CHAPTER II

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The critical pronouncement that art is life seen through a temperament posits a dichotomy between positive and negative approaches to life, the one vouchsafing for life's continuity on earth, and the other the negation of it. A creative writer who is committed to life sees the purpose of his art as a medium, to quote Mulk Raj Anand, "to interpret the truth of life from felt experience and not from books... to see in the intricate web of circumstances of human existence, the inner core of reality" (14).

When the inner core of reality is identified, life shows itself to be endless. This positive approach to life amidst despair, desolation and disillusionment is perceptible in the novels of some of the writers of Post-Modern Indian fiction; one among such prominent writers is Chaman Nahal. K.K. Sharma comments on Bhabani Bhattacharya that he "is endowed with a transparently positive vision of life" (202), and that "from his assertion of ethical values and the synthesis of the old and the new and of opposite extremes emanate Bhabani Bhattacharya's final vision of the affirmation of life" (202). The artistic presentation of the affirmation of life, likewise, can be observed in the novels of Chaman Nahal.
Regarding the stance taken by him in an interview with B.S. Goyal, in The Hindustan Times (1978), Chaman Nahal states, "I don't have a commitment with a slant. I am only committed to the affirmation of life. Life consists in taking on the challenges. I'm essentially an affirmationist". All his major protagonists explicate this conviction of their Creator. Life has to be lived and since life is a continuum, human beings strive to understand what constitutes the purpose of life on earth. It is here that the scriptures come to one's aid. They emphatically ascertain that to live one's life effectively, one has to follow certain principles of Dharma.

The term Dharma is derived from the root (Dhr) which means to sustain. Dharma is that moral law which sustains the world, society and the individual. As stated in the Mahabharatha, Dharma is so called on account of its capacity to sustain the world. On account of Dharma, people are sustained separately in their respective positions or stations. It is the religio-ethical concept generally translated in English as 'Virtue', 'Merit', 'Duty', 'Religious Acts', 'Acts of piety', 'Morality', 'Right conduct' or the 'Rules of conduct of the people'. (Prathiba, No.2., 1977, 15)
Knowledge of the religious texts leads one to understand the composite view of life, which culminates in self-realisation. Even to a practical minded individual the tenets of the scriptures are directions towards a fruitful end because they show him the correct ways of life. Nayantara Sahgal has struck the right cord when she says that Hinduism is “neither a creed nor a religion but a way of life sprung from the soil, the stones, the mountains and the rivers of India” (25).

Dharma, in its essence, can be called a way of life. An adherer of the Dharmic way of life cherishes certain principles mentioned in almost all Holy texts irrespective of their religious overtures. The Vedic religion is called Sanatana Dharma and “it is more a way of life than just a religion” (The Hindu, Thursday, Nov.19, 1998).

Of the Scriptural Trinity of Hinduism, the Upanishads, Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita, the Gita, according to Swami Chidbhavananda, proves to be “the essence of the Upanishads” (3), since the Vedanta Philosophy it embodies, “is made easy of understanding” (3), and “one who has studied and understood the Bhagavad Gita may be said to have caught the cardinal teachings of the Upanishads” (3).

Dr. Chaman Nahal’s novels categorize the characters according to their reaction to ethical and philosophical principles mentioned in these Holy texts.
We have a group of characters who are highly orthodox and who strictly adhere to the superficialities of the rigid religious codes. In *My True Faces* (1973), Kamal’s parents, his grandmother, the innumerable uncles and aunts are typical examples of the orthodox Hindus.

“Dharma was the cardinal virtue taught at the home Kamal grew up” (17). Prostrating at the feet of elders, obeying their commands, removing the shoes before entering the room, “where they had their temple” (17), suffering without protesting, having food after bath are some of the codes of conduct expected of youngsters.

The elders preoccupy themselves with activities like Pranayama, chanting of the Gita and visiting the temples. “Getting up early was an excellence lauded by Dharma” (17).

Any voice of protest raised by the young would be immediately silenced with the threat, “you will ever be unhappy, so long as you don’t follow your Dharma” (18). The Grand mother being the oldest member of the family “everything she ever did was always right” (17).

Lala Mathur Das, the father of Kamal, is a self-made man. As far as Kamal can comprehend “Dharma did not keep his father himself particularly happy” (18).
Dissatisfied with all the accumulated assets, he quotes Sastras as stating, "without a roof on your head, which you might lawfully call your own... there was no Mukti for you, no redemption" (19).

The fulfilment of his desires depended on his religiosity, thinks Kamal. But unfortunately his prayers were not answered.

All his devotion or bhakti had not taught him how to resign himself to his fate. In theory he applauded the concept and indeed held it out to every member of his family as the only guideline to follow in life.... But when misfortune befell him, which was often, he lost all self-possession. (20)

It is Kamal’s grandmother who impresses him much. Amidst very orthodox surroundings she is quite unorthodox. Though superstitious, she taught Kamal things “which were beyond knowledge, beyond the wisdom of this world” (21).

Appreciation of nature, being compassionate to the sick and the needy, showing respect to the dead are some of the traits every individual has to develop since “all paths lead to the same God” (21). This had been the greatest lesson Kamal learnt from his grandmother as a boy. She had also taught him that one truly takes the name of the Lord through action and good deeds. His
grandmother's authority was the Gita. Kamal had noticed "her Gita full of marginal notes" (24).

Childhood obedience to parental authority has to give way to adult indulgence when the boy enters manhood. Independent thinking leads to greater incompatibility. Kamal painfully realises that he had disobeyed his father in more than one way. He had not taken up his father's business, had decided to marry a modern girl of his choice. But according to the elders, "he had essentially remained a good boy" (25). He had not "deviated from the path of Dharma" (25). He had not indulged in any affair; had consented to marry the woman chosen by his parents; conceded to the traditional demand of dominating his wife because dharma says the husband is a God.

And so ultimately every argument ended around this nebulous myth of dharma. Centuries old laws, centuries old dogmas continued to survive because they were not the laws invented by man, open to correction and change with the passage of time but divine laws ever supreme, ever correct, beyond human scrutiny, beyond challenge. (28)

Incompatibility is more obvious when an independent woman who is also the daughter-in-law refuses to rise up to the expectations of the elders. Irksomeness in Malti’s behaviour is the result of her conviction that traditional
beliefs and conventions curb her freedom. Kamal also reveals his sense of independence when he refuses to accept any dowry from Malti's father in spite of knowing that his father's only worry was "the financial aspect of the ceremony" (34). He considers it "a crime against humanity to buy or sell matrimonial partners" (35).

There is open defiance in Malti against obligations imposed by the elders, especially, when she is expected to fall at their feet several times a day, as a mark of respect.

The hauteur in his wife's bearings makes it impossible for Kamal to maintain his mental equipoise and as the hiatus in the relationship widens, he realises that his marriage is a failure. But he feels helpless because "the Shastras made this a relationship which could never break, which was eternal"(45).

Brought up in a western set up and obsessed with the cleanliness-mania, Malti finds everything in her husband's house disgusting, even the eating habits of Lala Mathura Das. She does not prove herself to be another branch of the family tree but only an axe which has come to cut the family tree. No member of the family is exempted from her crude and vengeful remarks.
Kamal's attempts to preserve the sanctity of the marriage prove futile. He had hoped that marriage would give him independence from other people.

This was a part of his dharma he dreaded the most, the necessity to submit to innumerable nobodies who were connected with you through one bond or the other. The uncles and aunts by blood he could understand, yet the thousands of 'uncles' and 'aunts' who materialized from nowhere and demanded attention, the parasites on your emotional reserve, them he hated. (48)

Kamal had insisted on moving out and taking up a house of his own to inhale the spirit of independence. The elders' injunction, he had thought, could only prove to establish a barrier between him, Malti and his parents. In the orthodox surroundings in which he was brought up, every one was superstitious, whereas everything was ordered in Malti's house. Malti had been a medical nurse before her marriage.

Western education had helped her develop hatred for anything that was orthodox or traditional. It is this emancipated feeling that makes her feel that marriage had placed her in captivity. Even the child in her womb, she believes, had made her a captive. On the contrary, the elders strongly emphasize that marriage can never be broken. Misunderstanding and bickering
between the married couple should never lead to divorce. They openly admonish the younger generation's hasty decisions. Their constant advice to them is to have faith in God. The elders in Lala Mathura Das’s house live up to the orthodox order.

Mutual adjustments between man and wife would lead to the maintenance of the family. As another alternative to the hasty decision of seeking divorce, they have the horoscopes of the affected party analysed in order to find if there is any way to nullify the evil which causes the disruption of smooth relationships.

The family’s getting together to sort out the problems and find a solution usually ends in an altercation which is compared by the author to the ‘battle of Mahabharatha’. But in spite of the wrangles, the ultimate goal before them is always the sustenance of the family. Truce follows with minor and major compromises. This is what happens when Kamal is urged by the elders to call Malti back after she has forsaken him offering no sign of return.

The scene where Kamal’s family and Malti’s family meet is a typical Kurushetra. Sides are taken, darts are sent, some powerful, some meek; some are defeated, some made submissive, but the final outcome is one of compulsory acceptance of a truce based on the honour and pride of the family. It is Kamal who is victimised because their decision is based on Dharma.
“Dharma insists that the place of a wife is in her husband’s home” (142).

He further states:

Dharma insists that a husband treat his wife as his equal.

Dharma demands that a wife obey her husband. Dharma demands that a husband loves his wife. Dharma asserts that the union of a husband and wife is inseparable until death.

Dharma asserts that a husband respect his wife’s wishes.

Dharma directs a wife to bear many children to her husband.

Dharma directs a husband to provide for his wife liberally (143).

All elders assert that even the most liberal Hindu finds himself to possess all orthodox beliefs and superstitions.

Thus, Dharma leads them to reconciliation. According to them, even if Kamal’s wife has humiliated him, reprimanded him, left him in a suffering inferno, he, as a dutiful husband, is not to cherish any ill-will against her. It would be better to have her back and live with her because Dharma expects one to do so. If not the husband’s concern for his wife, the father’s responsibility towards his child at least should make him accept them unconditionally. The elders’ world, as depicted by Chaman Nahal in My True Faces, revolves round the principle of Dharma.
Chaman Nahal's second novel, Azadi, introduces us to another set of Orthodox Hindus, namely, Lala Kanshi Ram, the patriarch and his domesticated wife Prabha Rani. Prabha Rani is a woman of simple faith who believes that "all created matter was one, man and beast and bird and the flowers and the trees to boot" (29). Her husband, to her, was "an avatar of Vishnu" (14), the irony being Lala Kanshi Ram is not a worshipper of idols. He pays respect to the idol Krishna because He was Prabha Rani's God. She is very proud of the fact that her husband is the most learned man in the neighbourhood. She is the typical representative of the innocent illiterate and modest woman to whom Pati is Parameshwar. Like an obedient disciple, she listens to the story of the Mahabharatha narrated by her husband.

"He was the Lord and the master, but in disasters it was she who took charge and steered the ship" (41).

This typifies the strength of a woman who shoulders the responsibility of her husband, and if the situation warrants, even surpasses him in taking up the reins and controlling the affairs. But at the same time the simplicity and modesty do not forsake her.

"She was a woman of the soil who believed in rhythm in things happening in their own order" (41).

Chaman Nahal's third novel, Into Another Dawn, deals with another
orthodox Hindu family, whose preoccupation is with the pilgrims, guiding them through various rituals with the faith of bringing them the satisfaction of appeasing the dead and paving the way for their salvation. When there is expectation in the orthodox parents that their sons also should follow their footsteps, repulsion on the part of the young leads to the segregation of the family. Here again we have a clash of wills. Ravi, the protagonist of the novel, succeeds in attending school only because of his stubbornness, because his parents want him to join the family business of supervising the souls of the pilgrims.

Somebody died somewhere, somebody's ashes to be immersed in the Ganges, someone wanted a dead grandmother to be remembered, some child had to be named, another's head was to be shaved or there was to be a thread ceremony or a marriage. (24)

Constant nagging at home makes Ravi retaliate in silence by secretly planning to go abroad in search of new pastures.

Another type of orthodoxy is perceived in the form of headstrong elitist group who prevent all attempts of the people, to quote O.P.Mathur, to set “Our cultural values straight” (96). These characters appear in Chaman Nahal’s The English Queens.
Contrary to these orthodox people we have the protagonists of Nahal's novels reacting powerfully against the conventionalities and finding their own way to self-realisation. Referring to them as sharing a few common traits O.P. Mathur comments:

The novels of Chaman Nahal thus work out the universal themes of understanding, sympathy, love and authenticity of feeling and action in social, national and international contexts with a solid bedrock of Indian life, legend and philosophy under them. In all his novels Chaman Nahal like his own Kamal, Kanshi Ram, Ravi and Pradeep is on the side of life (with a capital 'L') and the positive ethical and philosophical values that emerge from it and make it meaningful. (96)

The quest motif is vividly presented in My True Faces. Any progress that an individual makes in his life is from a minor to a major perfection. Kamal Kant, the protagonist, is a laudable character whose search initially begins as a search for his missing wife and son but that search ends in attaining the realisation that all faces one sees in this world are many faces of the lord, and to 'know' this, one should possess 'the ability to change within the context
of his identity' (78), as Kami, the Principal of the College where Malti studied, puts it.

Swami Vivekananda’s definition of life as “the unfoldment and development of a being under circumstances tending to press it down” (127) can be applied to Kamal since it is he who experiences the multiplicity of life and moves into a world of absolute freedom.

In spite of his liberal education Kamal strives hard to establish a cordial relationship between his family, his wife and himself. His efforts to be a dutiful son, an affectionate brother, a loving husband and a doting father prove futile since all the circumstances, he faces, are beyond his control. The conflict between his wife and his father can be represented as a conflict between “modernity versus orthodoxy” (88). Malti’s house is referred to as ‘this’ house and Kamal’s ‘that’ house. Malti’s parents had “taken on Western manners without taking on Western values” (76). Having had a Western education, Malti had imbibed “the arrogance of the anglicized Hindu” (76) which had been her father’s trait. Kamal’s meeting with Kami, the Principal, makes it clear to Kamal that it was a mismatch between Malti and himself. The fact, that Malti was growing older, and because Kamal had a steady income, had made Rao Sahib, Malti’s father choose Kamal as his son-in-law. Conventional parents-in-law, a domineering husband and unsuitable surroundings prove
unconducive to her emotional make up, and paves the way for her deserting her husband. Kamal’s first obstacle is the discord that he finds in his marital life. Unable to condescend and compromise, Kamal is gradually pushed into the vortex of conflicts and sufferings. An added burden is the criticism of his sisters who blame him for choosing the wrong girl. He is referred to as being naive by Karni. But Kamal is suave without being naive, since, in him, we find the sensible person searching for a solution without harming the sentiments of those who are involved with him. When suggestions are offered from various quarters in the guise of friends and relatives, he never rejects them but, at the same time, acts according to what his conscience dictates to him.

He sees his mother often uncommunicative, but finds in her the possible means to move ahead with greater confidence and conviction and without losing his identity. The search for his wife indeed ends in a search for identity.

He oscillates between hope and fear. His fear that both his wife and child would be dead is negated by Mukut. This leads him to continue his search. The search that he undergoes is not destined to bring him any reconciliation between himself and his wife. It is meant to be a spiritual journey, a search for self-realisation, a search to know what life is.
Education has not made Malti a better person according to Kamal’s sisters and the rejoinder of his brother-in-law that “the higher the education the more rude they are” (99), stifles Kamal, but he keeps his private grievance to himself because it is anticipated that he should go through the purgatorial fire before emerging purified and acquiring a knowledge of what he is in reality. When he faces the innumerable inquisitive people who made him feel more desolate, he tries to play the part of a perfect gentleman to himself.

Life had its pitfalls for everyone. Yet one must learn to face them with composure. Dharma demanded that of us, didn’t it? Right you are buddy. The two selves in him, the rebellious one and the submissive were one for the day.(102)

At every point of his life, when Kamal feels there is no improvement, there is no growth, opportunity gives him the mettle to continue his arduous journey through life, and Kamal knows “he could travel only one road at a time, and he had to do it alone” (103).

Alongside the urge to move forward unwittingly, there is also the pull of the flesh too strong that he wants, through volition, “to go beyond her (Malti)
and beyond dharma, all in one leap" (111), but an invisible hand pulls him up from the great fall. He seeks refuge in drinks in order to move into the world of oblivion. It is a big negative the family receives in reply to the cables, the telegrams and advertisements sent to trace Malti and his son, which is, "the ultimate reach of the Vedas that saved you lot of explaining. Na iti, na iti, na iti, not this, not this, not this" (112).

Kamal, as a spiritual aspirant, has started his pilgrimage. And the journey has to be undertaken without anybody to depend on. The Peepal tree near Lahori Gate, which was his grandmother's favourite tree, is now the Bodhi tree under whose awning he feels enlightened. Kamal also strikes us as a seer of life. "He wanted life, not wisdom. He wanted the right of making a choice even it be the choice that took him to damnation" (115).

From fetters and bondage he wants to move into a world of total freedom. When his vision widens, he acquires a feeling of oneness with even the stream of men who were entering the houses of prostitutes. Those men are his brothers, he feels. Even in the company of the prostitute, he sees the fierce image of Krishna making him aware that "the pain of life was the pain of being a man. It was a pain by choice. It was the pain of dreaming dreams" (118).

Bogged into a medley of feelings, confronted by innumerable unconnected thoughts, swayed by emotions of guilt, Kamal experiences the
pull of Maya. The key to a higher life is in overcoming the consciousness of physical pleasure. Kamal is no exception. When there is onward movement towards spiritual enlightenment one has to be cautious as not to fall into the maze of Maya. There is a great conflict in his mind. He tries to find answers to several questions of complex nature.

Where’s Malti? Where’s Lallu? Are they alive? And the prostitute... What did he get out of it? What did he shatter? Was the revolt over? Was the freedom won? What had he shattered? He had shattered illusion. The illusion of Dharma? Yes – of Dharma. (119)

It is when he concludes that no single act in isolation can confer freedom on any individual that he painfully realises that “he was back where he had started, a felon of tradition” (120).

His sister’s nod to consult a pandit to find a way out of this problem takes Kamal to the pandit who points to him that his (Kamal’s) “rashi shows you can master the world if you want” (121). What is required of Kamal is faith. Kamal is ready to have faith and belief if there is a chance for him to move out of distress. Even those who are orthodox and superstitious don’t
want him "to be caught in the same vice" (122). Kamal’s mother tries to
defend her son for once. Kamal takes the advice of the pandit because the
charm that the pandit gives him is only "the ancient fire worship" (123).

Kamal’s attempts to consult a medium to know the whereabouts of his
wife and son end in his being totally duped by the man who uses the medium.
Kamal’s father admonishes him for being superstitious.

When Kamal decides to undertake the Odyssean journey, he is informed
of Malti’s "resting at her father’s place all the time" (134). This leads to the
"second battle of Mahabharatha" (136), to be fought in the house of Lala
Mathura Das Chopra. When reconciliation is round the corner, Kamal wakes
up into a new awareness. When the merits and demerits of Malti are analysed,
Kamal is gradually moving into a spiritual awakening. He now remains unsure
whether he actually wants Malti back or not. "The ritual of reconciliation"
(148), having been completed, Kamal is advised to go to Tilak Nagar by the
elders in order to recall his wife. Even though one part of him secretly agrees
with what they tell him, the ‘self’ in him knows that that is not what he actually
needs. According to O.P.Mathur, his experiences in the "purgatorial fire of
suffering" (89), now longs for the "baptismal waters of rain"(89).

"There was a famine in his soul and he longed for water. The seed will
sprout if only it would rain. It was too hot. It was too hot" (144).
The supplication for rain is symbolical of Kamal’s life moving on to a higher spiritual plane. The killing of the flies represents the killing of the ego.

“No wonder Krishna chose killing in preference to compassion” (145).

The many faces he sees while moving into the side lanes are the faces of those who had resigned themselves to their fate.

“They had no identity, no selves of their own. That’s how dharma wanted them to live by merging yourself with the mass. The spirit of life bequeathed to them permitted of no withdrawal” (147).

Kamal now realises that real and authentic life, to quote O.P.Mathur, “consists in moving from the rigid and orthodox Dharma to a true worship of God as a principle of life and death synthesising and transcending both” (89).

He recollects the words of Lord Krishna to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita. Krishna asks Arjuna to act.

A life of activity is preferable to a life of meditation, said he. Only act not for yourself. Act for me, he said.

Surrender your Karmas to me. And me is your clan, your family, your tribe-act for them. You’re not you, you’re a part of the rest. (147)

Kamal now wants to be his true self. “I want to be myself. I want to be myself” (148). At the same time there appears to be no escape for him from
"The Order of the Dharma" (148). His having to take Malti back sounds to him a moral necessity. As he moves towards Malti's house, the strange phenomenon that he witnesses is when, in the place of the traffic policeman, he sees the Sadhu who had warned him that he would one day return to mother Yamuna. The disc in his hand says 'Dharma'. Now the question of the real significance of Dharma raises itself before him. His mind is overpowered with the constant repetition of the word Dharma as if he were repeating the rosary.

Dharma leads to the acceptance of his wronged wife, but when he finally reaches her place he has only one question to ask her. He wants to know why she has accepted to return to him if she really hates him. The utter lack of contrition on her part compels him to finally forsake her with a final statement that he doesn't want her.

When he moves out into the street, his mind is relieved of the entire burden he has been bearing unwillingly. His mind is filled with hatred towards her. But the sight of Lord Krishna in the temple makes him have a composite view of life. The merging of Lord Krishna and Siva into one offers him a revelation. The transformation is sudden because spiritual transformation comes suddenly. Now all faces appear to be the many faces of the lord. Kamal now relives the momentous life of Arjuna when God reveals Himself in
full glory. The two verses in the Vibuthi Yoga stand testimony to this truth.

Chapter X of the Bhagavad Gita contains two verses which reveal the spiritual truth.

"I am the self, O, Gudakesa, seated in the hearts of all beings. I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings" (20), and "whatever being there is glorious, prosperous or powerful, know that to have sprung but from a spark of my splendour" (41).

Thus Kamal’s moving out of the temple has a spiritual connotation. Nahal wants to establish the truth that the place for self-realisation, to quote O.P.Mathur, is “not the inner sanctum of the temple but the vast fields of life” (89).

The Lord’s words keep ringing in his ears as he moves out.

"I know, I already know – I know everything. But she too is my face as you are and all my faces are true faces" (155).

Kamal now has realised his true identity. His mind is free from all feelings of animosity, pity and fear. It is as transparent as crystal because now he has surmounted all types of bondage, and has entered the world of eternal freedom and bliss. All faces, including Malti’s, are the true faces of the Lord. Beyond this there can never be any spiritual progress. His experiences are of a
spiritual kind because they ultimately lead him to a life of perfection. He has now understood, has realised the composite view of life. In this realisation he finds life's continuation. Life is eternal. It is a real life because his is a realised being. It is an affirmation of life on earth. He stands comparison to the hero Sanyasi of Tagore's Sanyasi, who travels from the negation of desolation to the hearty affirmation of life.

Lala Kanshi Ram, in Azadi, in spite of his ordeals, hopes that he would establish himself in life. The gruesome partition in the history of India and its aftermath leave all the people desperate, desolate and fearful about their future, which appears to them dismal and bleak. The atrocities of the Muslims on the Hindus on their journey to India are expressions of the communal frenzy in men, and the journey is one of hard travail. There is only death and destruction. But Lala Kanshi Ram rises above the normal human level, and shows himself to be an avowed believer in the continuity of life. S.C. Bhatia remarks:

Lala Kanshi Ram and his family [are]
caught in the psycho-political forces generated by the partition between India and Pakistan.
These forces threaten to destroy the protagonist's
hold on life around him. The various adjustments
made by him to maintain it constitute a powerful
portrayal of an individual’s developing consciousness. (371)

His ardent belief in Hinduism doesn’t posit any animosity towards the
Muslims. Instead, he considers them members of his own family.

Forced by the declaration of Independence and the tragedy of partition
to migrate to India, Lala Kanshi Ram stands witness to the discernible distance
between the Hindus and the Muslims among whom before the partition there
had been communal amity, but he does not become agitated. He stays behind
to collect all the people and to make arrangements for their journey to a land,
which does not assure them accommodation or occupation. As a member of a
traditional middle class family, he adheres to the principle of simple living and
high thinking which is what is expected of an individual according to Dharma.
When the entire locality is disturbed and disrupted by the announcement, he
does not expressly reveal his anxiety; instead, offers words of consolation, and
points out the truth that during moments of intense turbulence and frenzy, one
should not lose hope and faith. He, to quote Nahal, is “a forced exile” (40).
He does not distinguish between religion and people. All are children of God,
he tells his wife. When partition involves, to quote G.P.Sarma, “displacement,
hatred and unimaginable indignity" (240), Lala Kanshi Ram shows himself to be a self-effacing man who does not lose patience, piety and sympathy.

At the camp, the Indian refugees are silent spectators of ‘communal tension’, ‘sporadic acts of murder, arson and organised violence. Lala Kanshi Ram is above personal concern. He moves about like a leader extending his services to them, and exhorts them to accept what little is given to them without any protest. But, when he witnesses the atrocities committed on womenfolk, he silently prays for the safe landing in their homeland.

When his family is caught in the current of Muslim hostility, he still holds his dignity. The loss of his daughter and his son-in-law makes him ponder over the meaninglessness of communalism, fanaticism and narrow nationalism. He, like Tagore, yearns to uphold the Dharmic principle of one family, one religion and one race when one would see the materialisation of ‘Sadaiva Kudumbam’ (All belong to the family of God).

As a true guru he imparts the value of universal brotherhood to Arun.

“Many parts of him had died, but there were others still alive, forcefully and affirmatively alive, and he knew he was not defeated” (274).

It is an impartial view that Kanshi Ram takes when he states, “what I mean is whatever the Muslims did to us in Pakistan we are doing it to them
here” (338). He also adds, “we have sinned as much. We need their forgiveness” (340).

What we find in Corinthian Chapter 4 verse 8 of the Bible that “we are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed, we are perplexed but not in despair” can be applied to Lala Kanshi Ram because even in disaster he remains dignified. While the train moves towards Delhi, Kanshi Ram recapitulates the scene of battle between the Kauravas and the Pandavas at Kurushethra, which is now Delhi. Asnani states that when the train is about to reach Delhi, “his individual consciousness has become one with a wider national consciousness”. He visualises the gruesome scenes enacted before his eyes:

domestic, amorous, ghastly, lurid, playful, heroic, pathetic and symbolic, the scene of desolation in the refugee camp and of parents crying over the loss of their near and dear ones, the scene of the refugee casting a longing, lingering look on the buildings, factories, churches, temples, schools at the time of their leaving their home town for destinations unknown to them, the scene of the ghastly attacks on the caravan of refugees motivated by communal frenzy, the
shameless parading of raped, naked women of all ages in streets for the delectation of the sex maniacs, the pangs of labour pains of a child-birth in a moving train, the self-immolation of a Sikh refugee Niranjan Singh who is not prepared to get his hair shaven off for safety-all these are the scenes too deep for tears and too poignant to be forgotten. (58)

These only help to widen his outlook on humanity and conclude that eternal values like love and compassion alone matter in order to keep the world moving, life moving.

According to O.P.Mathur, "Lala Kanshi Ram thus takes a stance which clearly demonstrates his freedom from commitment to anything except love, compassion, tolerance and forgiveness in a word, freedom of the spirit and the mind which alone makes political freedom meaningful" (90).

Lala Kanshi Ram's surmounting the problems he faces is indicative of the fact that he is progressing in life. Krishna's clarion call to Arjuna in the Gita is to fight the battle of life with courage and conviction so that action that goes with self-control, detachment, austerity, and a passion for service enriches a man's life. Lala Kanshi Ram illustrates this postulation of the Gita. His life proves fruitful because of the application of the Dharmic tenets proclaimed in
the Gita. He lives up to the expectations of a wise man. The Gita states that a wise man’s attitude towards creatures high and low will be the same.

The impartial treatment that is meted out to the members of the family, the friends in the neighbourhood and the servants bears testimony to his greatness. He is also a champion of righteousness because he does not distinguish between friends and foes.

The stature that he acquires in life is equal to the level of a Mahatma. He says, “Yes, I can’t hate the Muslims any more” (338). When a trace of racial awareness is perceptible in his wife, he corrects her “don’t hate them then” (339).

He is beyond religious barrier for he adopts the basic principle of Jesus Christ expressed pithily by Alexander Pope in his Essay on Criticism, “To err is human, to forgive divine.” He states “Forgive, that way alone can you make peace with yourself” (339).

Lala Kanshi loses everything only to gain what is worthwhile in life. He has established himself in the sublimity of life. He loses his property, his daughter, his people, and even those who accompany him, leave him. But he has won his real freedom – freedom from all the pressures that pull man away
from God. He proves that the forces of life are triumphant over those of death. (369)

The loss of Gandhiji plunges the country into darkness and despair, but Lala Kanshi Ram has a new awakening.

"Today the men stood in pride – even balanced, firm, sure of themselves" (369). What if there had been partition, violence and bloodshed? Life continues its onward march leading the people who have will, determination and equipoise to a life of fulfilment.

According to O.P.Mathur, "The cosmic pain and bloodshed are but a prelude to the birth of a new humanity however weak its voice at present may be" (91).

Kanshi Ram's son Arun begins his life as a foil to his father, but even in him, one finds the progress from an ordinary college student to a matured and enlightened personality. His movement starts from personal love to family obligations and finally to national aspirations.

The fact that he moves from the self by electing to go with his parents, giving up his youthful romance with Nur proves that he makes a 'man' of himself. This indeed is a remarkable progress he has made in life. This man in
him also cherishes certain noble principles concerning humanity. He wishes to be bold, self-asserting, dignified. He has acquired “a new identity for himself” (227). Chandini’s loss gives him the knowledge that “she has become his second self” (358).

In spite of the loss of communication in the family, he experiences the influence of his father on him. He admires his father for “his father had been superb throughout, he had carried his pain nobly and Arun loved him for that” (370).

He, like his father, senses the significance of love and freedom involving the whole of humanity, “he was going to carry it (the River) along with him to wherever he went for it was a moveable river, the river of love” (323).

The death of his sister no doubt shocks him, but he knows that death hits people, but still life continues. This is the truth. “It was the continuity of life. It was the continuity of the will in the being of things that matters” (207).

While discussing the theme of partition in Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan, Manohar Malgonkar’s A Bend in the Ganges, and Chaman Nahal’s Azadi, Shyam S. Asnani remarks,
What brackets these novels into one group is not only the theme of partition, that is common to all of them, but also its quality of stark realism, its absolute fidelity to the truth of life and its trenchant exposition of one of the most appalling episodes in the annals of current Indian history. (59)

**Azadi** closes with the establishment of the continuity of life on earth symbolised by the working of Sunanda's machine.

"The machine went whirring on, its wheel turning fast and its little needle moving up and down, murmuring and sewing through the cloth. The doors of both the rooms shook with its vibration" (371).

O.P.Mathur’s remark on this is worthy to remember:

The initiative has now passed into the hands of the individual. No longer a passive victim; he is stitching out his own destiny. Love and creative action – these are the supreme values which form this moving drama of hatred and violence. (91)
Into Another Dawn introduces another character, Ravi, the person who also speaks for universal love and brotherhood which rises above racial consciousness, narrow mindedness and selfishness.

Leaving his people in an impulse to chalk out his own future abroad, he chances to meet an American woman Irene, establishes a relationship with her without losing his individuality, and when he knows that there is a prospect of early death owing to cancer, decides to rest on the lap of mother Ganges. His movement from one dawn to another is metaphorically suggestive of the movement, which his name Ravi symbolises, spreading his warmth of love as he moves.

The America that he sees is an America, which unites people of all races – the White, the Brown and the Black. His life culminates in his arriving at the greatest truth that all are one in the eyes of God. He wishes to die with the thought of “the Ganges, Irene and this black doctor” (148), which again establishes the concept of universal love.

He also, in the end, realises his identity as a human being. “Now I am not particularly dark. On occasions I have been mistaken for a Greek or an Italian or a Spaniard.... No I am not as dark. But it would be apparent to anyone that I am not white” (11).

Nahal points out the theme of universal love which transcends the
barriers of caste, creed, colour, religion and nation in his preface to the novel

**Into Another Dawn**, where, as a prologue, the following lines are quoted from **Panchathantra**:

"Is he one of us or is he an outsider?

So speak the small.

Those of noble heart

Take the whole world for family"

Nahal's next novel **The English Queens** represents the protagonist whose approach to life is the preservation of the cultural life of India. According to O.P.Mathur, "Nahal is firmly on the side of India maintaining her cultural authenticity and not allowing herself to be wafted on the Western breeze" (95).

Steeped in Western education, customs and character the Indians seem to have lost their linguistic identity. As Krishna states in the Gita that wherever adharma flourished he would take a new Avatar and annihilate adharma to preserve Dharma. The same responsibility is taken by Ravi who is transmuted as Lord Chetna in the novel by Nahal, whose only aim is to destroy the Royal Charter which has been left by the British to perpetuate their language and culture.
So Ravi’s main purpose in life is to revive Indian culture, and maintain its greatness, which is also suggestive of the fact that life can continue when we realise what we are.

Renunciation and sacrifice are the two sides of the coin of love. This great principle works through the life of Sunil, the hero of The Crown and the Loincloth (1981). His rise to the greatest heights of perfection against coercive forces, which in the name of orthodoxy, fanaticism and traitorship, try to hinder his progress, forms the core of the novel. The novel is one other illustration to exhibit the power of the constructive forces over the destructive elements which like a Hydra keep multiplying, and make the ascent to the peak of perfection an arduous task. Sunil is able to accomplish this feat owing to his determination and the influence of Mahatma Gandhi who is introduced as a character in the novel by Chaman Nahal for definite purpose. Gandhiji’s presence is enough to make the aspirants dedicate themselves heart and soul to any task which concerns itself with the freedom and the future of the nation.

The significance of Gandhiji’s role in shaping the destiny of India from a century old bondage and ignorance through his principles of non-violence, tolerance, love and spirituality has been emphasized by many writers and speakers. Rama Jha remarks:
In his latest novel *The Crown and the Loincloth* Nahal’s focus is on Gandhi himself. He takes up the gigantic task of fictionalizing the life of Gandhi from 1915-1922 which covers the period from Gandhi’s final arrival in India from South Africa to his launching of the first Non-Co-Operation movement under the charismatic leadership of the loinclothed Gandhi which shook the century old pillars of British rule in India. (177)

The novel, like the other novels of Chaman Nahal, divides itself between orthodoxy and authenticity. Even though Gandhiji has a prominent role in the novel, the story revolves round the fate of Thakur Shanthi Nath’s family, comprising besides the landlord, his wife and their eight children. Sunil, the protagonist, is their fourth son, and Kusum is his wife. In an old joint family setup, awareness of the family hierarchy, deferential submission to the elders, and implicit obedience in meeting their demands are expected of the young. Kusum being the youngest daughter-in-law, “was only expected to say, Yes, and submit” (45). She has realized the advantage of the joint family system.

The joint living also brought a feeling of relief, though. There were so many people around to take care of details and she did
not have to worry her head on that comment. So long as she obeyed—No, not ever, obeyed—so long as she listened without answering back— it went well; she could do her own bidding after that. (46)

In spite of belonging to an affluent family and having passed her matriculation, Kusum has no difficulty in accepting the superiority of the patriarch. Though irritated by the jealousy and inquisitiveness of the other daughters-in-law, she does not act in defiance against patriarchal domination. But Kusum is able to realize the real concern of the patriarch for the family behind the rigid disciplinarian.

Thakur Shanti Nath, the master of the house, belonged to a family which “traced its lineage to the Rathors of Marwar” (42), were Rajputs only in name but when they moved to the Punjab gradually “took on Punjabi names, intermarried with the Punjabis adopted Punjabi as their language and came to pride themselves as sons of the Punjab” (43).

Most of Shanthi Nath’s ancestors were bankers, but Shanth Nath preferred agriculture to banking. When the novel opens, we are introduced to Shanti Nath as a landlord in possession of about 2000 acres of land and adopting a servile attitude towards the British, but aspires to be a master of his tenants. There were thousands of men who were servile to him since “The
British wanted to have a stable rural base, loyal to the throne, and only agriculturists with vast holdings could serve that end" (43).

Even the firing at Jallianwala Bagh wounding his son and killing even innocent women and children does not bring about any change in his attitude towards the British Raj, and he remains without condemning it, or opposing it. Even when Sunil wants to discuss it, he remains without any response.

His whole edifice had been built on the munificence of the British. “If he was their ally to power, they were his allies to power, to power and money; he had to uphold whatever they did” (113).

Even Sunil who openly protests against British Imperialism is identified as a man who “comes from a family that has been most loyal to the crown”(89).

In his loyalty to the Crown, Shanti Nath typifies a feudal lord, and his sons have the awareness that none could take on the symbolic value Thakur Shanti Nath had for the whole family. (None) could stand for that unity, that solidarity. Functional skills and familiarity with details didn’t make one the master of a clan, didn’t make one a patriarch. A patriarch should be
able to lead the tribe in times of calamity, be able to hold them together, be able to suffer for it, make sacrifices for it and yes, accommodations too. And that's what Thakur Shanti Nath had done in the past. When he allowed Sukhbir to become a Sikh, when he let Sunil go to college. When he promptly remarried Rukmani, one of his daughters who widowed, to another farmer against protest from many since he was of a lower status. (107)

The pride and confidence with which he carried himself forces even the 'rival zamindars of Ajitha" (107), and the visiting British Officers to treat him with deference. His loyalty to the British Crown is so strong that he is hesitant to reclaim his daughter who has eloped with a revolutionary for fear of being looked down by the British. His stringent orthodox conviction is that she has violated dharma which enforces discipline on the part of the young towards the elders even if it goes against their personal wishes or aspirations. But Shyama, his daughter, considers staying by the side of her husband to be her dharma, which is what Hindu dharma propagates. He criticizes Gandhiji and his principles as immature, and considers the natural calamity, like the earthquake which killed Rehana, as a sign of God's displeasure over the unheediness in the actions of the Indians. He remarks:
they [Indians] must slow down their campaign against the British. Gandhi had put forward before the country a grand scheme without preparing a grand design for it. There must be merit in the Gandhian method since so many people had responded to the sound of his trumpet. Only he was leading an untrained army into the battle field. Time was required to train the non-violent army and to convince the British and win over their support. (401)

Thakur Shanti Nath, as the master of the household, tries to execute what his father Thakur Vishwa Nath wanted him to do. “Get going, do something, grow and multiply” (412). Thakur Shanti Nath’s life ambition was “to fill up the haveli with more noise, more laughter, more action” (412). He is pained to see the large family shrunk into a small one with separation and death. That is the main reason why he is against Kusum joining the Ashram of Gandhiji and his being convinced that Gandhiji is in the wrong. He believes that “he, (Gandhiji) should fight more the violent revolutionaries than the British. “The British were his allies, they too wanted India to be free, why couldn’t they sit together and work out their differences?” (413). In spite of all his orthodox rigid principles and domination, there is the greatest redeeming factor which is perfectly recognised. “Yet, if there could be a perfection of
physical dignity, she had known it in Thakur Shanti Nath. Dignity which was no show, which was not the product of a way of thinking but a way of living” (414).

Conditioned by the British strategy of winning over the money-lenders through disbursement of vast holdings in their favour, Thakur Shanti Nath has ended up as a rich landlord in possession of thousands of acres of lands to his credit, which position has forced him to be servile towards the British, and which attitude he never gives up till the end in spite of the newly created awareness in the people to voluntarily accept the call of Mahatma Gandhi to join the non-co-operation movement initiated against the imperialistic British Government.

Thus he stands as a representative of the conventional die-hards who refuse to conform to changes which foster life-giving principles, and proves himself to be a total contrast to his youngest son Sunil, who realises the validity of Gandhian principles which affirm life.

Sunil, the fictional hero, who is drawn towards Gandhiji and his principles, sincerely believes that Gandhiji’s approach is positive, and it is an indication of the birth of a new era. “It’s the birth of a new era Kusum. It’s the birth of a new era” (52).
The voice of protest is first heard in Thakur Shanti Nath's family when Sukhbir, Shanti Nath's second son, embraces the Sikh faith. In order to save face before the village, Shanti Nath himself announces the news of the conversion to the village. Now it is the turn of Sunil, who with the view to acquire the assent of his father for the continuation of his studies, refuses to return home after taking refuge in the Golden Temple at Amritsar. The father has necessarily to assent in order to maintain the unity of the household.

The authority of a Zamindar, as Thakur Shanti Nath saw it, "depended on presenting a united household before his tenants" (57). Sunil succeeds again in making his father concede to his demand of choosing teaching as his vocation even though Thakur Shanti Nath does it to prevent the dethronement of his position as lord and the master of the household and the havelis. Devotion, determination and deference, the salient traits of a dedicated worker, are present in Sunil, and these help him rise above filial affection, conjugal pleasures and paternal concern to surrender himself to the cause of the nation once he comes under the fold of Mahatma Gandhi. By acting according to the dictates of the Mahatma, he hopes, "to lead these men in a different direction one day" (58). The vision of a free India has kindled new thought current of dissent in the minds of many young men in India and depending upon their upbringing and attitudes, there had been various approaches to solve the same
problem. Indian history has witnessed two groups of fighters, namely, the extremists and the moderates. Rakesh is an extremist, and therefore is unable to accept the ideology of Gandhiji. He believes that “the British can be driven out of India only by force” (58).

Western education has converted him into a terrorist and an anarchist, and his approach to the concept of Indian freedom is based on violence and destruction. He tells Shyama, Sunil’s sister:

I want to hurt the system. The British rule is based on exploitation-exploitation of the local population. It starts with the Viceroy of India - no, I should say with that damn King in England - and is passed on down to the smallest functionary even a village patwari. Your father is a cog in the same system. He does nothing else but exploit. If these men have to one day throw bombs at the white Englishmen, they must first learn to destroy their native exploiters. (59)

He stands as a total contrast to Sunil, who also believes in strength to fight the English, but he believes that even though “organized violence and organized non-violence were both forms of strength” (62), he wants to prove that organized non-violence is the only weapon which could be used as a
powerful weapon against the British. This difference in ideology results in the rupture of their friendship, and both go their diverse ways.

The road to absolute liberation and salvation cannot be inarduously taken. Sunil at the initial stages suffers without directions. Problems besetting the family remain unsolved. Sunil feels that if, as a brother, he is unable to defend his sister Shyama, it would be impossible for him to stand up for a forlorn nation. When he is on the verge of losing hope, because he sees signs of his political convictions crumbling, he meets Gandhiji accidentally, and this proves a turning point in his career and life too.

Gandhiji's life itself is a standing illustration of how in voluntary self-denial a man is not only able to realize his true identity, but also the greatest truth that proves to be the highest good: "A man in order to be a man must live for others" (21).

Gandhiji placed himself at the disposal of the meek, the needy and the poor. His experiences in South Africa were instrumental in the germination and fostering of his unshakable conviction. "They [the British] may beat the life out of him, but they couldn't bend him" (27). After his return to India from South Africa, he decided to dedicate himself to the service of the people and the nation. He was not after power. He was aware of what he was.
“He was not made by God to wield power on earth. You had only to look at him. He was short. He was frail. And he was perhaps the ugliest man alive” (32).

Louis Fischer also describes the Mahatma as, “a little man who lived like a poor man and defended the poor to the face of the rich, a holy man in an ashram” (130).

But the very same fragile timid person, once he learned to distinguish between the physical and the spiritual, between the body and the soul, found himself transcending all the barriers that hinder spiritual evolution and finally emerged as the Mahatma on whose shoulders rested the destination to lead and direct his people. But Gandhiji’s goal in life was not to lead but to serve.

Referring to the early stages of Gandhiji’s entry into the national arena Louis Fischer says:

The hundreds of millions did not know him. But the fame of the Mahatma was spreading. India stands in awe of power and wealth. But it loves the humble servant of the poor. Possessions, elephants, jewels, armies, palaces win India’s obedience. Sacrifice and renunciation win its heart ... Gandhi renounced in order to serve. (130)
A very essential task was to be accomplished before he undertook to serve the nation. "Yet, to lead the entire Indian nation, he would have to purify himself" (38). He also knew that the call to serve the nation and his people had to come from within.

Adoption and assimilation of the vows of celibacy, recognition and acknowledgement of the efficacy of Ahimsa, and experimenting with truth have guided Gandhiji towards realizing his self. Only a fully evolved individual can accomplish a formidable task affecting the people in a spirit of selflessness and dedication.

While emphasizing the credibility of Mahatma Gandhi's principles which are sure signs of affirmation of life, G.P.Sarma remarks:

Non-violence was Gandhi's weapon for winning freedom as it was for the earlier leaders. But to it, he added a new meaning and a new significance. He philosophised and idealised these and other allied terms to the farthest possible extent. For example, non-violence meant for Gandhi a deep faith in love for all, whether friends or enemies, a complete dissociation from evil, and abstention from such brute reaction as retaliation or revenge. As for non-cooperation, for Gandhi it was only a new name for suffering. It was to him an acid test
of people’s sincerity because it required silent sacrifice. He thus gave the new name Satyagraha to non-violent non-cooperation. Passive resistance for Gandhi was a restraint undertaken voluntarily for the good of society. Swaraj also meant to Gandhi something more than mere political independence from foreign rule. It was a state of being in which all people live in peace and harmony, getting rid of fear, helplessness and other evils. (182-183)

Sunil finds “a new path opening before him” (24). He, like the Mahatma, makes his discoveries relating to Hindu culture. “The bedrock of Hindu culture was tolerance, tolerance that resulted from simplicity, from accommodation with others, resulted from forgiveness and charity” (125).

When he stumbles upon Gandhi, Sunil realises that if he were to become a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, he should be ready to face greater challenges in life. Gandhiji’s acceptance of Sunil into his fold is based on the outspoken nature of Sunil when he regrets his cowardice in not helping his sister. Sunil is made to comprehend the greatest truth regarding Gandhiji and his principles.

“For Gandhi politics was inseparable from morality, personal morality. The pursuit of God for him was the pursuit of truth and that truth started at the individual level” (128).
Sunil therefore comes forward to sacrifice his family, his possessions and his personal desires to serve the motherland. He is advised to start “Khadi bhandars” (133), to propagate the need for the use of homespun cotton material in the place of imported dress materials. As an avowed follower of Gandhiji, he joins the band of the reactionaries, and knows that his dharma is to act in a manner so as to express his loyalty to his motherland above his bond and duty.

With Platonic love for Rehana as a backdrop, Sunil conducts the spinning programme with the assistance of Muzaffar Ahamed, Rehana’s husband since, according to Gandhiji, spinning wheels would be the redemption of India. “And lawyers, teachers, legislators and the spinning wheel taken together could generate a wave that would rock the British Empire to its very foundation” (130). ‘Onward to freedom through the wheel’, the slogan of the Congress becomes the source of inspiration to Sunil to be in the bandwagon to work for the rehabilitation of the labourers of the hilly regions.

Thus the first step towards perfection and realization of the eternal truth gets initiated in Sunil’s life when he moves out of the consciousness of his self and starts thinking about the welfare of those who do not bear any relationship with him or his family. From an emotional level, he also moves to a higher plane of putting ‘perspectives’ before ‘love’. It is this development which
reveals to him the miserable condition of the untouchables who live a segregated life in spite of being born as human beings. Obsessed with shame and humiliation, he decides to see how Gandhiji, "would condone this monumental blemish" (216).

Gandhiji's immediate response reactivates Sunil to the extent of allowing a member of the children of God (Harijans) to cook food for him. Gandhiji's reply indicates that he too had long cherished the desire to work for the abolition of untouchability.

I too live in the same shame and humiliation. Only I shouldn't let the larger issue, the fight for freedom be clouded by it. When we become a free nation, abolition of untouchability will be the primary aim of my life as long as I last. In the mean time, think of yourself as an untouchable and befriend these lonely children of God. (216)

Sunil acts according to Dharma as defined by the merchant Tuladhara to the ascetic Japali in the Mahabharatha, quoted by Ranganathananda.

"He knows dharma O Japali, who is always the friend of all, and who through his actions, thought and speech, is absorbed in (ensuring) the welfare of all" (291).
Sunil's dharmic principles are based on authenticity of life. They are life promoting principles which can be adopted, experimented, and practised by any individual who wants to realize the myth of communal living in an atmosphere of peace and contentment.

Sunil's attitude towards life brings in the desired result. He is successful in transforming the primitive people into accepting the pragmatic principles of Gandhiji.

Ideological differences between himself and Muzaffar do not deter him from moving ahead with his plans of bringing the people together to fight against the British. He even loses Rehana, who dies in an earthquake. Another major hurdle he has to cross is his brother-in-law and his one time friend Rakesh, who clings on to the conviction that only war can settle disputes.

And there can be no revolution except through the barrel of a gum. There is a historical inevitability about it, too. Just as feudalism leads to imperialism, imperialism will lead to socialism. Those in the higher echelons would never willingly surrender or give up their rule until they are dethroned, until they are pushed out. There will have to be a blood bath. (186)
Amidst such supporters of coercion, violence and destruction Sunil wages a dharmic war as a true follower of the Mahatma who is on the path of Dharma. He is able to isolate Gandhiji as the sole leader of the people and the nation because Gandhiji’s belief rested not on individualism, or nationalism, or internationalism but on humanism. His were humanistic principles. Even though sacrifice starts at the individual level, it culminates in the sacrifice for the welfare of humanity. Among the stalwarts who have created history, Gandhiji’s action has been unique in the sense that it has won the admiration of even his opponents.

Sunil’s progress has reached a stage when he has to show himself to be a person who has acquired the knowledge relating to eternal Truth. A great task of dedicating himself to the cause of the motherland brings him into the national arena. As a believer in positive, life-giving principles, he understands the meaning of what nationalism is in the true sense of the term. A correct assessment of the term is made by G.P.Sarma:

Nationalism, while seeking freedom from foreign oppression, wants at the same time to organize and consolidate the collective power of the people. And since this power can be consolidated only after the removal of social injustices, a nation struggling for freedom also struggles to free itself from
its social evils. The attempt to rid society of its age-old evil practices that in the name of custom are only causing harm is also, therefore, a national process. (98)

Sunil recognizes the fact that his primary aim is to create an awareness in the primitive people of the hilly areas that all are born equal, and, therefore, they have to come together to assert their rights in the society to which they belong. Even when Muzaffar refuses to accept the truth that the Congress is against communalism, Sunil tries to convince him.

"You are making the basic error of confusing Hinduism with the Congress. Even if Hinduism is corrupt and shallow, the Congress is not"(248).

Thereby he proves that he is above caste, community or religion. He is only a servant of the people as Gandhiji had taught him to believe.

A contrasting nature is seen in Sardar who is a Sikh and who is ready to sacrifice himself to uphold his faith in Sikhism. This determination to live up at least to his religion is taught by Sunil to Sardar Singh.

Instilling moral courage into an ignorant man Sunil has equipped Sardar Singh to accept modern treatment for his foot. Sardar Singh is one instance to show how Sunil has moved out of his self to work for the welfare of others.
Chaman Nahal, through the character of Sunil, has postulated the vital principle of living in amity against diversity. His concern for serious reforms resulting in the happiness of all shows him to be a creative writer whose novels have a reformative purpose. G.P.Sarma's views of Indo-Anglian fictional writers have greater validity because they are applicable even in the case of Chaman Nahal.

Many of the Indo-Anglian fiction writers have written novels and short stories with the purpose of purging society of its harmful practices. This attempt at a reformation is not only an attempt at bringing happiness to individual members of society but also an endeavour to make society as a whole strong. And in a society like the Indian which is ridden by caste and religious differences this endeavour also means an endeavour for consolidation and integration of various peoples into one race or ration. (96)

**Murugan, the Tiller**, a novel by K.S.Venkataramani, also deals with the freedom movement under the leadership of Gandhiji, and it also validates the concept of rural reconstruction as one step towards achieving Swaraj. The emphasis on Gandhian views is very much evident in the speech of
Ramachandran, one of the chief characters of the novel. Ramu voices forth the same conviction one finds in Sunil when he exalts the principle of non-violence.

The glory of motion will be nourished on the painless and non-violent food, dripping from nature as sunlight dripping from the sun. The soul of science is ahimsa the redemption of all sentient life from violence to others and to itself and from the dull pain of muscular labour. (286)

The sincerity and devotion Sunil exhibits while executing the plans of Gandhiji is remarkable to the extent of creating an indelible impression in the minds of the people who receive his service that he deserves the same respect and admiration that are showered on Gandhiji. This is evidenced by the letter one of the Rohur inhabitants writes to Gandhiji. He mentions in his letter that apart from Sunil, the people of Rohur can rely only on Gandhiji for help.

There comes a moment when even Gandhiji doubts himself and recognises the futility of moving ahead with his principles of truth, non-violence, temperance and spirituality, which all had the basis on self-control which the people were lacking. The spate of violent activities taking place in different parts of the country in spite of his advice to the people to exercise
self-control worries him to the extent of announcing his decision to immediately stop the non-co-operation movement. The man of peace is now found to be perpetually at war with himself, experiencing nightmares, and incidentally forgetting the fact that "his monumental decisions were made by Gandhi during those very nightmares" (335).

But the cloud of doubt is dispelled, and Gandhiji is back into activity but with the determination of making "the non-violent non-co-operation even more stringent" (371), and with the expectation of making people raise themselves to his level if they require his leadership.

Sunil, on the other hand, in spite of hearing about Gandhiji’s decision to withdraw the movement, is determined to go to the very same people in order to continue his service to them - not as a person involved in politics but as a medicine man. He unburdens himself to Ken Ashby.

Satyagraha has been withdrawn by the author of the scheme.

And I would much rather be a medicine man. I learned first aid while I was in Simla Hills last year. I would much rather learn more of it, teach myself a simple system of medicine like homeopathy, and go out into the remote villages. (387)

He is also ready to help the Congress in its rural uplift programme. The road to perfection once taken, there is no returning to the past humdrum
existence. Sunil wants to cleanse himself completely. For the wrong that he has done to his wife Kusum by being in love with Rehana, he wants to do penance; "By denying myself altogether. By going out into the villages" (390). According to Sunil, service itself is a penance. Therefore, he intends to serve the villagers. Sunil's character runs parallel to the character of Moorthy in Kanthapura, a novel written by Raja Rao. Moorthy gives up his collegiate education in order to become a follower of Gandhiji. He becomes the leader of the villagers who come to know Gandhiji through him. And as Sunil is respected by the people, Moorthy also is considered a saint, a veritable Gandhi by the people of Kanthapura.

He is our Gandhi. The state of Mysore has a Maharaja, but that Maharaja has another Maharaja who is in London, and that one has another in Heaven, and so everybody has his own Mahatma, and this Moorthy who has been caught in our eyes playing as a child, is now grown up and great, and he has his wisdom in him, and he will be our Mahatma. (109)

While enforcing the need for the focus to stay on Gandhiji in his novel The Crown and the Loincloth in respect to the theme of the novel, Chaman Nahal states that he has introduced the protagonist Sunil to show how he is influenced by Gandhiji. This is done with a definite purpose 'to ensure Gandhi
a permanent place' (46) in all the three novels of his trilogy which he had planned to write, and out of the three, only The Crown and the Loincloth has been published. But Sunil’s role has a further dimension. He has realized the significance of life on earth. He has understood that life is beautiful. The beauty of life is felt when one loves everyone without any feeling of hatred, Love alone matters in this world. God manifests himself through love. Sunil has grasped the eternal truth that love is God and God is love. When one’s mind is filled with love, it is ready to make the final sacrifice. Sunil proves Thakur Shanti Nath’s old line of reasoning wrong. In spite of his outward opposition of Gandhian principles, Thakur Shanti Nath too acknowledges the greatness of Mahatma Gandhi in his heart of hearts.

There must be merit in the Gandhian method since as many people had responded to the sound of his trumpet. Only he was leading an untrained army into the battlefield. Time was required to train the non-violent army and to convince the British and win over their support. (401)

The cycle of marital life has not run smooth for Sunil because of his association with Rehana. Kusum, his wife, is not ready to accept him with his minor slips and moral lapse. Sunil finds himself incapable of convincing her. His understanding of the concepts like virtue, impiety, duty, transgression is
totally in contrast to the orthodox conventional unchanging beliefs of the people. He is not able to even come to terms with what Krishna says in the Gita. His feelings expressed to Kusum are proofs of his faith in the authenticity of life.

I do not understand even that, about duty I mean, yes, I've read the Gita at one time I thought I knew what Lord Krishna is trying to tell Arjuna but not now, it is such a savage message, the message of the Gita, where after having gone through endless pains to convince Arjuna that all living beings are manifestations of the one supreme being, that is, his enemy is as much a part of God as Arjuna himself, yes; after having put forward that sublime idea, Lord Krishna instead of telling Arjuna to defeat but forgive Duryodhana, asks him to get up and kill, yes. I know he doesn't use exactly these words but that's what Lord Krishna wants, he wants murder, murder by proxy in the name of duty. (404-405)

Sunil is the propagator of love. According to him, Love doesn't differentiate between a friend and a foe, a king and a pauper, a master and a servant. It treats everyone alike. He doesn't want life to be too very complicated. His desire is to find settlement for all complications so that
people would come together and live as one community. And the way to settle the problem is through love. He wants his wife Kusum to accept him as he is "Give me your love, your compassion. The new path will appear" (406).

In spite of his promises, she refuses to believe him. It is in such a situation that Sunil proves to the world that he has reached the apex of the perfection in realizing the real meaning of life. When the extremists plan to assassinate the Prince of Wales, he acts like a true Satyagrahi. His life is a precedent to what Gandhiji is to perform through his actions in future.

Rakesh and other revolutionaries are determined to kill The Prince of Wales when he is about to visit Lahore. On the invitation of Ken Ashby, Sunil also promises to attend the fair. At a time when the Prince is to be killed, he intervenes, and receives the bullet shot thereby saving the life of the prince. He demonstrates himself to be a true follower of Gandhiji. He dies to save a man who belonged to the camp of exploiters. He sacrifices his life in love only.

Going to the rescue of gentility at the hand of savagery, at the hand of evil. Well, that's love, that's love! All right, may be he had loved as much as he had hated. But that was not enough, he should have loved more; he should not have hated at all. (399)
In his death there is affirmation; affirmation of a new choice, a new direction, and a new life. It is only after his death that Kusum understands that affirmation is what Sunil wanted from her. She shows her faith in him and in his mentor Gandhiji by deciding to join Gandhiji’s ashram at Sabarmati, Sunil through his activities has established his total faith in Gandhiji and his principles. He was of the belief that

“Indeed while fighting the British, it was the duty of every Indian to protect the life and property of every single British” (407).

While scattering the ashes in the Ganges, Kusum feels that she has to act quickly to show her faith in her husband’s way of life. According to her, “Sunil always considered affirmation ‘a mantra to fight despair’ (410). She is convinced that Gandhiji’s ashram is the only recourse.

“And there seemed a lure in the thought of joining the ashram, a departure from the old, a taking on of the new and the unknown that real affirmation implied” (410).

Kusum now chalks out a way of life for herself and her son on the path of Dharma because she, like her father-in-law Thakur Shanti Nath, believes that there should be a dignity in one’s life and that dignity is not the product of a way of thinking but a way of living and the significance of life lies in the acceptance of affirmative principles. She wants to offer not only herself to the
nation but also her son. She is hopeful of overcoming the temptations of the body, and is willing to take up life's challenges. Gandhiji recognises the honesty in her, and accepts her.

Coming face to face with Gandhiji, Kusum is satisfied that she has made the right decision. She has come to the ashram, "out of faith, out of an obligation - an obligation to her deceased husband" (417). With Gandhiji to support her Kusum knows that her affirmation has begun. She also hopes as is hoped by Gandhiji that

"Only the work in the ashram must go on as before. Young India must go on, the spinning must go on, agitation against social evils must go on" (420).

According to Radhakrishnan, Gandhiji draws people towards him with "an intrepid spirit, an almost impregnable will power and a super-human passion for truth and justice are his main characteristics" (230).

Chaman Nahal concentrates on these essential qualities while delineating the character of Sunil who may not be a Gandhi himself but one who avowedly accepts a life based on Gandhian principles. A quick survey of his development through life would posit the truth that any aspirant, in order to arrive at Truth which is equated with God by Gandhiji, has to be convinced that the means for the realization of Truth is Ahimsa.
The intrepid spirit in him is revealed in his decision to become a follower of Gandhiji, in his determination to serve the people of the hills amidst orthodoxy and superstition, in his spontaneity to rush to the rescue of the Prince of Wales unmindful of his safety. His impregnable will power shows itself in his courage to oppose the conventional ideas of his father, in his astute undertakings to alleviate the misery of the poor people, relegating familial considerations to the background, in his decision to place service before the self.

His superhuman passion for truth and justice exhibits itself in all his actions culminating in his superior sacrifice thereby proving the power of love as the only means for affirming life on earth. He stands as a fitting illustration of what Gandhiji wanted every man to do. Gandhiji remarks: "To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself" (430).

Thus, the progress of Sunil has three marked stages symmetrically represented in the three appellations of the three parts of the novel. From an emotional level he moves into an intellectual plane, and after acquiring the knowledge about life and Truth, leaves the message of affirmation to be adopted by the support of happiness and peace.
Thus Chaman Nahal’s heroes are all on the side of life. They make life meaningful and valuable. They are preservers of positive ethical and philosophical values, which when adopted in life, can speak for life’s continuity on earth. According to O.P.Mathur, Chaman Nahal, like his protagonists, has proved that “this is a whole and not a fractured vision of life”(96).