

Paper-XXII Contemporary Indian Writing in English-II

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UNIT-1 GIRISH KARNAD- *TUGHLAQ*

1.1.Contemporary Indian Theatre:

1.1.1. Introduction

The two decades after independence represent a time of the proliferation of theatrical forms in various regions of India. This period is also distinguished by the coming-of-age of Indian theatre. The generation of playwrights who emerged and came in to prominence in the two decades following the Indian independence revolutionized theatrical practices in India. The work of these playwrights is characterized by some commonly shared features. Most of them had a firm faith in the idea that earlier forms of theatre made possible by colonial modernity and conditioned by a pre-dominantly urban culture have become obsolete. Their departures from the earlier forms of theatre like the Parsi stage or the Indian Peoples' Theatre Association (IPTA), which flourished in the early decades of the century, became increasingly apparent. These departures manifested themselves as radical shifts in terms of themes, forms, structures, and presentation. Apart from these, new conceptions of theatre and theatrical techniques emerged as novel directions in Indian theatre. These playwrights forged radically new ways of creative self-expression distinguished by experimentation and revival of tradition. The self-consciousness of these playwrights as shapers of a "post-colonial" Indian theatre provided a different dimension to the cultural phenomenon. Almost all of the playwrights who started writing their plays in this period experienced a sense of disconnection with the previous forms of theatre. Girish Karnad, Dharamvir Bharati, Mohan Rakesh, Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar, Utpal Dutt, Habib Tanvir, G.P.Deshpande, and others are the most representative of this generation of playwrights. They strongly believed in the pursuit of play-writing as a serious literary practice with an independent existence of its own. For them, theatrical performance was not a precondition to write a play. The play-text was

treated as an autonomous entity with a life of its own. They were beneficiaries of both the print form and the performance of their plays. Their plays-as-texts were widely read, analysed, and commented on both nationally and internationally. They belong to the first generation of playwrights to have established play writing as a literary endeavour. Interestingly, most of these playwrights opted to write their plays in their own languages rather than in English, even as they were actively involved in the translation of their own plays in to English. This period is distinguished by the emergence of a number of bilingual playwrights who had literary competence in more than one language and both wrote and translated their works in either of them. Complementary to the role of the playwrights as translators was their role as critics, theorists and commentators. Their visibility in the literary world might be attributed to their active involvement in the formulation as well as articulation of experimental ideas and techniques in theatre. They had concrete and individually distinct notions of language, dramatic techniques, art of representation and performance, which transformed theatre in to a systematized art and a national cultural institution.

1.1.2. Contemporary Indian Dramatists

The plays of this generation of playwrights are characterized by experimentation, innovation, and a sense of cultural regeneration. A host of playwrights like Mohan Rakesh, Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, and Mahesh Dattani, among others, are representative of the paradigm shift. Mohan Rakesh (1925-1972) wrote his first play *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* (*One Day in Ashadh*) in 1958 which is now translated into English. During this period no dramatist could attain the heights that Rakesh scaled so easily. In 1959 he bagged the first prize of the Sangeet Natak Academy with his very first play. In his lifetime Rakesh published three full length plays, *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* (1958), *Lehron Ke Rajhans* (1963) and *Aadhe-Adhure* (1969) which are translated into English. He also wrote some one-act plays,

Dhwaninatya (audio play), *Beejanatya* (seed play) and radio plays, *Ande ke Chhilke*, and *Raat Beetne Tak. Pair Tale Ki Zameen*, was left unfinished, and was later completed by his close associate Kamleshwar. Rakesh's first play *Ashadh Ka Ek Din (One Day in Ashadh)*, 1958, a historical play, based on the life of the renowned Sanskrit poet Kalidasa is about his first love, Mallika-a moving portrayal of the destiny of a simple rustic girl who loves the poet intensely and dreams of his greatness. Her dream is realized but she has to sacrifice all that is valuable in her life. For her, Kalidasa is her total existence, but for Kalidasa she is only his inspiration. This juxtaposition between self love and total surrender of being in man-woman relationships is explored in the play. The play is also concerned with conflicts between art and love, creativity and environment, feeling and action, and artist and the state. *Lehron Ke Rajhans (The Great Swans of the Waves)*, 1963, also reflects the anxieties of the modern world but on an altogether different level. The problem here is the relations between man and woman, the clash of their egos, divided personalities and the inability to communicate with each other. What stands out in this play is the loneliness of the individual, internal conflict, the pain of not being able to communicate. The inability to mould oneself according to the desires of the other even when one would like to do so, the insistence on treating one's own ego and desires as all important instead of surrendering and compromising are modern, twentieth century modes. *Aadhe-Adhure (Halfway House)*, published in 1969, also deals with the clash between the egos of man and woman, the tension, suffocation, and the disintegration of such a relationship, but on an entirely different scale. In this play, it is not only the bond between husband and wife, which seems to be breaking, but the whole family, is heading towards total disintegration. For the first time in this play Rakesh has placed man in a modern setting to deal with modern problems. The theme, here too, is of a breakdown in relation but in a different manner and on an entirely different level. Such a dispassionate, ruthless portrayal of our lives and our problems in a modern context is indeed rare. *Aadhe-*

Adhure is Rakesh's best literary work. It is also regarded as one of the best dramatic literary works in Hindi theatre and an important landmark in Indian theatre. *Pair Tale Ki Zameen* (*Soil beneath the Sole*), too, was written keeping in mind the disruption, listlessness and suffocation of modern life. This play basically leans towards existentialism. The setting is not domestic but a tourist club in Kashmir. The characters are not related. Fate has brought them together for one day. Suddenly, a fearful flood begins to chip away the bridge that links the club to the city and the characters are cut off from the rest of the world. The changed psychological condition of these characters, overshadowed as they are by the possibility of sudden death, has been finely drawn and analyzed by Rakesh. A few hours later arrives the news of the receding waters, the telephone begins to ring and their safety assured, everyone returns to normalcy. However, the contribution of Mohan Rakesh to the growth and development of Indian Drama is undeniable for it is the creative effort of all regional writers producing plays in their respective languages that has enriched Indian Drama. Vijay Tendulkar (1928-2008), a leading playwright, is fundamentally a social commentator. During his several observations of the post-independence Indian social setup as a journalist Tendulkar felt deeply concerned about the predicament of certain sections of society especially the marginal position granted to women. Though never claiming to be a champion of women's liberation, yet he found that male suppression and exploitation of women was a persistent problem in Indian society. In Indian society, Tendulkar observes, woman suffers largely as the victim of the institutional body of powers. Often there is a collision between the two i.e., women and society sparking off violence. In majority of his plays, Tendulkar appears preoccupied with the view that woman as a victim is subjected to violence and is traditionally deprived of her rights. Tendulkar's *Kamala* (1981), a play in two acts, projects the deplorable state of women who are treated as mere objects to be bartered, bought and sold. Jaisingh Jadhav, a well-known young journalist working as an associate editor in an

English language daily, deciding to expose this racket, buys a woman named Kamala for a paltry sum of Rs. 250 in the Luhardagga Bazaar in Bihar. He is troubled by this bargain for he believes that even a bullock costs more than that. Jaisingh wants to take Kamala to the press conference to prove his point. In *Kanyadan* (1983) Tendulkar presents the deep rooted malaise which he perceived in everyday life. The play won him the Saraswati Samman award. In this play, Jyoti, the 20 year old daughter of Devalikar, an MLC decides to marry Arun Athavali, a boy from the lower stratum of society. While the father has no objection, her mother and brother are against the alliance. Jyoti has her way marrying Arun in spite of all opposition. The truth of the situation emerges soon when Arun proves to be a violent husband. Jyoti's marital and social experiences teach her that it is almost impossible to change either people or society. The greater dismay for her is that she fails to bridge the gap between her section of society and that of Arun's. The attitude of Arun in the play exhibits the misuse of power and violence. He thought that as a husband he had complete control over his wife—body and mind. In no case was he prepared to compromise with the independence of Jyoti. In this way Tendulkar was able to maintain a semblance of reality right through his creative productions because, as he admitted, behind the creation of each character or incident was a real life character or situation. Vijay Tendulkar composed his first direct play in English entitled *His Fifth Woman* which has been regarded as a sequel to his earlier play *Sakharam Binder* and deals with the problems of women. The play was performed in the Tendulkar Festival held in New York in 2004. The play portrays two friends in conversation with each other sitting near the mistress of one of them lying on her death bed, a destitute picked up from the streets. One of the friends, in the pretext of providing food and shelter to such women, exploits them physically, being careful at the same time not to get emotionally involved. Dawood, the other friend has a sympathetic attitude towards these destitute women and perceives them as persons having desires and capabilities. When the mistress dies, he

requests the bereaved friend to arrange for a decent cremation, thereby succeeding in this enterprise. In an apparently simple play, the message conveyed focuses on the fact that those claiming to uphold the law strictly are in reality tyrannical hypocrites. Real justice results out of compassion and love and not from hypocrisy, autocracy and selfishness. Tendulkar's *His Fifth Woman*, though written many years after the play *Sakharam Binder*, may be considered as a prelude to the later. The man giving shelter to the destitute woman is called Sakharam Binder, a man in his forties and these helpless women are projected as the live-in mistresses of Sakharam who is a bachelor. The dramatist raises some relevant questions on the issue of morality and necessity of compassion through the play. Thus, many sensitive and thought-provoking issues are examined and analysed from a predominantly social point-of-view. Mahesh Dattani is India's first playwright in English to be awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award for his contribution to world drama. Familial relationships attracted him the most. His *Where There is a Will* (1988) discusses the negative love of a father for his son. The enigma of generation gap constitutes the crux of *Dance like a Man* (1989) where Jairaj takes to dancing and marrying a dancer against his father's inclination. The familial conflict continues till the death of the father enabling Jairaj to relegate each item from the ancestral house that reminds him of his father. In addition, a hint is given about the prejudicial attitude of society against a male dancer, discussing, at the same time, the plight of temple dancers. Family relationships tend to be prominently displayed again in *Do the Needful* (1997) where a suitable bride is being sought for Alpesh, a thirty plus homosexual divorcee while twenty-four year old Lata deeply in love with a Muslim terrorist elopes with him. Mahesh Dattani's play *Tara* (1990) portrays characters that suffer from repressed desires, bondage to unreasonable traditions and very often are victims of cultural construct of gender. In *Tara* Mahesh Dattani delves deep into the mind of such characters laying stress on their fractured psyche especially when they are living in an equally fragmented social set up. The play

revolves around the physical and later the emotional separation of two conjoined twins, Tara and Chandan. The surgical operation is manipulated by Bharati, the mother and the maternal grandfather as to favour the son, Chandan. The twins had three legs between them with the major supply in the girl's side. However, as tradition required, it was essential for the boy to survive with two legs. Surgically the twins are separated in such a manner that Chandan has two legs while Tara remains with one leg though fate had its own plans and Chandan's leg was not accepted by his body resulting in amputation. Perhaps it would have suited Tara's body better. Consequently, both Tara and Chandan have one artificial leg each. Later several physical complications arise leading to the early demise of Tara. Tara is not merely an individual character but emerges as an archetype, an icon of the Indian girl child who is subdued in the mill of tradition. Dattani's plays have been acclaimed widely for their social realism more so because he brings out the plight of the subaltern woman who is no better than a second grade citizen in her own country. Another play focusing on woman's subordinate status in the society is *Bravely fought the Queen*, first produced in 1991 in Mumbai. This play focuses on an Indian family comprising of two brothers, Jiten and Nitin who are married to two sisters, Dolly and Alka. And Baa, the aging mother of the two brothers. Jiten and Nitin are joint owners of an advertising agency. The father of Jiten and Nitin was a cruel man often harassing their mother. Incidents of cruelty on her are referred to time and again in the play. Baa sees the same kind of cruelty in her older son Jiten hence she likes Nitin more. Dattani, through the various characters in the play brings to the forefront certain issues like domestic violence, deceit, desire, and fantasy. Through his plays, Mahesh Dattani succeeds in persuading the audience/readers to examine their individual and collective consciousness, thereby raising several questions about woman's condition in Indian society. Badal Sircar, a great Bengali playwright, is among the three great contemporary writers—Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar and Mohan Rakesh. Badal Sircar

dives deep into the problems of middle-class society. He uses contemporary situations to project the existential attitude to modern life. Popularly known as a 'barefoot playwright', Badal Sircar stands in the forefront of new theatrical movement in India. He has created a genuine people's theatre known as Third Theatre, a theatre supported by people. His later plays, *Procession* (1972), *Bhoma* (1974) and *State News* (1979) are based on the concept of the Third Theatre. Badal Sircar's three plays present philosophy and vision of making people aware of their social responsibility. He makes the theatre a medium of conveying individual responsibility of the people towards the society. Sircar's *Procession* is about the search for a real home—a new society based on equality. It is about a new society where man does not have to live by exploiting man and in which each works according to his ability and gets according to his needs. These plays show Sircar's deeper understanding of the problems of the nuclear age and of poverty, corruption, greed and the industrial and agricultural exploitation of the poor inform his theatrical endeavours.

1.2.Girish Karnad

1.2.1. Early Life and Career

Girish Karnad, a well-known playwright, author, actor, and film director, was born on May 19, 1938 in Matheran, Bombay Presidency whose films and plays, written largely in Kannada, explore the present by way of the past. His initial schooling was in Marathi. In Sirsi, Karnataka, he was exposed to travelling theatre groups or *Natak Mandalis* as his parents were deeply interested in their plays. As a youngster, Karnad was an ardent admirer of Yakshagana and the theater in his village. He earned his Bachelors of Arts degree in Mathematics and Statistics, from Karnatak Arts College, Dharwad (Karnataka University), in 1958. Upon graduation Karnad promptly went to England and studied Philosophy, Politics

and Economics at Lincoln and Magdalen colleges in Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar (1960–63), earning his Master of Arts degree in philosophy, political science and economics.

After working with the Oxford University Press, Chennai for seven years (1963–70), he resigned to take to writing full-time. While in Chennai he got involved with local amateur theatre group, The Madras Players. During 1987–88, he was at the University of Chicago as Visiting Professor and Fulbright Playwright-in-Residence. During his tenure at Chicago *Nagamandala* had its world premiere at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis based on Karnad's English translation of the Kannada original. Most recently, he served as director of the Nehru Centre and as Minister of Culture, in the Indian High Commission, London (2000–2003). He served as director of the Film and Television Institute of India (1974–1975) and chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, the National Academy of the Performing Arts (1988–93).

Most of his plays, written in Kannada, have been translated into English and some Indian languages. Karnad's plays are written neither in English, in which he vainly dreamt of earning international literary fame as a playwright, nor in his mother tongue Konkani. Instead they are composed in his adopted language Kannada. Initially, his command on Kannada was so poor that he often failed to distinguish between short and long vowels (laghu and deergha). When Karnad started writing plays, Kannada literature was highly influenced by the renaissance in Western literature. Writers would choose a subject which looked entirely alien to their milieu. There was a strong need to indigenize theatre and thus relate it to an Indian reality.

It was in such circumstances that Karnad took to writing plays. C. Rajagopalachari's version of the Mahabharat published in 1951 left a deep impact on him and soon, sometime in the mid-1950s, one day he experienced a rush of dialogues spoken by characters from the Mahabharata in his adopted language Kannada. "I could actually hear the dialogues being

spoken into my ears... I was just the scribe," said Karnad in a later interview. Eventually *Yayati* was published in 1961, when he was 23 years old. Centred on the story of a mythological king, the play established Karnad's use of the themes of history and mythology that would inform his work over the following decades. These sources were often used to portray contemporary themes, and existentialist crisis of modern man. Most of his characters are locked in psychological and philosophical conflicts. Karnad's next play, *Tughlaq* (1964), tells the story of the 14th-century sultan Muḥammad bin Tughluq and remains among the best known of his works.

Samskara (1970) marked Karnad's entry into filmmaking. He wrote the screenplay and played the lead role in the film, an adaptation of an anticaste novel of the same name by U.R. Ananthamurthy. Karnad followed with *Vamsha Vriksha* (1971), codirected by B.V. Karanth. During this period Karnad continued to produce work as a playwright, including *Hayavadana* (1971), widely recognized as among the most important plays of post-independence India. For his contributions to theatre, he was awarded the Padma Shri, one of India's top civilian honours, in 1974.

Karnad's other well-known films in Kannada include *Tabbaliyu Neenade Magane* (1977) and *Ondanondu Kaaladalli* (1978). He also worked in Hindi, directing the critically acclaimed *Utsav* (1984), an adaptation of Shūdraka's 4th-century Sanskrit play *Mrichchakatika*. With the play *Nagamandala* (1988), Karnad framed an unhappy contemporary marriage in imagery drawn from Kannada folk tales. In 1992 the Indian government awarded Karnad another of its highest honours, the Padma Bhushan, in recognition of his contributions to the arts. He was the recipient of the Jnanpith Award, India's highest literary prize, in 1999 for his contributions to literature and theatre. He continued to work in film, directing such movies as *Kanooru Heggadithi* (1999) and acting in *Iqbal* (2005) and *Life Goes On* (2009), among others.

1.2.2. Major Works

Girish Karnad's success in the field of contemporary theatre bears testimony to the fact that Indian theatre has revitalized itself through the use of experimental models. His plays are an assertion of the fact that Indian theatre can achieve significant success only by a "return to the roots". His plays are an interesting blend of the classical and the popular elements of Indian theatre. He borrows theatrical techniques both from the Sanskrit and the folk theatres of India. His plays are often considered to be an important part of Indian English literature, the consensus being that he himself has translated these plays in to English. Karnad, whose mother tongue was Konkani, wrote almost all his plays in Kannada, which was a second language to him. The English translations of his plays are considered by many to be far better in terms of literary merit than the Kannada originals. Another interesting aspect of Karnad's plays is that they do not directly base themselves on the original versions of a folk tale or a legend. They quite often develop out of a distinct and identifiable English translation of the original. In his preface to his *Naga-Mandala*, for instance, Karnad argues that the play "is based on two oral tales from Karnataka, which I first heard from Professor A.K.Ramanujan".

Yayati (1961) is a play about the Chandravamshi king in the Mahabharata who exchanged his decrepitude with the youth of his youngest son, to ward off the curse of premature old age. The play is a reflection of his eclecticism in borrowing elements from playwrights like Jean Anouilh, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Eugene O' Neill. This play established Karnad as a successful playwright, and makes use of the mythic narrative that is so crucial to his plays. The play attracted the attention of many readers when it first appeared in Kannada. *Hayavadana*

(1971) marked another significant achievement in his career as a playwright. The play is remarkable not just to Karnad's theatrical endeavours, but also to the new directions that post-independence Indian theatre was taking in around that time. It explores the question of the efficacy of revitalizing indigenous performance genres for a supposedly "modern" expression. It also marked the beginning of the genre of the "urban" folk play, that makes use of the dramatic and performative conventions of *Yakshagana* like stock characters, music, dance, masks, and talking dolls. The play centres around a story taken from the *Kathasaritasagara*, which is based on the transposition of heads. The play raises a set of important questions about identity and desire. Karnad's *Nagamandala*(1988) is often said to echo many of these themes. The play begins with a prologue where a failed playwright is cursed with death, because he has sent so many people to sleep in the theatre, the playwright himself is helped to stay awake by "Story" personified, who recounts to him the exciting narrative of a cobra and a married woman. The newly-wed Rani is neglected by her husband Appanna, who locks her up in the house. A king cobra falls in love with her and visits her in the disguise of her husband every night. On knowing this, her husband orders her to prove her innocence by putting her hand in to the ant-hill. She emerges unscathed in the process and is raised to the status of a village goddess. The play moves at a brisk pace and the dialogues are delivered in a smooth flow which preserves the spontaneity inherent in the narration of a folk-tale.

One of the dramatic techniques central to Karnad is the re-contextualization of history in the framework of the present. The past gets a contemporary relevance in most of his plays. This is clearly evident in plays like *Tale-Danda* and *Tughlaq*(1964). *Tale-Danda* deals with the final crisis in the life of one Basavanna, a social reformer in 12th century Karnataka. The play highlights the resentment of the upper-caste to the reformist ideas of Basavanna, which reaches a climactic moment when one of his Brahmin disciples gives his daughter in marriage to

an untouchable. The “Mandal” and the “Mandir” movements and the unrest they generated in the country become the chief sources for the play and the reason for its contemporary relevance.

For his *The Fire and the Rain*, Karnad borrows a story from *The Mahabharata* and gives it a contemporary meaning. This story highlights the dangers of knowledge without wisdom, power without integrity. Karnad expanded the original story and invested it with rich meaning and universal significance. The play reverberates with symbolism and suggestions. The “fire” in the title of the play is thus the fire of lust, anger, vengeance, envy, treachery, violence, and death. The “rain” symbolizes self-sacrifice, compassion, divine grace, forgiveness, revival, and life.

1.3.Tughlaq

1.3.1. The Context

Girish Karnad’s *Tughlaq* is a representation of one of the most important but nevertheless neglected periods of Indian history. the reign of the fourteenth century Mughal emperor Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq remains till date one of the most turbulent periods of history. This is the first and most significant play in the post-independence period to have engaged with the Sultanate period in Indian history. this period brought an end to the ‘golden age’ of classical Hinduism and introduced Islam as a dominant force. This is one of the most important phases of Islamic imperialism in India, but it remains neglected in the national imaginary because of the attention given to the later Mughal and British imperialism.

In the narrative of the life and achievements of the eccentric Sultan, Karnad saw the possibilities of creating a drama about contemporary political turmoil. While Karnad

eclectically borrows from a variety of sources like Zia-ud-din-Barani's contemporaneous account of Tughlaq in *Taqikh-I Feroz Shahi* (1357), he also freely blends fact and fiction to give the story a contemporary relevance. The play, then, represents the hopes and disappointments in the political life of the Nehruvian era in Indian politics. It voices the disillusionment of the people of Karnad's generation with Nehru's idealism. The play is a comment of the political scenario of the two decades after independence, under Nehru's leadership. Nehru's vulnerability to failure, in spite of over-arching ambition and an uncompromising intellect is paralleled with that of Tughlaq.

Karnad's *Tughlaq* is a significant intervention in history, as also a site for the development of a creative analogy between the past and the present. The contemporaneity ascribed to a historical situation makes the play unique.

1.3.2. Major Characters in the Play

Tughlaq- In the play, Tughlaq emerges as a headstrong and idealistic ruler. He is vulnerable, and constantly admits his mistakes and allows himself to be punished publicly. He moves his capital to Daulatabad because it is a city dominated by the Hindus. This move will further the cause of togetherness and communal unity. Through this character, the idealism of the Nehruvian era is commented upon. Guilty of parricide, Tughlaq is often on the defensive when he is questioned of his crime. His uncompromising generosity and sense of social justice embraces all religions and treats them in an impartial fashion. This character is a device that represents a scathing critique of the nationalist notion of communal harmony and religious co-existence, the very ideals that were valorized before independence but later turned in to an anti-climax with the partition of India.

The opening scenes reflect the idiosyncrasies and eccentricities of this character. He contemplates to equate the value of copper coins with silver dinars. In order to establish himself as a worthy ruler, he exposes himself to public scorn and invites public condemnation. He hastens the process of his own nemesis through a series of badly contrived measures at projecting himself as a tolerant and efficient ruler. His irrational and erratic methods are severely criticized by his courtiers and citizens. He emerges as a shrewd contriver and a mercilessly ambitious ruler. He is responsible for the assassination of Sheikh Muhammad, his severest critic, who accuses him of parricide and of being un-Islamic. He stabs Shihab-ud-din when he tries to conspire against him. He is doomed because of his own follies and failures, and becomes an insensitive murderer. The height of his insanity is reflected in the later episodes of the play. He later becomes a divided self, and suffers from inner turmoil and contradictions. His ultimate isolation in a world turned alien gives a tragic dimension to the play. Tughlaq might be perceived as an over-ambitious alien emperor, who aims to rebuild new cities and empires, subjecting the culture of a people to colonial strain. Each scene represents the progressive degradation and dehumanization of Tughlaq, leading to his tragic downfall.

Step-mother- The step-mother of Tughlaq constantly appears in the earlier scenes of the play. She is torn apart by conflicting emotions—her over-riding concern for her son is in contradiction with her awareness of the fact that he is guilty of parricide. She appears troubled, and confides in Najib, the courtier and politician. She is consistently projected as an embodiment of rationality and concern. She later murders in order to save her son from ultimate ruin. Tughlaq orders her to be stoned to death for the unwarranted act.

Aziz- Muhammad is very manipulative, witty, imaginative, secretive and ruthless, Aziz provides his ironic parallel .Like him, from the very beginning Aziz is clear about what he is to do in future (when he reaches his destination). In pursuit of realizing his dream to be rich by hook or crook, he manipulates the decision of the government giving compensation to those whose land has been confiscated by the state. He is a Muslim but in order to get the compensation he disguises himself as a Brahmin. Thus he punctures the balloon of the king's welfare policies .If Muhammad is confident that everything will be settled after he reaches Daultabad , Aziz is also confident of his plans. He tells Aazam, "There is money here .We will make a pile by the time we reach Daultabad."(p.155).If Muhammd has disguised his true self and poses to be a very religious and benevolent king, Azis is disguised as a Brahmin(though he is a Muslim washer man). Ironically, he appears as a Brahmin and ends up as a special messenger to the king. He becomes an instrument in exposing the cruelty and corruption prevalent in Muhammad's regime when he refuses to help a woman with a dying son in her lap and asking for help for his medical aid. Aziz expects money from her knowing full well that her husband is bed-ridden and she is helpless. Asked by Aaziz why he doesn't let her go to the doctor, very stoically he says,"It is a waste of money. I am doing her a favour." (188)

For Muhammad and Aziz politics holds a common interest. Aziz's comments about politics are ironically true:

... Politics ! It is a beautiful world- wealth, success, position, power-yet it is full of brainless people, people not with an idea in their head. When I think of all the tricks in our village to pinch a few torn clothes from people if one uses half that intelligence here, one can bet robes of power. It is a fantastic world. (190)

Like Muhammad he also makes use of religion and caste for his personal gains. He knows that even if the Hindu woman is not allowed to leave the camp, she can't complain against him as she takes him for a Brahmin. Complaining against a Brahmin to a Muslim, according to a Brahminical dogma, will send her to hell which she never desires. Furthermore, he is cruel like Muhammad in taking life of someone. He kills Ghiyas-ud-din and starts dancing after that which shows that he has no regrets of any sort after killing someone. His singing and dancing over a dead body reminds us of the neurotic self of the emperor. After killing Ghiyas-ud-din and putting on his robes he asks the horrified Aazam, "How do I look, eh? The great grandson of the Khalif . . . Laugh, the fool you laugh. Celebrate! What are you crying for? . . . Dance, dance. . . (sings)." (201). When he is to present himself before the king, he aptly defines himself, "I am your majesty's true disciple" (216). Indeed, Aziz appears as his 'shadow' or the 'other Muhammad'. It is perhaps because of this parallelism between them that Muhammad pardons him even for his grave misdeeds.

Aazam- He is a close friend of Aziz and his partner in the play. Both of them are vagabonds, and live mostly by robbery and deception. Aziz is undeniably the more cunning of the two. Aazam's actions are staged on a smaller scale, and Aziz's actions have larger ramifications. They constantly comment upon and analyse the policies of the Sultan and provide a variety of perspectives on the political climate of the play.

Najib- He is a politician and a shrewd contriver, a Hindu, who later embraced Islam. In most of the scenes, he is seen advising the Sultan on matters of political action and diplomacy. He is an advocate of ruthless political expansion and domination, and presents a perfect contrast to Barani, the historian. In the words of the Sultan "he wants pawns of flesh and blood. He doesn't have the patience to breathe life in to these bones..." He represents the more rational aspects of Tughlaq's self and is a constant companion in terms of royal political affairs.

Barani- He is a historian and a close associate of the Sultan. He witnesses and records history unfolding before his eyes. He radically differs in his opinions from the more rational Najib, and is more interested in looking at events in a relational and humanitarian point of view. He is sympathetic and tries his best to save the Sultan from his own whims and fantasies. The Step-mother confides in Barani and advises him to guard the Sultan from his temperament.

Sheikh-Imam-ud-Din- He is a maulvi and probably the harshest critic of Tughlaq. He openly proclaims Tughlaq to be un-Islamic and invites his hostility. He gives public lectures and condemns Tughlaq as guilty of parricide. He tries to influence the general public through his inflammatory speeches deriding the actions of the Sultan. He is later murdered in a cleverly crafted plot of the Sultan.

1.3.3. Scene-wise Analysis of the Play

Scene-I

This scene opens in front of the Chief Court of Justice in Delhi, where a group of predominantly Muslim citizens share their views on the political climate of the region. The few Hindu citizens are also involved in this casual exchange of dialogues. They discuss in detail the policies of the Sultan and their several implications. Tughlaq's benevolence to Hindus is critiqued from various perspectives. Tughlaq announces the proposed shift of capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, since Daulatabad had a majority of Hindu population. He projects his magnanimity towards Hindus and appropriates this quality as a political strategy. This decision of his is constantly viewed with disfavour by many of his Muslim subjects. His whimsicality and idealism are openly condemned.

Aziz, the foil to the character of Tughlaq, is also introduced in this scene. He appears in the guise of a Brahmin and he wins a case against the Sultan himself. This is a parody of the

Sultan's declaration that he can also be acquitted in the court of justice. Aziz traps Sultan in his own noose. He wins the game that the Sultan had started in a fit of ambitiousness. Aziz and his close associate Aazam are then seen shifting their attention towards making money by deceiving people on their way to Daulatabad, the new capital.

Scene-II

The scene shifts from the public space of the court to Tughlaq's chamber in his palace, where he is seen playing chess. The game of chess is a powerful symbol in the play, which could be perceived as symptomatic of the Sultan's alienation from his surroundings. In most of the important scenes, he is found isolated from the rest of his kingdom and passionately involved in the game of chess. Tughlaq's step-mother reprimands him for his recklessness in matters of his own security. She rebukes him for not initiating action to counter Ain-ul-Mulk's anticipated attack on Tughlaq's kingdom.

Muhammad Najib the politician and Zia-ud-din Barani the historian, two important acquaintances of the Sultan, are introduced in this scene. They offer different perspectives on a single issue and therefore represent conflicting points-of-view on political matters. While Najib is rational, pragmatic, and a shrewd contriver, Barani is full of human sympathy and concern for the Sultan and his kingdom. Najib is a man of action, whereas Barani is a man of forethought and restraint in courtly matters. Najib is actively involved in plotting and contriving political strategies and plans for the Sultan.

Tughlaq's crime of parricide is mentioned in this scene, and his insecurity and eccentricities are referred to. He murders his own father and brother for the cause of the realization of his political ambition. The step-mother's anxieties over the whimsical nature of Tughlaq are addressed to Barani, in whom she confides. She advises Barani to keep Tughlaq away from some of his advisors, who might mislead him.

Scene-III

Sheikh Imam-ud-din meets Tughlaq in Delhi, and this meeting turns out to be a strategic point in the play. He is the harshest critic of the Sultan and his policies. He openly accuses Tughlaq of parricide and inflames the hatred of his opponents. He is considered to be the chief agent in stirring the fires of discontent in the kingdom. Both Sheikh and Tughlaq wait in front of a mosque for an anticipated audience. Tughlaq supposedly arranged this meeting so that Sheikh, his harshest critic, could meet his subjects and address them in a gathering. The Sheikh is disappointed as not a single listener turns up at the proposed hour of the meeting. He blames Tughlaq for having craftily managed to keep away his citizens from his address. What appears to be Tughlaq's openness and magnanimity is in fact a cunningly contrived political move. Sheikh accuses him of being un-Islamic and of challenging the central tenets of the religion. Both of them engage in a witty repartee justifying their own positions. Towards the end of the scene Tughlaq convinces Sheikh, whose physical attributes resemble those of his, to go counter Ain-ul-Mulk's attack in the guise of the Sultan. He purportedly requests him to act as a messenger of peace. The rationale for his weird decision, in Tughlaq's opinion, was that Ain-ul-Mulk will never proceed when he sees the Sheikh, a holy man, conveying a message of political compromise.

Scene-IV

The Step-mother shares her anxieties about Tughlaq with Shihab-ud-din, another courtier. The sudden and unexpected death of Sheikh Imam-ud-din is announced in this scene. Imam-ud-din's death is testimony to the success of the Sultan's plans. The Sultan cunningly plots Sheikh's death in the battlefield in a bid to counter Ain-ul-Mulk, and is easily and effortlessly absolved of his guilt. This murder by Tughlaq acquaints the readers with the darker side of his character. His soaring ambition compels him to curb all dissension, and this is a step in that direction. The actual reason for Sheikh's death in the battlefield and the Sultan's hand in

the murder are explained in some detail by Ratansingh, who narrates the events to Shihab-ud-din and says that it was a cleverly conceived murder.

Scene-V

The scene shifts to a house in Delhi, where Shihab-ud-din and Ratansingh, the Amirs and the Sayyids are involved in a discussion that aims to curb the tyranny of the Sultan. The Amirs attempt to influence Shihab-ud-din by talking about the adverse effects of the Sultan's policies on them. They project the Sultan as blasphemous, and implore Shihab-ud-din to act on their behalf. They reveal the underbelly of the Sultan's seemingly tolerant nature. The Sultan had prevented the citizens from attending Sheikh's address even as he was waiting in front of the Great Mosque and getting disappointed as they did not turn up for the gathering. Fires of discontent about the Sultan's tyrannical behaviour and despotic domination are seen to soar high in this scene.

The proposed shift of capital from Delhi to Daulatabad is vigorously debated. In the opinion of the Amirs, this shift is a trap to dis-empower them, since Daulatabad is a place with a majority of Hindu population.

The Amirs, along with Ratansingh successfully manage to persuade Shihab-ud-din to engage in the plot of the murder of the Sultan. It is decided by common consensus that Tughlaq would be murdered on the day of his Durbar-i-khas, at the time of prayer. Although Shihad strongly opposes such a move, he eventually condescends to the plan. The plan is presented as advancing the cause of Islam, and the murder of the Sultan is presented as an act of deliverance from tyranny and insecurity. Towards the end of the scene, Shihab is still in two minds about the appropriateness of the proposed act of murder.

Scene-VI

The Amirs meet the Sultan for the Durbar-i-khas, and various issues are taken up for discussion and negotiation. The sultan announces that copper currency would be introduced

in his kingdom and that it will have the same value as silver dinars. This move further disappoints the Amirs. Shihab-ud-din advises the Sultan not to move to Daulatabad, as it might invite the hatred of many of his citizens. The Sultan remains adamant about the proposed shift and doesn't listen to the suggestion made by Shihab. The Amirs, along with Shihab initiate the plan for the murder by the time of the muezzin's call for prayer, but are immediately held captive by Sultan's Hindu soldiers. Shihab-ud-din is mercilessly stabbed by the Sultan himself in a fit of rage. Tughlaq emerges as a brute and a merciless murderer in this scene. Any amount of sympathy that the readers might have had for him in the earlier scenes is lost after this episode. He announces that the corpses of all the conspirators must be hanged publicly for people to learn a lesson. He also bans all prayer in his Kingdom, but Najib advises him to suspend all prayer till the anticipated arrival of Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid, a descendent of the Khalifa.

Scene-VII

The setting for this scene is the route from Delhi to Daulatabad, where Aziz, still dressed as a Brahmin swindles innocent citizens on their way to the new capital and makes money out of it. Aziz is presented as a worldly-wise and cunning person. He lives by cheating others of their money. He manipulates the orders and decisions of the Sultan and cons people in the name of law. When Aazam questions him, he answers: "You've been in Delhi for so many years and you're as stupid as ever. Look at me. Only a few months in Delhi and I have discovered a whole new world—politics! My dear fellow, that's where our future is—politics! It's a beautiful world—wealth, success, position, power—and yet it's full of brainless people, people with not an idea in their head." He sufficiently justifies his actions and invents new methods of cheating fellow citizens with every changing circumstance.

Scene-VIII

The scene quickly shifts to Daulatabad, the new capital. The two sentries guarding the fort comment on the progression of events on the way to Daulatabad. The family of the older official died on the way and he considers himself to be unfortunate enough to have survived this calamity. They discuss the rather unhappy and sombre state of affairs in the fort. Tughlaq suddenly arrives on the spot and opens his heart out to the young sentry:

“Nineteen. Nice age! An age when you think you can clasp the whole world in your palm like a rare diamond. I was twenty-one when I came to Daulatabad first, and built this fort. I supervised the placing of every brick in it and I said to myself, one day I shall build my own history like this, brick by brick.”

He reminisces the moment when he had arrived with his citizens to Daulatabad. He was overflowing with hope and enthusiasm, which eventually died out. His disturbed and perplexed state of mind is exposed in this scene. He suffers from qualms of conscience and inner agony. The news of armies marching towards his kingdom unnerves him. He confides in Barani, the historian, who provides timely advice to him by suggesting that it is high time he considered giving up the ruthless bloodshed and murder.

The scene ends with the shocking news of the sudden murder of Najib, the courtier and a close associate of Tughlaq.

Scene-IX

Aziz and Aazam wait for “goods” which were supposed to arrive soon. They discuss various methods of making a living by cheating people and Aziz is exposed to be mischievously intelligent. Aziz orders Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid, the person claiming to be the descendant of the Khalifa to be kidnapped. A man arrives with the “goods”, i.e. Abbasid, and hands him over to Aziz. Aziz then murders him and dresses himself up as Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid. Disguise, which forms an integral part of the theatrical techniques used in the play, is once

again used to magnify the theme of parallelism between Aziz and the Sultan. Aziz once again cleverly manages to manipulate the orders of the Sultan. He makes the best strategic use of the political climate of Daulatabad and steps in the disguise of a holy man who was invited by the Sultan. The observance of prayer would only be resumed after the arrival of this much-awaited guest.

Scene-X

The Step-mother questions Tughlaq and reprimands him for his erratic and illogical behaviour. The proposal of equating the value of copper coins and silver dinars had led to a huge problem. Around five hundred carts of counterfeit coins had to be exchanged for silver dinars, and the step-mother fears this might adversely affect the economy. Tughlaq is disturbed by the death of Najib, his adviser in political matters. He orders many of the Amirs and their families to be killed for not being able to reveal the name of the murderer. On hearing of these innumerable deaths, the step-mother reveals the fact that she had Najib poisoned to death as she apprehended further violence. Tughlaq is further agonized by this revelation. He is torn apart and becomes mentally unstable. He orders her to be stoned to death for her crime. Tughlaq is further isolated from his surroundings. He goes to the extent of even murdering his step-mother, one of the very few people close to him. He appears to be helpless:

“God, God in Heaven, please help me. Please don’t let go of my hand. My skin drips with blood and I don’t know how much of it is mine and how much of others. I started in Your path, Lord, why am I wandering naked in this desert now? I started in search of you. Why have I become a pig rolling in this gory mud? Raise me. Clean me. Cover me with Your Infinite Mercy. I can only clutch at the hem of Your cloak with my bloody fingers and plead. I can only beg—have pity on me. I have no one but You now. Only You. Only You...You...You...You...”

Barani announces that the descendant of the Khalif has arrived and it is a time for resuming prayer in the kingdom.

Scene-XI

The citizens do not rejoice on hearing the news of the arrival of the holy man. They are further perplexed because in their opinion, prayer is not a befitting solution for death and famine. People have been mercilessly murdered, many others have starved to death in the long run. Prayer can no more save their starving frames.

Tughlaq welcomes Abbasid, who is Aziz in disguise. He uses high flown words and honorary titles for him, which, seen in the context of the play, sound hilarious since the readers are aware of the fact that it is Aziz in disguise. A Hindu woman who lost her child on the way to Daulatabad recognizes Aziz, but is silenced. Riots follow this episode, since this is supposed to be yet another cleverly contrived measure at defeating the will of the citizens.

Scene-XII

Aazam makes plans for escape from the palace with Aziz. Aziz resists these attempts because he believes he is comfortably placed in the Sultan's custody. Moreover, Aazam's sudden disappearance may give rise to questions. Aazam voices his fear of being recognized, whereas Aziz is contented with his circumstances. Aazam realizes the seriousness of the situation and pleads with Aziz to escape, but Aziz is confident enough not to even conceive of anything like this.

Scene-XIII

The unexpected assassination of Aazam brings Aziz to the Sultan. His identity is questioned and Aziz seems to be caught. Aziz cleverly absolves himself of all crime by eloquently arguing that he has been the true disciple of the Sultan, since he has unflinchingly observed each and every order of his. He was a disciple who closely imitated the actions of the Sultan himself, obeyed every bid of his and stood by every law. He reveals the fact that when the

Sultan declared the oneness of all religions, he, a common dhobi, was the first to file a suit against the Sultan in the garb of a Brahmin. He then produced counterfeit currency and obeyed the new law. He plundered people of their wealth and belongings on the way to Daulatabad. Exhausted with all this, he killed Abbasid and appeared in the garb of a holy man. On being asked what punishment would be the most appropriate for him, he requests the Sultan to promote him to the post of an officer. The Sultan, amazed at this genius and his deeds, appoints him the official of Deccan.

Even Barani, the only surviving companion of Tughlaq, leaves him. Tughlaq's isolation is complete and he is a different being altogether. As Tughlaq tries to get the forbidden sleep, the call for the prayer is heard and he falls asleep. After the prayer, Tughlaq gets up confused from his deep sleep.

1.3.4. *Tughlaq* as a Political Allegory

Through the technique of establishing analogy between the past and the present, Girish Karnad heightens the relevance of the play for the present time. The play does not merely present a picture of the past, but highlights its implications for the present. An analogy is developed between Tughlaq's reign in the play and the political situation of the Nehruvian era. This analogy and its appropriateness make the play unique in terms of contemporary relevance. Even after years of its first publication, the play continues to be perceived as being contemporary.

One of the critical issues that Karnad addresses in *Tughlaq* is the striking gap between political aspirations and its reality. In one of his interviews Karnad comments: "When I read about Mohammed bin Tughlaq, I was fascinated. How marvellous this was, I thought. Tughlaq was a brilliant individual, yet is regarded as one of the biggest failures. He tried to

introduce policies that seem today to be farsighted to the point of genius, but which earned him the nick name "Mohammed the mad" then. He ended his career in bloodshed and chaos."

There is a consistent conflict between reality and what is assumed to be the ideal state of affairs. Tughlaq's uncompromising idealism is strongly critiqued. As the drama opens, Tughlaq implores his subjects to observe a system of imparting justice "without any consideration of might or weakness, religion or creed." Karnad's depiction of Tughlaq as one who sought to put aside religious differences in the hopes of embracing secularism is a powerful issue in the drama. Tughlaq states early on that he wishes to see unity between Hindus and Muslims as a significant part of his vision: "Daulatabad is a city of Hindus and as the capital, it will symbolize the bond between Muslims and Hindus which I wish to develop and strengthen in my kingdom." The impracticality of his aspiration collides with reality as Tughlaq fails in his vision. It is because of such a condition that Karnad exposes his propensity to failure.

This sense of analogy that attaches itself to the play is significant when set against the condition in which it was written. In 1964, India had been less than two decades removed from Partition and Independence. The result was a nation where direction and transformative vision was hard to establish. A nation born from Gandhian principles was still hopelessly locked in sectarian violence and communal hatred, the very elements that Karnad's Tughlaq desires to overcome in the drama. The theme of political aspiration being limited by temporal reality is a significant one in both the drama and the historical condition in which it is written. Tughlaq's initial judgment rendered upon a Brahmin that he "should receive a grant of five hundred silver dinars from the state treasury... and in addition to that...a post in the civil service to ensure him a regular and adequate income" is a reflection of how a transformative political vision might not necessarily be received well by the public. This

theme of political transformation stumped in the face of temporal reality is a significant part of the drama. It is reflective of the India that Karnad sees in front of him, a stunning realization between the gulf between what is and what can be. The chaos and fragmentation that results out of a vision steeped in genius becomes a part of both the ruler's narrative and the nation's history.

Tughlaq's notion of religious tolerance prompts him to emancipate Hindus from the payment of *jizya* or tax. This vision of his is not properly understood and appreciated by his citizens, who strongly oppose such a move. His policies and methods of political action were well ahead of his time, and therefore received severe critique from his contemporaries. They were formulated with the far-sighted vision of establishing a secular kingdom, but were instant failures as they failed to relate to the immediate reality of the subjects.

1.3.5. Major Themes and Issues in the Play

Idealistic Leadership

What makes the Sultan's character more fascinating is his paradoxical and complex nature. He is portrayed as "a dreamer and a man of action, benevolent and cruel, devout and callous." U.R. Anantha Murty remarks: "Both Tughlaq and his enemies initially appear to be idealists; yet in the pursuit of the ideal, they perpetrate its opposite. The whole play is structured on these opposites: the ideal and the real: the divine aspiration and the deft intrigue." These opposites constitute the main charm of the structure of *Tughlaq*. Tughlaq promises his Subjects to maintain "justice, equality, progress and peace -- not just peace but a more purposeful life" "without any consideration of might and weakness, religion or creed." But to a great surprise he could not win the hearts of his public.

He wants to give his "beloved people" peace, freedom, justice and progress. He says that his people would witness how justice works in my kingdom - without any consideration of might or weakness, religion or creed. But his ascendancy over the throne of Delhi makes him "at once a dreamer and a man of action, benevolent and cruel, devout and godless. His two close associates- Barani, the scholarly historian and Najib, the politician seem to represent the two opposite selves of Tughlaq, while Aziz, the wily time server appears to represent all those who took advantage of Sultan's visionary schemes and fooled him."

Indeed Tughlaq was at first an idealist but as time passed on his idealism failed and he turned to be a shrewd politician, a callous and heartless murderer and intriguer who employed religion for his political motives and even hurled the country into turmoil and troubles. Thus the play "explores the paradox of pseudo – idealistic Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq, whose reign is regarded as a spectacular failure in India's history." As an idealist and visionary, a rationalist and forward looking emperor Tughlaq tried to introduce his kingdom into an

egalitarian society. But he found the circumstances not favorable to rule because the country was divided between Islam and Hinduism. There was much animosity between the Hindus and Muslims. Tughlaq began to make efforts to bring about harmony between the two communities, justice and equality for all for the welfare of his people. He said:

“May this moment burn bright and light up our path towards greater justice, equality, progress and peace – not just peace but a more purposeful life.”

Tughlaq wanted to be an enlightened and liberal despot and tried hard to find the cooperation of his subjects, which was denied to him due to the bigotry and orthodoxy of his people. The people fail to understand his idealism and reformatory zeal, and condemn him as an enemy of Islam. In fact, he is a devout Muslim with full faith in the Holy Koran but his rationalistic and ideal views are beyond the comprehension of his subjects. However, the young people admire and support the liberal and secular policies of the Sultan whose rationalistic and modernized attitude appeals the youth. To him, “The country’s in perfectly safe hands – safer than any you’ve seen before”. No other Sultan before Tughlaq allowed “a subject within a mile’s distance”. It is he who made prayer five times a day compulsory for all Muslims as dictated in the Koran. The Young man further advocates him and says:

“Now you pray five times a day because that’s the law and if you break it, you’ll have the officers on your neck. Can you mention one earlier Sultan in whose time people read the Koran in the streets like now?”

Religious Tolerance as a Political Strategy

The Sultan practiced the idea of brother hood, which is an important aspect of human values in Islam, and this in turn annoyed the ecclesiastics because it undermined their political interests. The efforts of the Sultan to bridge the difference between Hindus and Muslims invited anger and displeasure of the Mullahs and Maulavis. To unite them, he abolished the

jiziyah tax and openly declared that both Hindus and Muslims would be treated impartially and would be equal in the eyes of the law. But this made him a suspect both in the eyes of the Hindus and the Muslims. The Old Man in the first scene mocked at the Sultan's liberal attitude towards Hindus:

"Beware of the Hindu who embraces you. Before you know what, he'll turn Islam into another caste and call the prophet an incarnation of his god...."

Even Hindus, who were prospering and exempted from *jiziyah* taxes, never trusted on their part. They bore with such insults silently. A Hindu expresses his anguish in the following words:

"We didn't want an exemption! Look, when a Sultan kicks me in the teeth and says, 'Pay up, you Hindu dog'; I'm happy. I know I'm safe. But the moment a man comes along and says, 'I know you are a Hindu, but you are also a human being' – well, that makes me nervous."

The young Muslim reacted sharply and violently to this statement of the Hindu and called him "Ungrateful wretch." Tughlaq remained an idealist and visionary throughout his life. As he said to his Step Mother: "I pray to the Almighty to save me from sleep. All day long I have to worry about tomorrow but it's only when the night falls that I can step beyond all that." Even at the height of frustration he did not give up his visions and idealism. He tells the Young Man:

"Nineteen. Nice age! An age when you think you can clasp the whole world in your palm like a rare diamond. I was twenty-one when I came to Daulatabad first, and built this fort. I supervised the placing of every brick in it and I said to myself, one day I shall build my own history like this, brick by brick."

By temperament Tughlaq was a rationalist and philosopher and he wanted to build up a powerful and united nation. The far-sighted Tughlaq announced his policy to shift the capital by saying that "this is no mad whim of a tyrant. My ministers and I took this decision after

careful thought and discussion”(3). The decision to shift the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad was taken because “My empire is large now and embraces the South and I need a capital which is at its heart. Delhi is too near the border and as you well know its peace is never free from the fear of invaders. But for me the most important factor is that Daulatabad is a city of Hindus and as the capital it will symbolize the bond between Muslims and Hindus which I wish to develop and strengthen in my Kingdom. I invite you all to accompany me to Daulatabad. This is only an invitation and not an order. Only those who have faith in me may come with me. With their help I shall build an empire which will be the envy of the world.”

Tughlaq’s rash decision to change the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad is a turning point in *Tughlaq*, which results in untold and inexpressible suffering to the common people. Prayer and religion are vitiated for power and money. Prayer is used to achieve an end and not an end in itself. The word ‘prayer’ is repeated several times and it reverberates throughout the play. Karnad dexterously shows how prayer affects the ruler and the masses. The powerful, the prosperous and the rulers can pray in peace. The poor who are exploited and empty stomachs cannot even think of prayer. Their prayer is only to earn bread by the sweat of brow. To Tughlaq it was a masquerade to hide his guilty conscience and to the hungry people it was luxury. In the atmosphere of atrociousness, cruelty, killing, sobs and sighs, wailing and tears which India had during the reign of Muhammad, it was very difficult for the people to pray.

Disguise

Disguise is an important theatrical strategy in the play. It on the one hand undermines the seriousness with which the Sultan’s plans are made and on the other, mocks at his idealism. The dramatist ironically presents Aziz, the dhobi, who disguises himself as Brahmin, and later appears in the guise of the great grandson of “His Imperial Holiness Abbasid, the Khalif

of Baghdad". He is invited by the Sultan to Daultabad to bless the country and to start the banned prayer. An announcement is made so that all the citizens may welcome His Holiness for, "This is a holy day for - us - a day of joy! And its glory will be crowned by the fact that the Public Prayer, which has been mute in our land these five years, will be started again from next Friday. Henceforth every Muslim will pray five times a day as enjoined by the Holy Koran and declare himself a faithful slave of the Lord."

Muhammad welcomes His Holiness with these words:

"We have waited for years for this joyful moment. Our streets have waited in silence for the moment when the call to the holy prayer will ring in them again. And each year has been a century. We have waited long, Your Holiness, and our sins have become shadows that entwine round our feet. They have become our dumbness and deprived us of prayer. They have become the fiery sun and burnt up our crops. Now the moment has come for me and my people to rejoice. Only you can save me now, Your Holiness, only the dust of your feet on my head can save me now."

It is a great ironic act that Tughlaq, the mighty and the most powerful, falls at the feet of Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid, disguised Aziz. The great and shrewd politician of his time wants to seek shelter at the feet of a religious man not knowing the dust of the feet he is taking on his head, is that of a common man. Here the great emperor becomes an object of pity as his dreams of the monarch are shattered. Politics fails and the realm of religion begins to prevail over politics. Karnad succeeds in presenting the common man in disguised is more powerful than the Sultan for the royalty has to bow down to him. The last scene becomes more ironical because the Sultan, who initiates the prayer after five years, falls asleep.

Symbolism

The play *Tughlaq* is noted for its symbols. Four symbols like prayer, sleep, the game of chess and the rose are used to heighten the effect of the play. As P. Bayapa Reddy remarks: “At the micro level, prayer symbolizes the religious idealism of Tughlaq. At the macro level, it connects man’s unconscious need for divine protection and guidance in an hour of anguish. In the beginning prayer is made compulsory but later it is banned for a few years and again it is revived. It is reduced to a mockery when the Sultan’s life is threatened at the time of prayer. ‘Sleep’ on one level represents the need for rest in man’s life. At the macro level it becomes symbolic of peace, which eludes man often. The rose is a symbol of the aesthetic and poetic susceptibilities of Tughlaq. It later on becomes a symbol of the withering away of all the dreams and ideals of Tughlaq. At the macro level, the game of chess is an ordinary game which is popular in India. It also symbolizes a political game in which an ordinary washer man checkmates the most intelligent and clever politician. Through this symbolist technique, the playwright has succeeded in creating the right political atmosphere”

Rulers and politicians use religion as a medium to befool the common man. They pollute religion by misusing it for fulfilling their dirty political motives. But religion cannot be used to serve the end of those who are in power because it preaches morals and expects morality from the people. It stands for virtue, goodness, righteousness and moral conduct while politics thrives on intrigue, craftiness, dishonesty and deceit. The case of Tughlaq is no exception. What Karnad shows in *Tughlaq* is that the idealist and his idealism do not go hand in hand with a politician and his politics. The idealist is only a misnomer and he has to face challenges, which he tries to curb down in his own crafty manner. But the idealist Tughlaq fails in producing any lasting result. What he gains, as he tells, is: “Not words but the sword – that’s all I have to keep my faith in my mission” and “power, strength to shape my thoughts, strength to act, strength to recognize my self”(66). All his idealism is shattered in the game of

politics and thrown to the winds. Even Barani, the best of his advisors, asks Muhammad, who is a man of great learning,

“You are a learned man, Your Majesty, you are known the world over for your knowledge of philosophy and poetry. History is not made only in statecraft; its lasting results are produced in the ranks of learned men. That’s where you belong, Your Majesty, in the company of learned men. And further, Your Majesty, there was a time when you believe in love, in peace, in God. What has happened to those ideals? You won’t let your subject pray. You torture them for the smallest offence. Hang them on suspicion. Why this bloodshed?”

The murder of the Sheikh leads to the intrigues of the courtiers and other idealists of the kingdom. This happening unites the Hindus and the Muslims altogether to rise against the craftiness and tyranny of the Sultan. Shihab-ud-din, the most trusted of the friends of Sultan is persuaded to attend the meeting of the intriguers and at last to stand against the Sultan. Sheikh Shams-ud-din Tajuddarfim tells Shihab-ud-din that he is attending the meeting to save Islam not to “get mixed up in the treacherous games of politicians.... But Allah isn’t only for me,... while tyranny crushes the faithful into dust, how can I continue to hide in my hole?”(32).

Religion-Politics Interface

Tughlaq is of great interest as it combines religion and politics of an idealist and visionary Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq. It intends to show that idealism of the ruler will fail and will ruin the idealist. The concepts like secularism, equality and unity in a country like India are very much ahead of the times. In India people still are led away by the saints and religious heads. They believe more their religious leaders than a politician. The fiery speeches of the religious saint swing people this side or that side for the vote. People still are befooled by them as they were during the reign of Tughlaq. Thus the life of the people is governed and corrupted by the interaction of the saints and the politicians. Tughlaq, who pretends to be a

true follower of religion, commits numberless murders to retain his monarchy. He commits patricide, fratricide and wipes off the religious and political leaders like Imam-ud-din and Shihab-ud-din for his kingship. He tells the cause of murdering them to his Step Mother in a simple way: “They couldn’t bear the weight of their crown. They couldn’t leave it aside so they died senile in their youth or were murdered”.

When Step-Mother accepts that she has murdered Najib, Muhammad does not accept this truth. But when she argues, “It was easier than killing one’s father or brother. It was better than killing Sheikh Imam-ud-din,” Muhammad replies, “I killed them for an ideal. Don’t I know its results? Don’t you think I’ve suffered from the curse? My mother won’t speak to me – I can’t even look into a mirror for fear of seeing their faces in it” (65). Muhammad is torn in finding peace in his own kingdom that “has become a kitchen of death” (65). There is only one punishment for treachery, he tells his Step-Mother, it is death. And for killing Najib he orders even his Step-Mother whom he loves more than anyone else to be stoned, dragged and killed.

Agony and the Notion of Repentance

The innumerable murders that Tughlaq is involved in don’t bring him peace. They tear him from within. He feels lonely and frustrated. In such torn and wretched state he seeks the shelter of God who can only save him from misery and the ghosts of the murdered. Only He can help him to be a man. For this all of a sudden Tughlaq, the mighty murderer, plunderer and sinner, falls to his knees and clutches his hands to his breast to pray:

“God, God in Heaven, please help me. Please don’t let go of my hand. My skin drips with blood and I don’t know how much of it is mine and how much of others. I started in Your path, Lord, why am I wandering naked in this desert now? I started in search of you. Why am I become a pig rolling in this gory mud? Raise me. Clean me. Cover me with your Infinite Mercy. I can only clutch at the hem of Your Cloak with my bloody fingers and plead. I can

only beg—have pity on me. I have no one but you now. Only you. Only you ... you ... you ... you”

The above passage reveals a Faustian cry of anguish, which comes from the mouth of Sultan. This Sultan uses his opponents like pawns on the chessboard of politics and unscrupulously kills them. Tughlaq even fails to offer prayer, which is reintroduced after an interval of five years when Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid disguised Aziz comes to Daultabad to bless him. He falls soundly asleep and gets up when the Muezzin's call to prayer fades away. His bloody actions are the result of his intense ambition to establish an idealistic leadership as the norm. The failure of his political methods unnerves him and makes him insane.

1.3.6. Suggested Essay Topics

1. Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq* juxtaposes the historical and the contemporary. Discuss.
2. *Tughlaq*'s failure is rooted in his uncompromising idealism. Analyse.
3. Comment on Karnad's use of theatrical devices in his *Tughlaq*.
4. Write an essay on Girish Karnad's use of symbols in *Tughlaq*.
5. Parallelism between Aziz and the Sultan is one of the central theatrical strategies in Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq*. Justify.
6. Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq* is a comment on the political anxieties of the Nehruvian era. Elucidate.

1.3.7. List of References

Karnad, Girish. *Collected Plays*. Ed. Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker. New Delhi: OUP, 2005.

Print.

Dharwadker, Aparna Bhargava. *Theatres of Independence: Drama, Theory, and Urban*

Performance in India since 1947. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press. 2005. Print.

1.3.8. Suggestions for further Reading

1. *Indian English Literature: 1980-2000*- M.K.Naik
2. *Collected Plays*- Girish Karnad
3. *Final Solutions*- Mahesh Dattani

UNIT-2 MANJULA PADMANABHAN- *LIGHTS OUT!*

2.1. Contemporary Women's Theatre

2.1.1. Introduction

Drama has not been a genre that women have readily chosen. Although women have made significant contributions to all forms of writings, the voice of the woman playwright was not heard for a very long time. Women's voices in the field of playwriting have always been silenced because it involved an exposure to the otherwise denied space of the public sphere. Theatre being a form of public expression, involved the vulnerability of women to public gaze.

Women's voices have been heard in the dramatic space only as mimicry, as a repetition of dialogues written for them by other male playwrights. They, for a very long time, enacted roles envisioned for them in the male imagination. They had rarely conceived of scripting the lives of characters in the same fashion as men did. It was in the 1980s that women entered spaces hitherto unexplored. With the burgeoning of Feminism, and the spread of feminist consciousness at around this time, women ventured to write plays for performance. This group of women, no longer content with their images in the plays of men, sought to re-script their own lives, with due prominence given to their experiences. They counter their own marginalization and erasure from the history of playwriting by strongly asserting their presence and active production of plays.

2.1.2. Women and Indian Theatre

While the representation of women on stage and in the mould created for them by men was a dominant practice in India, few women could actually associate themselves with theatre

because of the taboos associated with the presence of “respectable” women in the public sphere. For centuries, women performers mostly came from the communities of courtesans and prostitutes, who were seen primarily as public women devoid of all sense of shame. In other cases men performed the roles of women and even excelled in them. It was not until the early decades of the twentieth century that women came forward to get actively involved in acting and the scripting of plays.

The feminist theatre in India came in to existence under the influence of the women’s movements of the 1970s. This theatre was perceived primarily as a chief vehicle for the individual self-assertion of women and their anxieties. It comprises of plays written, produced, and directed by women, and voicing their consciousness. Experimental in technique, women’s theatre emerged as a potent weapon to expose the hypocrisy of the patriarchal set-up and its implications for women. It aimed at making public the private struggles of women and thus providing a platform for their agony to be heard and attended to. What is central, then, to this form of theatrical practice is the integration of art with the material conditions of women. These playwrights attempted to combat the dominant images of women circulated through the plays of men. They countered the stereotypical representations of women as either a *pativrata* or a whore and produced plays that radically questioned such reductionist practices. These theatrical practices were premised on the deconstruction of sexual difference, thereby puncturing the notions which were central to the operation of patriarchal cultural domination. The critique of patriarchy and its machinations were the major subjects for feminist intervention, and plays being a public medium, provided an adequate platform for subversion.

In the opinion of Tutun Mukherjee, a prominent critic of Indian theatre, women’s theatre in India is a forward-looking step that attempts to break away from reductionism and “locates

gender-identity in the flux of socio-historical processes”. It is a politically nuanced theatre that is oriented towards positive and productive change.

2.1.3. Indian Women Dramatists

Although women have made contribution to the genre from the late nineteenth century onwards, their efforts have not been sufficiently recognized and acknowledged. It was in the 1940s and 50s that some names of women playwrights came to prominence but it was not until the last three decades of the twentieth century that playwriting by women became a dominant strain in the literary and cultural life of the nation. Women’s relationships, their struggles, and their journey towards emancipation form the subject of these plays. These plays have sensitized their receptors to the specific problems faced by women in a patriarchal social set-up. The emergence of women directors and producers has further accelerated the process. These efforts jointly produced what might be termed as a “woman-centric” theatre, a theatre that is sensitive to and is informed by the major concerns of Indian women. The major pre-occupations of these playwrights are the exposure of certain hidden aspects of the past, exploration of the past for understanding a contemporary experience, reinterpretation of folklore, history, and myth, and creation of strong images that radically negotiate the representations of women in the plays of an earlier generation of male playwrights.

Among the prominent Indian women playwrights from the twentieth century, mention might be made of Swarnakumari Debi, Usha Ganguli, and Nabaneeta dev Sen in Bengali, Varsha Adalja in Gujarati, Tripurari Sharma and Kusum Kumar in Hindi, Malatibai Bedekar and Muktabai Dikshit in Marathi, C.S.Lakshmi and Mangai in Tamil, Volga and Vinodini in Telugu, Rasheed Jahan and Jameela Nishat in Urdu, Manjula Padmanabhan, Dina Mehta, and Polie Sengupta in English.

2.2. Manjula Padmanabhan

2.2.1. Early Life and Career

Born in Delhi to a diplomat family in 1953, Manjula Padmanabhan went to a boarding school in her teenage years. After college, her determination to make her own way in life led to her notable ventures in publishing and media-related fields. In her later years, she made name as a playwright and journalist. Apart from writing newspaper columns she created comic strips. She created Suki, an Indian comic character, which was serialized as a strip in the *Sunday Observer*. Before 1997 (the year her play *Harvest* was staged) she was better known as cartoonist and had a daily cartoon strip in *The Pioneer*.

In the year 1997, she won the Greek Onassis Award for her play *Harvest*. It was selected from 1470 entries in 76 countries for the prestigious award. Apart from this, she has authored other important works like *Lights Out!* (1984), *Hidden Fires*, *The Artist's Model* (1995), and *Sextet*. She has also authored a collection of short stories, called *Kleptomania*. Her most recent book, published in 2008, is *Escape*.

Alienation and marginalization are the dominant themes in her works. *Harvest* is a futuristic play about the sale of body parts and exploitative relations between developed and developing countries. It is being filmed by Govind Nihalani. Her short stories, which appeared as an anthology, are marked by a wry sense of humour. Padmanabhan's latest work, *Getting There* is a semi-autobiographical novel about a young woman illustrator in Bombay. She describes it as being "based loosely on events in the author's life between 1977 and '78. Almost none of it is entirely factual, but as a whole it is more true than false". Her cartoon strip, Suki, is also being published as a book in 2001, and her etchings are featured in their own exhibition in Delhi.

2.2.2. Major Works

Manjula Padmanabhan's works are contemporary in both theme and presentation. The major focus of her works is the specific problems encountered by a predominantly urban and modern upper middle class section of Indian society. Her award winning play *Harvest* is a futuristic play with an extended vision to 2010 that portrays the confinement of an middle class family of the third world to the tempting but illicit global economy of the first world. It is a dystopian play about an unemployed Indian man and his family who sells his body to a buyer in United States. The play is set in a Mumbai chawl in the year 2010. In a cramped one room tenement, reside four members: Om Prakash, the tense and jobless clerk, his wife Jaya, who has succumbed to the tense life of privation and insecurity, his old mother, the frustrated, ill-natured and satiric figure and his younger brother Jeetu who works surreptitiously as a gigolo. Om is dismissed from his petty clerical job and hence the family is thrown into economic and emotional disarray. Om and Jaya are only maintaining the semblance of a meaningful marital relationship. Jaya is carrying on a clandestine affair with her brother-in-law Jeetu. Mother's love extends only to the eldest son, Om, the bread-winner. She is also jealous of her Daughter-in-law. These four characters are locked in a loveless relationship, claustrophobically confines within the four walls of a one- room apartment.

Her comic cartoon strips have appeared in the Pioneer and the Sunday Observer. She has illustrated twenty-four books for children. She has written several novels and stories for children. Her books include *Double Talk*, *Hot Death*, *Cold Soup*, *This is Suki!*, *Kleptomania* and her autobiographical novel *Getting There. Escape* (2008) is her first novel for adults and is one of the few works of modern Indian science fiction. Many critics are of the opinion that she is one of those few Indian women playwrights who have boldly stepped

out of conventions that define respectability to address issues of gender, woman, her body and its behaviour, its exploitation in a family and social setting.

Her *Escape*, for instance, makes for a highly significant study that can explore in depth the socio-cultural, political, psychological, intellectual, and emotional issues related to the imbalance in the sex-ratio. The main context of the book is the declining sex-ratio in India that is mainly the result of the strong social bias against the girl child and the gross misuse of the cheap and widely available technology of sex-determination for female foeticide. According to the 2011 census, India's current child sex ratio is 914 females per 1000 males, which is the lowest since the 1961 census. Added to this sharp drop is the fact that the fall in the child sex ratio in rural areas is around four times that in urban areas. Padmanabhan herself says about her novel, "In the case of *Escape*, the idea presented itself originally as a newspaper 'middle' which would take the form of a page from the diary of the last Indian woman left alive... I kept thinking that despite all the positive stuff going on, it seemed more likely that women – Indian women anyway - appeared to be on the decline. So that was the context... around 2006 I began to think of turning that idea into a novel". The novelist presents a horrifying vision of the future where women have been completely exterminated. The novel combines adventure, romance, philosophy, human feelings and sexuality, fantasy and science fiction to give a strong warning about the unimaginable terrors that humanity would have to face if the violence against women is allowed to continue unabated. In her review of *Escape*, Giti Chandra writes, "The premise in *Escape* is simple: technology and a phobia of women have combined to create a country (clearly marked as India by the cultural detailing of clothes, food etc.) in which all females have been exterminated and a ruling class of cloned Generals keep a... grip of surveillance on the populace. Women are no longer needed for reproduction since men can clone themselves whenever they wish. They are not required for sex as homosexuality has replaced heterosexuality as the norm".

Her works are primarily geared towards creating awareness of and initiating positive transformative action on certain major social and cultural issues of contemporary India. In that respect, each of her works is shocks more than pleases. Her works attempt to present the harsh face of reality and demand action from the readers and onlookers. The reality depicted in her works is bare, and is devoid of all embellishment. It is a kind of art that stuns through its morbidity, startles through its grimness.

2.3. *Lights Out!*

2.3.1. The Context

Manjula Padmanabhan's *Lights Out!* highlights patriarchy's insensitivity to violence against women. An anonymous woman is regularly raped and brutally assaulted in an abandoned building opposite to the flat of a middle class Hindu family. While Leela, Bhaskar's wife strongly despises such an act and consistently requests her husband to inform the police, Bhaskar is largely indifferent to the incident. The act of rape indirectly pervades the lives of the middle class family and thus makes apparent the insensitivity of men. The central concern of the play is to critique the internalization of violence as part of a woman's lot. Myth reconfirms her belief in the notion that the attacks on her body are an inevitable aspect of being a female. The necessity for woman to conform to patriarchal values has been presented as normal. The violence on her body has been normalized. In the opinion of C.S.Lakshmi, a well-known critic of performing arts, the notion of "controlling the female body, shaping, re-forming, re-routing" its work is a patriarchal attempt at chastening her in order to accept her as normal. In the play, Padmanabhan deals with a kind of violence that is culturally perpetuated on woman. It is so firmly entrenched in her psyche that any kind of resistance is

inconceivable. Culture and its unquestioned continuance sanction certain varieties of violence. Very often, violence is unseen, not superficially noticed. It does not have any outward ramifications. Violence can even be bloodless, and it is this kind of violence that is implicit but intense, poses a major challenge to feminist intellect. In the play, the mutilated body of another woman creates a feeling of solidarity in Leela, since she shares with that anonymous woman certain culturally transmitted codes of conduct. Collective memory contains many such examples, and it is through this common sharing that Leela is drawn closer to the other woman. *Lights Out!* re-confirms Padmanabhan's belief in the fact that theatre can often be used as a space to deal with violence. Women's theatre in particular, can be a potential weapon to raise universal concern about various forms of violence women are made to internalize. Theatre can also be a space through which a dismembered, diseased body can be reclaimed.

2.3.2. Major Characters in the Play

Leela

She is a middle class woman who values her status as a "respectable" woman. She believes in the sanctity of the domestic sphere and cherishes the values of conjugality. She is unable to bear the painful cry for help that she regularly hears from a neighbouring compound. Having merely heard these strange, frightening sounds, she turns paranoid and hysterical. She nags her husband Bhasker to call the police and to dispense with the filthy act. She perceives the incident of sexual violence as a potential threat to the sanctity of the home. The constant fear of these sounds pervading her life is articulated in her impatient requests made to her husband. Her desperate plea for action is met with reticence from him. She fails to rationalize her fear, and therefore is unable to convince Bhasker to take action. She quite often identifies

herself with the woman who is being brutalized, and the pain and agony of the anonymous woman has an indirect impact on her. She is equally affected by violence as the anonymous woman, but violence in her case is bloodless and implicit. The violence that affects her is unseen and psychological. Her hysterical outburst towards the end of the play provides an appropriate climax to the drama.

Bhasker

He is out and out a patriarch and his reactions to Leela's suggestions reflect his firm belief in patriarchal values that undermine the status of women. He turns a deaf ear to Leela's nagging and attempts to convince her by saying that the incident of violence happening outside is not their concern. He is able to successfully isolate himself from what he sees outside and recognizes to be wrong; yet he is stubborn enough not to admit it to be unnatural and brutal. He, on the other hand tries to normalize the act of violence against the woman, thereby presenting it as justified. His insensitivity and indifference to rape expose patriarchal hypocrisy. His unwillingness to take transformative action is an evidence of his hypocritical attitude. He identifies the act as a domestic affair, a religious ceremony, exorcism, etc., but fails to admit that it is unjustified violence against a female victim.

Mohan

Mohan, Bhasker's friend, takes curious interest in the act of rape, even as he chooses to be a mute spectator. His involvement in the debate reveals subtle aspects of the problem of patriarchal insensitivity. He can simultaneously be close to and distant from the incident happening outside. He sees himself as too close to watch and derive voyeuristic pleasure from the act and too distant to take action against the perpetrators of crime. He is involved in a heated debate with Naina, Leela's friend, who implores him to initiate action. His

engagement in the discussion trivialises the act of rape and projects it as a normal part of a woman's existence.

Naina

She is perhaps the most sensitive of all in the play, and shares with Leela a certain kind of aversion for the act of violence. While Leela turns hysterical and nags her husband to call the police, Naina is even more active in influencing Bhasker and Mohan to take action. She is shocked to notice that the incident is an act of rape, and that both Bhasker and Mohan believe it to be out of their means to initiate action. She strongly condemns their inefficacy and urges them to act and not just watch. Her presence strongly advocates the cause of the emancipation of the woman from the act of sexual violence. She reacts sharply to the various ways in which the men rationalize the act. She is astounded to notice that they can afford to call the woman a prostitute, and she argues that even a prostitute has the right to be rescued from an act of sexual violence. She counters various reductionist tendencies that present women as vulnerable. She radically combats the stereotypical notions about women that the men constantly articulate. She may even be perceived as a kind of a mouthpiece for the playwright, who attempts to re-inscribe the images of women through a play like this.

Surinder

He is Naina's husband, and arrives only in the climactic episode. He is a man of action and is unable to tolerate the act of violence in the way that the other two men do. He urges them to take radical action and plans to murder the perpetrators of rape on the spot. He has little forethought and is eager to dispense with the crime they are all compelled to be a witness to. He is highly critical of the reticence of Mohan and Bhasker and gets impatient with them. He also disapproves of the suggestions of Leela and Naina, and acts by instincts.

Frieda

She is a maid servant and cook who is seen assisting Leela throughout. She is seen moving constantly and making arrangements according to the instructions given to her. She does not speak in the course of the play. She is made to remain silent throughout, and her silence speaks volumes about her subjugated status. Her silence has both gender and class dimensions to it. Her affiliation with a lower social order compels her to remain silent. She has no control over what happens on stage, but is a mute witness to all happenings. Her presence in the play further complicates our understanding of violence and suppression. In her case, it is not explicitly noticed violence, but a different kind of suppression that silences her. Her subjugation in the existing order of things is not just considered to be normal but is asserted in different ways.

2.3.3. Scene-wise Analysis of the Play

Scene-1

The setting of the scene is recognisably contemporary. The characters belong to an upper middle class household. The opening scene stages Bhaskar's insensitivity to Leela's fear. She is constantly frightened of the strange noises she hears from a neighbouring house. The question of violence is not addressed directly in relation to Leela. Leela is indirectly associated with violence. Violence does not have a direct implication for her. She "hears" of the incident. She is at once an active participant and a victim. The fact of her being a woman makes her empathize with the woman who is assaulted on a regular basis.

The strange and unidentified sounds are all-pervasive; they can be heard from all quarters. This draws attention to the intensity of the fear and the degree to which Leela identifies herself with the victim. Leela is seen repeating a message given by her friend, which says: “We are a part of...of what happens outside. That by watching it, we’re making ourselves responsible.” Leela’s fear and concern for the victim is in sharp contrast with Bhaskar’s aversion for taking action and his unwillingness to hold himself responsible for what happens outside. He avoids referring to the crime committed outside. He constantly evades the question because of the unwillingness to get entangled in a problem of this nature. Bhaskar’s evasion of the frightening sounds heard in the next building is symptomatic of patriarchal insensitivity. Violence is accepted as a normal condition for a woman. It becomes increasingly difficult for Leela to describe the crime in rational terms. The absence of a rationalistic rhetoric to describe an act of sexual violence is explored in the character of Leela. Leela’s difficulty in articulating her fears are highlighted. What is her fear all about? Is it the fear of the same action being perpetrated on her body as well? It is Leela’s sense of the shared fear of violence that compels her to raise her voice, albeit in an un-influential way.

The action works with interesting paradoxes. The action simultaneously happens and does not happen. The act of sexual violence and brutal attack on woman’s body become the subject of gossip, but not of rehabilitative action. It is the shocking experience of being a witness to patriarchal hypocrisy that unnerves Leela. What unsettles her further is the realization that these noises have pervaded the supposedly “respectable” household of Leela, “in to my nice clean house”, she says. Even outwardly respectable families are not free from the acts of sexual violence. It enters their lives in both overt and covert means. The mask of middle-class social respectability is used as a weapon to defend themselves of the claims of insensitivity to rape. Leela comments: “how it’s invaded our lives, our homes”. Leela’s nervous frenzy on hearing those sounds emerges out of a potential identification with the

victim who is constantly being raped and ravished. She participates in collective victimhood. Leela is a foil to the victim who is being raped. We get to realize the pain of the victim through Leela. It is a dramatic strategy that deepens the impact of the tragedy in the play.

The act of violence, as presented in this scene as in others, is a continuous process. It does not cease to happen at any moment in the play. Different characters approach and interpret the act with varying degrees of seriousness. At one point, Bhaskar even goes to the extent of saying that some people enjoy the act of rape. There is no direct reference to the “violent” act in the play. It is always through other people’s conversations that we perceive the grimness of it all. The brutality of the incident is not diluted by this theatrical technique, but is further magnified to a tragic level. Anonymity and unrecognizability of the act of violence heightens its effect in the play. At another level, it might as well be interpreted as the fear of the unknown and unfamiliar. Middle class alternatives like music, yoga, etc. are prescribed as means to ignore the question.

Scene-2

The incident is further problemmatized by the arrival of Mohan, Bhaskar’s friend. Both Bhaskar and Mohan now engage in a collective inactivity that tolerates the continuous performance of crime. Mohan derives voyeuristic pleasure in watching the act happen. His curiosity is aroused by the family’s account of it. Mohan is already informed about the regular occurrence of the violent act. He insists on “watching it happen”, just for the sake of it. It is the weird pleasure of watching crime happening from close quarters yet remaining uninvolved that arouses his interest in the crime. He believes that he can safely be a mute spectator to the crime. This incident gives him the rare opportunity to position himself “just far enough not to get involved, just close enough to see everything clearly”. The horrendous

act of crime and the brutality meted out to the woman in the background is made to transform in to a spectacle worth watching and enjoying. In their conversation, the incident loses its seriousness and becomes the subject of speculation and animated discussion. Leela is shocked to realize that the unbearable crime can be thus securely watched and commented upon. She intervenes:

Leela: But it's so frightening—won't you be frightened?

Mohan: Who me? No! Of what?

Leela: Of them! They are so terrible, the things that they do!

Mohan: But they're so far away, how can they hurt me?

[....]

Mohan: But—why not? What harm is there in watching?

[....]

Bhaskar: Just what I said. They are there and you are here. What's the connection!

[...]

Mohan: Yes—you see? It's unnatural not to look. It's unnatural not to get involved—

Leela (gesturing towards the window): But I'd be too frightened to go to their help!

Mohan: Who said anything about help? I'm talking about looking, that's all—

Mohan goes on to suggest that it might all be an enactment, a drama. He dilutes the seriousness of the crime just in order as to absolve himself of all sense of social responsibility. They comment on the nature of the crime by suggesting that the involvement of a different person each day at the site of the violent act adds a new dimension to it. The

questions that Mohan asks Leela are highly suggestive of the evasion of the assumption of a responsible position for what they consider to be wrong. The unwillingness to act and the aversion to fight against brutality are tactfully masked by the series of curious questions that are asked to Leela. These questions relating to the voice that is heard, the sights that are scene, appearances of the people involved, nature of the screaming, etc, successfully camouflage their indifference towards the incident. Their supposedly serious debate on the pros and cons of the incident and apparent involvement in finding a solution exposes them as mean and self-centred. In the pretext of finding a solution to the problem, they end up satiating their curiosity.

Mohan: Unless they actually call for help, is it our business to go? That's the question!

Bhasker: These people don't exactly say many words—it's all rather inarticulate.

Mohan: after all, it may be something private, a domestic fight; how can we intervene?

[....]

Mohan: Personally, I'm against becoming entangled in other people's private lives. Outsiders can never really be the judge of who is right and who is wrong.

They collectively ponder over the nature of the crime. They try to categorize it as murder, torture, and so on. Each of these categories they use to describe the incident gives them another excuse for not getting involved. Since the act has attracted attention, they choose to define it as too exhibitionistic. The gravity of the issue is dispensed with by the mention of and elaboration of rather unimportant details. Mohan goes to the extent of speculating that it could be a religious ceremony. The perpetrators of the brutal act are now elevated to the status of priests!

Scene-3

This scene opens on a darkened dining room. Mohan, Bhaskar, and Leela are eating at the table, while the anonymous screaming can distinctly be heard outside their window. The woman in question cries out for help, gives up, and then again resumes her screaming with renewed vigour. All through this, the discussion at the dining table is on and all the three of them are responsive to the sounds heard outside their window. Leela is consistently perturbed by the disturbing sounds. Her disgust stops her from behaving in a normal way. She does not cease to be shocked by the strange sounds and the innumerable calls for assistance she hears from outside. Mohan and Bhaskar continue to coax Leela in to behaving normally but they fail. They take weird pleasure in witnessing the act through closed doors, as it were. Leela keeps her children locked inside a guest room just in order to ensure they are not exposed to this horrible happening. Mohan and Bhaskar go to the extent of proposing that she allow her children to watch it because of its “cultural significance”. Nothing can convince Leela who has the children fed inside the guest room.

The arrival of Naina seems to break the monotony of the sounds, but the screaming continues as before even after her entrance. After exchanging some formal greetings and inquiries, Naina’s attention is shifted to the bizarre sounds outside the window. Leela tries to mask them through her speech, but fails to do so. Naina is petrified by the sounds, which have now assumed gigantic proportions. She demands that they ought not to remain silent witnesses to the act. She implores them to act and attempt to stop the molestation. They now jointly attempt to discover the reason behind the screaming, and Naina shockingly observes that a woman is being assaulted brutally. Both Bhaskar and Mohan try to rationalise the act and provide logical explanation for violence being perpetrated on the woman. In their discussion, the act of violence is legitimized as a kind of religious practice. They elaborate

upon the kind of violence that is being perpetrated and comment that the woman might be possessed. The assaults on the body of the woman are being normalized in their discussion.

Bhasker: Isn't it astounding that someone in such a condition has the energy left to scream?

Mohan: They say that people under a demon's power, even women, have the strength of three big men...

Bhasker: Funny, how it is most often women who become possessed....

Pause while screams intensify

Mohan: they are more susceptible...

Bhasker: The weaker sex after all...

Both Naina and Leela recognize the act as a gang rape, performed night after night, under the lights. They notice that a woman is being raped and molested by four men, all naked. Mohan and Bhasker, a little disturbed by this identification, try to convince them that it is exorcism, but not rape. Both the women are shocked to learn that they have been silently yet curiously watching a woman being regularly raped and assaulted. When Leela is bent on informing the police, Bhasker immediately stops by remarking that the woman who is with four men at once might as well be a whore. He triumphantly argues that since the woman is a whore who depends on sex for her livelihood, the incident might not be a rape. Naina asserts that even a whore could be raped if the act of sex is against her desires and inclinations. Bhasker sees this explanation as illogical, since in his view, a whore, who is not decent, who has nothing to lose, cannot be raped. Chastity is here made to assume a great status; it the precondition of being a "decent" woman. A whore is someone who has compromised with her chastity, and has therefore lost her right to be recognized as decent and respectable. Important

questions like who is decent and respectable, and to what extent, emerge out of their discussion.

Naina: Leela's right. It must be terrible to be a whore.

Mohan: Terrible, yes.

Bhasker: They live at the outer limits of human society—

Mohan: In a jungle of shame and disgrace—

Leela: Let's call the police. Please. Please.

Naina: By losing their vulnerability to rape, whores lose their right to be women? Is that what you mean?

Mohan: Right. After all, finally, the difference between men and women is that women are vulnerable to rape...

Bhasker: And men are not.

Leela gets hysterical over the heated debate between Naina, Mohan, and Bhasker, and collapses. She implores them to call the police. Even now, Bhasker is seen absconding and not taking any urgent action. Surinder, Naina's husband is enraged to see the bloody act. In a fit of temper, he urges them to wipe it out by violence. Even he is shocked to disbelief on looking at the poor woman being beaten up and raped. He considers killing them and dispensing with this incident. He is not in favour of calling the police because of their unresponsive nature. He angrily comments that the four men, by attracting the attention of the whole colony and its respectable inmates, are challenging the codes of decency. In his opinion, they are posing tough challenge to decent people and their establishments. They think of plans to murder the four men and actively engage in devising means to end the

disturbance. As they get involved in such discussion, Naina notices that the screams have stopped and the people have left the compound. All the time taken to devise means to stop the incident from happening are mocked at by this sudden realization. The futility of attempting to dramatically counter violence through murder and bloodshed is hinted at. All their plans, carefully construed and curiously conceived, are proven to be ineffective.

2.3.4. Depiction of Sexual Violence in Manjula Padmanabhan's *Lights Out!*

Padmanabhan depicts a trailer of gang rape on stage intentionally to record the dehumanized reactions of men in *Lights Out*. The play dramatizes the urban apathy for sexual violence and a total reluctance of involving in such an uncivilized incident. The spectacle of mutilated female body along with brutality of gang rape on stage characterizes psycho-semiotics of the male gaze. The twitching female body – its agonized movements on public display for male consumption denotes the hierarchical male theatrical supremacy within a patriarchal set-up. The description of “Three men, holding down one woman, with her legs pulled apart, while the fourth thrusts his – organ - into her!” (39) denotes not only sexual victimization of woman, but also highlights the psycho-somatic pleasure of seeing by male duo. The ongoing pornographic scene, may not appear obscene to them; they derive voyeuristic pleasure in watching the act of rape being performed. Their desire for watching ‘domesticated porn’ from and within household provides a double meaning of happiness to them. Psychologically, there is a causal interlink between pornography and violent sexual aggression of men. The

visualization of porn plays a vital role in appropriating a subhuman, victimized, second class status for women. In addition to this, their planning for taking the live snap of gang rape and its monetary advantage shows their malignity towards the commodification of female sexuality. Hence, the sadomasochistic pleasure of 'seeing' the brutal act brings a weird kind of pleasure to them.

The play *Lights Out* dramatizes the visualization of a gang rape which ultimately destroys two lives – the lady who is raped and Leela who witnesses it. Right from the beginning, the protagonist Leela appears as a neurotic. The juxtaposing sound of help and brutalized ecstasy makes a sense of unnatural frightening feeling in her mind. She becomes so squeezed in tension throughout the day. The phobia she feels is inexpressible: "I carry it around all day. Sometimes it's like a shawl, it wraps itself around my shoulders and I start to shiver". The imagery of shawl shows an indication of how appalling the tension may be. The fear wraps the innermost mind of Leela and she is struggling to free herself from this clogged situation. Leela's constant nagging over Bhaskar's overlooking mentality culminates into hysterization for her. The helpless and hapless condition of the raped woman is the reflective outcome through Leela's delirium. The pain and torment of molestation which the raped lady gets bodily, Leela, the psycho victim of this, takes it mentally and emotionally. But her torture is so subtle, that it is hard to recognize. She remains speechless for sometimes, only sobbing is audible. Though, Leela is not the direct victim of such awful savagery, but the visual effect of gang rape acts as a great blow upon her psyche. The aftermath of rape i.e. the trauma of rape is more horrific and painful than the rape itself. The threat of rape turns her into a paranoid. Her husband's carelessness towards his wife further magnifies her suffering. By ignoring her subtle pangs, Bhaskar devalues her femininity that shakes the credibility of her own discourse and self-understanding. This very sense of ignorance, insecurity and self-distrust due to the non-supportive attitude of Bhaskar, makes her alienated and sceptic and throws a

psychological war to them. This condition experienced by many rape victims, is termed as 'second rape'. Leela is the prey of this vulnerability of rape and its trauma which predominate the whole drama and destroy Leela's tranquil state of mind.

Again, by placing the two binary oppositions of female presence – Leela's hysterical behaviour on one hand and Freida's silence on the other, Padmanabhan tries to create a concatenation of contrast, comparison and contradiction at a time. While the former attempts to voice forth the ugliness of victimization, the later is incapable of making articulation. While, Leela, as a representative of upper middle class background, always strolls in front of the stage, Freida her domestic help never appears on the front stage. It is, as if, Padmanabhan restricts her actional zone within the space of the kitchen. Freida's static confinement particularizes dramatic/ theatrical marginalization. The spatial and non-functional gest of Freida somehow merges with her silence which not only devoices the suppression of women but also decodes the gender location of class. Naina's concern for the victim forms a separate category of action altogether. She implores the members of the family to take vigorous action against the crime. Padmanabhan's ingenuity in depicting different sound effects—heart rending cry for help of the rape victim, Leela's hysterical outburst, Naina's eloquence in deriding the bloody act, and Freida's constant reticence generates a series of antithetical verbal/ non-verbal action. Crying is an oral gesture through which the raped lady wants to verbalize her inner turmoil and physical agony, while Leela's hysteria is a strong performative gesture through which she likes to ventilate her suppressed pangs of emotion. Freida's silence indicates a kind of saturation and subsequent acceptance of subjugation as a strategy for survival. The bizarre sounds of screaming intermittently – screams emanating from a woman in the construction site – who is raped and brutalized every night in the midst of arch lights are sufficient proof of the subordinated status accorded to her.

The psycho-sexual barbarity against women portrayed by Indian women dramatists eventually flags out a major thrust of feminist drama: the projection of hysteria on stage. Usually, female dramatists have the proclivity to depict their women characters through this disease as it not only serves as a dramatic strategy to ventilate their suppressed feelings but also heightens the impact of violence against them. The depiction of hysteria, trauma and violence forms an integral part of women's dramaturgy that shock even as they necessitate change.

Hysteria, being most strongly identified with feminism exists on a kind of continuum. Clinical observations of hysteria claim an intense sexual association with it and in this regard, the incident of unwanted rape and its aftermath ultimately culminates into hysteria. Due to its frequent association with female sexuality, hysterical gestures also assume erotic proportions. The perpetration of multilayered atrocities against women attempts to highlight the ongoing feminist debate about the criminality or assaultive nature of rape. Though the act of rape is the most heinous crime against women but its aftermath seems more critical to overcome that sometimes culminates into hysterical outburst for them. The unbridled trauma affects them mentally, physically and emotionally. The recurring psycho-somatic trauma of rape usually exasperates the victim from time to time and hence gradually turns into a hysterical subjectivity. The trouble of self-distrust, masochism, depression due to sexual victimization imposes a sense of social scepticism upon the victim that may be called as a 'second rape'. In the play, Leela's hysterical outburst at merely hearing the continuous screams of the anonymous woman is a case in point. Leela empathizes with the woman and therefore requests her husband to take transformative action against the brutal act. Her fear has larger ramifications: she at once articulates her empathy for the woman and identifies herself with the victim of violence. The violent act pervades her life in a rather indirect manner, and every scream of the helpless victim incites strong and sure responses from Leela. Leela's fear of the

supposedly vulgar act intruding their “respectable” household is rooted in middle class concern to preserve the chastity of its women as a marker of social respectability. Women’s chastity is a pre-condition for a respectable household.

Hysteria, being a familiar dramatic emotion in women’s theatre, functions as a universalizing container for the repressed and silenced histories of female suffering. The body of the hysteric is a repository of trauma. The iconographic maneuvering of a corporeal language of female sufferings makes possible the translation of gender oppression in to a visual entity. While the corporeal iconography of hysteria translates or speaks, there lies a risk of unveiling the wrongs or harms done to women. In this regard, we may say that depicting hysteria in women-centric plays intends to recreate the spectacularized and fetishized object of curiosity. Hysteria, trauma, and melancholia are identified by contemporary women dramatists as potent media for the expression of gender-based violence. The hysterical voice of Leela functions as an agency of her pejorative claims before patriarchy. The leitmotifs of hysteria and trauma in women’s dramaturgy do not function as mere conceptual or analytical categories but as potent weapons of subversion.

By adopting hysteria as an analytical implement for their plays Indian feminist dramatists endeavour to decode the agony of the silent suffering of women for the audience. Both for dramatist and performer, hysteria functions as a dual performance strategy of vocal speech and silent expressive gestures to set the political awareness and to communicate with audience.

2.3.5. Gender-politics in Manjula Padmanabhan’s *Lights Out!*

This play is a scathing attack on the double standards of the middle-class people who enjoy the fruit of liberty and abundance in the prevailing system. They are seen always chattering about the ways to bring the country out of the morass in which it finds itself, but they remain

only confined to the lip-service, always avoiding taking concrete steps, because they are ‘ninny lions’ presenting themselves as valiants, but inwardly cowards. *Lights Out!* deals with a very common yet misunderstood ‘bystander effect’. A middle class couple debates over an incident that is happening outside their building and conjures up various possible interpretations of what’s being seen and heard. During the course of the conversation, few others join the couple. But none of them wants to go out and help. They are either happy being voyeurs or too concerned about their safety.

The playwright, a feminist, voices her concerns about the fate of women in a society where the educated, resourceful and conscious elite class remains a mute spectator and an indifferent observer of the crimes committed on women. The playwright highlights the fact that however hard we may try to present ourselves innocent about the crimes or the evil around us, we can not absolve ourselves of our complicity in these crimes and evil by remaining muted. Leela in *Lights Out!* is shocked to see what is being done to a woman outside her home under the street light by a group of rogues. She repeatedly urges her husband Bhasker to do something in this regard, to act or call the police, but her pleas fall on deaf ears of her husband:

Leela: (*Wheedlingly.*) Can’t you call the police? Just for me?

Bhasker: (*Drawing away.*) No.

Leela: But why not?

Bhasker: We’ve discussed this before----

Leela is a traditional straight-forward Indian woman who fails to understand how the police act; she thinks that the police can book the perpetrators of the crime while her husband is aware of the police ways—inaction, corruption, high-handedness and laziness:

Leela: I know, I know--- you've told me they're not interested in cases like this, they don't bother about minor little offenses— but I'm frightened! Can't you see that? Isn't that enough?

Bhasker: Go tell the police that you're frightened about noises in the next building! They'll laugh in your face. (*Lights Out!*, p.112)

The apathetic attitude of the police towards the victims of crime is revealed by Bhasker, and this is the main cause why people don't approach the police with social concern because the agency entrusted the task of protecting its citizens is devoid of any humanity in general.

The playwright satirizes the inward hollowness of these so-called “respectable” people who only think about their own well-being, and are insensitive to the world around them. They are concerned about saving their own skin; they turn their back towards their own brethren—oppressed, cornered and crushed—because ‘they don't want to stick their necks out’. Bhasker is reluctant to call the police despite the constant persuasions of Leela because he cowers at the sight of what will happen to them when the goons come to know about the complainant. So, he like his neighbours plays safe and becomes an escapist with the arguments that if others are not coming forward to complain, ‘So why should we!’ He is completely indifferent to the developments outside his home, but the irony is that he asserts, ‘I'm not deaf and I'm not disturbed by them’. He further gives logic in defence of his stand of not calling the police, ‘You never know with the police these days. They may say it's none of our business, what goes on in the next-door compound. After all, there's the chowkidar...’. By adopting such an unsympathetic and callous attitude towards those who are experiencing all forms of indignities, the playwright through her mouthpiece Sushila, opines that we are in the same league with the rapists and the criminals:

Leela: (*Changing tack.*) You know what Sushila said?

Bhasker: No idea. (*Pointedly loosing interest. Looks around for his paper.*)

Leela: That we're part of ...what happens outside. That by watching it, we're making ourselves responsible---

Bhasker: (*Finds his paper.*) Rubbish!

Leela: That's what I said at first! But then...

Bhasker: (*Starts reading.*) Sushila's a fool. (*Lights Out!*, p.112).

Male chauvinism is at its best when Bhasker's friend Mohan sides with the former and laughs at Sushila's opinion about their complicity in the crime, and calls her an intellectual mockingly. Though Leela is on the verge of losing her sanity as the scene of the woman being assaulted remains permanently in her conscious and subconscious mind but the men do not realize the gravity of the crime. Both Bhasker and Mohan don't heed to her pleas, and time and again put aside her concerns through their hypocritical ways. That only a woman can understand the bruised and battered psyche of a woman becomes amply clear when other women characters like Sushila and Naina voice their concern about the victim. The difference in the attitude of men and women towards the crime is presented through a debate between Mohan and Naina:

Mohan:...After all, finally, the difference between men and women is that women are vulnerable to rape...

Bhasker: And men are not....

Naina: And women believe they are vulnerable to rape—

Mohan: And men do not.

Naina: And women are decent enough to be raped...

Mohan: And men are not.... Bhasker: After all,...what is a woman but someone decent enough to be raped?

Mohan: And what is a man but someone too indecent to be raped!

Naina: But if women are too indecent to be raped does it mean that men are whores? (*Lights Out!*, p.142).

Manjula lays bare what lies hidden in the dark souls of humanity; and shows that utter selfishness and passivity in such situations hint at our identification with the perpetrators of crime.

The incapacitated middle-class is very focused about its own interests; its men can discuss all that is wicked and horrible, but will not come out of the 'shady zones' of comfort. They are projected as great thinkers, philosophers, but only thinkers; they never come to the fore-front to stand for justice and righteousness. They pretend to be very honest and full of integrity, but in reality they are chicken-hearted people who are hypocrites, sham, devoid of any values.

Mohan: ...it could just be some, you know, drama—

...Was there an edge of hysteria?...Perhaps the victim is always somewhat diseased?...Nothing's proven yet except that the screaming is, quite possibly, genuine. Or at least it sounds genuine...People scream for all sorts of reasons!...Or sometimes for the sheer pleasure of it!(pp.121-122)

Bhasker: Well, the assailants tear the clothes off the victims and then, perhaps in the general excitement, remove their own clothes as well.

(*Lights Out!*, p.126).

The male protagonists in the play are great stage actors, always justifying their stand with meek pretexts. Their every response and move is calculated and goaded by the darkness in

the recesses of their souls. No doubt, Bhasker is worried about his wife and children but instead of acting like a responsible, conscious member of the society, dispelling the fears of Leela, he tries to hide his fears in the garb of ridiculous, disgusting and inhuman arguments and suggestions, and surrenders himself before the perpetrators of crime as well as inert and toothless state mechanism. This self-centric approach by modern man has completely plagued the very foundation of our social ties where every individual finds himself alone in this world.

Lights Out! is a subtle satire on the *decent* and *civilized* people whose life appears to be full of absurdities and contradictions. It is but ironical that rape is described as a “ritual”, “a religious ceremony”! “Sacred rites!”, “the Cult of the Body-Builders” or “heavenly” and the rapists as ‘priests’ or holy persons. Modern man’s total ennui and indifference to his fellow beings has resulted in the collapse of social fabric of fellow-feeling.

The play also proposes a complete negligence towards a woman’s (Leela) fright and sensitivity, by her husband. Our society is full of selfish cowards like Bhasker and Mohan, and to the playwright such Bhaskers and Mohans are the main cause of unabated crimes in our society, and such people are more harmful than those involved in the gang-rape as they can give a bad name to anybody nonchalantly just to escape from their responsibilities towards the system of which they are part. That’s why they never feel ashamed of calling the tortured woman a ‘whore’:

Bhasker: And listen: there’s one more extremely important consideration
to be taken into account...(There is a note of triumph in his voice).

Naina: (*Disgusted*) What? What’s left?

Bhasker: She could be a whore, you know!

Leela: Ugh!

Naina: A whore! Do you think that's what she is?

Mohan: Of course—she's with four men at once!

Naina: (*Uncertainly.*) Is that enough to prove she's a whore?

Bhasker: A decent woman would never be found with four men at once.

Naina: But she could have been abducted from somewhere, been brought here and...

Mohan: Decent woman would never submit to this sort of thing. (*Lights Out!*, p.139).

Through their arguments both Bhasker and Mohan somehow are able to convince Naina and Leela with the point that the woman outside is a whore and that she has willingly allowed the four men to pounce on her, and therefore, the act can't be defined as rape. Such pointless discussions and responses prove that there is a meaning in their design and every calculated move is a deliberate ploy to avoid calling the police or encountering the rapists. The play is replete with bizarre and ridiculous conversation that leads the readers nowhere. Frieda represents a different case altogether. She has internalized the fact that she has to learn to remain silent and bear the torture as is the case with the woman assaulted. Other women, who are vocal and assertive like Leela and Naina are neglected and cornered and forced to accept the verdict of their husbands, fathers or brothers. When Naina questions Mohan about the rape, 'What would *you* call that —a poetry reading?' (*Lights Out!*, p.139), Bhasker's response is the height of insensitivity, '...If all they wanted was a little sex, why would they go to the trouble of so much violence?' (*Lights Out!*, p.139). The playwright asserts that only a woman can understand the trauma of a wronged woman, her gentle sensibilities and pains of bruised body and crushed soul. The men get pleasure by inflicting agony on women or by watching them in such a state. Leela finds it unbearable to bring herself to the window at the

time of crime and is horrified when Mohan and Bhasker move towards it, but the latter seem to be very curious to watch the wrongdoing.

Throughout the play, the main characters belonging to two opposite camps based on their sex are involved in a heated argument whether the offense is a rape or not, whereas the ulterior motive of the men is to while away the time and not to intervene in the crime. They are successful in their motive of deceiving the women to the very end. The difference in approach is because a woman always identifies herself with the victim while a man fails to understand the delicate mind and sensitivity of women.

Lights Out! teases us out of our thoughts and incites intellectual introspection. It lays bare the hypocritical attitude of the Indian middle-class. This happens, the playwright feels, because of utter failure and irresponsiveness of the state mechanism and civil society in protecting its citizens; the outlaws act in connivance with the state machinery—police—and as a result the total lawlessness prevails where the criminals call the shots while the lawful and the god-fearing cower at the very sight of these offenders, and the *decent* and *civilized* people search for lame excuses for avoiding direct confrontation with the molesters. The hypocrisy of the elite class is at its best in the discussion among Bhasker, Naina, Mohan and Leela:

Bhasker: Listen...(*Quelling the others.*) listen...you see that out there?
(*He gestures.*) Now...that (*With a certain fiendish satisfaction.*) that is the point of being a decent woman! (*Dramatic pause.*) You see, if she were a descent woman, we people would go to her rescue! (*Pause.*) She is not, and so she's left to her fate!

Naina: (*Lamely.*) Surely—I mean—even a whore has the right to choose her clients!

Mohan: Choose her clients! A whore just takes what she gets!

Bhasker: Whatever rights a woman has, they are lost the moment she becomes a whore.

Leela: (*Dully.*) How *horrible* it must be to be a whore.

Naina: You mean, if she's a whore there's nothing we can do about all this?

Mohan: What's there to do? We can either watch or not watch—that's all.

(*Lights Out!*, p.140).

The anarchy that prevails has engulfed the every aspect of human life; people prefer returning to their cells instead of raising their voice against the culprits or come forward to the administration for redressal of their grievances because the common people take it for granted that the law enforcing agencies and the law-breakers are hand-in-glove with each other.

2.3.6. Suggested Essay Topics

1. Manjula Padmanabhan's *Lights Out!* is a scathing attack on patriarchal insensitivity. Comment.
2. Sexual violence is not just presented as normal, but as an integral part of a woman's existence. Analyse the statement in relation to Manjula Padmanabhan's *Lights Out!*.
3. *Lights Out!* is a feminist play that exposes sexual violence as a strategy for subversion. Elaborate.
4. *Lights Out!* is a play that highlights urban apathy to rape. Justify.

5. Violence can often be bloodless; it can be implicitly perpetrated. Discuss in relation to Manjula Padmanabhan's *Lights Out!*.
6. Physical violence perpetrated on the anonymous woman translates itself as Leela's hysterical outbursts in *Lights Out!*. Elucidate.

2.3.7. List of References

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2.3.8. Suggestions for Further Reading

1. *Getting Away with Murder*- Dina Mehta
2. *Mangalam*- Polie Sengupta
3. *Escape*- Manjula Padmanabhan
4. *Harvest*- Manjula Padmanabhan

UNIT-3 AUROBINDO GHOSH- A *SYSTEM OF NATIONAL EDUCATION*

3.1. Indian English Prose

3.1.1. Introduction

Lord Macaulay's rather infamous "Minute on Indian Education" of 1835 established English language and the European system of education as the uncontested representatives of civilizational modernity. The debates on English that spill over a few decades in the mid nineteenth century culminate in this eloquent proposition which argues that Indian languages are unfit to express ideas of modernity that a community would like to teach its progeny. The Minute was a sweeping condemnation of the entire Orientalist policy of the veneration of classical languages. Macaulay dismissed classical languages as "dead" and the vernaculars as "poor and rude" and hence the intellectual improvement of those classes which had the means to pursue higher education could only be brought about through English. Although severely criticised for their assumed racial superiority, the Macaulay's views eventually gained immense popularity, as English came to be embraced by many from the elite sections of Indian society. This acceptance of English was never a smooth or continuous process. Neither was it accepted unquestioningly. The idea was vigorously debated in public circles and thus prompted a lot of reactions. However, many intellectuals made it a potent medium of self expression, and since then English has come to voice the hopes and disappointments of the Indians. Indian English prose, in particular, played a vital role in providing a proper medium of expression to the revolutionary and reform-oriented ideas of the nationalist elite. English became the language through which supposedly "modern" ideas were discussed and debated. It later became an important tool in the formulation of an anti-colonial sentiment. Notions of an autonomous national order were given concrete shape through prose.

3.1.2. Indian English Prose: The Beginnings

English prose seems to have come rather naturally to Indian writers. It predates Indian poetry in English, and forms a vast territory in itself. It is full of stylistic and formal variety, and a number of writers have employed it for creative self-expression. It is a body of writing that did not just arrive earlier, but also survived longer than verse. The introduction of English language and literature in educational institutions opened up new possibilities for the Indian intelligentsia. English became the language of translation, petitioning, journalism, law, oratory, political agitation, social reform and propaganda, educational, historical, and political studies. K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar argues that for the Indian elite, English also represented “the end of insularity and the streaming in of Western thought-currents, and in the result there was witnessed the first stirrings of a trans-valuation of values.” This group of men who were direct beneficiaries of English education were able to view indigenous customs and traditions in more distanced and objective manner, producing in the long run their own versions of social reform oriented writings in prose. English language formed the prism through which they viewed home truths. English also enabled them to think beyond the hitherto strong barriers of caste, class, region and religion, and thus the ability to conceive of a free and democratic India. There was a strong belief that a proper education in English would, for instance, lead them to a vague but definite world of the future. Education in English was inextricably interlinked with the notion of material and intellectual progress in a supposedly “modern” world. In the words of K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar “The Western impact, the infusion of English literature and European thought, and the resulting cross-fertilisation have thus been the means of quickening the interplay and circulation of ideas and the emergence of a new literature, a new climate of hope and endeavour in the country, and a bold marching towards new horizons.”

3.1.3. Major Writers of Prose in Late 19th and Early 20th Century

The Indian renaissance in the nineteenth century prompted the expression of novel ideas through English prose. This major cultural re-orientation produced prose of various categories, out of which mention might be made of historical, political, cultural, and religious writings. The prose of this period was characterized by a strong desire for the re-discovery of a national past, and a strong awareness of the problems of the day. Most of the members of the Indian National Congress were efficient in the use of English prose and therefore produced a considerable variety of writings. Similarly, the effervescence of various streams of reformist thought paved the way for the social reformers to conceive of the possibility of change through the medium of prose. Most of the middle and upper class male reformers of the day, from Bengal and Bombay, made prose the vehicle of social and cultural transformation.

Raja Rammohan Roy, one of the most assertive voices in the late nineteenth century, wrote on themes and issues as divergent as religious awakening, social reform, education, women's empowerment, and political consciousness. His famous letter to Lord Amherst of 1823 deserves special mention. The letter makes an eloquent proposition for the introduction of English education in India, in place of the present practice of offering lessons in Sanskrit. The letter accords a high position to English as the language of science and modernity. In terms of its articulation of the need to modernize education, the letter predates other important documents like Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education". Other writers who foregrounded these issues in their writings include—Keshub Chunder Sen, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, and Bankim Chandra chatterjee. Keshub Chandra Sen, in particular, gave a perfect shape to social reform through his writings. Sen's speeches preaching faith, intuitive understanding of spiritual matters, salvation and repentance reflect the impact of Western religious and philosophical

discourse. In the year 1870 he gave a lecture on what he believed to be England's obligations and duties to India. It praises the benefits of British rule, points out to the defects in this government, and touches on the issues of education and unemployment. The speech demonstrates a symbiotic relation between a deeply inward life and its modulation into social and political concern, an important feature of Indian nationalist discourse. Romesh Chunder Dutt, another literary figure of the time, wrote on a variety of topics. His prose is characterised by his capacity for description, his powers of observation, incisive comments on individuals, and literary criticism. Apart from prose, he wrote poetry, fiction, and translated many of the epics into English. Dadabhai Naoroji, the "Grand Old Man of India", critiques the policies of the British government in his *Poverty of India* (1873), and *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (1901). The focus of his argument is that the administrative and economic policies of the British are bent on undermining the real interests of India, which can only be countered by giving Indians a considerable percentage of representation in the British government. *Essays, Speeches, Addresses, and Writings* (1887) and *Speeches and Writings* (1916) are collected volumes of his speeches. The speeches of Bal Gangadhar Tilak are suffused with the aggressive element that was so characteristic of his political methods. The era of moderate politics ended with his entry into the Indian political scene, and his speeches, therefore, reflect a strong disdain for such moderate methods. They reverberate with a certain kind of straightforwardness in argument, and are devoid of stylistic grace.

A well-known poet, Tagore also distinguishes himself as a writer of expressive prose. Most of his prose writings in English were lectures delivered in different places. *Sadhana* (1913), a series of lectures delivered at Harvard University is informed by his philosophical knowledge. He touches upon a variety of themes like the relation of the individual with the universe, the nature of evil, realization of beauty, and so on. His *Personality*, and *Nationalism*, both came out of his lectures during a visit to USA in 1917. *Nationalism* is a

collection of three lectures on nationalism in Japan, the West, and India. He critiques the imperialistic nationalism of the West and argues that this base form of nationalism has destroyed the fabric of India. He shows remarkable appreciation of European culture, while at the same time critiquing the political ambitions of the English. Japan is valorized as the torch-bearer of Asian cultural unity, and must therefore be made responsible for the awakening of the East. India must not lose her essence by a blind imitation of the West. Other notable prose writings of Tagore include *Creative Unity* (1922) and the *Religion of Man* (1930). Out of the ten insightful essays included in *Creative Unity*, the essay titled “East and West” deserves special mention. In his opinion, the growing distance between the two can be attributed to the impersonal form of the relation Britain has chosen to establish with India. It is the machine from the West and not the man that has been sent to India. The collection titled *Religion of Man* comprises of lectures on various topics, like religion, for instance. Tagore’s prose reveals his cultural cosmopolitanism and his essentially international outlook. He had a synthetic view of the relationship between the East and the West. He believed in the unity of the two and their mutual understanding.

A well known nationalist figure, Swami Vivekananda’s speeches and writings have been the most influential and popular. He had firm faith in the doctrine of the oneness of all religions and strongly believed that Hinduism had a message for the West. His address at the World Parliament of Religions in 1893 remains till date the most read of all his works. His works reverberate with his conception of India and his views on various aspects of spiritual and mental development of the countrymen. He attacks the fossilization of thought brought about by medieval orthodoxy and superstition, the devaluation of the status of women, and the current system of education. The agenda he envisioned for India is linked to the notion of the rediscovery of a golden past. His prose combines his scholarship and a striking rhetorical

power. It is forceful, precise, and is distinguished by a certain kind of athletic agility. His language is scientific and rational, and is characterized by the quality universality.

At a time of the effervescence of strong currents of social and political reform, new ways of expression came to be envisioned. Issues like religious revival, abolition of sati, English education, and emancipation of women came to be openly debated. It was around this time that political pamphleteering English became a popular means of public debate. Journalism was perceived as the best way to appeal to the Indian intelligentsia.

The idea of an emerging national cultural order is integral to most of these writings. English acted as a window on the world, and the Indian intelligentsia was influenced by the liberal values and ideas of nationhood. These writings embody varied responses to the notions of an independent and culturally rejuvenated Indian nation. These views are often coupled with either a rejection, complete or partial, of Englishness, or an explicit celebration of the idea of progress almost always associated with it.

3.2. Aurobindo Ghosh

3.2.1. Early Life and Career

From his childhood days Sri Aurobindo was brought up with Anglicised habits, with the ideals of an Anglophile as desired by his father, Dr. Krishnadhan Ghose, who was himself an Anglophile, a Medical Officer trained in England. Dr. Ghose took all possible care and precaution to insulate the minds of his children from active Indian influences. While a student in England, young Aurobindo used to receive often from his father news paper cuttings of the *Bengalee* marked with passages pertaining to the cases of ill-treatment of Indians at the hands of Englishmen. Moreover, his young mind was imbued with revolutionary ideas and inspiration from his study of the history of Ireland and America. After shifting from St.

Paul's School to Cambridge Sri Aurobindo joined a secret society, romantically called the "Lotus and Dagger," where each member was required to take oath for liberation of India. His fourteen years' study career in England gave him an insight into the English character and British politics. He could effortlessly detect the nefarious intentions of the Anglo-Saxon bureaucrats and their repressive designs behind colonial rules and policies which his contemporary politicians failed to grasp at times.

Under the aegis of Sri Aurobindo, a strong popular movement started in the West Bengal vehemently opposing the Bengal Partition Act prepared by Lord Curzon and Bamfylde Fuller in 1905 that aimed at undermining Bengali nationalism by dividing the people along communal lines into two separate political units with separate administrative staff. To awaken nationalism in Bengal, he left his lucrative post of the Vice-Principal of Baroda College that fetched then a salary of Rs. 750/- per month. He took up instead the role of the Principal for a paltry amount of Rs.120/- per month at Bengal National College in Calcutta. He could detect the political strategy of the Moderates which was not to offend the Anglo-Indian bureaucracy out of fear and selfishness. The Moderates basically differed from the Nationalists in their inability to grasp the imperative need for mass support in the country's struggle for freedom. Instead of putting their trust in the nation, they relied much on the charity of the colonial lords and vaguely hoped for the liberation of their motherland through the generosity of the alien bureaucrats.

The top brass of Government on priority basis convicted and punished Sri Aurobindo by fabricating a serious case against him, to strike terror in the hearts of the Nationalists. So the police falsely implicated him in the Alipore Bomb case (a serious crime) and kept him as an under-trial prisoner; but from want of sufficient evidences the Magistrate subsequently acquitted him of the charges. The Anglo-Indian journals gnashed their teeth at his honourable acquittal. During his incarceration in Alipore prison, he came to realise that all revolutionary

activities were governed by the unseen hand of the Divine. He perceived his forcible detention as a distinct sign of God with a particular divine purpose. His “Uttarpara Speech” of 30 May, 1909, marked a turning point in his political activities and heralded the beginning of his spiritual life. He came to revere India not as a big land mass, a geographical entity but as a living being, as our Mother, as the *Shakti* of millions of people. It amounted to realise divinity in the nation, God in the multitude of people.

After his return from England, Sri Aurobindo started taking active interest in Indian politics and held the elite in the National Congress responsible for their lack of political maturity in steering the movement for liberation of India. He censured the Congress as the elite’s club engaged only in the deliberation of political situation with no decisive action to push forward the movement. All that this national body could achieve till then were a few paltry administrative reforms. The irony being our country had been fondly looking upon the Congress from its inception as a fresh fund of hope and vigour. Nine trenchant articles penned by him were published in the *Indu Prakash*, offer new interpretation of and insight into the obsolete methods pursued by the leaders of the Congress over a decade to regulate its activities. These articles criticised the Congress for not being **national** enough. In reality, the members of the Congress belonged to a limited, a newly formed middle class only. Hence, how could it be designated as truly national? He drew the attention of his readers to the historical example of the protracted Irish resistance to England’s rule. The Irish leaders did not annually assemble to wax eloquent on the virtues of British rule. Obviously, this was an oblique remark on the working of the Indian National Congress. The Irish revolutionaries were men who preferred action to mere making of speeches and appeals to higher authority. Not being prudent enough to make any historical analysis, the leaders of the Congress ignored the fact that in order to secure their own liberties, the Englishmen have resorted to no less than three times the method of open struggle and rebellion. The pity was that the

Congress leaders, Sri Aurobindo felt, were recoiling in terror from an open struggle with British bureaucracy. A few lucrative offers of jobs dangled by the colonial bureaucracy before the Congress for expansion of the elected members of the Vice regal Council could detract our top leaders from their political objectives. But these sham offers came under sharp scythe of Sri Aurobindo. He repeatedly reminded the Congress that any hope for an achievement of the Congress from Anglo-Indian bureaucracy was futile and impractical. He expressed his own conviction that out of a total number of twenty-five only ten members would be Indians. Even if these Indian members voted together, they would be a permanent and absolute minority.

As Sri Aurobindo noticed, the leaders belonging to the Moderate Group in Indian National Congress were more interested in self-promotion and gaining access to power and privileges within the colonial system than arousing political aspiration of the people for freedom from colonial rule. In the programme of G.K. Gokhale, who was the President of Indian National Congress, only some representative would get the scope to push up their friends, relatives, and protégés for various offices under colonial government. Sri Aurobindo detected the lacunae in Gokhale's reform programme in which there was no scope for political education of the people of India. On these grounds he debunked the Moderate Group in the Congress as an ineffective force in the freedom struggle of our motherland. He exposed the strategies designed by the Moderate leaders to serve their selfish motives in perpetually remaining at the helm of affairs of the Congress. These were the glaring defects of the Congress in not being able to turn India's freedom movement into a popular and mass struggle.

3.2.2. Aurobindo and Indian Nationalism

As opposed to the pre-dominantly elite and moderate version of Indian nationalist thought, Aurobindo's political methods distinguish themselves in terms of their aggressiveness and direct attack. His thought was based primarily on the notion that the incarcerating influence of colonial cultural domination has sapped India of its cultural richness. Predominantly masculinist in its orientation, this brand of nationalism aimed at the radical indigenization of social institutions under British control. His prime contention is that the most effective way of opposing the colonizer is to create alternative indigenous social institutions based on the ancient practices of Indians. This form of resistance lies not in explicit violence and open opposition, but in gradual reformation of the otherwise corrupt lifestyle enunciated by the colonial rulers. The underlying notion is that colonialism exerts a paralysing influence on the social and cultural practices of a colonised people by imposing alien and distanced methods of living on them. The acceptance of and absorption in to these institutions represents the worst form of domination. This makes the colonised vulnerable to mental and intellectual corruption. This school of nationalist thought was radical in its methods because any form of acquiescence to the largely alien and unfamiliar modes of living was considered to be a tacit approval of colonial domination.

The imbricated-ness of Aurobindo's thought in the political context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century invites reference to other nationalist thinkers of the time. A study of Sri Aurobindo's conception of nationalism entails similarities and contrast between his ideas and those of the prominent Indian nationalist thinkers like Bankim Chandra, for instance. The burgeoning national imaginary in colonial Bengal in the second half of nineteenth century developed the iconography of the mother to represent the nation. Bankim glorifies India as a mother in his novel *Anandamath*, a concept that continues in to inform nationalist discourse in a significant manner. Bankim, like Vivekananda, Tilak and Sri Aurobindo, upholds

Hinduism in its own right as the greatest of all religions. He stresses the need for a national religion based on new moral ideals that would lead to the establishment of a new national character. Since neither language nor racial difference is a suitable device for the creation of national solidarity, Bankim argues that in the context of India the spread of Hinduism alone will be an effective cultural foundation of Indian nationhood. Sri Aurobindo and Bankim posit faith in the divinity of the motherland. Moreover, Sri Aurobindo's political pamphlet, *The Bhavani Mandir* written in 1905 emulates Bankim's scheme of militant spiritualism to liberate India from alien domination. Sri Aurobindo does not concede to political configuration of the nation on the basis of caste along the lines suggested by Tilak, although he has tremendous admiration for him. The former designs a programme of national education to a strict exclusion of the "enforcement of religious teachings and practices." But aligned with Sri Aurobindo's efforts, Tilak joins his hands with him in awakening the spirit of the masses by vehemently antagonising the elitist politics of the Congress. They succeed in forging a union of all classes of people under one umbrella for India's struggle for freedom.

In a series of lectures on nationalism, Rabindra Nath Tagore, like Sri Aurobindo exhorts the West to eschew the path of materialism and learn spirituality from the East. Both condemn in strong terms the rise of "bellicose and rapacious imperialism of Europe." Pinning hope on his philosophy of cultural universalism, he invites all races of the world to cohabit in India. Unlike Sri Aurobindo, he does not arouse a belligerent patriotism and nationalism. For Tagore, a nation is a mental construct as well as an organic entity comprising two essential features: first, a historical memory of people, and the second, a consensus among the natives to live together in a specific geographical location. He finds fault with the Western Nationalism as it is *sans* social cooperation and spiritual idealism. Colonial rivalry demonstrates that the concept of nation is a much contested field of competition for political and economic hegemony.

Both Gandhi and Tagore could visualise the inevitable need for a national ideology of India as a means of survival. Both agree that the concept of nation has historically emerged through revolutions, wars, conflict and struggle. But the society in the East has evolved through civilisation, culture, religion, and spirituality. Whereas the West has laid its foundation of nation on the state as the centre of social and political organisation, life in India is rooted in village community. These communities in our country had their relative autonomy under royal control. In his culturalist discourse, Tagore speaks of imaginary cultures in which the best of each culture could compensate for the inadequacy of the other cultures.

Sri Aurobindo foregrounds various devices to mount resistance to colonial rule in India. His main contention is that self development of a nation under foreign servitude is impractical and remains a far-fetched dream. All attempts at social transformation, educational reforms, industrial expansion, and ethical improvement of the nation are foredoomed without political freedom. So the strategies he devises to counteract British colonial rule can be analysed as: Self-help, Passive Resistance, *Swaraj*, and *Swadeshi*. To set right the impoverished and oppressive financial system, Sri Aurobindo demands the control over taxation by the people whose hard-earned money is utilised in meeting the expenditure and needs of the colonial government. Once the people of a country become “the controller and the paymaster of both the wings of executive and judiciary of Government, executive tyranny comes to an end.” In addition to this, the new system will stop the drain of peoples’ resources that can otherwise be utilised in protection of Indian commerce, industry and trade by employing Indian indigenous labour force. The rising tide of popular opinion, Sri Aurobindo pins hope, can alone save India from the state of “bleeding to death by foreign exploitation.” He justifies the need for a civil struggle as “a reality and morality in war” for an oppressed nation.

To appropriate the means of passive resistance, collective action, struggle and suffering are inevitable. In this matter any sign of timidity and selfishness in people will disrupt the hard earned unity and weaken the force of resistance. The method of active resistance is opted to cause positive harm to the existing government machinery; but that of the passive resistance is directed to abstain from doing anything that would help the colonial government in its governance. It is an apt method of resistance as the foreign government banks upon the help, cooperation, and acquiescence of the subject people for continuance of its administration. The principle of passive resistance is to show apathy and refusal by the people to do anything that will help British trade and commerce either in the exploitation of the country or running its administrative machinery of the Anglo-Indian officialdom. The European system of education teaches subordination and loyalty to the colonial government and discourages patriotism in students at large. It is antagonistic to Indian culture and tradition. To counteract these evils, Sri Aurobindo stresses the need for “Educational Boycott” to render the well organised educational administration of India impossible in a bid to snatch away the control of the minds of youth from the hands of the alien rulers. British law courts and administration of justice have inherent tendencies to enforce subordination of the colonial subjects to fulfil their political objectives. As a counter-measure to this unjust system, Sri Aurobindo proposes “Judicial Boycott” in order to paralyse British judicial administration. He rejects British justice for its “ruinous costliness of civil code, the brutal vigour of its criminal penalties and procedure.”

As a strategic step our refusal to work in Government schools, colleges, offices, courts or serve in the departments and police, Sri Aurobindo believes, will sabotage British administrative machinery. To make this procedure of resistance more effective, he proscribes social excommunication for those of our countrymen who work against passive resistance. He considers *Swaraj* for a nation as the breath of life. The Doctrine of Passive Resistance

enunciated by Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi's movement of *Satyagraha* both derive their germinal ideas essentially from Thoreau's concept of "Civil Disobedience." Sri Aurobindo prescribes for a Nationalist to show deep concern in four areas: first *Swadeshi*, second Boycott, third *Swaraj* and the last one is National Education. *Swadeshi* means the preference of the natives for articles produced by Indian labour in India itself. Boycott is people's determination not to use and exclude foreign products manufactured by foreigners. Sri Aurobindo explains that the idea of total *Swaraj* does not limit itself to mere political freedom; rather it embraces social and spiritual emancipation. He declares assertively that God has set apart India as the "eternal fountain of holy spirituality, so He will never allow that holy fountain to run dry." Resistance, a lesson he learns from Thoreau, true patriotism in the highest form.

Sri Aurobindo uses writing as a potent weapon to mount journalistic onslaughts on the tyrannous administration of the Anglo-Indian government. He undauntedly censures through the columns of the journal *Bande Mataram* the policies, strategies, rules and hollow prospects of administrative reforms framed by the astute British administrators to perpetuate the colonial domination over India. In fact, as a matter of strategy the colonial government relentlessly pursues a dual policy of granting meagre political concession to lure the Moderate leaders of the Congress on the one hand; and ruthlessly adopts repressive measures on the other, to suppress the growth of nationalistic spirit in India. For making persistent demand for self government as the first step to complete autonomy by Sri Aurobindo's party, the Anglo-Indian press branded the nationalists with the sobriquet "seditionists" or "Extremists." Some of the Anglo-Indian news papers such as— *The Statesman*, the *Englishman*, the *Indian Mirror*, the *Times*, and the *Pioneer* seemed to be in league with one another to crush the "Extremists out of existence." The Nationalists were doubly cursed for facing stringent criticism at home front; also from their political adversaries on their own soil.

The colonial government receives from Sri Aurobindo journalistic whips for giving blind encouragement in allowing “the Magistracy to a phenomenally oppressive police.” He reveals the secret unholy nexus between Mahomedan hooligans and Anglo-Indian administrators as they have become eventually good allies, “brothers-in-arms to fight against *Swadeshi*.” He analyses Lord Curzon’s clever policy of stifling the voice of patriotism through the instrumentality of the University and condemns the sinister intention behind the issue of the Risley Circular: “This ukase out-Rusias Russia. Not even in Russia have such systematically drastic measures been taken to discourage political life and patriotic activity among the young. Not even the omnipotent Tsar has debarred to issue a ukase so arbitrary, oppressive and inquisitorial”. While trying to convince his political opponents, he drives home the fact that the constitutional reforms expected of as British gift to Indian politicians, in reality, turns out “to be a sheer mockery and heartless farce.” The idea floated by the Congress leaders of holding a Congress session in London to beg for rights by sending sumptuous sums of money is vehemently opposed by him. In the last resort, he warns them that any attempt to shift the field of the battle to London will be impractical and harmful.

Sri Aurobindo treats it below the dignity of a patriot or revolutionary to beg favour from the “alien exploiter”. In view of the immense plight of the Rawalpindi sufferers, he disapproves the idea of appealing to the mercy of Lord Minto, the Viceroy of India. In his politico-philosophical assumption suffering for the cause of our motherland in Rawalpindi will not go waste; the patriots must suffer so that their martyrdom should inspire our countrymen instantly. Lord Morley was inimical both to the Moderates’ ideal of selfgovernment on colonial lines and the demand of Nationalists for *Swaraj*. He was stubborn in his belief that educated Indians were not fit to be entrusted even by gradual stages with the supreme governance of Indian affairs. He goes to the extent of declaring in the British Parliament that his Government in India is carrying on the most difficult experiment in human history on

personal government along with free speech and free right of public meeting. Sri Aurobindo passed a scathing criticism on Lord Morley's diplomatic declaration about a subject nation: "The freedom of a subject race is only the freedom to starve and die, all the rest of its existence being on sufferance from those who govern" (*B.M*, 459). Under British rule in some cases it is quite difficult to distinguish a judge from a medieval executioner. Sri Aurobindo reveals how state terrorism by the colonial administration perpetuates in the name of administering justice to people of India. The one man who could oppose this is Keir Hardie. Praising Hadie for his outright sense of courage, Sri Aurobindo proclaims that very few English men have the courage to tell the world "the most elementary facts about the wrong England is doing us." A voice of opposition raised by an Englishman is drowned "in the roar of the ruling nation whose aim is mercilessly to exploit India."

3.2.3. Major Works

Aurobindo was one of the few Indian writers of the time to have produced a whole corpus of writings in English, the language he was made to learn and internalize. His prose writings cover a wide range, beginning from the spiritual to the explicitly political and social reformist. He emerges as a mystical philosopher and a revolutionary politician in most of his prose writings, which comprise essays, letters, speeches, and the like. He began writing poetry in English as a school boy, and his *Songs to Myrtilla* (1898) belongs to this period, as also the long verse narratives *Urvashi* and *Love and Death* (1899), which reflect his heavy reliance on Sanskrit sources. He was influenced by several literary figures of the time, Oscar Wilde being one of them. His political prose writings are known for their radicalism and the severity of their attack on the established leaders of the time. His stringent and uncompromising criticism of contemporary political situation and the series of newspaper

articles he wrote on the subject made him infamous for a very long time. His contribution to the nationalist daily *Bande Mataram* as the chief editorial writer paved the way for the expression of much of his anti-colonial sentiment, ideas which he cherished from his childhood. The series of nine fiery articles written by Sri Aurobindo at the age of 23 under the caption “New Lamps for Old” published in the *Indu Prakash*, Bombay, during 1893 - 94 broke a new ground in Indian politics by severely criticising the servile policy of prayer and petition adopted by the Indian National Congress. Subsequently, his editorials writings in the *Bande Mataram* brought the “art of safe slander” to utmost fruition. With Sri Aurobindo in the editorial board the journal started preaching with extraordinary success “a political creed that was dangerous to the continuance of bureaucratic absolutism.” Out of vengeance, the Imperial Government modified the Press Act on June 8, 1908 making it more stringent and brutal than ever before.

The booklet called *Bhavani Mandir* was a step in the direction of the formulation of a doctrine of revolutionary politics in India. Written in a very strong and assertive tone, the book aims to project the notion of a regenerated India. It caused endless nightmares to British administration; but on the contrary, it proved to be a mighty inspiration and supreme driving force to countless revolutionaries. Of course, the scheme remained at the level of ideas and was never carried out in reality. The booklet maps out India’s all-round development to stand as an independent nation; and to wrest sovereign power from the colonial master. A strong conception of India as a mighty Mother informs writings such as these, and in these respects, Aurobindo might be compared to Bankim Chandra, whose depiction of the nation as a mother received immense popularity in nationalist thought.

“India, the ancient Mother, is indeed striving to be reborn, striving with agony and tears, but she strives in vain. What ails her, she who is after all so vast and might be so strong? There is surely some enormous defect, something vital is wanting in us, nor is it difficult to lay our

finger on the spot. We have all things else, but we are empty of strength, void of energy. We have abandoned Shakti and are therefore abandoned by Shakti. The Mother is not in our hearts, in our brains, in our arms.”

There are frequent references to the proud Aryan race and its rebirth to trigger the process of decolonization. Merged with such evocations is a critique of post-Enlightenment scientific modernity. Aurobindo’s rejection of European science is founded on his belief that the embracing of science in India is but a mere imitation of England.

“Our knowledge, then, weighed down with a heavy load of Tamas, lies under the curse of impotence and inertia. We choose to fancy indeed, nowadays, that if we acquire Science, all will be well. Let us first ask ourselves what we have done with the knowledge we already possess, or what have those who have already acquired Science been able to do for India. Imitative and incapable of initiative, we have striven to copy the method of England,...The mighty force of knowledge which European science bestows is a weapon for the hands of a giant, it is the mace of Bheemsan; what can a weekling do with it but crush himself in the attempt to wield it?”

In 1909, during a period of confinement, Aurobindo had a series of mystical experiences, which form the quintessential base for his *Karmayogin*, the English daily newspaper which he founded around this time. Political journalism is combined with his observations on education and art. *A System of National Education*, a collection of his essays and reflections on education, is a product of this period. *Essays Divine and Human* is a series of articles on spiritual and cultural topics. His later endeavours were shaped as essays on various aspects of philosophical experience, which were to appear as *The Life Divine* (1940). His prominent treatise on yoga, *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1955) remains a popular work on the subject. In *The Ideal of Human Unity* and *The Human Cycle* he charts the evolution of human cultures. *The Mother* (1928) contains his correspondence through letters on questions of both spiritual and

ordinary interest. His *Savitri* (1951) remains, till date, the most read of his poetic endeavours. The episode from the Mahabharata forms the material of this 24,000 lines long epic poem. The poem is not just a description with epic seriousness of an incident from mythology; it remains a powerful artistic venture that attains metaphysical levels in terms of interpretation. The five blank verse plays, *Perseus the Deliverer*, *Vasavadutta*, *Rodogune*, *The Viziers of Bassora* and *Eric*, form an important part of his vast corpus of writings. His verse translations from Sanskrit and Bengali deserve special attention. *Vikramaorvasie*, translated as *The Hero and the Nymph*, stands apart even amongst these translations.

3.3. *A National System of Education*

3.3.1. Introduction

First published in the year 1921, *A System of National Education* is a compilation of a series of articles written by Aurobindo Ghosh. These essays are articulated as his observations on the state of education in India and the need, strongly felt, of the radical renovation of the existing system of education. The essays are a set of insightful comments on the current pattern of education modelled on Europe. An unquestioning emulation of the European educational model, Aurobindo argues, will further mislead the children and the youth, who are the direct beneficiaries of this pattern. In order for us to have a sound knowledge of our surroundings and our ethos, we must be made to imbibe values that are inherent in indigenous practices of teaching. By discarding the European model of education, Aurobindo does not merely argue a case for the recognizably “Indian” system to be followed, but also frames his agenda of anti-colonial intellectual resistance. Colonialism did not merely corrupt the external social, political, and cultural institutions of the people it dominated, but also paralysed the mind. Corruption of the intellect of the colonised through an alien system of education is the best way to perpetuate the acceptance of colonial dominance. An English education automatically entailed an acceptance of English values, English culture, and by implication, English people. This complicated process of conquering the mind of the colonised is the chief target of Aurobindo’s attack in this book.

The ancient Indian system of complete submission to the *guru* and the system of integrating education with national cultural values deserve special attention in these essays. The essays, result of strong reactions against colonial educational policies and programmes, are quite unexpectedly balanced and tranquil in tone. The reactionary element that is so explicit in the views expressed is not superficially noticed in the prose. The essays are brief,

analytical, and insightful. The book is a swift progression of a series of reflections on various themes related to national education, its nature, methods of training the mind, formulation of the intellect, shaping the psyche, and so on.

3.2.2. The Context

The early decades of the 20th century constitute the most turbulent period in Indian history. Indian nationalist thought, which formed a significant strain in the intellectual atmosphere of the 19th century, reached its high watermark by the first three decades of the 20th, with the involvement of prominent nationalist thinkers like Nehru, Gandhi, Bankim Chandra, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and others. Prominent programmes and methods of political action were being designed for the achievement of the shared goal of political emancipation from the colonial rule. The intensification of nationalist activity further distinguishes this period, as does the concretization of plans for anti-colonial resistance. Many methods were tried and found fault with, and the active involvement of Gandhi revolutionized Indian struggle for freedom by transforming it into a mass movement. Social reform of indigenous customs and practices was fore-grounded as an essential step towards the achievement of independence. Quite similarly, emancipation from the web of social and political institutions introduced by the alien rulers and the shaping of indigenous institutions of an autonomous nature became the immediate goal of the nationalists. While the moderate wing of the Indian National Congress believed in partial compliance with the idea of institutions set up by the coloniser, the extremists believed in structuring indigenous institutions that radically challenged the basic premise of colonialism. These thinkers believed in formulating a system which was a radical departure from the European model.

3.3.3. Chapter-wise Analysis

Chapter 1-The Human Mind

For Aurobindo, education implies the enrichment of human mind. He defines educationists in relation to, and as necessarily different from artists, who, in his view, work with dead material. An educationist, then, works with human beings, shaping whose character is his motive. Ghosh accords a high position to educationists.

Aurobindo directs a scathing attack on the educational system imposed by Europe. He highlights some of its major defects in the chapter. Aurobindo enlists the unsuitability of the European model of education to the Indian ethos. He condemns it as based on a certain kind of corruption of the mind. By its complete lack of any component on physical exercise, this model of education produces nothing but stagnation:

“There can be no doubt that the Educational System of Europe is a great advance on the many methods of antiquity, but its defects are also palpable. It is based on an insufficient knowledge of human psychology and it is only safeguarded in Europe from disastrous results by the refusal of the ordinary student to subject himself to the processes it involves, his habit of studying only so much as he must to avoid punishment or to pass an immediate test, his resort to active habits and vigorous physical exercise. In India the disastrous effects of the system on body, mind and character are only too apparent.”

The aim of national education is not to formulate a system that emulates the European model, but to integrate the comprehensiveness of the European system of education without the strenuous notion of cramming or learning by rote. Ghosh here aims to dispense with a mechanized order of imparting education that is prevalent in Europe, and by implication, in the European educational model followed in India. He argues that this re-vamping of education can only be achieved by strengthening what he terms as the “instrument of

knowledge”, the mind. The ulterior motives of educational refinement cannot be accomplished in a system which functions on the notion of the stagnation of this vital and organic instrument. A system of education, which, in his words, is “natural, easy, and effective”, needs to be implemented. His awareness of the mental requirements of modern conditions shapes this model.

Aurobindo acknowledges the teacher’s role as that of a facilitator of learning and not as an instructor or a taskmaster. For him, teaching is best accomplished by suggestion and not by imposition. A teacher, conceived of in this manner, becomes a catalyst of the activity in the pupil’s mind. The pupil imbibes lessons through the suggestions of the teacher. Knowledge is not directly imparted to the pupil as an already available product of the teacher’s mind; the pupil is trained to absorb knowledge on his own. The knowledge that is latent in a pupil’s mind is triggered to come to the surface. Condemning the practice of dubbing this methodology as inefficient for children, Aurobindo strongly recommends it for children. The degree of involvement of the teacher and the amount of guidance and assistance provided by the teacher in this process of learning is progressively reduced with increasing age limits of the students.

He strongly resists the prevalent practice of pre-deciding the course that a child’s mental and professional growth shall take. The common practice of anticipating a child’s future and the consequent shaping of his mind to suit that model receives his disapproval. He in turn argues that the mind of a child should be made free to decide its own destiny. A child’s mind should develop itself in accordance with his own nature and preferences. There is no way in which a separate person would determine the destiny of a child. The child must be made independent enough to decide his prerogatives. In the words of Aurobindo,

“To force the nature, to abandon its own dharma is to do it permanent harm, mutilate its growth and deface its perfection. It is a selfish tyranny over a human soul and a wound to the

Nation, which loses the benefit of the best that a man could have given it and is forced to accept instead something imperfect and artificial, second rate, perfunctory and common. Everyone has in him something divine, something his own, a chance of perfection and strength in however small a sphere which God offers him to take or refuse. The task is to find it, develop it and use it. The chief aim of Education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use.”

In his perception, each child is gifted with a special ability, and it is the moral responsibility of the guardians of the child to provide a congenial environment for this special faculty to develop to fruition. Imposing a pre-decided course of growth on a child is a form of tyrannical stifling of the child’s soul. It resembles mental corruption of the worst kind. Since is child is divinely ordained and is blessed with a unique ability, it has something extraordinary to offer to mankind and to the nation. Forcing one’s views of mental development on a child might impair the process by which he would make a unique and recognizably significant contribution to the cause of national growth. Aurobindo’s views on education are distinguished in terms of the recognition of the varied nature of the contribution made by individuals in a nation.

Standard practices of imparting education must relate themselves to the milieu to which pupil’s belong. Education, instead of helping them conceive images of a world alien to them, must assist them in achieving a more comprehensive understanding of their own locale. It is the region that they affiliate themselves to, that must receive the highest attention through education. Education must paint the images of the real surroundings a pupil is expected to encounter in his daily life. A form of education that is distanced in terms of its content and the situationality it addresses fails to relate itself to the reality of the pupil’s existence. A mode of instruction that talks about a different order of reality creates a vague, alien, bent of mind in a student. This mode of instruction is largely incongruent to the growth of the nation.

Education is a re-confirmation of the idea of a pupil's belongingness to a certain region and ethos. Divorced from the reality of his circumstances, education has nothing concrete and substantial to offer to the pupil.

“It is God's arrangement that they should belong to a particular nation, age, society, that they should be children of the past, possessors of the present, creators of the future. The past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aim and summit. Each must have its due and natural place in a National System of Education.”

A national system of education is one that emerges out of the bearings of a nation's past, and thus acknowledges the crucial role this past plays in moulding the present and anticipation of a future. The past plays a defining role in a system of national education. The traces of a nation's past cannot be erased in the act of modernizing the system of education.

Aurobindo thus conceives of an educational pattern which values and treasures its past, even as it constantly embraces the present and foresees a future.

Chapter 2- The Powers of the Mind

Aurobindo classifies the human brain in terms of its capabilities and the functions it performs, and proposes the view that the human brain is the instrument of knowledge or the *antahkarana*. This is further divided into four layers. The *chitta* or the reservoir of past experiences and mental impressions is the storehouse of memory. He makes a crucial distinction between what he terms as potential and active memory. In his view, the active memory selects material from the potential memory. It searches from amongst a matrix of stagnant and dormant material. While the passive memory or the *chitta* remains constant and unchanging, the active memory is in a state of flux. Aurobindo here seems to echo S.T. Coleridge's famous theorization of fancy and imagination in his *Biographia Literaria*. The mind proper is called *manas*, and it forms the second layer. This layer performs crucial functions like the translation of all sensory impressions into mental images. Since the senses

and sensory impressions form the material of thought, children should be properly trained in the art of using their five senses. It is the primary responsibility of a teacher to enable the pupil to use his senses in the best manner possible. The intellect or *buddhi* forms the third and the most important layer in the human mind. It imposes order on the material accumulated by the other parts of the mind. It is the most vital component of the mind, and is of great value to the educationist. Prominent functions like imagination, memory, judgement, observation, comparison, classification, inference, comprehension, command, manipulation, and reasoning are performed by the intellect. Divided into two categories—the right hand and the left, the intellect is indispensable to human reason. The fourth and the most superior of all faculties is the one characteristic of a genius. This involves intuitive perception of truth, which transforms a person into a prophet of truth. Aurobindo calls it a “mighty and baffling” element in the pupil, one that is difficult to deal with. The educationist has not been able to work with the element of genius in a pupil. Instructors have often tended to ignore this vital element and have made untiring efforts to stifle and delimit it, thus paralysing its full growth. The more liberal of teachers have extended their encouragement for the development of this faculty in the pupil’s mind. Aurobindo considers this faculty to be crucial for the evolution of humanity as a whole. This faculty, however, needs proper direction. It always runs the risk of being misdirected. It is the responsibility of a teacher to provide proper support to this faculty. The perfection of this element through the minimization of error, caprice, and fancifulness is the duty of the teacher. The teacher by himself cannot achieve this; the best way to allow this faculty to flourish is to enable the pupil to develop it on his own.

Chapter 3- The Moral Nature

The primary focus of this chapter is the articulation of the pressing need for the integration of morality with intellect in education. In the perspective of Aurobindo, a system of education which emphasizes the development of the intellect at the cost of its separation from morals

and emotions, must not be encouraged. True education is as much the refinement of morals and emotions, as of intellect. Intellectual growth must complement the moral and emotional growth of a pupil. The modern system of education, even as it succeeds in training the minds of the pupils, fails to address the question of moral and emotional growth. The obvious and somewhat trite attempt to instruct pupils in lessons of religion and spirituality, have proved to be vain. These texts and discourses run the risk of being received in a mechanical and banal manner, with their essence being lost in the process of reception. The ideas intended to be imparted in such lessons lose their profundity and are bound to become banal.

The moral well-being of a man can be ensured through the training of emotions, the *samskaras* or habitual behaviour, the *swabhava* or nature. These vital psychological traits need to be channelized in a manner most conducive to the mental development of a pupil. It is important to provide a direction to these otherwise frivolous traits.

“You can impose a certain discipline on children, dress them into a certain mould, lash them into a desired path, but unless you can get their hearts and natures on your side, the conformity to this becomes a hypocritical and heartless, often a cowardly compliance. This is what is done in Europe, and it leads to that remarkable phenomenon known as the sowing of wild oats as soon as the yoke of discipline at School and at home is removed, and to the social hypocrisy which is so large a feature of European life.”

The emergent system of national education aims to enable pupils to internalize more than passively accept certain cores ethics and modes of conduct. It creates in them the need to conform to the values they are made to imbibe. Aurobindo strongly decries the English system of education. The critique is vehement and direct. He accuses this system of being instrumental in the estrangement of the young men of India. He argues that this system of education resulted in the moral corruption of a generation of Indian youth before the revamping effect of the Swadeshi movement, which brought them closer to their roots. He

highlights the inappropriateness of the alien educational pattern in an Indian milieu. Institutions like the Central Hindu College, he maintains, are always in the danger of emulating the situation of European education system described above. They, through the adoption of the English system of education, fail to integrate religious and moral values in the pupils.

Rejecting the model of the English boarding school as rigid and excessively disciplinarian, Aurobindo privileges the ancient Indian practice of the *Gurukuls* as the ideal to be restored and emulated. This model, for him, carves out a special role for the teacher not as an instructor but a mentor and guide.

“The old Indian System of the Guru commanding by his knowledge and sanctity, the implicit obedience, perfect admiration, reverent emulation of the student, was a far superior method of moral discipline. It is impossible to restore that ancient system; but it is not impossible to substitute the wise friend, guide and helper for the hired Instructor or the benevolent Policeman which is all that the European System usually makes of the pedagogue.”

There was an aura of sanctity attached to this ancient system of instruction.

Aurobindo advocates teaching methods which value the example more than the precept. He avoids delineating a system which is overtly didactic. Learning is imparted more through associations than through mere instruction. Learning excites noble emotions and lofty thoughts. It elevates the soul and emancipates the mind.

The attempt at offering religious instruction as part of education is again condemned as a European practice which is highly mechanized. Religion, for Aurobindo, must be lived and not merely studied. He focuses on the need to integrate religion with one's daily existence by way of practice.

Chapter IV- Simultaneous and Successive Teaching

The focus of this chapter is the inadequacy and inefficiency of the practice of teaching by snippets or in chunks. A topic is dealt with in minor details and is taught in chunks over a long period, resulting in the loss of expertise on the part of the students. No attempt is made by the prevailing system of education to offer an expertise-oriented course to pupils. The academic set-up aims to offer snippets of knowledge at the base and high levels of expertise at the higher levels, where students are expected to specialize in certain areas. Aurobindo finds this system ineffective and inappropriate, as it fails to present a complete view of a subject to the pupil. He calls it shallow and insubstantial: “Much of the shallowness, discursive lightness and fickle mutability of the average modern mind is due to the vicious principle of teaching by snippets.”

In contrast to the current educational pattern, Aurobindo mentions the ancient system of education which aimed at offering detailed knowledge in one or two subjects and thus enabled students to specialize in certain areas of study. He finds this system highly relevant and purposeful. He counters the supposed allegation that the otherwise inconstant mind of children is automatically held captive by variety in the subjects that they learn. By bringing in variety, educationists claim to have succeeded in imparting teaching to students in a way that suits them best. The pupils are absolved from the strain of studying one subject for a longer duration of time. The practice of prolonged concentration has never been encouraged in children in modern times. Condemning the current practice of education as unnatural and rigid, Aurobindo proposes his theory of “self-education”, where the pupil is made capable enough to educate himself. The teacher’s duty is to generate interest in the subject a child is interested in. trained in this manner, the child will develop the ability to study a subject for a long and sustained period of time.

The mental faculties of children should be made sound enough to understand the implications of what is taught to them. Once these faculties are strong enough to absorb knowledge, they should be taught languages. Taught in this manner, learning becomes less painful and more effortless.

Aurobindo advocates the development of a sound knowledge in the study of one's mother-tongue. In his opinion, one's mother-tongue is possibly the best instrument through which a window on the world of knowledge could be opened. A child's venture in to the world of knowledge must be initiated by a study of one's mother-tongue.

“Almost every child has an imagination, an instinct for words, a dramatic faculty, a wealth of idea and fancy. These should be interested in the literature and history of the Nation. Instead of stupid and dry spelling and reading books, looked on as a dreary and ungrateful task, he should be introduced by rapidly progressive stages to the most interesting parts of his own literature and the life around him and behind him, and they should be put before him, in such a way as to attract and appeal to the qualities of which I have spoken.”

The imaginative faculty of a pupil ought to be geared towards a study and appreciation of the literature of his nation. A mode of study that introduces them to and triggers their interest in their own literary heritage is to be adopted. In place of the mechanical task of learning spelling or other technical aspects of a language by rote, pupils should be made to read their national literature. The spirit of the nation is kept alive through the study of a national literature. History, science and arts could be taught to students at this level. The teaching of these subjects must not be formal or artificial, but natural, in the sense that a human interpretation ought to be given to these subjects, by relating them to human beings. The subjects could be weaved in to the form of interesting narratives that centre on a key figure, through whose example a lesson would be taught.

“Every child is a lover of interesting narrative, a hero-worshipper and a patriot. Appeal to these qualities in him and through him, let him master without knowing it the living and human parts of his Nation's history. Every child is an inquirer, an investigator, analyser, a merciless anatomist. Appeal to those qualities in him and let him acquire without knowing it the right temper and the necessary fundamental knowledge of the Scientist. Every child has an insatiable intellectual curiosity and turn for metaphysical enquiry. Use it to draw him on slowly to an understanding of the world and himself. Every child has the gift of imitation and a touch of imaginative power. Use it to give him the ground work of the faculty of the artist.”

Various elements of the child's learning abilities must be appealed to in order to create a deep impression on his mind. It is more important to put the qualities he/she is gifted with than to impose the forceful development of certain other qualities which are not inherently present in the child. The qualities of inquisitiveness, curiosity, and the spirit of inquiry must be kept alive in a child's mind in order to enable him to learn these subjects in a more natural manner. Nature must be allowed to devise its own methods of educating the child. New ways of learning must be made available to posterity and their complete growth must be ensured.

Chapter V- The Training of the Mind

The primary responsibilities of a teacher involve a proper training of the senses, leading to a profound evocation of noble thoughts in the mind of the pupil. The mind, unlike other senses, does not gather its material from external sources, but is turned inward. The senses, therefore, in order to be made vehicles of noble thought, should be trained to be sensitive and accurate. Obstacles, if any, in the path of sensitiveness and accuracy must be removed by the teacher. The sense organs perform their functions accurately, but it is the nerve currents, which, if not active, hinder this process. The smooth functioning of all these elements can be ensured by the control of breathing. Aurobindo here prescribes *yogic* methods to purify the nerves. This methods helps in the stabilization and systematization of the nerves, which otherwise get

disturbed by certain sensations. He elaborates on the role played by these vital elements and the methods by which these faculties can be perfected through rigorous discipline and practice. He argues that the sixth sense has never received any attention that it deserved. The training of the sixth sense has never been the focus of the training of the mind. The focus is on the gradual undoing of the habitual use of the mind and the adoption of a perfect manner in which the human mind can be tuned. The ultimate aim of these exercises should be the purification of the mind, or *chittashuddhi*, which, in his view, is an ancient form of training. This method, he laments, is considered unsuitable to modern means of education.

“But so long as there is not chittasuddhi, instead of doing this office perfectly, it itself remains imperfect and corrupt and adds to the confusion in the mind channel by false judgment, false imagination, false memory, false observation, false comparison, contrast and analogy, false education, induction and inference. The purification of the chitta is essential for the liberation, purification and perfect action of the intellect.”

Chapter VI- Sense Improvement by Practice

The inertia of the senses and the means by which they could be made to function actively is addressed in this chapter. The inattention of *buddhi* leads to what he terms a *tamasic* inertia. The faculty of observation, the most important trait in human beings, needs to be trained and developed as part of a child’s education. Aurobindo here details the significance of attention in the development of the mind and other sensory faculties.

“Attention is a factor in knowledge, the importance of which has been always recognised. Attention is the first condition of right memory and of accuracy. To attend to what he is doing, is the first element of discipline required of the student, and, as I have suggested, this can easily be secured if the object of attention is made interesting.”

The object on which one wants the child's attention to be focussed needs to be made appealing to his mind. The development of concentration should be the aim of education at the primary levels. The possibility of multiple levels of concentration must be explored and shaped in the child. These multiple levels of concentration enable a person to be attentive to the details of a certain important incident, while being vaguely conscious of other happening simultaneously. Through practice, what is purported to be achieved is the shaping of these levels of concentration in such a manner so as to enable a child to devote equal attention to several happenings at a time. This unique ability needs to be developed in the pupil, and his mind must be made sensitive and active enough to make note of several details with equal degrees of concentration.

Chapter VII- The Training of the Mental Faculties

This chapter explores in further details the need to perfect the skills of observation. The quality of selective observation enables us to take notice of certain objects, even as we discard or ignore others. There are just a few things that remain intact in the memory after they are observed. Many others are usually perceived in a rather indifferent manner, resulting in their eviction from the regular memory. Receptivity varies with the degree of attention with which a certain object is perceived. Instead of merely casting a glance at an object, the senses must be trained to know the object intimately, to observe and internalise it. The objective of this exercise ought to be the training of the skills of observation. Lessons ought to be taught not merely as mechanical exercises and repetition, but through association and comparison. The mental elements of comparison and contrast will naturally be perfected through these practices. The spirit of scientific enquiry, analysis and inference would be called upon to materialize these tasks. The need is to make the study of nature, and the acquiring of scientific and botanical knowledge less and less artificial by integrating it with nature. The memory and judgement of the pupils needs to be trained through these and other

such processes. These processes, in turn, will generate a certain kind of willingness to pursue study of the topics taught even in leisure hours.

Students must be made familiar to the method of relational evaluation of their own judgement. Through the comparison of their judgement of things with that of others, they could be shown how correct they were and how far their opinions were correct. Aurobindo accords an important role to the ability to make correct judgement.

“The judgment will naturally be trained along with the other faculties. At every step the boy will have to decide what is the right idea, measurement, appreciation of colour, sound, scent, etc., and what is wrong. Often the judgments and distinctions made will have to be exceedingly subtle, and delicate. At first many errors will be made, but the learner should be taught to trust his judgment without being attached to its results. It will be found that the judgment will soon begin to respond to the calls made on it, clear itself of all errors and begin to judge correctly and minutely.

The best way is to accustom the boy to compare his judgments with those of others. When he is wrong, it should at first be pointed out to him how far he was right and why he went wrong; afterwards he should be encouraged to note these things for himself. Every time he is right, his attention should be prominently and encouragingly called to it so that he may get confidence.”

The training provided in comparison and contrast leads to a development of the faculty of analogy. This will further equip the students with the skills needed to establish associations between objects, to study them in connection with each other. Apart from these, imagination forms an important element in itself. It is the most vital function of the mind and is the most independent of all other faculties. It performs functions like the creation of mental images, merging already existent thoughts and images in to new combinations, appreciation of beauty, and enabling an understanding of the nature of one’s creative and spiritual life.

Aurobindo comments on the use of language and says that the poor and mediocre taste for words has paralysed the imagination and intellect. A proper choice of words and linguistic expression is essential for the intellect to develop. Words should be taught in terms of their structures, sense, and sound, and then the ability to relate these words to other words known already through comparison and analogy must be encouraged. This kind of an associative learning must be executed in place of the rather mechanical task of cramming and learning words by memorization. The method of learning through associations also enhances the grammatical sense, as words are not being learnt in isolation but in unison, in the form of their combinations with other words and grammatical structures. This form of a less rigid and informal method must be adopted in place of the stern and over-used ways of learning. The aim must be the evocation of curiosity and triggering of interest, rather than merely absorbing the knowledge of grammar.

“All this should be done informally drawing on the curiosity and interest, avoiding set-teaching and memorising of rules. The true knowledge takes its base on things, *arthas*, and only when it has mastered the thing, proceeds to formalize its information.”

Chapter VIII- Training of the Logical Faculty

The objective of this chapter is to enumerate the role of logical reason in the process of learning. This faculty is dependent on the material collected by the other elements of knowledge. Since this faculty deals with the inferences drawn through association with the senses, its primary function is to deduce and discriminate. Reasoning depends on three factors, the correctness of the facts accumulated, completeness and accuracy of data, and the elimination of other possible or impossible alternatives to a certain conclusion. It necessarily involves the ability to pick and choose, to select. This faculty fails in most cases due to the inappropriate functioning of the three elements stated above. The un-decidability that underlies the act of making inferences complicates the process.

The practice of teaching reasoning through the subject of logic is an ineffective one, because it replaces the subject and theory for the practical aspect of it. A skilled teacher would much rather teach a rule or a proposition by way of example than through theoretical concepts. The application of the principles of logic in real life situations must receive the highest degree of attention in such teaching. A pupil must be made to learn lessons from his own successes or failures in drawing inferences on a certain issue. His own interpretations and conclusions must be made the basis of future lessons. The faults in his inferences can be directly dealt with in such a method of rectification. A child must be made aware of the role of bias or prejudice in the acceptance or rejection of a given fact. Pupils must be trained to deal with options in a more open-minded and inclusive manner. Hasty acceptance or rejection of ideas must be avoided as far as is practicable.

Formal teaching in a certain subject and on a particular topic could only be imparted after the pupil has acquired sufficient experience in the art of observation and the skills of judgement and inference. These practical instances of learning through more natural and less formalized means should pre-date the more formulaic explanations of a concept. Formal and more pedagogical approaches to teaching logic might be applied only after a pupil has himself absorbed the art of reasoning. It will then be a more systematized version of the same lessons which he has absorbed himself.

3.3.4. Aurobindo as a Writer of English Prose

Through his prose writings, Aurobindo facilitated the creation of newer possibilities of expression. A great scholar himself, Aurobindo never allowed his scholarship or erudition to dominate his prose. His prose is of a literary artist with a mind of exceptional calibre. It is unique with the characteristics of profundity and immensity. As one reads, one feels the charm of its ambience, and the tranquillity of thought process. In the opinion of V.K. Gokak,

an eminent literary critic, Aurobindo's prose is gifted with the quality of "meticulousness and virtuosity possessing the power, charm and propriety" that stand out distinctly. It possesses the exceptional power of expression which is lucid, powerful, musical, and full of harmonious coherences.

Aurobindo makes use of myths quite frequently to substantiate his prose. The use of myths provides a profundity to his writing. The creative writer generates life into the ancient myths by using them significantly in his texts. He re-shapes them and reminds us of the myth by his own sentence which is full of the memory of a citation, an epigram or a paradox. For Aurobindo, the past is a living reality to be found in the future. The sleeping myth becomes a flaming metaphor in his texts. He knows both the worlds—the east and the west—very-well and he sees the soul of myth. In the great books of the Pondicherry period; myths are fused with an effortless ease. While trying to characterise the Asura, he remembers Aeschylus's phrase:

... he is thus blown along on the hurricane of his desires and ambitions until he stumbles and is broken, in the great phrase of Aeschylus, against the throne of Eternal Law.

In *Essays on the Gita*, he recalls an apophthegm by Heraclitus and harmonises the idea with Gita's ideal of life as battle. From Heraclitus he moves freely to the world of the Upanishads. He refers to the Darwinians and "Modern Science" in passing. He also uses myths as metaphors both in satiric prose and in serious discourses. The culmination of an exposition is often marked by a synonymous phrase or a clause or a sentence from the original text, which has often a metaphorical function. After the original commentaries, the Sanskrit synonym looks like his own creation.

Many critics hold the view that Aurobindo's writings are English on the surface, but Sanskrit at bottom. He infuses in his impeccable English the rhythm of Sanskrit verse. Many of his writings are distinguished by the intensity of spiritual emotion, which gives a new flavour to this style. The style of Aurobindo's prose might at best be called a synthetic style, for it is based on a synthesis of science, psychology and literature. The language of psychological investigation, gives credence to his propositions. There is a great rush of eloquence born of spiritual inspiration in many of his philosophical writings. In some of his works, the poetry is concealed by the apparent bareness of prose. Every sentence is a truth-saver and yet there is no outward show, no exhibitory use of rhetoric. His prose is sufficient proof of the claim that Indian English prose attained a remarkable degree of variety and maturity in the early decades of the twentieth century.

3.3.5. Aurobindo's Critique of the European System of Education

The notion of formulating a "national" system of education is a strategy at de-bunking the western and supposedly "corrupt" models of education available in colonial India. Designing an indigenous model of education is a nationalist strategy. It counters the predominantly foreign language-based education popularized by the British administrators. The new model that was being envisioned emphasized on spiritual enrichment rather than material advancement. It was as much steeped in polemics as was Indian nationalism. Amongst the pioneers who presented their own versions of the notion of national education, mention might be made of Vivekananda, Gandhi, and Sarojini Naidu. Remodelling youth and thus shaping their psyche for an indigenous political struggle had been the agenda of many of these educationists and innovators.

Even as Aurobindo formulates a seemingly universalist treatise on education, the text is imbued in the nationalist and anti-colonial discourses of the time. In the text, Aurobindo uses the vantage point of an educationist to propagate his nationalist agenda of the indigenization of a supposedly “alien” form of education. The process through which the perceived Anglicization of the native was propagated was by imparting European system of education. This led to the growing alienation of the youth of the country. This dominant social change had to be countered by a more convincing and appealing model of education, one that would do both—provide the alluringly “modern” content of European education and relate it to Indian ethos. The much talked about “spirit” of the nation would be purportedly kept alive in this mode of education. In producing such a model of education, Aurobindo construes a strategy for anti-colonial resistance.

Aurobindo’s efforts at making the pupils self-reliant through education deserve special mention. Education, for long, under the British system had been mostly a mechanized and impersonal medium of instruction. The need to transform education in to a lens to look at one’s own milieu was never felt before. Through a progressive stifling of the spirit of freedom, this system of education made pupils heavily reliant on external rather than internal sources for gaining knowledge. The undue importance given to learning by rote and cramming, for instance, paralyse the growth of an individual’s mind by attacking its creative ability and genius. Aurobindo’s efforts have been directed towards the perfection of all those internal elements that were otherwise neglected. Through this theoretical formulation, Aurobindo attacks the ideological bearings of European education in India. The need to found education on native soil and the need to create an indigenized pattern of educational refinement is a strategy for resistance.

The system of education envisaged by Aurobindo is one that appeals to the hearts and not just the minds of pupils. In his opinion, it is important to win the hearts of the pupils in order

to mould them in the desired manner. If the pupils are emotionally motivated to embrace a certain opinion, that opinion gets wider acceptability and greater viability amongst pupils. Aurobindo attempts to develop a critique of the European model of education which, through its emphasis on the mind, fails to prove efficient in gaining acceptability amongst pupils. As his counter-narrative of a proposed pattern of national education is carved in to a definite shape, the vulnerability of the Western model becomes mercilessly apparent. He perceives these perils as directly affecting the social life in Europe. To all outward appearances, the child schooled in such a system acts according to the pre-determined pattern of discipline, but in his private moments enjoys this liberty and his independence from these ritualized codes of conduct.

The recourse to an “ancient” Indian social institution in place of the “corrupt” colonial one is a nationalist strategy at appropriating a politicized past as a claim for cultural and moral superiority. The constant recourse to an “ancient” form of educational refinement necessitates an understanding of the complex nature of Indian nationalist thought and its strategic use of a homogenized “Indian” past. The past, for Aurobindo, as also for many other nationalist thinkers of the time, represented a perfect state of time. Social institutions achieved the pinnacle of glory in the past, and therefore they could be potential models for the reconstruction of the current social institutions, which are corrupted by colonial control. This past is evoked not just to provide alternative means of conceiving contemporary social institutions, but also to act as a claim to cultural superiority. The tantalizing effects of colonial cultural domination is countered through the imagined past and the repeated valorization of the perfect state of things that could be emulated. This form of education, which bases itself on a recognition of the values and ethics of the milieu within which it emerged, is pitted against an alien and supposedly mechanical system of education prevalent under the colonial power. The ancient system of education and its efficacy in bringing about

positive changes is posed as a challenge to the colonial pattern of education, which merely echoes the system prevalent in Europe, without making any attempt to integrate it with the ethos of India. The eloquent articulation of the condemnation of the European model projects the ancient Indian model of education as morally superior and more effective than the current system. The national system of education will do away with the indispensable alien influence of the European model.

“It is clear, therefore, that unless we revert to our old system in some of its principles, we must be content to allow this source of disturbance to remain. A really national system of education would not allow itself to be controlled by European ideas in this all important matter.”

Similarly, Aurobindo's anticipations of creating a race of true Aryans deserve special mention, distinguished, as they are by the notion of cultural superiority. His aim was to construct a predominantly masculinist national space. The claims for racial superiority are made through the appropriation of education as a vantage point to frame a larger critique of colonial institutions as a whole. The attempt to counter the supposedly modern social institutions introduced by the coloniser with an ancient indigenous model became a commonplace for a majority of nationalist thinkers. It at once debunked the colonial endeavours of modernisation and social advancement and projected the colonised as culturally superior.

“The thirst of knowledge, the self-devotion, the purity, the renunciation of the Brahmin, the courage, ardour, honour, nobility, chivalry, patriotism of the Kshatriya, the beneficence, skill, industry, generous enterprise and large open-handedness of the Vaisya, the self-effacement and loving service of the Sudra, these are the qualities of the Aryan. They constitute the moral temper we desire in our young men, in the whole Nation.”

The professed aim is to create a predominantly Aryan nation, where the essential values of the milieu one lives in will be propagated. National education must aim to preserve the spirit of Hinduism, and its essence. The aim at creating a Hindu nation of the Aryan race is a nationalist political strategy.

“It is this spirit of Hinduism pervading our Schools which far more than the teaching of Indian Subjects, the use of Indian methods or formal instruction in Hindu Beliefs and Hindu Scriptures should be the essence of Nationalism in our Schools distinguishing them from all others.”

The school, then, becomes the space where nationalist thinking is encouraged to be developed. The students become the vehicles of this form of thought and are expected to become chief agents of anti-colonial resistance.

3.3.6. Suggested Essay Topics

1. Make an estimate of Aurobindo Ghosh as a nationalist thinker.
2. Aurobindo's notion of “national education” attempts to formulate a critique of the European model of education. Discuss.
3. Aurobindo's views on education are inextricably linked to the idea of nationalist reconstruction of colonial institutions. Elucidate.
4. Write an essay on Aurobindo's role as an educationist and innovator.

5. Aurobindo appropriated education as a strategy for anti-colonial resistance. Comment.

3.3.7. List of References

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3.3.8. Suggestions for further Reading

1. *Nineteenth Century Indian English Prose*- Mohan Ramanan

2. “Letter to His Excellency the Right Hon’ble William Pitt, Lord Amherst” (1823)- Raja Rammohan Roy

3. “Minute on Indian Education”- T.B.Macaulay

4. *Speeches*- Sarojini Naidu

UNIT-4 M.K.GANDHI- SPEECHES

4.1. Indian Nationalism

4.1.1. Introduction

The second half of the 19th century witnessed the proliferation of national political consciousness and the growth of an organised national movement in India. The year 1885 marks the beginning of a new epoch in Indian History. Indian National Congress was founded in December 1885 by seventy-two political workers. It was the first organised expression of Indian Nationalism on an all-India scale. The rise and growth of Indian nationalism has been traditionally explained in terms of Indian response to the stimulus generated by the British Raj through creation of new social and political institutions, and new opportunities. However, it was the discourse of a “degenerated” India that was largely endorsed by the Orientalist scholars that provoked strong reactions from many enlightened Indians, and this resulted in the effervescence of nationalist sentiment among the elite sections of Indian society. For a very long time, Indian nationalism remained the option only for the upper classes. It was not until the arrival of M.K.Gandhi, that it got transformed in to a “mass” movement, with the involvement of the working classes. English educated men from the upper classes dominated the political scene for a major part of the period, and the difference in their political methods and alignments divided them in to two groups: the moderates and the extremists. The moderates favoured a political system which aimed at working in consonance with the prevalent system of colonial cultural institutions. They believed in political harmony between Britain and India. The extremists, on the other hand, used more radical and aggressive means for the articulation of their demands. They believed in essential opposition to the colonial system of governance. Their primary aim was to

establish autonomy in terms of governance, and they strived to make India politically independent.

The history of Indian nationalism, in short, is as much about intrigues and contradictions within the nationalists of the Indian National Congress as about the struggles and friction between the colonisers and the colonized.

4.1.2. Reasons for the Growth of Indian Nationalism

Indian Nationalism grew partly as a result of colonial policies and partly as a reaction to colonial policies in fact, it would be more correct to see Indian nationalism as a product of a mix of various factors. People came to realise that colonial rule was the major cause of India's economic backwardness and that the interests of the Indians involved the interests of all sections and classes. The very condition of British rule helped the growth of national sentiment among the Indian people. Nationalist sentiments grew easily among the people because India was unified and welded into a nation during the 19th and 20th centuries. The introduction of a uniform and modern system of government by the British throughout the country unified it administratively. The destruction of the rural and local self-sufficient economy and the introduction of modern trade and industries on an all- India scale had increasingly made India's economic life a single whole and interlinked the economic fate of people living in different parts of the country. Furthermore, the introduction of the railways, telegraph and unified postal systems had brought the different parts of the country together and promoted mutual contact among the people, especially among the leaders.

As a result of the spread of modern western education and thought during the 19th century, a large number of Indians imbibed a modern rational, secular, democratic and nationalist political outlook. The spread and popularity of the English language helped

nationalist leaders of different linguistic regions to communicate with each other. Modern education also created a certain uniformity and community of outlook and interests among the educated Indians. This English-educated intelligentsia formed the nucleus for the newly-arising political unrest, and it was this section of the society which provided leadership to the Indian political associations. The historical researches by Europeans scholars, such as Max Mueller, Monier Williams, Roth, Sassoon, and by Indian scholars such as R.G. Bhandarkar, R.L. Mitra and later Swami Vivekananda created an entirely new picture of India's past glory and greatness. The theory put forward by European scholars that the Indo-Aryans belonged to the same ethnic group of mankind from which stemmed all the nations of Europe gave a psychological boost to educated Indians. All these inspired the educated Indians with a new spirit of patriotism and nationalism.

With the emergence of the modern press, both English and Vernacular, the latter half of the 19th century saw an unprecedented growth of Indian-owned English and Vernacular newspapers. The Indian Press played a notable role in mobilising public opinion, organising political movements, fighting out public opinions and promoting nationalism. These reform movements sought to remove social evils which divided the Indian society; this had the effect of bringing different sections of the society together. Since many reform movements drew their inspiration from India's rich cultural heritage, these promoted pan-Indian feelings and spirit of nationalism. An important factor in the growth of national sentiments in India was the tone of racial superiority adopted by many Englishmen in their dealings with Indians. The reactionary policies of the British government were also responsible for the growth of political associations.

4.2. M.K.Gandhi

4.2.1. Early Life and Career

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869, in Porbandar, a small coastal town in northwest India. His father, Karamchand Gandhi, was a local politician, serving as prime minister to a number of local Indian princes; his mother, Putlibai, was Karamchand's fourth wife, married when her husband was already in his forties. Neither of his parents was well educated: his mother was illiterate, and his father, Gandhi wrote later in life, "had no education save for experience." Nevertheless, they were well-to-do by the standards of the rural region in which they lived, owning several houses in Porbandar and the neighboring towns of Rajkot and Kutiana, and they were able to afford a nurse and a good education for the young Gandhi. The year of Gandhi's birth fell in the midst of the Victorian era, when the British Empire was approaching its apogee. A clever journalist had observed in 1817 that "the sun never sets upon the British flag," and by the latter half of the 19th century, that bold declaration was true. In addition to their vast domains in India, the British controlled both ends of the Mediterranean; they held key positions in the South Pacific at Malaya and Singapore; they dominated an entire continent with their hold on Australia and New Zealand; and they ruled the Dominion of Canada, which made up half of North America. In addition, during Gandhi's youth, British adventurers such as Cecil Rhodes were busy bringing most of Africa under Queen Victoria's rule as well.

This vast realm was held together by a peculiar mixture of commercial greed, missionary zeal, and rivalry with other European powers, along with the frequently expressed notion that Britain had a unique "civilizing mission" embarked upon for the benefit of the rest of the world. It was, in a sense, an informal empire, having no official standing under the English constitution, and the British public was remarkably ignorant about the administration of their

realm. But it held together remarkably well, and by the 1870s, the British governed a quarter of the world's land and population, more than the Roman or Spanish Empires at their height.

India was the "jewel in the crown" of Victoria's Empire. British rule in India, referred to as the Raj by the men who built and sustained it, had begun with the penetration of the continent by the British East India Company in the 18th century. At that time, the subcontinent was governed by a decaying Islamic dynasty, the Mughals, whose power had declined to such a degree they had difficulty enforcing their rule beyond their capital of Delhi. Largely to secure their trade routes, the English traders used private armies to expand their political control, and by the time the British government took over from the East India Company in the 1860s and established a regular system of Imperial rule, the British had replaced the Mughals as overlords of the entire region. For Britain, the benefits of the *Raj* were obvious—Imperial administration provided a wide and fertile field of employment for their young men, control of the subcontinent gave them geopolitical dominance over a wide arc of territory, and exports of Indian raw materials helped offset the trade deficit that a small industrialized island like Great Britain accrued. For the numerous Indian peasantry, deeply religious, bound to the land, and tied down by the strictures of the caste system, the change of rulers made little practical difference—it is important to remember that the idea of the "Indian nation" is essentially a modern invention, and that before the arrival of the British, the vast subcontinent had neither a common language nor a history of democratic self-rule. For most Indians, the British conquest was merely a matter of trading a corrupt ruling class for a more efficient one.

Even at the height of Imperial Britain's dominance, however, only two-thirds of India was governed directly from London. The rest was held by a collection of traditional Indian potentates, princes, and rajas, some corrupt, others forward-looking, who had sworn

allegiance to the British Crown and were allowed a reasonable degree of autonomy in local affairs. It was in one of these princely states that Gandhi was born, educated, and—at the age of thirteen—married, to a local girl of the same age named Kasturbai. Child marriage was—and still is, in some regions—an accepted facet of daily life in India, and while later in life Gandhi would attack the practice as cruel and inhumane, he seems to have welcomed the wedding, and, in his words, "I lost no time in assuming the authority of a husband . . . (she) could not go out without my permission." Needless to say, the adolescent couple went through quarrelsome stretches, often not speaking to one another for long periods of time.

Gandhi was a shy and fearful child. Short and spindly, he shied away from athletics, and his lack of physical prowess was matched by his difficulties in school. Though in later years he would read the Bible, Tolstoy, and the *Bhagavad-Gita* with great enthusiasm, the young Gandhi labored over the multiplication tables and never rose above academic mediocrity. His religious imagination, which would inspire observers around the world in years to come, was also decidedly limited in his childhood years. His household was a remarkable center of religious diversity: his mother was a devout Hindu, and his father's friends, a diverse group that included Muslims, Parsis, and Jains, often debated religious and philosophical matters in the house. (Given Gandhi's later philosophical convictions, it is noteworthy that Jainism was particularly strong in his region, since that movement preaches the preciousness of all life, and the necessity of avoiding the killing of any living creature, however small.) But while many of the ideas that percolated around the young Gandhi found their way into his religious convictions later in life, as a young man he had no religious convictions at all—the subject bored him, in his own words, he found the "glitter and pomp" of Hindu temples distasteful, and if anything, leaned "somewhat toward atheism."

In 1885, Karamchand Gandhi passed away, and his relatives decided that the young Mohandas was his most likely successor as head of the family. With that in mind, they agreed that the young man should go to England and study for the bar there—with an English law degree under his belt, they assumed, Gandhi would have no difficulty following in his father's footsteps as a local politician. But a journey to Europe was a significant step, and his mother Putlibai worried about the corrupting effect that England would have upon her son's morals. To calm her fears, Gandhi swore an oath to avoid wine and meat (both proscribed by the Hindu faith) while overseas, and after the family had gathered enough money, he made his way to Bombay to sail for Southampton in England.

In Bombay, a remarkable event occurred: The elders of Gandhi's caste, the Modh Banias (a merchant caste, neither as high as the priestly Brahmins nor as low as the shunned untouchables) learned of the proposed trip and objected. No member of their caste could go to England, they solemnly declared, because such a trip would inevitably involve impurity, and Hinduism could not be practiced in Europe. By this point, however, Gandhi was determined to go, and so he allowed himself to be expelled from his caste. For the remainder of his life, he would be "out-caste", an appropriate condition for a man who labored hard to put an end to caste divisions in India. All obstacles now removed, Gandhi sailed for England in September of 1888, at the age of nineteen. Among the loved ones he left behind was his three-month-old first child, a boy named Harilal.

4.2.2. In South Africa

In the months following his initial speech, Gandhi was preoccupied with legal work, and had little time for public activity. He did find time to read some of the works of Tolstoy, notably *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, which argued for the practical application of the

Sermon on the Mount. This work, with its harsh attacks on the use of force in human society, had a profound influence on Gandhi, who would later write a letter to the reclusive Russian genius, thus beginning a fruitful correspondence between two of the world's most famous pacifists.

With his year finished and the lawsuit concluded, Gandhi prepared to return to India. But political events in South Africa intervened. On the day of his farewell party, Gandhi became aware of an "Indian Franchise Bill" that was before the Natal legislature—a bill that would deprive Indians of the right to vote. He was amazed to learn that no organized opposition to the bill existed, and when he asked his friends about it, they begged him to remain and assist them in the struggle. He agreed to stay, but for only a month—a month that became a year, then two; by the time Gandhi finally left South Africa for good, he had lived and worked there for the better part of twenty years. Gandhi has always been associated with India, and rightly so, but it is important to note that it was in this long, twilight struggle against the encroaching racism of South African politics that he first earned the title of "Mahatma," or "Great Soul."

From the beginning of his involvement in South Africa, Gandhi adopted the personal philosophy of selflessness. A public man he might be, but he refused to accept any payment for his work on behalf of the Indian population, preferring to support himself with his law practice alone (which was primarily sustained, it must be noted, by Indians: twenty Indian merchants contracted with it to manage their affairs.) His central idea was self-denial in the service of his fellow men, which he, as a follower of the Sermon on the Mount and the *Bhagavad-Gita*, regarded as not being self-denial at all, but rather a higher form of self-fulfillment.

This philosophical clarity coexisted with intense spiritual turmoil, as Gandhi struggled to define his religious beliefs. It was during this period that Gandhi enjoyed a wonderful correspondence with a friend in Bombay named Raychandra, a highly educated, deeply religious Jain, with whom he discussed spiritual topics drawn from a range of traditions from Hinduism to Christianity. Raychandra, who read even more widely than Gandhi, led his friend to a deeper appreciation of the Hindu faith and scriptures, while at the same time he encouraged Gandhi in his quest to define his religious beliefs in terms of his own inner illumination, rather than an external dogma. In the end, Gandhi concluded that it was best to seek God within his own tradition, as a Hindu, even though other faiths might contain their own truths as well.

On the political front, a last-minute petition drive failed to stop the passage of the Indian Franchise Bill; however, Gandhi remained undeterred. He proceeded to organize a still larger petition, which was sent to London, to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and distributed to the press in Britain, South Africa, and India. It caused a considerable stir, and prompted both the *Times* of London and the *Times of India* to write editorials in support of the Indian right to the vote. Meanwhile, Gandhi set about establishing a political organization for the Natal Indian, which came to be called the Natal Indian Congress (a clear reference to the Indian National Congress, at that point a relatively tame body). Gandhi faced difficulties in financing the Congress, but the body soon possessed a library and a debating society, held regular (and lively) meetings, and published two major pamphlets. They were entitled *An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa*, and *The Indian Franchise—An Appeal*, and offered a cogent, detailed case for putting an end to discrimination in South Africa.

The work of the Congress was hardly easy, however, as discrimination against "coolies" (as Indians were disparagingly termed) was an entrenched part of South African life—especially

in the Boer-ruled regions, where Gandhi and his friends could exercise little influence. In Natal, Indians were not allowed to go out after nine p.m. without a pass; in the Orange Free State, they could not own property, run businesses, or manage farms; in the Transvaal, they could not own land, and were forced to live in the worst urban slums. Even in the Cape Colony, British-ruled for decades, Indians were often forbidden to walk on the sidewalk, and could be kicked off—quite literally, often—by passing whites. It was in this social climate that Gandhi and the Congress were to struggle for the next twenty years.

In 1896, when it had become clear that he would be spending a significant portion of his life in South Africa, Gandhi made a brief return to India in order to collect his wife and children. While there, he published a pamphlet on the plight of Indians in South Africa (known to history as the Green Pamphlet) and experienced the first taste of the popular adulation that his work would eventually win him. He had developed a reputation as a champion of the poorest laborers in Natal, and when he went to visit the Indian province of Madras, the region where most of the laborers had originated, cheering crowds and wild enthusiasm greeted him. But he had promised his South African friends that he would be gone only six months; accordingly, he packed up Kasturbai and his children and sailed from Bombay in December 1896.

Upon his return to South Africa, however, a riotous crowd of whites awaited him at Port Natal. Gandhi had developed a considerable reputation as a troublemaker, and they were determined that he should not be allowed to land. Considerable confusion also fueled their anger; many of the rioters mistakenly believed that a number of dark-skinned passengers were a large number of poor Indian immigrants that Gandhi had brought with him. However, Gandhi was saved and escorted to safety by the port's Police Superintendent and his wife—it would not be the first time that his ability to get along with Englishmen would serve him

well. Meanwhile, the confusion over the "immigrants" was cleared up (they were mostly returning Indian residents of Natal), and Gandhi's standing in the local white community was actually improved as a result of the incident.

He was soon back to work at the Natal Indian Congress, but within three years the Boer War impeded his political progress. This conflict, fought between the British and the twin Boer Republics, had been a long time coming, and it ended—after three years of furious and often brutal fighting— with the absorption of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State into the Empire. During the war, Gandhi was able to find a way to merge his loyalty to Britain against the Boers with his ardent pacifism: he organized and led an Indian medical corps that served on the British side and conducted itself with great bravery at a number of battles, including Spion Kop in January of 1900.

The loyalty that led Gandhi to assist the British army in the Boer War, it should be noted, was no *pro forma* matter. Gandhi's views on the subject of empire would later alter dramatically, but at this point in his life, and indeed, until the 1920s, he was an ardent British patriot, and his pro-British stance resulted from much thought. The Empire, he felt, embodied the principles of equality and liberty that he believed in, and he regarded the racist policies of the South African states as an aberration, rather than a defining trait, of British rule. Indeed, he saw the Raj as benevolent rather than tyrannical; despite its flaws, he believed that the Empire had been good for India, and that the ideals of the British constitution merited the loyalty of all British subjects across the globe, white, black and Indian alike. The man who would later bring down white rule in India could still, at this point in his life, declare that he and his fellow Indians were "proud to be under the British Crown," believing that "England will prove India's deliverer."

The end of the Boer War, Gandhi hoped, would bring the establishment of true British justice throughout South Africa—and an opportunity for him to return, more or less permanently, to India. He left Natal for Bombay in 1901, but before he left, his friends in the Natal Indian Congress made him promise to return immediately if they needed him in their political efforts. It was a pledge that he would be soon called upon to fulfill.

One of Gandhi's principal motivations for his return to India was his desire to attend the 1901 meeting of the Indian National Congress. The Congress, upon which his own Natalese organization was modeled, had been founded in 1885 by an Englishman, in the hopes of creating a social and political forum for the westernized Indian upper class. It had no real political power, and tended to be pro-British—however, at this point, Gandhi was also pro-British, and he saw the Congress as the only national organization that could claim to speak for India. He attended the 1901 Congress in the hopes of seeing the passage of a resolution supporting the Indian population of South Africa, and his hope was realized, largely through the work of G.K. Gokhale, the most significant Indian politician of his day. Gokhale knew Gandhi from before his move to South Africa, and Gandhi stayed a month as a guest in his household, forging numerous connections that would serve him well later in life.

But his time in India was cut short by an urgent telegram summoning him back to South Africa. Since the end of the war, the British and Boers (now referred to as Afrikaners) had been restoring good relations, often at the expense of the Indian population. Now Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies, had come to South Africa to finish the peacemaking. Gandhi returned in time to present Chamberlain with a paper outlining Indian grievances, but the Secretary remained unsympathetic. Britain planned for South Africa to become a self-governing colony along the lines of Canada and Australia, leaving power in the

hands of the local (white-ruled) government. If the Indians wished to stay in Africa at all, Chamberlain hinted, they had better "placate" the Afrikaners.

So Gandhi, his hopes of post-war improvements dashed, went back to work. He set up camp in the Transvaal this time, deciding that his countrymen needed him more in that recently conquered region, and began representing Indians who had fled the Transvaal during the war and were now being overcharged for re-entry passes. When authorities dispossessed Indian inhabitants of a shantytown in order to clear the area for development, Gandhi represented these Indians as well. Collecting a staff around him that included several young women from Europe, he began (in 1904) the publication of a magazine, *Indian Opinion*, that agitated for political liberty in South Africa. The magazine soon found a readership throughout the country, and, with Gandhi writing the editorials himself, became both a vehicle for his fame and a wide platform for his ideas.

4.2.3. Involvement in Indian Politics

A number of changes in Gandhi's personal life soon impacted his growing celebrity. The first was his achievement of *Brahmacharya*, or the voluntary abstention from sexual relations. This was not an uncommon Hindu practice among men in their forties and fifties, who gradually cease sexual activity once they have had enough children to satisfy the demands of custom, family and caste, but Gandhi adopted the practice between 1901 and 1906, when he was in his thirties. He seems to have regarded it as part of his quest for selflessness and restraint in all aspects of life; in his writings, he suggests that as a young man he succumbed too easily to lust, and recounts how he failed to be with his father when he died because he was making love to his wife, a lapse of duty for which he never forgave himself. Whether or not Gandhi's decision was based on pure principle—amateur psychologists have speculated

exhaustively about alternative motives—suffice it so say that from 1906 onward, with Kasturbai's consent (she was physically frail at this point, and may have welcomed his decision) Gandhi was almost entirely celibate.

At the same time, Gandhi read for the first time John Ruskin's book *Unto This Last*, which maintained that the life of labor—that is, of work done with the hands, rather than machines—was superior to all other ways of living. Gandhi was convinced by the argument, and he considered this new idea the final piece to his personal philosophy. He quickly applied Ruskin's belief to his personal life, abandoning Western dress and habits, and moving his family and staff to a farm in the Transvaal that he called the Phoenix Settlement. There he strove to live the life that Ruskin's book urged—after some time, he even gave renounced the use of an oil-powered engine and printed *Indian Opinion* by hand-wheel. From that point on, he conceived of his political work not in terms of a *modernization* of India, but as a restoration of the old Indian virtue and civilization that had been lost to Western materialist and industrialist influences. He imagined a utopia in which handlooms and spinning wheels would provide all the power, rendering engines and electricity superfluous; correspondingly, he and his extended family soon began using these traditional implements on his own farmstead.

Thus arose an unlikely religio-political celebrity—a crusader against injustice who renounced both sexual pleasure and the entire modern world. To this mix of traits was added his philosophy of political protest, which soon gained a name: *Satyagraha*. Taken literally, it meant "truth-force" in Sanskrit, but in practical terms, it meant a refusal to obey unjust authority. In 1906 it was put to the test within a few years of being coined, 1906 being the same year that Gandhi made his final renunciation of sex and entered fully into *Brahmacharya*. The Transvaal government had made plans to register every Indian over

the age of eight, making them an official section of the population. The Indian community called a mass meeting on September 8 of that year, and there Gandhi asked the whole community to take a vow of disobedience to the law. He warned them that it might mean torture and death—but everyone present took the vow.

The law went into effect in July of 1907, after the Transvaal attained self- government, and the resolve of the Indian population was quickly proven. Gandhi was among the first to appear before a magistrate for his refusal to register, and he was sentenced to two months in prison. He asked for a heavier sentence— a characteristic act of *Satyagraha*—and devoted his time in jail to reading. After his release, the campaign went on. A compromise proposed by Jan Smuts, an Afrikaner hero in the Boer War and now Prime Minister of the Transvaal, fell apart when Smuts broke his word to Gandhi.

Indians burned their registration cards, crossed the Transvaal-Natal border without passes, and went to jail in large numbers. In 1908, Gandhi went to jail again: this time his reading included the writings of the American Henry David Thoreau, most notably his impassioned essay "Civil Disobedience," which spoke directly to Gandhi's plight. He emerged from prison resolved to continue resistance for as long as necessary.

In the end, the struggle would last until 1913. Gandhi went to London in 1909, and managed to drum up enough support among the British to convince Smuts to eliminate the odious registration law. But the Transvaal's Prime Minister, despite his growing respect for Gandhi, still wanted to relegate the Indian population to second-class status. (Possibly he did not personally desire their subjugation; however, given the views of his supporters, he had no other choice.) The final struggle was joined in 1913, with the refusal of the white government in Natal to lift the crippling poll tax, and a Supreme Court decision in the Cape Colony that made all non-Christian marriages illegal—which, in effect, made all Indian wives into

mistresses and all their children into bastards. Gandhi now organized *satyagraha* on a massive scale: women volunteered to cross the Natal-Transvaal border illegally; when they were arrested, five thousand Indian coal miners went on strike. Gandhi took command of this "army" and led them across the Natal border, courting arrest.

In the end, their large numbers were their triumph. "You can't put twenty thousand Indians into jail," Smuts said in 1913, and negotiated a settlement whereby the legality of Indian marriages was restored, the poll tax was abolished, and the import of indentured laborers from India (really more akin to slaves) was to be phased out by 1920. In July of 1914, Gandhi sailed for Britain: "The saint has left our shores," wrote Smuts, "I sincerely hope forever"; the statement represented Smuts's deep admiration and regard for Gandhi (for the rest of his life he kept a pair of sandals given him by "the saint"), yet also the political distress that the Indian leader caused him and his administration. And Smuts got his wish: Gandhi never to set foot in South Africa again. He was forty-five and a celebrity, known throughout India for the amazing success of *satyagraha*, and stepped out into a world about to change. World War I was only a month away.

4.2.4. Events Leading to the Non-Cooperation Movement

When the Rowlatt Act came into law, Gandhi proposed that the entire country observe a *hartal*, a day of fasting, prayer, and abstention from physical labor, in protest against the injustice of the repressive new law. The response was overwhelming—on April 6, 1919, millions of Indians simply did not go to work, and for twenty-four hours (agonizing hours for the British) India simply ground to a halt. But Gandhi had pushed too far too fast, and turmoil engulfed the country. As he traveled around the country, the British arrested him, provoking angry mobs to fill the streets of India's cities. As violence swept through the country,

Gandhi—to the amazement of many—ordered the mobs to return to their homes, and called off his campaign. If *satyagraha* could not be carried out without violence, he declared, it would not be carried out at all.

His appeal, however, came too late. In Amritsar, capital of the region known as the Punjab, the British authorities had panicked at the appearance of the huge crowds on April 6, and had deported the local Hindu and Muslim members of the Congress. The mobs turned violent, and Brigadier-General Reginald E.H. Dyer was summoned to restore order. Dyer proclaimed martial law, banning public meetings and instituting public whippings for Indians who approached British policemen. On April 13, perhaps unaware of the prohibition on public meetings or perhaps defying the British, a crowd of more than ten thousand gathered in the Jallianwalla Bagh, an open space, surrounded by buildings, in the center of Amritsar. Dyer arrived at the head of his troops, and, without warning, ordered his machine-gunners to open fire. As Winston Churchill later put it, the crowd "was packed together so that one bullet would drive through three or four bodies . . . (the people) ran madly this way and the other. When the fire was directed upon the centre, they ran to the sides. The fire was then directed upon the sides. Many threw themselves down on the ground, and the fire was then directed on the ground. This was continued for eight or ten minutes, and it stopped only when the ammunition had reached the point of exhaustion." The official British tally for the bloody afternoon was 379 killed and 1,137 wounded.

The British public were nearly as horrified as their Indian subjects. Dyer resigned in disgrace, and the London government repudiated his conduct vociferously. But the damage had been done. The Amritsar Massacre had the effect of pushing moderate Indian politicians, like Gandhi, toward outright rebellion, and it created a climate of hostility between British and

Indians that would fester throughout the twenty-five-year march to independence. The old ideal of a benevolent, liberal British Empire lay shattered.

After many delays, the British finally allowed Gandhi to make his way to Amritsar. All along his journey, cheering crowds greeted his progress; once he arrived at the site of the massacre, he commenced his own investigation into the events of April 13. The report, when it was finally produced months later, differed little from the official account of the incident, but his work on it drew him into closer contact with a number of prestigious Indian politicians, including Motilal Nehru—the father of Jawaharlal Nehru, who would become Gandhi's great ally and the first Prime Minister of India.

After his work at Amritsar was done, Gandhi proceeded to the Muslim Conference being held in Delhi. The chief item for discussion was the feared suppression by the British of the Caliphs of Turkey, who Muslims considered to be the heirs of Mohammed and the spiritual heads of Islam, as part of the effort to restore order after World War I. Such a suppression would be a slap in the face to the Muslim population of India, and Gandhi urged them to respond. A simple boycott of British goods would not suffice, he asserted: if the British did insist upon the elimination of the Caliphate, Indian Muslims should refuse to cooperate with their rulers entirely, in matters ranging from government employment to taxes. But in the meantime, Gandhi urged caution, since the peace terms with Turkey had not yet been published.

Indeed, in the months that followed, Gandhi found himself supporting the British, who had recently passed the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, aimed at laying the foundation for constitutional self-government in India. For the increasingly nationalistic Congress leaders, these reforms did not go far enough, but when Gandhi threw his support behind the initiative, they had no choice but to go along—his fame was so great that the Congress could accomplish

little without him, and he quickly became the body's guiding spirit. In any case, the period of *rapprochement* with the British did not last long. The British were clearly determined to abolish the Caliphate, and still enforced the odious Rowlatt Act with vigor. In April 1920, Gandhi accepted the (largely symbolic) presidency of the Home Rule League, and shortly thereafter, he asked all Indians, Hindu and Muslim, to join him in "non-cooperation" with their rulers beginning on August 1. He himself set the example; on August 1 he returned the medals that he had received for valorous service in the Boer War.

The period of "non-cooperation" that began in 1920 saw Gandhi moving all across India, encouraging people to give up their Western clothing and British jobs. In his wake came other volunteers, who worked to turn the Congress into something it had never been before—a grass-roots organization, with countless local units. This effort, despite the interference of the British authorities, was a great success, and in September of that year, Gandhi passed an official constitution for the Congress, with a system of local units working under two national committees. It was a structure that would endure for decades. Over the next year, Gandhi continued to crisscross the country, unmolested by the agents of the new Viceroy, Lord Reading, who was reluctant to arrest the popular figure. By 1922, Gandhi had deemed that the time was right for a move from non-cooperation into outright civil disobedience. However, a terrible atrocity intervened in his plans: a mob in the city of Chauri Chauri hacked the local constables to death. Gandhi, who had brought India to the brink of revolution, now was sufficiently horrified by the atrocity that he abandoned his plan for civil disobedience and retired into a period of fasting and prayer. It was during this period, in March of 1922, that Lord Reading finally gave the order for his arrest on a charge of sedition.

Toward the Declaration of Independence

Gandhi's trial for sedition, and the subsequent imprisonment that began in March 1922 and ended with his release in January of 1924, marked the first time that he had faced prosecution in India. The judge, C.N. Broomfield, was uncertain what to do with his famous prisoner—Gandhi was clearly guilty as charged, and willingly admitted as much, even going so far as to ask for the heaviest possible sentence. Like many Englishmen, Broomfield developed a liking for the Mahatma, commenting, "even those who differ from you in politics look upon you as a man of high ideals and of noble and even saintly life." He gave Gandhi the lightest sentence possible: six years in prison, which would be later reduced to just two years.

Willingness to accept imprisonment was, of course, an integral part of *satyagraha*, and Gandhi was perfectly content while in prison. His captors allowed him a spinning wheel and reading material, and save for a bout of appendicitis (which actually hastened his release), he was, he wrote to a friend, "happy as a bird."

Still, it must be noted that during his two-year imprisonment, Gandhi's great nonviolent revolution essentially fell apart. Non-cooperation gradually died away as Indians drifted back to their jobs and routines; the Congress leaders, notably Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das, were participating in local government again; worst of all, Hindu-Muslim unity had fallen apart, and violence rocked many communities. The struggle for Indian independence had run aground on the immense, seemingly insuperable problem of disunity among Indians, who had never been a nation in the Western sense, and remained divided by caste, language, and most of all, religion.

Gandhi's greatest achievement, throughout the '20s, '30s and '40s, was to overcome these differences, to unify India by making *himself* the symbol of unity. Of course, he never explicitly claimed this role—to do so would have been anathema to his selfless philosophy—yet it was undeniably Gandhi's person, more than the slogans of nationalism and liberation, that

united Brahmins and untouchables, Hindus and Muslims in the struggle against the British. His amazing personal determination served as a beacon to all—his behavior after leaving prison is a perfect example: no sooner had he left the trying conditions of prison than he immediately commended a three-week fast requesting peace between the warring religious factions, an event that captured the imagination of the world and indeed went a long way toward easing tensions between Hindus and Muslims. His "soul-force" may well have been the only thing that could bring all Indians together, and he used it to amazing effect.

Even as Gandhi served to unify the Indian people, his figure served to expose the contradictions within the British position on the subcontinent. For while the members of Gandhi's home-rule movement strengthened their arguments by pointing to the oppression of the British Viceroy, those Viceroys attempting to quell the Gandhi phenomenon in fact failed because of a policy not oppressive enough. Theirs was a liberal empire in the end, and they were raised in a liberal tradition that prized freedom of speech, of the press, and of assembly; thus they could not counter *satyagraha* and stay true to themselves. Had Gandhi practiced *satyagraha* in, say, Stalin's Soviet Union or Hitler's Germany—or had the British been willing to violate their own liberal principles and imprison him for life, deport him, or even execute him—the struggle for independence might have taken a dramatically different turn. But then, such a crackdown was never a realistic possibility. Indeed, most of his British antagonists genuinely liked Gandhi, and by the 1920s, weary of war and empire, most of them had reconciled themselves to some sort of home rule for India in the near future. Independence was coming, in one shape or another, despite the resistance of die-hard imperialists in Britain, because the British had lost the will to sustain their empire; and yet the Viceroys, governors and Secretaries of State were still not willing to give India total independence.

And Gandhi was willing to accept the delay, at least for a time. After his fast ended in October of 1924, he withdrew from political life and devoted himself to "*swaraj* from within"—working to prepare India morally for its independence. This preparation took the form of travel throughout India, combined with speeches and articles in his magazine, *Young India*, advocating good hygiene, exercise, sexual self-control, and an end to child marriages, which Gandhi now considered a grave evil. The strangest, and yet perhaps the most important part of his program, was a devotion to his spinning wheel.

For Gandhi, influenced by John Ruskin's paeans to hand labor, homespun clothing had become the great external symbol of a free India, and wherever he went, he encouraged young people to learn to make their own garments. When the Indian National Congress pressured him into accepting its presidency in 1925, he did so on the condition that every member wear homespun clothing to the sessions; by the late '20s, *khadi*, as homespun was called, had become the official garb of every Indian nationalist.

His period of political quiescence came to an end in 1928. The British had sent a board of inquiry, called the Simon Commission, to investigate social conditions in India and recommend solutions. Since the board lacked any Indian representation, it was considered a slap in the face by the nationalists—as were the comments of Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State for India, who remarked that there was no prospect of Indian control over their own government in the foreseeable future. Gandhi now returned to his once-abandoned plan for large-scale civil disobedience, which was carried out between February and August in the district of Bardoli, near Bombay. Led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, a Bombay lawyer and a friend of Gandhi for some twelve years, the inhabitants of Bardoli refused to accept an increase in taxes, and held firm despite imprisonment and threats from the authorities. To

Gandhi's delight, no violence erupted, and on August 6 the government gave in, released the prisoners, and repealed a recent tax increase.

After the success in Bardoli, there was much talk of immediate independence, especially among the young nationalists like Subhas Chandra Bose of Bengal and Jawaharlal Nehru, son of Motilal Nehru. Gandhi was wary of such hotheadedness, since "independence" was an uncertain term, given that no mechanism for an Indian government existed. Nevertheless, he toured the country in 1929 and prepared for another *satyagraha* campaign. The nervous British Viceroy, Lord Irwin, who had just seen a coalition government of left and right take over from the Conservatives in London, suggested a "Round Table Conference" of British and Indian representatives to discuss the possibility of Dominion status for India—which would give it a significant degree of self-rule. But the Conservatives were still powerful, and their fury at such a notion forced Irwin to back down. Disappointed, Gandhi gave in to the demands of the young men in the Congress— which was now presided over by the younger Nehru, who was forty in 1930. He returned to his *ashram* and emerged, in January of 1930, with a Declaration of Independence of India.

4.2.5. The Salt March and Civil Disobedience

After the publication of the Declaration of Independence, all India—and much of Britain, too—waited anxiously to see what Gandhi would do next. By February of 1930, his mind had turned to salt. Under the Salt Laws, the British government had a monopoly on salt, controlling both its production and distribution. It was against these laws that Gandhi now turned the force of *satyagraha*.

On March 2, 1930, he sent a famous letter to the Viceroy Lord Irwin, warning him that beginning on March 11 he and the other members of his *ashram* would begin breaking the Salt Laws. Irwin—who would later take the title Lord Halifax—was a deeply religious person, with a great respect for Gandhi, whom he called "the little man," and agonized before deciding not to arrest the Mahatma before seeing what course his disobedience would take. He did not have long to wait. On March 12, having given the Viceroy an extra day, Gandhi and seventy-eight others left his *ashram* and began to walk the two hundred miles to the seacoast. There, he declared, he would take a pinch of salt from the Indian Ocean, thus violating the laws of the Empire, which declared that only the British could harvest salt.

Practically, of course, the Salt March was a meaningless gesture. But as an act of political theater, it had astonishing power. The attention of the world was now focused on western India, where the "little man," accompanied by crowds from every village he passed, spent twenty-four days walking to the sea. He reached it on April 6, and took salt from the ocean; soon, all over India, the subjects of the Raj followed suit, disobeying the Salt Laws in massive numbers: the Congress organized the sale of illegal salt on a huge scale, and mass meetings took place in every major city. The British government cracked down—throwing people in jail, censoring the press—but all to no avail. Soon the prisons were full to bursting with Indians, all of whom followed Gandhi's lead and made no resistance. It was *satyagraha* on an unprecedented scale, and the Viceroy was helpless against it. In desperation, he ordered the Indian leaders arrested, beginning with Jawaharlal Nehru and ending, on May 5, with Gandhi. But still the demonstrations went on, lasting nearly a year, and finally, in January of 1931, the government yielded. The prisoners were released and Gandhi met with Lord Irwin, who agreed that the Indian National Congress could send a representative to the Round Table Conference, to be held in London that fall. There was no question as to who the Congress' representative would be.

This was the peak of Gandhi's career. Despite the groans of men like Winston Churchill, who saw in this "half-naked fakir" the downfall of Britain's Empire, he received a friendly, even adulatory greeting from the British when he arrived for the Conference that fall. Leading Englishmen, from the King to George Bernard Shaw, lined up for interviews, and large crowds followed him wherever he went. In a sense, it was this "public relations" side of the Round Table Conference that achieved the most for India, as Gandhi built considerable support for independence among the British public. The Conference itself, unfortunately, was an utter disaster—no plan for independence or home rule could be agreed upon, because of British concern over the treatment of minorities (especially Muslims) in a Hindu-dominated India. This difficulty was not a new one: the Muslim League, founded by Muhammed Ali Jinnah, had become a significant force in Indian politics, and its demands would make the road to independence a rocky one.

When Gandhi returned to India in late December of 1931, the British were cracking down again after a Congress campaign against British landlords. Nehru had already been arrested, and so too was Gandhi, only a week after his return home. He was given no trial, nor were any charges brought—rather, he was held at the discretion of the British government. While he was in prison, the British set out to create separate electoral systems of Hindus, Muslims, and untouchables, to ensure that each would have representation in provincial legislatures. To Gandhi, the idea of dividing Indians by religion was objectionable, and the idea of dividing them by caste was intolerable. He announced a fast in protest, one that lasted only six days before a compromise was agreed upon, yet which did more damage to his health than any of his previous fasts. And throughout the six days, India hung on his every breath.

Whether because of his evident physical weakness, or the disappointment brought on by the failure of the Round Table Conference, Gandhi made plans to remove himself from politics.

While still in prison, he decided to devote himself again to his "constructive work," as he called it, of improving the daily lives of his fellow Indians. To prepare for this, in 1934 he announced another fast, for self-purification—and this time the British, terrified at the consequences if he were to die in prison, released him.

4.2.7. 'Quit India' Movement

From 1934 until the outbreak of war in 1939, Gandhi left the struggle for political independence to others. He began traveling through India again, working with women and children, helping untouchables, and promoting use of the spinning wheel. He went from village to village, preaching his gospel of cleanliness, harmony, and love, barefoot and on the road for months at a time. Eventually, he began advocating what he called "Basic Education": based in part on the Montessori system developed in Italy, it was a form of schooling that combined books with practical education, a necessity for the poor peasants he was trying to reach.

Later, nearly everyone in India would claim to have seen Gandhi at one time or another during this period of wandering. Meanwhile, politics went on without him. Politicians continued to consult him, of course, but the Congress was now being guided by its rising star, the charismatic and intelligent Nehru. And the march to independence continued, aided greatly by the Government of India Act, which passed Parliament in 1935 (and led the ardently imperialist Churchill to resign from the cabinet). The Act's ultimate goal, however—an Indian federation that would unite all the provinces and princely states—was rejected by the Congress and their increasingly fractious adversaries in Jinnah's Muslim League.

But the ancillary provisions of the Act went into effect anyway, and by 1937 local legislatures, made up of elected Indians, held effective control on the provincial level. On the national level, though, the British still ruled India, and British and Indians alike tensely

questioned what sort of legitimate government could be forged out of the growing Muslim-Hindu rift. The Congress, now enmeshed in local government issues and on its way to becoming the Congress Party that would dominate Indian politics for decades, continued to agitate for immediate independence. However, it remained unclear, as it had been at the Round Table Conference in 1931, how a national Indian government could work.

It was World War II that finally brought the itinerant saint-politician back into public life. After war broke out in September 1939, the British immediately brought India into the conflict without consulting the nationalist leadership. Even as howls of outrage rose from the Congress and the Muslim League, Gandhi was invited to see the Viceroy, now Lord Linlithgow. Having never lost his deep respect for Britain, and detesting Nazism as "naked ruthless force reduced to an exact science," Gandhi pledged his personal support to Britain and the allies. Nehru, however, was less excited by the idea of aiding the Empire's war effort, and along with the other Congress leaders, he drafted a manifesto that essentially asked for complete independence in return for Indian support against the Nazis. Gandhi, unhappy at taking advantage of Britain's weakness (it was now 1940, and the Germans were rolling across France), reluctantly went along.

Gandhi's support was immaterial—Churchill was now in command of Britain, and he had no intention of allowing Indian independence, certainly not in war-time, and not with the issue of minorities (Muslims, practically speaking) still unresolved. Nehru's demand was turned down, and now Gandhi, previously unwilling to further debilitate the British in their time of struggle, agreed to a small-scale campaign of civil disobedience, in which only the Congress leaders went to jail. This small-scale campaign lasted until 1942, when Sir Stafford Cripps arrived on the subcontinent, offering India Dominion status in the British Commonwealth after the war (which meant *de facto* independence, since a nation could leave the

Commonwealth at any time). The Congress might have accepted this, however the proposals also insisted—in an effort to deal with the Muslim problem—that any province would have the right to secede from the Dominion. This Gandhi and the rest of the Congress could not accept, since it would mean the "vivisection" of India.

Of course, as it was, vivisection was to accompany independence anyway, in the form of the partition, so it is worth asking if the Indian nationalists would have been better off hammering out the agreement in 1942, when the country was on a war-time footing and British troops could have maintained order. As it was, independence came only in 1947, and the country collapsed into chaos. Alternatively, we might ask if the British should have acceded to the Congress' demands for immediate independence, and used their troops to police India while Nehru and others established a national government for the subcontinent. Both ideas, though appealing, are ultimately pure fancy—in 1942 or 1947, Jinnah and the Muslim League were unlikely to accept a national government that would have inevitably been dominated by Hindus (as they were the group already in power), regardless of whether British troops remained or not; and a partition in 1942 would never have been accepted by a Congress that still hoped to rule a united India.

With the failure of the Cripps mission, the Congress now decided on an immediate campaign of civil disobedience. Before it could begin, however, all the Congress leaders, including Gandhi, were arrested in August of 1942 and imprisoned in the palace of the Aga Khan. Without the Mahatma's voice to calm the people, India exploded into violence. The Viceroy demanded that Gandhi speak out against the civil strife, but for once he refused, choosing instead to begin a fast in February of 1943 that lasted for three weeks and left the government terrified that he might die in confinement. But still, he seemed less dangerous to them in his velvet prison than out of it, and so the government kept him in the Aga Khan's palace,

surrounded by his friends and family, while the war dragged on. He was not released until May of 1944, a month before D-Day, and he left the palace nursing a profound personal grief—Kasturbai, his wife and companion for the last sixty-two years, had died during their confinement.

4.3.8. The Final Years

The three years after his wife's death were a time of struggle against what Gandhi saw as an impending catastrophe—the partition of India. As World War II wound to an end, Jinnah was pushing for an independent Muslim state, a "Pakistan," an idea that Gandhi found utterly unacceptable. The Muslim population was concentrated in the northwest and extreme east of India, but there was no clear line of demarcation, and Hindus and Muslims lived side by side in most regions. In a series of long, impassioned exchanges with Jinnah in 1944 and '45, both in person and by letter, Gandhi argued that partition would inevitably lead to violence and forced migration. But Jinnah held firm.

In 1945 Churchill lost the British elections and the left-wing Labour party came to power, determined to push Indian independence through and rid themselves of a subcontinent that had become ungovernable. Meanwhile, new elections were held in India for the provincial legislatures, appointing Muslim League representatives from Muslim-heavy districts, and Congress Party representatives everywhere else. The political debate was increasingly polarized, and to Gandhi's despair the gulf was not between British and Indians anymore, but between Indians. Amid the wrangling, the British pushed ahead: a Cabinet Mission was appointed, and in May 1946 it published its proposal for an Indian state. Taking into account the Muslim League's demands, it nevertheless advised against partition, which would leave large minorities on either side of any boundary. Instead, it proposed a federal system in which

any vote on a religious issue would require a majority of both Hindus and Muslims. To the Englishmen who wrote it, it seemed a sensible compromise.

Gandhi was uncertain about the Cabinet Mission's report, but events were now unfolding too rapidly for him to control. A provisional government was being formed to pave the way for a transition to independence, but Jinnah and the Muslim League would have no part in it, and when Nehru became the provisional government's leader, the Muslims treated his inauguration as an occasion for mourning. Religious riots broke out in Calcutta; arriving there by train, Gandhi used Calcutta as his point of departure for what would be his last walk through rural villages, preaching compassion and brotherhood to a largely Muslim population. People came by the thousands to hear him speak—but even as he made this pilgrimage, political events were outpacing him. The Labour government was eager to get India off its hands, and it dispatched Lord Mountbatten, a skillful diplomat, as the last Viceroy of India. Arriving in March of 1947 and charged with the task of bringing about independence within a year, Mountbatten summoned Gandhi away from his peasant mission to meet with Jinnah in Delhi.

The meeting was fruitless. Jinnah was obdurate, and the Congress leaders, led by Nehru, accepted partition as the price of independence. Mountbatten turned down Jinnah's more extreme demands, and under his mediation a Pakistani-Indian border was established that would cut right through western and eastern India, leaving the Punjab (present-day Pakistan) and Bengal (present-day Bangladesh) as East and West Pakistan. Gandhi was heartbroken, but India was independent—a fact that became official on August 15, 1947.

Disaster followed. Violence swept the country as Hindus and Muslims killed one another in terrible numbers, or fled across the newly created borders, seeking safety in India or Pakistan, depending upon their religion. The numbers of dead will never be known exactly—thousands

died, certainly, and perhaps even millions, while nearly fifteen million people were forced from their homes. It was torment for Gandhi, who felt that no one had listened to him, that India had learned nothing from all the years he had spent teaching nonviolence and brotherhood.

His influence was still great: his Independence-Day pledge to fast until violence in Calcutta ceased brought an end to the riots in three days. But he could not sway an entire nation gone mad with violence. He tried, going first to Delhi, then to the Punjab, and back to Delhi, where on January 13, he began another fast "unto death," or until there was peace in Delhi. This fast lasted five days, until Muslim and Hindu leaders promised to make peace, and afterward Gandhi spent his time recuperating, hoping to return to the Punjab before long. It was not to be—on the evening of Friday, January 30, he was in his garden when a Hindu nationalist named Nathuram Vinayuk Godse came up to him, and, after receiving a blessing from the Mahatma, shot him dead.

Godse had hoped that Gandhi's death would lead to war between India and Pakistan and the elimination of the Muslim state. Instead, it led to peace, as Hindus and Muslims alike joined in mourning for the slain Mahatma. Indeed, the entire world mourned: flags were lowered to half-mast, and kings, popes, and presidents sent condolences to India. Nehru, speaking on the radio that night with tears choking his voice, declared, "the light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere." Gandhi was gone, a martyr, as he would have wished, to the cause of peace.

4.3. The Speeches

4.3.1. The ‘Quit India’ Speech

Gandhiji addressed the A.I.C.C. at Bombay on 8-8-42 outlining his plan of action, in Hindustani, as follows:

Before you discuss the resolution, let me place before you one or two things, I want you to understand two things very clearly and to consider them from the same point of view from which I am placing them before you. I ask you to consider it from my point of view, because if you approve of it, you will be enjoined to carry out all I say. It will be a great responsibility. There are people who ask me whether I am the same man that I was in 1920, or whether there has been any change in me. You are right in asking that question. Let me, however, hasten to assure that I am the same Gandhi as I was in 1920. I have not changed in any fundamental respect. I attach the same importance to nonviolence that I did then. If at all, my emphasis on it has grown stronger. There is no real contradiction between the present resolution and my previous writings and utterances. Occasions like the present do not occur in everybody's and but rarely in anybody's life. I want you to know and feel that there is nothing but purest Ahimsa in all that I am saying and doing today. The draft resolution of the Working Committee is based on Ahimsa, the contemplated struggle similarly has its roots in Ahimsa. If, therefore, there is any among you who has lost faith in Ahimsa or is wearied of it, let him not vote for this resolution. Let me explain my position clearly. God has vouchsafed to me a priceless gift in the weapon of Ahimsa. I and my Ahimsa are on our trail today. If in the present crisis, when the earth is being scorched by the flames of Himsa and crying for deliverance, I failed to make use of the God given talent, God will not forgive me and I shall be judged unwrongly of the great gift. I must act now. I may not hesitate and merely look on, when Russia and China are threatened. Ours is not a drive for power, but purely a nonviolent fight for India's independence. In a

violent struggle, a successful general has been often known to effect a military coup and to set up a dictatorship. But under the Congress scheme of things, essentially nonviolent as it is, there can be no room for dictatorship. A non-violent soldier of freedom will covet nothing for himself, he fights only for the freedom of his country. The Congress is unconcerned as to who will rule, when freedom is attained. The power, when it comes, will belong to the people of India, and it will be for them to decide to whom it placed in the entrusted. May be that the reins will be placed in the hands of the Parsis, for instance-as I would love to see happen-or they may be handed to some others whose names are not heard in the Congress today. It will not be for you then to object saying, "This community is microscopic. That party did not play its due part in the freedom's struggle; why should it have all the power?" Ever since its inception the Congress has kept itself meticulously free of the communal taint. It has thought always in terms of the whole nation and has acted accordingly. I know how imperfect our Ahimsa is and how far away we are still from the ideal, but in Ahimsa there is no final failure or defeat. I have faith, therefore, that if, in spite of our shortcomings, the big thing does happen, it will be because God wanted to help us by crowning with success our silent, unremitting Sadhana for the last twenty-two years. I believe that in the history of the world, there has not been a more genuinely democratic struggle for freedom than ours. I read Carlyle's French Revolution while I was in prison, and Pandit Jawaharlal has told me something about the Russian revolution. But it is my conviction that inasmuch as these struggles were fought with the weapon of violence they failed to realize the democratic ideal. In the democracy which I have envisaged, a democracy established by nonviolence, there will be equal freedom for all. Everybody will be his own master. It is to join a struggle for such democracy that I invite you today. Once you realize this you will forget the differences between the Hindus and Muslims, and think of yourselves as Indians only, engaged in the common struggle for independence.

Then, there is the question of your attitude towards the British. I have noticed that there is hatred towards the British among the people. The people say they are disgusted with their behaviour. The people make no distinction between British imperialism and the British people. To them, the two are one. This hatred would even make them welcome the Japanese. It is most dangerous. It means that they will exchange one slavery for another. We must get rid of this feeling. Our quarrel is not with the British people, we fight their imperialism. The proposal for the withdrawal of British power did not come out of anger. It came to enable India to play its due part at the present critical juncture. It is not a happy position for a big country like India to be merely helping with money and material obtained willy-nilly from her while the United Nations are conducting the war. We cannot evoke the true spirit of sacrifice and valour, so long as we are not free. I know the British Government will not be able to withhold freedom from us, when we have made enough self-sacrifice. We must, therefore, purge ourselves of hatred. Speaking for myself, I can say that I have never felt any hatred. As a matter of fact, I feel myself to be a greater friend of the British now than ever before. One reason is that they are today in distress. My very friendship, therefore, demands that I should try to save them from their mistakes. As I view the situation, they are on the brink of an abyss. It, therefore, becomes my duty to warn them of their danger even though it may, for the time being, anger them to the point of cutting off the friendly hand that is stretched out to help them. People may laugh, nevertheless that is my claim. At a time when I may have to launch the biggest struggle of my life, I may not harbour hatred against anybody.

II

[Gandhiji's address before the A.I.C.C. at Bombay on 8-8-'42 delivered in Hindustani:] I congratulate you on the resolution that you have just passed. I also congratulate the three

comrades on the courage they have shown in pressing their amendments to a division, even though they knew that there was an overwhelming majority in favour of the resolution, and I congratulate the thirteen friends who voted against the resolution. In doing so, they had nothing to be ashamed of. For the last twenty years we have tried to learn not to lose courage even when we are in a hopeless minority and are laughed at. We have learned to hold on to our beliefs in the confidence that we are in the right. It behoves us to cultivate this courage of conviction, for it ennobles man and raises his moral stature. I was, therefore, glad to see that these friends had imbibed the principle which I have tried to follow for the last fifty years and more. Having congratulated them on their courage, let me say that what they asked this Committee to accept through their amendments was not the correct representation of the situation. These friends ought to have pondered over the appeal made to them by the Maulana to withdraw their amendments; they should have carefully followed the explanations given by Jawaharlal. Had they done so, it would have been clear to them that the right which they now want the Congress to concede has already been conceded by the Congress. Time was when every Mussalman claimed the whole of India as his motherland. During the years that the Ali brothers were with me, the assumption underlying all their talks and discussions was that India belonged as much to the Mussalmans as to the Hindus. I can testify to the fact that this was their innermost conviction and not a mask; I lived with them for years. I spent days and nights in their company. And I make bold to say that their utterances were the honest expression of their beliefs. I know there are some who say that I take things too readily at their face value, that I am gullible. I do not think I am such a simpleton, nor am I so gullible as these friends take me to be. But their criticism does not hurt me. I should prefer to be considered gullible rather than deceitful. What these Communist friends proposed through their amendments is nothing new. It has

been repeated from thousands of platforms. Thousands of Mussalmans have told me, that if Hindu-Muslim question was to be solved satisfactorily, it must be done in my lifetime. I should feel flattered at this; but how can I agree to proposal which does not appeal to my reason? Hindu-Muslim unity is not a new thing. Millions of Hindus and Mussalmans have sought after it. I consciously strove for its achievement from my boyhood. While at school, I made it a point to cultivate the friendship of Muslims and Parsi co-students. I believed even at that tender age that the Hindus in India, if they wished to live in peace and amity with the other communities, should assiduously cultivate the virtue of neighbourliness. It did not matter, I felt, if I made no special effort to cultivate the friendship with Hindus, but I must make friends with at least a few Mussalmans. It was as counsel for a Mussalmans merchant that I went to South Africa. I made friends with other Mussalmans there, even with the opponents of my client, and gained a reputation for integrity and good faith. I had among my friends and co-workers Muslims as well as Parsis. I captured their hearts and when I left finally for India, I left them sad and shedding tears of grief at the separation. In India too I continued my efforts and left no stone unturned to achieve that unity. It was my life-long aspiration for it that made me offer my fullest co-operation to the Mussalmans in the Khilafat movement. Muslims throughout the country accepted me as their true friend. How then is it that I have now come to be regarded as so evil and detestable? Had I any axe to grind in supporting the Khilafat movement? True, I did in my heart of hearts cherish a hope that it might enable me to save the cow. I am a worshipper of the cow. I believe the cow and myself to be the creation of the same God, and I am prepared to sacrifice my life in order to save the cow. But, whatever my philosophy of life and my ultimate hopes, I joined the movement in no spirit of bargain. I co-operated in the struggle for the Khilafat solely on order to discharge my obligation to my neighbour who, I saw, was in distress. The Ali brothers, had they been alive today, would have testified to the truth of this assertion. And so would many

others bear me out in that it was not a bargain on my part for saving the cow. The cow like the Khilafat. Stood on her own merits. As an honest man, a true neighbour and a faithful friend, it was incumbent on me to stand by the Mussalmans in the hour of their trial. In those days, I shocked the Hindus by dinning time they have now got used to it. Maulana Bari told me, however, that through he would not allow me dine with him, lest some day he should be accused of a sinister motive. And so, whenever I had occasion to stay with him, he called a Brahmana cook and made social arrangements for separate cooking. Firangi ,Mahal, his residence, was an old-styled structure with limited accommodation; yet he cheerfully bore all hardships and carried out his resolve from which I could not dislodge him. It was the spirit of courtesy, dignity and nobility that inspired us in those days. They respected one another's religious feelings, and considered it a privilege to do so. Not a trace of suspicion lurked in anybody's heart. Where has all that dignity, that nobility of spirit, disappeared now? I should ask all Mussalmans, including Quaid-I-Azam Jinnah, to recall those glorious days and to find out what has brought us to the present impasse. Quaid-i-Azam Jinnah himself was at one time a Congressman. If today the Congress has incurred his wrath, it is because the canker of suspicion has entered his heart. May God bless him with long life, but when I am gone, he will realize and admit that I had no designs on Mussalmans and that I had never betrayed their interests. Where is the escape for me, if I injure their cause or betray their interests? My life is entirely at their disposal. They are free to put an end to it, whenever they wish to do so. Assaults have been made on my life in the past, but God has spared me till now, and the assailants have repented for their action. But if someone were to shoot me in the belief that he was getting rid of a rascal, he would kill not the real Gandhi, but the one that appeared to him a rascal.

To those who have been indulging in a campaign of a abuse and vilification I would say, "Islam enjoins you not to revile even an enemy. The Prophet treated even enemies with

kindness and tried to win them over by his fairness and generosity. Are you followers of that Islam or of any other? If you are followers of the true Islam, does it behave you to distrust the words of one who makes a public declaration of his faith? You may take it from me that one day you will regret the fact that you distrusted and killed one who was a true and devoted friend of yours.” It cuts me to the quick to see that the more I appeal and the more the Maulana importunes, the more intense does the campaign of vilification grow. To me, these abuses are like bullets. They can kill me, even as a bullet can put an end to my life. You may kill me. That will not hurt me. But what of those who indulge in abusing? They bring discredit to Islam. For the fair name of Islam, I appeal to you to resist this unceasing campaign of abuse and vilification. Maulana Saheb is being made a target for the filthiest abuse. Why? Because he refuses to exert on me the pressure of his friendship. He realizes that it is a misuse of friendship to seek up to compel a friend to accept as truth what he knows is an untruth. To the Quaid-Azam I would say: Whatever is true and valid in the claim for Pakistan is already in your hands. What is wrong and untenable is in nobody’s gift, so that it can be made over to you. Even if someone were to succeed in imposing an untruth on others, he would not be able to enjoy for long the fruits of such a coercion. God dislikes pride and keeps away from it. God would not tolerate a forcible imposition of an untruth. The Quaid-Azam says that he is compelled to say bitter things but that he cannot help giving expression to his thoughts and his feelings. Similarly I would say : “I consider myself a friend of Mussalmans. Why should I then not give expression to the things nearest to my heart, even at the cost of displeasing them? How can I conceal my innermost thoughts from them? I should congratulate the Quaid-i-Azam on his frankness in giving expression to his thoughts and feelings, even if they sound bitter to his hearers. But even so why should the Mussalmans sitting here be reviled, if they do not see eye to eye with him? If millions of Mussalmans are

with you can you not afford to ignore the handful of Mussalmans who may appear to you to be misguided? Why should one with the following of several millions be afraid of a majority community, or of the minority being swamped by the majority? How did the Prophet work among the Arabs and the Mussalmans? How did he propagate Islam? Did he say he would propagate Islam only when he commanded a majority? I appeal to you for the sake of Islam to ponder over what I say. There is neither fair play nor justice in saying that the Congress must accept a thing, even if it does not believe in it and even if it goes counter to principles it holds dear.

Rajaji said: "I do not believe in Pakistan. But Mussalmans ask for it, Mr. Jinnah asks for it, and it has become an obsession with them. Why not then say, "yes" to them just now? The same Mr. Jinnah will later on realize the disadvantages of Pakistan and will forgo the demand." I said : "It is not fair to accept as true a thing which I hold to be untrue, and ask others to do say in the belief that the demand will not be pressed when the time comes for settling in finally. If I hold the demand to be just, I should concede it this very day. I should not agree to it merely in order to placate Jinnah Saheb. Many friends have come and asked me to agree to it for the time being to placate Mr. Jinnah, disarm his suspicious and to see how he reacts to it. But I cannot be party to a course of action with a false promise. At any rate, it is not my method."

The Congress as no sanction but the moral one for enforcing its decisions. It believes that true democracy can only be the outcome of non-violence. The structure of a world federation can be raised only on a foundation of non-violence, and violence will have to be totally abjured from world affairs. If this is true, the solution of Hindu-Muslim question, too, cannot be achieved by a resort to violence. If the Hindus tyrannize over the Mussalmans, with what face will they talk of a world federation? It is for the same reason that I do not believe in the possibility of establishing world peace through violence as the English and American

statesmen propose to do. The Congress has agreed to submitting all the differences to an impartial international tribunal and to abide by its decisions. If even this fairest of proposals is unacceptable, the only course that remains open is that of the sword, of violence. How can I persuade myself to agree to an impossibility? To demand the vivisection of a living organism is to ask for its very life. It is a call to war. The Congress cannot be party to such a fratricidal war. Those Hindus who, like Dr. Moonje and Shri Savarkar, believe in the doctrine of the sword may seek to keep the Mussalmans under Hindus domination. I do not represent that section. I represent the Congress. You want to kill the Congress which is the goose that lays golden eggs. If you distrust the Congress, you may rest assured that there is to be perpetual war between the Hindus and the Mussalmans, and the country will be doomed to continue warfare and bloodshed. If such warfare is to be our lot, I shall not live to witness it. It is for that reason that I say to Jinnah Saheb, "You may take it from me that whatever in your demand for Pakistan accords with considerations of justice and equity is lying in your pocket; whatever in the demand is contrary to justice and equity you can take only by the sword and in no other manner."

There is much in my heart that I would like to pour out before this assembly. One thing which was uppermost in my heart I have already dealt with. You may take it from me that it is with me a matter of life and death. If we Hindus and Mussalmans mean to achieve a heart unity, without the slightest mental reservation on the part of either, we must first unite in the effort to be free from the shackles of this empire. If Pakistan after all is to be a portion of India, what objection can there be for Mussalmans against joining this struggle for India's freedom? The Hindus and Mussalmans must, therefore, unite in the first instance on the issue of fighting for freedom. Jinnah Saheb thinks the war will last long. I do not agree with him. If the war goes on for six months more, how shall we be able to save China? I, therefore, want freedom immediately, this very night, before dawn, if it can be had.

Freedom cannot now wait for the realization of communal unity. If that unity is not achieved, sacrifices necessary for it will have to be much greater than would have otherwise sufficed. But the Congress must win freedom or be wiped out in the effort. And forget not that the freedom which the Congress is struggling to achieve will not be for the Congressmen alone but for all the forty cores of the Indian people. Congressmen must for ever remain humble servants of the people.

The Quaid-i-Azam has said that the Muslim League is prepared to take over the rule from the Britishers if they are prepared to hand it over to the Muslim League, for the British took over the empire from the hands of the Muslims. This, however, will be Muslim Raj. The offer made by Maulana Saheb and by me does not imply establishment of Muslim Raj or Muslim domination. The Congress does not believe in the domination of any group or any community. It believes in democracy which includes in its orpit Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Parsis, Jews-every one of the communities inhabiting this vast country. If Muslim Raj is invetable, then let it be; but how can we give it the stamp of our assent? How can we agree to the domination of one community over the others?

Millions of Mussalmans in this country come from Hindu stock. How can their homeland be any other than India? My eldest son embraced Islam some years back. What would his homeland be-Porbandar or the Punjab? I ask the Mussalmans: "If India is not your homeland, what other country do you belong to? In what separate homeland would you put my son who embraced Islam?" His mother wrote him a letter after his conversion, asking him if he had on embracing Islam given up drinking which Islam forbids to its follower. To those who gloated over the conversion, she wrote to say: "I do not mind his becoming a Mussalmans, so much as his drinking. Will you, as pious Mussalmans, tolerate his drinking even after his conversion? He has reduced himself to the state of a rake by drinking. If you are going to make a man of him again, his conversion will have been turned to good account. You will,

therefore, please see that he as a Mussalman abjures wine and woman. If that change does not come about, his conversion goes in vain and our non-co-operation with him will have to continue.”

India is without doubt the homeland of all the Mussalmans inhabiting this country. Every Mussalman should therefore co-operate in the fight for India’s freedom. The Congress does not belong to any one class or community; it belongs to the whole nation. It is open to Mussalmans to take possession of the Congress. They can, if they like, swamp the Congress by their numbers, and can steer it along the course which appeals to them. The Congress is fighting not on behalf of the Hindu but on behalf of the whole nation, including the minorities. It would hurt me to hear of a single instance of a Mussalman being killed by a Congressman. In the coming revolution, Congressmen will sacrifice their lives in order to protect the Mussalman against a Hindu’s attack and vice versa. It is a part of their creed, and is one of the essentials of non-violence. You will be excepted on occasions like these not to lose your heads. Every Congressman, whether a Hindu or a Mussalman, owes this duty to the organization to which will render a service to Islam. Mutual trust is essential for success in the final nation-wide struggle that is to come. I have said that much greater sacrifice will have to be made this time in the wake of our struggle because of the opposition from the Muslim League and from Englishmen. You have seen the secret circular issued by Sir Frederick Puckle. It is a suicidal course that he has taken. It contains an open incitement to organizations which crop up like mushrooms to combine to fight the Congress. We have thus to deal with an empire whose ways are crooked. Ours is a straight path which we can tread even with our eyes closed. That is the beauty of Satyagraha.

In Satyagraha, there is no place for fraud or falsehood, or any kind of untruth. Fraud and untruth today are stalking the world. I cannot be a helpless witness to such a situation. I have

traveled all over India as perhaps nobody in the present age has. The voiceless millions of the land saw in me their friend and representative, and I identified myself with them to an extent it was possible for a human being to do. I saw trust in their eyes, which I now want to turn to good account in fighting this empire upheld on untruth and violence. However gigantic the preparations that the empire has made, we must get out of its clutches. How can I remain silent at this supreme hour and hide my light under the bushel? Shall I ask the Japanese to tarry awhile? If today I sit quite and inactive, God will take me to task for not using up the treasure He had given me, in the midst of the conflagration that is enveloping the whole world. Had the condition been different, I should have asked you to wait yet awhile. But the situation now has become intolerable, and the Congress has no other course left for it. Nevertheless, the actual struggle does not commence this moment. You have only placed all your powers in my hands. I will now wait upon the Viceroy and plead with him for the acceptance of the Congress demand. That process is likely to take two or three weeks. What would you do in the meanwhile? What is the programme, for the interval, in which all can participate? As you know, the spinning wheel is the first thing that occurs to me. I made the same answer to the Maulana. He would have none of it, though he understood its import later. The fourteen fold constructive programme is, of course, there for you to carry out. What more should you do? I will tell you. Every one of you should, from this moment onwards, consider yourself a free man or woman, and acts as if you are free and are no longer under the heel of this imperialism.

It is not a make-believe that I am suggesting to you. It is the very essence of freedom. The bond of the slave is snapped the moment he consider himself to be a free being. He will plainly tell the master: "I was your bond slave till this moment, but I am a slave no longer. You may kill me if you like, but if you keep me alive, I wish to tell you that if you release me from the bondage, of your own accord, I will ask for nothing more from you. You used to

feed and cloth me, though I could have provided food and clothing for myself by my labour. I hitherto depended on you instead of on God, for food and raiment. But God has now inspired me with an urge for freedom and I am to day a free man, and will no longer depend on you.”

You may take it from me that I am not going to strike a bargain with the Viceroy for ministries and the like. I am not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete freedom. May be, he will propose the abolition of salt tax, the drink evil, etc. But I will say, “Nothing less than freedom.”

Here is a mantra, a short one, that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The mantra is : ‘Do or Die’. We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery. Every true Congressman or woman will join the struggle with an inflexible determination not to remain alive to see the country in bondage and slavery. Let that be your pledge. Keep jails out of your consideration. If the Government keep me free, I will not put on the Government the strain of maintaining a large number of prisoners at a time, when it is in trouble. Let every man and woman live every moment of his or her life hereafter in the consciousness that he or she eats or lives for achieving freedom and will die, if need be, to attain that goal. Take a pledge, with God and your own conscience as witness, that you will no longer rest till freedom is achieved and will be prepared to lay down your lives in the attempt to achieve it. He who loses his life will gain it; he who will seek to save it shall lose it. Freedom is not for the coward or the faint-hearted.

A word to the journalists. I congratulate you on the support you have hitherto given to the national demand. I know the restrictions and handicaps under which you have to labour. But I would now ask you to snap the chains that bind you. It should be the proud privilege of the newspapers to lead and set an example in laying down one’s life for freedom. You have the pen which the Government can’t suppress. I know you have large properties in

the form of printing presses, etc., and you would be afraid lest the Government should attach them. I do not ask you to invite an attachment of the printing-press voluntarily. For myself, I would not suppress my pen, even if the press was to be attached. As you know my press was attached in the past and returned later on. But I do not ask from you that final sacrifice. I suggest a middle way. You should now wind up your standing committee, and you may declare that you will give up the pen only when India has won her freedom. You may tell Sir Frederick Puckle that he can't expect from you a command performance, that his press notes are full of untruth, and that you will refuse to publish them. You will openly declare that you are wholeheartedly with the Congress. If you do this, you will have changed the atmosphere before the fight actually begins.

From the Princes I ask with all respect due to them a very small thing. I am a well-wisher of the Princes. I was born in a State. My grandfather refused to salute with his right hand any Prince other than his own. But he did not say to the Prince, as I felt he ought to have said, that even his own master could not compel him, his minister, to act against his conscience. I have eaten the Prince's salt and I would not be false to it. As a faithful servant, it is my duty to warn the Princes that if they will act while I am still alive, the Princes may come to occupy an honourable place in free India. In Jawaharlal's scheme of free India, no privileges or the privileged classes have a place. Jawaharlal considers all property to be State-owned. He wants planned economy. He wants to reconstruct India according to plan. He likes to fly; I do not. I have kept a place for the Princes and the Zamindars¹ in India that I envisage. I would ask the Princes in all humility to enjoy through renunciation. The Princes may renounce ownership over their properties and become their trustees in the true sense of the term. I visualize God in the assemblage of people. The Princes may say to their people : "You are the owners and masters of the State and we are your servants." I would ask the Princes to become servants of the people and render to them an account of their own services. The empire too

bestows power on the Princes, but they should prefer to derive power from their own people; and if they want to indulge in some innocent pleasures, they may seek to do so as servants of the people. I do not want the Princes to live as paupers. But I would ask them : “Do you want to remain slaves for all time? Why should you, instead of paying homage to a foreign power, not accept the sovereignty of your own people?” You may write to the Political Department : “The people are now awake. How are we to withstand an avalanche before which even the Large empire are crumbling? We, therefore, shall belong to the people from today onwards. We shall sink or swim with them.” Believe me, there is nothing unconstitutional in the course I am suggesting. There are, so far as I know, no treaties enabling the empire to coerce the Princes. The people of the States will also declare that though they are the Princes’ subjects, they are part of the Indian nation and that they will accept the leadership of the Princes, if the latter cast their lot with the people, the latter will meet death bravely and unflinchingly, but will not go back on their word. Nothing, however, should be done secretly. This is an open rebellion. In this struggle secrecy is a sin. A free man would not engage in a secret movement. It is likely that when you gain freedom you will have a C.I.D. of your own, in spite of my advice to the contrary. But in the present struggle, we have to work openly and to receive bullets on our chest, without taking to heels.

I have a word to say to Government servants also. They may not, if they like, resign their posts yet. The late Justice Ranade did not resign his post, but he openly declared that he belonged to the Congress. He said to the Government that though he was a judge, he was a Congressman and would openly attend the sessions of the Congress, but that at the same time he would not let his political views warp his impartiality on the bench. He held Social Reform Conference in the very Pandall of the Congress. I would ask all the Government servants to follow in the footsteps of Ranade and to declare their allegiance to the Congress

as an answer to the secret circular issued by Sir Frederick Puckle. This is all that I ask of you just now. I will now write to the Viceroy. You will be able to read the correspondence not just now but when I publish it with the Viceroy's consent. But you are free to aver that you support the demand to be put forth in my letter. A judge came to me and said : "We get secret circulars from high quarters. What are we to do?" I replied, "If I were in your place, I would ignore the circulars. You may openly say to the Government : 'I have received your secret circular. I am, however, with the Congress. Though I serve the Government for my livelihood, I am not going to obey these secret circulars or to employ underhand methods,'"

Soldiers too are covered by the present programme. I do not ask them just now to resign their posts and to leave the army. The soldiers come to me, Jawaharlal and the Maulana and say : "We are wholly with you. We are tired of the Governmental tyranny." To these soldiers I would say : You may say to the Government, "Our hearts are with the Congress. We are not going to leave our posts. We will serve you so long as we receive your salaries. We will obey your just orders, but will refuse to fire on our own people."

To those who lack the courage to do this much I have nothing to say. They will go their own way. But if you can do this much, you may take it from me that the whole atmosphere will be electrified. Let the Government then shower bombs, if they like. But no power on earth will then be able to keep you in bondage any longer.

If the students want to join the struggle only to go back to their studies after a while, I would not invite them to it. For the present, however, till the time that I frame a programme for the struggle, I would ask the students to say to their professors : "We belong to the Congress. Do you belong to the Congress, or to the Government? If you belong to the Congress, you need not vacate your posts. You will remain at your posts but teach us and lead us unto freedom."

In all fights for freedom, the world over, the students have made very large contributions.

If in the interval that is left to us before the actual fight begins, you do even the little I have suggested to you, you will have changed the atmosphere and will have prepared the ground for the next step.

There is much I should like to say. But my heart is heavy. I have already taken up much of your time. I have yet to say a few words in English also. I thank you for the patience and attention with which you have listened to me even at this late hour. It is just what true soldiers would do. For the last twenty-two years, I have controlled my speech and pen and have stored up my energy. He is a true Brahmachari who does not fritter away his energy. He will, therefore, always control his speech. That has been my conscious effort all these years. But today the occasion has come when I had to unburden my heart before you. I have done so, even though it meant putting a strain on your patience; and I do not regret having done it. I have given you my message and through you I have delivered it to the whole of India.

III

[The following is the concluding portion of Gandhiji's speech before the A.I.C.C. at Bombay on 8-8-'42 which was delivered in English:]

I have taken such an inordinately long time over pouring out, what was agitating my soul, to those whom I had just now the privilege of serving. I have been called their leader or, in the military language, their commander. But I do not look at my position in that light. I have no weapon but love to wield my authority over any one. I do sport a stick which you can break into bits without the slightest exertion. It is simply my staff with the help of which I walk. Such a cripple is not elated, when he has been called upon to bear the greatest burden. You can share that burden only when I appear before you not as your commander but as a humble servant. And he who serves best is the chief among equals.

Therefore, I was bound to share with you such thoughts as were welling up in my breast and tell you, in as summary a manner as I can, what I expect you to do as the first step. Let me tell you at the outset that the real struggle does not commence today. I have yet to go through much ceremonial as I always do. The burden, I confess, would be almost unbearable. I have to continue to reason in those circles with whom I have lost my credit and who have no trust left in me. I know that in the course of the last few weeks I have forfeited my credit with a large number of friends, so much so, that they have begun to doubt not only my wisdom but even my honesty. Now I hold my wisdom is not such a treasure which I cannot afford to lose; but my honesty is a precious treasure to me and I can ill-afford to lose it. I seem however to have lost it for the time being.

Friend of the Empire

Such occasions arise in the life of the man who is a pure seeker after truth and who would seek to serve the humanity and his country to the best of his lights without fear or hypocrisy. For the last fifty years I have known no other way. I have been a humble servant of humanity and have rendered on more than one occasion such services as I could to the Empire, and here let me say without fear of challenge that throughout my career never have I asked for any personal favour. I have enjoyed the privilege of friendship as I enjoy it today with Lord Linlithgow. It is a friendship which has outgrown official relationship. Whether Lord Linlithgow will bear me out, I do not know, but there is a personal bond between him and myself. He once introduced me to his daughter. His son-in law, the A.D.C. was drawn towards me. he fell in love with Mahadev more than with me and Lady Anna and he came to me. She is an obedient and favourite daughter. I take interest in their welfare. I take the liberty to give out these personal and sacred tit-bits only to give you an earnest of the personal bond will never interfere with the stubborn struggle on which, if it falls to my lot, I

may have to launch against Lord Linlithgow, as the representative of the Empire. I will have to resist the might of that Empire with the might of the dumb millions with no limit but of nonviolence as policy confined to this struggle. It is a terrible job to have to offer resistance to a Viceroy with whom I enjoy such relations. He has more than once trusted my word, often about my people. I would love to repeat that experiment, as it stands to his credit. I mention this with great pride and pleasure. I mention it as an earnest of my desire to be true to the Empire when that Empire forfeited my trust and the Englishman who was its Viceroy came to know it.

Charlie Andrews

Then there is the sacred memory of Charlie Andrews which wells up within me. At this moment the spirit of Andrews hovers about me. For me he sums up the brightest traditions of English culture. I enjoyed closer relations with him than with most Indians. I enjoyed his confidence. There were no secrets between us. We exchanged our hearts every day. Whatever was in his heart, he would blurt out without the slightest hesitation or reservation. It is true he was a friend of Gurudev¹ but he looked upon Gurudev with awe. He had that peculiar humility. But with me he became the closest friend. Years ago he came to me with a note of introduction from Gokhale. Pearson and he were the first-rank specimens of Englishmen. I know that his spirit is listening to me. Then I have got a warm letter of congratulations from the Metropolitan of Calcutta. I hold him to be a man of God. Today he is opposed to me.

Voice of Conscience

With all this background, I want to declare to the world, although I may have forfeited the regard of many friends in the West and I must bow my head low; but even for their friendship or love I must not suppress the voice of conscience – promoting of my inner basic nature today. There is something within me impelling me to cry out my agony. I have known humanity. I have studied something of psychology. Such a man knows exactly what it is. I do not mind how you describe it. That voice within tells me, “You have to stand against the whole world although you may have to stand alone. You have to stare in the face the whole world although the world may look at you with bloodshot eyes. Do not fear. Trust the little voice residing within your heart.” It says : “Forsake friends, wife and all; but testify to that for which you have lived and for which you have to die. I want to live my full span of life. And for me I put my span of life at 120 years. By that time India will be free, the world will be free.

Real Freedom

Let me tell you that I do not regard England or for that matter America as free countries. They are free after their own fashion, free to hold in bondage coloured races of the earth. Are England and America fighting for the liberty of these races today? If not, do not ask me to wait until after the war. You shall not limit my concept of freedom. The English and American teachers, their history, their magnificent poetry have not said that you shall not broaden the interpretation of freedom. And according to my interpretation of that freedom I am constrained to say they are strangers to that freedom which their teachers and poets have described. If they will know the real freedom they should come to India. They have to come not with pride or arrogances but in the spite of real earnest seekers of truth. It is a fundamental truth which India has been experimenting with for 22 years.

Congress and Non-violence

Unconsciously from its very foundations long ago the Congress has been building on non-violence known as constitutional methods. Dadabhai and Pherozeshah who had held the Congress India in the palm of their hands became rebels. They were lovers of the Congress. They were its masters. But above all they were real servants. They never countenanced murder, secrecy and the like. I confess there are many black sheep amongst us Congressmen. But I trust the whole of India today to launch upon a non-violent struggle. I trust because of my nature to rely upon the innate goodness of human nature which perceives the truth and prevails during the crisis as if by instinct. But even if I am deceived in this I shall not swerve. I shall not flinch. From its very inception the Congress based its policy on peaceful methods, included Swaraj and the subsequent generations added non-violence. When Dadabhai entered the British Parliament, Salisbury dubbed him as a black man; but the English people defeated Salisbury and Dadabhai went to the Parliament by their vote. India was delirious with joy. These things however India has outgrown.

I will go Ahead

It is, however, with all these things as the background that I want Englishmen, Europeans and all the United Nations to examine in their hearts what crime had India committed in demanding Independence. I ask, is it right for you to distrust such an organization with all its background, tradition and record of over half a century and misrepresent its endeavours before all the world by every means at your command? Is it right that by hook or by crook, aided by the foreign press, aided by the President of the U.S.A., or even by the Generalissimo of China who has yet to win his laurels, you should present India's struggle in shocking caricature? I have met the Generalissimo. I have known him through Madame Shek who was my interpreter; and though he seemed inscrutable to me, not so Madame Shek; and he

allowed me to read his mind through her. There is a chorus of disapproval and righteous protest all over the world against us. They say we are erring, the move is inopportune. I had great regard for British diplomacy which has enabled them to hold the Empire so long. Now it stinks in my nostrils, and others have studied that diplomacy and are putting it into practice. They may succeed in getting, through these methods, world opinion on their side for a time; but India will speak against that world opinion. She will raise her voice against all the organized propaganda. I will speak against it. Even if all the United Nations opposed me, even if the whole of India forsakes me, I will say, "You are wrong. India will wrench with non-violence her liberty from unwilling hands." I will go ahead not for India's sake alone, but for the sake of the world. Even if my eyes close before there is freedom, non-violence will not end. They will be dealing a mortal blow to China and to Russia if they oppose the freedom of non-violent India which is pleading with bended knees for the fulfillment of debt along overdue. Does a creditor ever go to debtor like that? And even when, India is met with such angry opposition, she says, "We won't hit below the belt, we have learnt sufficient gentlemanliness. We are pledged to non-violence." I have been the author of non-embarrassment policy of the Congress and yet today you find me talking this strong language. I say it is consistent with our honour. If a man holds me by the neck and wants to draw me, may I not struggle to free myself directly? There is no inconsistency in our position today.

Appeal to United nations

There are representatives of the foreign press assembled here today. Through them I wish to say to the world that the United Powers who somehow or other say that they have need for India, have the opportunity now to declare India free and prove their bona fides. If they miss it, they will be missing the opportunity of their lifetime, and history will record that they did

not discharge their obligations to India in time, and lost the battle. I want the blessings of the whole world so that I may succeed with them. I do not want the United Powers to go beyond their obvious limitations. I do not want them to accept non-violence and disarm today. There is a fundamental difference between fascism and this imperialism which I am fighting. Do the British get from India which they hold in bondage. Think what difference it would make if India was to participate as a free ally. That freedom, if it is to come, must come today. It will have no taste left in it today you who have the power to help cannot exercise it. If you can exercise it, under the glow of freedom what seems impossible, today, will become possible tomorrow. If India feels that freedom, she will command that freedom for China. The road for running to Russia's help will be open. The Englishmen did not die in Malaya or on Burma soil. What shall enable us to retrieve the situation? Where shall I go, and where shall I take the forty crores of India? How is this vast mass of humanity to be aglow in the cause of world deliverance, unless and until it has touched and felt freedom. Today they have no touch of life left. It has been crushed out of them. It lustre is to be put into their eyes, freedom has to come not tomorrow, but today.

Do or Die

I have pledged the Congress and the Congress will do or die.

4.3.2. Analysis:

The "Quit India" speeches, a series of speeches by Gandhi delivered to a large audience on 8th August 1942 remain a landmark in the history of anti-colonial resistance in India. These speeches outline his plan of non-violent protest against colonial domination as well as make an eloquent demand for the political emancipation of India. While the impact of a speech can

only be realized at the moment when it is spoken, with the presence of the audience at the receiving end, these speeches are known for their rhetorical qualities that bestow a certain kind of permanence on them. The effect of reading and interpreting these speeches is not diluted by the fact that they are removed from the political context and are being read solely as literary texts. These speeches overflow with literary expression, even as they were composed with the sole motive of initiating political action.

Gandhi's method of non-violent political struggle receives the highest degree of attention in the speeches, where he presents a well-crafted rationale for these methods. He sums up the struggle for independence as not a struggle for power, but as a struggle for the emancipation from the corrupted state of affairs under the alien system of governance. His political methodology is articulated in religious rather than scientific terms. He was largely instrumental in formulating a system of political action that relied heavily on spirituality. The key words in his register were passive resistance, swaraj, swadeshi, ahimsa, and so on. He is given the credit of discovering a new terminology to articulate the ideas of resistance. His vocabulary attempted to emancipate itself from the nationalist jargon derived from European Enlightenment thought. In this respect, he significantly differed from other nationalist who directly borrowed their terms of reference from European models. The agenda of the discovery of a new terminology to express nationalist sentiment went hand in hand with the project of indigenizing colonial social and cultural institutions. The chief aim of this endeavour was to liberate these institutions from the tantalizing influence of colonial cultural domination.

The Quit India Speech is one of Gandhi's longest addresses. He delivered it first in Hindi and then in a shortened English version. The speech was the second made by Gandhi during the two-day All India Congress Committee meeting in Bombay. The earlier speech was given on August 7, before the AICC's endorsement of the Quit India Resolution. The speeches of

August 7th and August 8th complement each other in content; both are passionate pleas for initiating the largest civil-disobedience movement in Indian history. In the first speech, Gandhi expressed his faith in nonviolent resistance, while barely touching upon issues such as the separatist politics of Hindu extremists or Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Instead, he emphasized the need for religious unity in order to foster true democracy, “the like of which has not been so witnessed”.

The first group Gandhi addressed in his speech was India's Muslim population. The Cripps Mission had reaffirmed British willingness to recognize the demands of Jinnah for a separate Muslim province. Political developments since the Lahore Resolution of 1940, which had demanded adequate and effective safeguards for Muslims to protect their rights and interests as a minority community, had elevated Jinnah to the position of spokesman for nearly all Muslims in India and had significantly impaired the ability of the Congress to represent the entire nation. For Gandhi, a messenger of religious brotherhood, the unity of religious communities was crucial for the success of any nationwide anti-British agitation. He vociferously criticized Jinnah as well as Hindu extremists like B. S. Moonje and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar for having preached and encouraged the doctrine of violence against followers of other faiths. Gandhi stressed the need for the unity of hearts and a joint effort in the struggle.

A broad cross section of Indian society participated in the Quit India Movement as a result of Gandhi's careful planning since 1939 as well as widespread dissatisfaction with British wartime policies. The Muslim League, the Communist Party of India, and Hindu fundamentalist parties did not officially support the movement, in the belief that it could weaken the Allied forces and inadvertently help the Axis powers. However, at the local and regional levels, members of these parties often either participated in the movement or at worst were neutral toward it. This allowed for considerable communal harmony. Despite

Communist nonparticipation, members of other left-wing organizations shaped the movement's militancy, especially the systematic targeting of public property and communication networks. Socialists such as Jaya Prakash Narayan and Ram Manohar Lohia and other left-wing leaders were particularly active in directing attacks on British installations.

Gandhi's speech, "Quit India", given on August 1942 in Bombay was geared towards an Indian population, oppressed by British rule. Gandhi spoke to all social groups in India in this speech; however, he selectively addressed the Muslims and Hindus. In fact, a large portion of Gandhi's audience and followers comprised of Muslims and Hindus. At the time the speech was given, there were rising tensions between the two religious groups. The enmity between the two groups grew due to their widely different beliefs and ideas. In his speech, Gandhi called for the peaceful coexistence of both groups. They were pushed to realize that they were Indians first and Muslims and Hindus second. As a result, members of each group temporarily put their differences aside and together took a stance against the British. In the end, their ability to identify with Gandhi's selflessness and match his concerns made them susceptible to act on his words. Furthermore, although his "Quit India" speech focuses mostly on an Indian audience, it also appeals to a much broader universal audience. Many people, globally, have sympathized with Gandhi's strive for political freedom and human rights, as depicted in his speech. Through the course of history the speech has been used as inspiration for a plethora of human rights movements. It set forth countless movements towards political, religious, and personal freedom, including the civil rights movement in the 1960's. The speech was used as a basis by various freedom rights leaders, such as Martin Luther King, in the fight for equal rights for whites and blacks in America. Ergo, the speech reached a broad spectrum of people, in particular Muslims and Hindus in India in 1942 and later many philanthropists in pursuit of human rights.

In his speech, Gandhi encourages his people to encompass a non-violent stance in their fight for freedom and equality. To promote peace Gandhi builds a motivating ethos, pathos, and logos through the careful use of a plethora of rhetorical strategies, for instance religious connotations, imagery, and biting diction. Gandhi entrenches a stirring ethos through the use of repetition and religious connotations. Through these devices Gandhi depicts himself as a religious, serene man throughout his speech. For instance at the beginning of his speech he makes a reference to god. Gandhi states, "God has vouchsafed to me a priceless gift in the weapon of Ahimsa...God will not forgive me and I shall be judged unworthy of the great gift". It must be remembered that Gandhi was addressing this speech to a fairly religious public, among the audience were many Muslims and Hindus, whom although practice different religions still believe in a form of God. Furthermore, Gandhi uses this religious connotation to appeal to the common beliefs of the Indian population. By stating that by failing to bestow ahimsa (a Hindu term referring to nonviolence) he will have failed God, he instils a common feeling of guilt and/or remorse in his audience. Therefore, causing many to endorse or at least contemplate a state of nonviolence. Further into his speech he adds, "I know how imperfect our Ahimsa is and how far we are still from the ideal but in Ahimsa there is no final failure or defeat". The concession realizes that this sense of peace is warped and far from perfect but grasps that there still is promise. It is followed by another religious connotation this time with a much more hopeful tone. He professes, "I have faith, therefore, that if, in spite of our shortcomings...it will be because God wanted to help us...unremitting Sadhana for the last twenty-two years". Here, Gandhi disseminates the belief that, despite the sustained struggle, God will reward them. He offers hope, which in return, thwarts the need for violence. Gandhi further exploits the term Ahimsa through repetition. He invariably repeats the term for the duration of his speech and in doing so implants the concept in the minds of the readers. Henceforth, through the use of religious connotations, repetition, and

concession he builds an ethos based on high moral values and guided beliefs. Consequently by depicting and sharing these beliefs he triggers emotional responses from the audience through a gripping pathos.

Gandhi utilizes pathos to persuade readers to encompass amity. He enthralls emotion through the use of cordial and biting diction, as well as metaphor and imagery. For his pathos Gandhi uses his metaphor and biting diction in a similar way in that they both are cultivated to infuse fear in the reader; in a way they work congruently. Towards the beginning of his speech he uses imagery, he depicts the earth in turmoil, ravaged by violence, pleading out for help. "In the present crisis, when the earth is scorched by the flames of Himsa and crying out for deliverance," he proclaimed. This image of a devoured world acts as a warning to the reader that if they continue in a path suffused with violence, it will lead to nothing but destruction. Gandhi personifies earth to illustrate the adverse effect of violence and also reflect suffering on a human level. Additionally, his use of biting diction in this quote emphasizes this theme of destruction. His choice of cutting words such as scorched, flames, and deliverance, all words that carry a negative connotation, make this statement dreadfully coarse, eliciting negative feelings. However, for the majority of his speech Gandhi sticks to a mellow, middle diction. It is important that his diction and tone be calm in order for him to accentuate peace, in other words he must lead by example. If he were to be using biting diction during the entire course of his speech he would contradicting his preeminent theme of Ahimsa. Gandhi also uses apostrophe to bring forth positive feelings of unity and empowerment. After focusing mostly on violence, in the middle of the speech Gandhi targets the two main religious groups in India, Muslims and Hindus. Outside from the British, religious tensions between these two groups contributed to the widespread violence in India at the time. He begins the statement through the sententia, "Everybody will be his own master". He then goes on to say, "Once you realize this you will forget the differences

between the Hindus and Muslims, and think of yourselves as Indians only, engaged in the common struggle for independence”. Gandhi promotes a feeling of equality and the idea that no one group is ruled by another. He encourages harmony between the two groups. Thus, Gandhi uses pathos in two ways: one to promote a mutual feeling of dismay and by doing so causing others to digress from violent methods, and two by creating a sense of solidarity and consensus among individual groups in India.

Logos is the final technique Gandhi uses to clout the colonized Indians towards passive resistance. His logos constitutes of deductive reasoning and correction of erroneous views. Gandhi organizes his speech through deductive reasoning. In the first few paragraphs he makes the claim that the greatest weapon is Ahimsa (peace). Gandhi claims, “the draft resolution of the Working Committee is based on Ahimsa, the contemplated struggle similarly has its root in Ahimsa”. He then uses his later paragraphs to explain why that is so. Each paragraph provides different evidence to justify his initial claim. For instance, in one of his subsequent paragraphs he makes an allusion to Carlyle’s French Revolution and Russian revolution stating, “But it is my conviction that in as much as these struggles were fought with the weapon of violence they failed to realize the democratic ideal”. Note his latter statement supports his initial claim. In this statement in particular Gandhi is also using correction of erroneous views. He substantiates his allegation by revealing the flaw of a previous method. Here he concludes that violence eliminates the potential for a real democratic state in which all are equal. He ties in this statement with his with his apostrophe to Muslims and Hindus, as mentioned earlier in this paper. Deductive reasoning tends to be less effective than inductive reasoning, where one starts with explanations and concludes with an overall claim, however Gandhi successfully uses this technique to enforce his logos. Moreover, Gandhi identifies a common mistake in reasoning “the people” make, which is the hasty generalization of the British. The fallacy that the British people and British imperialism

are one, results in unwarranted hatred towards British people. He disclosed, “The people make no distinction between British imperialism and the British people...We must get rid of that feeling” (Gandhi 2). He reminds the people that the confinement of India is not due to British people but British colonialism. Ergo, the utilization of logos in his Quit India speech works to promote his main idea that nonviolence is essentially an effective weapon on its own.

In his Quit India speech, Gandhi acquires trust from his audience through an artistically cultivated Ethos, Pathos, and Logos; as a result, in doing so he inspires the readers to follow a nonviolent path to freedom and equality. Several different devices were used as aid to establishing his Ethos, Logos and Pathos. Gandhi carefully incorporates these rhetorical devices throughout his paper. Gandhi used his intelligence and cordial nature for many years in India, but he also indirectly infused his ideas and beliefs on many people worldwide. His call for non-violence and equality influenced many human rights movements on a global scale. His ideas of unity and accord were seen in the civil rights movement in the mid 20th century in the US. Ultimately, Gandhi’s words encourage the evolutions to a larger, ideal democratic state.

4.3.3. Speech at the Second Round Table Conference

The following is the text of the speech that Mahatma Gandhi delivered at the plenary session of the Round Table Conference in London on November 30, 1931.)

Rule of Majority

I do not think that anything that I can say this evening can possibly influence the decision of the Cabinet. Probably the decision has been already taken. Matters of liberty of practically a whole Continent can hardly be decided by mere argumentation, or even negotiations. Negotiation has its purpose and has its play, but only under certain conditions.

Without those conditions, negotiations are a fruitless task. But I do not want to go into all these matters. I want as far as possible to confine myself within the four corners of the conditions that you, Prime Minister, read to this Conference at its opening meeting. I would, therefore, first of all say a few words in connection with the Reports that have been submitted to this Conference. You will find in these Reports that generally it has been stated that such and such is the opinion of a large majority, some, however, have expressed an opinion to the contrary, and so on. Parties who have dissented have not been stated. I had heard when I was in India, and I was told when I came here, that no decision or decisions will be taken by the ordinary rule of majority, and I do not want to mention this fact here by way of complaint that the reports have been so framed as if the proceedings were governed by the test of majority.

But it was necessary for me to mention this fact, because to most of these Reports you will find that there is a dissenting opinion, and in most of the cases that dissent unfortunately happens to belong to me. It was not a matter of joy to have to dissent from fellow delegates. But I felt that I could not truly represent the Congress unless I notified that dissent.

There is another thing which I want to bring to the notice of this Conference namely, what is the meaning of the dissent of the Congress? I said at one of the preliminary meetings of the Federal Structure committee that the Congress claimed to represent over 85 percent of the population of India, that is to say the dumb, toiling, semi-starved millions. But I went further: that the Congress claimed also, by right of service, to represent even the Princes, if they would pardon my putting forth that claim, and the landed gentry, and the educated class. I wish to repeat that claim and I wish this evening to emphasize that claim.

Congress Represents India

All the other Parties at this meeting represent sectional interests. Congress alone claims to represent the whole of India and all interests. It is no communal organization; it is a determined enemy of communalism in any shape or form. Congress knows no distinction of race, colour or creed; its platform is universal. It may not always have lived up to the creed. I do not know a single human organization that lives up to its creed. Congress has failed very often to my knowledge. It may have failed more often to the knowledge of its critics. But the worst critic will have to recognize, as it has been recognized, that the Indian National Congress is a daily growing organization, that its message penetrates the remotest village of India, that on given occasions the Congress has been able to demonstrate its influence over and among these masses who inhabit its 700,000 villages.

And yet, here I see that the Congress is treated as one of the Parties. I do not mind it; I do not regard it a calamity for the Congress; but I do regard it as a calamity for the purpose of doing the work for which we have gathered together here. I wish I could convince all the British public men, the British Ministers, that the Congress is capable of delivering the goods. The Congress is the only all-India wide national organization, bereft of any communal bias: that it does represent all minorities which have lodged their claim—I hold unjustifiably—to represent 46 percent of the population of India. The Congress, I say, claims to represent all these minorities.

What a great difference it would be today if this claim on behalf of the congress was recognized. I feel that I have to state this claim with some degree of emphasis on behalf of peace, for the sake of achieving the purpose which is common to all of us, to you Englishmen who sit at this Table and to us the Indian men and women who also sit at this Table. I say so for this reason: Congress is a powerful organization: Congress is an organization which has been accused of running or desiring to run a parallel Government; and in a way I have endorsed the charge. If you could understand the working of the

Congress you would welcome an organization which could run a parallel Government and show that it is possible for an organization, voluntary, without any force at its command, to run the machinery of Government even under adverse circumstances.

But no. Although you have invited the Congress, you distrust the Congress. Although you have invited the Congress, you reject its claim to represent the whole of India. Of course it is possible at this end of the world to dispute that claim, and it is not possible for me to prove this claim; but, all the same, if you find me asserting that claim, I do so because a tremendous responsibility rests upon my shoulders.

The Way of Negotiation

The Congress represents the spirit of rebellion. I know that the word ‘rebellion’ must not be whispered at a Conference which has been summoned in order to arrive at agreed solutions of India’s troubles through negotiation. Speaker after speaker has got up and said that India should achieve her liberty through negotiation, by argument, and that it will be the greatest glory of Great Britain if Great Britain yields to India’s demands by argument. But the Congress does not hold quite that view. The Congress has an alternative which is unpleasant to you.

The Old Way

I heard several speakers—I have tried to follow every speaker with the utmost attention and with all the respect that I could possibly give to these speakers—saying what a dire calamity it would be if India was fired with the spirit of lawlessness, rebellion, terrorism and so on. I do not pretend to have read history, but as a schoolboy I had to pass a paper in history also, and I read that the page of history is soiled red with the blood of those who have fought for freedom. I do not know an instance in which nations have attained their

own without having to go through an incredible measure of travail. The dagger of the assassin, the poison bowl, the bullet of the rifleman, the spear and all these weapons and methods of destruction have been up to now used by, what I consider, blind lovers of liberty and freedom. And the historian has not condemned them. I hold no brief for the terrorists. Mr. Ghuznavi brought in the terrorists and he brought in the Calcutta Corporation. I felt hurt when he mentioned an incident that took place at the Calcutta Corporation. He forgot to mention that the Mayor of that Corporation made handsome reparation for the error into which he himself was betrayed, and the error into which the Calcutta corporation was betrayed, through the instrumentality of those members of the Corporation who were Congressmen.

I hold no brief for Congressmen who directly or indirectly would encourage terrorism. As soon as this incident was brought to the notice of the Congress the Congress set about putting it in order. It immediately called upon the Mayor of the Calcutta Corporation to give an account of what was done and the Mayor, the gentleman that he is, immediately admitted his mistake and made all the reparation that it was then legally possible to make. I must not detain this Assembly over this incident for any length of time. He mentioned also a verse which the children of the forty schools conducted by the Calcutta Corporation are supposed to have recited. There were many other miss-statements in that speech which I could dwell upon, but I have no desire to do so. It is only out of regard for the great Calcutta Corporation, and out of regard for truth, and on behalf of those who are not here tonight to put in their defence, that I mention these two glaring instances. I do not for one moment believe that this was taught in the Calcutta Corporation schools with the knowledge of the Calcutta Corporation. I do know that in those terrible days of last year several things were done for which we have regret, for which we have made reparation.

If our boys in Calcutta were taught those verses which Mr. Ghuznavi has recited, I am here to tender an apology on their behalf, But I should want it proved that the boys were taught by the schoolmasters of these schools with the knowledge and encouragement of the Corporation. Charges of this nature have been brought against Congress times without number, and times without number these charges have also been refuted, but if I have mentioned these things at this juncture, it is again to show that for the sake of liberty people have fought, people have lost their lives, people have killed and have sought death at the hands of those whom they have sought to oust.

The New Way

The Congress then comes upon the scene and devises a new method not known to history, namely, that of civil disobedience, and the Congress has been following up that method. But again, I am up against a stone wall and I am told that that is a method that no government in the world will tolerate. Well, of course, the Government may not tolerate, no Government has tolerated open rebellion. No Government may tolerate civil disobedience, but Governments have to succumb even to these forces, as the British Government has done before now, even as the great Dutch Government after eight years of trial had to yield to the logic of facts. General Smuts, a brave general a great statesman, and a very hard taskmaster also, but he himself recoiled with horror from even the contemplation of doing to death innocent men and women who were merely fighting for the preservation of their self-respect. Things which he had vowed he would never yield in the year 1908, reinforced as he was by General Botha, he had to do in the year 1914, after having tried these civil resisters through and through. And in India, Lord Chelmsford had to do the same thing: the Governor of Bombay had to do the same thing in Borsad and Bardoli. I suggest to you, Prime Minister, it is too late today to resist this, and it is this thing which weighs me down,

this choice that lies before them, the parting of the ways probably. I shall hope against hope, I shall strain every nerve to achieve an honourable settlement for my country, if I can do so without having to put the millions of my countrymen and countrywomen, and even children, through this ordeal of fire. It can be matter of no joy and comfort to me to lead them again to a fight of that character, but if a further ordeal of fire has to be our lot, I shall approach that with the greatest joy and with the greatest consolation that I was doing what I felt to be right, the country was doing what it felt to be right, and the country will have the additional satisfaction of knowing that it was not at least taking lives, it was giving lives: It was not making the British people directly suffer, it was suffering. Professor Gilbert Murray told me—I shall never forget that, I am paraphrasing his inimitable language—“Do you not consider for one moment that we Englishmen do not suffer when thousands of your countrymen suffer, that we are so heartless?” I do not think so. I do know that you will suffer but I want you to suffer because I want to touch your hearts; and when your hearts have been touched then will come the psychological moment for negotiation. Negotiation there always will be; and if this time I have travelled all these miles in order to enter upon negotiation, I thought that your countrymen, Lord Irwin, had sufficiently tried us through his ordinances, that he had sufficient evidence that thousands of men and women of India and thousands of children had suffered; and that, ordinance or no ordinance, *lathis*¹ or no *lathis*, nothing would avail to stem the tide that was onrushing and to stem the passions that were rising in the breasts of the men and women of India who were thirsting for liberty.

The Price

Whilst there is yet a little sand left in the glass, I want you to understand what this Congress stands for. My life is at your disposal. The lives of all the members of the

Working Committee, the All-India Congress Committee, are at your disposal. But remember that you have at your disposal the lives of all these dump millions. I do not want to sacrifice those lives if I can possibly help it. Therefore, please remember, that I will count no sacrifice too great if, by chance, I can pull through an honourable settlement. You will find me always having the greatest spirit of compromise If I can but fire you with the spirit that is working in the Congress, namely, that India must have real liberty. Call it by any name you like; a rose will smell as sweet by any other name, but it must be the rose of liberty that I want and not the artificial product. If your mind and the Congress mind, the mind of this Conference and the mind of the British people, means the same thing by the same word, then you will find the amplest room for compromise, and you will find the Congress itself always in a compromising spirit. But so long as there is not that one mind, that one definition, not one implication for the same word that you and I and we may be using. It is impossible, Prime Minister, I want to suggest to you in all humility, that it is utterly impossible then to find a meeting ground, to find a ground where you can apply the spirit to compromise. And I am very grieved to have to say up to now I have not been able to discover a common definition for the terms that we have been exchanging during all these weary weeks.

Our Goal

I was shown last week the Statute of Westminster by a sceptic, and he said, "Have you seen the definition of Dominion?" I read the definition of "Dominion" and naturally I was not at all perplexed or shocked to see that the word "Dominion" was exhaustively defined and it had not a general definition but a particular definition. It simply said: the word 'Dominion' shall include Australia, South Africa, Canada and so on ending with the Irish Free State. I do not think I noticed Egypt there. Then he said, "Do you see what your

Dominion means?” It did not make any impression upon me. I do not mind what my Dominion means or what complete independence means. In a way I was relieved.

I said, I am now relieved from having to quarrel about the word ‘Dominion’, because I am out of it. But I want complete independence, and even so, so many Englishmen have said, “Yes, you can have complete independence, but what is the meaning of complete independence?”, and again we come to different definitions.

One of your great statesmen was debating with me, and said: “Honestly I did not know that you meant this by complete independence.” He ought to have known but he did not know, and I shall tell you what he did not know. When I said to him: “I cannot be a partner in an Empire”, he said: “Of course, that is logical.” I replied: “But I want to become that. It is not as if I shall be if I am compelled to, but I want to become a partner with Great Britain. I want to become a partner with the English people; but I want to enjoy precisely the same liberty that your people enjoy, and I want to seek this partnership not merely for the benefit of India, and not merely for mutual benefit; I want to seek partnership in order that the great weight that is crushing the world to atoms may be lifted from its shoulders.”

This took place ten or twelve days ago. Strange as it may appear, I got a note from another Englishman, whom also you know, and whom also you respect. Among many things, he writes: “I believe profoundly that the peace and happiness of mankind depend on our friendship”; and, as if I would not understand that, he says: “Your people and mine.” I must read to you what he also says: “And of all Indians you are the one that the real Englishman likes and understands.”

He does not waste any words on flattery, and I do not think he has intended this last expression to flatter me. It will not flatter me in the slightest degree. There are many things in this note which, if I could share them with you, would perhaps make you understand better the significance of this expression, but let me tell you that when he writes this last

sentence he does not mean me personally. I personally signify nothing, and I know I would mean nothing to any single Englishman; but I mean something to some Englishmen because I represent a cause, because I seek to represent a nation, a great organization which has made itself felt. That is the reason why he says this.

But then, if I could possibly find that working basis, Prime Minister, there is ample room for compromise. It is for friendship I crave. My business is not to throw overboard the slave-holder and tyrant. My philosophy forbids me to do so, and today the Congress has accepted that philosophy, not as a creed, as it is to me, but as a policy, because the Congress believes that is the right and the best thing for India, a nation of 350 millions to do.

Our Weapon

A nation of 350 million people does not need the dagger of the assassin, it does not need the poison bowl, it does not need the sword, the spear or the bullet. It needs simply a will of its own, an ability to say 'no' and that nation is today learning to say 'no'.

But what is it that that nation does? To summarily, or at all, dismiss Englishmen? No. Its mission is today to convert Englishmen. I do not want to break the bond between England and India, but I do want to transform that bond. I want to transform that slavery into complete freedom for my country. Call it complete independence or whatever you like, I will not quarrel about that word, and even though my countrymen may dispute with me for having taken some other word, I shall be able to bear down that opposition so long as the content of the word that you may suggest to me bears the same meaning. Hence, I have times without number to urge upon your attention that the safeguards that have been suggested are completely unsatisfactory. They are not in the interests of India.

Financial Cramp

Three experts from Federation of Commerce and Industry have, in their own way, each in his different manner, told out of their expert experiences how utterly impossible it is for any body of responsible Ministers to tackle the problem of administration when 30 percent of her resources are mortgaged irretrievably. Better than I could have shown to you, they have shown out of the amplitude of their knowledge what these financial safeguards mean for India. These mean the complete cramping of India. They have discussed at this Table financial safeguards but that includes necessarily the question of Defence and the question of the Army. Yet while I say that the safeguards are unsatisfactory as they have been presented, I have not hesitated to say, and I do not hesitate to repeat that the Congress is pledged to giving safeguards, endorsing safeguards which may be demonstrated to be in the interest of India.

At one of the sittings of the Federal Structure Committee I had no hesitation in amplifying the admission and saying that those safeguards must be also of benefit to Great Britain. I do not want safeguards which are merely beneficial to India and prejudicial to the real interests of Great Britain. The fancied interests of India will have to be sacrificed. The fancied interests of Great Britain will have to be sacrificed. The illegitimate interests of India will have to be sacrificed. The illegitimate interests of Great Britain will also have to be sacrificed. Therefore, again I repeat, if we have the same meaning for the same word, I will agree with Mr. Jayakar, with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and other distinguished speakers who have spoken at this Conference.

I will agree with them all that we have, after all these labours, reached a substantial measure of agreement, but my despair, my grief, is that I do not read the same words in the same light. The implications of the safeguards of Mr. Jayakar, I very much fear, are different from my implications, and the implications of Mr. Jayakar and myself are perhaps

only different from the implications that Sir Samuel Hoare, for instance, has in mind; I do not know. We have never really come to grips. We have never got down to brass tacks, as you put it, and I am anxious—I have been pining—to come to real grips and to get down to brass tacks all these days and all these nights, and I have felt: why are not we not coming nearer and nearer together, and why are we wasting our time in eloquence, in oratory, in debating, and in scoring points? Heaven knows, I have no desire to hear my own voice. Heaven knows, I have no desire to take part in any debating. I know that liberty is made of sterner stuff, and I know that the freedom of India is made of much sterner stuff. We have problems that would baffle any statesman. We have problems that other nations have not to tackle. But they do not baffle me; they cannot baffle those who have been brought up in the Indian climate. Those problems are there with us. Just as we have to tackle bubonic plague, we have to tackle the problem of malaria. We have to tackle, as you have not, the problem of snakes and scorpions, monkeys, tigers and lions. We have to tackle these problems because we have been brought up under them.

They do not baffle us. Somehow or other we have survived the ravages of these venomous reptiles and various creatures. So also shall we survive our problems and find a way out of those problems. But today you and we have come together at a Round Table and we want to find a common formula which will work. Please believe me that whilst I abate not a little of the claim that I have registered on behalf of the Congress, which I do not propose to repeat here, While I withdraw not one word of the speeches that I had to make at the Federal Structure Committee, I am here to compromise; I am here to consider every formula that British ingenuity can prepare, every formula that the ingenuity of such constitutionalists as Mr. Sastri, Dr. Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Jayakar, Mr. Jinnah, Sir Muhammad Shafi and a host of others can weave into being.

Mutual Trust

I will not be baffled. I shall be here as long as I am required because I do not want to revive civil disobedience. I want to turn the truce that was arrived at in Delhi into a permanent settlement. But for heaven's sake give me, a frail man 62 years gone, a little bit of a chance. Find a little corner for him and the organization that he represents. You distrust that organization though you may seemingly trust me. Not for one moment differentiate me from the organization of which I am but a drop in the ocean. I am no greater than the organization to which I belong. I am infinitely smaller than that organization; and if you find me a place, if you trust me, I invite you to trust the Congress also. Your trust in me otherwise is a broken reed. I have no authority save what I derive from the Congress. If you will work the Congress for all it is worth, then you will say good-bye to terrorism; then you will not need terrorism. Today you have to fight the school of terrorists which is there with your disciplined and organized terrorism, because you will be blind to the facts or the writing on the wall. Will you not see the writing that these terrorists are writing with their blood? Will you not see that we do not want bread of wheat, but we want the bread of liberty; and without that liberty there are thousands today who are sworn not to give themselves peace or to give the country peace.

I urge you then to read that writing on the wall. I ask you not to try the patience of a people known to be proverbially patient. We speak of the mild Hindu, and the Musalman also by contact good or evil with the Hindu has himself become mild. And the mention of the Musalman brings me to the baffling problem of minorities. Believe me, that problem exists here, and I repeat what I used to say in India—I have not forgotten those words—that without the problem of minorities being solved there is no Swaraj for India, there is no freedom for India. I know and I realize it; and yet I came here in the hope 'perchance' that I might be able to pull through a solution here. But I do not despair of some day or other

finding a real and living solution in connection with the minorities problem. I repeat what I have said elsewhere that so long as the wedge in the shape of foreign rules divides community from community and class from class, there will be no real living solution, there will be no real living friendship between these communities.

It will be after all and at best a paper solution. But immediately you withdraw that wedge, the domestic ties, the domestic affection, the knowledge of common birth—do you suppose that all these will count for nothing?

Were Hindus and Musalmans and Sikhs always at war with one another when there was no British rule, when there was no English face seen there? We have chapter and verse given to us by Hindu historians and by Musalman historians to say that we were living in comparative peace even then. And Hindus and Musalmans in the villages are not even today quarrelling. In those days they were not known to quarrel at all. The late Maulana Muhammad Ali often used to tell me, and he was himself a bit of an historian. He said: ‘If God—‘Allah’ as he called out—‘give me life, I propose to write the history of Musalman rule in India; and then I will show, through documents that British people have preserved, that Aurangzeb was not so vile as he has been painted by the British historian; that the Mogul rule was not so bad as it has been shown to us in British History; and so on. And so have Hindu historians written. This quarrel is not old; this quarrel is coeval with this acute shame. I dare to say, it is coeval with the British advent, and immediately this relationship, the unfortunate, artificial, unnatural relationship between Great Britain and India is transformed into a natural relationship, when it becomes, if it does become, a voluntary partnership to be given up, to be dissolved at the will of either party, when it becomes that you will find that Hindus and Musalmans, Sikhs, Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Christians, Untouchables, will all live together as one man.

I do not intend to say much tonight about the Princes, but I should be wronging them and should be wronging the congress if I did not register my claim, not with the Round Table conference but with the Princes. It is open to the Princes to give their terms on which they will join the federation. I have appealed to them to make the path easy for those who inhabit the other part of India, and therefore, I can only make these suggestions for their favourable consideration, for their earnest consideration. I think that if they accepted, no matter what they are, but some fundamental rights as the common property of all India, and if they accepted that position and allowed those rights to be tested by the Court, which will be again of their own creation, and if they introduced elements—only elements—of representation on behalf of their subjects, I think that they would have gone a long way to conciliate their subjects. They would have gone a long way to show to the world and to show to the whole of India that they are also fired with a democratic spirit, that they do not want to remain undiluted autocrats, but that they want to become constitutional monarchs even as King George of Great Britain is.

An autonomous Frontier Province

Let India get what she is entitled to and what she can really take, but whatever she gets, and whenever she gets, and whenever she gets it, let the Frontier Province get complete autonomy today. That Frontier will then be a standing demonstration to the whole of India, and therefore, the whole vote of the Congress will be given in favour of the Frontier Province getting Provincial Autonomy tomorrow. Prime Minister, if you can possibly get your Cabinet to endorse the proposition that from tomorrow the Frontier Province becomes a full-fledged autonomous province, I shall then have a proper footing amongst the Frontier tribes and convene them to my assistance when those over the border cast an evil eye on India.

Thanks

Last of all, my last is a pleasant task for me. This is perhaps the last time that I shall be sitting with you at negotiations. It is not that I want that. I want to sit the same table with you in your closets and to negotiate and to plead with you and to go down on bended knees before I take the final lead and final plunge.

But whether I have the good fortune to continue to tender my co-operation or not does not depend upon me. It largely depends upon you. But it may not even depend upon you. It depends upon so many circumstances over which neither you nor we may have any control whatsoever. Then, let me perform this pleasant task of giving my thanks to all from their Majesties down to the poorest men in the East End where I have taken up my habitation.

In that settlement, which represents the poor people of the East End of London, I have become one of them. They have accepted me as a member, and as a favoured member of their family. It will be one of the richest treasures that I shall carry with me. Here, too, I have found nothing but courtesy and nothing but a genuine affection from all with whom I have come in touch. I have come in touch with so many Englishmen. It has been a priceless privilege to me. They have listened to what must have often appeared to them to be unpleasant, although it was true. Although I have often been obliged to say these things to them they have never shown the slightest impatience or irritation. It is impossible for me to forget these things. No matter what befalls me, no matter what the fortunes may be of this Round Table Conference, one thing I shall certainly carry with me, that is, that from high to low I have found nothing but the utmost courtesy and the utmost affection. I consider that it was well worth my paying this visit to England in order to find this human affection.

It has enhanced, it has deepened my irrepressible faith in human nature that although Englishmen and Englishwomen have been fed upon lies that I see so often disfiguring your

Press, that although in Lancashire, the Lancashire people had perhaps some reason for becoming irritated against me, I found no irritation and no resentment even in the operatives. The operatives, men and women, hugged me. They treated me as one of their own. I shall never forget that.

I am carrying with me thousands upon thousands of English friendships. I do not know them but I read that affection in their eyes as early in the morning I walk through your streets. All this hospitality, all this kindness will never be effaced from my memory, no matter what befalls my unhappy land. I thank you for your forbearance.

4.3.4. Analysis:

The Round Table Conferences (1930–32) were a series of meetings in three sessions called by the British government to consider the future constitution of India. The conference resulted from a review of the Government of India Act of 1919, undertaken in 1927 by the Simon Commission, whose report was published in 1930. The conference was held in London.

The first session (Nov. 12, 1930–Jan. 19, 1931) had 73 representatives, from all Indian states and all parties except the Indian National Congress, which was waging a civil disobedience campaign against the government. Its principal achievement was an insistence on parliamentarianism—an acceptance by all, including the princes, of the federal principle—and on dominion status as the goal of constitutional development. The second session (September–December 1931) was attended by Mahatma Gandhi as the Congress representative; it failed to reach agreement, either constitutionally or on communal

representation. The third session (Nov. 17–Dec. 24, 1932) was shorter and less important, with neither the Congress nor the British Labour Party attending. The result of these deliberations was the Government of India Act, 1935, establishing provincial autonomy and also a federal system that was never implemented.

In this speech, Gandhi critiques the whole notion of arriving at a common consensus about India's future through negotiations. He is sceptical of the peace-establishing claims of the conference, and therefore is steeped in self-doubt and suspicion. He constantly asserts the fact that he is a part of the conference in his capacity as a representative of the Indian National Congress, an organisation that supports the cause of communal harmony. He rationalises the existence of the Congress and argues that it is the most representative of all political parties in India. He, in his speech, depicts the primary political principles of the Congress and argues that one of its chief intentions was to uphold the amity between religious groups. Gandhi projects the Congress as a political organisation that safeguards the interest of all Indians irrespective of their caste, creed and colour.

Gandhi's speech was widely appreciated by its wisdom, commonsense, intelligence and balance. Though the conference ended without yielding any positive result, Gandhi was able to transmit his charisma and message of non-violence and truth, and the cause of India's freedom to the thinking minds of Britain. He met the Labour Party members of the Parliament, and also members of other parties. "If India did not have the power to control its foreign relations and the defense what else is this so-called autonomy?"—he asked those members of Parliament. A major part of the country's revenue is extorted away by the foreigners. Everything including education, sanitation and health etc had to be managed with the rest of it. Gandhi spoke again at the sub-committee meeting of the Round Table Conference. It was a spirited speech. He pointed out that the delegates to the conference were not the representatives of India, but those of the Indian government.

“I know almost all political parties of India” – he said... “But I do not find here any one of those having the right and ability to represent the country”. “Where will this take us to, he asked the sub-committee”. He demanded that adult franchise be given to all Indians. He spoke again, at the full session of the Round Table. It was one of the most memorable speeches he had given. He declared that the Congress Party would rest contented only after winning complete freedom.

The speeches of M.K.Gandhi are noted for the strength of argument; he defends his stand with a remarkable flourish. Eloquence, one of the primary attributes of a good speaker, is a characteristic feature of his utterances. He is clear and lucid, and does not engage in quibbles. He avoids word play, and focuses on the development of thought in a systematic fashion. His speeches are neatly structured, where one idea or theme gives way to another. There is a remarkable sense of coherence in his long speeches which keep the attention of the readers intact through the unity of thought and the logical progression of ideas. Thoughts are in a constant process of evolution in his speeches and writings, and he examines a single thought from varied perspectives. The multiplicity of his perspectives and the recognition of diversity distinguish his speeches. His speeches are replete with religious imagery and abound in allusions. He relies heavily on myth and history to legitimize his arguments. Because of the far-fetched nature of his rationale, he was often dubbed as ancient, impractical, and unscientific. His rhetoric is considered to be obsolete and antiquarian. He nevertheless made an ever-lasting impact on his audiences and his speeches continue to influence and motivate the readers as they once enthralled the listeners.

4.3.5. Assessment of Gandhi's Role in the Indian Nationalist Movement

Gandhi, the politician-saint, the man who brought down an empire by preaching brotherhood and nonviolence, is perhaps the most influential figure in the struggle for anti-colonial resistance. His place in history is secure, and it does not diminish his greatness to point out that in some respects, he had failed. He had spent his life working toward the achievement of independence for India without violence or division—"you can cut me in two if you wish," he famously told Muhammed Jinnah, "but don't cut India in two." Yet in the end, he was forced to watch as his newborn country was torn by one of the great human calamities of the century. Gandhi had made India ungovernable for the British, but in the autumn of 1947, it became ungovernable for anyone.

If his political dream was in some sense a failure, so too was his dream of an India cleansed of the age-old inequities of caste and prejudice, and yet uncorrupted by modern technology and industry. He imagined a country where countless Indian peasants wove their own clothes and tilled their own land, without what he considered the ruinous effects of modernity. But after his death, history passed him by: his great disciple, Jawaharlal Nehru, was an ardent socialist, and by the 1950s Nehru's five-year plans were turning India into an industrial state—and eventually, a nuclear state. Meanwhile, the iniquities of class and gender that he had so loathed persisted, even into the 21st century.

Yet Gandhi had to aspire as high as he did to achieve what he did; indeed he won triumphs for India that less idealistic leaders would never have dreamed possible. No one did more than Gandhi to improve the lot of poor Indians, and if his dreams fell short of reality, it was not because the dreams were flawed, but because the human race, which he loved so much, could not rise to the standard he set. It is true that India split after independence, but without Gandhi's labour, without the power of his person, there would have been no India at all. The

nationalists of the Indian National Congress fought for independence, but they were, and always would be, westernized elite, out of touch with the vast masses inhabiting the real India. It was Gandhi, the Mahatma, who made the people of the subcontinent believe in the idea of an Indian nation; indeed, it was he, the frail, bespectacled figure with the simple clothes and the ready smile, who embodied this idea throughout the long decades of struggle.

To the Indian people, Gandhi gave a nation. To the world, he gave *satyagraha*, arguably the most revolutionary idea of a long and ravaged century. He showed that political change could be affected by renouncing violence; that unjust laws could be defied peacefully and with a readiness to accept punishment; that "soul-force," as much as armed force, could bring down an empire. He drew this lesson from his readings of the Bible and Tolstoy and the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and he taught it to Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, and countless other political protestors who would follow his example in the years to come. In some sense, Gandhi's greatest achievement lay in his legacy; for his ideals, and the example he provided in living them out, inspired, and continued to inspire, people of all nations to take up the peaceful struggle for freedom from oppression.

4.3.6. Suggested Essay Topics

1. Comment on the style of M.K.Gandhi's speeches.
2. Write an essay on the rhetorical devices used in the speeches of M.K.Gandhi.
3. The speeches of M.K.Gandhi strongly advocated the cause for an organized system of anti-colonial resistance. Elaborate.

4. Comment on the methods of political action endorsed by M.K.Gandhi with examples from his speeches.

5. Through his highly impactful speeches, M.K.Gandhi channelized India's struggle for freedom from the tantalizing influences of colonial cultural domination. Discuss.

4.3.7. List of References

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4.3.8. Suggestions for further Reading

1. *Hind Swaraj*- M.K.Gandhi
2. *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*- M.K.Gandhi
3. *An Autobiography*- Jawaharlal Nehru

UNIT-5 JAWAHARLAL NEHRU- AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

5.1. Autobiography

5.1.1. Introduction

An autobiography is often described as a developmental narrative, where the course of an individual's development in the background of history is traced. Use of the *confessional mode* might at first seem to bring it closer to other forms of life writing, but there has been an ever-increasing differentiation between various forms of life-writing over the years. Autobiography, therefore, has been defined in relation to and as different from memoirs, diaries, or journals. These forms are considered to be loosely structured and less serious. The autobiographical form represents a narrative that is ordered, neatly structured and well-conceived. An autobiography orders events of a person's life with some purpose or goal in view. An individual's life is put in a perspective in an autobiography.

An autobiography represents an individual placed in history, who has achieved a certain degree of consciousness and stability with regard to himself in the sense that he becomes a "historian of himself" or a chronicler of his own life. Autobiographies are mostly narratives of stabilization, narrate as they do the movement of an individual from a rudimentary and unfinished state to a more matured and balanced sense of selfhood. The critical backward gaze that the autobiographical subject casts on his past reconfirms his stable and unshakable position in the social set-up within which he exists. Autobiographies, therefore, are written at a moment in one's life when an individual has acquired relative degree of stability and constancy as regards his personal and public life. This sense of self-evaluation is essential for an autobiography. Self-actualization is the ultimate goal of an autobiographical narrative.

These notions of a stabilized wholeness have been questioned in current scholarship on autobiographical narratives. What emerges in an autobiography, therefore, is not a full, rounded self, but a fragmentary personality.

The sense of profundity attached to the individual's achievements as inscribed in the autobiographical narrative has been a matter of debate especially on the grounds of the universalist claims that it tends to make. The tendency now is to consider the autobiographical text as "constructed", in a certain sense, where the dynamics of a narrative come in to play. The validity of the "truth" that is represented in an autobiography has also been subject to such critical interventions.

The autobiography's sense of referentiality to a contemporary person has especially been critiqued after the advent of post-modernist criticism. Autobiography's claim to critical objectivity has been questioned by poststructuralist criticism. The universal or objective point of view implies a particular ideology of the subject and we need to be sceptical about the claim that the personal can guarantee authenticity.

The numerous ways in which the self is constructed in an autobiographical text opens up a new area for analytical intervention. This view entails the notion that contesting and conflicting visions of selfhood are presented to the reader. Since the self-perceptions of the autobiographical subject colour the text, the autobiography always presents a version of truth that is not free from prejudice.

5.1.2. Autobiography as a Literary Genre

Paul De Man, in a famous essay titled "Autobiography as De-Facement" outlines some of the fallacies in the current critical scholarship on autobiography. One of them, he observes, is the tendency to treat autobiography as a literary genre. By giving it the status of an independent literary genre, De Man states, critics elevate it to a higher aesthetic level as

compared to reportage, chronicle, or memoir. The aestheticization of autobiographical writing automatically distances it from the author. De Man disregards critical claims to generic definition in so far as autobiography is concerned. He also strongly critiques the critical practice of delineating the aesthetic differences between autobiography and fiction, and asserts that the former always runs the risk of being considered in terms of ready referentiality to an identifiable, verifiable, subject. He suggests that an autobiography may as well be a construct of one's life. One may choose to represent the details of their life in the way they want. Autobiography, for him is self-portraiture, and is thus governed by the resources of the medium available to the author. Its constructed-ness is often missed out in such criticism. Self-reference in autobiography is just a mode of figuration, and it is the illusion of reference that misleads these critics. This constructed self-referentiality brings it closer to fiction. In his words:

“Autobiography, then, is not a genre or a mode, but a figure of reading or of understanding that occurs, to some degree, in all texts. The autobiographical moment happens as an alignment between the two subjects involved in the process of reading in which they determine each other by mutual reflexive substitution. The structure implies differentiation, as well as similarity, since both depend on a substitutive exchange that constitutes the subject. This specular structure is interiorized in a text in which the author declares himself the subject of his own understanding, but this merely makes explicit the wider claim to authorship that takes place whenever a text is stated to be by someone and assumed to be understandable to the extent that this is the case. Which amounts to saying that any book with a readable title-page is, to some extent, autobiographical.”

For critics like De Man, autobiography is something that emerges in the process of reading. It is more of a kind of an interpretation that happens when a text is read and analysed.

Autobiography, as a genre, then, does not pre-date a given text. It evolves as a particular mode of reading or interpretation. He does not perceive the claims to authenticity and authorship as exclusive only to the autobiographical mode. It is the manifestation of a linguistic structure that is unique to an autobiography, not the fact that the details in the autobiography provide ready reference to one's real life.

5.1.3. Features of an Autobiography

Until recent times, the idea of a coherent structure was the parameter to judge an autobiography. The qualities of autonomy, authority, authenticity, self-realization, and transcendence, which were considered to be the quintessential attributes of an autobiography, have been severely critiqued in recent studies. These qualities entailed the assumption of a predominantly male and universal subject and were therefore invalidated as befitting critical tools to study this genre.

Postmodern, Feminist, and postcolonial perspectives challenge the notions of an authoritative speaker, intentionality, truth, meaning, and generic integrity in an autobiographical text. More than presenting an account of neatly ordered and arrayed events from the life of a unified and coherent self, what an autobiography does is that it engages in a dialogue with constantly changing, fluid identities. Contemporary life-writing is in for a certain kind of de-centering of the notions of a unified self being represented in an autobiography.

The autobiographical self is constantly in a process of evolution. The self emerges as one reads through the autobiography. The self emerges through stages of development and growth.

The practice of interpreting autobiography as a genre that privileged the white, masculine subject, has now given way to a certain kind of recognition of pluralities. A new awareness

about the gender, racial, and other differences now informs our reading of autobiographical texts. The genre of autobiography now voices the concerns of the oppressed or the culturally destabilized and marginalized people. Autobiographies that come to us from subjects who have experienced the oppression of colonial political domination occupy a central position in critical discourse today. Autobiographies of people in a position of powerlessness, as it were, have begun to help us rethink the genre and define it in terms of the new dynamics. In this context, Linda Anderson argues,

“The idea that autobiography can become ‘the text of the oppressed’, articulating through one person’s experience, experiences which may be representative of a particular marginalized group, is an important one: autobiography becomes both a way of testifying to oppression and empowering the subject through their cultural inscription and recognition.”

Postcolonial autobiography, in particular, voices the anxieties of a whole community and its struggles under the stifling influence of colonial experience. The autobiographical subject writing from a nation formerly colonized, becomes a representative of the trials and tribulations of his community as a whole. The act of writing autobiography becomes both a means of expressing solidarity and a move towards collective action. Autobiographies written from the vantage point of a subject experiencing colonial domination transform themselves in to strong condemnations of the atrocities of the colonizers. They raise collective consensus on the issue and thus become means of anti-colonial resistance. The idea of resistance through writing is a particularly significant strain in postcolonialist criticism of autobiography.

5.1.4. Major Indian Autobiographies

Indian writing in English has always been rich in terms of biographies and autobiographies. Autobiographies have mostly been written by public figures, whose ideas these texts were

intended to promote. The gamut of life writings that appeared in the course of one century is also a testimony to the fact that Indian English prose has reached hitherto unprecedented levels of perfection.

Nirad C. Chaudhuri's *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951) is, in his own words, "more of an exercise in descriptive ethnology than autobiography". His prime focus in the autobiography is "the conditions in which an Indian grew to manhood in the early decades of the century", where the "the environment shall have precedence over its product". He details his early childhood and years of upbringing at Kishoreganj, the country town he lived in, Bangram, his ancestral village, and Kalikutch, his mother's village. England is often spoken about as a place that has stirred his imaginative life. A major part of the autobiography is dedicated to the description of the early stages of Indian nationalism, seen through the perspective of the "outsider", and in this respect, the autobiography may be read vis-à-vis the other political autobiographies of the time, like that of Nehru, for instance. The autobiography stands apart in its stringent critique of the same values which the political writings of the time venerated.

M.K.Gandhi's *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth*, written in the form of a sequence of parables over the time of a few years and serialized as weekly newspaper columns, is a modern experimentation with the age-old jataka tradition. The autobiography might be interpreted both as a historical quest and a negotiation of the idea of freedom, and a spiritual sojourn in order to achieve salvation. Gandhi's autobiography was written with a complete awareness of the fact that it was an established practice in the West, where as his autobiography would just be a series of confessions or revelations. He attempts to puncture the notions of standard practices of life-writing in the West. He maintains, "when I had began to write it, I had no definite plan before me. I have no diary or documents on which to base the story of my experiments". After these attempts at debunking the notions of

autobiographical writing, he clears the space for his own intervention. He appears to be a scientist, seeking nothing but truth in the autobiography, and the series of trials and tribulations of his life are the various “experiments”. Lived experience is narrated in the form of short snippets in to his life.

Other notable Indian autobiographies written in English include R.K.Narayan’s *My Dateless Diary* (1960) and *My Days* (1975), Vijaylakshmi Pundit’s *The Scope of Happiness: A Personal Memoir* (1979), Mulk Raj Ananad’s *Pilpali Sahab: The Story of a Childhood Under the Raj* (1985), Ruskin Bond’s *Scenes from a Writer’s Life: A Memoir* (1997) and *The Lamp is Lit: Leaves from a Journal* (1998) Dom Moraes’ *My Son’s Father* (1971) *Never at Home* (1992).

5.2. Jawaharlal Nehru

5.2.1. Early Life and Career

One of the most popular personalities of his time, Jawaharlal Nehru was born to a family of Kashmiri Brahmans, noted for their administrative aptitude and scholarship. He was a son of Motilal Nehru, a renowned lawyer and an ardent follower of M.K.Gandhi. Jawaharlal was the eldest of four children, two of whom were girls. A sister, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, later became the first woman president of the United Nations General Assembly.

Until the age of 16, Nehru was educated at home by a series of English governesses and tutors. In 1905 he went to Harrow, a leading English school, where he stayed for two years. From Harrow he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he spent three years earning an honours degree in natural science. He qualified as a barrister after two years at the Inner Temple, London.

Four years after his return to India, in March 1916, Nehru married Kamala Kaul, who came from a Kashmiri family settled in Delhi. Their only child, Indira Priyadarshini, was born in 1917.

On his return to India, Nehru at first tried to settle down as a lawyer. But, unlike his father, he had an attitude of disinterest for the profession.

Even as a student at Cambridge, Nehru was keen about Indian politics and Indian freedom. But not until he met Mahatma Gandhi and was persuaded to follow his political footsteps did he develop any definite ideas on how freedom was to be attained. The quality in Gandhi that impressed him was his insistence on action. Nehru met Gandhi for the first time in 1916 at the annual meeting of the Indian National Congress in Lucknow. Gandhi was 20 years his senior. Neither seems to have made any initially strong impression on the other. Nehru did not assume a leadership role in Indian politics, however, until his election as Congress president in 1929, when he presided over the historic session at Lahore, where he projected complete independence, rather than Dominion Status, to be India's political goal.

Nehru's close association with the Congress Party dates from 1919 in the immediate aftermath of World War-I. This period witnessed an effervescence of nationalist sentiment and governmental repression culminating in the Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy in April 1919; 379 persons were reported killed and at least 1,200 wounded when the local British military commander, General Dyer, ordered his troops to fire on a crowd of unarmed Indians assembled for a meeting.

When, late in 1921, the prominent leaders and workers of the Congress Party were outlawed in some provinces, Nehru went to prison for the first time. Over the next 24 years he was to serve another eight periods of detention, the last and longest ending in June 1945, after an imprisonment of almost three years. In all, Nehru spent more than nine years in jail.

His political apprenticeship with the Congress lasted from 1919 to 1929. In 1923 he became general secretary of the party for two years and again, in 1927, for another two years. His interests and duties took him on journeys over wide areas of India, particularly in his native United Provinces, where his first exposure to the overwhelming poverty and degradation of the peasantry had a profound influence on his basic ideas for solving these vital problems. Though vaguely inclined toward socialism, Nehru's radicalism had set in no definite mould. His tour of Europe and the Soviet Union during 1926–27 helped him to make an objective analysis of the political circumstances in India. Nehru's real interest in Marxism got an added impetus from this visit.

After the Lahore session of 1929, Nehru emerged as the leader of the country's intellectuals and youth. Hoping that Nehru would draw India's youth, at that time gravitating toward extreme leftist causes, into the mainstream of the Congress movement, Gandhi had shrewdly elevated him to the presidency of the Congress Party over the heads of some of his seniors. Gandhi also correctly calculated that, with added responsibility, Nehru himself would be inclined to keep to the middle way.

After his father's death in 1931, Jawaharlal moved into the inner councils of the Congress Party and became closer to Gandhi. Although Gandhi did not officially designate Nehru his political heir until 1942, the country as early as the mid-1930s saw in Nehru the natural successor to Gandhi. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact of March 1931, signed between Gandhi and the British viceroy, Lord Irwin, signaled a truce between the two principal protagonists in India. Hopes that the Gandhi-Irwin pact would be the prelude to a more relaxed period of Indo-British relations were not borne out; Lord Willingdon (who replaced Irwin as viceroy in 1931) jailed Gandhi in January 1932, shortly after Gandhi's return from the second Round Table Conference in London. He was charged with attempting to mount another civil disobedience movement; Nehru was also arrested and sentenced to two years' imprisonment.

The three Round Table Conferences in London, held to advance India's progress to self-government, eventually resulted in the Government of India Act of 1935, giving the Indian provinces a system of popular autonomous government. Ultimately, it provided for a federal system composed of the autonomous provinces and princely states. Although federation never came into being, provincial autonomy was implemented. During the mid-1930s Nehru was much concerned with developments in Europe, which seemed to be drifting toward another world war. He was in Europe early in 1936, visiting his ailing wife, shortly before she died in a sanitarium in Switzerland. Even at this time he emphasized that in the event of war India's place was alongside the democracies, though he insisted that India could only fight in support of Great Britain and France as a free country.

When the elections following the introduction of provincial autonomy brought the Congress Party to power in a majority of the provinces, Nehru was faced with a dilemma. The Muslim League under Mohammed Ali Jinnah (who was to become the creator of Pakistan) had fared badly at the polls. Congress, therefore, unwisely rejected Jinnah's plea for the formation of coalition Congress-Muslim League governments in some of the provinces, a decision on which Nehru had not a little influence. The subsequent clash between the Congress and the Muslim League hardened into a conflict between Hindus and Muslims that was ultimately to lead to the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan.

When, at the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, the viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, committed India to war without consulting the autonomous provincial ministries, the Congress Party's high command withdrew its provincial ministries as a protest. Congress's action left the political field virtually open to Jinnah and the Muslim League. Nehru's views on the war differed from those of Gandhi. Initially, Gandhi believed that whatever support was given to the British should be given unconditionally and that it should be of a nonviolent character. Nehru held that nonviolence had no place in defense against aggression and that

India should support Great Britain in a war against Nazism, but only as a free nation. If it could not help, it should not hinder.

In October 1940, Gandhi, abandoning his original stand, decided to launch a limited civil disobedience campaign in which leading advocates of Indian independence were selected to participate one by one. Nehru was arrested and sentenced to four years' imprisonment. After spending a little more than a year in jail, he was released, along with other Congress prisoners, three days before the bombing of Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. When the Japanese carried their attack through Burma (now Myanmar) to the borders of India in the spring of 1942, the British government, faced by this new military threat, decided to make some overtures to India. Prime Minister Winston Churchill dispatched Sir Stafford Cripps, a member of the war Cabinet who was politically close to Nehru and also knew Jinnah, with proposals for a settlement of the constitutional problem. Cripps's mission failed, however, for Gandhi would accept nothing less than independence.

The initiative in the Congress Party now passed to Gandhi, who called on the British to leave India; Nehru, though reluctant to embarrass the war effort, had no alternative but to join Gandhi. Following the Quit India resolution passed by the Congress Party in Bombay on August 8, 1942, the entire Congress working committee, including Gandhi and Nehru, was arrested and imprisoned. Nehru emerged from this—his ninth and last detention—only on June 15, 1945.

Within two years India was to be partitioned and free. A final attempt by the viceroy, Lord Wavell, to bring the Congress Party and the Muslim League together failed. The Labour government that had meanwhile displaced Churchill's wartime administration dispatched, as one of its first acts, a Cabinet mission to India and later also replaced Lord Wavell with Lord Mountbatten. The question was no longer whether India was to be independent but whether it was to consist of one or more independent states. While Gandhi refused to accept partition,

Nehru reluctantly but realistically acquiesced. On August 15, 1947, India and Pakistan emerged as two separate, independent countries. Nehru became independent India's first prime minister.

In the 35 years from 1929, when Gandhi chose Nehru as president of the Congress session at Lahore, until his death as prime minister in 1964, Nehru remained—despite the debacle of the brief conflict with China in 1962—the idol of his people.

Internationally, Nehru's star was in the ascendant until October 1956, when India's attitude on the Hungarian revolt against the Soviets brought his policy of nonalignment under sharp scrutiny. In the United Nations, India was the only nonaligned country to vote with the Soviet Union on the invasion of Hungary, and thereafter it was difficult for Nehru to command credence in his calls for nonalignment. In the early years after independence, anti-colonialism had been the cornerstone of his foreign policy, but, by the time of the Belgrade conference of nonaligned countries in 1961, Nehru had substituted nonalignment for anti-colonialism as his most pressing concern. In 1962, however, the Chinese threatened to overrun the Brahmaputra river valley as a result of a long-standing border dispute. Nehru called for Western aid, making virtual nonsense of his nonalignment policy, and China withdrew.

The Kashmir region—claimed by both India and Pakistan—remained a perennial problem throughout Nehru's term as prime minister. His tentative efforts to settle the dispute by adjustments along the cease-fire lines having failed, Pakistan, in 1948, made an unsuccessful attempt to seize Kashmir by force.

Nehru's health showed signs of deteriorating not long after the clash with China. He suffered a slight stroke in 1963, followed by a more debilitating attack in January 1964. He died a few months later after a subsequent attack.

5.2.2. Jawaharlal Nehru and Indian Nationalism

Nehru represents the more rational aspects of Indian nationalism. In sharp contrast to Gandhi, his modern outlook and secular attitude to politics enabled him to win the hearts of many. Because of his modern political and economic outlook, he was able to attract the younger intelligentsia of India to Gandhi's movement of nonviolent resistance against the British. His secular approach to politics contrasted with Gandhi's religious and traditionalist attitude, which during Gandhi's lifetime had given Indian politics a seemingly religious cast. The Encyclopaedia Britannica sums up their differences as follows: "The real difference between Nehru and Gandhi was not in their attitude to religion but in their attitude to civilization. While Nehru talked in an increasingly modern idiom, Gandhi was harking back to the glories of ancient India."

Nehru's Western upbringing and his visits to Europe before independence had acclimatized him to Western ways of thinking. He was an uncompromising critic of the imperial ambitions of the English, but this hatred never prevented him from embracing all that was good in their culture. He strongly resented the use of worn-out imagery and much-used terminology to evoke patriotic sentiments in the masses. He believed in uniting the cause of Indian independence with that of the attainment of social and economic freedom and the emancipation of the exploited. His active involvement in the movements for the cause of peasant emancipation endeared him to the rural masses and provided a stronger base to his nationalist activity.

He was in for a system of united political action that undermined the large amount of unhealthy segregation that had crept in to Indian politics. This segregation along communal lines often disturbed him and created in him a strong distaste for the influence of religion in politics. Religion, he believed, gave a fundamentalist shape to politics. His vehemence for the

creation of sub-nationalist political groups in the name of religion, as in Muslim league, for instance, provoked strong responses from him.

Nehru's uncompromising internationalism prompts him to think beyond the goal of political freedom. Unlike many of his contemporaries who saw the achievement of national independence as the ultimate objective of the long series of trials and tribulations of the Indian National Congress, Nehru conceived of an India whose integration in to the global order was the perceived aim of the Congress. To him goes the credit of widening the perspectives of many a congressman. For Nehru, the immediate goal of the Congress was political freedom, but the larger and more profound aim was the attainment of global unity and amity. The perceived enemy was imperialism, and not the Englishman. Nehru approves of and advocates the veneration of the cultural influence of the British. Their imperial ambitions were to be strongly condemned and opposed, where as their contribution to modern science was to be applauded and assimilated. Richard J. Walsh, the editor of the first American edition of Nehru's autobiography, writes:

"For Nehru thinks in world terms... He fights for the freedom of India, but that is only the issue of the moment. He stands for an Asiatic federation, but that is only the issue, let us say, of a generation. He looks beyond to the world order, he thinks of mankind as a whole. America, England, India, China... "Round the four seas" said Confucius, "all men are brothers"; and such is Nehru's concept." The development of the spirit of trans-nationalism can be traced to the works of Nehru, written as early as 1941. Nehru imagines a global national order, and his universalist outlook is reflected in his autobiography.

In the words of Dr. Anup Singh, a biographer of Nehru:

"There has been too much talk of the traditional conflict of East and West, and belief that they can never meet. Nehru is proof that they have already met. He is the synthesis of East

and West. In him the best of both cultures are fused in to the coming world type, the man of the future.”

The importance of Nehru in the perspective of Indian history is that he imported and imparted modern values and ways of thinking, which he adapted to Indian conditions. Apart from his stress on secularism and on the basic unity of India, despite its ethnic and religious diversities, Nehru was deeply concerned with carrying India forward into the modern age of scientific discovery and technological development. In addition, he aroused in his people an awareness of the necessity of social concern with the poor and the outcast and of respect for democratic values.

5.2.3. Major Works

Nehru’s reading habits enabled him to write numerous articles, pamphlets and essays on various political, social and cultural issues, prominent among them being *Soviet Russia* (1928) and *Wither India?*(1932). His first book, *Soviet Russia* is a collection of sixteen articles which were written as a result of his visit to Russia in 1927. In his perception, India can draw valuable social and political lessons from Russia. Nehru is also remembered in literary circles as the finest of letter-writers we ever had. His by now famous *Letters from a Father to his Daughter* (1930) consists of thirty-one letters written by him in 1928 to his ten-year old daughter. The letters are written in lucid prose, reflecting a considerable degree of clarity in composition. However, his reputation as a writer rests on three of his major works, *Glimpses of World History*, *An Autobiography*, and *The Discovery of India*. Each of these texts is an informed intervention in to history. The form of narrative history, which merges both the public and private aspects of his life, makes these texts different from others. Normally interpreted as classic texts on Indian nationalism, these texts contain some of the

best prose written in English at around the period in India. Nehru uses the method of historical inquiry as a means to awaken the spirit of inquisition in the lethargic masses. His works are memorable for creating an awareness of a collective, shared, history and its documentation. While relying heavily on the past, his writings commented on the present and anticipated the future. The past is not interpreted in terms of its relevance to the present and future. The perspective that informs his understanding of the past is that of the present. His anxieties about the course of events in the present are voiced everywhere in his writings. The past is studied in so far as it can provide a critical lens to interpret the present and anticipate the future. *Glimpses of World History*(1934) was written serially, in the form of letters to his daughter Indira. The professed aim is to acquaint his daughter with the facts of world history, but the text sets out to re-interpret certain events of world history from an Indian point of view. The text, at best, could be described as an Indian history of the world. The text seeks to challenge, if not admittedly so, Eurocentric notions of historiography. The act of presenting world history in the form of letters to a child might just be a narrative strategy. He does not attempt to present a chronological and cohesive version of history; certain details are ignored completely, and others are focused on in detail. The text does not appear to lack organizational unity in the sense that there is a narrative pattern to be identified. The simultaneity of events across the world is the focus of the text.

He does not appear to have written these letters from the vantage point of a scholar or a historian, as the tone makes it clear. It was more of an intimately personal narration, as in reportage, for instance. International events are personalized in the sense that they are made to correspond with the narrator's private life.

His *Autobiography*, titled *In and Out of Prison: An Autobiographical Narrative with Musings on Recent Events in India*, and variously referred to as *Toward Freedom*, or *An Autobiography*, remains till date the most read of all his works. It became an instant bestseller

when it was published in 1934, and bagged numerous reviews. It was reprinted ten times in the first year of its publication, and subsequently appeared in several forms in and outside India. Political autobiography was an established genre by the time Nehru wrote his. Gandhi had already popularized the genre, and Nehru gave it a new interpretation and scope. Maturity of prose is one of the chief highlights of this text. The text is distinguished by remarkable restraint; it avoids direct or vehement commentary on things that unnerved him, for instance. Embracing the European tradition of autobiography-writing, Nehru narrates a more public predicament; the autobiography chronicles the development of Indian nationalist movement even as it charts the growth of the individual. The allegorical structure demands interpretation at two levels; one at the level of the individual, and another at the level of the community and nation. In the opinion of Sunil Khilnani, “The *Autobiography* possessed many of the distinctive flourishes in Nehru’s literary armoury: the rhetorical question, the sweeping assertion followed by concessive clarification (a style that at once rebuffed and included), and the choice image...” The autobiography becomes an act of self-promotion; it displays a certain image of his for public view. He emerges as a man of cerebral refinement; rational and pragmatic.

The Discovery of India (1946) is the most complex of his works, which reflects considerable amount of intellectual efforts at narrativization. His pre-occupations with history and culture form the content of the book. Commonly interpreted as a text of Indian nationalism, it is suffused with a melancholy tone and is devoid of the characteristic celebratory tone that is natural to a text written on the eve of Indian independence. This book also, quite typically, is a product of inactivity and a long term of imprisonment. The *Discovery* is read primarily as a re-invention of the past and some of Nehru’s pressing concerns about the bearings of the past on the present. The practice of writing what was later to be termed “counter-history” has been his greatest achievement. Nehru’s writings moulded English as a befitting medium of

expression for polemical writing. The potential of this language for social and cultural functions came to be fully realized through his writings.

5.3. *An Autobiography*

5.3.1. Introduction

An Autobiography (1936) was written by Jawaharlal Nehru during a period of long and sustained imprisonment. Written at the age of forty five, the autobiography is Nehru's masterpiece, and represents his literary refinement as a writer of prose. The professed aim of the autobiography is to trace the different phases of the development of the individual, and the details of contemporary incidents, viewed against the background of the individual's growth and maturity, are incidental. Although Nehru discarded the idea of reading the autobiography as a comment on national events of the time, it demands interpretation as a classic of Indian nationalism. The fact that it is written by an active and ardent member of the nationalist movement cannot be ignored.

Apart from being the autobiography of a sensitive individual, the book is the testament of a whole generation, a generation that was caught in the whirlwinds of change. The first four decades of the twentieth century—and that is the period that the autobiography takes under its purview—were the most turbulent as they witnessed massive changes in the course of the Indian struggle for freedom. The nationalist movement became stronger and widened its scope with the emergence of leaders like Gandhi, and the adoption of new political methods and the excitement that they generated amongst the countrymen and women set this period apart from the earlier phases. The autobiography then, represents an individual's assessment of the national struggle for freedom and his evaluation of the nature and scope of anti-colonial resistance in India.

An Autobiography invites reference to other such autobiographical writings of the time, and thus demands a relativist approach in reading and interpretation. Nehru's autobiography may be read vis-à-vis Nirad C. Chaudhuri's *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, and M.K.Gandhi's *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Each of these autobiographies presents an alternative way of looking at the national struggle, and where Nehru and Gandhi represent the insider's perspective of the national movement, Chaudhuri is more critical of anti-colonial resistance.

5.3.2. The Context

Nehru's autobiography is a product of turmoil both in his personal life as well as the life of the nation. He wrote the autobiography at a time when he was imprisoned for the second time, and the autobiography is seen from the perspective of a person under confinement. He re-evaluates the events that led to his imprisonment, as also the events that led to the initiation of the Civil Disobedience movement. Nehru details the circumstances that led him to get involved in the movement for independence and his subsequent imprisonment in the Dehradun jail. The autobiography is not just a justification of his actions in the past but a documentation of his vision for the future of the nation. Nehru's perspective deepens as one progresses while reading the autobiography, and there is a simultaneous intensification of the desire to present a supposedly unbiased account of events.

Nehru narrates the circumstances that led to his confinement for the second time. He muses over the inter-cultural divide and the mutual animosity between Indians and the English, and observes that individuals from both the races, when act according to their impulses, do not seem to be as inhuman as they are often projected to be. There are interesting reflections on the nature of imprisonment in British India and the stifling of the spirit that this kind of confinement can threaten the prisoner with. Nehru talks about the degree of oppression he had to face in prison. Jail life represented inactivity and stagnation for Nehru:

“Outside, there was always relief in action, and various interests and activities produced an equilibrium of the mind and body. In prison there was no outlet, and one felt bottled up and repressed; inevitably, one took one-sided and rather distorted views of happenings. Illness in jail was particularly distressing.”

Well integrated in to the descriptions of prison life is the scathing critique of the British government and its policies. The lines separating the private and the public are gradually blurred. The individual merges with the historical context being described. Nehru strongly condemns the current practice of the incarceration of the mind of the prisoner, just as his body is captivated. These references to the mental oppression of prisoners symbolically represent the stifling influence of colonial domination. Just as one’s body is captivated in a prison, one’s mind is incarcerated under colonial influence. *An Autobiography* may be the individual’s journey in search of mental and spiritual independence, just as it is the nation’s journey towards liberation from colonial domination. Nehru’s longing for freedom is reflected in the lines: “Picture books also, especially of mountains and glaciers and deserts, for in prison one hungers for wide spaces and seas and mountains.” Solitariness is often compensated with a close intimacy with nature—its mountains, trees, and changing climate: “Only a prisoner who has been confined for long behind high walls can appreciate the extraordinary psychological value of these outside walks and open views.”

Nehru’s prose is characterized by minuteness of observation and concrete description. The locale comes alive in his prose, as do the images that are presented with an almost artistic precision.

5.3.3. Preface

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE ORIGINAL EDITION

This book was written entirely in prison, except for the postscript and certain minor changes, from June, 1934, to February, 1935. The primary object in writing these pages was to occupy myself with a definite task, so necessary in the long solitudes of jail life, as well as to review past events in India with which I had been connected to enable myself to think clearly about them. I began the task in a mood of self-questioning and, to a large extent, this persisted throughout, I was not writing deliberately for an audience, but, if I thought of an audience, it was one of my own countrymen and countrywomen. For foreign readers I would probably have written differently, or with a different emphasis, stressing certain aspects which have been slurred over in the narrative and passing over lightly certain other aspects which I have treated at some length. Many of these latter aspects may not interest the non-Indian reader, and he may consider them unimportant or too obvious for discussion or debate; but I felt that in the India of today they had a certain importance, a number of references to our internal politics and personalities may also be of little interest to the outsider.

The reader will, I hope, remember that the book was written during a particularly distressful period of my existence. It bears obvious traces of this. If the writing had been done under more normal conditions, it would have been different and perhaps occasionally more restrained. Yet I have decided to leave it as it is, for it may have some interest for others in so far as it represents what I felt at the time of writing.

My attempt was to trace, as far as I could, my own mental development, and not to write a survey of recent Indian history. The fact that this account resembles superficially such a survey is apt to mislead the reader and lead him to attach a wider importance to it than it deserves I must warn him, therefore, that this account is wholly one-sided and, inevitably, egotistical; many important happenings have been completely ignored and many important

persons, who shaped events, have hardly been mentioned, In a real survey of past events this would have been inexcusable, but a personal account can claim this indulgence. Those who want to make a proper study of our recent past will have to go to other sources. It may be, however, that this and other personal narratives will help them to fill the gaps and to provide a background for the study of hard fact.

I have discussed frankly some of my colleagues with whom I have been privileged to work for many years and for whom I have the greatest regard and affection; I have also criticized groups and individuals, sometimes perhaps rather severely. That criticism does not take away from my respect for many of them. But I have felt that those who meddle in public affairs must be frank with each other and with the public they claim to serve. A superficial courtesy and an avoidance of embarrassing and sometimes distressing questions do not help in bringing about a true understanding of each other or of the problems that face us. Real co-operation must be based on an appreciation of differences as well as common points, and a facing of facts, however inconvenient they might be. I trust, however, that nothing that I have written bears a trace of malice or ill will against any individual.

I have purposely avoided discussing the issues in India today, except vaguely and indirectly. I was not in a position to go into them with any thoroughness in prison, or even to decide in my own mind what should be done. Even after my release I did not think it worthwhile to add anything on this subject. It did not seem to fit in with what I had already written. And so this "autobiographical narrative remains sketchy, personal, and incomplete account of the past, verging on the present, but cautiously avoiding contact with it.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Badenweiler,

January 2, 1936.

5.3.4. Chapter-wise Analysis

Chapter-1 “Descent from Kashmir”

Nehru writes of his ancestry and his Kashmiri Brahmin identity. He was the descendant of Raj Kaul of Kashmir, a noted scholar of Sanskrit and Persian in the 18th century. Nehru was the only male child in the family and his two sisters were born eleven years after his birth. He says that a single child—for that is what he was for eleven long years—is pampered by parents in India. He was never sent to any private or government schools in India and was under the tutelage mostly of governesses.

He comments on his childhood and observes that he was primarily a loner. He rarely made friends and spent most of the time reading. Although he stayed with his cousins in the ancestral house, there was a gap of several years between them and he could not mingle with them as intimately as he should have done.

The chapter details the descent of the family from Kashmir and mentions his father, uncles, and other relations. Motilal Nehru, his father, was in to the Law and achieved considerable degree of success in the profession. An assertive nationalist, he was also an ardent admirer of the Englishmen and their ways. Nehru traces the roots of his nationalist fervour to his father and his cousins, who enabled him to think and respond to situations in a particular manner. The young Jawahar’s psyche was consistently moulded by what he heard or saw from other people in his family. He quite naturally imbibed the nationalistic fervour that was the hallmark of his father.

Chapter-2 “Childhood”

Nehru casts a critical backward gaze on his past. His reflections on his childhood are made from the perspective of an adult. The autobiography emerges as a set of reminiscences or

retrospections, where he grows up in an environment of the effervescence of strong anti-colonial sentiment:

“My childhood was thus a sheltered and uneventful one. I listened to the grown-up talk of my cousins without always understanding all of it. Often this talk related to the overbearing character and insulting mannerisms of the English people, as well as Eurasians, towards Indians, and how it was the duty of every Indian to stand up to this and not to tolerate it.”

In the above passage as in many others, Nehru absolves himself of the “offence” of commenting directly on the attitudes of the British towards Indians. His invective towards the British is put indirectly by way of his cousins’ comments on the political scenario of the time. The account of Nehru’s involvement in the anti-colonial struggle is embedded in the accounts of his cousins’ involvement in it. Nehru is a passive listener who “without always understanding all of it” participates in the debates. This deliberate distancing and unwillingness to involve in any direct commentary might be a political strategy. Describing the activities of the British, Nehru observes:

“I was filled with resentment against the alien rulers of my country who misbehaved in this manner, and whenever an Indian hit back, I was glad. Not infrequently, one of my cousins or one of their friends became personally involved in these individual encounters, and then of course we all got very excited over it.”

Even as Nehru strongly condemned British presence in India and their imperial ambitions, he was all praises for their cultural impact on Indians. His apologetic stance in framing an invective against the British is reflected in the following lines: “Much as I began to resent the presence and behaviour of the alien rulers, I had no feeling whatever so far as I can remember, against individual Englishmen. I had had English governesses, and occasionally I saw English friends of my father’s visiting him. In my heart, I rather admired the English.”

Chapter-3 “Theosophy”

Nehru’s identity as a Kashmiri Brahman is strongly asserted in the chapters that open his autobiography. These are the chapters that reflect on his childhood and early years in Allahabad. He makes observations on the formative influence of the theosophists via a resident tutor, F.T. Brooks, who developed in him a taste for philosophy. He also acknowledges the influence of Mrs. Annie Besant on his world-view. World history, in general, and contemporary events like the Boer war, Russo-Japanese war, etc. left an indelible impression on his mind.

Chapter 19 “Communalism rampant”

Nehru elaborates on the nature of communal relations in pre-independence India and asserts that these relations have shaped the character of the Indian struggle for freedom over the years. He analyses the role of communal tension in intensifying the animosity between two sub-nationalist groups. He describes the Hindu-Muslim riots in Northern India over seemingly trivial issues like *aarti* and *namaz*, and argues that the print media has stirred the fires of communal tension. These riots were used as props by the government for deepening the hostility between the two communities. National unity and integrity were jeopardized. The government provided support to most of the Muslim leaders who now rose in to prominence and thus led to the formation of an alternative indigenous political wing. These petty political disturbances and communal turmoil adversely impacted the unity that Indian National Congress had come to represent.

Actions performed or events participated in the past are seen from the perspective of the present in this retrospective narration. The autobiographical subject analyses, evaluates, critiques, and apologizes for actions performed in the past, which, seen from a fresh perspective, call for a different mode of action altogether.

For Nehru, the goal of political freedom is inextricably interlinked to social freedom. They are one and inseparable:

“Political independence, meant of course, political freedom only, and did not include any social change or economic freedom for the masses. But it did signify the removal of the financial and economic chains which bind us to the City of London, and this would have made it easier for us to change the social structure. So I thought then. I would add now that I do not think it is likely that real political freedom will come to us by itself. When it comes, it will bring a large measure of social freedom also.”

This chapter invites reference to another chapter that appears later in the autobiography, but elaborates on the notion of communal hatred. Nehru attempts to trace the roots of the notion of a “Moslem nation” that was gradually gaining popularity amongst the Muslim section of nationalists.

Chapter 51 “A Liberal Outlook”

Nehru recounts an experience of visiting Poona to see Gandhi. He accompanied Gandhi to the home of the Servants of India Society on this occasion. He laments the lack of political awareness in the inmates of the Liberal Party and observes that many of the active members of this party were politically naïve and backward. Their attention was never focused on the vital problems that affected the country.

This chapter records Nehru’s reflections on the attitude of Indians towards political action. He comments on the varying degrees of moderation and extremism that are adopted by us in different contexts and situations. He expresses his aversion for the moderate method of political action. For him, it represents passivity and inaction. Patriotic sentiment, he says, is not sufficient to enable us to act. Something more profound is to be looked for. He strongly condemns the willing abstention from action under the name of moderation.

He critically evaluates the evolution of the Indian National Congress in terms of its control by the middle classes. The membership soon becomes categorized into two—one representing the lower middle classes and another, the upper middle classes and the government. The group encompassing the lower middle classes comprised of members from more humble professions and the unemployed intelligentsia, and this group became more active and aggressive. The upper middle classes sought to rehabilitate their lost dignity and self-respect through their nationalist participation. There were major temperamental differences between them. Nehru deserves comparison with Frantz Fanon, who, in his *Wretched of the Earth* condemns the nationalist elite as perpetuating the same kind of dominance that the colonizer had represented. By professing to be the rescuers of a people from colonial domination, the middle class forges a new kind of domination. It assumes the role of the mouthpiece of the subject population under the clutches of colonial power.

Nehru was in for the creation of a “New State” in place of the mere replacement of the old order of things with a newer, Indian version, with Indian officials controlling all major positions and institutions. He termed it as “Indianization”, and the term has derogatory connotations for him.

Nehru’s tirade is directed against British imperialism and its imposition on India, not the English people. Like Tagore, Nehru is full of admiration for the cultural influence of the English. British presence in India is seen as a threat to the larger cause of a international world order that he dreamt of. Any political compromise in the form of Dominion Status will abort and paralyze India’s connections with other parts of the world, as it would be restricted to Britain only.

Nehru’s prose reaches a high degree of sublimity in this chapter. His tone is profound and imagery Wordsworthian. He emerges as a great visionary.

Chapter 53 “India Old and New”

Nehru comments on colonial historiography and its representation of Indian history. India was always projected in a negative light in such histories. This had an adverse impact on an earlier generation of intelligentsia who were schooled in such thought. They internalised such representations, and their instinctive rejection of such images was suppressed.

In this chapter, Nehru also critically analyzes the Chatterjean “inner sphere” of religion as a claim to cultural superiority. Partha Chatterjee, in his postulations on nationalism as a derivative discourse asserts that the definite schism between the outer sphere of public activity and the inner domestic sphere constituted an important strain in Indian nationalist thought. The outer sphere, or the sphere of the man, was directly under the incarcerating influence of colonial domination. The inner sphere of the home, or the domain of the Hindu wife was relatively free from the direct influence of colonialism and it was therefore projected as an Indian claim to cultural superiority. The notion of the West as materialistic and the East as spiritualistic formed a dominant strain in the primary phases of Indian nationalist thought. The revival of interest in the “glorious” past through the help of both Orientalist scholars and Indian intellectuals like Vivekananda created nationalistic fervour among many Indians.

Nehru traces the development of nationalist thought through different stages. He reflects a deep understanding of the nationalist psyche. He mentions how early nationalist writings like those of Vivekananda, Naoroji, Romesh Dutt, and others played a major role in the shaping of this psyche. These writings enabled the average Indian to think in a more independent fashion, and thus to free oneself from the framework offered by British historians. The received versions of Indian history were constantly challenged by the nationalists, but still their intellect was shaped by the British ideology. Early nationalist thought was influenced by British ideology and the moderates find it difficult to free themselves from this influence.

Therefore, the notion of complete political independence is incongruent with nationalist thinking of the moderates.

5.3.5. Jawaharlal Nehru as an Autobiographical Subject

In one of the chapters in the autobiography, Nehru's reflects on the idea of perception: "It is difficult to see oneself as others see one. And so, unable to criticize myself, I took to watching carefully the ways of others, and I found considerable amusement in this occupation. And then the terrible thought would strike me that I might perhaps appear equally ludicrous to others." The act of writing an autobiography is a complicated process involving the significant questions of selfhood, perception and critical self-evaluation. In the process of commenting on oneself, it is almost impossible to avoid the element of bias that automatically suggests itself in such writings.

Autobiographical writing almost inevitably involves the notion of reminiscing or recollection through memory of a past that is otherwise unavailable. In this act of reclamation of memory, the events may get merged with each other, rendering themselves collective and blurred. It is the collective effect of events on the subject that is represented in an autobiography. Commenting on autobiographical unreliability, Nehru says: "I write from memory, and I am likely to get mixed up about dates." What is lost in the process, then, is a temporal specificity that is sacrificed in search of a larger pattern of things.

Nehru's autobiography might be said to be representative of the hopes and failures of a nation struggling for independence. He speaks for the whole community of Indians experiencing colonial subjugation. His vantage position as a representative member of the Indian National Congress might at first seem to have conferred this status on him, but this perspective can further be problematized. This assumption of a representative voice, as Anderson argues, is problematic. The assumed representativity can elide further differences.

The question of which vantage point one chooses to speak from complicates the discussion on autobiography. Nehru, for instance, represents an elitized view of colonialism and the national struggle for political independence. This vision, however, might be further contested by people writing autobiographies from other vantage points. A dalit autobiographer might not perceive things as Nehru does. A woman narrating the tantalizing influence of colonialism might perceive things differently.

Nehru's claims to representativity lies in the shared history of victimhood, of which he becomes the chief spokesperson. By assuming the self-assigned role of the chronicler of a shared history of subjugation, Nehru carves out a special place for himself in the public/political sphere. He becomes the chief spokesperson for Indian history. Nehru's historical writings, as in *The Discovery of India* and letters to his daughter, present his own version of history. While he is aware of the demeaning of Indian past by English historians, he himself appropriates the role of an authoritative historian in these writings. His writings constantly negotiate with his image in the public sphere, and provide a perspective to his political actions.

Chapters that talk about Nehru's public and personal lives alternate in the autobiography. A chapter where his intense involvement in public affairs by way of meetings, protests, agitation, and demonstrations are described is almost inevitably followed by chapters which are intimately personal in the sense that they either talk about his relationship with a member from his family, or record his own ideas on imprisonment, for instance. The chapter titled "Non-violence and the Doctrine of the Sword" is followed by the one titled "Lucknow District Jail", where his intimate observations on imprisonment are recorded. Episodes such as these reflect a Wordsworthian desire for union with nature combined with the desperate longing for escape:

“But the time I spent in watching those ever-shifting monsoon clouds was filled with delight and a sense of relief. I had the joy of having made almost a discovery, and a feeling of escape from confinement. I do not know why that particular monsoon had that great effect on me; no previous or subsequent one had moved me in that way. I had seen and admired many a fine sunrise and sunset in the mountains and over the sea, and bathed in its glory, and felt stirred for the time being by its magnificence. Having seen it, I had almost taken it or granted and passed on to other things. But in jail there were no sunrises or sunsets to be seen, the horizon was hidden from us and late in the morning the hot-rayed sun emerged over our guardian walls.”

Passages of this kind appear between seemingly dense commentaries on contemporary politics. These passages do not merely break the monotony; they divert the attention of the reader and project the autobiographical subject in a positive light. Nehru negotiates between the inner and outer spaces—the confinement of prison life is juxtaposed with the relative freedom of the life outside. The moments of confinement, interestingly, turn out to be moments of retrospection. Nehru is here turned inwards, and is no more the same public figure who appears in the previous episodes. These chapters introduce us to a different aspect of his personality, especially through his musings on humanity, life, and the world in general. These appear to be the least biased portions of the autobiographical narrative.

Nehru’s portraits of his father Motilal Nehru, Mohammad Ali, and Gandhi, in a chapter remain one of their kinds so far.

Nehru’s spirit of self-questioning may be a mask, because it detaches him from getting engaged in any direct self-commentary. It absolves him of the act of self-praise. Nehru, for instance, defends his act of self-praise by commenting on his conceit. He observes that although it is quite difficult for a person to look at himself in a detached manner, he could successfully accomplish this task of critical self-examination. His habit of restraining himself

from being carried away by such praise had prevented him from developing such false pride in his own abilities. The habit of self-introspection helped him to retain his humility. He says that he was humble till the very end.

“It was true that I had achieved, almost accidentally as it were, an unusual degree of popularity with the masses; I was appreciated by the intelligentsia; to young men and women I was a bit of a hero, and a halo of romance seemed to surround me in their eyes. Songs had been written about me, and the most impossible and ridiculous legends had grown up. Even my opponents had often put in a good word for me and patronizingly admitted that I was not lacking in competence or in good faith.

Only a saint, perhaps, or an inhuman monster could survive all this, unscathed and unaffected, and I can place myself in neither of these categories. It went to my head, intoxicated me a little, and gave me confidence and strength. I became (I imagine so, for it is a difficult task to look at oneself from outside) just a little bit autocratic in my ways, just a shade dictatorial. And yet I do not think that my conceit increased markedly. I had a fair measure of my abilities, I thought, and I was by no means humble about them. But I knew well enough that there was nothing at all remarkable about them, and I was very conscious of my failings. A habit of introspection probably helped me to retain my balance and view many happenings connected with myself in a detached manner. Experience of public life showed me that popularity was often the handmaiden of undesirable persons; it was certainly not an invariable sign of virtue or intelligence. Was I popular, then, because of my failings or my accomplishments? Why, indeed, was I popular?”

Nehru comments on the idea of hero-worship, and in these statements, he emerges as a leader and a public figure. His affinity with the masses and willingness to fight for their cause is clearly depicted in the following passage:

“The question that my friend had asked me still remained unanswered: did I not feel proud of this hero worship of the crowd? I disliked it and wanted to run away from it, yet I had got used to it; when it was wholly absent, I rather missed it. Neither way brought satisfaction, but, on the whole, the crowd had filled some inner need of mine. The notion that I could influence them and move them to action gave me a sense of authority over their minds and hearts; this satisfied, to some extent, my will to power. On their part, they exercised a subtle tyranny over me, for their confidence and affection moved inner depths within me and evoked emotional responses. Individualist as I was, sometimes the barriers of individuality seemed to melt away, and I felt that it would be better to be accursed with these unhappy people than to be saved alone. But the barriers were too solid to disappear, and I peeped over them with wondering eyes at this phenomenon which I failed to understand.”

Conflicts outside in the public sphere resembled and to some extent corresponded to the conflicts in Nehru’s mind. The public and the private realms often appear intertwined in this autobiographical narrative. The act of writing the autobiographical narrative gives him momentary release from the conflict. It resolves the conflict for the time being. The act of writing an autobiography might also be seen as a strategy of self-justification. The autobiography legitimizes his actions in the past. There is a constant reiteration of the fact that success in the public or political sphere did not mean success at all. The real success Nehru aspired for was a far more complicated manifestation of his ideas about social progress.

He gives a more inclusive definition to freedom, where the term does not merely suggest emancipation from colonial subjugation. Freedom acquires a broader connotation in Nehru’s autobiography.

“But all these shouting crowds, the dull and wearying public functions, the interminable arguments, and the dust and tumble of politics touched me on the surface only, though

sometimes the touch was sharp and pointed. My real conflict lay within me, a conflict of ideas, desires, and loyalties, of subconscious depths struggling with outer circumstances, of an inner hunger unsatisfied. I became a battleground, where various forces struggled for mastery. I sought an escape from this; I tried to find harmony and equilibrium, and in this attempt I rushed into action. That gave me some peace; outer conflict relieved the strain of the inner struggle. Why am I writing all this sitting here in prison? The quest is still the same, in prison or outside, and I write down my past feelings and experiences in the hope that this may bring me some peace and psychic satisfaction.”

Nehru’s critique of religious attitudes in India deserves special mention. He adopts the outsider’s perspective, a supposedly “modern” perspective in matters of religion. He at once emerges as a staunch advocate of post-enlightenment modernity and its rejection of religious dogma.

“India is supposed to be a religious country above everything else; Hindu, Moslem, Sikh, and others take pride in their faiths and testify to their truth by breaking heads. The spectacle of what is called religion, or at any rate organized religion, in India and elsewhere has filled me with horror, and I have frequently condemned it and wished to make a clean sweep of it. Almost always it seems to stand for blind belief and reaction, dogma and bigotry, superstition and exploitation, and the preservation of vested interests. And yet I knew well that there was something else in it, something which supplied a deep inner craving of human beings. How else could it have been the tremendous power it has been and brought peace and comfort to innumerable tortured souls? Was that peace merely the shelter of blind belief and absence of questioning, the calm that comes from being safe in harbor, protected from the storms of the open sea, or was it something more? In some cases certainly it was something more.

But organized religion, whatever its past may have been, today is very largely an empty form devoid of real content. It has been filled up by some totally different substance. And, even where something of value still remains, it is enveloped by other and harmful contents.”

Nehru’s comments on his contemporaries like Gandhi and others are carefully constructed. They seem to abound in praise and positive criticism, but are not altogether free from Nehru’s cynicism and inquisitive outlook on men and manners.

“These parlor socialists are especially hard on Gandhiji as the arch-reactionary, and advance arguments which in logic leave little to be desired. But the little fact remains that this "reactionary" knows India, understands India, almost is peasant India, and has shaken up India as no so-called revolutionary has done. Even his latest Harijan activities have gently but irresistibly undermined orthodox Hinduism and shaken it to its foundations. The whole tribe of the Orthodox have ranged themselves against him and consider him their most dangerous enemy, although he continues to treat them with all gentleness and courtesy. In his own peculiar way he has a knack of releasing powerful forces which spread out, like ripples on the water's surface, and affect millions. Reactionary or revolutionary, he has changed the face of India, given pride and character to a cringing and demoralized people, built up strength and consciousness in the masses, and made the Indian problem a world problem. Quite apart from the objectives aimed at and its metaphysical implications, the method of nonviolent non-cooperation or civil resistance is a unique and powerful contribution of his to India and the world, and there can be no doubt that it has been peculiarly suited to Indian conditions.”

Nehru’s self, as represented in the autobiography, appears to be nuanced and multi-layered. It strongly comments, and still remains uninvolved in any direct condemnation of socio-political institutions. It inspires public action, but professes to be intimately personal. Even as it gets involved in the web of contemporary events and their evaluation, it remains hidden behind the mask of narrative respectability.

5.3.6. *An Autobiography as a Political Autobiography*

In their book *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith have argued that the marginalized subject, by ‘deploying autobiographical practices that go against the grain’ can constitute ‘an “I” that becomes a place of creative and, by implication, political intervention’. Nehru’s act of writing an autobiography, then, becomes an act of political intervention. Veiled in the descriptions of prison life is a narrative of anti-colonial resistance, aimed at decolonization. While the periods spent out of the prison represent the moments of action and involvement in public work, the moments spent inside the prison are mostly times of reflection and retrospection. An active participant in the resistance campaign records his experiences of struggle with the colonial government. If not a direct means of action, the idea of resistance is more implicit to the autobiography. It is shaped as more of a kind of intellectual resistance to colonial subjugation and suppression of the spirit of rebellion. This spirit re-asserts itself in the autobiography, and in place of physical action there is mental and intellectual action. Resistance to colonial rule is carried out in a more subtle manner.

Even as a child, ideas of patriotism filled his mind: “Nationalistic ideas filled my mind. I mused of Indian freedom from the thralldom of Europe. I dreamt of brave deeds, of how, sword in hand, I would fight for India and fight for freeing her.” His development as an autobiographical subject parallels the growth of the nation: “Right through the years of 1906 and 1907 news from India had been agitating me. I got meagre enough accounts from the English papers; but even that little showed that big events were happening at home.”

Great events like the World War-I, for instance, affect him deeply. These stirring events provoke detailed responses from him in his autobiography: “it was the pre-war world of the early twentieth century. Soon this world was to die, yielding place to another full of death, and destruction and anguish and heart-sickness for the world’s youth.”

Nehru gets involved in what he calls the “agrarian movement” and fights for the cause of the *kisans*. He integrates the cause of India’s struggle for independence with that of the peasants’ struggle for their rights. He raises consensus on the nature of their exploitation in the hands of the landlords, *talukdars* and the government. He helped them achieve social respectability and thus resist the atrocities inflicted on them by the upper classes.

A major portion of the autobiography is dedicated to Nehru’s descriptions of the beginnings of the Gandhian phase of Indian National Movement. He reflects on the advent of Gandhi in the political scene in India, and the pioneering role played by him in popularizing the idea of Swaraj:

“We had not only a feeling of satisfaction at doing effective political work which was changing the face of India before our eyes and, as we believed, bringing Indian freedom very near, but also an agreeable sense of moral superiority over our opponents, in regard to both our goal and our methods. We were proud of our leader and of the unique method he had evolved, and often we indulged in fits of self-righteousness. In the midst of strife, and while we ourselves encouraged that strife, we had a sense of inner peace.”

Nehru comments on the relations between the imperial rulers and the subject population in one of the most popularly quoted passages:

“The average Englishman did not believe in the bona fides of non-violence; he thought that all this was camouflage, a cloak to cover some vast secret design which would burst out in violent upheaval one day. Nurtured from childhood in the widespread belief that the East is a mysterious place, and its bazaars and narrow lanes secret conspiracies are being continually hatched, the Englishman can seldom think straight on matters relating to these lands of supposed mystery. He never makes an attempt to understand that somewhat obvious and unmysterious person, the Eastener.”

The autobiography contains some of the insightful reflections of Nehru on the roots of the inter-racial divide and its nature. His comments are informed both by his keen understanding of history as well as his minute observations of contemporary events. The autobiography, in fact, charts the development of the different phases of the inter-cultural relationship between India and England. Underlying this breach of relationships is a sense of unfamiliarity between both the cultures. Nehru, having shared the best of both cultures, assumes an authoritative position in his critique of this historical relationship. He brings in not just his historical knowledge, which might provide him with a lens to look at contemporary events, but his experience of the present. His descriptions are devoid of any binary opposition between the English and Indians. His perspective is a far more nuanced one, one that analyses more than directly labels.

Nehru's notion of political struggle radically differed from that of his contemporary, M.K.Gandhi. Nehru had a deep sense of distaste for what he considered to be Gandhi's sustained and indirect methods of political action. The difference between them was both of methods and vision. While Gandhi envisioned a free India and a return to the past, Nehru dreamt of an independent India which would rely heavily on the West and what it could offer for its progress. Nehru severely criticized the religious element in politics that had been introduced by Gandhi. He considered it to be detrimental to the growth of national sentiment. "I used to be troubled sometimes at the growth of this religious element in our politics, both on the Hindu and the Moslem side. I did not like it at all. Much that Moulvis and Maulanas and Swamis and the like said in their public addresses seemed to me most unfortunate. Their history and sociology and economics appeared to me all wrong, and the religious twist that was given to everything prevented all clear thinking. Even some of Gandhiji's phrases sometimes jarred upon me—thus his frequent reference to Rama Raj as a golden age which was to return. But I was powerless to intervene, and I consoled myself with the thought that

Gandhiji used the words because they were well known and understood by the masses. He had an amazing knack of reaching the heart of the people.”

Nehru’s rejection of Gandhi’s political methods was founded on the premise that they were far-fetched and impractical. Gandhi’s frequent and almost inescapable recourse to religion as a referent in political action repelled Nehru. Gandhi’s dependence on religious phraseology often unnerved him, who found it extremely impractical. However, he avoids making a direct mention of this dislike. This is done in a rather circuitous manner, as the passage quoted above clearly shows. He also refers to his inability and powerlessness that prevented him from intervention. The passage ends with a positive comment on Gandhi’s ability to appeal to the masses. This is how some of the most controversial issues of his day are hidden under the mask of neutrality. Nehru was in for the spiritualization of politics without being narrowly religious:

“A vast movement had all sorts and kinds of people in it, and, so long as our main direction was correct, a few eddies and backwaters did not matter. As for Gandhiji himself, he was a very difficult person to understand; sometimes his language was almost incomprehensible to an average modern. But we felt that we knew him quite well enough to realize that he was a great and unique man and a glorious leader, and having put our faith in him, we gave him an almost blank check, for the time being at least. Often we discussed his fads and peculiarities among ourselves, and said, half-humorously, that when Swaraj came these fads must not be encouraged.”

Nehru was both a great admirer and a harsh critic of Gandhi’s methods of political action. While he is full of appreciation for Gandhi’s contribution in making Indian struggle for independence a mass movement and for his role as a leader, he strongly critiques the political method adopted by him. Gandhi’s emphasis on spiritual strengthening and his path of non-violence bordering on inaction and passivity repelled Nehru.

Nehru envisioned that the struggle for political independence would quite naturally and effortlessly lead to the end of the exploitation of the farmers. This duality of purpose always inevitably informed his outlook on political affairs. The cause of Indian independence was inseparable from the greater cause of the emancipation of the underdog. With this end in view, he extended his full support to the Indian National Congress and its activities.

“And the non-cooperation movement offered me what I wanted—the goal of national freedom and (as I thought) the ending of the exploitation of the underdog, and the means which satisfied my moral sense and gave me a sense of personal freedom. So great was this personal satisfaction, that even a possibility of failure did not count for much, for such failure could only be temporary.”

Nehru equates political freedom with personal freedom, and thus elevates the idea of independence to new heights. Credit goes to him for giving a new interpretation to the much debated idea of freedom and exploring its deeper connotations.

The danger of Indian nationalism getting compartmentalized into smaller and more fundamentalist versions of it was a perceived danger to Nehru. He always feared the intervention of religion could give a fundamentalist shape to political parties and their policies. This was a constant challenge to the unity of the political groups actively working for the cause of ending British colonialism in India. Nehru disapproves of the compartmentalization of Indian nationalists along communal lines.

“And yet this nationalism itself was a composite force, and behind it could be distinguished a Hindu nationalism, a Moslem nationalism partly looking beyond the frontiers of India, and what was more in consonance with the spirit of the times, an Indian nationalism...”

Nehru strongly disapproves of the lethargy of the congressmen. He dubs them as indolent and unwilling to initiate some influential action in terms of revolutionary movements. He calls them “semi-revolutionary” in nature.

Nehru's visit to Europe enabled him to look at Indian nationalism from an objective and distanced perspective, as it were. For the first time, he was able to perceive the anti-colonial resistance in India from outside. His views are always relational. He sees Indian struggle for freedom not just as an isolated movement, but as part of a larger international struggle against imperialism as a whole. His subsequent visits to different places broadened his vision and allowed him to evaluate the political scenario in India from an impartial and unbiased position. His view always extended to and encompassed a larger global canvas: "I felt I had a clearer perception of world affairs, more grip on the present-day world, ever changing as it was."

Nehru represented the more rational aspects of Indian nationalist thought. His view was not narrowly nationalistic in the sense that he thought in universal terms. In one of the chapters, he comments on the use of familiar and worn out phrases by congressmen to evoke nationalistic sentiments. He is highly critical of the repetitive nature of the phraseology used by the nationalists:

"Their speeches laid stress on the glories of old times; the injuries, material and spiritual, caused by alien rule; the sufferings of our people, the indignity of foreign domination over us and our national honour demanding that we should be free; the necessity of sacrifice at the altar of the motherland. They were familiar themes which found an echo in every Indian heart, and the nationalist in us responded to them and was moved by them (though I was never a blind admirer of ancient times in India or elsewhere). But though the truth in them remained, they seemed to grow a little thin and threadbare with constant use, and their ceaseless repetition prevented the consideration of other problems and vital aspects of our struggle. They only fostered emotion and did not encourage thought."

"Freedom" as a keyword in the autobiography has deeper connotations for Nehru. It is both literal and metaphorical. At one level, it refers to the circumstances of imprisonment and

the idea of release. At another level, it can imply the notion of political freedom from colonial subjugation. The text develops a discourse on anti-colonial resistance. It forges an intervention in the idea of resistance in Indian English writing.

In Nehru's opinion, Gandhi's campaign on Khadi led to the glorification of poverty, and thus poverty was encouraged. He wanted to fight poverty rather than encouraging it.

Nehru's efforts at the de-elitization of the Indian National Congress deserve special mention. He played a prominent role in making Congress "more socialistic, more proletarian, and organized labour to join the national struggle." Nehru re-writes a chapter of the history of anti-colonial resistance in India by focussing on the lower classes and their perception of freedom. He gives a different interpretation to the idea of freedom.

Milton Israel, in one of his essays titled "India, Nationalist Voices: Autobiography and the Process of Return" argues that the autobiographers and memoirists of the nationalist period shared a conviction that they were involved in extra ordinary events that needed to be recorded. This body of writing was undeniably polemical in nature. The purpose behind writing such autobiographies was proselytization and propaganda. Commenting on the propagandist content of these autobiographies, Israel says:

"The design of the nation-building goals and the means to achieve them required an extraordinary preparation by those who sought a leadership role. It was necessary to find some order in their world, to achieve a comfortable understanding of their own developing identities and then to share their conclusions and attract a following. A description of that period of change and adjustment is a common prologue shared by many of the nationalist memoirs. For some, however, the issue is not resolved, the centre is not found; and the control of the terms of reference for a freedom struggle that is both national and personal remains unresolved."

Nehru comments on the general atmosphere of political inaction prevailing amidst the members of both the moderate wing of the Congress and the Liberal party. His prose reaches a high degree of sublimity in this chapter and he sounds Wordsworthian. He emerges as a great visionary in such passages.

“Not for most of us, unhappily, to sense the mysterious life of nature, to hear her whisper close to our ears, to thrill and quiver at her touch. Those days are gone. But, though we may not see the sublime in nature as we used to, we have sought to find it in the glory and tragedy of humanity, in its mighty dreams and inner tempests, its pangs and failures, its conflicts and misery, and, over all this, its faith in a great destiny and a realization of those dreams. That has been some recompense for us for all the heartbreaks that such a search involves, and often we have been raised above the pettiness of life. But many have not undertaken this search and, having cut themselves adrift from the ancient ways, find no road to follow in the present. They neither dream nor do they act. They have no understanding of human convulsions like the great French Revolution or the Russian Revolution. The complex, swift, and cruel eruptions of human desires, long suppressed, frighten them. For them the Bastille has not yet fallen.” (page-262)

Nehru strongly condemns the willing abstention from action that quite often goes under the name of moderation. He perceives it as inaction and passivity:

“Nor is moderation enough by itself. Restraint is good and is the measure of our culture, but behind that restraint there must be something to restrain and hold back. It has been, and is, man's destiny to control the elements, to ride the thunderbolt, to bring the raging fire and the rushing and tumbling waters to his use, but most difficult of all for him has been to restrain and hold in check the passions that consume him. So long as he will not master them, he cannot enter fully into his human heritage. But are we to restrain the legs that move not and the hands that are palsied?” (page-263)

The nationalist elite and their appropriation of the positions previously occupied by the colonial rulers receive his disapproval. Nehru here sounds more like Fanon, as he comments on the aspirations of this small body of self-interested men who aim to replace the British officers in the existing order of things rather than creating institutions anew. They forge a new variety of domination which is not unlike the previous one.

“For many generations the British treated India as a kind of enormous country house (after the old English fashion) that they owned. They were the gentry owning the house and occupying the desirable parts of it, while the Indians were consigned to the servants' hall, the pantry, and the kitchen. The fact that the British Government should have imposed this arrangement upon us was not surprising; but what does seem surprising is that we, or most of us, accepted it as the natural and inevitable ordering of our lives and destiny. We developed the mentality of a good country-house servant. Sometimes we were treated to a rare honour we were given a cup of tea in the drawing room. The height of our ambition was to become respectable and to be promoted individually to the upper regions. Greater than any victory of arms or diplomacy was this psychological triumph of the British in India. The slave began to think as a slave, as the wise men of old had said.

Times have changed, and the country-house type of civilization is not accepted willingly now, either in England or India. But still there remain people among us who desire to stick to the servants' hall and take pride in the gold braid and livery of their service. Others, like the Liberals, accept that country house in its entirety, admire its architecture and the whole edifice, but look forward to replacing the owners, one by one, by themselves. They call this Indianization. For them the problem is one of changing the colour of the administration, or at most having a new administration. They never think in terms of a new State.” (page 264-65)

Nehru's tirade is directed against the imperial aspirations of the British, not the people. He is full of admiration of the cultural influence of the English. He highly values his schooling in English thought and culture.

"Personally, I owe too much to England in my mental make-up ever to feel wholly alien to her. And, do what I will, I cannot get rid of the habits of mind, and the standards and ways of judging other countries as well as life generally, which I acquired at school and college in England. My predilections (apart from the political ones) are in favour of England and the English people, and, if I have become what is called an uncompromising opponent of British rule in India, it is almost in spite of these.

It is their rule, their domination, to which we object, and with which we cannot compromise willingly not the English people. Let us by all means have the closest contacts with the English and other foreign peoples."

Nehru's ambitions are greater than what has often been described as patriotism or nationalism. He is in for an international world order, where countries will live in cooperation and collaboration.

"I do not know what India will be like or what she will do when she is politically free. But I do know that those of her people who stand for national independence today stand also for the widest internationalism. For a socialist, nationalism can have no meaning; but even many of the non-socialists in the advanced ranks of the Congress are confirmed internationalists. If we claim independence today, it is with no desire for isolation. On the contrary, we are perfectly willing to surrender part of that independence, in common with other countries, to a real international order. Any imperial system, by whatever high-sounding name it may be called, is an enemy of such an order, and it is not through such a system that world co-operation or world peace can be reached." (page 267)

Nehru's observations and analysis of the different stages of the development of nationalist thought in India make interesting reading. It is these passages that Nehru emerges as a very sensitive and rational thinker, a visionary. His analysis of the past, observations on the present, and anticipations for the future are always calculated. This sense of balance in thinking is never lost hold of in the autobiography.

Nehru attempts to de-romanticize the portrait of *Bharat Mata* as projected by the nationalist imaginary. He is in for a more realistic understanding of the image of India. He considers this practice to be immature and amateurish, as something that is more likely to happen in the earlier stages of development of nationalist thought. Even as he does it, he is unable to free himself from the association of India with the image of mother. He displays a reasonable amount of aversion for the usage of readily available and worn-out vocabulary of Indian nationalism. He avoids sentimentalism and gives the much desired rational base to Indian nationalist thought. He avoids the easy and effortless recourse to the gaudy and clichéd rhetoric of Indian nationalism.

“It is curious how one cannot resist the tendency to give an anthropomorphic form to a country. Such is the force of habit and early associations. India becomes Bharat Mata, Mother India, a beautiful lady, very old but ever youthful in appearance, sad-eyed and forlorn, cruelly treated by aliens and outsiders, and calling upon her children to protect her. Some such picture rouses the emotions of hundreds of thousands and drives them to action and sacrifice. And yet India is in the main the peasant and the worker, not beautiful to look at, for poverty is not beautiful. Does the beautiful lady of our imaginations represent the bare-bodied and bent workers in the fields and factories? Or the small group of those who have from ages past crushed the masses and exploited them, imposed cruel customs on them and made many of them even untouchable? We seek to cover truth by the creatures of our imaginations and endeavour to escape from reality to a world of dreams.”

Nehru also reverts to the nationalist dichotomy of the materialist West and the spiritual East. He works within these dichotomies even as he questions them and evaluates their validity for his arguments. For Nehru, the New India that must take shape should be born out of a compromise between the essence of its ancient traditions and the gift of science that has been introduced through British colonial intervention.

Nehru's attempt to counter the claims of English historians deserves special mention. He refers to the nationalist practice of writing a "counter-history", a history that challenges colonial historiography and its demeaning claims on the subject population. History is now appropriated as a claim to cultural superiority over the colonizer.

5.3.7. *An Autobiography as a National Allegory*

One John Gunther, in his book *Inside Asia* wrote: "Nehru's autobiography is subtle, complex, discriminating, infinitely cultivated, steeped in doubt, suffused with intellectual passion. It is a kind of Indian *Education of Henry Adams* written in superlative prose—hardly a dozen men alive write English as well as Nehru—and it is not only an autobiography of the most searching kind, but the story of the whole society, the story of the life and development of a nation."

The narrative of personal development is here symbolic of the newly imagined national political order, and the seemingly private turmoil in Nehru's life has a larger, national ramification. The autobiography, therefore, mirrors the hopes and disappointments of not just a great person, but a whole nation. Disturbances and emotional upheavals in Nehru's personal life directly affect the destiny of the nation at large. The course of his progress charts the growth of the nation as conceived of in his imagination.

Philip Holden, in his essay "Other Modernities: National Autobiography and Globalization" asserts: "In its mapping of individual onto national story, Nehru's text became the model for

a series of national autobiographies written by the leaders of nations emerging from colonialism: Kwame Nkrumah's *Ghana* and Kenneth Kaunda's *Zambia Must Be Free*, for example, and later in the century, Nelson R. Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* and Lee Kuan Yew's retrospective *The Singapore Story*...If the novel, as Benedict Anderson writes, became the means by which the nation might be imagined from within as a community whose members are bound together by a simultaneity of actions in "clocked, calendrical time", then the national autobiography, evolving later, did something very different. It now imagined the nation as not so much a community but as an individual, newly liberated from the incarcerations of colonialism, ready now to act with autonomy in a newly constituted international public sphere."

Holden argues that the emergent nation-state is the prime focus of what he chooses to call "decolonizing autobiographies". They attempt to record the emergence of the nation-state through an account of an individual's life:

"In these immensely influential autobiographies, and in the social imaginaries which they bring into being, the nation state is an imagined individual. Enslaved under colonialism, the nation is now reborn, has achieved the age of majority [rule], and will mature in the fullness of time. For now, it will take its place as a junior member among a community of equal nations, each autonomous and self-governing."

The narrative of individual growth parallels the growth of the nation in this classic text. Just as the individual autobiographical subject attempts to reorder his past and develop a narrative out of it, nationalism also tries to imagine a past that is re-shaped and rearranged. The orderliness of the individual's narrative represents the orderliness of the nationalist narrative. The narrative of the individual's emancipation here represents the emancipatory narrative of nationalism.

The text is replete with metaphors of exercise and bodily discipline. This disciplining of the male body has figurative associations. It represents the masculinist disciplining of the nationalist movement, in sharp contrast to the perceived emasculating anti-colonial resistance formulated by Gandhi. Nehru is in for a more masculine and supposedly “active” method of resistance. He disapproves of the supposedly more feminine politics of Gandhi and often equates it with passivity. Nehru emerges as a rational, autonomous, and masculine, even as he is ready to admit that the body of the nation is feminized through continual associations with motherhood and a glorious past. Gender is re-inscribed in to the autobiographical text through such associations.

The abundance of prison metaphors and the images of prison life in Nehru’s autobiography represent the incarcerating influence of colonial political domination. Jail life, for Nehru, becomes an actualization of the curtailment of freedom under colonialism. The periods outside the prison become times of active involvement in what he considers to be proper and productive public work. These moments are moments of celebration, since he gets actively involved in general welfare. The anticipation of imprisonment bears testimony to the fact that the freedom granted to him is short-lived in nature, and confinement is the normal course of life under colonial subjugation.

5.3.8. Suggested Essay Topics

1. Jawaharlal Nehru’s *An Autobiography* is an account of a nation in the making. Comment.
2. Write an essay on the evolution of nationalistic sentiment in the early decades of the 20th century with special reference to Nehru’s autobiography.
3. Jawaharlal Nehru’s *An Autobiography* is a developmental narrative where the growth of the individual to a more matured sense of selfhood parallels the evolution of the nation. Elucidate.

4. Write an essay on the depiction of prison life in pre-independence India as narrated by Nehru in his autobiography.

5. *An Autobiography* is a neatly structured narrative where the episodes that narrate Nehru's involvement in public affairs alternate with those which record his experiences in isolation. Discuss.

6. Make an estimate of Jawaharlal Nehru as a nationalist thinker on the basis of your reading of *An Autobiography*.

5.3.9. List of references

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5.3.10. Suggestions for further Reading

1. *Hind Swaraj*- M.K.Gandhi

2. *Discovery of India*- Jawaharlal Nehru

3. *Letters from a Father to His Daughter*- Jawaharlal Nehru

