CHAPTER - III
THE HEROIC AGE.
PART - I

DUSK BEFORE DAWN:

"He is without doubt, made of the stuff of which heroes and martyrs are made" are the words spoken about Gandhiji by G.K. Gokhale, Gandhiji's political mentor. This and such other remarks attributed to Gandhiji, certainly speak of the charismatic character of Gandhiji and also of the magic wand he wielded, by a simple touch of which he produced many heroes who were ready to do or die at his behest for the cause of the nation. By the time he arrived from South Africa, the socio-economic conditions of our country were so dismal that the Indians needed fresh air and light. Jawaharlal Nehru hails the arrival of Gandhiji in his book 'Discovery of India'.

"Then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air, that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breath, like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes, like a whirlwind that upsets many things but most of all the working of people's mind."

Gandhiji had proved his worth as the leader of the masses in South Africa. Therefore he was invited by Gokhale to come to India and lead her to her political destiny. The 'Second coming' of the leader of the masses was hailed heartily by the people in India and they believed that Gandhiji was a messiah who could resurrect them. Leaders came and went, but he went on leading India, till the bullets transmitted him from life to immortality.

What were the realities of India, which stood out clearly before the unclouded eyes of Gandhiji when he returned from South Africa?

1) The first thing that struck him was the pall of fear that hung over the country. The fear was of the hydra-headed British power and its agencies. Gandhiji discovered that fear was a great enemy of the people and decided to fight it.

2) Another reality, that flashed to Gandhiji, was the crushing poverty of the people. How could any people, engulfed by such poverty, stand up and fight for their freedom?

3) More than anything else, what Gandhiji feared was the tragic lack of unity among the vast majority of the people. Gandhiji's genius found a way out of this. He was stunned to see that less than one hundred thousand
British people here, could hold down in subjection all the Indians. Gandhiji found out instinctively that Indians had lost their courage, self-reliance, unity and the thirst for freedom.

He succeeded in remedying these evils through his constructive programmes. So the period is called the 'Gandhian Age,' K.R.S. Iyengar writes in his book *Indian Writing in English*:

"The period between the two world wars and comprising them both was Gandhian Age in India, our Modern 'Heroic Age' (for so the late C.R. Reddi once called it).... Life could not be the same and every segment of our national life, politics, economics, education, religion, social life, language and literature-acquired a more or less pronounced Gandhian hue.... As he grew in stature, the nation also grew in self-consciousness and strength."2

**THE HEROIC AGE:**

It is an article of faith that great heroes are born at the time of crises - religious, cultural, spiritual, national and so on. Every one, born at the time

of such a crisis, cannot become a hero. The heroic character needs a charismatic touch, a deep insight into the hearts and minds of the people, a capacity to lead the people into collective action with a broad ethical base, the vertical growth of his personality to rise above all and an ability to fulfil the desires of his followers. Unless such qualities are found, the people cannot follow a leader. Hitler, too, had a deep insight into the German bourgeois psychology, as Gandhiji had of the Indian peasant psychology. The difference between the two leaders was, that the former harnessed the petty bourgeois psychology to establish a barbaric and fascist political system, while the latter used it for the task of overthrowing imperialism and building up of democracy. Blind hatred for a race produces not a hero but a crank, a total misfit in history.

Gandhiji was the hero of the National Movement and the age is called "Heroic Age" because -

1) Gandhiji made the movement truly national in character. He provided it a firmer and a larger indigenous base, both ideological and organizational. To him freedom meant something deeper than mere emancipation from foreign yoke. It was a matter of preserving a culture, of building up a national character, and of renewing and energizing every aspect of life.
2) He turned the movement into a real mass-movement by his personal charisma, by his remarkable capacity to negotiate with many vying groups, by his skillful use of many myths and symbols and by his interpretation of tradition to suit his purpose.

3) Gandhiji was a great builder. He transformed the character of the Congress by giving it a new direction, a new constitution, a new organizational structure, a new technique of agitation and a new leadership and programme.

4) Gandhiji broke the hypnotic spell of the inevitability of the British Raj in India. He rid Indians of the pervasive, perpetual and paralysing fear of the British rule. He taught them to say 'no' to the oppressors, both foreign and Indian.

5) He aimed at bringing about political and social revolution in the country. He thought of India in terms of the oppressed and the untouchables. To raise them to a new height of awareness was the mission of his life.

6) Gandhiji wisely prevented the national movement from becoming narrow, racial and isolationist. He was the strangest of the rebels the world has seen. Mass politics is impossible without violence. Violence did burst when people discarded his teachings.
7) Gandhiji had in him, as G.K. Gokhale observed,
"The marvellous spiritual power to convert ordinary men around him into heroes and martyrs.
One of his greatest contributions to the national movement in India was, that he provided it with able leaders at various levels and ultimately made himself indispensable."³

8) He did not mix religion with politics. He spiritualized politics, otherwise he could not have gained the support of all. He was religious, but his religion was most liberal, non-ritualistic and tolerant.

9) It is argued that independence would have come to India even without Gandhiji. But without Gandhiji, the national movement would have been deprived of a great deal of moral elevation and spiritual enthusiasm. His influence on modern India can neither be effaced nor ignored.

10) He was genuine, sincere and humane in his approach even to his opponents. He was a hero with a moral force. For these reasons, the Gandhian period is called the modern 'Heroic Age' ³A in India.

³A C.R. Reddi quoted by Iyengar Srinivasa K.R. in Indian Writing in English, P.203.
When Gandhiji assumed full charge of the Indian National Congress, the first thing he did was to declare India's support to the British in the first world war. The moderates in Indian politics believed that their unconditional support would cause a change of heart among the British people, who would then grant self-government to India.

The Muslims were also not happy with the British Government in India, because they were not consulted at the time of the partition of Bengal. Secondly, the British had not given support to the Sultan of Turkey in the Balkan wars. This led to the Khilafat movement, and Gandhiji with his shrewd calculations, led this movement to bring the aggrieved Muslims under the Congress banner.

The Indian National Movement had hitherto been confined to the middle classes, but in the first year of his leadership, Gandhiji turned it into a mass-movement. He found the first opportunity to demonstrate his political doctrine in the controversy over the Rowlatt Bill. He opposed the bill vigorously, because it was inconsistent with the principles of justice and was a threat to the freedom of the people. Therefore he gave a call for Satyagraha.
THE BIRTH OF SATYAGRAHA

It is said that the Gandhian Satyagraha was born in South Africa, when Gandhiji refused to get out of the first class railway compartment, because he had a right to travel in the first class compartment on a valid ticket. Satyagraha was first launched by Gandhiji in Indian politics in February 1919. The great French Nobel laureate, Romain Rolland, writes about Satyagraha.

"The active force of Love, of faith and sacrifice, this three-fold energy is expressed in the word 'Satyagraha'. It took the form of constitutional opposition to the Government under Gandhi."4

The wilder of Satyagraha should take the following vows:

The vow of truth, of Ahimsa, of Celibacy, of control of palate, of non-stealing and non-possession. These are the tenets of Jainism. Gandhiji added two more vows, the vow of Swadeshi and Fearlessness to complete his chart.

SATYAGRAHA: A NON-VIOLENT RESISTENCE:

"I do oppose
My patience to his fury, and am armed
To suffer with a quietness of spirit,
The very tyranny and rage of his."5

5. Shakespeare William, Merchant of Venice-IV.i, 15-18.
Shakespeare, through these lines from *Merchant of Venice*, breathes the very spirit of the Gandhian Satyagraha. Despite the geographical and historical distancing the close resemblance of these thoughts prove that all great minds think alike. The most characteristic doctrine brought to bear upon public affairs by Gandhiji, is that of Satyagraha or non-violent resistance, as opposed to violence manifested in warfare. Erick Erickson in his book *On the Origins of Militant Non-violence*, has undertaken an intensive study of the Gandhian non-violence on psychological and sociological planes. The origin of Ahimsa does not lie only in Gandhiji's life history, but in Indian philosophy, religious traditions and also in the circumstances that prevailed in India when Gandhiji came. Erickson's interest is not a psychological reconstruction of Gandhiji's past or delineation of his inner conflicts, but to provide insight into the specific configuration, where a man's deep personal needs, dovetailing into the historical needs of the time, propel him into greatness, transforming the relatively unknown Mr. M.K. Gandhi, into the universally revered Mahatma. Erickson finds the following three basic elements in the Gandhian Satyagraha

1) Satyagraha is an engagement at a close range, giving the opponent maximum opportunity for an informed response.
2) The confrontation should be conducted among equals, with emphasis on mutual dependence and the satyagrahi should demonstrate perfect trust, in the words and actions of the opponent.

3) The satyagrahi should accept suffering, not as a passive submission, but as an active choice. Eric Erikson writes.

"All this is at once a declaration of non-intent to harm others, and an expression of faith in the opponent's inability to persist in harming others beyond certain point, provided of course, that the opponent is convinced that this is not a moral danger of losing either identity or rightful powers, but may, in fact, acquire a more permanent share of power". 6

There are misgivings in the minds of some people about satyagraha or there is 'duragrhaha' about satyagraha. Sudhir Kakar, in his review of Erikson's book writes,

"Many people call it an idealistic non-sense, because of Gandhiji's coupling of satyagraha with sexual abstinence...Once Gandhiji said 'A true passive resister can have no desire for progeny'...It is this insistence on moralistic asceticism, the violent suppression of the most important part of man's nature, has been named as the most serious flaw in this theory." 7


7. Ibid. P.139.
They further argue that Gandhiji's opposition to man's instinctual nature, would put the practice of ideal Satyagraha beyond the powers of most of the people.

Though the argument holds some water, it ignores the Indian culture and ethos. For a close study, this problem should be split in two parts:

1) Brahmacharya or celibacy on individual level.
2) Brahmacharya or celibacy on group level.

Now, let us examine what Gandhiji says. S.M. Kohli quotes Gandhiji in his article 'Gandhi'.

"The union is meant not for pleasure, but for bringing forth the progeny. And the union is crime when the desire for progeny is absent."\(^8\)

Therefore what Gandhiji prohibited was not sex but sexuality. No doubt, sex is energy. But people aiming at great deeds, should not get involved themselves in sexuality. Gandhiji did not object his followers bearing children.

S.M. Kohli quotes Gandhiji again,

"I am not sorry for having been born. It cannot be unlawful for me to see the best in me is reproduced."\(^9\)

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In his view the sexual act, apart from the urge of progeny, is detrimental to body, mind and soul.

The second point, celibacy on the group level, needs a more careful study. It is well-known that Gandhiji prescribed certain strict measures for those, who participated in the freedom struggle. He advocated Brahmacharya for these people, as he thought that if the volunteers got married, they become the members of a social institution called family, which has its own restraints and limitations. Secondly, as millions of young men and women participated in the movement, so much of moral restraint was essential. Thirdly, Brahmacharya is not merely mechanical celibacy. It also means control over all the senses and freedom from lust, evil thought, word and deed. This is the birth of a new code of conduct. The Brahmacharin has no narrow loyalties of a 'family'. The whole world is his family and he will centre all his ambition in relieving the misery of mankind. Therefore it can be concluded that Gandhiji has been misunderstood on this issue even by his close associates.

**SATYAGRAHA: A POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

Satyagraha, as a political philosophy, has often come under fire. The popular changes levelled against it are,

1) It is a psychological coercion.
2. It is a means to prove that Gandhiji was a revivalist.

Jayantanuja Bandopadhyaya, in an article 'An Assessment of Gandhism' in 'Quest', raises doubts about the locus standi and the purpose of satyagraha. In order to support his view, that satyagraha is a psychological coercion, he quotes the example of Gandhiji - Ambedkar issue. The British Prime Minister awarded separate representation to the untouchables in India. B.R. Ambedkar accepted it, but Gandhiji launched his fast against this award on September, 20, 1932.

"This was an act of coercion and political compulsion," writes Bandopadhyaya. But the issue should be viewed from a different angle. Firstly, Gandhiji had a right to protest against any award, that went against the unity of the people. This right was given to Gandhiji by the people themselves. He was not imposing coercion on the untouchables in India. His fight was with the British government, who were trying to split the Hindu society at a time when unity was needed most. Thirdly, instead of accepting the separate representation, which was divide and rule policy, Gandhiji thought of reservations in the Government services for the untouchables. Gandhiji's

fast was a strategical move to build pressure on the British Government in England to withdraw the award.

A section of the Indian 'intellectuals' called Gandhiji a revivalist. This is probably due to the confusion created in their mind. Though Gandhiji's ideas and ideals were far reaching, the idiom through which he communicated them was drawn from religious sources. The words like Ram Raj, Varnashram dharma, cause a great deal of confusion in the minds of unwary interpreters of the Gandhian ideology. Who is a revivalist then?

"A revivalist is essentially a zealous upholder of great traditions. He seeks the root causes of contemporary social decadence in the collapse of the traditional order. It is almost an article of faith with him that there existed a golden age at some stage of the history of the nation. That age, he irretrievably believes, is not lost. It can be resurrected if the nation so chooses. The sacred books, in his views, are inexhaustible repositories of ancient wisdom and insight. They have for him all time utility and relevance." 11

Probably Gandhiji's concept of Ram Raj, depending upon the sacred books, made people misunderstand him. His Ram Raj is not a benevolent monarchy but a social order which guarantees basic freedom, ends poverty and

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exploitation and shows profound concern for the well-being of every one. He did not dream of reviving the past, but dreamt of an ideal life to be realised in the foreseeable future.

The sacred laws of the Hindus were of no avail. Gandhiji wanted these laws to go. Adherence to scriptures was never an idea to which Gandhiji subscribed. He also was firmly opposed to the idea that religion should be the base for any nation. He believed in the truth of all the religions. He thought himself to be a good Hindu. By being a good Hindu, he believed, he could be a good Muslim, a good Christian and a good Buddhist. This understanding of Gandhiji is too big a claim to find ready acceptance. He advised the Hindus to keep the laws of Manu in cold storage and asked the Muslims to come out of narrowness. Hindu-Muslim unity was dear to him. He struggled to end the forces of traditionalism and thereby incurred the wrath of revivalists among the Hindus and Muslims. He had to pay a heavy price for it. Therefore it is wrong to call Gandhiji a revivalist.
AHIMSA: A CARDINAL PRINCIPLE OF SATYAGRAHA.

Greatness has often been thought to be the contribution to mankind of truth or a new value, which did not previously exist, or was unknown, or was mistakenly perceived. Gandhiji's greatness lies in Ahimsa, which is a demonstrable truth. Secondly, Gandhiji proved that violence is not the natural way to resolve human conflicts. He proved that non-violence is not only a pious wish but a demonstrable truth that 'works'. Erick Erickson writes—One should recognise the fact demonstrated by Gandhiji, that aggressiveness can be better dealt with by non-violence. In fact the pacific confrontation in a man may be more 'natural' and more 'instinctual' than violence.

Erickson summarises his studies on aggression among the higher animals, which shows that within the same species, there are instinctive pacific rituals which prevent one animal from killing the other. Sudhir Kakar quotes Erickson.

"Among the wolves who are considered to be the epitome of ferociousness, it is reported that when two wolves fight each other, there comes a moment when the one who begins to weaken, bares his unprotected neck to his opponent, who in turn is instinctively inhibited from taking advantage of this 'non-violent' situation."

The aggressive instinct in higher animals has thus a built-in brake which prevents a fight from turning into slaughter. This brake has failed in man because of his evolutionary development into what Erickson calls 'Psuedo-species'. By this term he means splitting of groups from tribes to nations, from caste to class, from religion to ideology etc., which provide their members with a firm distinct and superior identity and immortality. What renders this 'natural' process a potential malignancy of universal dimensions, however, is the fact that in times of threatening changes and upheavals the idea of being the first rank species, must be reinforced by a fanatical fear and hate of the other pseudo-species, so that the others must be annihilated or kept in their places by periodical warfare or conquest, by stringent legislation or local customs, becomes a periodical or reciprocal obsession of man.

Gandhiji's awareness of the necessity to free oneself from these destructive drives, to transcend the identity given by one's own pseudo-species into the more inclusive and wider identity of man, is an awareness which is essential for the survival of the human race. Erickson writes again,

"In fashioning the instrument of satyagraha he attempted to provide ritualization with which men can face each other, with mutual confidence
analogous to the instinctive safety built into animals specific world."

Gandhiji was confident that Ahimsa could be a means to solve national and international problems. He wrote,

"And who knows, that I shall not be an instrument for bringing about peace, not only between Britain and India, but also between the warring nations on Earth? This last wish will not be taken for vanity by those who believe that my path is not sham but a reality, greater than the fact that I am penning these lines."

**Ahimsa: No Apology for Cowardice**

Not only the political adversaries of Gandhiji but also some men of letters say that Ahimsa demoralises soldiers and it turns people into sheep. They speak of Ahimsa as a weapon for cowards and a method of emasculation. But according to the Mahatma the bravest alone can wield the weapon of Ahimsa. It calls for fearlessness. It is not an apology for cowardice. Gandhiji preferred violence to cowardice. J.B.Kripalani quotes Gandhiji,

    (Govt. of India, New Delhi, 1960-63), P-43.
"My non-violence does not admit running away from danger or leaving dear ones unprotected. Between violence and cowardly flight, I prefer violence to cowardice."

Gandhiji does not advise us to turn the other cheek when we are hit upon the first. On the other hand, he wants the other cheek to be made so tough that the hitter might find it inconvenient to strike. A satyagrahi matches his capacity to suffer against the capacity of the tyrant to inflict suffering, his soul-force opposing the physical force of the oppressor.

Shafi Usman in Manohar Malgonkar's A Bend in the Ganges says that Gandhiji's Ahimsa is the philosophy of sheep and a day dream, as such the greatest danger to nation. He believes that 'just one last push' with an armed agitation is enough to throw the British out. If Ahimsa is a day-dream, 'just one last push' to throw the British out is worse than that. Killing a handful of the British would not have helped to hoist the Indian national flag on the Red fort of Delhi. Armed agitation also has the following demerits.

1) Armed agitation was not possible because the Indians were without arms. Lokmanya Tilak said 'we can rise in armed revolt against the British, when there is

a guarantee of fifty percent success; we can gamble with
the remaining fifty percent’. But when there was a
guarantee of defeat, it would have been suicidal to
resort to an armed agitation. The British power could
have mercilessly dealt with such an agitation. In fact
they wanted it, so that they could deal a fatal blow to
the freedom fighters.

2) Armed agitation would have led to destruction
of national property.

3) Non-violent movement is mass-oriented, but
only a selected few can participate in an armed agitation.

4) Though the non-violent movement is a law-
breaking movement, it is also the most law-keeping move-
ment. No running away from jail, no destruction of pro-
perty, tolerating tyranny and no hitting back. Therefore
they had the moral courage to order the British to 'Quit
India'.

5) The Non-violent movement led to collective
action in the open, but the armed agitation was an under-
ground activity of the few. Gandhiji preferred the non-
violent movement, for it was not only a strategy of
fighting the British but a way of life.

The last objection taken by Jayantanuja Bandopadhyaya to the non-violent movement of Gandhiji is that
"Gandhi failed to take note of the imperfections of contemporary human society". What he means to say is that, Ahimsa can be successful only in an ideal society and Gandhiji did not try to build the ideal society before he advocated Ahimsa. This is a baseless argument. What else was Gandhiji doing then his whole life? He tried to clean politics through his saintliness. He fought the social evils. He provided some economic relief through his spinning wheel. The spinning wheel was to be a symbol of self reliance. He interpreted truth in such a way that every man could practise it in his daily life. Are all these not an effort to build an ideal society? A hundred percent ideal society may be a utopia, but Gandhiji did try to cleanse the Indian Society in his own way. There can be no denial of that fact. Then a probable question would be if Gandhiji had succeeded to a large extent in building an ideal society then why did his Ahimsa fail at the time of the partition of the country? Ahimsa failed not because the concept was defective but the human element that handled Ahimsa was defective. Nirmal Kumar Bose, Gandhiji's close associate, writes how Gandhiji's followers discarded Gandhiji's teachings,

"They voyaged with the captain, but disembarked at way side haven, when the power to shape Indian's destiny seemed to have come within their grip."[16

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In view of this discussion the following conclusions can be drawn about Ahimsa and Satyagraha:

1) These weapons of Gandhiji, once holding full sway over the Indian mind, can be useful supplements to the constitutional methods even to-day. Such contributions are still valued and treasured in the intellectual heritage of mankind.

2) Though Gandhiji was inspired by Tolstoy, Carlyle, Thoreau and Gita, Satyagraha as a technique of an organised non-violent resistance, was undoubtedly an original contribution of Gandhiji to resolve conflicts in human society. The objections raised are biased and show an improper study of Indian history.

3) Gandhiji's theory of Satyagraha and the concept of Swaraj, through a highly decentralised political and economic system, are basically derived from the Indian intellectual tradition. These Gandhian concepts are the examples of originality in the almost barren field of Indian thought after Sankaracharya.

4) In this country of Saints and Avatars, lofty morals are taught without any one taking the trouble of descending to reality and trying to reconstruct the framework of the society from its grass root level. As a result the enormous gulf between the nobler elements of
India's philosophical and moral traditions have never been built. Gandhiji was one of the rare persons who has sought carefully to mould the society around him, with every ounce of his life. In Gandhism we find a noble attempt at building the fabric of social organisation around the nucleus of moral values. The critics of non-violence and Ahimsa have failed to take note of this and have called them un-realistic.

5) Finally, there are some universal qualities which gave Gandhism enduring values; the eternal quest for truth, the grim determination, the proud defiance of the hostile universe tempered by an utter personal humility, compassionate but not cowardly Ahimsa, the courage and self-reliance of a holy pilgrim and universal brotherhood.

GANDHISM AND "TOUGH-ME-NOT" ISM

Gandhiji's crusade against untouchability had a double purpose, political as well as humanitarian. He wanted all Indians to be united in the freedom fight and according to his second purpose, Gandhiji felt that the age-old untouchability was a curse to Hindu Society. Gandhiji wrote in 'Harijan' about untouchability.

"The untouchability that disfigures the present day Hinduism is a morbid growth. It only betrays a woodenness of a mind, a blind conceit. It is
According to Gandhi untouchability is the worst kind of social disease. It has received religious sanction in India and reduced millions of people to a state bordering on slavery. In the political battle against the British rulers in India, the united front of all the Indians was very essential. If the Indians were divided on the basis of communities like the Hindus, the Muslims, the Buddhist and Jain etc., every group would be playing into the hands of the British and the rulers, known for their divide and rule policy, would have exploited the situation. So Gandhi opposed vehemently all the moves of the British to segregate the Sudras from the main stream of Hindu Society. For that sake he went even to the extent of defying the Sacred laws of Manu. He was also opposed by the Sudra leadership, but he finally won his point.

Gandhi opposed untouchability on the social ground also. The caste Hindus were avoiding the touch of Sudras as sin. Even their shadows were not allowed to contaminate the shadows of the caste Hindus. In no other religion of the world its followers are so divided on the

basis of caste. Gandhiji felt that for a healthy society the epidemic of untouchability must vanish. A.R. Desai writes -

"Historically untouchability was the social fruit of the Aryan conquest of India. In the process of interaction, a portion of the indigenous conquered population was incorporated into the Aryan fold. The most backward and despised section of this incorporated population constituted the hereditary caste of untouchables. It is older than the Vedas. Hallowed with the tradition and sanctified by religion, it continued to exist in all the barbarous vigour for centuries."

Untouchables were socially debarred from pursuing any profession except scavenging and removing the dead animals. The Hindu caste enacted draconic laws to punish them. They had no right to study Vedas, enter temples and draw water from the wells. They had to announce their arrival in the market and other public places, so that the high caste people could clear away to avoid their touch. Under no institution was man so deeply humiliated as he was under untouchability. Gandhiji came to the rescue of these people.

The course of history never runs smooth. It is more so with a subject nation. Although the Indians helped the British during the second world war, they were content with the little concessions given by the rulers from time to time. The promises made to grant more political liberties were broken and in addition, the cruel bills like Rowlatt Act were passed, when people aired their opinion against the bill, they were massacred in cold blood. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre was of this kind and it was followed by many humiliating acts passed by the British government in India.

All this never deterred Gandhiji. He seized this opportunity to organise a joint Congress-League movement against the British government. In August 1920, Gandhiji launched an extensive programme which included;

1) Surrender of all the British titles.
2) Boycott of all the British goods.
3) Withdrawal from Government schools.
4) Resorting to charakha and Khadi.
5) Non-co-operation with the British Government.
6) Temperance movement, denouncing liquors the root cause of poverty and moral depravity.
7) Above all, he launched a crusade against untouchability. Some fifty million people were classed as untouchables. Nearly all of them were penniless, to whom the basic social rights were denied. Gandhiji called them Harijans, people of God.

The second phase of the Heroic Age is replete with Gandhiji's movements against the British government, to achieve these ends. While leading all these movements, Gandhiji had to encounter opposition from some leaders. The most pungent criticism came, when Gandhiji withdraw the civil dis-obedience movement all of a sudden, after the Chauri Chaura incident. But the critics fail to notice that the violence, of the type of chauri chaura, does not fit into the syllabus of Ahimsa. Gandhiji never insisted on 'whole loaf or no bread' tactic. He had often consented to receive, without accepting, half a loaf. For the other half he never abated his fight, but he would abide his time and opportunity. His capacity lies in choosing the latter. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Gandhiji's close associate, writes about Gandhiji's political genius.

"He knows when to strike, therein he shows his genius of a statesman and warrior. Really it is difficult to state between his saintliness
and the statesmanship which in the engine and which is the brake-van of his train of Satyagraha."19

Ordinarily we consider the latter the engine and the former the brake-van. But it was the reverse in the case of Gandhiji. It is easy to blame him but difficult to place oneself in his place and peep into one's own self and tell whether whatever Gandhiji did was wrong. If Gandhiji had allowed violence, there would have been mass-murder on either side. This was against the very spirit of Ahimsa, and so the Mahatma could not have permitted it.

The Congress, which was divided for not having heeded Gandhiji's words, became united once again when the Simon Commission was touring India to study what more concessions should be given to her. Under the insistence of Jawaharlal Nehru, a resolution was passed, stating that the goal of the Congress was to attain complete independence. The British Government was not ready to concede this demand. The result was an all out conflict between the Congress and the government. In December 1929, the Congress permitted mass-civil-disobedience and gave Gandhiji power to organise it. He started the

second movement by defying the unpopular salt tax. The Dandi March won much publicity and such disobedience, movements were organised throughout the country. By the middle of that year, about sixty thousand volunteers, including the top leaders, were arrested.

Nevertheless, the British Government went ahead with its plan and the first Round-table conference was held in London in 1930. It failed because the Congress did not participate in it. Lord Irwin realised this and persuaded Gandhiji to come to an agreement. Consequently, there was the Gandhi-Irwin pact and the civil disobedience movement was suspended. The Congress agreed to be represented through Gandhiji alone, at the second Round-table conference in 1931. At the first Round-table conference the general framework of the new constitution for India was prepared and in the second, the details were discussed. Gandhiji unsuccessfully opposed the rights of the minority groups for special considerations in the form of special electorates. Gandhiji returned disappointed and revived his civil disobedience movement. The third and the last Round table conference was held in 1932 to finalise the details of the new Indian constitution. It was introduced in the parliament in 1935 and was passed in the same year.
QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

According to the 1935 act, the elections to the provincial assemblies were held and in seven out of eleven States, Congress Ministries were formed. Encouraged by this victory, the Congress adopted a strong anti-league policy. They refused to admit any Muslim into the Ministry and demanded dissolution of the Muslim League. A breach, thus, was created between the two groups, which finally led to the partition of the country.

In 1939 the second world war broke out and the Governor General declared without consulting the Congress, that India had joined the Allied forces. The Congress Ministries resigned in protest. The Allied forces suffered a severe reverse in August 1940. The British Government, once again declared its policy of granting India self rule and the Congress, once again rejected this 'August offer', suspecting the British intentions. All the Congress leaders turned to Gandhiji for his advice. In October, 1940 Gandhiji started his Civil-disobedience movement again.

On the other hand, the Muslim League accepted the British offer, because it implied that the British Government would consult the Muslims in devising the future plans for India. In this way instead of solving the dead lock, the 'August Offer' widened the Hindu-Muslim
split. At this very hour the final blow to the Hindu-Muslim unity was dealt by the introduction of Cripps Plans which meant in case the Muslim majority did not want to remain in the Indian Union, they could unite as a separate state.

After rejecting the Cripps Plans, the Congress faced the Japanese threat to India's security, because the second world war was brought to her threshold. Gandhiji thought that the presence of the Allied Troops in India might provoke the Japanese. They had already conquered Burma and along with the Indian National Army, they were planning to enter India. So Gandhiji wanted immediate withdrawal of the British from India. The Congress, under the influence of Gandhiji, passed a resolution on 8th August 1942. This is popularly known as the 'Quit India' movement, the last rebellion of the Congress against the British.

The 'Heroic Age' is a tumultuous time in the political life of Gandhiji. It covered various aspects of our national life. Rama Jha rightly observes:

"Although, Gandhian thought embraced various facets of man's experience - social, political, economic and spiritual and projected on integrated approach to life. It symbolised the national and for the first time gave the Indian novelists
in general and the Indo-Anglian novel in particular a sense of national identity".20

Fictional treatment of the Gandhian myth in the 'Heroic Age' is given in the following part of this chapter.

20. Jha Rama, Gandhian Thought and Indo-Anglian Novelists (Chanakya Publication, New Delhi, 1903) P. 176.
CHAPTER - III
THE HEROIC AGE
PART- II

The men who despise worldly things, who set no store by anything that men generally desire, pursue ideals of no present value and immediate consequence. There is no early recognition or reward for such people. They are allowed to pass misunderstood. Understanding comes in due course of time and then people praise the memory of the one who is beyond praise and blame. They are the true revolutionaries.

The true revolutionaries in human history are not the dictators and warriors but great teachers, prophets and scientists, who create revolutions 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.

Great persons like Mahatma Gandhi, though they are governed and controlled by socio-economic determinations in the beginning, appear like effulgent stars towards the end, rule the destiny of men, control events and movements of a community or a nation. Gandhiji's character was multidimensional, encompassing politics, religion,
society, culture and the metaphysics of non-violence.

Despite all this, he died metaphorically on 15th August 1947, when his followers threw all his qualities to the wind and left the Mahatma a lone voice, trailing in the solitary glory of love, truth and non-violence.

When Gandhiji came from South Africa, he found that India was divided and frustrated. The Congress was in the hands of the moderates, the Muslims were drifting away and the extremists had been excluded. There was fear in the minds of Indians about the British ruler. This peculiar situation is symbolically represented by K.A. Abbas in his novel *Inqilab*:

"Then a strange, 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.'"

The essence of Gandhiji's teaching was fearlessness and truth, and action allied to these. The most devastating influence of the British rule was fear that spread everywhere. The overpowering shadows of army, the officials, the prison and the widespread secret service made the

Indians lose confidence in themselves. A Messiah was awaited to redeem the masses from this fear. It was against this fear that Gandhiji's quiet and determined voice was raised. Gandhiji's teachings gradually lifted the black cloak of fear from the shoulders of the Indians. This was Gandhiji's first step towards raising national awareness among the masses.

The second reality that stood before the unclouded eyes of Gandhiji was poverty. The people who were groaning under the crushing burden of poverty for ages, could not be united unless the leader was capable of doing so with his charisma. The old, self sufficient and autarchic villages were ruined by the British people and consequently the Indians had to suffer. Anwar, in Ingilab, draws a comprehensive picture of how the British had ruined India.

"India has been ruined economically. The revenue derived from our people is out of proportions to our income. Our average income is seven pice per day and of the heavy taxes we pay 20 percent are raised from the land revenue derived from the peasantry and 3 percent from the salt tax, which falls most heavily on the poor. Village industries such as hand spinning etc., have been destroyed, leaving the peasantry idle for at least four months in the year, and nothing has been
substituted, as in the other countries for the talents thus destroyed. 2

Unless the people had two simple meals a day, they could not be united and Gandhiji knew that empty bellies would not listen to anybody. He wanted to make the villages self-sufficient as before. His nightmare was the machine dominated industrial society, which would suck India's villages from the country side into the blighted urban slums, destroy their ties of family and religion all for the faceless, miserable existence of an industrial complex, spewing out things people rarely used. Gandhiji has been wrongly accused of preaching the doctrine of poverty. He knew well that grinding poverty produced moral degradation, which he loathed. He wanted man to find out a just medium between debasing poverty and heedless consumption of goods.

The most important contribution of Mahatma Gandhi was the fact that he united all the Indians in the cause of the freedom-struggle. The disunity among the people was so rampant that 'Unity' seemed almost impossible. The people were so terribly frightened by the hydra-headed British rule in the country, that they were not ready to put up an organised opposition front to the Raj. No less

2. Ibid, P-239.
charismatic a person than Gandhiji was needed to allay their fears. Though the Indians were divided horizontally on the lines of caste and religion, Gandhiji realised that a great common culture still bound them together. He made good use of it to rouse the national sentiments of the people and to unite them. K.A. Abbas catches the mood of his countrymen in the following words,

"The procession was a huge affair, starting from Patchpuri Mosque to the stone-cutter's well... which was being led by a bearded Muslim Moulavi and a Hindu Swami in a saffron-coloured dress. There were songs and slogans - the same slogans he heard in Amritsar and Anwar let his squeaky little voice merge into the thunder and roar of the crowd. Allahu Akber! God is great! Vande Mataram! Glory be to the motherland!"

It was Gandhiji's love towards humanity that could bind the Hindus and Muslims together. He alone knew how and when an appeal to their good sense should be made to unite them. Chaudhari Barakat Ali and Lala Kanshi Ram in Azadi represent this Hindu-Muslim brotherhood.

"As a basis for self discipline, Gandhi spoke of Hindu-Muslim unity... from to-day he said, let each Muslim accept one Hindu as his 'brother' and the Hindu that Muslim as his brother... India.

3. Ibid, P-83."
he said, was divided into geographical not communal entities, and the whole of India was a single nation... A Muslim in India was more an Indian than any thing else. The same was true of a Hindu".  

For this love, sacrifice and selfless service to the down-trodden in India, Gandhiji was called the 'Mahatma', the great soul. In the country of Saints the impact of the title 'Mahatma' was so great on the Indian mind that whenever Gandhiji came to the people, they gathered round him eagerly to see him. Chaman Nahal describes the ecstasy of the people at the sight of the Mahatma,

"When Gandhi showed up and they had seen him, they felt no need to stay there longer. They were not interested in politics, nor in Gandhi's speeches, For them Gandhi was a Mahatma, a religious figure and they had come only to pay homage to a saint".  

Mahatma Gandhi declared himself to be a man of religion and he sought to relate his ideas and thoughts to a transcendental reality. Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose says that Gandhiji's mass appeal lies in his character and personality; so people rallied round him wherever he went.  


Gandhiji wielded such an overwhelming influence that his mere presence used to cause a sensation in the public. This charismatic characteristic of Gandhiji is presented by Mulk Raj Anand in the following lines,

"The Mahatma raised his right arm from the folds of his shawl and blessed the crowd with a gentle benediction. The babble of voices died out, as if he had sent an electric shock through the masses of humanity gathered at his feet. This strange man seemed to have the genius that could by a single dramatic act, rally multi-coloured, multi-tongued India to himself." 6

In this way Gandhiji united the whole of India for the first time.

WHY IS IT CALLED THE 'HEROIC AGE'?

The period between the two world wars is named the 'Heroic Age' in Indian literature. During this period every department of life, political, social, educational and literary, acquired a pronounced Gandhian hue. K.R. Srinivas Iyengar writes about our country's reaction thus:

"It was the Phoenix hour and Gandhi the Mahatma gave the signal, and a whole nation awoke from its suspended animation and felt the blood stream of a new life coursing through its veins." 7

Till Gandhiji came to India, the Congress was in the hands of the Middle Class people. Their main aim was to approach the Raj with appeals, petitions and requests and wait silently till the bureaucracy turned its eye to them. A handful of city-bred lawyers, doctors and businessmen were at the helm of the Congress affairs. The freedom movement, till Gandhiji came was not representative of all the Indians. Gandhiji took the movement to every village, hamlet and hut. He made the movement really national in character. At his call thousands and thousands of people came out of their houses, schools, Colleges and filled jails jolting the British Government. This shock and surprise of the Raj is expressed by K.A. Abbas in *Inqilab*.

"But now they were faced with the amazing phenomenon which no other government in the world had ever faced before on such a scale of tens of thousands of perfectly law-abiding, decent, God fearing citizens, who had suddenly developed a passion for going to jail." 8

Gandhiji's influence was so deep on the Indian masses that even the rural female folk, otherwise timid, came willingly to the front. M.K. Naik writes in *A History of Indian English Literatures*.

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

Women were not only participating in demonstrations, but they also organised themselves into small groups with independent programmes suitable for them. Such of the women who were alone or with no responsibility whatsoever, plunged into politics and led other women. Their houses were turned into mini Congress offices. Raja Rao gives a picture of such a house,

"They said Rangamma's house was now become something of a Congress House, and there they were piling books and books, and they had even brought spinning-wheels from the city."®

The second quality that contributed to Gandhiji's greatness and which is also responsible for the 'Heroic Age' is his Judicious use of myth, history and scriptures to rouse the popular sentiments of religion and to bind them together with one common thread. Before he addressed any public meeting, Gandhiji used to chant Ram Dhun.

'Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram'. Its effect was two-fold, the attention of the distracted minds of the audience was drawn to him while it roused the religious sentiments in the heart of the people. The good influence of 'Ram Dhun' is explained by Gandhiji's character in *Waiting for the Mahatma*.

"It is perfectly simple procedure provided you have faith in it. If you watch yourself, you will avoid all actions, big or small and all thoughts, however obscure which may cause pain to another, cultivate an extra affection for the person and you will find that you are able to bring change in him."**

Thirdly, Gandhiji gave a definite direction and a new organisational structure to the Congress. Before Gandhiji, the Congress was a body of timid middle class people. Under Gandhiji's leadership, it not only expanded to every village but also shed its slow and appeasing approach to the British rulers. It became bold and its leaders could talk with the rulers on terms of equality.

Anwar in *Ingilab* ponders,

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

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Dominion status with the Empire. An 'Independence of India League' has been formed and under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, it was mobilising the youth of the country to push the leadership of the Congress towards the revolutionary goal of complete independence".12

For many years, the Congress was Gandhiji and Gandhiji Congress. His word was final on all the important national events. During these days the Congress acquired the Gandhian morality as its base. Every Congress leader had to take the vows of celibacy, truth, Khadi, non-violence, Charkha, Non-possession and non-stealing. Raja Rao writes in Kanthapura,

"Then Moorthy stands up and says, it is no light matter to be a member of the Congress and that every promise before the Congress is promise before the Mahatma and God."13

As the people had to keep the promises of the Congress, the Congress also had to keep the promises given to the people. The greatness of Gandhiji lies in the fact that he made the people and the organisation interdependent. The Congress demanded unconditional support from the people.

13. Raja Rao, Kanthapura, P-104.
and in return the Congress promised the people to get freedom of the nation and to keep the country united. The Mahatma alone could do this miracle. Lala Kanashi Ram in *Azadi*, praises the Congress under Gandhiji's leadership.

"The Congress had a promise to keep with people. For the last thirty years, since that wizard Gandhi came on the scene, it had taken the stand that India was a single nation, not two."14

The fourth characteristic of the 'Heroic Age' is the trait in Gandhiji's personality, that broke the hypnotic spell of the British inevitability in India. He told the British rulers to their face to 'Quit India.' Gandhiji told the British to leave India and let the Indians manage or mismanage their own affairs. The country which was fighting the second world war for a small piece of land had no right to hold India in subjection. Gandhiji shattered the boastful British bubble that what would happen to India if they leave. Gandhiji had a reply and the same has been effectively communicated by R.K.Narayan in *Waiting for The Mahatma*:

"Please leave this country to be managed or mismanaged by us, that's purely our business, and come back any time you like as our friend"

and distinguished guest, not as our rulers."

Under the influence of Gandhiji the Indian people had the courage to say 'no' to the treacherous laws of the Raj. They refused to pay the taxes if such payment was unjust. The people of India had the courage to look in the face of their rulers and deny obedience, if the rules and laws were coming in their way of getting freedom. This was no mean achievement of Gandhiji.

The fifth reason why the Gandhian age was called the 'Heroic Age' is the fact that for the first time the peasants and untouchables, who were the 'Objects' of history till then, under Gandhiji's leadership, became the 'subject' of history. None, before Gandhiji thought so, could think that India belonged to peasants and untouchables also! These people were totally discarded. They were the people of marginal culture and they were not allowed to mix in the mainstream of Indian culture. The Mahatma realised that independence achieved, keeping these people outside, was not independence at all. His political agitation was also a social revolution. Under the British regime the peasants were mere nameless entities. Mulk Raj Anand writes about this aspect,

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"Through centuries the Indian peasants were living peacefully with themselves. And then had come the Angarezi Sarkar, like an invisible shadow, spreading over anonymous countryside, where men women and children had grown and died, nameless like plants".16

Another class of people whom Gandhiji loved and whose emancipation was his mission of life was the untouchables. Almost every novelist, who wrote about Gandhiji, also wrote about the Harijans or untouchables. The Mahatma was so deeply concerned with the problems of the untouchables that an entire novel Untouchable was to centre round that problem. Gandhiji in Anand's Untouchable declares—

"I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should wish to be reborn as an untouchable, so that I may share their sorrow, sufferings and the affronts levelled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from their miserable condition".17

The sixth reason why the age is termed, 'Heroic Age' is Gandhiji's non-violence. Ahimsa or non-violence was a unique method of resistance. It was the most fearlessly active force because its basic requirement was the ————


17. Anand, Mulk Raj, Untouchable, P-162.
human being cleansed of fear and hate, willing to suffer and renounce reward, a human being fully aware of the grandeur of human life and human efforts. Non-violence is based on the quiet courage of man, backed by his personal character. Gandhiji was a wonderful rebel. Mass politics is impossible without bloodshed, but Gandhiji led the movement in his unique non-violent way. Every soldier of the non-violent army had to shun anger and violence in word, deed and thought. The character of Khan Abdul Ghafrar Khan is made to speak out his mind on non-violence in *Ingilab*.

"The way of non-violence is the virtuous path, the way of God. We are with Gandhiji in his campaign and Insha Allah, by the grace of God, will show that the Pathan knows how to die for Freedom." 18

Gian's friend in Manohar Malonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* called Non-violence the creed of cowards. But only the bravest can wield Ahimsa. If the freedom movement had gone the violent way, probably we would have suffered heavy loss of national property and we would have created another enemy namely Britain.

The seventh cause why this period in Indian history is called the Modern 'Heroic Age' is the fact that Gandhiji

provided many leaders who spread his gospel throughout the country. Every novel of this phase has at least one Gandhi of its own. Murugan, Kandan, Moorthy, Sriram, Bakha, Dhooli Sing, Devesh etc., were local Gandhis. C.D. Narsimålah, writes in 'Fiction and the Reading Public in India' —

"It was Gandhi's greatness that produced hundreds and thousands of little Gandhis throughout the country. Moorthy was in college when he felt the impact of Gandhi and walked out of it, the Gandhi man." ¹⁹

Raja Rao also expresses a similar opinion in Kanthapura:

"The Mahatma patted him on the back; and through that touch was revealed to him as the day is revealed to the night the sheathless being of his soul...he came back to the college that evening, he threw his foreign clothes and his foreign books into the bonfire, and walked out, a Gandhi's man." ²⁰

By the simple touch of Gandhiji, an ordinary man was turning into another little Gandhi. They spoke like Gandhiji and acted like Gandhiji. Devate or Deveth Basu speaks like Gandhiji in So Many Hungers.

¹⁹. Narasimålah, C.D. 'Fiction and the Reading Public in India,'
²⁰. Raja Rao, Kanthapura, P-54.
"Friends and Comrades, do not betray the flag. Don't betray yourself. We stand or fall with our inmost faith, Ahimsa. There is violence in your thoughts, that is evil enough. Don't make it worse by violence in action.... Ours is harder task. If we use the arms of our enemies, we play into their hands. The supreme test has come. Be strong. Be true. Be deathless. Bande Mataram." 21

This was the way how Gandhiji produced local leaders like him. They imitated their master. Some of them failed no doubt, but there was the effort. Gandhiji was like a big lamp lighting many small lamps, which dispelled darkness in their own capacity. This proves that Gandhiji did not allow the freedom struggle to become narrow and isolationist. He provided a mass-base to it and made it really a people's revolution.

The ninth cause to call the period the 'heroic Age' is the fact that Gandhiji became a significant part of the stuff of which India's spirit is made. It is argued that we would have won freedom even without Gandhiji. But without Gandhiji the movement would have lost its moral elevation, glory, and grandeur of human efforts. Nayantara Sahgal writes about the Gandhian influence in This Time of Morning.

"Gandhi had been no saint who had stood aloof from the world's struggle. He had been a human being who had demonstrated as men did time to time, the glory and grandeur of human effort. He had been a pilgrim whose passion for truth had burst the bonds of religion, refused the confines of Saintliness, and had spilled over instead, into the mainstream of daily life flowing into field, farm and factory". 22

Lastly, Gandhiji was genuine, sincere and humane in his actions and decisions. There was nothing to hide. Nayantara Sahgal expresses this in *Storm in Chandigarh*.

"Gandhian politics had also meant an open decision, the open action. No stealth no furtiveness, no shame. Every act proudly performed in the Sun-light". 23

For these reasons, the Gandhian Age, the period between the two world wars is called the 'Heroic Age'. To deserve this title Gandhiji did not fight any battle, did not combat with a dragon like the ancient war heroes did. He did not kill a dragon, rather he converted a dragon, which was a much more difficult task. A man of conviction, with truth as his shield and action as his


sword, alone can do this. And Gandhiji did it.

THE BIRTH OF SATYAGRAHA:

Satyagraha took its birth in the form of constitutional opposition to the unjust laws of the British Government. It is an active force of love, sacrifice and faith. Many Indian English novelists have written about Satyagraha. Moorthy addresses the people in Kanthapura, telling them how a real satyagrahi should be:

"Brothers in the name of Mahatma, let there be peace and love and order. As long as there is God in Heaven and purity in our hearts evil cannot touch us. We hide nothing. We hurt none. And if these gentlemen want to arrest us, let them. Give yourself up to them. That is the true spirit of the Satyagrahi."24

Satyagraha was developed by Gandhiji as a religious creed, not to yield to the unrightful authority, when the Satyagrahi thought he was right. It was a matter of his inner faith. In his decisions he should be guided by his conscience. Gandhiji's character in R.K. Narayan's The Waiting for The Mahatma speaks,

"Your work should be a matter of inner faith. It cannot depend upon what you see or understand.

Your conscience should be your guide in every action. Consult it, you won't go wrong. Don't be guided by what you see.25

The satyagrahi is a disciplined soldier on the path of truth guided by his conscience. He has to take vows of Truth, Ahimsa, celibacy etc. A strong will, wrought out of these elements, is the capital of a satyagrahi. Gandhiji believed that with this strong will to change the destiny of your country, independence could be achieved and a new India could be built. Unlike other revolutionaries, Gandhiji was not a maker of laws and ordinance, he was the builder of a new humanity. Though born in South Africa, Satyagraha reached its culmination in India, as a unique weapon to fight oppression and injustice.

**Satyagraha: A Non-violent resistance:**

Erick Erickson in his brilliant book *On the Origins of Militant Non-violence* enumerates the following basic elements in the Gandhian Satyagraha.

"1) Satyagraha is the engagement at close range, giving the opponent maximum opportunity for an informed response.

2) The confrontation should be among equals, with the emphasis on mutual dependence and

the satyagrahi should demonstrate perfect trust in the words and actions of the opponent.

3) A satyagrahi should not accept suffering as a passive submission but an active choice. 26

All these basic elements of satyagraha are expressed by the novelists in one or the other form. As regards the first element that the Satyagrahi should inform his opponent about his intentions and line of action, K.A. Abbas writes in Inqilab.

"The programme had been announced in advance and made known to the 'enemy' - the police knew the number and names of the satyagrahis who would be in the Gandhi army....this was a new kind of army waging a new kind of war.... A new word was required to describe it - satyagraha. It was in fact the battle of Truth." 27

As regards the second characteristic of Satyagraha, that the confrontation should be among equals, it should be noted that Gandhiji perfectly honoured this dictum. His fight was with the British Rule in India, not with the British people. But this rule of the game was not strictly followed by the other side. They could not beat Gandhiji but they beat his followers. Men, women and children

27. Abbas K.A. Inqilab, P-256.
were beaten alike. This act betrayed their frustration and psychological defeat in the presence of the Satyagrahis. K.A. Abbas summarises a situation in *Ingilab*:

"The Government hesitated to lay hands on the Chief instigator for this revolt and struck at his followers with unparalleled ferocity." 28

The Indians could have reacted violently but that was not the teaching of the Mahatma.

Erickson says that the third characteristic of a Satyagrahi was to accept sufferance not as a passive submission but as an active choice, not as an inability of a helpless, but as a courageous deed of a brave person, who had the capacity to fight back, but would not do so because tolerance and patience were his first principles to follow. One would wonder to see what an amount of strong will is required to gain this active sufferance for the fiery martial people like the Sikhs and Pathans to be beaten up to pulp and remain non-violent. Under these circumstances how can it be said that Gandhiji's Ahimsa was the philosophy of sheep and creed of cowards. It was a militant way of life but not an escapist ideology. To fight with deadly weapons is the tendency of the war mongers, who refuse to learn a lesson from the past. The militant non-violence

28. Ibid. P-264.
of Gandhiji was the culmination of a culture. Mahatma Gandhi knew this. He is one of the greatest generals history has written about.

There are certain misunderstandings about satyagraha in respect of sexual abstinence. It is this insistence on moralistic asceticism or suppression of the natural instincts, as some say, which is a serious flaw in the Gandhian theory of Satyagraha. Critics of the Gandhian Satyagraha also say that the Mahatma's opposition to man's instinctual acts would seem to put the practice of Satyagraha beyond the power of the common man. The problem should be divided into two parts as Brahmacharya or celibacy on the individual level and on the group level. Manu, the law giver, describes the first child as born of Dharma and the subsequent children of Kama or lust. In line with this thought, Gandhiji said that people involved in freedom fighting should control their carnal desires. What he meant was that sex should not become a habit, a regular physical necessity like thirst and hunger to the freedom fighters.

Secondly, Gandhiji advised Brahmacharya for his followers because if they get married they become the members of the institution called family, which has its own constraints. Tossed between the family and duty towards the nation, man might waver. That is why Gandhiji advised
control over the senses. He did not deny sex but the sexuality to an individual as well as to a group.

Some novelists misunderstood Gandhiji on this issue. Satyajit in Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh*, has a prolonged discussion with his wife Suruchi on Brahmacharya.

"One such idea is Brahmacharya, complete chastity of body and even of thought. It is, Gandhiji believed, a great source of spiritual strength. He never asked his followers to take that vow but his expectations were clear. You know that Suruchi?".

There is only one way, for you" he repeated, and fell into silent brooding, the melancholy on his face deepening. Then the words came explosively "Take your freedom".

"My freedom" The puzzlement in her voice was also plain.

"What shall I do with my freedom?"

"Marry again...."

"Marry this time, some one who isn't a madcap like me. You are young in your twenty-ninth year. Marry some one who will give you true happiness."29

This is a clear distortion of Gandhiji's concept of Brahmacharya. Did Gandhiji ever ask his followers to divorce their wives? what Gandhiji himself would not do.

how can he advise his followers to do? This is not Gandhism but Satyajitism fathered upon Gandhiji. It should be borne in mind that Gandhi alone could do a Gandhian gesture!

On the other hand, R.K.Narayan appears to be fairly on the right side of the problem in his novel, Waiting for The Mahatma. Bharati and Sriram wanted to marry and it would not have been possible without the consent of the Mahatma. Sriram approached him and said:

"We are waiting for your blessed permission to marry".

Mahatma looked from one to the other with joy.
"Do you like each other so much?"

Sriram burst out, "I have waited for five years thinking of nothing else."

"What about you Bharati?" you are saying nothing."
Bharati bowed her head and flushed and fidgeted,

"Ah, that is the sign of a dutiful bride....
"Does this silence mean yes? " Sriram looked at her with bated breath. Gandhiji observed her for a moment and said,

"She 'd be a very unbecoming bride, who spoke her mind aloud! Good, good, God Bless you, When is the happy occasion, tomorrow?...." Very well, tomorrow morning 'the first thing I do will be that, I will be your priest; I will come and present the bride". After a few steps towards the prayer ground Gandhiji stopped and said,
"Bharati, I have a feeling that I may not attend your wedding tomorrow morning."

Truly, Gandhiji could not preside over Bharati's marriage ceremony because it was the evening of 30th January of the year 1948. R.K. Narayan's Gandhiji is more convincing than the Gandhian Satyajit.

It would be presumptuous to conclude that Gandhiji's repressed sexual instincts sprang back to the form of displaced violence towards the members of his family like wife Kasturba and son Hiralal. Gandhiji confessed characteristically that the gap of communication between the husband and wife was because Gandhiji was a jealous husband and Kasturba was not a woman to tolerate male chauvinism. Gandhiji himself confesses anticipating this charge.

"Let not the reader think, however, that ours was the life of unrelieved bitterness, for my servitudes were also based on love".

It is better to shut our Freuds and Jungs here because Gandhiji's confession does not indicate the suppression of sex but the normalcy of his mind.

Satyagraha, as a political philosophy, has often come under fire. Some critics say that it is a kind of psychological coercion. As an example in point, they cite the Poona Pact between B.R. Ambedkar and Gandhiji. Gandhiji went on fast to protest against the award of separate electorates to the Untouchables in India. At last Ambedkar was to yield to the demand of Gandhiji to save his life. By this incident it is concluded that Gandhiji's satyagraha was an act of political coercion. Gandhiji could understand the British intention behind the award. If it was for the good of the untouchables, the messiah, whose mission of life was the upliftment of the down-trodden, could not have opposed the award. It should be remembered that even the Lucknow Pact of awarding separate electorate for Muslims was also discarded the very next year for similar reasons.

Satyagraha was wrongly called a typical Gandhian tactic of an emotional blackmail of the British people. It is difficult to believe that the British, known for their political ocumen, would have yielded to the tactics of 'the half naked Fakir'.

The most characteristic doctrine brought to bear upon public affairs by Mahatma Gandhi, is that of non-
violent resistance of satyagraha, soul force as opposed to brute force. In Gandhiji's thinking, truth or Satya and gentleness or Ahimsa, are one in essence. Truth is God and Ahimsa God's love. Therefore Gandhiji used to say that the object of Satyagraha is to change the heart of the opponent through love. There is no place for coercion.

Secondly, it is argued that through Ahimsa and Satyagraha Gandhiji was trying to evoke the dead past, so he was a revivalist. A revivalist is essentially an upholder of the past great traditions. A revivalist thinks that the present social decadence is due to the shattering of the old order. He presumes that the holy books contain all the wisdom. But was Gandhiji one such? He did not honour the laws of Manu because they encouraged caste feelings. He never stood for the old order. He was not rigid in the matters of religion. It is unfortunate that despite his radical views, Gandhiji was misunderstood by the traditionalists as well as the revivalists. Such a misconception is voiced in *The Wound of Spring* by Marath Menon,

"This is Kaliyuga, the age that will witness the slow denial of our ancient ways and beliefs... that Gandhi whose one aim seems to be to turn the whole world upside down".  

According to some he was a revolutionary because he was opposed to the caste system and according to others


(Orient Paperbacks, New Delhi, 1968)
he was a reactionary because he dreamt of Ram Raj. His Ram Raj meant a society in which all are on an equal footing. He was not a revivalist because he did not uphold the supremacy of the scriptures and religion over nationalism.

AHIMSA: A CARDINAL PRINCIPLE OF SATYAGRAHA:

Erick Erickson holds that violence is not natural to man. He also says that non-violence is not only a demonstrable method that works but a way of life. Gandhiji demonstrated that aggressiveness in man can be better dealt with by non-violence. In fact pacifism is more natural and more instinctive to man than violence.

Gandhiji's revolution was unique in its choice of non-violence as a method of resistance. It is a fearlessly active force because its basic requirement is the man in whom the natural built-in-brake to oppose violence exists. Nayantara Sahgal in her novel Storm in Chandigarh is concerned with a society, which is bewildered in its retreat from non-violence. Is the victim to bow always down before the oppressor or to claim his right for survival? The message the writer wants to pass on to her readers is that courage is involved in taking a stand against tyranny and injustice. This is the meaning of non-violence, and the post-independence generation should learn it all over again.
Non-violence as described by Mrs. Sahgal is a far more comprehensive attitude than being merely a political weapon. The Gandhian values have not outlived their utility. Non-violence is an active force. Usman in *Situation in New Delhi*, has the Gandhian courage to dissociate from power and to lead a new revolution, asking those who wished to accompany him to take an oath of peaceful action. While violence is born out of despair, non-violence is born out of strength. Kalyan Sinha, in *This Time of Morning* says.

"It is the finest way for India at that moment in the history to win her freedom. It was the only way to fight without resentment to leave no trail of blood and despair, no gaping wounds of the mind that would never heal. It was a way particularly suited to the genius of both the Indians and the British people. For India it was a rescue from the spirits stagnation, from the crippling melody of resignation, non-co-operation was a courageous and a determined resistance to evil. And the British must one day respond to its honest unrelenting pressure, and recognise its truth."

Kalyan Sinha, known for his typical pessimism about the Gandhian means and ends, also adores Satyagraha. Therein lies the greatness of it.

As Erickson has rightly pointed out, in fashioning Satyagraha, Gandhiji had provided a kind of ritualization that prohibits the opponent to hit. This ritualization, in the form of Satyagraha, makes both the parties to face each other with confidence. There is a natural built-in-brake in the animals which prevents them from killing the enemy, when it is exhausted. This natural brake has failed in man and the Gandhian Satyagraha substitutes it.

One more question, often asked, is can Satyagraha be tried against a brute force like that of Hitler. Gandhiji, in his letter to Hitler written on 23rd July, 1939 had requested him to shun violence. He also wrote that he had experimented the force and power of non-violence in India with considerable success. What reply Hitler gave has not been recorded by Tendulkar, the biographer of Gandhiji. But one thing is certain that Ahimsa is an appeal to the instinctual catholicity and pacification of human being. Gandhiji realised this with the rare insight of a prophet.

AHIMSA: NO APOLOGY FOR COWARDICE

People who do not understand the reality of Ahimsa, call it a philosophy of sheep and a creed of cowards. A friend of Gian, in A Bend in The Ganges, by Malgonkar speaks,
"Freedom has to be won, it has to be won by sacrifice, by giving blood...non-violence is the philosophy of sheep and creed of Cowards. It is the greatest danger to the country.... college boys fall more easily for Gandhiji's type of movement, it is much more face saving. They shelter their cowardice behind the tenets of non-violence".  

Shafi Usman, the terrorist leader says, 

"They (British) had nothing but contempt for the non-violent agitation of Mahatma Gandhi and his followers, the white men, if were convinced, would never respect such abject passivity. To them the apostles of non-violence were the enemies of nation, bent on emasculating the population. They will end up by making us into a nation of sheep....three hundred million sheep."  

As a writer Malgonkar's priorities are well known. Speaking in support of armed agitation, he calls non-violence the philosophy of sheep, which is a gross under estimation of Ahimsa. According to Gandhiji, the bravest alone can wield it. Therefore, Erickson called it the 'militant Non-violence'.

35. Ibid. P-72.
Ahimsa stands in sharp contrast with war, which is nothing but imposing our will upon others as punishment to them. The non-violent Satyagrahi does not hate any one, not even his oppressor. He wins, the oppressor through an appeal to his good sense. On the other hand war is the result of the imbalances and injustice created by a previous conflict. Every war makes way for every subsequent war. If this game continued then the world might turn into a graveyard. Gandhiji's non-violence was against this. Man as animal is violent, but his spirit is non-violent. The moment man awakes to his spirit within, he cannot remain violent. Persons like Lokmanya Tilak were also not very optimistic about armed agitation, unless fifty percent chances of victory were there. Our independence would have been delayed until we fought a decisive battle against the British, which was impossible. Mrs Sahgal rightly comments on Ahimsa in her letter to Jasbir Jain,

"Strength does not come to them from physical force. It comes from the will. Non-violence does not mean submission to the will of the evil doer, but of putting one's whole soul against the will of tyrant. Working under the law of our being, it is possible for one individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire and to lay the foundation for that empire's downfall."

Gandhiji opposed untouchability on two grounds. It was a political necessity for Gandhiji to build a united front of all the Hindus before the British rule in India. So he opposed vehemently any move to segregate the untouchables from the main stream. Gandhiji went to the extent of saying that if the Dharma Shastras or Scriptures were coming in his way of including untouchables into the Hindu fold, he would put them in cold storage. On the issue of separate electorate for the untouchables, he was opposed even by the Harijan leadership but Gandhiji convinced them of the divide and rule policy of the rulers. Gandhiji speaks in Untouchable.

"I have emerged....from an ordeal of a penance, undertaken for a cause which is as dear to me as life itself. The British Government sought to pursue the policy of divide and rule in giving to our brethren of the depressed classes separate electorates in the council that will be created under the new constitution. I do not believe that the bureaucracy is sincere in its efforts to elaborate the new constitution."

There is a second reason why Gandhiji opposed this untouchability. It was because of the social

injustice and humiliation, the untouchables were suffer­
ing for centuries. For Gandhiji, war against untoucha-
bility was a socio-religious crusade. The caste Hindus
were avoiding the touch of the Sudras; even their shadows
were not allowed to contaminate the shadows of the caste
Hindus.

Gandhiji was deeply hurt by this treatment given
to the untouchables. Gandhiji's character in Anand's
novel Untouchable declares,

"I donot want to be reborn. But if I have to be
reborn, I wish to be reborn as an untouchable,
so that I may share their sorrow, sufferings
and the affronts levelled at them, in order
that I may endeavour to free myself and them
from their miserable conditions."38

Gandhiji also advised the untouchables to be clean
so that others should not look down upon them. Gandhiji
continues in Untouchable:

"If there are untouchables here...they should
realise that they are cleaning Hindu society....
They have, therefore, to purify their lives. They
should cultivate the habits of cleanliness, so
that no one shall point his finger at them".39

38. Ibid. P-162.
39. Ibid. P-163.
All the people who had assembled to listen to him were moved by the genuine concern of the speaker about the untouchables. But there was also a lone voice which dissented. Mr. Basheer Ahmed B.A. (axon) Bar-at-law comments,

"Gandhi is a humbug", it was saying "He is a fool. He is a hypocrite. In one breath he says he wants to abolish untouchability, in the other he asserts that he is an orthodox Hindu. He is counter to the spirit of our age, which is democracy."

This was a charge brought by some of the 'intellectuals' in India. There is no contradiction in Gandhiji's statement. How does his being a good Hindu come in his way of abolishing untouchability? By being a good Hindu, he can be a good Muslim a good Christian and a good man. For a good man it is the ethics and morality that matter rather than the religion, that isolates persons from persons and subjects some of them to inhuman tortures.

40. Ibid. P-165 - 166.
THE HEROIC AGE: THE SECOND PHASE

The second phase of the 'Heroic Age' is more turbulent and eventful, because the British Raj in India used bayonet and baton to suppress the Indian people, when they aired their opinions in non-violent ways. Although the Indians helped the British during the Second World War, the promises given to grant more political freedom were broken and cruel bills like Rowlatt Act were passed to add salt to the souring wounds of the Indians. When people protested peacefully, they were massacred in cold blood in Amritsar on April 13, 1919. Abbas describes the event:

"The rifles kept on barking, the bullets came flying in an uninterrupted stream, men and women and children fell every way, there were screams and moans and groans. . . . The Red face ordered the rifles to be directed at them and they were mown down before they could pass through to safety. All round them lay dead, the dying and the wounded."41

The 'Preventive murder' of Amritsar was followed by a series of humiliating orders. People were flogged in public and were made to crawl. Hostages were taken and property was confiscated. The Hindus and Muslims were hand-cuffed in pairs to demonstrate the consequence of their unity.

But Gandhiji was not deterred. He organised a Hindu-Muslim front against the British rulers. In 1920 he gave a call to surrender all British Titles, boycott foreign goods, withdrawal from Schools, resorting to Charakha and non-co-operation etc. Rabindranath Tagore renounced his Knighthood declaring,

"The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in their incongruous context of humiliation and I, for my part, wish to stand shorn all special distinctions, by the side of my countrymen, who for their so called insignificance, are liable to suffer degradation not fit for human beings."

Venkataramani's novel Kandan the Patriot is about a young man called Kandan who, through sheer merit, manages to acquire a post in the time-honoured institution, the I.C.S. But he decides to give up his job so as to be able to fight the Satanic Govt. through the power of Satyagraha, Ahimsa, Love and Willing Sufferance.

As regards the second point of the programme, the boycott of foreign goods, and resorting to Khadi, the novelists have taken the onlooker's stand, but some writers like R.K. Narayan have shown genuine concern:

42. Tagore, Rabindranath, quoted by Mehrotra S.R.
Gandhi & The Indian National Movement
(Bombay, 1977) p. 128.
"On the day he got his Khadi clothes, a simple dhobi and a jibba, he took off the clothes he had been wearing, heaped them in the middle of the street, poured half a bottle of kerosine over the lot, and applied a match; his old clothes caught fire and burned brightly."43

Khaddar was not only a means to subsidize the poor man's life, but was also a status symbol of millions of freedom fighters. Manohar Malgonkar acknowledges the value of Khaddar in *A Bend in the Ganges*:

"It was the uniform of the Indian National movement. It proclaims you a soldier in the army that was dedicated to Truth and Ahimsa."44

The charakha was considered as an instrument for social change. Spinning was considered a social philosophy. Bhabani Bhattacharya, a Gandhian himself, considers in *Shadow from Ladakh* the Charakha as the Gandhian reply to the machine,

"The wheel that turned cotton into yarn had been in Gandhi's hand an instrument of social philosophy and so it was still in Satyajit's reckoning...The wheel was a common man's reply to the Power fed machine."45

This part of the history of Indian National Freedom Movement is well presented by all the writers of the Indian English novels, because it is full of dramatic and poetic qualities. But the instances of pseudo-Gandhians, who spin and weave as a ritual are also not wanting. The municipal chairman in Waiting for The Mahatma is one such opportunist, who uses Khaddar and Gandhiji's name for selfish ends. R.K. Narayan writes,

"He worked all the previous night to attain this effect, and had also secured for himself a Khaddar jibba and a white Gandhi cap, for his wife a white Khaddar Sari, and for his son a complete outfit in Khadder." 46

Vanchi in The Chronicles of Kedaram is an other classic example of such an opportunist and turncoat. He exploited the dispute over Mantapam between two Iyengar groups. The national movement was a golden opportunity to throw his lot with the Gandhi creed. Vanchi of 1939, is the representative of a new class of opportunist leadership. This was a class of unscrupulous opportunists and totally alienated people, who whipped up provincial and communal feelings to keep themselves in power. Ironically enough such people managed to become very important people in the movement. This kind of unbridled greed

and lust of such people brought discredit to the Gandhian movement.

Non-co-operation movement was another wonderful weapon Gandhiji had in his quiver. The easiest and the surest way of his countrymen gaining their freedom was to learn to say 'no' and non-co-operate with the rulers. If such non-co-operation is shown, the British would find it difficult to continue here. S.R. Mehrotra quotes J.R. Sleeley, a British official, speaking at Cambridge University in 1880.

"Now, if a feeling of common nationality began to exit there (in India) only feebly, if, without inspiring any active desire to drive out the foreigners, if it only created a notion that it was shameful to assist him in maintaining his dominion, from that day our empire would cease to exist." 47

Gandhiji knew this very well so he wrote in Hind Swaraj in 1909:

"The English have not taken India, we have given to them. They are in India not because of their strength but because we keep them." 48

47. Mehrotra S.R. Gandhi & The Indian National Movement, (Bombay, 1977) P.140.

48. Ibid, P-140.
The non-co-operation movement was suspended by Gandh-ji because the people attacked the police station at Chauri Chaura. Many people were disappointed when the movement was called off. There was no significant activity in the national life of the people. The vacuum created in the political life of the country was filled in by communal movements like Suddhi and Tablig.

The Congress, which was divided for not having listened to the counsel of Gandhiji, became united once again when 'Simon Commission' was touring India and gave Gandhiji full power to lead the movement. In December 1929, Gandhiji initiated the second movement by denying the unpopular salt tax. The British government must have been amused why Gandhiji chose to deny the salt tax alone. But Nayantara Sahagal significantly points out,

"Gandhi made symbols of the lowliest commodities salt and cloth, both vital necessities of life and both heavily taxed."49

The Dandi March, undertaken by Gandhiji, drew the attention of the whole world. The Gandhi-army was to cover 200 miles from Sabarmati to Dandi to prepare salt. K.A.Abbas writes glorifying the event.

49. Sahgal Nayantara, A Time to be Happy.
"This was a new kind of army waging a new kind of war and there was no precedent in military history for these tactics and strategy. A new word was required to describe it, Satyagraha it was in fact, the battle of Truth."\(^{50}\)

The Mahatma's march to the sea, to break the salt law is compared to the march of Christ from Galilee to the sea. Abbas compares Gandhiji to Christ in these lines:

"It is an old story - nineteen hundred and thirty years old....I was quoting only from the bible".\(^{51}\)

This was brought to the notice of Mahatma Gandhi but Gandhiji earnestly requested the journalists not to compare him to Christ. Robert, the American Journalist, was surprised at the simplicity and humility of the great man. He says,

"One who was himself a saint and prophet could have that much humility".\(^{52}\)

\(^{50}\) Abbas K.A. \textit{Inqilah}, P- 256.

\(^{51}\) Ibid, P- 257.

\(^{52}\) Ibid, P- 257.
THE POLITICAL DEAD-LOCK AND THE CONGRESS REVOLT - 1939-42,

(QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT)

In April 1940, the allied forces suffered severe reverses in Europe and in order to get more help from India, the British government declared that India would be granted self rule after the war. But India rejected the offer. The Congress, under the influence of Gandhiji, passed a resolution on 8th August 1942, which is popularly known as the 'Quit India' movement. This is the last rebellion of the congress against the British in India. The slogan 'Quit India' set the Indian mind on fire and young and old alike were shouting at the British to quit India. R.K. Narayan Comments on the magic of 'Quit India',

"The Mahatma had in his famous resolution of August 1942 said: 'Britain must quit India' and the phrase had the potency of a mantra or a magic formula. Throughout the length and breadth of the land, people cried 'Quit India'. The Home Secretary grew uneasy at the sound of it. It became a prohibited phrase in polite society. After the Mahatma uttered the phrase, he was put in prison, but the phrase took life and flourished, and did ultimately produce enough power to send British out". 53

The same novelist has recorded the feelings of different classes of people about the 'Quit India' movement. To the simple village-folk 'Quit India' meant Mahatma Gandhi becoming the emperor of India.

"What will happen, Sir, if they leave who will rule the country?"

"We will rule it ourselves".

"Will Mahatmaji become our emperor, Sir?"

"Why not?" 54

R.K. Narayan does not fail to draw some funny caricatures, whose first and last concern was money, let anything happen to the country. They were totally unaware of what was going on in the country. They measured everything, even the country's freedom, in terms of money. A forest contractor in Waiting for the Mahatma, when tackled by Sriram says,

"Ah Mahatmaji, I gave five thousand rupees to Harijan Fund. I have a portrait of him in my house, the first face I see is his, as soon as I get up from bed."

"Do you know what he means by non-violence?"

"Yes, Yes, I have never missed a day's lecture when he came to Malgudi." 55

54. Ibid, P-69.

55. Ibid, P-72.
There were some seditious extremists like Jagadish, who often spoke in terms of 'Smashing the back bone' of Britain, even though Gandhiji advised peace in the 'Quit India' movement.

"Britain's backbone must be smashed, and it lies in the courts, schools and offices and railway lines, from these she draws the strength for her survival." 56

When disorder prevailed in the Indian rank and file, after all the top leaders were in jail, such seditious elements were active to add confusion to the already prevailing chaos. Finally, good sense dawned upon Sriram and he turned back. Kai Nichison writes about the Gandhian impact on this age.

"The impact of Gandhiji's teachings and personality made itself felt in the Indo-Anglian literature of the 'Heroic Age' and the fiction of India echoes, still to-day, the words and thoughts of the Mahatma. The Gandhi literature, which put aside every impulse from England and devoted creative efforts in creating Mahatma's words into fiction by modelling the characters to act as Gandhi would have wanted them to behave". 57

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56. Ibid, P-123.

In this way the Indian English novelists have successfully mythicized the heroic deeds of Gandhiji. But the pride of heroism for having achieved something great did not last long because much against Gandhiji's will our country was divided. The following chapter deals with the partition of India and its aftermath.