to symbolize a primary and a degrading aspect of the colonial experience. The relation between the dog and its master, is a stock pattern in a typical colonial situation, involving an alien master and his low class native subject. This dog has no separate name but it is called after its previous master. Hatterr describes his dog:

"How many times he had bolted like hell, his tail half mast frightened by a rat?.... any little cackling from the hens could make him to eat his heart out 'they have made it that master, they have done that to me again."18

Nath C. Bannerji is a typical middle-class colonial cast in a different mould. Nath Chandidas Bannerji loves England so much that he declares,

"I often wish I could change my maiden name from Nath to Noel."\(^{19}\). Again he said

"I do not belong to backward India."\(^{20}\)

He goes to the extent of telling Hatterr that he was the member of the 'tail waggers and chum club of England'.\(^{21}\)

Although the passive acquiescence stretched over a long period, as colonialism advanced, it also stimulated nationalist agitation. Colonialism has been the primary channel through which the material, spiritual, social and cultural forces have galvanised the native people and produced leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, to wash away the past sins and breathe a new life into the colonial people. India, with Mahatma Gandhi at the helm, strived successfully for the birth of the Indian nation.

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21. Ibid. P - 231.
INDIA A CLASSIC COLONY:

It is said that the most arresting fact about India was that her soil was rich but her people were poor. It is difficult to explain this paradox of British India, its extreme poverty amidst plenty, its arrested economy and stunted growth.

The basic problem of India was the problem of four hundred million human beings, living under conditions of extreme poverty and semi-starvation. In pre-British India, an Indian village was a little republic, self-sufficient and self dependent. A self sufficient village carried on its agriculture with the primitive plough and its handicrafts by means of simple instruments. This conservative, unchanging and autarchic village survived all the military, political and religious upheavals. But the British conquest of India was of a different type. It was the rule of the people, who had already overcome the feudal economy and integrated themselves into a modern nation. The developmental process, which made England one of the most advanced countries, also made India a backward country.

Consequently, by the end of the 19th Century, India was transformed into a classic colony. India was a classic colony because it was the largest and the
longest dominated colony of the world. As R. Palme Dutt writes, "India in 1938 had more than half of total colonial population of the world;" Though its soil was very rich its people were very poor. For these reasons India was called a classic colony. It was a major market for the British manufacturers and a big source of raw materials and food stuffs. Its agriculture was highly taxed. India provided employment for the thousands of middle class English people and according to R. Palme Dutt.

"India contributed 1/12 of the whole national income of England." The Indian army was used to protect the far flung English territories. This situation gets reflected in Mulk Raj Anand's novel, The Sword and the Sickle.

"O Hindustan, Hindustan" said Harnam Singh, "This country is like a lean bullock, that has been reduced to the bones by the Angrezi lion, son. Each day the lion awoke and gnawed a chunk of flesh off the bullock's body and left it weaker, but still standing. And then the other beasts of the jungle came and set to... the local Jackal and foxes took their tol..."

22. Dutt R. Palme. *India To-day*, P-8.
23. Ibid. P-71.
there has been bad times before in this country, but surely no time was so bad as the present one."24

It is Anand's conviction that the British Government not only exploited the country's natural resources but debased the character of those Indians who were in its service. It created a body of sycophants. Such people, who had lost the sense of human dignity, became instruments at the hands of the alien rulers in India. So, sometimes, the shrewd rulers thought of purchasing them for their selfish ends. In Malgonkar's *Combat of Shadows*, Sir Jeffery Sudden tries to buy Jugul Kishore because it was the strategy of the Empire.

"There is nothing wrong with judicious payment of money to keep the right people to our side, indeed it might be called the bed-rock of empire's frontier strategy.... beat them up if you cannot buy them off cheaply."25

The autarchic nature of the Indian villages was destroyed by British imperialism and the millions of ruined artisans, spinners, weavers, potters, tanners, smelters and smiths had no alternative save to crowd

themselves into agriculture. In this way India was transformed from being a colony of agriculture and manufacture into an agricultural colony of the British, K.A. Abbas presents this picture in his Ingilab.

"Village industries, such as hand spinning have been destroyed, leaving the peasantry idle for at least four months in the year, ruining their talents and nothing has been substituted, as in other countries, for the talents thus destroyed.... British manufactured goods constitute the bulk of our imports. Customs duties betray clear partiality for British manufactures, and revenue from them is not used to lessen the burden on the masses but for sustaining a highly extravagant administration".26

The two countries, India and England were thus organically linked with each other and participated for nearly two centuries, in a common integrated world economic system with opposite consequences. In fact the degree of under-development depends on the extent to which the colony refuses to cope with the world capitalist system. It is, perhaps, for these two reasons that India the classic colony, the most developed of the

colonial countries, because of its peaceful transition to independence, continued to maintain friendly relations with the previous as well as new metropolis. The relations between a colony and its metropolis are primarily economic because colonies are established for economic exploitation only.

National consciousness cannot evolve under such conditions of exploitation. It presupposes a common economic life and also an exercise of fundamental influence on the social, ideological, even administrative life of the people. Mahatma Gandhi realised it when he came from South Africa. Since then he devoted his life for the rise of national consciousness amongst his countrymen.

**THE RISE OF NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS:**

National consciousness is a specific kind of community consciousness or group solidarity, which constitutes a bond between the members of a community in regard to the pursuit of certain aims. National consciousness also constitutes certain national aspirations. First among them is national unity, comprising of political, economic, religious and cultural unities. National consciousness is not only political awareness, but knowing and realising the cultural, religious and
economic history of a nation. This consciousness comes to a generation but slowly. All this gets reflected in various Indian English Novels. Nayantara Sahgal in her novel *This Time of Morning* compares the growth of National Consciousness with that of a tree,

"There is no quick way to grow trees, is there? They just grow in their own time, if the roots are not strong they can't grow at all, Papa says."

So national consciousness resembles a majestic banyan tree, with its roots deep into the soil. Timely watering and careful nourishing is required, so that it might grow and give shade and shelter to the people.

The slow maturing of national consciousness took place between the two world wars. During these years life could not be the same and every segment of our national life acquired more or less, a pronounced Gandhian hue. The life of Gandhiji became the life of our nation. As Gandhiji grew in stature, the nation also grew in self-consciousness.

The second important feature of national consciousness is freedom from the forces regarded as

In K.S. Venkatramani's novel *Kandan the Patriot*, Raghu, a docile clerk resigns his government job and when asked by his mother whether he was drunk, he tells,

"yes, mother, drunk with the wine of freedom. No more am I a slave at the desk of grinding account for an alien rule to keep a pampered system going.... are you not proud of me to-day that I have won my freedom, so that I may work for the public cause? Mother, the thing is in the air, who can stop it?" 

Every novel of this phase has at least one Gandhi of its own. Kandan, Sriram, Moorthy, Devesh to name a few. They speak like Gandhi and they act like Gandhi. All of them challenged what was rotten in the society. In the process of evolving national consciousness, many old traditions had to be crushed down and Gandhiji was instrumental for that. Mulk Raj Anand, in his novel *Untouchable*, caught this defiant mood of the people, when they were rushing to hear Gandhiji's speech:

"It was as if the crowd had determined to crush every thing, however ancient or beautiful that lay in the way of their achievement of all that Gandhi stood for. It was, as if, they knew by

(Svetaranya Ashram, Madras, 1934), P-224.
an instinct, surer than that of conscious knowledge, that the things of the old civilization must be destroyed to make room for those of the new. It was, as if, in trampling on the blades of green grass, they were deliberately, brutally, trampling on a part of themselves, which they had begun to abhor, and from which they wanted to escape to Gandhi.29

The third important characteristic of national consciousness, is the value attributed to the national language. The national language must be capable of expressing the hopes and aspirations of the people as a whole. It should be the spoken language of the majority of the people. The National language is a status symbol of the people of a nation. When the people are addressed in that language, naturally they feel proud about it. In Waiting for The Mahatma, R.K. Narayan makes the character of Gandhiji to play on the emotional strand of the people about the national language.

"I will not address you in English. It is the language of our rulers. It has enslaved us".30

In the novel, at the very outset, Gandhiji makes it clear


that he would speak only in Hindi. Of course, he had a desire to speak in the language of the people of Malgud. He promises them that he would speak in their language next time. This shows Gandhiji's respect for all the languages, but he insisted upon one national language. He never abhorred any language, but his argument was that the mother tongue and the national language should get priorities. Advocate Shankar in Kanthapura has a novel way of teaching Hindi to the people. He felt that,

"Hindi must become the national language... and he spoke nothing but Hindi to his daughter, and if by chance he used an English word, as they do in the city, he had a little closed pot, with a slit in the lid, into which he dropped a coin, and every month he opened it and gave it to the Congress fund." 31

The last feature of national consciousness is the striving for distinction among other countries for honour, distinctiveness and prestige. In Bhabani Bhattacharya's novel So Many Hungers, the problem of distinction and self-respect gets depicted thus:

"The soldiers from India have fought and defeated white troops in pitched battles even against

very heavy odds. The white man's bubble has exploded in the African war".32

Mulk Raj Anand has also exploded the theory of racial superiority of the white people. In his typical humanistic way, he questions the propriety of the alien people always abusing the natives of India and denying them the right of becoming masters of their own land. In his The Sword and the Sickle, Anand writes:

"The Sahibs were no gods, as he himself had seen at close quarters in Europe. The days are gone when he could be cowed down by the red faced monkeys or by rich Indians like Harbans Sing and other greasy psychophants. Why, the Hindustanis were a separate nation like the Germans and the Francis and the Angrezi people! And they deserved respect as men. Why should they always be abused by the Goras as the blackmen, who were used to relieve themselves on the ground! they had the right to be a separate nation, and what was more, they had the right to own their land."33

Mahatma Gandhi is mostly responsible for this rousing of pride and confidence in one's valour. He was not only a

great figure in world history, but an angelic prophet. Politically, perhaps, he was greater than Calvin and Chancellor Bismarck. Indians, whose minds were nourished on the speeches and writings of Gandhiji, who read about the war of American Independence and French Revolution, could not but cherish aspirations for the ultimate emergence of an independent India.

BIRTH OF A NATION:

Man is born free and he loves freedom. This is the law of nature. By instinct man loves freedom and in the course of human history, it becomes necessary for the people of a subject nation to dissolve an alien rule, which holds them in subjection. After two hundred years of oppression, political and economic, Indians naturally wanted freedom. Under the stewardship of Mahatma Gandhi, Indians fought for their political freedom and got it. This sense of unity amongst all the Indians, which is very essential for such freedom struggle, is well expressed by Dr. Aziz in Forster's Passage to India.

"India shall be a nation! No foreigners of any sort! Hindus and Muslims and Sikh and all shall be one! hurrah! For India.... we shall drive away every blasted Englishman into the sea,
and then you and I shall be friends*.  

The French Revolution with its gospel of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, the declaration of American Independence and the Russian Revolutions in 1905 and 1917, Propelled the cause of Indian Independence.

As the notion of a nation is determined by the soil, climate and natural boundaries, it is also determined by and rooted in race, tribe and blood instincts. A nation is not merely a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism. If we accept this economic concept of a nation, then a nation would simply mean a joint stock company, originated by men of property, the stock holders. Pure economic considerations in the formation of a nation ignore many other considerations. There may be a divine key to heaven, but there cannot be an economic key to history. Nations are the products of modern human culture. This cultural base was ruined in India by the British rulers. This idea is well expressed by Gandhiji’s character in Inqilab:

"The British rule in India has brought about the moral, material, cultural and spiritual ruination"

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34. Forster E.M. Passage to India (London, 1945)-P.138.

* Passage to India is not of course an Indian English Novel, and for that very reason perhaps, the quotation becomes relevant.
of this great country. I regard this rule as curse, I am out to destroy this system of government....I was a believer in the politics of petitions, deputations and friendly negotiations. But all these have gone to the dogs. I know that these are not ways to bring this government round. Sedition is my religion now. Ours is a non-violent battle. We are not out to kill anybody, but it is our dharma to see that the curse of this government is blotted out."

With this firm determination and commitment, the Mahatma was out to fight the alien rule. His battle was not against the British people. He loved them as he loved his own people. But his fight was against the oppressive, hegemonic British rule. Rahul in Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers* says,

"Why should you fight the people of England. They are good people. The people are good everywhere. Our fight is with the rulers of England who hold us in subjection for their narrow interests."

This was the general opinion of the Indian people. But the educated people and the civil servants were also

thinking on these lines. When a country is passing through a great historical process of getting independence, its people cannot sit silently. Bhabani Bhattacharya says again in *So Many Hungers*:

"His countrymen could not surely be detached. Onlookers of that historic process which, as it developed, must draw all enslaved nations into its orbit. That was the dilemma of every thinking Indian."

It was in South Africa that the Indian nation was being conceived. The Times of India of 8th December, 1908 writes 'Many people believed that the real Indian nation is being hammered out in South Africa.' A nation comes into being, when its people make sacrifices, when they determine to fight for the cause. The hero in *This Time of Morning* of Nayantara Sahgal speaks about the determination of the people to be free,

"It was in 1915 the British empire in India was about to be challenged by a soft spoken man of forty six, who was convinced that no army, no empire, no circumstance of injustice or repression could vanquish human beings passionately determined to be free."

38. Sahgal Nayantara, *This Time of Morning*, P.179.
Some novelists like Bhabani Bhattacharya, were aware that freedom was not a magic wand. Everything cannot be deemed to be achieved, once freedom is achieved. It demands faith and devotion in the people about their work. In his A Goddess named Gold, the old village bard, who was a faithful follower of Gandhiji, tells people that maintenance of freedom requires acts of faith to be done by the people.

"Freedom was a touchstone.... it was a touchstone for every one. To possess this touchstone was not enough for it could wake to life and work its miracles only when acts of faith were done."

There is no easy way for freedom. Nations do not drop from the heavens. Indian novelists have taken pains to describe that freedom was not in the air, waiting for an opportunity to drop down. It would be absurd to argue that Gandhi or no Gandhi, India would have been free! There is no denial of the fact that Gandhiji was instrumental in the process of winning freedom. The hero in So Many Hungers emphatically says:

"Freedom could not drop from the skies, nor be asked from lands beyond seas; but there in the

(Hind Pocket Books, New Delhi, 1967) P-303.
Vast swamp of suffering and struggle would it break in bloom, growing out of the seeds of spirit. It was the four-petalled lotus of the people.  

RISE OF THE NATIONAL CONGRESS:

The Indian National Congress was, in fact, brought into being through the initiative and guidance of the British Polity. It was a secret plan to safeguard the British rule against the rising forces of popular unrest. But within a year, their illusions were cleared and the Congress came to be regarded as a seditious centre. It was a strategic move to bridle the Indian activities and to frustrate their enthusiasm. Indian leaders knew this. If A.O.Hume wanted to use the Congress as a safety valve, the Congress leadership hoped to use him as a ‘lightening conductor’. Formation of the Indian National Congress provided a common platform, at least in the beginning, for the people of all castes, languages and regionalities. In K.A. Abbas’s novel Inqilab, Anwar, the hero, speaks about Gandhian charisma, which holds together people with different affinities:

40. Bhattacharya, Bhabani, So Many Hungers, P-282.
"Subhas Bose, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Rajagopalachariar - the emotional Bengali, the impassive and enigmatic Pathan, the shrewd and sophisticated Tamilian! Anwar had met them all in one day and found it difficult to fit them into the pattern of congress politics which, hitherto, had seemed to him to be determined only by the saintly humanitarianism of the Mahatma... could these strangely assorted personalities and the conflicting forces they represented be merged in the struggle which seemed imminent? If that happened, it would be the greatest triumph of Gandhian Strategy! "41

Under the influence of Gandhiji, the Congress came to be more a revolutionizing party than a political party aiming merely at political freedom. The moral content of Gandhiji's teachings bore great influence on the Congress leaders and their followers. Moorthy, the local Gandhi in Kanthapura, drives this point home to his village folk when he tells them what it is to be a Congress worker and a follower of Gandhiji.

"The Congress men will have to swear again to speak Truth, to spin their daily one hundred yards, and put aside the idea of the holy Brahmin and the untouchable pariah".42

41. Abbas K.A. Inqilab, P-222.
42. Raja Rao, Kanthapura, P-170.
The Indian National Congress has been described in three different phases by the Indian English novelists. The first phase of the Congress activities was the agitational phase because of the partition of Bengal. Swaraj, Boycott, Swadeshi and National Education were the four cardinal points of the Congress programme then. Joining the Congress was a noble feat for the youth. In Waiting for the Mahatma, Srim the hero, is blessed by his teacher for having joined the congress organisation.

"I am proud to see you here, my boy. Join the Congress, work for the country, you will go far, God bless you." 43

In the second phase of the Congress activities, the progressive non-violent non-co-operation was launched by Mahatma Gandhi. The congress had decided in favour of entering into the local self-government and provincial assemblies. Gandhiji toured the country and advised the congress leaders to enter into active politics. Anticipating such a decision, Vanchi in The Chronicles of Kedaram was flirting with the Congress. He was loyal to the Crown, but his opportunism found Congress a sure horse to win. In the midst of the election campaign communal riots brokeout. Vanchi realised

that he might lose his election. Nothing short of a miracle would save him and none but the Mahatma could do this miracle. It was an indication that even by that time, the opportunists were taking refuge in the National Congress.

The last phase of the Congress was the declaration of complete independence as its aim. Everyone in the country was influenced by the declaration of 'Purna Swaraj', to be the object before the Congress. Gandhiji gave a call to all the Indians to strive peacefully to achieve it. Choudhari Barkat Ali, in Chaman Nahal's Azadi has this wonderful experience:

"It was that speech that changed the course of his life for him. Gandhi first explained the contents of the new resolution passed by the Indian National Congress at Lahore explained what the Purna Swaraj meant - full Azadi."44

In due course of time the Congress became a great power, springing up in Indian politics. It was no more a body of petitionists. This aggressive mood of the younger generation is expressed in Ingilab:

"No longer would the congress remain a body of timid lawyers passing resolutions to demand

Dominion status within the empire. An 'Independence of India League' had been formed and under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhaschandra Bose, it was mobilising the youth of the country to push the old leadership of the Congress towards the revolutionary goals of complete independence.  

The moral content, given by Mahatma Gandhi to the Indian National Congress, started slowly waning after some time and the Congress started becoming a political party like any other party. Mrs. Sahgal writes in This Time of Morning -

"When all the old crusading zealots like Prakash are out of the picture, the Congress will be a political party like any other. It is that now, if it will face the fact. Haloes went out with the Mahatma".  

In This Time of Morning, Kailas Vrind, a Gandhian, does not agree with Kalyan Sinha. He feels that any change, involving the erosion of moral values, would be self-defeating. He puts his faith in the quality of the people, who are involved in the task of nation-building. Social change can be meaningful, only when the human being is not by passed and he remains the  

45. Abbas K.A. Inqilab, P-134.  
46. Sahgal Nayantara, This Time of Morning, P-38.
ultimate concern. Kailas feels that the Congress should not abandon its moral character, which was its main strength.

The Congress always stood for a united India, but the Mahatma was bypassed and the division of the country was approved by the Congress leaders. The nightmare of the holocaust and the breach of promise by the Congress is expressed thus by Lala Kashi Ram in Azadi.

"The Congress had a promise to keep with the people. For the last thirty years, since the wizard Gandhi came on the scene it had taken the stand India was a single nation, not two. And Gandhi was not only a politician, he was a saint." 47

In this way the Congress, which was once a haven for all those who were aspiring for complete freedom of the country, was to neglect Gandhian principles and become an organisation of selfish and opportunist people.

FORMATION OF THE GANDHIAN MYTH:

Myth is a statement of primeval reality which still lives in the present day life. It is the teaching 47.

47. Nahal Chaman, Azadi, P - 42.
of the Gita that, whenever there is decline of goodness, God takes birth to punish the unrighteous and to protect the righteous. Likewise great heroes have come on this planet at the need of the hour. Gandhiji's arrival was not only a historical necessity but the need of the hour, to redeem Indian people from political, moral and material depressions. Gandhiji was certainly a "living myth because he imbibed in himself the best qualities of the mythological heroes. The people of India could identify him with Harishchandra for his truthfulness, with Rama for his celibacy, with Janak for his Saintliness and Political acumen.

Every aspect of Gandhiji's life has been mythicized by the Indian English novelists. In Kanthapura, Raja Rao writes about Gandhiji's birth -

"There was born, in a family in Gujarat a son such as the world has never beheld. As soon as he came forth, the four wide walls began to shine like the Kingdom of the Sun, and hardly was he in the cradle than he began to lisp the language of wisdom. You remember how Krishna, when he was but a babe of four, had begun to fight against demons and had killed the Serpent Kali."48

48. Raja Rao, Kanthapura, P-16.
Like Raja Rao, other writers also treat Gandhiji's life as a saviour myth. The hero is described as the pioneer of salvation, accomplisher of great deeds and as a warrior-hero. The saints, and heroes, who exemplify this way of life in the present like Mahatma Gandhi, and Mother Theresa have been widely regarded as mythical figures of the twentieth century. Gandhiji's Saviour myth is seen in operation in the following passage in *Inqilab*:

"Then a stranger, a frail little man, came and stood between him and the dragon and said

"I am Gandhi and I have come from South Africa. Don't kill this little boy, dragon, or I will not obey your unjust laws. Indeed you should not kill any one, not even a mouse." 49

Both *Kanthapura* and *Waiting for The Mahatma* deal with a similar theme: the impact of Gandhian thought on the average Indian. In the latter, the plot is laid in Malgudi. Sriram comes under the spell of the Mahatma, which Bharati has already experienced. Bharati—that is, the spirit of India, may be regarded as symbolic. The impact of Gandhiji, that was transmitted through Bharati, has changed the life of Sriram; just as in *Kanthapura* the impact of the Mahatma passing on through

Moorthy, changes the life of the entire village. Gandhiji is not endowed with supernatural qualities in Waiting for The Mahatma, as is done in Kanthapura. But Gandhiji, in the former, can also read the heart and mind of the people. 'He probably reads my thoughts' (Waiting for The Mahatma, P-18), Sriram feels. In Waiting for The Mahatma Gandhiji is treated as a warm human being who touches the lives of two young people while retaining his historical authenticity.

Gandhiji appears in person in Nagarajan's Chronicles of Kedaram and Anand's The Sword and the Sickle. We find the Gandhian touch in the character of Nirmala in Chronicles of Kedaram. Even in the midst of raging scandals, Nirmala is the very symbol of grace and dignity. Finally she declares her intention of joining the Sabarmati Ashram. She seems to symbolize the hard fight a woman has to put up in her bid to become a part of the new social order that is slowly emerging. Komi does not see this and so he says 'strangely enough, though she had been at Kedaram over a decade, she did not seem to belong to it' (Chronicles of Kedaram, Page-135). At the end of the novel everybody seems to have changed, shedding the hangover of the past. It is a new order, new set of values. This is clearly the influence of the Gandhian myth, that was
operating through the character of Nirmala. Like her, many more women plunged into the freedom struggle. Woman had equal rights and equal status in the eyes of Gandhiji. He encouraged women to come out of the four walls and make sacrifices in the process of winning freedom. M.K. Naik quotes A.R. Desai in his book *A History of Indian English Literature*.

"This was unique in the entire history of India, the spectacle of hundreds of women taking part in political mass movement, picketing of liquor shops, marching in demonstrations, courting jails, facing lathi charges and bullets."50

Not only women but men and children also succumbed to the magic of Gandhiji. Kailas Vrind in *This Time of Morning* is one amongst such followers of Gandhiji. Nayantara Sahgal describes the feelings of Kailas when he come under the influence of Gandhiji.

"Kailas belonged to the generation that had succumbed to the magic of Gandhi. The fire, the dedication, the singlemindedness of the man in loin cloth had attracted him, made him a member of the congress, sent him to jail.... a singularly fortunate generation Kailas felt, for whom ideas and actions had been happily wedded, and the goal achieved."51


Lalusing, in *The Sword and The Sickle* meets Gandhiji and he was not in a mood to listen to him and accept what the Mahatma told. But the sincerity of Gandhiji made him to end with these words,

"after the heated discussion with the Mahatma Lalu felt guilty and weak. His face was covered with sweat and he felt he would have to submit rather than go on fighting this greatman". 52

In another novel *Zohra* by Zeenath Fatehally, we find the Gandhian idealism coming in conflict with the Materialism of Zohra's husband. Zohra was a sensitive girl brought up in the Zanana of an aristocratic Muslim family of Hyderabad. She falls in love with her brother-in-law Hamid, who was inspired by a selfless love for the country and the ideals of Gandhiji. Zohra's husband wants fast industrialisation. In an argument with her husband Zohra repeats Hamid's words -

"But is not Mahatma Gandhi doing that? Only this is a new way of revolution. But it will surely lead to the regeneration of India." 53

The concept of myth, in a literacy theory, centres round the following three important motifs:

1) The image or picture - either social or supernatural.
2) The narrative or story - the archetypal or universal.
3) The symbolic representation of events.

We come across the first type of myth-formation in 'Untouchable', written by Mulk Raj Anand.

"Only recently he had heard that the spider had woven a web in the house of Lal Sahib at Dilli, making a portrait of the sage, and writing his name in English. That was said to be a warning to the Sahibs to depart..." 54

Gandhiji is said to be an Avatar of God Vishnu and Krishna. By such representations of Gandhiji in mythical form, the writer links our present with the past, without which the modern man may experience a kind of cultural and spiritual alienation.

The second category of mythicizing a story can be found in the story of Jayaramachar in Kanthapura.

"O Brahma! you who sent us the prince propagators of the holy law and sages that smote the darkness of ignorance, you have forgotten us so long that men have come across the seas and oceans, to trample on our wisdom to spit on virtue itself. O Brahma! deign to send us one of your gods.

so that they may incarnate on Earth and bring
back light and plenty to your enslaved
daughter."55

The third category of mythicizing in literature
is through symbolic representation of events. Bakha
wanted to listen to Mahatma Gandhi, who was hailed as
a messiah of a new age. This peculiar event has been
symbolically represented by Mulk Raj Anand in
**Untouchable**:

"At once the crowd, and Bakha among them, rushed
towards the Golbagh. He had not asked himself
where he was going. He hadn't paused to think.
The word 'Mahatma' was like a magical magnet,
to which he, like all the other people about him
rushed blindly. The wooden boards of the foot
bridge creaked under the eager downward rush of
his ammunition boots."56

The symbolic meaning here is obvious. A new age
is about to dawn. The Mahatma is the herald of the new
age. The age-old customs and traditions are creaking
under their own weight. Bakha, the untouchable boy, is
crushing them under his ammunition boots.

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This mythical expression enriches our literature. As men cannot live by abstractions alone, they fill their voids by crude, extemporized myths. Thus the Gandhian myth is essential to understand the post-independent India.

THE NEW APOCALYPSE OF A MYTHIC CHARACTER:

An apocalypse is a kind of revelation, a new vocabulary with a new semantic characteristic. Great religious and political leaders float certain ideas and ideals and attract people around them. Such slogans are believed to be the wishfulfilments of the people. Jeevan, the freelance writer, in Sahgal's, *This Time of Morning* says,

"People rally on ideas. Gandhiji understood it. He used the salt and Khadi. He himself was a symbol." 57

In South Africa, Gandhiji refused to go out of the first class railway compartment. He said inoffensively, 'you can remove me, I refuse to go voluntarily'. At this moment a new revolution called Ahimsa or non-violence was born. When Gandhiji preached that ideal to the people in India, they flocked around him and accepted

his teaching as their way of life. In The Day in Shadow, Nayantara Sahgal writes about the people who accepted a new apocalypse as their way of life,

"There are rare times when ordinary people get linked with big events, when intimate and personal affairs get mixed up with the stupendous, when a person can say, I was there. It happened to me. That is what makes living legend out of the dry stuff of history. It obviously happened to the people in the time of Christ, and with Gandhi here." 58

In colonial India, Indians were not politically enlightened. Gandhiji, through slogans like 'Quite India' promised as though to fulfil the demands of the people. People of India were so much energized with this slogan, that they were ready to launch a war against a first-rate war equipped nation like England. Sriram in Waiting for The Mahatma, explains the situation to the simple village folk thus -

"It is 'Quit' - meaning that the British must leave our country".
"What will happen, Sir, if they leave? who will rule our country?"
"We will rule it ourselves".

"Will Mahatma become our Emperor, Sir?".
"Why not?" 59

Some of these slogans were highly provocative to the British Rulers. Indians used to get so much enthused that they were ready to do or die under the spell of them. When the people shouted 'Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai' (Victory to the Mahatma), they were beaten, because victory to the Mahatma meant defeat for the Raj. The hold of such apocalypses was so strong, that the more they were beaten, the more they used to shout. This kind of willing sufferance, which is the core of the Gandhian teachings, Raja Rao depicts in Kanthapura.

"After all it is not bad - after all it is not bad, and our bangles break and our saris tear yet we huddle and move on. Then once again Rangamma shouts 'Gandhi Mahatma Ki Jai' " and we all rush forward and the crowd behind us."60

'Inqilab Zindabad,' (long live revolution!) was yet another slogan that set people's heart on fire. Many people could not understand the meaning of it, but they unmistakably felt that it meant some radical change for the better in the country's politics. K.A. Abbas

60. Raja Rao, Kanthapura, P-186.
writes about the influence of this slogan on the people in *Inqilab*.

"But some how the cry made him burn with fierce excitement, the hair on his body seemed pulled out of their roots, there was rush of blood to his face and his head reeled..." 61

A special mention must be made of 'Vande Mataram' (Mother! I bow to thee). It became a war cry and its echoes were heard throughout the country. 'Vande Mataram', vindicated itself, like a suppressed spring within the bowels of the earth, which finds its way out in a thousand fountains; like Lord Krishna who manifested himself in myriad forms; like the banyan tree which Shahajahan reduced to cinders, but which sprouted again from the ashes. The slogan 'Vande Mataram', under Gandhiji, led to the throbbing unity of the country, a war cry against foreign domination. It became the slogan of liberation.

Thus, the mythicized Gandhiji created a new kind of political awareness among the people, making them to shed their fear and dead weight of the past. Himself a hero par excellence, Gandhiji produced many heroes by his words and deeds and baptised them with Ahimsa. He ushered in a new Heroic Age in Indian history.