Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

The complex Indian ethos with its multiplicity of linguistic and ethnic groups had proved itself to be the most overwhelming experience for the English writers of Indian fiction. The ambivalence they invariably experienced when trying to catch the metaphysical strain in the Indian temper was a reflection of their total inability to grasp the Indian's ingrained tendency for a quest for an order or pattern beyond the material experience. This bafflement made them confine themselves to recurring images like caparisoned elephants, the sacred cow, naked fakirs, snake charmers and ferocious wild beasts. Even the much lauded A Passage to India remains a labyrinth or uncertainties, equivocal implications and familiar images.

Of the two great writers between the post mutiny and pre independence period of India, Kipling and Forster, the former, though born in India and lived among the Indians, chose to be a bard of the Empire rather than a writer of the Indian milieu and ethos. Forster shows how physical India for the English man was a persecuting force, out to efface his identity. It crushed him physically and confused him
morally. Under such conditions, it is quite natural, as Alan Sandison has observed that every thing diffuses into meaninglessness just as they did for Forster's Mrs. Moore\(^1\). These writers totally failed to see any wisdom in Indian legends and myths, dismissing them for their "total absence of beauty, either sentimental or artistic\(^2\). The Indian religious ideas like asceticism, non-violence, tolerance, celibacy and piety were pictured as harmful and detrimental to the maturing of manliness. In Kim, Kipling ridicules these concepts as a foolish wild-goose chase and meaningless exploration in the void. G. K. Das, in his E.M. Forster's India, shows how Forster presents Hinduism to his readers through "a process of comedy and enjoyable bewilderment\(^3\)" without taking into account its theology or philosophy. Because of their total inability to fathom the subtleties of Indian philosophy with its focus on the continuity of life, they denounced it as life negating and as a road to God paved by the devils. Unfortunately this image created by these English writers on Indian themes has come to exercise much influence on the sensibility of the western reader of Indian English fiction.

The early Indian writers of English fiction during the pre-independent period were mainly concerned with weaving a realistic or, what they thought to be a realistic, picture of Indian life with its
attendant miseries and superstitions. It was only when Tagore came to the Indian literary scenario that any significant shift in thematic considerations materialised. Tagore helped Indians re-discover the moral, cultural and philosophical founts of a great heritage. Gandhian thought which presented a humanistic image of man with all his failings and excellences, further gave a purposive direction to the writers of Indian-English fiction. The historical romance tradition slowly got replaced by novels picturing contemporary social realities. Where as K.S. Venkataramani's *Kandan the Patriot* (1934), Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) and R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955) deal with the overall impact of the Gandhian movement on the Indian masses, Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936) and Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So many Hungers* (1947) zero in on specific social problems, However there seems to be no serious endeavour on the part of these major novelists to probe deep into the Gandhian ideology and to interpret the same in terms of the age old wisdom of the Indian way of life.

Summing up the characteristic features of the major writers of Indian-English fiction, K.R.S. Iyengar makes some interesting observations. He feels that R.K. Narayan's heroes are "Psychic projections, troubled men" trying their best to workout their
salvation of love and surrender. Mulk Raj Anand is at his best when he attempts to unveil the humanistic core of his heroes and Kamala Markandeya's heroes try to grapple with the existential problem in varying degrees. It is in Chaman Nahal's novels that we come across the "still small voice of man, not snuffed out altogether" and love, that lies bleeding, yet reviving. It is this expression of the unstiffled voice of humanity and the portrayal of ever reviving love that marks out Nahal from the majority of Indian English novelists. In novel after novel, he gives this message of a happy synthesis of suffering and rejuvenation which is the core of his philosophy of life.

The perennial source from which Nahal draws his sustenance in shaping this vision is Gandhian ideology, which in turn has received much of its nourishment from the Bhagvat Gita and the great Indian epics, Ramayana and Mahabharatha. The influence of Western philosophy in the formulation of Gandhian ideology has often been exaggerated. But the much quoted comment of Geoffrey Ashe that even though the Westerners could not westernise him, they could "teach him his own people's wisdom better than his own people" is not without validity. We understand from Gandhi's autobiography that it was during his stay in England and, later in South Africa that he became passionately conscious of his own cultural heritage. Even
before he came into contact with the London Vegetarian Society, he had taken the vow, never to eat meat. His association with this group only provided him with a rationale for his decision. Again, his contact with some members of the Theosophical Society became instrumental in his introduction to the Bhagavat Gita, through Sir Edwin Arnolds translation of it as The Song Celestial. He confesses that he felt ashamed that he had not till then read the divine poem neither in Sanskrit or in Gujarati. Thus it was a westerner who initiated him into a rational understanding of the tradition he belonged to, by birth. His contacts with the Theosophical Society further enabled him to realize Hinduism as the world's spiritual fountain head and involved him deeper in the study of Indian philosophy. His introduction to Tolstoy’s The Kingdom of God is within You (1893) convinced him that passive resistance, the core of the Christian Gospel was, similar in many ways to the Jain doctrine of Ahimsa. The three great truths he came across in Ruskin’s teachings, namely, (1) the good of the individual is contained in the good of all, (2) the dignity of human labour, and (3) the worthiness of a life of austerity are not some thing new to an Indian nurtured in the traditional wisdom of the Upanishads. To Gandhi Thoreau’s essay, turned out to be a scientific confirmation of what he was already doing in South Africa.
Through the portrayal of Gandhi as one steeped in Indian ethos, Nahal reveals his own faith in, and indebtedness to the time-tested cultural and ethical values of his own heritage. His fictional endeavours thus become an artistically controlled personal myth in which he reveals more of himself. Gorden Hall Gerould notes how fiction, more than any other literary genre reveals the author:

The writer of fiction almost inevitably reveals himself as fully as any of his characters, which is one very important reason why his art is very popular. No creator of course, fails to show himself through what he creates, but the maker of fiction does so more fully than most others.

A close reading of Nahal's novels will reveal that, like Gandhi he too holds in high esteem, the basic tenets of Hinduism like devotion to selfless duty, faith in the innate goodness of all human beings and the insatiable urge of the soul to transcend impediments and to accept life in its totality. Like Gandhi, Nahal also is highly critical of the obscurantist practices performed in the name of religion which only blurs and confuses man in his search for the ultimate truth in life. Nahal even makes Gandhi say, "Hinduism is a rotten religion in the way it is practised. (The salt, 345). In into Another Dawn, Nahal sketches this rotten side of the Hindu religion practised as a "business
of supervising the souls of the pilgrims" (24) by the Pandits of Hardwar, who resort to underhand methods to exploit the gullible pilgrims. The pilgrims too are a pack of self-centred fortune seekers who are blissfully unaware of the high ideals of the religion to which they belong:

Go with these people and watch their tears in memory of the dear departed—the dear departed they had misused and misappropriated till the last second of her earthly existence. Go with them, and see them offer food and coins to the poor, while back at home, they must be skinning these very people alive.(29).

In My True Faces, Nahal shows how, in a custom-ridden Hindu family the word ‘dharma’ is being bandied about, without bothering to understand the profound implications of the concept connoted by the word. Even love gets substituted by dharma in the man-woman relationship. This distorted image of dharma confuses and baffles Kamal, the protagonist of the novel.

What ever he had received had been fed to him through the long sieve of dharma and by the time it reached his conscience, it was so devitalised, so flavoured with strange tinctures, he never knew what its natural taste was.(40).
While accepting the presence of suffering in this world as a reality, Nahal seems to believe that a lot of suffering in India can be traced to the narrow mindedness and selfishness of dehumanised social parasites and crafty, politicians. These people strenuously guard a corrupt system and stifle voices of dissent. In Azadi we see the callous way in which the miserable refugees are treated by the bureaucrats. The long period of colonial subjugation had drained the essential vitality of an average Indian and even when the long cherished freedom was realized, it did not liberate him in any way. In the English Queens, Nahal shows how, the corrupt municipal authorities and politicians join hands in encouraging the poor to encroach upon the government land and establish slums. The authorities are happy with the bribe money they get and the politicians are only concerned with the 'vote bank' they have earned, which would lead them to the portals of power, when the time comes. Again in the Triumph of the Tricolour. Nahal portrays dismal pictures of power - crazy politicians, bargaining in the name of Gandhi for a congress candidature in the election to the parliament. The irony is that most of these leaders had stood with the colonial rulers during the pre-independent days and scoffed at the sufferings of the freedom fighters. The younger generation too blindly ape their elders and indulge in vandalism in the name of politics. In The English Queens
Nahal describes a typical scene from a students' strike in the Delhi University Campus. Most of the agitating students are quite unaware of the cause of the agitation. Even the leaders themselves seem to know very little about it. But as their rival organisation had burned a few buses in the course of their agitation, these students want to excel them:

They would spare the cars so that the demonstrators might be able to hitch a ride back home. But the buses they would not spare. And since the other group had burned five, they would burn six. (60).

In his article, The Second Generation of Indian English Novelists, Nahal reveals the reason why he wants to be a socially committed writer. He is convinced that a creative writer in India cannot escape the visual and emotional stresses to which he is exposed to, in his every day life. He believes that if a novel dealing with romantic love can be valuable as literature, so can a novel with a social purpose or a novel combining the mystical, the humanistic and the social. In all the eight novels of Nahal, we experience this happy synthesis of the mystical, humanistic and social elements. When Nahal speaks of the 'mystical' in the novel, it is not to be confused with the purely metaphysical discourses that form the core of Raja Rao's novels. What
he means is a world view that takes into account the ethical commitments and morality, freed of the shackles of metaphysics. V.K. Gokak, discussing the value system within which the Indian culture functions, opines that as spirit and matter are of equal importance, it is mandatory on the part of every individual to be a conqueror of his own self and master of his environment. He further observes:

Spirit and matter are both divine. The materialist's affirmation is only half the truth. So is the ascetic's denial. The body is not to be despised. Nor is it to be glorified at the expense of the spirit.

Nahal in his novels follows this golden mean and he successfully harnesses the spiritual with the materialistic to regenerate life weighed down by heavy odds. He considers Hinduism as an all-embracing philosophy of life which allows every individual to discover his own path to fulfilment and salvation, without essentially subjecting himself to any rigid custom or order of worship. In his sojourn through life, Kamal in My True faces passes through stages of blind faith, negation and finally affirmation through acceptance of life's diversity. Sunrise in Fiji shows how excessive adherence to material comforts impoverishes the spiritual element inherent in every human being. Ravi, the protagonist of Into Another
Dawn is shown as attaining spiritual maturity as a result of a long chain of suffering. Kanshiram in Azadi and Sunil in the Crown and the Loincloth undergo such a transformation to reach the light of truth. It is this essential faith in the redeeming nature of man that makes his novels real celebrations of life. The backdrop of the novel may be domestic, inter-cultural or historic, but they are all incandescent with the emotive and spiritual luminosity of his vision of life.

Feminist writers envisage a change in the social milieu wherein women are accepted as equals in the sharing of rights, opportunities as well as responsibilities. The seeds of the emancipation of Indian women were sown by such reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and most important of all Mahatma Gandhi. The British rulers also bestowed much patronage on women's education. Nahal feels disheartened that the first generation Indian-English novelists somehow overlooked the possibility of depicting the emerging new woman of India in their novels. Citing the example of Sarojini Naidu, who took up the leadership of the Indian National Congress after the arrest of Gandhi in connection with the Salt Satyagraha, he says that the historic role played by the Indian women in the freedom struggle could have provided an alternative
replacement model. But unfortunately this rich resource has been completely left out by most Indian writers of fiction. Nahal refutes the claim made by some feminist writers that only a female is capable of truthfully depicting the emotions and feelings of a woman. "If we follow this argument" says Nahal, "then one has to be a hermaphrodite to write a novel". Nahal in his novels recreates the myth of Shakthi to infuse the spirit of defiance into his female protagonists. His major women characters like Malti, Irene Kusum, Rehana and Abha put up a tough resistance to assert their identity and refuse to be cowed down by the dictates of a male oriented society. The women revolutionaries in the Gandhi Quartet—Charulatha, Salma and Dulari not only establish an equal status with their male companions, but are shown as excelling them in their steadfast pursuit to win freedom for India.

Nahal makes use of a number of linguistic devices in his narrative technique. Carefully chosen clusters of images and symbols figure most prominently amongst the devices deployed by him. They help in evoking the required atmosphere to provide a deep insight into the character's psyche and lend textural density and structural unity to the novels In Azadi which is divided into three parts. 'The Lull', 'The Storm' and 'The Aftermath', the image of the sea getting agitated by the storm is quite in tune with the incidents narrated in the novel.
The 'fire crackers' indicate the impending conflagration of religious animosity. When the train carrying the refugees is passing through Kurukashetra, we are reminded of the futility of bloodshed perpetrated by the two communities who once lived in peace and amity. The birth of a child to Isher Kaur in the train heralds the dawn of a new age. The whirring sound made by Sunanda's sewing machine is a sure symbol of the renewal of life. In True Faces, the recurring symbols are 'Krishna', 'heat' and 'rain'. Krishna represents the diversity of God's creations. Kamal's disillusionment melts away, when Krishna tells him, "all my faces are my true faces". (234), 'Heat' stands for the anxieties and agonies of Kamal and 'Rain', the much awaited solace and quietude.

The 'dawn' in Into Another Dawn connotes the emergence of a new world glowing in mutual understanding, friendship and love. In sunrise in Fiji, Sonipet, the small town where Harvansh spent his boyhood days becomes a symbol of the tranquility and serene atmosphere of the India of the olden days. The people there share customs and values and are ever ready to help each other. Harvansh, who has no time even for a self appraisal is a symbol of the modern generation in India, who attach little value to the traditional way of life which bestows much importance on social commitments. Likewise the vultures hovering over Delhi after the communal
carnage, clearly symbolise the virus of communalism which, if allowed an entry into the body politic of the nation, is sure to drain it of its vitality.

Irony is crucial to the content of Nahal's early novels. Kamal's ritualistic adherence to 'dharma' in My True Faces in a way causes the collapse of his domestic happiness. The ironical incongruity between expectation and fulfilment is quite conspicuous here. In Azadi, the lines from Gitanjali prefixed to the novel, envisaging the 'dawn of freedom' provides a powerful ironic lens to look at the theme of the novel. As we go on reading the novel, these lines keep echoing in our mind. Ravi's life in Into Another Dawn can be viewed as a chain of accidental coincidences like his meeting with Steve Cogney at Rishikesh leading to his migration to America and his meeting with Irene resulting in love and fulfilment. The novelist gives an ironic twist to the story when Ravi, caught in the grip of leukemia returns to Rishikesh, from where he had once made an escape.

Nahal's exquisite use of the device of conflict and contrast is quite commendable. In his first novel, My True Faces, this conflict works at different levels, like, between Kamal's true self and the concept of 'dharma' in which he was nurtured and between Kamal's
conventional family and Rao Sahib's anglicised household. There is conflict also between the existing joint family and the emerging nuclear family. In the *English Queens* he makes conflict the underlying theme of the novel. The "basti" people with their poverty, illiteracy and gullibility representing the natural and the earthy are contrasted with the anglicised Indians with their worship of an artificial culture. In the *Crown and the Loincloth*, the British imperialism comes into conflict with Indian nationalism on the one hand and there is also conflict between the two modes of the expression of nationalism non-violence and terrorism - on the other. Nahal makes use of contrasts in characterisation as also in the delineation of events. In *Azadi* the steadfast Niranjan Singh who immolates himself to preserve his religious faith is contrasted with the spineless Gangu Mall, who becomes a Muslim convert, discarding his wife to preserve his property. There is also contrast between Chaudhari Barkat Ali, who lived the life of a true Muslim and believed in the unity of all religions with Abdul Ghani who derives sadistic pleasure in torturing and killing the Hindus in the name of religion. The Hindu Muslim unity portrayed in the first part of the novel is in contrast with the atmosphere of bitter hatred and mutual distrust prevalent in the post-partition days. In *Sunrise in Fiji*, Sushil who is a loving, caring and committed husband is presented as a foil to
Harvansh, who is materialistic and self-centred. Prathibha makes this point very clear when she says, "Sushil was not a rich man like you, Harvansh, yet he was much richer than you in many ways".(138)

In The Crown and the Loincloth, Sunil who follows non-violence is presented as a foil to Rakesh the terrorist. Likewise Gen. Dyer, the incarnation of white arrogance becomes a foil to Kenneth Ashby, who is level-headed and lovable. In a way Ashby reminds us of Mr. Fielding in A Passage to India who believed that this world is full of men who are trying to reach to one another and "can best do so, by the help of goodwill plus culture and intelligence."(50) There is also the implied parallelism between the character of Sunil and Gandhi on the one side and Kasturba and Kusum on the other:

The language used by the Indian-English writers conveys the author's search rather than their success in having established a distinct tradition of the genre in India. The Indian-English writer's grasp over the vernacular makes it imperative on his part to refashion it to capture Indian tonal rhythms. Even when he uses the language that the West can understand, that language is abstracted from the context of the living Indian culture. Even when the writer is capable of
using the language like a native writer of the language, he has to be conscious of the fact that he is writing about people who do not normally speak or think in English. The creativity of the writer, to a great extent, depends on how far he is capable of rendering convincingly the idioms, nuances and the idiosyncrasies of linguistic speech habits to provide consistency between speech and character for maintaining an illusion of reality. Nahal seems to be very much conscious of this and he takes particular care to construct speeches befitting the social and literary standing of his characters. In Azadi, when Lala Kanshiram is witnessing the parade of the English constables, the superintendent of police walks up to him and asks:

Lalji, thik hai?
Han Sahib, thik hun. Bilkul thik hun, Sahib.
The superintendent would have liked to move on, but Lala Kanshiram pushed Arun in front of him.
Is this your son?
the superintendent asked reluctantly.
No Sir, no. He is your son only, Lala Kanshiram replied, folding his hands and going into additional raptures.
The superintendent knew the Punjabi terminology and did not show alarm at the fatherhood attributed to him. (23)
On the very same occasion when his son Arun shows no interest in the parade that is going on, Kanshiram chides him. "You listen to me, you haram zadai, you son of a bastard, I am telling you, look at the gora Sahibs."(23)

In contrast to the crude and unsavoury English of Lala Kanshiram with the hue and flavour of the vernacular, Nahal makes Gandhi use simple but polished English. In The Crown and the Loincloth Gandhi tells Sunil:

When I am asking you to learn spinning I am really asking you to learn a new language. A language that might touch the chord of an Indian peasant everywhere in any corner of India.(143)

This shifting of registers is quite discernible even while the novelist as narrator gives the readers an insight into the working of the minds of his characters. Thus we see Dyer, seething with indignation and contempt, thinking about Gandhi:

The concessions the Government had made to that seditious Gandhi, the arch villain! Since the day of his arrival from South Africa, he had caused nothing but trouble. (The Crown-91)
Kamal in *My True Faces* ponders over his marital bliss:
Strange the fountain of the body, most mysterious its hidden resources and needs. And the two of them, the man and the woman, given licence to revel in each others' passion, had their fill of the long denied waters of life and made up for the years of neglect, and the years of want.(47)

Nahal's grip on the language gains greater strength in his later novels K.R.S.Iyengar, commenting on Nahal's use of the English language in the *Gandhi Quartet* observes that the language is adequate and resilient as there are "no angularities, no laboured flourishes and no elaborate journalistic explications."9

For the artistic structuring and rendering of human experience and for the communication of the significance of the same to the reader, the novelist takes certain angles of vision. Thus the 'point of view' taken by an author provides him with a means of controlling and shaping his material and also enables the reader to see for himself the meaning and significance of the narrative. Moreover, as Miriam Allott observes, this selection of an angle of vision is of prime importance to the author, as he has to interpret his material in such a way as to "make it seem authentic."10 In *My True Faces* and *Sunrise in Fiji*, the story is told from the perspectives of the
protagonists, Kamal and Harvansh. Nahal uses the first person narrative technique in *Into Another Dawn*. The concerns in the novel *Azadi*, vary from the socio-economic and humanistic implications of the tragic exodus to the psychic and emotional disturbances of the victims of the traumatic experience. As such, Nahal employs the multiple or shifting points of view, as Faulkner does in *The Sound and the Fury*. The novel proceeds through the varying perspectives of Kanshiram and Arun. The interaction between these two characters and the description of events which bring out the socio-moral and ethical questions become the centre of interest in the novel. This multiple point of view is followed in the novels, *The Crown and the Loincloth*, *The Salt of Life* and *The Triumph of the Tricolour*. In these novels, the main plot develops through the perspectives of characters like Gandhi, Sunil and Kusum. In the subplot dealing with the revolutionary movement, the story proceeds through the point of view provided by different revolutionaries. Very rarely does Nahal resort to the technique of introducing an omniscient narrator. Brace Gerald Warner in his book, *The Stuff Fiction* notes that the chief fault of the omniscient method is that it tells the readers too much, thereby denying them an opportunity to draw their own conclusions. In the Gandhi Quartet there are occasions, especially when the author feels it obligatory on his part to trace the
development of the freedom movement, this technique is employed. On such occasions Nahal generally observes reticence, but still there are instances of too much description which do not in any way contribute to the overall development of the plot, as when he pursues at length, the 'Ajitha murder case' in the *Triumph of the Tricolour*.

The search for the glories of the past of one's land of birth and the desire to celebrate its cultural values have become almost an obsession with many of the writers of newly independent African countries. Chinua Achebe, in his famous novel *Things Fall Apart* explores the virtues and weaknesses of a tribal past, to project a model for the national life of Nigeria. Soyinka in *The Interpreters*, Gabriel Okara in *The Voice* and Peter Abraham in *This Island Now* show an inclination towards satire, exposing the uncertainties and confusions pervading the desire to assert a national identity. However in India, there was no perceptible change in the social structure due to colonialism because of what Ashish Nandy terms as the "ethnic universalism" of "non-modern India." Nandy traces the reasons for the absence of any cultural confusion in an Indian in spite of the long history of foreign intrusions. India, in its own "diffused way" tried to create an "alternative language of discourse", appropriating the west as a sub culture within the Indian cultural matrix". Even while
accepting the appropriation of the Western value system as a sub culture, there has always been an attempt by the Indian-English novelists to present characters who long for asserting a national identity. Ramaswamy, the protagonist of The Serpent and the Rope, is seen advancing defence to fight cultural colonialism. For him, "India is not a country like France is, or like England. India is an idea, a metaphysic."(380) The marriage of Ramaswamy with the French lady Madeline represents the congruence of two contrary world views. However, this association does not last long as the 'Indianness' in Ramaswamy and the 'Frenchness' in Madeline are too formidable to admit any sort of mutual adjustments. Krishna, in R.K.Narayan's, The English Teacher renounces his stable and comfortable job of English teaching and takes a kind of spiritual journey to find out an answer to some ontological questions.

By rejecting the western education system, Krishna rejects the western intellectual edifice. In Kamala Markandeya's Possession, Val, the protagonist, even though culturally and psychologically conditioned by the west, had to face an identity crisis due to his de-Indianisation. When haunted by the possibility of impending death, Ravi, in Into Another Dawn has to return to India to the solace only Ganges can provide "on its wide bosom."(162)
Harvansh in *Sunrise in Fiji* tries to shake off the Indianness in him and enjoys a meteoric rise in a materialistic world. But in the final reckoning, he too realizes that he had pawned away his identity following an illusion and tries to return to his cultural and spiritual base. The anglicized Indians in *The English Queens*, crumpled like paper bags when Lord Chetna (Indianness incarnate) points a finger at them. It is quite significant that the Gandhians as well as the revolutionaries in the *Gandhi Quartet* never suffer from any identity crisis.

Nahal has great regard for Bhabani Bhattacharya, with whom he shares many common grounds. He fully endorses Bhattacharya's bias for the kind of art that teaches unobtrusively by its vivid interpretation of life. While Mulk Raj Anand pins his hope for the transformation of society on science, Bhattacharya and Nahal are committed to bring back to human mind, the possibility of happiness by upholding the values of hope and faith. Bhattacharya's protagonists, like Nahal's Kamal, Ravi, Harvansh and Sunil, come to realize the importance of dynamic equilibrium and move towards a maturer view of life after leading unbalanced lives. Nahal in *Into Another Dawn* and Bhattacharya in *A Dream in Hawaii* deal with the theme of international brotherhood that transcends artificial
barriers, leading to the emergence of a brave new world. What Dorothy Shiner finds as the reasons for the universal appeal of Bhattacharya's novels are equally applicable to the novels of Chaman Nahal:

Although there are many issues to which Bhattacharya addresses himself, the major and most inclusive one seem to me to be those concerns of today that are universal in nature: individual human worth and dignity, freedom and national aspiration and the need for reconciliation of differences or achievement of equilibrium among differing views and ways of life, especially between East and West, the traditional and the new. The manifestations of these universal issues and the manner in which they are handled may be peculiarly Indian, immersed in the author's home scene and ethos. This does not however, invalidate their universality or restrict their appeal, it confirms one human commonality.12

Literature, in national context becomes a companion of history and of the time, projecting a national image, looking ahead with a creative pride in the "progressive formulation of the collective into an artistic construct."13 In the trans-national context, any good piece of literature has to embody an expanding vision of mankind's essential unity and integrity despite racial, religious and ethnic distinctions. To achieve this end, a writer has to highlight certain
eternal values of life and project a vision that transcends the
temporalities of human divides. Chaman Nahal has had significant
success in this direction as is evident from his thematic concerns and
their faithful delineation in the novels. Hope is the keynote of all his
novels. Viewing life in all its totality, he shows life worth living with
all the jubilations and tribulations it offers. The acceptance,
affirmation and celebration of life form the bedrock of Nahal's
philosophy of life projected through his novels. It is this unremitting
zest for the glorification of the positive values of life that make us look
forward with interest to his continuation of this exploration.
Notes


7. V.K. Gokak, *India and World Culture* (New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1989) 80


