

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Political figures across generations have often inspired creative writers to use them as source materials for spinning out tales concerning the human journey in its various aspects. Amongst such illustrious political figures, Mahatma Gandhi stands out head and shoulders above the rest for being the fountain-head of not only the most number of fictional efforts, but also in the sense that creative writers have incessantly continued to return to him for nearly a century now. The Gandhian consciousness is reflected in the Gandhian revolutions from 1920 to 1947 and it is generally called “Gandhian age” (Iyengar 248) or “the Gandhian whirlwind” (Naik 114) with an unprecedented awakening of a distinctive national unity in every walk of life. Gandhi was neither a system builder nor an anchorite who isolated himself from the world in his hermitage. He never claimed to be a saint or a reformer. “I deny being a visionary. I do not accept the claim of saintliness” (Prabhu 16). He had no intention to leave any ‘ism’ behind. “Well, all my philosophy if it may be called by that pretentious name, is contained in what I have said. But, you will not call it ‘Gandhism’; there is no ‘ism’ about it.” (Tendulkar IV: 67). One can observe Gandhi’s multiple levels or dimensions in his personality. The ideas and values which he practiced and propagated in his life are generally considered Gandhian ideology.

It stands for truth, non-violence, fearlessness, self-help, simplicity, honesty, voluntary poverty, love for all and hatred for none, religious toleration, decentralization of power, equal status for women and self-realization through self-restraint and self-abnegation. It also advocates a life of *brahmacharya* and considers fasting to be a necessary as an external aid. It is for the use of Hindi or

Hindustani and regional languages. It encourages the establishment of cottage industries so that the villagers may become self-sufficient by learning different handicrafts and be thus weaned away from the enchantment of the city life. It is against the use of foreign goods, untouchability, economic suppression and deep-rooted prejudices and superstitions. (Sharma, S. 207-208)

In fact not only fictional writers have found him to be a fecund store-house, but creative writers of other sorts too have approached the man on a regular basis. If we take the number of biographies written or films produced on a single person with metonymic consistency, obviously Gandhi would again top the charts. He not only inspired the masses of India but also put immense impact on the creative writers, writing in any of the Indian languages. The writers of Indo-Anglian fiction also could not remain unaffected by his ideology. The Anglo-Indian fiction in pre independence period was imbued with Gandhian ideology and “Their approach to it was naturally that of a participant observer and positive” (Venkateswarlu Foreword). Main among the Indian novelists in English who affirm the Gandhian ideology are K.S. Venkataramani, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Bhabani Bhattacharya, D.F. Karaka, C.N. Zutshi and Amir Ali.

Starting with Tagore’s *Home And the World* in 1913 Indian writers have utilized Gandhi the man, the ideologue and the politician as repertoire for channelising their creativity. The initial phase of this century old phenomenon, comprising some four decades, inspired fiction writers to conceptualise and create protagonists who are in one sense or the other palimpsests of Gandhi. They not only see Gandhi as the harbinger of freedom to India but also as a Messiah whose influence is sure to redeem the promise that India as an idea holds.

K.S. Venkataramani is probably the earliest Indian novelist in English to have come under the predominant impression of Gandhian ideology and affirms it in his two novels *Murugan, the Tiller* (1927) and *Kandan, the Patriot* (1932). *Murugan, the Tiller* champions Gandhi's economic theory and *Kandan, the Patriot* reflects the Gandhian political thoughts. *Murugan, The tiller* presents Indian rural life.

As in the typical twenty's novels, the action shifts from the 'village' to the 'city' and back again from 'city' to 'village', encompassing the significance and the unadorned simplicity of village life and brilliantly recapturing through and through the fervour of the freedom struggle ... The central characters Kedari and Ramu, are witnesses to the gyrating processes of change and mutation until they find repose and contentment in the purity and the self-sufficiency of their political action. The whole action seems to have been apportioned between Kedari and Ramu, who obviously represent two modes of living and two valuations of Gandhian ideology. (Venkateswarlu 21)

Venkataramani portrays *Kandan, the Patriot* as new India in the making and gives a graphic picture of Gandhian age without introducing Gandhi personally. The novels deal with the issues like Civil Disobedience, prohibition, *Swaraj* and particularly *Satyagraha* as political weapons to overthrow the British rule in India. "All the exigencies of Gandhian politics and the application of non-violence in all fields of activity, as envisaged by Gandhiji himself are sought to be recorded by the novelists with outmost scrupulously and artistic concinnity" (Venkateswarlu 23).

Gandhi was influenced by Ruskin and Tolstoy; Mulk Raj Anand was swayed immensely by Gandhi and his ideology. He imbibed Gandhi's ideas about the downtrodden, untouchables and exploited. Gandhi's humanism can be observed clearly in the novels of Anand. Gandhi fought against untouchability, injustice, exploitation, racial fanaticism, caste discrimination and class distinctions with the weapon of non-violence. Under the ineffaceable impression of Gandhian ideology Anand created his fictional world.

All his novels, starting from *Untouchable* (1935) to *Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953) are delineations of the theme of exploitation. Since Gandhi's spirit had also revolted against this injustice, different aspects of Gandhian ideology find an indirect expression in different ways in different novels. We have the soulless poverty of industrialization in *Coolie* (1936), slave-driving of laborers in *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), rural indebtedness in *The Village* (1939), unemployment caused by machines in *The Big Heart* (1945) and the debauchery of the native rulers in *Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953). (Sharma S. 22)

Thus Anand has been consistently engrossed with the themes which propagate Gandhian values and approach to life and affirms the Gandhian ideology.

Kanthapura (1938), the first and the far-famed novel written by Raja Rao, may be regarded as the quintessence of Gandhian philosophy. It is a story of an Indian village Kanthapura which organizes the Civil Disobedience movement in line with Gandhi's call for struggle. In this novel the author has realistically and positively elucidated the impact of Gandhian ideology. The characters have been conceived in the light of social and political aspects of Gandhi's constructive programmes. Moorthy, the miniature Gandhi preaches Gandhian philosophy to the characters participating in the movement. Gandhi has attained the

status of God for Achakka, the narrator and she considers Moorthy, the protagonist, to be his *avatar* and thus he is the real incarnation of the Mahatma himself.

The *Harikatha*-man, Jayaramachar, has come in connection with the celebration of *Sankara-Jayanti* and *Ganesh Jayanti* and compares Gandhi to Lord Krishna, the flute player. “You remember how Krishna when he was but a babe of four, had begun to fight against demons and had killed the serpent Kali. So too our Mohandas began to fight against the enemies of the country” (16). The protagonist takes the spinning wheel from the Congress head office and distributes them to the people free of cost so that they may cultivate the habit of spinning. Thus the author has reiterated Gandhi’s principles of economic independence and self reliance in the novel through spinning and weaving.

The author has depicted Moorthy as a veracious model of the Mahatma himself who follows Gandhian ideals in his entirety. He embodies the Gandhian concepts of non-violence, equality, self-reliance, brotherhood, purity, humanism and untouchability. He listens himself, “There is but one force in life and that is Truth, and there is but one love in life and that is the love of mankind, and there is but one God in life and that is the God of all. ...” (48). He throws his foreign clothes and books into the bonfire, thus becomes part of *Swadeshi Movement* and associates it with humanity and love. He instantly determines to do something for the coolies on the Skeffington Coffee Estate when he comes across their wretched condition which arouses his interest. This incident highlights his Gandhian traits of love for the down-trodden and sympathy with the underdogs of society. He is quite successful in bringing up a new awakening and self-confidence among the coolies. Throughout the novel he remains non-violent. No gesture of rage and violence are ever seen on his face even in compelling and inevitable situations. When some of the coolies, including Rachanna and Madanna, become violent and start beating Bade Khan,

he intervenes and entreats them to avoid any exchange of violence. Moorthy is a staunch believer in Gandhian notions that fasting and control of the palate are essential for effective practicing of *brahmacharya* and he undertakes fasting to mitigate the damage done by violence. When police come to arrest Moorthy, people keep on shouting slogans, “Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai” (121).

Moorthy in a true Gandhian way says, “Brothers, in the name of the Mahatma, let there be peace and love and order ... Give yourself upto them. That is the true spirit of the *Satyagrahi*” (120-121). He has full faith in the Gandhian ideal that a *Satyagrahi* needs no advocate so he refuses to accept any defence on his behalf which reveals his faith in conversion through love. “Kanthapura is a veritable grammar of the Gandhian Myth – the myth that is but a poetic translation of the reality. It will have a central place in Gandhi literature” (Iyengar 396). Thus, the contemporary story has been metamorphosed into a myth and a legend, acquiring in the process, a symbolic connotation. The author’s liking for Indian cultural tradition and his avowed acceptance of Gandhism enables him to fictionalize the whole freedom struggle.

Bhabani Bhattacharya’s first novel *So Many Hungers* (1947) was published in the month of October, just two months after India got independence. The ‘Quit India Movement’ and the ‘Bengal Famine’ of 1943 made a profound impact on the author and consequently the story revolves around both the occurrences. In addition to hunger for freedom and for food, the novel depicts so many hungers like the hunger for fame, for sex and for wealth. The novel “is woven around the happenings in the lives of Rahoul and Kajoli and their families; and these are meant to highlight and vivify the crushing effects of ... the godfather of Kajoli” (Naik 123).

In the beginning of the story Rahoul the astro-phiscist, is on the staff of a college of the city and pursues his research on cosmic rays. Gradually he emerges as a Gandhian freedom fighter and ultimately joins the Civil Disobedience Movement. Before joining the fight for

freedom he seeks the advice of his grandfather, Devesh who is a firm patriot and an archetype of Gandhi in true sense of the term. Devesh unfalteringly advises him that the call of the country comes first and in the real Gandhian way asks him to fight with the British rulers and not the British people.

When the villagers of Baruni join the movement he exhorts them to be non-violent. He undertakes a fast in the prison during the Quit India Movement and the news reaches Kajoli at a most critical moment in her calamitous life. It impels her to take a momentous decision which saves her from ignominy and humiliation. It is because of the persuasive message of Devesh Basu, the Devata, she strives till the last for her dignity and honour “The novel depicts how Gandhiji’s message of truth and non-violence and fearlessness as the weaponry for securing independence to the country has inspired like Devesh babu and his grandson Rahoul, and instilled in them patriotic zeal and a spirit of sacrifice for the cause of the country’s freedom” (Rani 30). Thus the author, however, does not assign a direct role to Gandhi but he is always present in the background of the novel in the form of the *Devata* who infuses nationalistic fervour in Rahoul. “The very conception of the plot, the complication of event and the solution of the novelist offers at the end of the novel suggest the vindication of Gandhian ideas in the novel” (Jha,R 159).

The profound impact of Gandhian ideology on R.K. Narayan is conspicuously perceptible in his vision of life. He upholds the Gandhian values which include uprightness and truthfulness in all spheres of life. Even a cursory rendering of his novels reveals the Gandhian influence on him. His novel *The English Teacher*, however, does not refer directly to Gandhi but it embodies the Gandhian Ideology. In the novel Krishnan, the protagonist, denies to live in the image of an Indian created by the English rulers and he becomes more self-critical and acutely

aware of the meaninglessness of his job as a teacher in English. Through Krishnan the author proffers the theme of the relevance of the Western education system in India. Cultural conflict, the mental enslavement and the alienation of an individual that form his roots can be observed as direct consequences of the Western education system. “We and our children must build on our own heritage. If we borrow another, we impoverish our own” (Bose 261). To revive his cultural roots Krishnan renounces the value system generated by the Western education and discontinues to be an English teacher and joins the playschool of the headmaster, the staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi.

In the novel Krishnan has Gandhian traits of self-examining and self-criticality and tries to find out the answer of the question, “What was wrong with me?”(5). With his understanding of Gandhian philosophy, there emerges a realization of the individual’s in society. This Gandhian outlook of liberation and realization of self can be perceived throughout the novel. In the course of struggling with the recondite questions of human existence and a meaningful realization of self he has become a stranger to his worldly affairs, the job of a lecturer in English at Albert Mission College. This job stifles his creativity as a poet and forbids him from free interaction with the people. Thus snaps his cultural roots and becomes the cause of his resignation.

Like Krishnan the headmaster also does not like to imitate the west indiscriminately. He believes in Gandhian ideology of education. He is against costly educational institutions. The headmaster renounces the ancestral property which shows his steadfast belief in Gandhian ideology of non-possession and the dignity of labour. It is his renunciation of material possession that he decides to reside in a laid back, backward street hoping to change it to a better one through his own efforts and establishes a playschool for children.

Krishnan's father is also a Gandhian character in the novel. He is an educated person, a graduate but refuses to enter government service and settles in his village. He prepares the ink himself and uses the old brown paper for writing purposes. Utilisation of old paper or not wasting it, use of old pen and the ink prepared by himself display his Gandhian traits. He is an educated person who, like Gandhi, trusts in handicraft and lives in a village.

The novel has numerous references concerning Gandhian philosophy:

For instance, the Gandhian thought on education in view of the English Teacher brings the headmaster, a minor character who works on Gandhian lines to the forefront. Krishnan's appreciation for the headmaster and his resignation from the Albert Mission College to join the headmaster's school just for one-fourth of his college salary, accord a higher degree of significance to the headmaster. The headmaster's stress on craft, observance of strict economy to maintain his school and ample opportunity he allows the children to play are in accordance with the Gandhian scheme of education. (Dewari 100)

Krishnan, the protagonist, sees the children playing happily in the school and gets "a glimpse of some purpose in existence and creation" (125) which proves the author's affirmation in Gandhian ideology.

The creative Indian writers in the early twentieth century draw their inspiration from Gandhi and his ideology. He and his postulations provided them with enough imaginative material for their fictional protagonists who can clearly be seen as motivated nationalists carving out a new path for India's political as well as mental liberation.

However, with India's liberation and Gandhi's assassination Gandhi's political decline picked up pace. Congress by deifying him and other political parties by willful rejection of his

emancipatory ideals, both equally contributed to his political sidelining. This decimation comes full circle with Indian English authors joining a cacophony of voices bent on sully Gandhi's image. The process which had already started with authors like Mulk Raj Anand, picked up pace with the publication of R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma*.

In the first part of R.K. Narayan's novel *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955) Sriram, the protagonist, 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 novel it may be Sriram's waiting for the Mahatma to get his sanction to marry his beloved, or the assassin's waiting for his target, the Mahatma.

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). 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" (Jha 143). When Gandhi asks him what exactly he wants to do. After much deliberation Sriram tells, "I like to be where Bharati is" (70). 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" (Singh36).

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 Gopad 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). Gandhi leaves Malgudi and Sriram now makes a deserted shrine on a slope of Mempi Hill his home.

Part three of the novel introduces a new character, Jagdish. He relies upon terrorism and paralyzing the British administration and uses Sriram as a tool for carrying out his nefarious activities. “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” (167). He becomes so experienced in these convulsive activities that a typical rashness can be observed clearly in him. He is lodged at the central Jail in Malgudi. “Sriram’s association with Jagdish’s terrorist activities is presented as a deviation from Gandhian path...” (Jha146).

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. Natesh is a pseudo-Gandhian who “has a knack of acquiring good certificates. ... Runs with the hare and hunts with the hounds” (27).

In the end of the novel when Gandhi asks whether they love each other, “Sriram burst out, I’ve waited for five years thinking of nothing else” (252). In spite of his busy schedule Gandhi calls them and tells that they can marry the next day. As the Mahatma approaches the

dais for the prayer, the man waiting for the Mahatma takes aim and fires at him. “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).

Raja Rao’s ‘Comrade Kirillov’ is a socio-political novel in its concern. In the novel the ideological conflict gets internalised in the consciousness of the central character Comrade Kirillov alias Padmanabha Iyer. He and the other main characters in the novel do not affirm completely the Gandhian philosophy, rather they question its feasibility and sustainability. Comrade Kirillov alias Kirillov Padmanabhan is initially initiated into theosophical society founded by Annie Besant. He is completely disillusioned and starts reading books on socialism. He is called Comrade Kirillov after his conversion to communism. 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). Mahatma Gandhi was a God believer but Kirillov did not like religion, “it is like a disease caused by vitamin deficiency. God is the fiction of the lazy” (40). This is not merely a shift in political ideology but an attempt to alter his vision of life itself. This disillusionment is not only from Annie Besant but indirectly from Gandhi also.

Gandhi believed in the ideology of non-violence. He was the apostle of non-violence and he never harboured 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 advocates *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” (Bose18). 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). For Kirillov 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 type of protests and campaigns. The British Empire cannot be demolished by the 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’. 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).

Set in the menacing background of the Chinese aggression in the early sixties Bhabani Bhattacharya’s novel *Shadow from Ladakh* 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” (Jha170).

In the novel 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 true 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, A128).

Though outwardly putting each foot-step along Gandhian lines Satyajit is not a true Gandhian in many respects. Foremost he is over conscious of maintaining his Gandhian image. It is not that Satyajit imposes celibacy upon himself and Suruchi only but it was a compulsion for all. 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. 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.

Symbolic of the reconciliation between the two divergent ways of life is the marriage of Sumita and Bhaskar. 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. “ 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).

Every bowl of yogurt with its elixir-like properties has nonetheless a shelf-life. Once it crosses that rear threshold of time, its tanginess turns acrid, its sweetness begets sourness, its wholesomeness gets overshadowed by a partisanship. The same happens to Gandhi in this second phase. The iconoclast gets effete even as the icon retains its aura, still larger than life but of little value except an aesthetic appeal to the phenomenon hungry eye, apparition manufacturing imagination. This is what creative writers do to Gandhi in this twilight phase.

However, while Gandhi has continued to invite attention from literary writers, the nature of their response to the man and his ideology has, in the process of evolution, gone beyond the critical curve. As a result the writers of the latest phase on the Gandhian persona are almost in unison in besmirching the man. This personal besmirching is done as if to discredit the ideology behind the man as being hollow. Such approach is a precise antithesis of the approach of the novelists of the initial phase who in their different ways share the common platform that declares Gandhian ideology to be efficacious in giving direction to the Indian freedom struggle and in finding credible solutions to the sustainability of the progressive trajectory of mankind’s growth.

The Great Indian Novel (1989), a political satire, covers the twentieth century Indian history and is modelled on the epic, the Mahabharata. It interfuses myth and history. “Tharoor finds a remarkable correspondence between ‘myth’ and ‘reality’, and uses the hybridized mode to accommodate history, myth, autobiography, fiction, non-fiction, in order to convert the novel into ‘a passage through India’ the first half of the novel draws heavily from Gandhi’s autobiography” (Venkateswarlu 71). More than half of the novel is concerned with Ganga Datta

/Gandhi as the main character who is also the Bhishma of the Mahabharata. The author makes a scathing attack on Gandhi and his ideology and presents him as rejected, dejected and a defeatist. “The country has been turned into a ‘muddle’ by her self-seeking and power-crazy politicians- the modern prototypes of the ancient Kauravas, who wrecked the glorious heritage of India represented by Bhishma in the Mahabharata and Gandhi in the recent past”(Ghosh 113).

Real personages from history and characters from Mahabharata have directly been correlated to the characters in the novel. “Tharoor has displayed a shrewd matching skill in making the characters of the Mahabharata walk, talk, act, procreate and die in the contemporary setting of India, before and after her independence”(Balaswami 231). Ganga Datta, the character in the novel, has been correlated with Gandhi, the real figure in the history of modern India. There are numerous references which confirm that Ganga Datta the character in the novel is, in fact, Gandhi the real figure of the modern history of India. In the novel the courtiers “heard the word ‘South Africa’, ‘defiance of British laws’, ‘arrest’, ‘jail’ and ‘expulsion’” (25). Gandhiji’s visit to Champaran to see the plight of indigo peasants has been depicted in the novel as the campaign for defying the indigo laws at Motihari. The Bibigarh massacre is a fictional representation of Jallianwala Bagh massacre. The fast on behalf of the “suburban jute-factory workers at Budge Budge, outside Calcutta” (93) is a parodic representation of the “Satyagraha on behalf of Ahmedabad workers” (Gandhi, R 211) in March 1918. Similarly, the ‘Mango March’ (‘Forbidden Fruit’) is the fictionalization of Salt March. Thus the author ridicules this event by applying the technique of parody.

Tharoor sketches the ideas of Gangaji/Gandhiji as radical and weird about the world around him. “He’s not an easy man to place, really” (38). He has been depicted as an intransigent who started the agitation without consulting anyone and who unilaterally called it off. The author

holds Gangaji/Gandhiji and his miscalculated decisions and eccentricities responsible for the partition.

Gandhi believed, “Truth is God” (Tendulkar359) but in the novel Gandhi “shall pursue the truth, in all its manifestations, including the political and, indeed, the sexual” (45). The author has not only presented Gangaji/Gandhiji as a bargainer but also tries to give a new shade to the meaning of Truth. He comments satirically, “If Gangaji believed in Truth, it was the truth he believed in.... to eliminate the dissenter” (175). Ganga/Gandhi has been depicted as a very weak fellow whose voice is unpersuasive and does not reach his audience and he is incomprehensible to the people. Ganga/Gandhi generally shocks people by his strange way of fighting and they remain unable to understand his philosophy.

The failure of Gandhi’s ideology of non-violence has been delineated through Jaiprakash-Drona who waged a violent war against the British successfully. The author portrays two different characters who really negate Ganga/Gandhi’s ideology. Karna poses “a threat to what Gangaji stood for politically” (208) and Amba is “almost ready to exact her revenge “(208). In the end, the party which Gangaji /Gandhiji built up goes against him and thus he becomes irrelevant even before his death. Tharoor sketches Gandhi as a wussy old man who looks dejected over the state of the land and a deep sense of despair overwhelms him.

Historical figure Gandhiji wanted the world to know of his tryst with *brahmacharya* or celibacy but Shashi Tharoor in his novel *The Great Indian Novel* repeatedly comments satirically on the futility of Ganga/ Gandhi’s celibacy. He portrays him as a person obsessed with celibacy, “who feared it to be constantly under threat” (28). When rejected Amba comes to Ganga with a marriage proposal he also refuses because of his vow celibacy. He exhorts her to lead a life of celibacy. “A life of celibacy is a life of great richness” (29). Amba not only rejects his concept of

celibacy but resolves even to destroy Ganga/ Gandhi. Amba metamorphosed into Shikhandin/ Nathuram Godse denounces Gandhi, “Your life has been a waste, unproductive, barren... You are nothing but ... a man who is less than a woman ... nothing else could after that stupid oath of which you are so pathetically proud” (232). Thus his vow of celibacy is shown as the main cause of his death. “Tharoor, a man of many cultures and brought up and educated abroad, has had obviously highly cerebral Western education that seems to have desensitized him to the human - cultural matrices of India. His sensibilities are in sharp contrast with those of Raja Rao, who in spite of living abroad has been deeply nourished in the Indian ethos” (Tripathi 118). To denigrate Gandhi and his ideology the author puts in the mouth of dying Ganga/ Gandhi not ‘Hey Ram’ but “I...have...failed...” (234).

The Great Indian Novel despite its grand sweep turns out to be a rather personal and politically biased discourse. Tharoor’s political predilections can be observed vividly in the narrative. In the author’s note he claims the Mahabharata as the “primary source of inspiration” for the novel. “But it emerges as neither great nor Indian in spirit, but a promiscuous and gauche caricature of the ancient as well as modern India in the absence of any substantial informing vision, and lacks correspondence between the theme and narrative. The Mahabharata, an infinitely *scriptable* text recognized for its polysemousness, is misconstrued in Tharoor’s novel into an unequivocal parody intended to entertain the consumerist international readers” (Tripathi 116).

Mukunda Rao’s novel ‘The Mahatma’ presents the historical picture and depicts Gandhi as a man of vicissitudes and unpredictability. Gandhi’s queer ways, his eccentricity always astounds even his close associates. Rao portrays Gandhi a completely disappointed, dejected and helpless man in various situations. When he is advised not to visit Kurukshetra he feels irritated

and finds “himself into the depth of despair” (16). He is desolated by the death of so many people due to hatred and violence. He finds himself anguished, forlorn and miserable in those murky conditions. He observes about himself-“It’s all over. ... They don’t need you. You are finished” (21). The narrator has exposed the bleak reality of his relations at later stage with his own associates when they want to get rid of him. At the time of the third death anniversary of Kasturba he is a feeble old man, tired and full of sorrow. He has meetings with the workers, members of the Islamia Party and Government officials but the atmosphere is gloomy and he is in agony. Rao shows the old man sitting all alone, having commanded his followers to leave him in peace and thinks, “I am finished. ...” (167).

When Prof. Mitra suggests that more than religious fanaticism it is class hatred which has contributed to the large-scale killings in Kurukshetra but Gandhi rebuffs and does not bother about the classes. Mitra fails to get him interested in the class analysis of society for better understanding of communalism. Thus the author has depicted the Mahatma as a person who cannot be impressed upon. Gandhi turns down the request of Vaidi and Gopika to accompany him: “‘I don’t want any of you’, the Mahatma shouted. ‘Because it is my wish’” (67). Rao exposes Gandhi’s high-handedness who is not ready to listen even to his associates.

The pumice-stone episode has exposed the domineering nature of the Mahatma. Maya/Manu is ordered to fetch the pumice-stone from Fatehpur, historically Bhatialpur, when they have to stay at Samsarpur /Narayanpur. She has to cross a maze of dark tunnels in the forest alone to bring it back.

Like Gandhi’s other experiments, his principle of ahimsa also is unintelligible to the people. When Gandhi is apprised that some of the women have been taken away forcibly, he instigates the youths to protect them by all means. “... to protect yourselves and your mothers

with arms, by all means do it” (51). When some families return to their houses upon the advice of the Mahatma, they get either killed or driven out. All it happens because the Mahatma does not want any army to control the carnage and he reckons the army and the police force as the collective violence of the state. Rao comments satirically on the efficacy of Gandhi’s principle of ahimsa, “And you know, even the party leaders at the centre no more believe that ahimsa can lead us out of the present impasse”(46).

In the novel, there are several occasions when Gandhi harbours incertitude about the efficacy of his actions. When he sees the horrible sight of massacre he looks dejected and finds himself ineffective. “What should I do ? God. How should I stem the raging violence?”(20). The Mahatma’s dream of Hindu- Muslim unity is shattered and he feels helpless in this situation. Mohammed Azam, historically Jinnah, breaths fire, “O Kafir! Your doom is not far and the general massacre will come! Jihad! ” (12). The Chief Minister of Bengala not only declares the protest day a holiday but he arranges the transport and distributes weapons. Even he does not allow the Mahatma to visit Kurukshetra to meet the riot affected people. “He was afraid; afraid not of violence, not of death but of the corruption of death; and his own failure” (14). He finds himself in a very gloomy condition when he reaches Dattakhali in Kurukshetra where he does not know whether he will succeed. He wants to talk of tolerance, Hindu- Muslim unity, fraternity but he does not want to face the stark reality of the partition. Hindu Sangh considers the Mahatma “a good man but a danger to Hindutva”(40). Thus the author creates a very ironical situation that Islamia Party accuses Gandhi as ‘Hindu’ and Hindu Sangha considers him a danger to Hindutva.

In the second half of the novel the aspersion of Gandhi acquires a high pitch. His personal view of Gandhi and his vow of *brahmacharya* conceptualized in the novel as *yajna* and

its calumny effects have been drawn in graphic details. Prof. Mitra finds the Mahatma radically opposite to the life of a *brahmachari*. "...he has broken apparently every rule prescribed in the scriptures....And for all his openness, isn't he also obsessed with sex?"(143). In the novel most of the associates of the Mahatama are skeptical about this *yajna*. They find Gandhi's vindication completely implausible.

The author seems to reveal the mental picture of Gandhi just to portray him not as an iconic but as an ineffectual personality. He shows him as a person who is "running out of time"(1), "a puny figure clad in white"(3), whose mind is "gripped by a growing fear"(5). No one is ready to listen to him so he has to shout, "Those who want to challenge me come forward"(7)and thus challenges the people. Prof. Mitra "had felt that what the Mahatma stood for in certain matters were in direct contradiction to what he had come to believe in" (----) and he finds the Mahatma "a difficult man" (72). The Mahatma finds himself "a back number now" (21) who is abandoned by his own associates and he is not 'their surrogate father anymore" (21). He thinks about his colleagues, "They don't need you. You are finished" (21). Thus Rao decimates the image of Mahatma completely. The novel comes to an end on a note of confusion. The narrator has condemned Gandhi to death eleven months before the event took place in actuality.

Sudhir Kakar's *Mira and the Mahatma* is a story of Madeline Slade (Aka Mirabehn) and Gandhi which covers nine years- from 1925to 1930and from 1940 to 1942 "when their lives were entwined more intimately than in any other period of their long association. ... Gandhi's letters to Mira, her letters to Prithvi Singh and his to her" (Author's Note) are the basis of the narrative.

Kakar satirically comments on Gandhi's ashrams and the ashramites. He tries to unmask the inner reality of the ashrams where very few inmates can be considered strong people

marching together for the awakening of a person's spiritual potential. The author being a psychoanalyst analyses the inmates psychologically and finds that most of the ashramites imitate without understanding the principle or idea behind the imitated action. Harenbhai, an inmate in the ashram, eats exactly fifty-five *chapattis* at meals no more or less. Similarly, Bhansali, another close associate of Gandhi, decides to take a twelve years vow of silence. Such characters are just types who follow the Mahatma without any rationality. The author has depicted such characters to ridicule Gandhi and his philosophy. In the novel Gandhi's ashram is less a monastic community more a quibbling village where they are attracted to the Mahatma for very different reasons. "The ashram was not free of the inevitable discord, petty jealousy and envy" (42). Most of the families live there not by choice but because their husbands or fathers live with Gandhi and follow him.

In one such ashram, Madeline is admitted and after a week she takes a vow of celibacy. Madeline is renamed by Gandhi after sixteenth century Indian woman-saint, Mira. "And now I have a present for you –a new name, Mira" (45). Living in a one room hut close to Gandhi's cottage, she becomes an ally and a disciple in the ashram. She was a great devotee of Beethoven and a great admirer of Romain Rolland who was an authority on Beethoven. She comes to be acquainted with Gandhi through his biography written by Romain Rolland which "made Gandhiji the darling of the literati, drawing-room intellectuals and the saloon women all over Europe" (Kumar 159).

The author reveals the life of ashrams where some like Mira want to devote their life to the Mahatma's cause but once they come close, Gandhi and not his cause becomes their obsession. For both, Mira and Mahatma, the early years have been splendid but gradually, there is a loosening of bonds that brings them together. Mira starts making too many demands upon

him. She behaves like a determined woman who wants to possess and own him. She wants to have exclusive rights over him. Kakar depicts her as an insecure being at the bottom of her heart and very soon Gandhi realizes that she has become a heavy responsibility. Ultimately her obsession becomes her undoing. Other inmates at the ashram become indifferent and cautious with her and consider her to be an intruder.

Mira's strong desire to be close to Gandhi now transforms into a strong need and when discomfited she suffers acutely from pangs of separation. She finds herself unable to live away from him. He also likes to have her within his consciousness but from a respectable distance. Her obsession frightens him and he advises her to come to terms with her own Psyche. Kakar reveals the complex relationship between Mira and the Mahatma. "The presumption that their relationship was not quite one-sided and that Mira too evoked complex, 'counter-transference' reactions in Gandhiji is amply supported by his letters to her"(Kakar125).

The author exposes another reality of the ashram that there are some rules to be followed by the ashramites but for some privileged persons like Nehru there are no Gandhian rules to be observed. Once Mira observes Nehru's staring at the pretty woman like Amtussalam and she mentions it to Gandhi. Gandhi laughs and remarks, "well, Jawaharlal likes two things: politics and women" (122).

The author, being a psychoanalyst, reveals the factors which determine Mira's emotional disposition. From the very early age Madeline/Mira used to play Beethoven's music. Romain Rolland wrote *Jean Christophe* an epic novel based on Beethoven's life and she learnt French to read the ten volumes of the book. She met the author, Rolland, who sent her to Gandhi. She arranged three concerts of Fredric Lamond, the interpreter of Beethoven's music and even "she had fallen in love with the fifty-six-year old pianist" (74). Kakar comments, "many years

later, she would rediscover the same purity and strength in Gandhiji, in moments when Bapu was most himself” (67). Ultimately she chooses Baden “because of its connection to Beethoven” (263). She came in 1925 and lived for thirty three years in India. “At last, more of Beethoven was on her mind than Gandhiji” (Kumar 187).

Naveen, another character in the novel, is actually Kakar’s alter ego. He is a Hindi scholar, Mira’s general guide, tutor and the narrator of the story. He joins the ashram not by choice but by chance when he comes under the influence of Gandhian ideology during Gandhi’s visit to his college, Gujarat College, where he used to be a student of Hindi literature. Gandhi delivers a lecture on cleanliness and untouchability but no one is ready to listen to it. The level of noise is very high but Gandhiji keeps himself busy in revealing the meaning of *swaraj*. “Perhaps I was the only one who agreed with all he had said” (86).

The narrator throws light on the complex relationship of Gandhi and Mira, thereby unveiling the man behind the Mahatma. He depicts the most crucial stage in Gandhi’s life, his growing attraction towards Mira and has unwrapped her all consuming desire to serve Gandhi and desperate longing to be close to him at all times. Thus the author by devising the technique of psychoanalysis tries to caluminate Gandhi’s image.

The author casts aspersions on Gandhi’s failure on other fronts like Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, celibacy which becomes the main reasons of severe depression and other complications. “For Gandhi, the period between 1936 and 1938 was full of marked swings of mood, ... This was partly occasioned by his failure to achieve the goals of removing untouchability and reducing Hindu-Muslim conflict”(124).

However, the entry of Prithvi Singh into Mira’s life and heart is late but the relationship between Mira and the Mahatma can be understood through her involvement with him. He has

been a legendary revolutionary but “he sought the protection for Gandhiji, who was totally impressed by his reforming zeal. ... gradually replaced Gandhi in her affections” (Kumar181). At the end of the novel he remains “unconvinced about Bapu’s philosophy of non-violent resistance. Bapu, you must admit that you have failed” (228). He comments on the ashram of Gandhi, “Forgive me, Bapu but in your ashram is there a place for anything other than sex?”(231-232). He disagrees to the Bapu’s mantra of life, “I saw like the way Mirabai was absorbed in God, I saw this English lady absorbed in Bapu. Yes I never saw the lines of satisfaction on her face” (240). For this unrequited love and for the miserable life of Mira, the narrator holds Gandhi and his ideology of celibacy responsible.

What goes sour still has its own uses though limited, partisan is still a piece of the wholesome pie and retains its essential/potential properties. But then there is no falling object that abruptly sheds its hurtling down motion and hangs mid-air. It can’t stop before it has hit the ground. The same happens to Gandhi once he comes in possession of the writers of the third phase. From their tall pulpits, they as if in unison not only decide to drop him to the ground but in doing so apply the force of their sleight-of -hand to make him lock-stock-barrel crash land. What craters it makes in doing so on the psyche of readers they are least concerned or may be even elated within.

Thus the discerning critic along a journey that starts in the affirmation of an ideology that proved a corner-stone in changing the destiny of a quarter of humanity in the middle of the twentieth century, passes through a phase of transition in the latter half of the century questioning the viability & sustainability of the aforesaid ideology and passes into a phase in the dying years of an old century and rising ones of a new that not only questions the credentials of the ideology but also debunks and rejects it as sham and puerile. The strategy of debunking

Gandhi is blatantly conjured up to add to the number of readers of this fiction, helping writers, who have “a morbid fascination” for Gandhi's idiosyncratic openness, to “sell their books” (Tushar Gandhi). If in the process of fabricating such titillating facts, these writers have to be economic with Truth, they do so without qualms. While globally an understanding of Gandhian principles seems to be gaining in popularity (e.g. in sustainable development studies, environmental sciences, peace conferences, international relations, etc), such fiction soaring on the wing of phantasmagoria is striving to discover its own dark hole on the azure horizon. Thinkers like Gopalkrishna Gandhi are not off the mark in observing, “Despite this, Gandhiphile thinking and writing continues to grow and continues to dwarf the Gandhiphobic” (Gandhi Gopal).