(I) Marxism

The rise of industrial capitalism brought about radical changes not only in the mode of production but also in the socio-political fabric of the society in the nineteenth century. Karl Marx was one of the first thinkers to react to the capitalist system of production. Karl Marx (1818-1883) was a German Philosopher, political economist, historian and revolutionary. Marx addressed a wide range of topics and presented a complex analysis of history and society in terms of class relations. He perceived human history to have been composed of a series of struggles between classes—between the oppressed and the oppressing. This is one of the fundamental propositions of Marxism. The opening line of the introduction to his path-breaking book *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) says:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles, contest between the exploiting and exploited, ruling and the oppressed class. (18)

Marxism asserts that the class struggle is the central element of social change. Marxism aims at the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by a classless society. Marx foresaw a revolution in which the workers would unite and rebel. Marxist critics have interpreted Marx's theories in a number of different ways, but there are a few fundamental Marxist concepts: the dialectical model of history; the idea that social being determines
consciousness; and the base/superstructure model, the concept of hegemony and workers’ alienation.

Celebration of contradiction is at the heart of Marxism. A factory owned by a rich businessman embodies the contradiction of the clashing interests of the workers and the owner. Through a process of workers’ unrest and managerial coercion, the factory moves forward. If conditions are ripe and workers’ unrest in several factories can add up to take the form of a revolution, a workers’ state will be the consequence. In Bengal where the leftist parties have been elected to power time and again, proves how Marxist dialectics works in societies where capitalist-imperialist oppression of people reaches at its peak.

Marxism is not only a kind of philosophy, but also a method to understand history. In this sense, Marxism fits into a kind of historicism known as historical materialism which shows that history, or social change comes about through human actions, and not because of God, destiny, or some mystifying non-human agency. Historical materialism can be called ‘materialist’ because it defines how humans have created material culture, i.e. tools, objects, the things that we use in our daily lives every day, and how this material culture has brought about the historical change.

Marx’s dialectical account of history presupposes the idea that an individual’s social being is determined by larger political and economic forces. Marx writes:

The mode of production in material life determines the general character of social, political and spiritual process of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines the existence, but on the contrary their social existence determines their consciousness. (Marx and Engels, CER 17)
Marx declares that thoughts do not govern the world; neither history is the outcome of slow unfolding of reason. Marx argues that all ideologies are the by-products of social and economic realities. These realities could be religious beliefs, legal systems and cultural expressions. As pointed out earlier, Marx emphasized that it is not the consciousness of men that determines their social being, but on the contrary their social existence determines their consciousness. The social class into which a person is born determines his outlook and viewpoints. Marx declares:

...in direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here is a matter of ascending from earth to heaven. The phantoms formed in the brains of men are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life process... Morality, religion, metaphysics, and all the rest of ideology well as forms of consciousness corresponding to these, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence... It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness (Ideology 36-37).

Marxism has an apparent tie up with materialism. According to Marxists, ideas are mechanically decided by material environment. Marxists believe that both our objective circumstances and our subjective ideas inescapably change and this process is steered by the material engine of economy. This kind of economic system under which a person subsists, and the standing that a person occupies within that system, is thus determines his or her consciousness.

Marx focuses on capitalism as an unequal mode of production, one which exploits workers. According to Marx, this inequality is a fundamental aspect of capitalism, and needs to be changed through uprising. Marx hopefully predicts that the internal tensions and contradictions of capitalism
will eventually destroy capitalism, and capitalism will evolve into socialism. Socialism, for Marx, is the final stage of economic development, and is perhaps the last page in the book of history. Socialism would be a utopian mode of production - an ideal economic system, and would then just remain forever (without evolving into something else). Marx hopes that this would be a final curtain to the history.

Marxism as an economic doctrine offers an analysis how capitalism as an economic system operates. It's based on an analysis of how the forces and relations of production work to keep the capitalist system afloat. In a factory, for instance, a worker performs labour on raw materials, and thus transforms those raw materials into a finished product; in the process, the labourer adds something to the raw materials so that the product (raw material + labour) is worth more than the original raw material. What the labourer adds is called "surplus value" in Marxist theory. While the labourer is paid for the work he or she does, but that payment is disproportionate in terms of the work he puts up. He just subsists, but can not live comfortably. He is not paid in terms of the value he adds to the raw material. Thus the capitalism promotes unfair development: the labourer does the work and the owner gets the profit from the surplus value created by the labourer. In such a scenario society gets diametrically divided into two warring factions- the proletariat, and the capitalists. The proletariats are the workers who have to sell their labour power in order to survive, and the capitalists who own the means of production ultimately establish hegemony over the socio-political life of the general public.

Marx also dwells on the alienation of the workers. The capitalists own the factories and mines in which the proletariats work. The proletariat by selling their labour power objectify themselves into commodities. The product finished by the worker is owned by the capitalist, who considers it as...
a commodity to be sold. The proletariat gets disconnected from the product he has helped create. This leads Marx to assert that capitalism involves an alienation of workers. Alienation is the process whereby the worker is made to feel foreign to the products of his/her own labour. The worker is alienated from his product precisely because he no longer owns that product, which now belongs to the capitalist who will sell it for profit. The labour put into an object becomes a part of the capitalist's profit, and thus no longer belongs to the labourer. This whole process reduces the labourer into a property that can be bought and sold. The worker becomes a commodity, something to be sold in the marketplace like a thing; the worker who is a commodity is thus not fully human, in the philosophical sense, since he cannot exercise free will to determine his actions.

By this logic, a factory worker can be treated not as a human being with specific needs, but as 'hands'—mere wage earner. Marxists hope that this will bring about the ultimate alienation of the proletariat, and their exploitation by the capitalists will lead to large scale hostility between workers and owners, labour and capital. Marx further says when earnings are not invested in workers' welfare but in building more factories, the workers will end up as the poorest until no quick-fix compromise is possible. At a crisis point, the large scale revolt will lead to a total shake-up of the system. This change could be workers' revolution as witnessed during the October Revolution in Russia and that will ultimately result into social upheaval leading to socialism. For a political system to be considered socialist, the workers must own the means of production.

Marxists also use the term hegemony to explain the power of ruling group. Hegemony is a sort of deception in which the individual forgets his own desires and accepts dominant values as his own. For example, someone might think that going to college is the right and necessary step in every life,
when in reality their belief is socially constructed and is reflective of upper-class domination. Literature, then, may be seen as something that both reinforces dominant values and only occasionally calls them into question. The ruling class maintains its power through this nexus of material and ideological instruments.

Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto* (1848) is a testimony to this fact. It is declared that "the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class." [VI, 503] This is the so-called dominant ideology thesis, which indicates that the class which is economically powerful will try to impose its own ideas on the rest of the society and devise political system, legal framework, religion to serve its interest. However the other exploited class will try to wage a battle to counter the domination of the ruling class. The sphere of ideology thus becomes a field of class conflict. This is the battle the Marxist authors depict in their work.

Marx then develops this concept of determination into one of the fundamental concepts of Marxism—that of base and superstructure. According to Marx, economy is the foundation or base of society. The economic relations—or modes of production—are the primary determining factor in all social relations. The cultural, political and social forms of life fall in the category of superstructures which are created out of the base and also serve to expand the economic base. The economic base encompasses all the forces of production, which Marx believes influences our ideological constructions. The superstructure rests upon the base; cultural activities—such as philosophy or literature—belong to the superstructure. All the different aspects of a society are in Marxist theory, determined by the economic base. To Marxists a society's economic base determines the theme and styles of its literature too. Marx writes:
..it was seen that all past history was the history of class struggles, and these warring classes of society are always the products of modes of production and of exchange- in a word, of the economic conditions of their time; that the economic structure of society always furnishes the real basis, starting from which we can alone work out ultimate explanation of the whole superstructure of judicial and political institutions as well as the religious, philosophical and other ideas of a given historical period. (XXV, 26-7)

Marx believes that since superstructure is the product of the base, it predictably carries the ideologies of the base. For Marx, ideology, as part of the superstructure generated by an economic base, works to justify that base. The ideologies present in a capitalist society are employed to defend the capitalist mode of production. Ideologies are the value system, contemporary ethos, prevailing ideas, and feelings through which people carry out different social activities. Literature, as an intellectual creation, is a kind of ideology, one that gives sanction to the dominance of the ruling classes. Marxists believe that for a proper study of literature of a given time, it is imperative to study the socio-economic conditions of the time. Literature as indicted by the Marxists has been used for centuries by the upper classes to spread the dominant value system.

Literature forms the part of superstructure of culture and it is controlled by the economic base. Literary creations may ask some valid questions with regard to whole range of super structure- political structure, religious system, or aesthetic thoughts. Marxist literary critics want to examine how the economic base of any culture especially in a capitalist society influences the form and content of literature. They also want to observe how literature functions vis-à-vis various aspects of the
superstructure. Their first typical inquiry is how literature reflects economic base and, finally, Marxist critics would like to probe how literature can function as a vehicle of social change, or other way round just to reinforce the existing conditions. They also want to investigate whether literature is a part of struggle that will bring about an end of capitalism and usher in a socialist revolution or whether literature is part of the bourgeois justification of capitalism.

Marxism calls into question the time-honoured principles of art. Marxists generally view literature "not as works created in accordance with timeless artistic criteria, but as 'products' of the economic and ideological determinants specific to that era." (Abrams 149) All art forms are thus measured by the economic yard stick. Such a view kills the autonomy of each sphere of art. It is a point of debate whether Marx was in favour of such materialist reduction of art. In my opinion Marx does not support the idea of art being a passive product of the economic system. Marx is conscious of the universal appeal of genuine works of art evolving in a healthy, dialectical relationship with socio-economic structure. Marx in his treaty *On Literature and Art* grants “the relative independence to the various art forms.” (17) Caudwell takes forward the Marxist postulation and states that literature and society exist in a dialectical unity. He asserts; “not only does social existence determine literature but literature also influences society and therefore has a conscious social purpose (16). In the words of Parkinson, “The artist or creative writer is not the passive reflector of social consciousness.” (85) George Lukacs, a celebrated Marxist theoretician suggested that the critical significance of artistic creation was “ontological” and the art reflected the true nature of human being as a “species being (55-57).” It is a total fallacy to say that the creation of literature is exclusively dependent on the laws of social development. Literature being a specific form of social consciousness follows its own law of development. Individual creativity is the hallmark of literature
and creative artists are not obliged to take the class lines or to follow dominant ideas of his time. Artists or creative writers may criticize the dominant views and conceive new realities which could be in conflict with the dominant ideology of the period. Krylov, a Russian critic has ably presented the views of Marx and Engels:

They were in no way inclined to qualify art as a passive product of the economic system. On the contrary, they emphasized that the various forms of social consciousness - including of course, artistic creation actively influenced the social reality from which they emerge. (19)

In the late sixties famous English critic Raymond Williams took up the task of formulating Marxist cultural and literary theory. Williams is also in opposition to a materialist reduction of literature. He defines the social value of art as a creative form. He says that all art forms are legitimate means to communicate our experiences of reality. He says that art as an individual creative act creates conventions and institutions which from the bedrock of culture. Raymond Williams modified the terms like base and superstructure as residual and emergent cultures. Raymond Williams also reconsidered Marx's assignment of economic base as primary and the cultural superstructure as secondary to determining the relations of production. In his work, Williams explores the crucial ways in which culture also determines the social means of production, particularly the manufacture and reproduction of hegemonic consent and education in its labour force. Williams writes; "the art of a great artistic period may reach a point of vitality and vision where it can influence the life of the period down to its very economic foundations (241).” He further points out that “Marxism by itself can tell us nothing whatever about the goodness or badness of a work of art. A man may be an excellent Marxist, but if he lacks imagination and taste,
he will be unable to make the choice between a good and an inferior book. What Marxism can do; however is throw a great deal of light on the origins and social significance of works of art.” (Williams 246)

The pioneering methods of analysis adopted by Marx have been very prominent in shaping a broad array of disciplines. In the 21st century, we come across a theoretical presence of Marxist approaches in the variety of fields as diverse as economics, sociology, literature, anthropology, media studies, theatre, history, education, economics, literary criticism, aesthetics and philosophy. The influence of Marxism does not stop there. Many social movements, political revolutions, scholarly theories, political parties, and even governments have taken recourse to Marxism as an intellectual basis for their politics and policies. Social democratic movements in 20th century Europe, the erstwhile Soviet Union and other Eastern bloc countries, Mao and other revolutionaries in developing countries declared their allegiance to Marxism. These movements have added new frontiers to Marxism and transformed it so much that it is difficult to recognize its true bottom line.

Marxism became favourite with the masses. It held out promise for the humanity crushed under the capitalist exploitation. Marxism was thought to be panacea for the ailing world. The concept of dialectical materialism as depicted in Das Kapital generated a tremendous exhilaration among the masses. There was a new hope for the exploited workers of the world. People started dreaming about the proletariat revolution. There was a hope that the revolution would bring about freedom to the peasants and workers and destroy the system of exploitation of man by man. Marx’s ideas exerted a major influence on the workers’ movement. This influence provided the momentum to the Great October Revolution in Russia. The victory of the Marxist Bolsheviks in Russia brought cataclysmic changes in socio-economic and political set up of the world. There were hardly any parts of the world
which remained insulated from Marxian ideas in the course of the twentieth century. Marxism gained popular support especially in the third world countries of Asia and Africa because of its anti-colonial and anti-imperialistic stance.

Communists all over the world regarded Marxism as their official dogma, but they discredited Marxism by establishing authoritarian states where the individual freedom was denied. The failure of communism is reflected in the demise of the Communist bloc in Eastern Europe and Soviet Union. There were not many takers for Marxism in the western world as staunch Marxists believed in violent revolution. However their ideas of class struggle and exploitation have guided the western democracies to frame the alternative policies in favour of the working class and to take other welfare measures.

Ideally Marxist philosophy is a cry from the wilderness; it's a plea to restore the social order that is replete with injustice. Economy is the driving force of human behaviour. How one gets his bread and butter decides the fate of his life and Marxism at its best is designed to provide the equal distribution of economic resources.

(II) Marxism and Literature

Creative writers across the continents could not escape the rush of excitement. Literature all around the world bore the stamp of Marxist power. The writings acquired a new purpose. Literature in the erstwhile Soviet Union became the torch bearer of the Marxist literature. Communism emerged as an attractive substitute for the prevailing disorder and instability. There was a marked left wing shift of the theorists and literary artists. In 1936 the Left Book Club was set up in England. Escapist movement also became fashionable in both Europe and America. Literary intellectuals gave vent to their uneasiness through their writings. English stalwarts like T.S. Eliot,
Bertrand Russell, D.H.Lawrence, George Orwell, and Christopher Caudwell expressed their disquiet towards contemporary realities through their scholarly studies and creative writings. Many of the authors of the period brought about a moral critique of industrial capitalism and supported the cause of the socialist humanism through their literary output.

In India too the impact of the Bolshevik revolution and the appeal of Marxist views were quite phenomenal. The young nationalists and intellectuals like Jawaharlal Nehru, Mulk Raj Anand, M. N. Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, Yashpal were fascinated by the dynamic ideology of Marxist Socialism during the early decades of the twentieth century. Scientific socialism became a parallel movement along with Gandhian ideology and shaped the destiny of a nation passing through the period of great ferment and tumult.

The World Progressive Writers’ Association was established under the leadership of the leftist writers like Maxim Gorky, Pablo Neruda, Romain Rolland and others in 1935. Immediately followed the beginning of the Indian Progressive Writers’ movement in 1936 under the guidance of some of the stalwarts like Premchand, Mulk Raj Anand, Rabindranath Tagore, Sajad Zaheer and Uma Shankar Joshi. The movement provided the writers the platform to attack the twin perils of colonialism and fascism in their creative writings. Translations from Russian authors gave momentum to the socialist literature in the Indian subcontinent. Gandhian movement provided added impetus to the creative writers and became the inevitable corollary of such a revolutionary change in society.

The writers in India provided the voice to the aspirations and predicaments of the toiling masses in their literary works. They exposed the social and economic ills deeply entrenched in the society. Their story line captured the daily battle of a mill-hand or a farm labourer exploited in a
capitalist society. The idea of revolution became the centre of conflict in their stories. Their writings also echoed the utopian vision of a just and classless society liberated from all kinds of exploitation. The style of writing also underwent a radical transformation. The common man’s language became the medium of literary expressions. The literary style became less ornamental and more down-to-earth. It is, however, essential to keep in mind that the ideals of social justice, political freedom and national character became the real focal point in all the creative writings of the age whether influenced by Marx or by Gandhi.

Marxist revolution left indelible imprint on Hindi literature. Premchand, the most popular author of Hindi fiction championed the cause of Marxist ideology in India. Premchand presided over the first conference of Progressive Writers’ Association in 1936. Premchand was enamoured of socialist revolution in Russia and unequivocally declared himself a confirmed Bolshevik. Workers, peasants and the downtrodden masses took the center stage in all his novels. He attacked all kinds of superstitions, backwardness, ruthless tyranny of landlords, and the pitiable condition of untouchables in his literary works. Premchand’s monumental work, _Godan_ (1936) is a poignant account of the exploitation of the Indian peasantry by the capitalists. Leading Hindi fiction writers of the period- Yashpal, Bhairav Prasad Gupta, Ashk, and Amarkant Shekhar Joshi continued the socialist tradition of Premchand and depicted the growing class struggle and political turmoil in their work. Yashpal’s _Deshdrohi_ (1943) romantically presents the role of the Communist party in Indian politics.

It was in Bengal where Marxist revolution established its solid roots and its influence has not waned over the past century and this is evident from the fact that even today the Communist party is ruling the state. Marxism found a fertile ground in Bengal. Rabindarnath Tagore and Sarat Chandra
Chatterjee - two leading lights of Bengal were the pioneers of social realism in Bengal. Tagore first called the revolution as the ‘greatest sacrificial fire’ in history. Their literary output deals with the simple joys and sorrows of common men and women. Bengal’s favourite son Tagore in his Nobel Prize winning Gitagali celebrates the humble lives of the lowly and the lost.

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!

Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a Temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!

He is there where the tiller is tilting the hard ground and where the path maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust.

Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on this dusty soil! (Tagore 8)

Sarat Chandra Chatterji, the foremost Bengali novelist launched a massive social protest against the age-old social evils of Indian society in his fiction. Other notable fiction writers in Bengal who were influenced by the Marxian ideology were Manik Banerjee, Premendral Mitra, Manoj Bose, Sailo Mukerjee, Ashim Roy and many others.

Twin influences of Gandhi and Marx were visible in the Gujarati literature published in the first half of the twentieth century. The eminent poets of Gujarati literature, viz, Umashankar Joshi, Snehrashmi, Sundaram, Krishnalal Sridharani and Karsandas Manek, although deeply influenced by the Gandhian ideals showed keen interest in Marxian ideology. They were well aware of the works Karl Marx, Engels and Lenin. The socialist writers like Maxim Gorky, E. Toller attracted a wider audience especially among Gujarati literati. Eminent Gujarati poet Sundaram published his path-breaking collection of poems Koya Bhugat ni Kadvi Vani (‘Sour Talk of Koya

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Bhagat') in 1933. Here the poet demonstrates his socialist concern for the exploited and mourns for the misery of the poor.

“Oh, Friend, Ahmedabad is the city:
Dotted with hundred mills owned by the rich,
Oh, brother ’nd in our countryside,
In this land of Rama-
The poor even yearn for rags...” (Sundaram 77)

Sundaram in these heartrending poems highlights the rural-urban divide and articulates his anger at the capitalist stranglehold over the wealth. His Songs of the Poor (Garibo Na Gito) (1933) also bears testimony to the poet’s Marxist concern.

Umashanker Joshi’s Gangotri (1934) is a rich treasury of brilliant poems highlighting the poet’s Marxist leanings. “Jatharagni” (Fire in the Belly) is one such poem portraying the popular Marxist theme of opulence vis-à-vis hunger.

‘Build, build, big buildings
Touching the skyline,
Erect majestic minarets ’nd palaces for the rich,
Mounting in majesty
The day is not far when the flames from their hunger
Will blow up,
Leaving behind not a single grain in the ruin
To find out. (Joshi 27)’

The poems like ‘The Song of a Hammer’ (Hathoda Nu Geet), ‘The Washer man’ (Dhabi), ‘the Bulbul and the Beggar Woman’ (Bulbul ane

* Translation Mine
Bhikharan) suggest the inherent contradictions of the capitalist society and bring to light the poet’s strong Marxist connection.

Snehrashmi, another prominent Gujarati poet evokes his Marxist affinity in the poems like “A page of the history in making” (Ghadata Itihash Nu Ek Panu), “The Poet and People” (Janata ane Kaavi) in his anthology of poems- Panghat (1948). Karsandas Manek’s Stalinopakhyan (Narrative on Stalin) is a rich tribute to Communist Russia and Stalin’s contribution to it. His other poems like ‘Jay Jaganath’, ‘Hari na Lochaniya’, ‘Aafatno Avaj’, and various other poems from the collection of poems, Albel are noted for their socialist fervour.

Like poetry, Gujarati fiction of the first half of the twentieth century also underlines the traces of Marxist influence along with ever present Gandhian ethos. Ramanlal Desai, the prolific fiction writer of the period was the frontrunner in stressing the pains of the poor and under-privileged in his great array of novels. His famous novel GramLaxmi depicts the flavour of both the ideologies- Gandhism and Marxism working not at cross purposes but fused together. The hero of the novel Ashwin shows his keen understanding of these ideologies. His other novels Shirish, Kokila, Snehagna, Diteya-Chakshu and Jayant reveal Desai’s socialist vision. Kanaiyalal Munshi (1887-1971), the stalwart of Gujarati literature, although known for his historical romances, shows a curious blend of Gandhian idealism and Marxist influence at least in the early phase of his writing career. His novel Swapnadrashta (The Dreamer) focuses on the emergence of revolutionary party. Suhasi is another Gujarati fiction writer who delineates the plight of exploited labourers in his novel Meghli Rate (The Cloudy Night). In the thirties biographies of Stalin and Lenin became available in print. Dhanvant Oza, a well-known Marxist thinker in Gujarat wrote the biography of Karl Marx. Mulk Raj Anand’s Coolie and Gorky’s seminal work, The Mother were also translated into Gujarati.
Marxian ideology made quite an impact on Indian English literature like its counterparts in regional languages. More than any one else, Mulk Raj Anand penned his novels under the strong influence of Marx. Anand’s Marxist links are clearly evident from the choice of themes and portrayal of characters in his fiction. Anand came into close contact with the influential Marxist circle during his stay in England. Although it is difficult to pinpoint separately who exerted a major influence on Anand- Marx or Gandhi. There is no doubt that both Marx and Gandhi shaped Anand’s creative thoughts. Anand’s socialism drew its inspiration from both Gandhi and Marx. We could clearly recognize the working of these two ideologies in Anand’s rich crop of fictional output- Untouchable (1935), Coolie (1939), The Village (1939), Across the Black Waters (1940), and The Sword and the Sickle (1942). All the protagonists of the above cited novels- Bakha, an untouchable sweeper in Untouchable, a waif like Munoo in Coolie, a labourer like Gangu in Two Leaves and a Bud belong to the lowest strata of the society.

Bhabani Bhattacharya also chose to follow the footsteps of his illustrious predecessor, Mulk Raj Anand in his treatment of these twin ideologies of Marxism and Gandhism during his long-drawn-out creative journey starting from So Many Hungers (1947) to A Dream in Hawaii (1978). Bhattacharya visited Soviet Union on quite a few occasions. Bhattacharya like his other Bengali contemporaries created his stories under the powerful impact of Marxism. The alluring appeal of Marxist thought is revealed in his following comment:

The impact of the Great October Revolution we, the Indians, have felt in our own lives... The red star, rising over the world, has become an embalm of liberation for the people of the world who are under the yoke of tyranny. (04)
In the case of Bhattacharya, Marxism did not come in conflict with his high regard for Gandhian ideals. On the contrary his Marxist sensitivity opened his eyes to the ills of society and played its part as a promising stimulus to Gandhian moral vision.

Marxism in its original format is the realization of god's ideal word [not the one practised in China or in the erstwhile Soviet Union]. Here by Marxism, I refer to the Marx’s dream of the workers’ revolution and the end of capitalist hold on economic resources. In such a world there is justice and equity and there is sharing and no exploitation. This is perhaps the vision of ‘Rama Rajaya’ envisaged by our sages in the ancient scriptures. This is also akin to Gandhi’s vision of ‘Sarvodaya’.

Marxist theory thus, is aimed at social change. Marxists tend to examine social relations so as to change them, to correct what they perceive as the totally unfair socio-economic system resulting from the capitalist social order. According to the Marxists, religious beliefs, legal systems and cultural frame work are the products of the social and economic conditions prevailing in the society. They believe that art should not only reflect such conditions honestly, but strive to improve them. Marxist literary critics are also inclined to uncover the signs of repressions and contradictions within literary creations. This is apt because Marxism was at first devised to evaluate just such contradictions within society. Marxist literary critics also view literature as closely related to the politics of socio-economic power struggle and thus my analysis of Bhattacharya’s literary works is linked to larger socio-political questions.
(III) Gandhism

Gandhism is the term that defies all definitions. Gandhism is not about any rigid philosophy. It is more about Gandhi’s journey in search of truth. It was the truth that was arrived at by self-discovery and self-examination. Gandhi’s life is a chain of experiments with truth. Gandhism stands for the way of life Gandhiji himself has practised, not just vouched for. Gandhian thought belongs to the world of action, not just of ideas. Gandhiji was a man of action and devoted his life to the service of the people. Gandhi was an excellent example of a leader who led from the front and practised what he preached diligently. If one wants to see how ideas can be put to practice, look no further, it is the Gandhian way that exhibits the effective use of action to transform ideas into veritable performance. Gandhi gave the world the ideas of truth, non-violence and Satyagraha.

Gandhiji has always said, truth and non-violence are no new ideals. They are eternal laws of life preached in various countries for thousands of years. He has also exhibited to the cynical world that truth and non-violence are the most powerful weapons in the hand of man. Gandhiji has enriched the meaning of these ideas and breathed fresh life into them.

Gandhiji has tried to unite philosophy with life, abstract principle with concrete reality of facts, religion with politics and ethics with a programme for social revolution. (Srivastava 224)

It is said that the Gandhi’s world view was shaped under the influence of the seminal works like The Gita, The New Testament, Ruskin’s Unto This Last, Thoreau’s “Essay on Civil Disobedience,” and Tolstoy’s The Kingdom of God is within You. Gandhi imbibed all that was best in the western thought and
combined it with the Indian tradition. Gandhi metamorphosed his ideas into mass public movement. This is quite in contrast with the western masters like Ruskin and Tolstoy to whom Gandhi was indebted for some of his germinal thoughts. They were academics who strived for individual perfection whereas Gandhi turned his individual consciousness into mass consciousness and aroused in us national identity. Whereas others preached and propounded a thesis, Gandhi worked for the larger good of humanity. With the firm determination Gandhiji dedicated his entire life for the service of mankind on the basis of truth, non-violence and Satyagraha.

Gandhism stands for the ideas and principles that govern the vision and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. The term encompasses the major Gandhian tenets like, ahimsa, satyagraha, brahmacharya, and sarvodaya. Gandhiji never claimed to have been the originator of new thoughts and ideas. His ideas do not constitute a system of new philosophy. He was not even in favour of the term ‘Gandhism’. Gandhi never subscribed to any ‘ism’. He once said; “I do not claim to have originated any new principle. I have simply tried in my own way to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems. Well all my philosophy, if it may be called by that pretentious name, is contained in what I have said. You will not call it ‘Gandhism’. There is no ‘ism’ about it.” (Gandhi, Harijan 39)

Gandhiji identified himself with the common man in his endeavor to stir the people to rise against political bondage, economic serfdom and social slavery. Gandhiji after returning from South Africa travelled across the length and breadth of the country in order to connect with the masses. Millions of ordinary Indians were drawn in by Mahatma Gandhi. He laboured to display that he was a part of the masses, one among them. This image of Gandhi ensured that he could easily sway the masses into action against the British. Gandhiji was aiming for ‘purna swaraj’ by unleashing the
strength of ordinary people. Gandhi’s call worked like a magical wand and brought together for a common cause people from various cross sections of society. Gandhiji guided the Independence Movement building the unity of all castes and communities.

The concept of non-violence (ahimsa) and non-resistance has been part of Indian religious thought since time immemorial and has been linked to Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Christian theology. Gandhi has stated that “I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to experiment in both on as vast a scale as I could do.” Gandhi’s commitment to non-violence emerged from his personal examination. It commands people not to do injury to any living being. Vegetarianism is ahimsa’s most conspicuous application. Gandhi interpreted the concept of ahimsa in the most humane and moral terms. It is applied as an injunction against violence in its myriad forms. Ahimsa is morally and effectively superior to himsa (violence). The satyagrahi chooses self-sacrifice and non-violence not merely to stand by the rightness of his cause but to triumph in it.

Another important Gandhian tenet is satyagraha. Gandhiji says that satyagraha is the only weapon for bringing about peace in the universe. He compounded the term from two nouns: truth and insistence. Satyagraha is the weapon of self-sacrifice against the brute force. Satyagraha is non-violence in action. It means holding on to truth. Mahatma Gandhi writes:

Satyagraha is literally holding on to truth and it means, therefore truth force. It excludes the use of violence, because man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth, and therefore not competent to punish. (Gandhi, Young India 222)
Satyagraha is based on the premise that through love, ahimsa and conscious suffering, the forces of evil can be neutralized because this is the way of truth. Satyagraha utilizes non-violent methods of civil disobedience, fasting, picketing and strike. Non-co-operation is also a technique of Satyagraha. By withdrawing their co-operation with the evil doers people may show their resistance and may compel the ruler to abstain from wickedness. Gandhiji not only preached satyagraha but practised it wholeheartedly. The satyagrahi is the one who insists upon the truth against extreme provocation. His objective is to put to shame his antagonist by observing fast.

Gandhi conceived the idea of Satyagraha during his long apprenticeship from 1893 to 1914 as a leading Indian politician in South Africa. Gandhiji became the victim of cruel racial discrimination perpetrated by the white majority against the Indians and this was a turning point in the life of a low profile lawyer who launched a valiant struggle against injustice. The same weapon he employed successfully back in India during the Champaran campaign against the exploitation of the tenant farmers. After the success of Champaran Satyagraha, Gandhiji launched a series of non-co-operation movements against the British rule which catapulted him into a mass leader. This movement created an unprecedented awakening among the people.

Brahmacharya is another important vow which Gandhiji prescribes as being essential for the development of non-violence. He clearly says that a leader of Satyagraha “must attempt and virtually achieve Brahmacharya.” (Gandhi, Harijan 192) He defines brahmacharya as the correct way which leads to Brahman. ‘Brahmacharya’ consists in the fullest control over all the senses in thought, word and deed. An impure thought or anger is a breach of
Brahmacharya. (Gandhi, Harijan 200) At the same time Gandhiji is against the mechanical celibacy and is not in favour of suppressing bodily desires.

Gandhi advocated the revival of Indian village industries and especially Khadi. He considered khadi as the symbol of swadeshi. He regards spinning wheel as a dynamic means and instrument of helping people to meet the bare needs of their lives. It can supplement their meager income from cultivation. Gandhi emphatically mentioned that Swaraj can not be attained by the erection of huge factories as they stand for exploitation. Gandhiji stressed more on cottage industries than industrial development. He was against machine not because machine was wrong but because machine had exploited man power and had become the master of man instead of being helper to it. Large scale machinery concentrates wealth in the hands of one man who lords over the rest who slave for him. He denies machine where it goes against human welfare, but he approves of the heavy industry if employed by the State for the common good.

Gandhiji came up with the doctrine of trusteeship to ameliorate the pains of industrialism. Gandhiji’s concept of trusteeship provides a way to transfer the current capitalist order of society into a socialistic set up. It gives the present owning class the chance of the change of heart. It is the non-violent conversion of the people that can do its miracle. Rich people will remain as trustees of their excess wealth for the good of the commons. Gandhiji believed that only non-violent persuasion can convert the heart of the rich people.

It is a moot question whether Gandhiji was a Marxist. Gandhiji was well aware about Marxist revolution and said; “He could not share with Marx the view that the use of violence could usher in non-violence.” (Tendulkar 36) Gandhiji was against any socialism that had material foundation. Gandhiji’s
idea of socialism has its uniqueness. Gandhiji’s aim was to establish a classless society based on justice and equality.

Gandhi’s socialist programme starts from the villages. British rule in India spoiled the village life which was once famous for its autonomous character. It was autonomous with economic self-sufficiency, but that status of the village was destroyed and made the villagers dependent on the towns. That’s why; Gandhiji stressed more on village development. The prosperity of the villagers can only assure national development. The villagers mainly the peasant class must be saved from political and economic exploitation.

Gandhi’s concept of religion has a moral foundation. For him religion should have a moral purpose and it should be devoid of rituals, superstitions and dogmas. Gandhiji was a staunch advocate of religious reformation. Religion to him is not in the form of subscription to dogmas or conformity to rituals, but to him religion is in the sense of an abiding faith in the absolute value of truth, love and justice. Gandhi has said: “I am trying to see God through service of humanity for I know that God is neither in heaven, nor down below, but in everyone (Dash 29).” Romain Rolland wrote about Gandhi’s concept of religion in his legendary book, *Mahatma Gandhi*:

All religions are founded on the same moral laws. My ethical religion is made up of laws which bind men all over the world.

(Rolland 28)

Gandhiji has time and again expressed that all our efforts to establish swaraj will go in vain if we do not uplift the untouchables from their status. The principle of sarvodaya depends upon the removal of untouchability. Gandhiji has said, “I prayed that if I should die with any of my desires unfulfilled with regard to my services to the untouchables, I wish to be born amongst untouchables to fulfil my promise.” (Gandhi, *Untouchability* 6).
Gandhiji was not a scholar neither was a theoretician. He did not advocate any political or socio-economic theory. He was a man of action; continually dealing with practical economic, political and social problems of the country. It was primarily as a man of action that he wielded profound influence on the people of India. Gandhi made no difference between men and women. For the first time in Indian history, at Gandhi’s call women came out of their shackles, stood shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts during the freedom movement. Gandhian thought radically transformed the status of women in society. The uniqueness of Gandhian thought lies in the fact that he could successfully fuse together the best of the western and the best of Indian traditions. He stood for decentralization and his concept of trusteeship was rooted in the humanitarian ground of ‘bread for all before cakes for some’. But Gandhism is above all a message of hope.

(IV) Gandhism and Literature

The creative minds of thirties and forties were greatly influenced by the Gandhian philosophy. The advent of Gandhian thought made a profound impact on the literary artists of the time. This has double-edged impact bringing about the change not only in the contents but also in the technique of writing literature. It gave a new direction to the Indian literary scene. In addition to that the Indian freedom struggle under the leadership of Gandhi was so powerful that it grew out to be an all-encompassing emotive experience for all the Indians. It provided a distinctive national identity to the people. M.K. Naik states;

The Indian freedom struggle was already more than a generation old, but with the advent of Mahatma Gandhi it was so thoroughly democratized that freedom consciousness percolated for the first time to the very grassroots of Indian
society and revitalized it. It is possible to see a connection
between this development and the rise of the Indian novel in
English, for fiction, of all literary forms, is more vitally
concerned with social conditions and values. (Dimensions 117)

Most of the literary artists of the time could not escape this powerful
current of all India character, especially the influence of Gandhiji. To take the
words of Jawaharlal Nehru from The Discovery of India:

Gandhiji was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us
stretch ourselves and take deep breaths; like a beam of light
that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our
eyes; like a whirlwind that upset many things but most of all
the working of people’s minds. (358)

Literature in all languages was influenced by the advent of Gandhian
Renaissance. Indian English literature too witnessed sudden surge in its
creation and range when the Gandhian movement was at its peak. “It was
during this age that Indian English fiction discovered some of its most
compelling themes: the ordeal of the freedom struggle, East-West
relationship, the communal problem and the plight of untouchables, the
landless poor, the downtrodden, the economically exploited and the
oppressed.” (Naik, History 118)

Gandhi did not preach any dialectics, eschewed all kinds of theories,
instead he made common cause with the masses and religiously followed the
path of truth and non-violence. Two journals of Mahatma Gandhi ‘Young
India’ and ‘Harijan’ brought Gandhian views in public domain. Gandhi’s
humanistic nationalism gave a new dimension to the literature in all
languages. For the writer Gandhian thought worked as a vital formative link
in shaping his vision and creative impulse. “The most important aspect of
Gandhi’s personality was that he stood for the common man, the humblest, the lowliest and the lost.” (Bhattacharya, Gandhi 225) This set the writers free from the longstanding old conventions of sticking to the traditional mode of writing.

The writers, under Gandhian impact revolutionized the way the novels were written. “They learned to descend to the humble walks of life, to sympathize with a common citizen or even a common peasant. Premchand, for instance, whose earlier stories had romanticized freedom, now took hold of the ordinary peasant exploited in the extreme as the central character of his writings.” (Chaudhri 64) Bhattacharya’s own protagonist in his much acclaimed He Who Rises a Tiger is a low born kamar.

The writers of the period broke free from the traditional view of India perpetuated by the West. It was a radical departure form the past when the writers developed a realistic outlook and started writing the stories not of the prince, but of the pauper. The style of writing also had a marked change, became less ornamental and more direct and more colloquial. Evaluating the impact of Gandhi on literary writers, Narasimhaiah remarks: “Gandhi broke the word and freed the thought and broke the thought and freed the thing and made us speak like Gods and rant like Demons.” (54) As discussed earlier, under the Gandhian influence three pioneering writers emerged on the horizon and shaped the future of novel writing in India. The 'Big Three'—Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan led the way from the front and with their contribution the Indian English novel attained a considerable stage of maturity and worldwide recognition.

The novels in other regional languages also bore the Gandhian stamp. Premchand’s Premashram (1921) and Raagbhumi (1925) in Hindi, Sati Nath Bhaduri’s Jagari (1946) in Bengali, G.T. Madkholkar’s Muktam (1933) in Marathi and R.V. Desai’s GramLaxmi (1940) in Gujarati, set out to employ
Gandhi as an overriding motif in their fictional world. Under the Gandhian influence these writers heralded a new era in the art of novel writing by portraying the life of common man and his day-to-day problems in their novels. These novels served as a blueprint for the future of novel writing in Indian literature.

However in English, it was K.S. Venkataramani who presented Gandhian vision of rural reconstruction in his twin novels *Murugan the Tiller* in 1927 and *Kandlan the Patriot* in 1932. These are the early signs of Gandhian magic working in full in fiction. Mulkraj Anand’s *Untouchable* (1935) created a furor of sort in the literary circle over the choice of the main protagonist—a low born untouchable! It was a class act from the Gandhian perspective. Neither the famed Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee nor the renowned author of Hindi classics, Premchand could ever imagine making the downtrodden sweeper his hero.

Outlining the unprecedented influence of Gandhi on Indian populace Mulk Raj Anand wrote: “It was as though Gandhi had touched the inner most chords of the dormant Indian consciousness and vivified certain inner rhythms of human beings.” (Anand 335). In *Untouchable* Anand presents Gandhi as a character and the novel underlines the emancipation of untouchables as its chief motif. Gandhi’s actual speech is woven in the fabric of the novel:

I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should wish to be reborn as an untouchable, so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and affronts levelled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from their miserable condition. (Anand, 162)
*The Sword and the Sickle* is another of Anand’s novels where Gandhi again appears as a character.

The Gandhi-fiction comes of age with Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* (1938). Gandhi retains the pride of place in the novel as the Gandhian programmes like *swadeshi*, abolition of untouchability and the value of the spinning-wheel take the centre stage in the book under the leadership of local Gandhi, Moorthy. The novel presents Gandhi with all his mythical awe and wonder. One of the villagers in the story comments:

I do not imagine the Mahatma like a man or god, but like the Sahyadri Mountains, blue, high, wide and the rock of the evening that catches the light of the setting sun. That’s what he is. High and yet seeable, firm and yet blue with dust, and as the pilgrims march up the winding path, march through prickles and boulders, thickets and streams, so shall we march up to the top. (Rao 176)

R.K. Narayan’s *Waiting for Mahatma* (1955) provides an artistic rendering of Gandhian freedom struggle. In the novel Narayan exposes with his characteristic irony the convenient Gandhian stance adopted by the characters to achieve their personal ends. Even his earlier novels *Swami and Friends* (1935) or the later ones like *The Vendor of Sweets* distinctly show the influence of Gandhian philosophy.

Other important novels influenced by the Gandhian spirit are: F.H. Das’s *Into the Sun* (1933), D.F. Karaka’s *There Lay the City* (1942) and *We Never Die* (1944), K.A. Abbas’s *Defeat for Death* (1944), Bhabani Bhattacharya’s *So Many Hangers* (1947), B.Rajan’s *Dark Dancer* (1959), kamala Markandya’s *Some Inner Fury*, Nayantara Sahgal’s *A Time to be Happy* (1958) and Manohar Malgonkar’s *A band in the Ganges* (1964).
Gandhi’s appeal turned out to be the major sustaining force for the novelists before the independence and even immediately after it. Their writings are characterized by the blind adherence to Gandhian ideals. Their basic aim of writing fiction was to awaken the people against the oppressive British rule and also degenerative social conditions prevailing in society. Later novelists, however, were all set to examine Gandhi and his ideals critically. For example Bhabani Bhattacharya in his novels questions Gandhi’s ideal of brahmacharya and even pleads for heavy industrialism. Malgonkar in all his novels raises questions about the validity of non-violence as a strategy to win freedom.

Gandhi shares some of the basic tenets of Marxism when he speaks for the deprived section of the society. Gandhi’s anti-industrial stance speaks volumes about his affinity with some form of socialism. Gandhi moves away from Marxism on the issue of Marx’s insistence on workers’ revolution brought about by bloodshed. Western socialism centres on violence some way or other whereas Gandhian socialism harps on non-violence and the ethics of conciliation. Gandhi had read Marx’s Das capital and stated that “he could not share with Marx the view that the use of violence could usher in non-violence (Tendulkar 36).” Like Karl Marx, Gandhiji envisages establishing a classless society but not on the lines of class war as Marx visualized. Non-cooperation, not the confrontation was Gandhi’s policy. Gandhian idea of classless society rests on the principle of non-violence and satyagraha. Gandhian theory of Sarvodaya is the key to Gandhi’s concept of classless society. Gandhi aspires for a classless society giving equal opportunities to all irrespective of caste, class, colour and sex. Gandhian concepts of Satyagraha and Ahimsa will always have an ethical edge over Marxian ethics of revolution. In Marxist philosophy man is not freer, he is the slave of the state, and man is overshadowed by agencies of the state. Gandhian humanism frees man from any kind of bondage. Madhu
Dandavate in his famous book *Marx and Gandhi* writes, “We need a new integration of the early liberating influence and scientific outlook of Marx and the human and humane ideals and methodology of Gandhi with its emphasis on the dignity of man and devolution of power.” (Dandwate, 5) There are many points of comparison between Marx and Gandhi; however Marx, along with Gandhi remains the most powerful influence on all intellectual thinking, including aesthetics during the last two centuries.
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