

### Chapter 3

#### **Transition: From Iconic to Ineffectual**

Gandhi's death in the beginning of 1948 didn't merely mean his physical obliteration from the scene of action. It signified a kind of metaphoric cessation too. The short intervening period between India's freedom and his death was probably a period of inordinate anxiety-laden length for him. The intensity of violence-filled process of birth for the twin nations was cause enough for him to re-assess the relevance of all that he had worked and stood for throughout his life. India through its bloody actions had amply demonstrated to the man himself as well as to all those who cared to follow his footsteps how it gave scant regard to his ideals, ideals which he lived and died for. The mood of the nation was that of token gratitude to the man and his methods.

Writers of fiction along with being chroniclers of fictional history of their times, are also beings whose mindscapes are palimpsests on which are etched the psychic predilections of their age. When during the pre independence period the nation saw Gandhi as an incarnation of hope, writers also held him as harbinger of change, modernity, freedom, and so on. But in the aftermath of freedom as the nation found it convenient to pay him ritualistic obeisance, so did the writers. The preceding chapter of the present work dealt with authors who in their own ways presented the deep impact that Gandhian ethics had on them. The chapter dealt with three particular works by different authors and delineated them in detail in an effort to show the deep impact of Gandhi on the masses of India and how that impact resulted in forging a new mindset amongst people.

The three works discussed above belonged to the pre-independence period. The present chapter will again delineate three works of fiction all published in the post-independence period.

The common thread, interestingly, between the two chapters that even while the intentions and nature of works in the chapters, despite belonging to the Gandhian discourse, are of differing scopes, their authors remain common. What is surprising is the ideological shift that they clearly depict in their pre and post independence stances. The three authors i.e. Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya and R.K. Narayan in the post-independence era of their respective writings align themselves with the predominant social thought, instead of sticking to their own orbit of thinking. They seem to be unmindful if in the process of thematic realignment their own earlier self avowed commitment to the Gandhian vision of India's destiny gets skewed, twisted or thwarted. Here it is needless to say that the authors under discussion do not belong to the category of sundry writers. They rather belong to that exalted stratum of writers of fiction in English who are known for their fictional achievements. As representative writers having a width of appeal, their common deviation merits careful delineation.

Among his novels and short stories, R.K. Narayan presents Mahatma Gandhi predominantly in his novel *Waiting for the Mahatma* where Gandhi appears in person addresses huge gatherings and inspires the Quit India movement. The other works of Narayan do no more than merely echo Gandhi's conviction. Except *Waiting for the Mahatma* his other works have only sparse references to, or echoes of Gandhi or Gandhian spirit. "In 1955, about seven years after Gandhi's assassination, Narayan returned with a more direct treatment of the subject of Gandhi in *Waiting for the Mahatma*, which is comparable to Anand's *The Sword and the Sickle*, K. Nagarajan's *Chronicles of Kedaram* and Venu Chitale's *In Transit* for portraying Gandhi as one of the characters in the novel. Narayan's obvious intention, in *Waiting for the Mahatma* is to show the nature and extent of Gandhi's impact on the average Indian. Sriram's character provides Narayan an apt illustration of the whole process of this impact" (Jha142-143).

In the first part of the novel Sriram with a lot of volunteers and a large gathering finds himself waiting for the Mahatma on the bank of Saryu where “the sands were warm, the sun was severe.... ‘Waiting for the Mahatma makes one very thirsty’ (25). In the end of the novel, Sriram’s waiting for the Mahatma to get his sanction to marry his beloved, Bharati, proves fruitful. Bharati and Sriram meet the Mahatma on the fatal day just prior to his going to the prayer meeting on the lawns of the Birla House and get his sanction and blessings. Thus their long wait for the Mahatma ends happily for them. The title rightly indicates the prolonged waiting of Sriram and Bharati to get the consent of the Mahatma for their marriage as the country has been going through the difficult phases of the freedom movement and as both of them are part of that. Gandhi makes Bharati and Sriram wait to make them place the interests of the country before their own personal interests. In the light of the assassination of Gandhi at the prayer meeting on that day, the title may indirectly suggest the assassin’s waiting for the Mahatma or the assassin’s waiting for his prey. So it may be Sriram’s waiting for the Mahatma or the assassin’s waiting for his prey, Gandhi.

The very title of the novel, ‘Waiting for the Mahatma’, reveals the novelist’s intentions and his devotion to the Mahatma. Though the novel is based on the Sriram-Bharati love story, the Mahatma remains in the background. Narayan has been careful enough to give the Mahatma neither a minor role nor a major role but to keep him in the whole background of the novel. (Sharma, A 97)

Iyengar’s comment is quite relevant in this case. “Gandhi is too big to be given a minor part: on the other hand, he is sure to turn the novel into a biography if he is given a major (or the central) part” (Iyengar 372). We find that all the characters that appear in the novel are involved in and react to Gandhi. It does not matter if such involvement or reaction is reverential and favourable

or it just shows disapproval or anger, but involvement is there and there is no escape from Gandhi.

Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* deals with the triumphs and tragedies of Sriram, the protagonist, an orphan teenager of Malgudi who is brought up by his grandmother. His young heart has started to attract his natural attention towards beauty and charm around him. In the very opening, we find his mind captivated by the portrait in Kanni's shop in his neighbourhood. "That portrait in the opposite shop fascinated his adolescent mind... The only softening influence in this shop was the portrait of the lady with apple cheeks, curls falling down the brim of her coronet, and large, dark eyes. 'Those eyes look at me,' Sriram often thought. For the pleasure of returning the look, he went again and again, to buy something or other at the shop" (6). When he becomes major, after attaining age of twenty, his Granny hands over the charge of his financial dealings at the Fund Office. When Kanni scents that Sriram has enough money, he produces an old ledger and persuades him to make payment standing unpaid in his grandfather's account for supplying imported cheroots for him. This reveals the credulous side of Sriram who is not able to see through the guiles of a person like Kanni who easily topples down him by touching upon his sentiments and flattering his family prestige. Like other heroes of Narayan, he is an un-heroic hero.

On the New Year Day, when Sriram goes to the market, he meets a slim, young and attractive girl clad in white Khaddar sari, Bharati, the heroine of the novel, jingling her tin sealed money-box and asking for donations, to whom he feels an irresistible attraction. "She looked so different from the beauty in Kanni's shop, ... and he realized how shallow was the other beauty.... He wouldn't look at the picture again..." (22). He puts an eight-anna silver coin in the donation

box and realizes his folly in not enquiring about her name, caste, horoscope and other things concerned with her. His imagines:

What a dangerous thing for such a beauty to be about !... He felt that he wanted to sing a song for her. But she was gone.... He wished he hadn't given just a nickel but thrust a ten rupee note into her collection box..., and that would have given her a better impression of him, ... If ever he saw her again he would take charge of the money-box and make the collection for her, whatever it might be for. (22)

He follows the trail of her in the jostling crowd hoping to have another glimpse of her but his quest proves futile. He learns from a merchant that she belongs to the entourage of Gandhi and “you know the Mahatma is coming” (24).

When the merchant tells him that Gandhi is visiting Malgudi, “Sriram suddenly woke from an age old somnolence....” (24). His waiting for the Mahatma in Malgudi comes to an end when the Mahatma comes to dais accompanied by the local bigwigs like Mr. Natesh, the Municipal Chairman, and the other volunteers of Gandhi's camp. Mahatma Gandhi asks the people from dais to clap loudly but “people were half-hearted” (26) Again Gandhi calls, “I want you all to do it with a single mind” (27) all men and women clap except Sriram. “He was hesitant” (27). Later Gandhi says that someone in the corner is not joining them in clapping. “And Sriram felt he had been found out and followed the lead” (27). After the Ram Dhun which is sung in chorus, Gandhi speaks in Hindi and it is the duty of Natesh to translate it into Tamil. Natesh is a pseudo-Gandhian who “has a knack of acquiring good certificates... Runs with the hare and hunts with the hound” (27).

Now Sriram understands “the technique of attending these meetings... He wore a pair of large dark glasses which gave him, he felt, an authoritative look. He strode through the crowd”

(28) and thus, next day, finds himself beside the women's enclosure. They are in simple clothes without much ornaments as Gandhi does not like ostentation. Sriram looks at the young women in the gathering and speculates which one of them he will choose for his wife. "He fancied himself the centre of attraction if any woman happened to look in his direction. "Oh, she is impressed with my glasses – takes me to be a big fellow, I suppose" (29). When he looks at the vast gathering of women in the other enclosure, suddenly the advice of Gandhi flashes before his mind. "All women are your sisters and mothers. Never look at them with thoughts of lust" (29). He wonders at having "so many sisters and mothers" (30) around him.

The Mahatma calls upon the people who form a mighty army to be united and disciplined to fight for their freedom against the British rule. He reminds them that they are a non-violent army which will fight the British without any hatred of them. They must all spin the *charkha*, sing *Ram Dhun*, be united without being split by caste or religious labels. When Gandhi talks about the evil of untouchability and caste-divisions, Sriram appreciates the superior wisdom of Gandhi and reflects upon the scanty treatment meted out to the scavenger by his Granny because of her orthodoxy. He feels sorry that he has joined his Granny in ill-treating the scavenger. Gandhi says that they must respect women and treat them as their sisters and fight for the freedom of India with faith in God and in their unity. "Here Narayan has given a vivacious and realistic picture of Gandhiji's contribution to the Indian freedom struggle, his ideology of truth, non-violence, his love for untouchables, underdogs and urchins, and spinning on the 'charkha'" (Sharma, A 97)..When Gandhi addresses public meetings at Malgudi highlighting his ideology, it becomes, sometimes, impossible for Sriram "to follow his words. He could not grasp what he was saying, but he looked rapt, he tried to concentrate and understood" (30).

Sriram notices Bharati on the dais clad in a sari of *Khaddar* and “worthy of standing beside Mahatmaji’s microphone”(31). She looks beautiful in the sari of home-spun *khaddar*. “Before, he had felt that the wearing of Khaddar was a fad, that it was apparel fit only for cranks, but now he realized how lovely it could be” (31). When Gandhi tells people that they should not entertain any hatred towards the British, Sriram having Bharati in his mind, thinks aloud saying that he has no hatred in heart but only love and he has no bitterness in his heart for a creature who looks so divine. He is also afraid that his Granny may not like his idea of marrying Bharati for she believes in keeping up caste and horoscope. “Sriram wanted to go and assure the girl on the grand-stand that he fully and without the slightest reservation approved of her outlook and habits. It was imperative that he should approach her and tell her that. He seized the chance at the end of the meeting” (33). Narayan attempts a psychological probe into Sriram’s inner-thoughts. Initially Sriram appears immature, lazy and a bundle of weaknesses. He is not seriously interested in Gandhi and his ideology and “his interest in Gandhi was only a show and that he was really going after a girl” (56).

In the beginning he is not very serious about Gandhi, Bharati and his grandmother. When Gandhi occupies a hut after making sure that it has been vacant, Sriram lowers himself modestly on the mat. He has to leave the hut when Bharati tells him that it is the time for Bapuji to sleep. “He felt like asking, ‘who is Bapuji?’” (53). When he is alone with Bharati on the bank of the river, he is full of voluptuousness and coarseness. “... Sriram felt like taking the girl in his arms... ‘There is no one about. What can she do?’ he reflected. ‘Let her try and push me into the river, and she will know with whom she is dealing...’” (58). He becomes heedless about his grandmother who has raised him and leaves her all alone to the cares of others to get the love of Bharati. He gets attracted to Bharati and wishes to spend his whole life in her company.

“Because I like you, and I like to be with you” (59). It is his love for Bharati which works as a bridge between him and the Mahatma. “His attraction for Bharati signifies his personal search for a frame of reference for life and Baharti is an agent of this” (Jha143).

Bharati tells Sriram that he has to face Bapuji if he wants to work with her. At this, Sriram is rendered speechless, his heart begins palpitating and he wishes to bid goodbye to the whole business for ever. Bharati asks, “Why are you so cowardly?” (61). He tells resolutely that he cannot talk to Mahatmaji and he is afraid that he will “blabber like an idiot” (61). Bharati directs him to come to the door of Bapuji’s hut at three O’clock in the morning next day. Next morning he goes to Gandhi’s hut but he is at a loss to know what to do now. He wants to go back to Granny and earn her concrete goodwill “rather than the doubtful and strange favours of bigwigs like the Mahatma and snobs like Bharati.... But still the pull of Bharati was so strong and he could not get away from the place so easily as he had imagined” (65). He tip-toes towards Gandhi’s hut and “peeped in like a clown” (66).

When the Mahatma invites Sriram to go out with him for a walk. He moves out of the hut with his staff on one hand and with the other supported himself on the shoulder of Bharati. The Mahatma is in between him and Bharati and it is difficult to snatch a look at her as he wants. He has “to step back a quarter of an inch now and then in order to catch a glimpse of her laughing face” (68). The Mahatma asks Sriram why he considers it necessary to be away from his grandmother, causing her a lot of worry. Sriram says that he wants to be away from her for he wants to do something in this world. Gandhi asks him what exactly he wants to do. After much deliberation Sriram tells, “I like to be where Bharati is” (70). Bharati asks Sriram to manage without looking for comforts as the volunteers in Gandhi’s camp are all trained to live a rough life. She then takes him the hut of Gorpad, a fellow volunteer and requests him to accommodate

Sriram in his hut. “Through diligently listening to Gorpada he had picked up many political idioms, and felt himself equipped to talk with the Mahatma without embarrassment” (76).

Sriram is told that he can accompany Mahatmaji in his tour of the villages on condition that he has to secure permission of his Granny. As he knows it will be very difficult to get his Granny’s consent to join Gandhi’s camp, he writes a letter of farewell to her while she is asleep, places it under the brass water-pot on the window sill and silently leaves home without permission. Narayan introduces the heroine dramatically and gives the preliminary hints of Sriram-Bharati’s long-drawn romance. Sriram through Bharati finds himself amidst Gandhi’s followers and she leads him on the proper course to fulfil the Gandhian mission, “...for her, Mahatma Gandhi and the National Movement is of greater importance than his affair with Sriram. The hero Sriram is simply a shadow of Bharati who for the sake of his love, follows her and gets innocently involved in the National Movement willy-nilly” (Singh 36).

In the second part of the novel we learn that Sriram becomes a recognized member of Gandhi’s followers and forms a trio with Bharati and Gorpada and accompanies Gandhi in his tour of the famine affected villages near Malgudi. Sriram has no knowledge of villages, all that he knows of the villages are from the Tamil films he has seen and that is why, in one of the villages, he asks Bharati, “Where is the village?” (88). The sight of the villages and the plight of the villagers is striking but “...Sriram and Bharati seemed to notice nothing. They had a delight in each other’s company which mitigate the gloom of the surroundings” (88-89). Gorpada is angry with the British for creating an artificial famine by diverting the natural resources of India for their war effort. Sriram who wants to be left alone in the company of Bharati is somewhat puzzled at Gorpada’s complaint about the British as if he has been responsible for it. When

Gorpad turns his back to leave them alone, "...their eyes met and they giggled at the memory of all the sad, bad matters they had just heard or noticed" (89).

Gandhi leaves Malgudi and Sriram now makes a deserted shrine on a slope of Mempi Hill his home. He has set duties to perform everyday when he wakes with the cries of the birds. He often thinks that it is much better in Kabir Street for the birds making so much noise do not allow him to sleep in peace. "... he often found on checking his thoughts that they were still as undesirable as ever"(96). But he soon tempers himself by the austerities he had picked up in Gorpad's company. Bharati has taught him how to spin the thread to the required count during their sojourn in one of the villages. In the beginning, he made a mess of his spinning letting Bharati make fun of him. "He slipped, he made her laugh, he struggled in the grips of unholy thoughts when she stooped over him, held his hand, and taught him the tricks" (98).

In the lonely temple, Sriram finds happy moments whenever Bharati comes to meet him with Gandhi's directives to him. Bharati comes uphill to meet Sriram at dusk barefoot and he becomes fussy and asks her what makes her walk barefoot like this. She tells him that she has not got leather from Wardha yet. She then tells him that she is leaving for Madras. She has been summoned for instructions. Sriram thinks that Bharati must have some special motive to have come to meet him all the way. Perhaps she likes him very much, and waits for him to take her hands and tell her what he has in his mind. "Sriram felt, 'The whole thing is extremely false. She ought to be my wife and come to my arms'. He wondered for a moment, 'What is it that prevents me from touching her? What can she do? She is all alone in this place. Even if she shouts nobody will hear her for ten miles around'" (100). The lonely atmosphere is very encouraging and Sriram touches her arm but she pushes his hand aside. She asks him to stay there till she comes back

with instructions. Narayan's intention is very clear that Bharati is attached to Gandhian ideology and Sriram is attached to Bharati.

Three days later Bharati turns up bringing instruction for Sriram. She gives him a can of paint and a brush to spread the message of Gandhi's 'Quit India Movement' through the villages around Malgudi. With Mahatmaji in prison, they have to carry on the work in their own manner. On the following day, Sriram begins his political mission by climbing up the mountain path and reaching the first village on the way. He paints 'Quit India' by economizing paint on the latter 'Q'. He then teaches the children to utter 'Quit India' in a chorus but the teacher objects to this and blames Sriram for spoiling the children and making the police arrest and jail them all. Sriram forgets the Gandhian teachings and asks the teacher to beware for he will be beheaded once the British leave India.

Sriram goes on doing things mechanically. He enters forests and villages and conveys what he feels to be the Mahatma's message. He then goes to a plantation called 'Mathieson Estates', four thousand feet above sea level carrying his pot of paint and brush. On reaching the gate of the building 'he writes his message, 'Quit India' on the gate post. Mathieson, the owner of the estate, takes Sriram to his verandah and offers him a seat and a glass of orange juice. He enjoys the bliss of drinking the delicious juice. "The passage of the juice down his throat was so pleasant that he felt he could not interrupt it under any circumstance. He shut his eyes in ecstasy. For a moment he forgot politics, Bharati, strife, and even Mahatmaji" (113). Sriram asks Mr. Mathieson if he is not afraid of being alone. It may be risky for him if the Indians decide to throw him out. He, after some reflection, says that he is not afraid of anything. Sriram tells him, "It is because Mahatmaji is your best friend. He wants this struggle to be conducted on perfectly

non-violent lines” (115). Mr.Mathieson agrees with Sriram and by extending his hand to him bids him good-bye.

On seeing the behaviour of people in the village Solur who do not understand the sufferings of Gandhi undertaken on their behalf, Sriram feels very desperate. He conceives the contents of his letter to Mahatmaji to tell him that he is wasting his time and energy over a set of people who are so selfish and frivolous that they do not deserve anything from him. Right in the midst of this, a couple of officials get up and explain the importance of the war, and how the British are winning, and how India should protect herself from enemies within and without. Sriram first thinks of stopping all this nonsense but he decides to consult Mahatmaji on this issue and defers immediate action.

Back at the ruined shrine, Sriram lies on his mat and feels bored and questions himself about his mission. Bharati comes to meet Sriram with Gandhi’s message that Bapuji wants him to stay on and do his work there. Sriram welcomes her: “Here is my Devata Come !” (130). He invites her to recline comfortably against the stone tablet by the mat. He can see her left breast moving under her white *Khaddar Sari* but she does not seem to be aware of the feelings she is rousing in him.

... he suddenly threw himself on her,... It was an assault conducted without any premeditation, and it nearly overwhelmed her....

He gave her no opportunity to struggle or free herself. He held her in an iron embrace in his madness.

...No one can stop me and you from marrying now.

... He revelled in the scent of sandalwood that her body exuded.

...He behaved like an idiot. She wriggled in his grasp for a moment and at the same time seemed to respond to his caresses. (132)

She gently releases herself from his hold saying ‘not yet’ and that she must wait for Bapu’s sanction. She tries to dispel doubts from the mind of Sriram by telling him that the minute Bapu agrees they will marry but “Bapu! Bapu!’ It filled him with despair” (134).

Several days pass by in suspense and worry since Bharati met him last. Sriram suspends his regular agenda of work. He stays in the ruined shrine brooding about Bharati. Then one day she turns up at noon with a letter from Gandhi in which he asks Bharati to wait for her marriage with Sriram. He wants all his workers underground to come out and court arrest at the nearest police station. He asks Bharati to take his disciple, Sriram along with her and court arrest. Sriram says, “Not now, I want to think it over. But I will readily come if they will keep me in the same prison, preferably in the same cell” (138). Bharati tells him that the government will not keep them together. Sriram curses the government trying to defeat his true love for Bharati. “... he brought out his masterpiece on an inspiration. I am thinking of my grandmother” (140). He wants to see her before he is finally jailed. This idea seems to soften Bharati and she approves the stand of Sriram and leaves the place.

Part three of the novel introduces a new character, Jagdish. He believes in breaking the backbone of the British in India and wants to achieve freedom for the country immediately without bothering about the means adopted for it. He relies upon terrorism and paralyzing the British administration and uses Sriram as a tool for carrying out his volatile activities. The ruined shrine manned by Sriram comes in quite handy for him to install a two-way radio set which will receive and transmit the messages. The absence of Bharati causes a vacuum in the life of Sriram. “His separation from Bharati (after her arrest) deviates him from Gandhian path to the way of

terrorist movement. The agony of the separation turns into the fire of violence and his peaceful protest into the turbulent agitation.” (Singh 38) The arrival of Jagdish stirs him out of his lethargy and Sriram welcomes him. “Sriram was happy to find a kindered soul and at once poured into his ears his own feelings. ‘I hold Bharati not to be a fool...’ (144). Jagdish asks Sriram not to react that way. Each one has got to act according to what one considers best.

When Jagdish begins to unpack his bag containing radio set, Sriram hopes, “Childishly that something nice to eat would come out of it.”(144). Jagdish surmises that Sriram is thinking about Bharati always and doing his work mechanically. He offers to help Sriram meet Bharati through his client working as a guard in the prison. For doing this favour Jagdish expects him to do a return favour – all that Sriram has to do is to prevent a train load of chrome ore leaving a certain railway station for England. “His whole being acquired a meaning only when he was doing something in relation to Bharati” (162). Sriram undertakes this job but he has his own doubt if Jagdish is playing a practical joke with him. “If he is playing a joke, heaven help him, ‘he told himself. ‘I will crush his skull with a big stone’, and he revelled in visions of extraordinary violence.” (162). Just at the moment, Jagdish enters and warns him against day dreaming as the police are in hot chase of him.

Jagdish advises him to change his appearance to prevent being caught by the police. He grants Sriram three weeks to grow his moustache. He monitors the growth day after day. The period of three weeks is not at all wasted.

In association with Jagdish and under his expert guidance, Sriram did a variety of jobs which he hoped would help the country in its struggle for freedom: he sets fire to the records in half a dozen law courts in different villages; he derailed a couple of trains and paralysed the work in various schools; he exploded a crude

bomb which tore off the main door of an agricultural research station, tarred out 'V' for Victory and wrote 'Quit India' over the emblem. He became so seasoned in this activity that a certain recklessness developed in him. He had no fear of the police: they seemed to him a remote, theoretical body, unconnected with his affairs. He knew he could always slip through. (168)

Sriram is not able to meet Bharati but she sends information to him through the wardress that he should immediately go and meet his Granny. He rushes home and from the shopkeeper, Kanni he comes to know that his Granny has passed away. No sooner does he light the funeral pyre of his Granny than she shows signs of survival. Ironically enough he is arrested and leaves Granny to the care of Kanni. Sriram is lodged at the central Jail in Malgudi. He has been classified as a dangerous person and arrested under defence of India rules "...You are neither Gandhi's man nor an ordinary criminal, but more dangerous than either" (191-192). He finds his life in prison very tedious disturbing his normal sleep. He is not able to relish the tough ball of boiled millet served with very watery buttermilk. He longs for the crisp and tasty dishes that his Granny used to serve him. Alongwith the other prisoners, he longs for the soft *Halwa* and savouries of Sri Krishna Vilas. During the day the various duties that he has to perform in the prison make Sriram busy but at night when all the fellow prisoners go to sleep, he becomes prey to introspection. "He was seized with a desire to meet and talk to Bharati" (199). Many months and years have elapsed since they meet. He has lost count of time. Even if Bharati sees him, Sriram has his own doubt if she will recognize him. "He was losing his identity. He had lost his patriotic aim" (200).

He finds himself no better than his co-prisoners – forgers and homicides. The longer he stays here the more likely he is to drift away from Bharati. Somehow he should get away from

the prison. He thinks of the ways of escape followed by the heroes in the novel by smuggling in files and hack-saws. Ironically, in the jail “The word ‘Gandhi’ brought to his mind the memory of Bharati” (192) and Sriram wants to meet Bharati and so he wants to escape from the prison but the gangster cell mate of him advises against doing such a foolish thing. “Sriram’s association with Jagdish’s terrorist activities is presented as a deviation from Gandhian path,....” (Jha R146). Soon news reaches Sriram and others that Gandhi has been released and a new order of things is taking place. After sometime, Sriram is also released from the prison.

Coming out of jail, Sriram walks on as in a dream and finds it difficult to move without a guard following him, and without being told where he should go. He walks down the road with the thought that he is walking in an independent India but things look as they were before. “What was the sign that it was independent?” (219). He feels tired and hungry so he walks into Sri Krishna Vilas to take “something good to eat” (221) but most of the tables were empty. He waits for the waiter to attend on him. “They don’t care, Sriram told himself. I suppose I look like a gutter -rat” (221). The waiter tells him, “There is nothing good now, ... our government do not do anything about it yet. Most of its adulterated stuff, I tell you. He started on a long narrative about the situation in the country, the food shortage, the post-war confusion, and the various difficulties and hardships that people experienced. All this was a revelation...” (222).

When he visits his own house he felt angry and cheated. He turns round to see Kanni but he notices that his shop is replaced by some cement godown. “He felt pained and cheated again” (224). Then Sriram goes to Jagdish’s photo-studio and he seats Sriram on a sofa and shows him a photo album containing photos of the historical freedom struggle culminating in the Independence Day Celebration. He has inserted several photos of himself into the album, labeling himself as a humble soldier. A look at the album will make one think that Jagdish is the

chief architect of Independent India. Sriram is disillusioned and terribly upset to see the album. “If only I had known that people would reduce it all to this. I didn’t go about inscribing “Quit” and overturning trains just to provide a photographer with material for his album” (228).

Ironically Jagdish tells Sriram that the police could not arrest him as his grandmother did not die at a wrong moment. “If it hadn’t been for your grandmother, you would not have gone to jail at all” (229) Sriram writes a letter to Bharati with the help of Jagdish. She invites Sriram, he meets Bharati waiting to receive him at New Delhi station.

In her company he remains a true devotee of Gandhiji and tries to follow his principles. But whenever he moves farther from Bharati, he becomes injudicious and inordinate. When Bharati goes to jail leaving Sriram alone, he becomes an itinerant person and is easily entrapped in the nefarious designs of Jagdish and becomes reckless and gets involved into the violent actions and gets imprisoned. But, when he is released from jail and meets Bharati, he once again becomes morally stronger.” (Sharma A101). Her warmth infuses confidence in him. “This was the first time in his life that he was completely at peace with himself, satisfied profoundly with existence itself. (237)

When Gandhiji asks whether they love each other, “Sriram burst out, I’ve waited for five years thinking of nothing else” (252). Bharati is ready to go on fast in place of Sriram for purification and to show her love for Sriram. Both of them go to Birla House and wait for Mahatmaji’s call. In spite of his busy schedule Bapuji calls them and tells that they can marry the next day and he will himself officiate in the marriage but on second thought, he tells them that they shall marry the next day irrespective of his presence.

As the Mahatmaji approaches the dais for the prayer, the man waiting for the Mahatma takes aim and fires at him. “Two more shots rang out. The Mahatma fell on the dais. He was dead in a few seconds” (254). The wait for the Mahatma does not cease with his death as Lalji Misra aptly said, “The death of Gandhi is a political and moral disgrace to humanity. The waiting of Sriram ends after marrying Bharati but waiting for Mahatma continues for Bharati and Sriram, and people of Malgudi and the entire people of India.” (110).

In *Waiting for the Mahatma* varied motives prompt the characters to join the Mahatma and his movement. The characters like Natesh, Jagdish and the contractor act out of expediency, not of principle. The Mahatma remains incomprehensible to Sriram’s Granny. She does not understand Gandhi and his political mission. She feels that he and his followers are trying to disturb the smooth-running stream of life. She does not want her grandson Sriram to invite trouble on himself by associating with Gandhi and his dangerous preaching. “For her the Mahatma was one who preached dangerously, who tried to bring untouchables into the temples, and who involved people in difficulties with the police. She didn’t like the idea” (62). She feels that people make much of Gandhi’s fasting while for over twenty years now she has skipped her dinner as a measure of sacrifice and austerity after the death of her husband. But she does not know the significance of Gandhi’s fast as one for reforming people and bringing them to the just path. “Narayan wants to point out that the impact of Gandhi was different on different strata of the society” (Singh 35).

The author also exposes the hypocrisy and time-serving of people like the corrupt chairman of the Municipal corporation, Mr. Natesh who has replaced, just before Gandhi’s visit to Malgudi, the pictures of English kings and hunting gentry in his house with portraits of Congress leaders. The sudden transformation of himself, his wife and his son in Khaddar dress to

impress Gandhi reveals his hunger for stealing the limelight and passing for a patriot. The people of Malgudi, who know his reality, heckle and criticize him for his new-born patriotic fervour. The novelist unmasks his real colour when he becomes fidgety with his palace becoming a public place with the arrival of Gandhi. Sravani Biswas's analysis is quite appropriate in this case.

In fact, the greater part of the novel stands on the dialogic relation between Gandhi's teachings and the people. Sriram joins Gandhi's volunteers in order to stay near Bharati. The chairman hopes to become famous by letting Gandhi stay in his palatial house.... manages to get distinction with the borrowed Glory of Gandhi by interpreting in Tamil Gandhiji's speech. To Sriram's Granny Gandhi is a threat who weaned the youths away from their cosy comfortable homes to flirt with danger. Gandhi's famous *Satyagrahas* are nothing extraordinary to her... Again, there are the businessmen who impartially contribute money to Gandhiji's Harijan Fund as well as the war fund. The contractor who worshipped a portrait of Gandhi which he hung on his wall and gave five thousand to the Harijan Fund contributes the same amount to the war fund too.... There are also ardent followers of Gandhi like Bharati and Gorpad who would like to lay down their lives for Bapuji; again, there are men like Jagadish who pervert Gandhi's preachings to suit their own purposes. Thus each situation, each incident and each character stands questioning each other, and they are as strong and isolated as ever. Narayan describes them in his characteristic style of irony and humour and the effect is double voiced. (Biswas 125)

Bhabani Bhattacharya's novel *Shadow from Ladakh*, published in 1966, "towers above his other novels and is in fact the culmination of his genius" (Srivastva 239). Set in the menacing background of the Chinese aggression in the early sixties, the novel indicates the validity of Gandhian thought in its multiple dimensions. The novelist presents a clash between two ways of life – the Gandhian and the Western – both having a widespread following in India. "He almost thrashes threadbare the two stand points – first, Gandhian with its emphasis on pro-village economy and non-violent way of life and the second, heavy industrialization as the solution for India's economic problems" (Jha 170). This inner conflict between the traditional and modern social approaches to life, is projected in the backdrop of another conflict, a historical one, with its own set of values – the Sino-Indian border clash of 1962, a war which was initiated by China to assert its supremacy in the region on the one hand and to browbeat a resurgent young India into submission on the other. Seen in the light of the outcome of this war it becomes easy to surmise the yet-to-be outcome of the conflict between the Gandhian versus Western way of life in India.

Satyajit, the protagonist of the novel, is a Cambridge trained economist, who has voluntarily embraced the Gandhian way of life. Convinced of the efficacy of Gandhi's belief that independent India can thrive by emulating the life-style of countless Indian villages, Satyajit comes to live in Gandhigram, a village modelled after the historical village Sevagram, founded by Gandhi near Wardha, to give practical shape to the ideas enunciated in Hind Swaraj. In fact he, on his return from Cambridge, had decided to dedicate himself to a life of service, but was doubtful of the meaningfulness of restricting himself to one single place. He places his doubt before none other than Rabindranath Tagore who himself, engaged as he is in the task of village

reconstruction, inspires Satyajit with his unveiling ideas about human welfare. These ideas, as shown in the novel, perfectly echo Gandhi's ideas in this novel.

Satyajit's aim is to make Gandhigram an ideal village and a model for all the villages of India. It consists of a community in which all were equal creating a Gandhian social order. There is no segregation in different groups or classes based on birth or colour. All enjoy equal rights and equal social status. In Gandhigram all the residents have to live their life according to a strict disciplinary code of conduct. Everyone irrespective of his sex or age is forced to live life following Gandhian vows for ashramites. "Simple living, voluntary poverty, self help, celibacy – those are the basic compulsions" (65) for its residents. Satyajit in Gandhian manner thinks that these ideals followed will help in improving the moral force in the people. This moral force serves as a weapon to fight evil. In practical life it leads to the infinite capacity to bear suffering and die rather than retaliate. "The Cambridge-educated economist Satyajit patterns Gandhigram after Gandhiji's Sevagram, the 'village of service' (10), just as he moulds his own life in the image of the great Mahatma" (Raizada 94).

Though outwardly putting each foot step along Gandhian lines Satyajit is not a true Gandhian in many respects. First of all he is over conscious of maintaining his Gandhian image. He, in fact, loses close contact with the people whose leader he claims to be. He himself is aware of his lack of strength of character and it requires a lot of labour on his part to live as Gandhi lived. He lives within his self-created Gandhian image. "Satyajit towered over all the others. He was unequaled among the equals. With each passing year he had shut himself up more and more in a loneliness where none could enter" (47).

His aloofness and lack of identification with the villagers is quite an un-Gandhian feature of his personality. In Gandhian leadership the leader does not keep himself at a higher pedestal

but Satyajit keeps himself away from the villagers. He lives in his own world where he is alone. He is always making an effort to think like Gandhi. In his personal life he is guilty of the gravest violence to his wife Suruchi. In order to live according to the principle of *brahmacharya* Satyajit himself suppresses his own passionate nature as far as possible but he is not able to do it without the full cooperation on the part of Suruchi. Hence, he not only suppresses his own desire but also denies his wife to live a life of fulfilment. He also expects his wife to fulfil the role that Kasturba had for Gandhi. “She started, fascinated, at the man striving to build himself after the image of greatness. And he was comparing her to Kasturba, she felt sure... She, Suruchi, was no Kasturba, though. She was weak and commonplace, and wanted what most women asked for” (19). Suruchi has not succeeded in repressing her desire to have sons whom she has already named. “The suffering of the woman and the mother. It was not enough to have only one child, and she had lived long on the edge of expectation. Two sons—she felt lone for her unborn sons. She had even given them their names. Ajoy and Sanjoy” (21). It was because of the sheath of virginity she was forced to wear for long years, that her wish remained unfulfilled.

Suruchi regrets her easy submission to the will of her husband which made him assume the stature of Gandhi but she is fully aware that living a kind of artificial life Satyajit is not doing any justice to himself. Suruchi feels guilty of helping him to be Satyajit.

Though Suruchi, out of her loyalty to her husband, yields to his wishes yet she is never able to reconcile herself to his ascetic view of life. The dull and monotonous life of Gandhigram irks her. At times she wants to revolt against him and Gandhigram. She sides with Jhanak when Satyajit wants to reprimand the girl for her betrayal of Gandhigram. (Sorot 89)

She believes that an ascetic woman is a contradiction in terms. A woman must live like a woman. When a young girl Jhanak, a resident of Gandhigram rebels against the austere code of Gandhian life, Suruchi rejoices and says: “Who could hold her back from her urge, a woman’s primal urge to be nothing but a woman?”(285). Suruchi is sorry for this knowledge, her self-identification with Jhanak came to her much too late. “Pensive, she shook her head. Why hadn’t she had these thoughts years back, before the assault came from without?”(285).

It is not that Satyajit imposes celibacy upon himself and Suruchi only but it was a compulsion for all. The idea behind the vow he cherished was again Gandhian that the boys and the girls would be trained to restrain their instincts under the strict discipline from the beginning though they mixed with each other freely because the core of *brahamcharya* was “not escape but self conquest” (47). Born and brought up in this environment under the influence of Satyajit, Sumita, his daughter becomes an embodiment of what the author terms as Satyajitism. Eighteen years old Sumita is an exception in the sense that she is the “only Indian girl of her age who wore no adornment” (38). She abhors the shape of her body and cherishes a kind of aversion for marriage. It is the direct result of her development along the ideal of ascetic way of life of Satyajit. She is a blind follower of her father to the extent that her father’s wish is the sole governing law of her life even if she has to be unwomanly.

Suruchi makes all possible efforts to stop Sumita’s growth along such ascetic lines but it comes to nothing. Everytime she is defeated by the will of her husband who wants Sumita to be an ascetic. Sumita accepts her father’s position unquestioningly and has closed her eyes to any other life outside Gandhigram. Satyajit’s desire to transfer Gandhian ideas into actuality assume anti-life proportion in her daughter. Always clad in white garb, bare-footed, Sumita is contented with the kind of life she is living under the cult of Satyajit.

Bhattacharya cites many instances which prove that she is quite ignorant of an essential component of her life. She is unaware of the fact that senses are capable of deriving pleasure. She shows her dislike for different coloured dresses and ornaments which add to the beauty of a woman. For her it is unnecessary to be happy in life because one has more important things to do. Her total incomprehension of the erotic piece of sculpture, shown to her by Bhaskar, shows that the imposition of *brahmacharya* from the very childhood has developed in her a tendency towards the negation of life.

Bhattacharya gives us a peep in the real-self of Satyajit and shows the common man struggling hard to live up to the principle of *brahmacharya*. In Cambridge also he “had sternly chastised his body after each lapse, fasting for days together” (139) but many times later he was haunted by the thoughts of Harriet Green and Stella John. He forces *brahmacharya* on Suruchi after marriage but he cannot help giving way to his impulse even after her full co-operation. “...when tormented stone god lost his iron restraint and seized by something tempestuous he drew Suruchi to him and made love”(20).

In order to be a Gandhi, Satyajit spoils the life of his wife, his daughter and even his own in the process. The mask he wears takes him away from reality. The public image of Gandhi penetrates into his personal life and robs it of all the happiness. He deliberately rejects passion in search of immortality and suffers in the process. He forgets that he has been violent to his wife, his daughter and to himself. Bireswar, one of his friends, reveals at a juncture, the fact that his love for his daughter has a selfish motive behind it. He says:

...I saw the depth of your love for your daughter. She means as much to you as Gandhigram. That’s why you have had to equate her identity with Gandhigram’s – they must submerge into each other, blend, become of one piece. There’s

something more. All love has in it a secret streak of cruelty. You are cruel toward Sumita. You have been cruel to Gandhigram. (211)

Bhattacharya reveals the shallowness in the character of Satyajit. Moreover, he disapproves of celibacy as a compulsion for each and everyone. He shows that the Gandhian insistence on *brahmacharya* denies his followers to live a wholesome life. Satyajit chooses spiritualism and rejects materialism and the outcome of his approach is that the inhabitants of Gandhigram lead a life of poverty. His illogical approach is indicated by the fact that it calls upon its followers to deprive themselves of even ordinary amenities, to lead a life of abject poverty and to make endless sacrifices. In order to remove violence he wants, “a hundred thousand men prepared to die (175).” The bare necessities like clothes, footwear and utensils have been denied to the inhabitants on his philosophical considerations.

Dealing with international problems Satyajit tries to think like Gandhi and relies upon non-violence. India’s security is jeopardized by the Chinese encroachment. Instead of feeling enraged or aggressive Satyajit maintains his cool. He assumes that it is nothing more than a misunderstanding about border demarcations which can be resolved in a peaceful manner. He believes that the richness of human spirit knew no boundaries of race, creed or colour and argues: “What matters more for the Chinese – those barren rocks of Ladakh or the hearts of millions of Indians?”(52). He minimises the first border issue and is confident that India’s participation in the World Peace Conference would bring her justice and remove the prick of misgivings between the two countries.

However, the delegates of India come disappointed from the World Peace Conference at Moscow. The evil designs of China become obvious after the failure of negotiations between the

two countries. Now there was no scope left to assume that it was merely a misunderstanding and nothing more than that.

Not only does Satyajit deviates from Gandhism in his attempt to hide the unpalatable aspects of his wife's experience as a member of the Indian delegation in the Peace Congress at Moscow, he also propagates and practices, during the crucial period of external aggression, a version of Gandhism which Gandhi himself would have repudiated. Satyajit's unwillingness to face the harsh reality in the light of the unmistakable signals is a type of escapism, a sort of 'ostrich syndrome' which is at the farthest remove from Gandhism. (Bhatnagar 150-151)

Satyajit tries to resolve the border-dispute with the help of a peace brigade. He forms a Shanti-Sena consisting of five volunteers to go to the battle front. The government suggests that he should make a call to the whole nation but his call is not responded to by more than a dozen of people and he is forced to cancel the whole programme. Though the idea of sending a Shanti-sena is broadly Gandhian, his meticulous choice of five persons for it in which he does not include Suruchi is not in consonance with Gandhism. Gandhi always believed that non-violence needed more mass support than violence. His idea was to have as many good and true men and women for the purpose as possible.

The Minister's faint smile conveys the fact that he regards Satyajit's perception as incorrect and believes him to have little knowledge of the facts of life. And this Minister is a person who must have been at least sympathetic towards Gandhism, as the narrator reports: 'The Minister without Portfolio had been close to Gandhi, as close as Nehru himself. Satyajit had recollections of him in Sevagram'(193). If

even such a man has no faith in the peace march there must be something wrong with the whole idea of it. (Sharma, B 67)

The presence of Steeltown close to Gandhigram poses multi-dimensional posers to the ideology of the latter and threatens its very existence. “As the plot of the novel unfolds itself, the clash between the traditional and the modern values becomes evident in the form of the discord between Gandhigram and Steeltown” (Sorot 82). Bhashkar, Chief Engineer of Lohapur, educated in America lays full emphasis on the mass production of Steel. The author sets the frail spinning wheel against the machinery of modern age and sees the solution of many problems of India in the production of Steel “Steel means economic progress. Machine tools, tractors, big industrial plants, locomotives. Steel to fight poverty and hunger. But steel has gained a second meaning. It stands for our country’s freedom. That is an inescapable fact, not to be changed by wishful thinking. Development plus defense – a compulsion of our current history” (27). The aims of Bhashkar and Satyajit are common the preservation of national independence and removal of poverty but the means they apply are quite different. “Bireswar Basu, Satyajit’s close friend, calls Bhashkar a *phenomenon*, and tells Satyajit that both of them are complementary to each other like light and darkness in the hour of twilight. They may be opposite to one another, but alone is useless without the other” (Sorot 86).

Satyajit is convinced that in India, small machine like spinning wheel is the answer to all the problems. He emphasizes the spread of small scale industries or village industries to bring betterment for the masses and believes that in his way of economic development the problems of the peasants will not exist. His insistence on the spinning wheel has a rationale behind it. He is Gandhian in his conviction that it can keep the community away from the evil inherent in

mechanization. A spinning wheel is ideal because it helps an individual “to add to his efficiency without turning him into its helpless slave” (26).

Bhashkar, the Chief Engineer of Lohapur Steel company, trained in America has a highly westernised out-look. He observed America with all his senses but India remained within him as real as ever before. “Bhashkar’s character itself is a curious mixture of the old and the new values. He has lived long in the West, but he does not forget his Indian heritage. Though he does not see any harm in drinking wine, dating and merry-making, he also has a high respect for the basic human values (Sorot 86).” He is a contrast to Satyajit. Bhashkar insists on mass production Satyajit is particular of the by-products. Both are essential like the virtue and vice which give life its colour. In Bhashkar’s opinion non-violence is no match to violence and the ‘soul force’ advocated by Satyajit holds no meaning for him. The peace march on Gandhian lines that Satyajit wants to undertake gives a wrong signal, for the Chinese are non-Gandhians.

Bhashkar is very vehement in his argument on industrialization in the wake of the Chinese aggression. When the steel-town starts encroaching upon, he has to face the protests by many Gandhians but later he understands that his approach towards Gandhigram should be tempered with elements of Gandhian softness. He easily grasps that neither Satyajit nor Gandhigram can be won over by force. “Though Satyajit and Bhashkar exemplify two contrary modes of life, the clash between them whittles away gradually, thus, effecting a true transformation” (Venkateswarlu 54).

Through the close analysis of Gandhigram and Steeltown it is evident that Satyajit and Bhashkar represent two different facets of Gandhism. Satyajit’s Gandhigram is a presentation of Gandhi’s village of Swaraj and Bhashkar’s Steeltown is that of later India. “Satyajit, like Devesh Basu in Battacharya’s first novel, is a Gandhi like character. Bhashkar is the later version of

Rahoul in 'So many Hunger'. He has been votary of industrialization in the greater part of the novel, but finally he is converted to the Gandhian way of life". (Jha170).

The novel proffers the conflict between the old and the new; between the rural and the urban; between asceticism and aestheticism; between political and technological aspects and stresses the need for the synthesis of divergent sets of values for an all-round progress of the nation. Gandhigram and Steeltown symbolize two ways of life and two philosophies in direct opposition and it also espouses to the novelist's wavering faith between Gandhi and Nehru as, "Satyajit is Gandhi's shadow (or a Gandhian echo), and Bhaskar, the Chief Engineer of Steeltown, is almost a Nehruistic symbol or shadow (Iyengar 421)." Gandhian economics is threatened by the new cry of industrialization. Steeltown is the embodiment of the new approach. "Gandhigram and Steeltown are not simply two localities but concrete symbols of Gandhian and Nehruite ways of life - one believing in simple living and cottage industries whereas the other in Western ways of life and industrialization (Srivastva 240)."

Gandhigram to which the spinning wheel is central, is modelled after the ways and views of the scholar, Satyajit, a dogmatic follower of Gandhi and Tagore while Steeltown, which has grown up around the steel mills is dominated by Bhashkar, the young America-trained Chief Engineer with a highly Westernised outlook. "The confrontation between Gandhigram and Steeltown or Satyajit and Bhaskar reveals the novelist's two-sided vision. On the one hand he exhibits full faith and reverence to the Gandhian ideals but, on the other hand, he reckons the rapid development and mass production to be the need of the hour" (Sharma, A 128). In the first novel of Bhattacharya, Devesh Basu is a Gandhian character and people call him 'Devata', Satyajit is also a Gandhian character but not completely and the other main character Bhashkar also has Gandhian traits who adopts 'Nehruite ways of life'. 'From So Many Hungers' to

'Shadow from Ladakh' one can observe the transition from a staunch Gandhian protagonist Devesh Basu to a self-created Gandhian image, Satyajit.

During the period of struggle for freedom, the entire nation followed Gandhiji with unswerving faith in him. Nehru despite his ideological differences, also unquestioningly accepted Gandhi's leadership. China's unprovoked attack on India, however, brought these conflicting ideologies to the forefront and the people started debating whether India should meet force of following Gandhi's ideals of truth and non-violence, meet force with soul-force. (Rani 33)

Bhashkar a seeming opponent of Satyajit in socio-economic dimensions of Gandhian thought cherishes a view of life quite different from the one practised in Gandhigram. The austere life of Gandhigram is an unnecessary torture to its residents in Bhashkar's views. Bhashkar considers a celibate life a negation of life. What is considered 'vice' by Satyajit, Bhashkar considers to be the biological requirement of every human being. And negation of it does not lead anybody to a high pedestal of morality, rather deviates the person from the path of normalcy.

The compulsion to follow the code of strict discipline, for each and every social activist does not make any sense to Bhashkar. Bhashkar is more on the side of the common man, with an awareness of his ordinariness and weakness. Bhashkar is realistic in his approach, in viewing *brahmacharya* or ascetic life not as a positive force but as a hindrance in the progress of the country. He presents the unified view of life that "... virtue and vice together give life its colour, savour" (29).

The author reveals that post-independence India is faced with various grave problems which did not exist earlier. Bhashkar explains the problem of over population. "Each five ticks or

it could be four – signaled the birth of an Indian child. A child to be fed, clothed, reared, educated; given cultural fare, given employment, given his due share of the human heritage” (31). In his opinion, fast multiplying population of India cannot depend solely upon land and spinning for the fulfillment of its demands. He says, “There’s no getting away from mass production. It’s the only way to get fast-paced production” (29). Steeltown provided employment to thousands of people who worked together “to make four hundred million lives a little more livable” (33). The novelist holds the view that mass mechanization with a proper perspective of future will make the life in the country better. The mass industrialization is needed for the defense of the nation and the country is full of unexplored potentials in men and materials. Instead of leaving workless the people who do not have land to till, machinery will train their unskilled hands and utilize their idle hours.

In Steeltown, there is no clash of interests among the owners and the labourers. The interests of both the parties are committed to the cause of the nation. Bhashkar is very much concerned with the factory workers. There are various instances in the novel which reveal that he has not lost the human touch. He is in close contact with the workers. He goes to them and solves their problems. He does not have any false notion of his status or position while helping the mill hands. He takes full care of their well-being even at the cost of his interest. When a worker unfortunately dies, while working on a machine, his family is provided with compensation from the factory as well as from the Trade Union. Besides, Bhashkar immediately donates his full month’s salary for his family. Though constantly working on machines with the efficiency of a machine Bhashkar has due regard for human values. The author shows that the factory system has not been able to cast any ill effect on Bhashkar. His zeal for work has not the least cooled down

by his tough ordeal. He is working day and night not for any personal gain in terms of money or power.

Bhashkar is a man of action as well as that of knowledge. Sumita quotes Gandhi in this regard and says that no knowledge is bad. Bhashkar wants to utilize his knowledge to explore the latent potential in the soil. He plans the future of India after ten years as he says, “Ten years more, two other five year plans, fifty million kilowatts of hydropower, new found oil gushing generously from the deserts sands of Gujarat and Rajasthan, reserves of uranium yielding atomic power for peaceful use”(33). Knowledge turns into a curse when it perverts the mind of humanity because of the pride of the possessor but Bhashkar’s case is different. He wants to use the power and energy for peaceful purposes and he is above the evils generated by the mechanised set up.

Bhashkar, in order to open the eyes of the residents of Gandhigram in the world outside, plans to build a meeting place between Gandhigram and the Steeltown. The very idea in his mind is that of conversion and not of coercion. “Since at some stage or other, Gandhigram and steeltown are necessary, the country cannot have one at the cost of other” (Srivastava 245). It is admission on his part of superiority of the soul force over brute force, that is why, he works out his plan in a non-violent manner. The narrator unfolds the mind of Bhashkar. Bhashkar says: “But it’s to be achieved by peaceful penetration. Meadow House has been conceived with that purpose. A conquest by non-violence” (84-85). Bhashkar is fully aware that he has taken his arm from the armoury of his opponent to influence and defeat him. Even Satyajit also believes that Gandhigram must expose itself to every wave of thought, the full force of modern age, and yet stand rocklike in its strength of conviction. Isolation is unGandhian, it means the fear of defeat

and there should be no such fear in heart. That is why, Steeltown's invitation to Gandhigram to attend its cultural programme is whole heartedly accepted by Gandhigram.

Frequent meetings of the people of Gandhigram and steeltown in the Meadow House and their close interaction brings a new awareness in Gandhigram as well as in Steeltown. Grand Uncle's son leaves Gandhigram and starts staying in Steeltown as a mill-hand. Jhanak, a female resident of Gandhigram, rebels against the austere life of Gandhigram. She goes to watch a film with Grand uncle's son in the city and openly discloses it to other girls of Gandhigram. Ultimately she elopes with him and takes refuge in Steeltown.

Bhashkar's subtle ways succeed in making Sumita realize the inadequacies of the code of life she was living by. She is made aware of the incompleteness of her life. Bhashkar "would like her to reach into the broad sunlight, away from the light radiated from her father and enveloped her in its unhealthy glow" (123). It was unhealthy because it did not allow her to be fulfilled as a woman. She could not shed the father-image around her because she knew that she was Satyajit's India. She had to be exposed to another more powerful or irrepressible aspect of life.

Sumita's active participation in the activities of Meadow and her frequent visits to Steeltown bring a healthy change in her. For the first time, she desires to wear good, colourful *saris* and ornaments. A torrential rain brings Sumita quite near to Bhashkar and for the first time she experiences love for a man and is aware of her womanhood. In her character the author shows the development from suppression to spontaneity. Suruchi is contented to the core of her heart to see Sumita's growth in a natural manner. The change in Sumita is in the positive direction. Sumita casts away the unhealthy glow she was enveloped in; the rest of her development is completed during her stay in Delhi with Nandini and Debes, her dashing guide in Delhi.

Bhashkar's visits to Gnadhigram cast an equally healthy effect on him. He admits that he had been travelling from one exhaustion to another. The life of materials has not been able to provide him inner solace which he finds in Gandhigram.

In contrast to Stayajit who is making all deliberate efforts to live a celibate life, but in vain, Bhashkar realizes the sense of restraint in him. He says to Roopa that he cannot do any wrong to her. Having lived a life of flesh in America for many years he has not been able to evade the Gandhi within him. He is spontaneously living a life of dedication and restraint. In this sense he is a true Gandhian in essence though outwardly seeming to be different. He is unlike Satyajit, whose very attempt to live like Gandhi makes it un-Gandhian because it involved violence of many kinds.

On one hand Satyajit meets his failure while applying non-violence to inter-national problem; on the other hand Bhashkar proves the worth of the Gandhian gospel by winning the heart of the five Chinese girls at his place. The gospel of infinite love stands victorious through Bhashkar. He not only provides shelter to the daughters of a Chinese shoe-maker, temporarily imprisoned, but also acts as a father to them. The girls too reciprocate his love and affection in the same degree. At first, Bhashkar is shocked to see them offering worship to Mao's portrait. Later on he realizes that it is a ritual they are made to perform at their home every day. In order to express their love and gratitude to Bhashkar and their tutor Roopa, the girls massage their bodies regularly.

In a Gandhian creed, Bhashkar realizes the common bonds of human nature everywhere on the earth and admits the power of love. It is conveyed through the incident in which the little Erh-ku writes with her name the title of Bhashkar as Erh-ku Roy. One of the girls receives a spinning wheel from Gandhigram and enjoys spinning with it. While departing finally from

Steeltown she takes *charkha* along with her as the most beloved token of love from India. One of the girls confesses to Roopa that she had been very happy in India and she is definitely going to convey their love to her countrymen.

Fasting was recommended by Gandhi as one of the techniques of *Satyagraha*. Fasting is the last weapon for the votary of ahimsa, when human ingenuity fails, the *satyagrahi* fasts. The expansion of Steeltown poses a threat to the very existence of Gandhigram. Satyajit resolves to undertake a fast unto death to save Gandhigram. Bhattacharya shows that in the process of fasting Satyajit transforms himself into a true Gandhian. He realizes that the common self within him needn't struggle hard "to step on each footprint of the Master's striding gait" (367). Satyajit and Bhashkar work for national interests in their own way. Bhashkar has no hatred for Satyajit. In fact, he has utmost reverence for him and that is why Satyajit becomes successful in getting the desired result.

Bhabani Bhattacharya seems to be suggesting in 'Shadow from Ladakh' that the Gandhian technique of passive resistance can give the desired result only when one's adversary has at least softness, if not warmth, for one and that it is likely to fail when the adversary has no sympathy for one. This assertion is being made on the ground that even though Satyajit Sen resolves to encounter both the aggressions in the Gandhian way, he transforms his resolution into action only in case of Bhashkar Roy's aggression and not in case of the Chinese aggression.

(Sharma, B 65)

He undergoes a Gandhian creed and for the first realizes "the spirit's supremacy over the flesh" (387). He is able to shed the artificial mask of Gandhi he was wearing all the years in the past. He also feels sorry for Suruchi for depriving her of the fulfilment of life. Now there is no

need for him to impose Gandhian ideals on himself artificially. He comes to the grips of reality and towering into a new glory conveys to Suruchi an urge to live and relive.

Towards the ending of the novel Satyajit succeeds in his Gandhian stance. The people of Steeltown suddenly see the light of Gandhi in Satyajit and they lead a procession to Gandhigram so that Satyajit breaks his fast unto death. It is understood that Steeltown has withdrawn its plan of expansion which was causing a threat to Gandhigram. The mill-hands meeting with the residents of Gandhigram midway is an evidence of the peaceful co-existence of both. Hence Bhattacharya presents a synthesis of the earlier Gandhi and a later day interpretation of Gandhi. It is not merely a matter of live and let live. It is the co-existence between the two, the result of compromise and re-adjustment of values on either-side.

Symbolic of the reconciliation between the two divergent ways of life is the marriage of Sumita and Bhahkar. It is further strengthened by Satyajit's resolve to tone down his asceticism and live a full and natural life. The second kind of synthesis is between the asceticism of Gandhi and aestheticism of Tagore.

Satyajitism and Bhashkarism are two facets of Gandhian ideology. Satyajitism is an over simplification and exaggeration of Gandhian ideology focussing mainly on the Hind Swaraj interlude. It relates more to the pre-independence India. On the other hand Bhashkar is the exaggeration of the later posture of Gandhi in its multifaceted dimensions suitable in the post-independence context.

Gandhian ideology in its social, economic, political, cultural and moral dimensions is dealt herewith, from two different points of views and the reconciliation between them after re-adjustment on the either side is a proof of the author's creative treatment of Gandhism. His thorough analysis of Gandhian thought brings about the quintessence of the values Bhattacharya

seeks to project through the dynamic treatment of the same ideology. “The theme of the novel centres round this synthesis of the spinning wheel and the spindle, a synthesis of Gandhian and Nehruvian ideals, and of asceticism of Gandhi and the aestheticism of Tagore” (Venkateswarlu 52).

Raja Rao’s *Comrade Kirillov* (1976) is a socio-political novel in its concern. This novel, as many inner evidences prove, was actually written in 1950s. It has been mentioned in the ‘Postface’ to the novel that though originally written in English it was first published in French in Georges Fradier’s excellent translation in 1965. “M.K. Naik quotes Arthur Gregor as having stated in 1959 that Raja Rao had finished some new novels and hence it is obvious that *Comrade Kirillov* was one of them. The last entry in Irene’s diary made on January 4, 1949, which is inserted almost at the end of the novel, makes it clear that it was written in the nineteen fifties” (Dayal 78).

The major portion of the book is in the form of dialogues between characters as it is intended to show the clash of perspectives and dialectical development of thoughts. In the novel the ideological conflict gets internalised in the consciousness of the central character *Comrade Kirillov* alias Padmanabha Iyer. The conflict here is three fold: between tradition and modernity; the colonial subject and the coloniser; and the Mahatma and Marx. *Kirillov*’s ideological ambivalence in fact is a by-product of the long drawn colonial experience. The communist ideology believes that the socio-economic conditions are the determinants of man’s life and consequently, traditional morality and metaphysics are questioned. Due to the turbulent impact of communism on the traditional consciousness, the ideological dilemma that *Kirillov* faces is being pulled by the counter influence of communism on the one hand, Mahatma on the other.

Kirillov was initially initiated into the theosophical society founded and propagated by Annie Besant. He was turning away from theosophy and Gandhism and found in communism a retreat where he could play his heart's desire. He bade good bye to theosophy and committed himself to the cause of communism. Padmanabha became Kirillov, creating ambivalence in his own character and mind. "Kirillov is a split personality and does not realize dichotomy in his personality, a conflict between Indianness and Europeanised intellect" (Sharma K 82).

In spite of repeated declarations of his commitment to communism Kirillov has not been able to sever his links with the traditional Indian thought. This results in an acute conflict between the inherited philosophy and the imbibed ideology. Comrade Kirillov, as he has emerged from the novel, is almost like a child, noble, delicate, loving his country, India, with a deep unreasoned love, yet severely criticising and disagreeing with all that is Indian.

Such self-contradictory attitudes of Kirillov imply that ambivalence is characteristic trait of his personality. His simultaneous allegiance to Marxism and Gandhism appears to be the outcome of the conflict in his sub-conscious between his communist affiliations and his love for India then symbolized by Gandhi. His criticism of Gandhi, however, is an offshoot of his proclaimed loyalty to the communist party which found in Gandhism a formidable challenge to Marxism in the pre-independence era. (Dayal 83)

The progressive element in him, akin to most of the Indian intellectuals, with its attendant radical spirit clashes vehemently with his orthodox traditionalist psyche. Most of the Indian intellectuals, though, have not finally subscribed to the communist ideology, they give due regard to Marxism and weigh things seriously and accept certain of its tenets such as justice to working class and their struggle, but the violent means are always rejected. Minus materialism

and violence every Indian intellectual is seemingly a communist in his avowal of the cause of the lowly and downtrodden. "Communism believes in the material world of power and comforts and wealth while Gandhism scorns materialism, industrialism, lust for wealth and power and pleads for the rehabilitation of spiritual values, simple and reduction of wants in life. (Sharma, A 44).

We can see the duality in Kirillov's mind as a psychological dilemma. He is apparently dissatisfied with the state of affairs in India. He puts the entire blame on the Indian leaders including Gandhi. At the same time he is greatly charmed by them. He has known much, seen much but could not come to terms with any one's influence nor could he denounce another totally depicting his lop-sidedness. Kirillov is the representative of a class of neocolonials and his ambivalence is reflective of a general ideological confusion that followed independence in most of the ex-colonial countries.

The novel makes a realistic portrayal of Kirillov's divided loyalty and his split consciousness with an acute sense of irony, and a perceptive understanding of human psyche. Raja Rao realistically portrays the ideological ambivalence of Indian intellectuals caught up in the influence of communism. His Kirillov is representative of a class of neocolonials and Kirillov's ambivalence is reflective of a general ideological confusion that followed independence in most of the ex-colonial countries. (Rao11)

Again, the novel 'Comrade Kirillov' can be said to represent the transition period when the protagonist or the main characters do not affirm completely the Gandhian philosophy, rather they question its feasibility and sustainability. *Comrade Kirillov* has only one main character, Kirillov alias Padmanabha Iyer on whom the entire attention of the author is focussed. Other characters viz. Irene, wife; Kamal, son; 'R', the narrator, a distant cousin of Kirillov and 'S', a friend and

‘a senior colleague of ‘R’ move like satellites and exist as Kirillov’s dependents, having no independent existence of their own.

Kirillov assails and adores Gandhi and his ideology concomitantly. Makarand Paranjape’s delineation is ‘quite pertinent to comprehend Kirillov:

Kirillov, alias Padmanabhan Iyer, leaves India for California to propagate theosophy but, after a period of disillusionment, becomes a communist. From California he moves to London where, marrying a Czech immigrant, Irene, he settles down to the life of an expatriate intellectual.... Kirillov starts as a seeker of Truth, but after becoming a communist, he is increasingly revealed by the narrator to be caught in a system which curtails his access to Truth. Thus, Kirillov continuously rationalizes the major events in the world to suit his perspective. Nevertheless, following a visit to India several years after he has left, he realizes that his Communism is only a their upper layer in an essentially Indian psyche. Irene has also recognizes in her diary that he is almost biologically an Indian Brahmin and only intellectually a Marxist. By the end of the book, Kirillov is shown to be a man of contradictions: attacking and worshiping Gandhi simultaneously, deeply loving traditional India but campaigning for a Communist revolution, reciting Sanskrit shlokas but professing Communism. (Pranjape Introduction XIV)

The author begins the novel by stating that “he first met communism in comrade kirillov” (7). The central character P--, as he is called for most of the time in the novel, apparently dissatisfied with the state of affairs in India, turns towards theosophy and is swayed by it “theosophy had carried him westward on its proselytising flood” (8). P--, alias Padmanabhan

alias Comrade Kirillov alias Kirillov Padmanabhan is initially initiated into theosophical society founded by Annie Besant to be groomed as a companion for J. Krishna Murthy, the chosen Messiah of theosophical society. As J. Krishna Murthy disowns his role of Messiah, Kirillov soon realises the futility of this adventure. He is now convinced that theosophy, with all its comforts and promises, is not going to improve the lot of his country-men. The acute poverty of the Indian people raises a suspicion in his mind about the capability of the theosophical messiah to improve the destiny of Indians. “The recollection of the sights of human degradation and awful humiliation of man in India turns him to communism.” (Dayal 80). He is completely disillusioned and starts reading books on socialism. He is called Comrade Kirillov after his conversion to communism. This is not merely a shift in political ideology but an attempt to alter his vision of life itself. His conception of the slavery of his people is based upon firsthand experience. He has seen “the thin-legged Indian drove his miserable bullock, its sides flagging for want of fodder, and its bones speaking of the chemistry of death....” (10)

This disillusionment is not only from Annie Besant but indirectly from Gandhi also. It is an historical fact that politically they were colleagues leading a party ‘Home Rule League’. Kirillov is disillusioned with religious or spiritual side of man and this spiritual aspect has been eminent in Gandhi and his politics. “He was turning away from Theosophy and Gandhism and found in communism a retreat where he could receive his heart’s desire”( Gupta 169).

He wants to gain all available knowledge on western thought. He learns French, German and Russian languages to read and assimilate properly the knowledge of the scholars of these countries. “So Kirillov learnt German in order to read Marx and Engels, French to read Fourier and Saint Simon, and little by little he was pushed into Lenin and the holy Russian tongue”(14). Kirillov has great admiration for Lenin and the Russian Revolution, the most remarkable

experiment of those days. He feels that a revolution like the one that swept the Soviet Union alone can solve the miserable problems of his poor country-men.

The Russian Revolution was a remarkable experiment, it was the only historic revelation of the modern world. The Messiah was not only born – he worked, and his land was called the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics and may be a new Ganges flowed there and man there had all the prismatic colours of the prophetic world. Besides, it was built on reason and the steam-engine. (15)

The author has drawn an analogy between Kirillov and Gandhi: “Kirillov was essentially and thoroughly honest. He could not tell a lie, and he could never speak fast. But he could walkfast... His food, he consumed at the nearest vegetarian restaurant and this freak of vegetarianism carried him a long way” (16). It was in the year 1928 when he landed at Liverpool and was lodged in a hotel where he came into contact with people who were sympathetic to India and also were committed members of Labour Party. He was hopeful that if Labour Party came into power India would get its independence. “But on India everybody was certain India will soon have independence, the Labour Party had made definite and solemn promises” (18).

An avid reader of books and journals, he found the veracity of Marx on the benches of Bloomsbury. He found in communism a joyous knowledge. Kirillov’s averment that the messiah will be born in a steel furnace, followed by his reverence for the Russian Urals, simply alludes to his belief in Russian Communism. “The messiah will be born in a steel furnace (at Mongolostrokok)) and ten will be his arms of pointed steel....Hurrah to the Urals !” (24).

He kept himself busy in Labour Party meetings or in lengthy discourse on dialectics. Kirillov wore a necktie which had “a prater plusparenthetical as though much concrete philosophy had gone into its making....” (25). His neck tie is symbolic of his fanatic faith in

communism which too hangs around his neck and on his heart very much like his tie. He clings on to his tie with almost a desperate dependence. “Yes, it was his boon companion, ... his sole possession.... and whispered, “You, you, my noble, secret friend, you lie in the faithfulness of my scholarly solitude. O, go not away from my habitation, for what shall my destiny be without contiguous presence” (32). The author’s ironic description of Kirillov’s dresses particularly the necktie “revealed a soul so ambivalent” (25). Ambivalence is the foremost trait of his character. He is full of contradictions.

Both the narrators ‘R’ and Irene highlight his major traits. R - describes his personal appearance: “Kirillov... was an Indian, his pants too dissimilar for his limbs, his coat flapping a little too fatherly on his small, rounded muscles of seating, his lips tender, slow and segregated... dun eyes gave an added touch of humanity to his ancient and enigmatic face” (7 ). His complexity of mind and thinking have been made apparent by the narrator who calls him a bundle of opposites. “....P becomes a communist, though in his heart he still believes in Mahatma Gandhi and his principles” ( Narayan, Shyam 100). At the superficial level, one may perceive his unflinching admiration of Marxism and condemnation of Gandhism – the ideologies that stand poles apart.

The narrator ‘R’, a correspondent for *The Hindu* and his senior colleague ‘S’ first meet Padmanabh Iyer alias ‘P’ Alias Kirillov in London. ‘R’ tries to enlist ‘P’ in signing the manifesto, against the fake Mosco trials in the thirties; this leads to long discussions between ‘P’ and the narrator. His categorical refusal to put his signature on the manifesto demanding a fair trial of ‘the Mosco accused’, termed denigrates, affirms that ‘P’ is quite a bigoted communist.

Kirillov had written a book ‘Mahatma Gandhi – A Marxist Interpretation’ and its preface was written by some eminent scientist of Darwinist convictions which could only lead to

Marxian conclusions. But “his perfect unDarwinian enemy was this Mahatma Gandhi, friend and fool of the poor.... the Sadhu reactionary who still believed in caste and creed and such categories” (33). While the narrator called Kirillov “Sadhu of Communism.... allied with such violence, diplomacy and cynicism”(72). Kirillov held responsible Gandhi “whose birth in this world had set history many centuries backwards.”(33). Being unscientific in his approach, “Mahatma Gandhi should have been born in the Middle Ages, and he should not have bothered us with his theology in this rational age of ours” (37).

Kirillov has left theology and he “knew one thing—he was finished with Gandhi and all that” (22). Marx constructed the theory of revolution on the British working classes revolting against their masters, “and Mahatma Gandhi came and upset Marx” (34). He called Gandhi “an oriental Mazzini, with Indian mysticism....Much like Mazzini this new prophet of God had the Almighty too often on his lips” (34). Factually, Mazzini was an Italian politician, journalist and an activist for the unification of Italy and an early advocate of a ‘United States of Eurpoe’ about a century before the European Union began to take shape. Karl Marx did not agree with his ideas. Mahatma Gandhi was a believer but Kirillov did not like religion, “it is like a disease caused by vitamin deficiency. God is the fiction of the lazy” (40).

Kirillov alleged that Gandhi did not fight against slavery in South Africa “Besides, in South Africa, had Mahatma Gandhi ever raised the storm of revolt against the Negro-slave-lords, Smuts & Company ? No, no, never” (34). Gandhi believed in the ideology of non-violence. He was against war and violence. Although, he desired and struggled for the freedom but his concept of freedom was not based on violence. He was the apostle of non-violence and he never harbored the feelings of anger and hatred for anybody. But for Kirillov, “Non-violence was a biological lie. Man was born to fight- fighting is an instrument of Darwinian evolution....” (34).

He believed that there would be no progress without opposition and “this ‘titanic struggle’ could only be resolved” (34) by creating the classless society where man would regain his primary innocence and the new theory in biology will be developed. “Till then our present theories alone can explain the development of mankind, and Mahatma Gandhi is the one enemy of this new dispensation. More insidious than Hitler is this intellectual venom that is spreading over vast and ignorant humanity” (35).

Gandhi advocated *brahmacharya* which according to him is not mere mechanical celibacy; it is the way of life which leads us to Brahma – God. It includes control of the senses in thought, word and deed. For Gandhi, “Sex urge is a fine and noble thing. There is nothing to be ashamed of in it. But it is meant only for the act of creation. Any other use of it is a sin against God and humanity” (Bose 18). Kirillov during their long discussion calls Gandhi “a kleptomaniac” (35) and “an ungrown adult” (35). He does not agree with the Gandhian theory on sex.

Look at his theories on sex – he justifies the sexual act in terms of theological necessities: God wanted to people the world. When he wants the population to rise, then you know it instinctively: You feel like increasing the population of your own home. Then you can go to bed with your wife and produce the prescribed number of fetuses for population figures. Otherwise, you impose sisterhood on your young wife, and spread a carpet of virtue between you and your spouse. Fine, very fine counsels in this age of reason. (35-36)

For Gandhi the use of sex in other than creation is a ‘sin’. Kirillov advises “...Gandhi to read Freud – he would be the wiser for it.... The biological game of love making is as natural food.... So sex is the common biological act...” (36). There is no need to refer, those concepts which are crystal clear, to the scriptures. The approach should be realistic. “The communist, the

true Marxist, is above all a realist” (37) but Gandhi is a moralist. “That is why we think morality is a humbug. Your Gandhi morality, fattening itself on the *Marwari*-capitalist, and speaking a brother-brother language! It is nothing but the plainest of vulgarity. ... Your morality is bogus” (37).

For Kirillov the Gandhian civil disobedience and *satyagraha* are all imbecile adornments to historical process. He ridicules such protests and campaigns. The British Empire cannot be vanquished by non-violent protests. There is need of “war with Churchill and Company... or a new situation may arise ... then the great masses will rise in historical inevitability, and Mahatma Gandhi and his henchmen will all be washed away. Otherwise you can wait with your non-violence at the door of Whitehall.” (38).

Kirillov makes a satirical comment on Gandhian ‘trusteeship’. Nirmal Kumar Bose asked Gandhi in an interview, “Why there should not be state ownership of land and other means of production if, as Gandhi held, possession of property and non-violence were incompatible. Gandhi replied that perfection in ‘non-possession’ would remain an unattainable ideal: “Those who own money now are asked to behave like the trustees holding their riches on behalf of the poor. You may say that trusteeship is a legal fiction... and is equally unattainable. But if we strive for it, we shall go further in realising a state of equality on earth than by any other method” (Ganguli 271). Kirillov alludes to Gandhi, for his theory of trusteeship or possession: ‘I hate possession and yet I respect everyone else’s possession. I hate, violence, and yet I will kill in a civil war’ (39). Kirillov’s Marxist stand itself is a parody of Gandhi’s own words to Moorthy, the protagonist in the novel *Kanthapura*, those very words which led him to break from the Brahmanic shackles: “There is but one force in life and that is Truth, and there is but one God in life and that is the God of all” (48). Compare Kirillov’s declaration: “I know only one God, and

that is the common man, I know only one worship and that is the Party meeting. I know only one morality, and that is a classless society” (39).

Kirillov’s love for the motherland is mixed with pain. He imagines that the lost glory of India can be revived only through Marxism. He is pained to see the colossal indifference of the government towards the problems of the Indian people.

Kirillov is, indeed, a product of an intellectual derangement; he oscillates between excessive love for his country and the frustration that is inevitable on account of the miseries of his countrymen. His commitment to Marxism on the one hand, and his deep and abiding love for the Vedas and the Upanishads on the other account for the split of his personality. He is thus confused between two entirely different ways of life and sensibility. (Niranjan 60)

Completely different ways of life and sensibility confound him. He is highly impressed by popular and influential people, the champions of communism, thus he turns towards it. “The communist truth has Hegel of father, Feuerbach as the spouse of a legal wedding, Marx gave it a baptismal name, and Stalin gave it his own crown of steel” (48). On the other side he sings with utmost devotion and holiness a couplet from *Nirvana Astaka* of *Sankara* to remind of the non-dual nature of the existence on the earth:

“Manobuddhi ahankara cittani naham \cidanand rupah Shivoham – Shivoha” (I am not the mind, I am neither, intelligence nor egoism, I am joy of intelligence – I am Shiva, I am Shiva...)” (86).

He presents himself as an internationalist, but his love for India makes him hate Europe. Such a strange amalgamation is astounding but this reconciliation is typical of the Indian sensibility.

Just as Irene was a woman, and had specific reflexes, glandular and neurotic, Kirillov was an Indian, and he had peculiar reactions which no dialectic could clarify. He could almost speak of India as though he were talking of venerable old lady in a fairy tale who had nothing but goodness in her heart, and who was made of morning dew and mountain honey. He could not bear a word said against Mahatma Gandhi (though he could sometimes say more severe things than even Churchill might ever about the saintly Indian leader), but if Irene spoke of India, he simply remarked, “what do you know, Irene ?”... He would be proud of his heritage, ... (58)

Kirillov does not bear anything against Gandhi and Irene’s comment in her diary that at heart Gandhi is her husband’s God symbolise the muddle-headedness of the protagonist. The self-contradictory traits in Kirillov reveal ambivalence in his personality.

His simultaneous allegiance to Marxism and Gandhism appears to be the outcome of the conflict in his subconscious between his communist affiliations and his love for India symbolized by Gandhi. His criticism of Gandhi, however, is an offshoot of his proclaimed loyalty to the communist party which found in Gandhism a formidable challenge to Marxism in the pre-independence era. (Dayal 83)

Irene, wife of Kirillov, is a leading character who perceives Kirillov’s dilemma appropriately enough. Her diary conspicuously elaborates Kirillov’s ideological conflict between Marx and the Mahatma. In the beginning of her diary she records, “He lives on grave tensions” (94). He is constantly at war with himself. Kirillov comments satirically that Gandhian

*Satyagraha* proves futile attempt for freedom. He should learn from scriptures by comprehending them properly.

Mahatma Gandhi's symbolic *satyagraha*—people announcing to the police that on such and such a day, so and so will, at such and such place, break Government laws – is a piece of gross childishness. Mahatma Gandhi has not read his Ramayana well, though he reads chapters of it, and every day. Ravana was not conquered with symbolic protests by Rama, sitting fasting on Adam's bridge. Nor did Hanuman announce to Ravana the day and hour of his commado attack on Ceylon. Invisible was Hanuman – he, the son of the Air (Vayu – Putra). P's remarks are correct. (99)

It is foolish on his part to announce his programmes in advance which give enough time to the British to prepare themselves.

Irene makes a fun of Gandhi's *Satyagraha* in which "permission to join symbolic *Satyagraha* given to those who spin regularly two hundred twenty yards of yarn per day etc" (99). She further comments, "their courage is before the kitchen fire, like Uttara in the Mahabharatha, says P" (100). The reference has been made to the Prince Uttara in the Mahabharatha. Kirillov feels these volunteers may shout slogans but they would not be able to face the mighty British force. This situation is similar to the story of Uttara who went to rescue the cows which had been rounded up by the Kauravas. He was struck with awe and confusion when he saw a well equipped army of Kauravas. This myth has been interwoven in the remark just to clarify and to enforce the idea that these so called *Satyagrahis* cannot withstand the potent British force.

“‘Irene’s Diary’ is significant from two points of view: one, it reveals the character and personality of Comrade Kirillov, as Irene sees it, and two, it lets us into her own mind vis-a-vis comrade Kirillov” (Gupta 177). Irene strips away the mask covering Marx and his follower Kirillov. She doesn’t like the virulent attack on Gandhi. She exposes the inner reality of Kirillov’s mind. She finds Kirillov’s attack so lacking in taste. ‘The old puritan humbug’ or ‘that fine, moral hypocrites’, etc” (101). Irene reveals the reality: “All this is your European, indeed Marxist, baggage” (101). Further she enters the psyche of Kirillov: “At heart Gandhi’s is your God, you tremble when you speak of him sometimes. I once saw even a tear, one long tear, it was there when you spoke of Gandhi to S” (101).

Further she enters Kirillov’s critical posture: “Gandhism is bad for moral health. All ascetics smell the spermatozoa” (104). Irene understands the dual nature of Kirillov’s personality, his innermost conflicts and decides not to go to India. She knows: “His Indianness will rise up once he touches the soil of his land, and all this Occidental veneer will scuttle into European hatred. He hates Europe, does P. And yet he speaks of internationalism. A strange mixture.” (113). However, Kirillov does not accept the fact that he is proud to know that his book has been sent to Mahatma Gandhi but the inner reality has been revealed by Irene’s entry: “P. does not admit it, but I know he is proud that Pandit Nehru sent Mahatma Gandhi a copy of P’s book on India. Spoke well of the book” (115).

Thematically, the *Kanyakumari* myth, besides adding to the Indianness of the novel, signifies symbolically that India and its spirit live through Kamal even when Irene, his mother, has died and “his father, is away in Moscow and Peking, shuttling from one despair to another, *Kanyakumari* symbolizes the eternal value of India which has bravely faced the invasions of various ideologies from time to time.

In *Comrade Kirillov* the protagonist Padmanabha alias Kirillov speaks of India ‘as though he were talking of a venerable lady’ and he ‘could not bear a word against Gandhi’. Irene says to her husband Kirillov, ‘At heart Gandhi is your God’. The narrator says, “Mahatma Gandhi had won. He could always win, for he knew India’. But the protagonist does not have full faith in Gandhi. He has grave misgivings about Gandhi and his ideology. He makes a vituperative attack on Mahatma Gandhi. ‘Kirillov, however, knew one thing, he was finished with Gandhi and all that. Gandhi is a ‘friend and fool of the poor, the Sadhu reactionary... whose birth in this world has set history many centuries backwards.” The personal besmirching is done as ‘Gandhi is a kleptomaniac’; ‘Mahatma Gandhi is an ungrown adult’. He even calls Gandhi, ‘that old puritan humbug’ or ‘that fine, moral hypocrite’. The creative writers who found a niche in Gandhi have transmogrified him from iconic to ineffectual in the latter half of the century.

A serious reader of Gandhi as a fictional ideologue, who has seen the first two phases, would not be off the mark if such a reader awaits the third phase that would be a natural corollary of the first two phases and would be akin to the hoary writer of writerly coldness to the man and all that he stood for. With the publication of Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel*, Gandhi unmistakably slips into that phase. Some of the writers of this period depict Gandhi as nothing but a man of lamentable portents, ominous contradictions, consuming desires, pernicious effects etc. The verdant spring of Gandhi’s adulation through works of fiction, as it journeyed through the second phase, gave away to a period of ideological denudation of autumnal characteristics.