GANDHIAN THOUGHTS IN HIJAM ANGANGHAL'S NOVEL *JAHERA*

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Abstract

Hijam Anganghal's novel *Jahera* (published in the 1930s), captures a fissured and discriminatory society in Manipur during the early decades of the twentieth century. *Mangba-shengba*, which implies impure-pure or unclean-clean in everyday practice, was akin to untouchability. The novel focuses on the male protagonist Kunjabihari or Kunjo's ill-fated love story with the eponymous female protagonist, both of whom question the deep-rooted socio-religious division and injustices. The paper explores Kunjo's queries and attempts to redress thedivisiveness causedby *mangba-shengba*, its legimisation under the ruling King's organisation Brahma Sabha, and their stringent hold on the people. The novel depicts the tension between the Meitei Hindus and Meitei Pangals (Muslims), and exposes the bigoted structure within which the two lovers are caught. The paper analyses the way Anganghal critiques this structure through Gandhian views which are founded upon equality, dialogue, non-violence, social-reform, renunciation, vegetarianism, and unity.

Keywords: Anganghal, Brahma Sabha, Gandhian, *Jahera*, Mangba-Shengba, Non-violence

1. Introduction

Recognised as a British-ruled princely state from 1891 after the Anglo-Manipuri War, Manipur during the first few decades of the twentieth century was going through a literary renaissance under the triumvirate Hijam Anganghal, Khwairakpam Chaoba and Lamabam

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Kamal. Part of this renaissance was a cultural awakening, which drew attention to the need to produce literature in Manipuri (Meiteilon) and promote the Manipuri language. Anganghal (1892-1943) was a literary giant who produced works such as *Shingel Indu* (1938), the Manipuri epic *KhambaThoibiSheireng* (1940), *Thambal*, and social dramas like *Poktabi* and *Ibemma* among others. His novel *Jahera*, written in the late 1930s (publication date unknown), portrayed the socio-religious milieu of that period. Despite being embedded in the Meitei-Vaishnavite ethos and the fact that it was written by a devout Hindu, the novel shows the division between communities and the debilitating effects of the custom of *mangba-shengba* (impure-pure or unclean-clean) on the common people. The male protagonist, the Meitei-Hindu Kunjakishore (Kunjo), falls in love with the Meitei-Pangal/Pangan (Muslim) Jahera, both of whom commit a series of transgressive acts and are forced to bear the ramifications.

The focus of this paper is on Kunjo's critique of social practices that were set by the socio-religious organisation Brahma Sabha during the reign of Maharaj Churachand Singh. Although Kunjo's constant queries arise from a personal pursuit, viz., his 'impractical' love for Jahera, they reflect his discontentment with the social injustice caused by *mangba-shengba*. Thus, the paper explores Gandhian thoughts in the novel expressed mainly by Kunjo and the Muslim patron of Jahera and her mother, the Amir. Anganghal famously worshipped Gandhi and was himself a dedicated social reformist, particularly in matters of girls' education. Kunjo's conversations with his older and wiser friend Jamini, offers insights about Gandhi's influence on Anganghal, their discussions mirroring the dialogue format of *Hind Swaraj* (1909). The taboo on inter-marriages becomes a platform for critiquing the restrictions on individual choices and lack of agency in the novel. Moreover, Anganghal uses as premise the Meitei-Pangal hostility in Manipur during this time—an offshoot of the tensions between Hindus and Muslims in India—in order to question the deep-seated religious divide in the nation. The paper will therefore look at Anganghal's critical engagement with the *mangba-shengba* practice from the perspective of a staunch Vaishnavite who found its discriminatory aspect highly troubling, although there is no clear authorial indication of dismantling the system. His position therefore echoed Gandhi's assimilative approach towards the question of the *varnas* and the caste system. Finally, the paper willdwell on the novel's depiction of vegetarianism and meat-eating, which offers an important dimension to Anganghal's emulation of the Gandhian politics related with diet.[1] As the novel shows, food

habits are entrenched in the larger discourse of communal division and non-violence.

2. Anganghal's Critique of the Brahma Sabha

The Brahma Sabha, set up under the rule of King Churachand (1891-1941), can be considered as an organisation that sought to re-establish the king's waning power in the face of British political dominion of Manipur since 1891. It was a socio-religious form of control and surveillance of the people, particularly, the Meitei Hindus, but also caused a deep-rooted divide between Meitei Hindus and other communities which were outside the Vaishnav fold. Vaishnavism became a part of the Meiteis in Manipur in early 18th century during the reign of King Pamheiba, rechristened as King Garib Niwaz. The period was marked by an overhauling of the Meitei religion and belief system, including changing of indigenous nomenclatures and deities with those of Hindu, the burning of ancient scriptures known as the *Puyas*, and replacing of the Meitei script with Bengali. By the first decade of the twentieth century, Brahminical observances of purity and purification had become entrenched among the Meiteis.

But it was not until the Brahma Sabha's ascendancy that the religion, completely devoid of the values of equality and humanism of Vaishnavism, was adopted. Outcasting and purification after 'pollution' "became a common excuse of coercion and extraction of bribes" (J. Parratt, 2005, p. 19). Not only these, but even religious rituals became taxable, making the organisation an exploitative and profit-making body. Parratt sums up the entire practice of *mangba-shengba* as "essentially a conflict between two different understandings of Hinduism itself— the more liberal Vaishnavite Meitei tradition and an extreme Brahminical conservatism" (p. 21).

As a distinguishing feature of the Brahma Sabha, the practiceof 'untouchability', connoting impurity and pollution, occupies a significant space in the novel. This divisive system, along with the prevailing tension between Hindus and Muslims in India under British rule, determines the doomed fate of the young lovers. Despite being a steadfast Gauriya Hindu, Anganghal was not blind to the oppressive nature of his faith. Educated up to the fifth standard, Anganghal was bogged down with family responsibilities early in life. Hence, he took up the job of petition writer in the Cheirap Court, Imphal. His sense of social justice and equality would have certainly been shaped by the job. Moreover, for him, religion and the ideas of "purity and cleanliness" were tied with the physical and moral

beauty of his characters (E. Dinamani Singh, 1994, p. 14), and were not merely reflective of a dogmatic view of social norms. The novel is thus an exercise in "purifying through Kunjo's humane heart and behaviour, the societal ills of untouchability, religious division, and social hierarchy" (Aruna, 1994, p. 111).

That the stigma of outcasting is irreversible even if one is 'purified' is shown early in the novel. The Brahma Sabha's panoptic view instils so much fear that families and societies do not completely accept the transgressors back into the Hindu fold:

> The females were married to Europeans who came here to serve. When they left Manipur…they left behind these females just like the current of flood in rainy season rests a few hours on riverside meadows. These females are regarded to be untouchables by the *Meiteis* professing Gauriya faith. They are regarded as clothes smeared with night soil and discarded. (*Jahera*, trans. E. Sonamani Singh, 2006, pp. 15-16)[2]

Shunned by family and relatives, they are derided as "outcaste", and those who speak to them are stigmatised (*Jahera*, p. 16).Later in the novel, the author sums up the oppressive milieu that has subsumed many like Jahera: "(t)he religion of the nation, the whips of administration, the binding rope of family and friends all combine to restrict him in all directions and to destroy his own inborn will… It so happened to Jahera, poor daughter of a widow, bereft of everything" (p.46).Jahera faces multiple constraints of the inter-faith relationship, i.e., on the basis of religion, class and gender. Living with a widowed mother under the Amir's benevolence, she has less agency to resist rigid societal rules cast by the Hindus as well as the Muslims who term her a traitor for following Meitei ways. She constructs her own way of defying the socio-religious system by a covert self-fashioning in which she 'converts' into Meitei-Hindu faith by observing practices ofpurity and worship every day, thereby subverting customary religious behaviour.

3. 'Dialogue' for Equality and as Enquiry

As compared to the near absent resistance to the established traditions by women (with the exception of Jahera), the men in the novel constantly discourse about subjects such as the escalating Hindu-Muslim rift in India during the 1930s, untouchability, food habits, and intermarriage. The relatively 'public' domain of male articulations is a contrast to female inhabitation of tradition or clandestine subversion of cultural and social customs, as is the case

with Jahera. However, this is not to simplify the women's actions as passive and the men's as active. Rather, as this section will show, the format of dialogue and discussion, within which is implicit diverse opinions, offers scope for analysing the ways in which Anganghal questioned contemporary socio-religious orthodoxy.

Following his first encounter with Jahera, Kunjo often initiates discussion with *Ta*-Jamini about India, Hindu-Muslim hostility, untouchability owing to their different food habits, and conversion:

> "It is heard that Hindus and Muslims have enmity between them. There are news of their quarrel in every part of India, why, what is the reason of their enmity?" (sic)
>
> …"*Ta-Jamini* (Elder Brother), will it not be possible for the Muslims and Hindus to live together touching each other even though they may not dine together?"
>
> Jamini: "No, it is not possible."
>
> Kunjo: "Why?"
>
> "Because their origins are different and have different food habits. How can they mix and be together?"
>
> "Then why the term 'untouchable' is attached to them... Muslims do not term the Hindus an untouchable impure (sic)."(*Jahera*, pp. 20-21)

As a man subjugated by religious rigidity and lacking in resources, Kunjo is caught in the quagmire of his social environment. He is as idealistic as Jamini is pragmatic, and his queries only vex thelatter. Significantly, the conversations between the men are segregated into communal groups without much intersection. And unlike the friendship between Jahera and Ibemchaa Meitei, who weave together, there are no shared interests or for that matter, real dialogue between Hindu men and Muslim men in the novel. Seen from a subversive context, the Kunjo-Jamini conversations seem pale in comparison to Jahera's clandestine actions and self-fashioning.

The conversations, lacking in conclusive claims or efficacy, nevertheless point towards an important dimension to the exchange of ideas and dissenting opinions. It also signifies the "open-endedness" and non-dogmatism implicit in the dialogue form (Parel, 1997, p.lxiii). For instance, the dialogic form of *Hind Swaraj* complemented the contentious views between the Reader and Editor, both of whom engage in debates about narrow nationalism, sectarianism, caste system, vegetarianism, Hindu-Muslim division, and Western civilisation among other topics. In fact, dialogue is integral to Gandhism, not merely in terms of discussion, but because

it constitutes awhole worldview—moral, philosophical and political. Neera Chandoke presents various dimensions to Gandhi's outlook towards dialogue, the foremost being its centrality in attaining Satyagraha or 'Truth force' (Chandoke, 2008, p. 40). There is no place for non-violence in dialogue, for it impedes the path to truth. Dialogue encourages transparency and tolerance, as "participants must be ready to listen to, respect, and accept other points of view as equally valid" (p. 41). It precludes arrogance, enmity and otherness, and promotes equality and "a shared search for the truth" (p. 43). Most importantly, a *satyagrahi* has to create a "dialogical space" at the cost of personal "suffering" (p. 45).

Despite being representative of Gandhian voice, Kunjo and his idealismcannot pierce through the rigid social fabric. However, his simple yet persistent enquiries prise open the embedded discriminatory nature of *mangba-shengba*, compelling the readers to dwell on the unfairness of the system:

> "Ta-Jamini, what does it mean that a person is untouchable?"
>
> … "Unclean duties and persons and community doing unclean duties are said to be untouchable."
>
> "While a Brahmin thief is not untouchable will a young Hari who has not been doing any bad thing be untouchable? Why?
>
> … "Do you know what they do?"
>
> … "But the young one does not do that, will he be an untouchable?"
>
> … "His parents are doing (sic), he also will be doing it because he belongs to that race." (*Jahera*, p. 26)

Untouchability here isnot the same as the Hindu casteist institution, but it does borrow elements of social hierarchy and pollution intrinsic to it.The novel depicts its infiltration into relationships and inter-communal dynamics through not only Kunjo and Jamini's discussions, but also the interaction between Jahera and Ibemcha, and the Muslim men's lengthy debates about their mistreatment under the Meiteis. Outcasting by association is something that looms over the Jahera-Ibemcha friendship. Ibemcha's reluctance to teach Jahera how to put the *chandan*mark on the nose and forehead due to fear of "excommunication" (*Jahera*, p. 66) is not unfounded, as her house is burnt down later in the novel after Jahera and her mother are expelled from her locality by outraged Muslims. Jahera's eagerness to mark the *chandan*is emblematic of the many Hindu motifs and tropes within which Anganghal portrays her, including a

framed picture of Radha-Krishna and her parallelism with a 'pristine' white cow.

Anganghal's symbolic co-option of Jahera within the Meitei fold is one of the limited ways in which reformation of a discriminatory society can be imagined, i.e., through acceptance and assimilation. His position is reminiscent ofGandhi's belief in the reformation of Hinduism from within. Gandhi defended *varnashramadharma* on this principle, which E.V Ramaswamy Naicker, and later B.R. Ambedkar identified with "Brahman hegemony" (Dirks, 2001, p. 261).Anganghal was known to worship Gandhi, owning a picture of Gandhi taken during one of his hunger strikes, and being delighted when addressed as "Hijam Gandhi" (Samarendra, 1994, pp.8-10). Just like Gandhi's advocacy of women's emancipation, Anganghal worked for girl's education, setting up a primary school for girls in Imphal. He was one of the founders of the Yaiskul Girl's School Drama Party, which went on to become the Meitei Dramatic Union (1931), and was later renamed as the renowned Manipur Dramatic Union (1937) (Guno Singh, 1994, pp. viii-ix). Most importantly, Anganghal adopted Gandhi's principle of *swadeshi* by wearing and promoting 'Meiteirang', a coarse local yarn akin to Khadi produced with the spinning wheel, (ibid, ix). In fact, his long poem "Meiteirang" (Khadi), written in 1931, denounces foreign cloths, which he compares with a "prostitute" (Anganghal, 1992, p. 3), therebyresembling Gandhi's equating of the English parliament with a "prostitute" which is "without a real master" (Gandhi, 1997, p. 29).

4. Looking Beyond Binaries

The issue of *mangba-shengba* occupies a new dimension in the novel when a group of Muslim men's discussion of the discriminatory tradition extends to the Hindu-Muslim divide in India. The divide is further linked with the question of vegetarianism as a practice of the pure. Irked by Jahera's defiance of Muslim customs, the men approach the Amir and ask, "Why the Meiteis call others, Nagas and Pangals who speak different languages untouchables (sic)" (*Jahera*, p. 98).In the discussion that follows, the Amir patiently reasons with the agitated Muslim men by presenting a case of unity and tolerance amidst the prevailing atmosphere of communal divide in India:

> "You uncles and I myself are Muslims. The state where we live is India. Whose country is this India?"

> … "It belonged to the Hindus but we conquered it and later it was taken over by the Christians."
>
> "Yes it may be conquered in ten different ways but originally it belonged to the Hindus… Then there will be two peoples, Hindus and Muslims in India. We will not go back and they also will not be obliterated. The country belongs to two peoples. We are now the children of the same mother living together and therefore brothers." (*Jahera*, pp. 99-100)

The Amir's view has a simplicity and clarity, yetis presented with such compelling force that one cannot miss its echo ofGandhi's refutation of what the Reader in *Hind Swaraj* calls "the inborn enmity between Hindus and Mohamedans"(Gandhi, 1997, p. 51):

> Editor: India cannot cease to be one nation because people belonging to different religions live in it… That country must have a faculty for assimilation… The Hindus flourished under Moslem sovereigns, and Moslems under the Hindu… Religions are different roads converging to the same point." (pp. 50-53)

Gandhi attributed their "mutual distrust" to the English who gained in "authority" by "accentua(ting) the Hindu-Mohamaden dissensions" (pp. 55-56).Moreover, his idea of religion surpassed narrow sectarianism, as he sought to harmonise two seemingly different ideas of religion as *ethics* and *sect*: "In reality, there are as many religions as there are individuals, but those who are conscious of the spirit of nationality do not interfere with one another's religion" (p.50). He maintained this view in 1940, stating, "(i)ndeed, religion should pervade every one of our actions. Here religion does not mean sectarianism. It means a belief in ordered moral government of the universe…. This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc" (from *Harijan*, 10.2.40, cited in Chandra, 2004, p. 9). Thus, the ultimate idea of religion for him hinged on a universal religion— "that religion which underlies all religions" (Gandhi, 1997, p. 41),"—one which could be practised by everyone irrespective of sectarian affiliations.

Significantly, a similar outlook of assimilation and tolerance in the novel is expressed by the Amir, whose position as a patriarch-cum-patron of the Muslims ensures that his opinion has credence and authority as against that of the hostile crowd questioning Jahera's actions. To the Muslim men's assertion that "(r)eligion does not permit grass-eating bulls to be the king of animals" (*Jahera*, p. 99), the Amir insists that they focus their discussion on religion (*dharma*), hence refusing to equate strength with one's choice of food: "One cannot do away with Dharma…. Please do not shift it to the question

of strength. A tiger is not stronger than a grass-eating elephant… The lions and tigers who cannot survive are said to be inferior to the grass-eating cows" (ibid).The tiger has been used as a metaphor for British rule by Gandhi, and to someextent, for the modern state, boththeir "nature" being inimical to attaining *Swaraj* (self-rule) (Gandhi, 1997, p. 27). Thus, to one of the men's sectarian remark in*Jahera* that they should "(b)e brave as tigers…(and should) destroy the Hindus and turn out all the Christians and be independent" (p. 100), the Amir upholds a conciliatory attitude so that the country is unitedmainly throughabstinence from meat:

> [I]f you want to live as an independent nation let us take a vow and shun eating meat and beef. Let us free Mother India from the shackles on her leg by having one heart among the brothers Hindus and Muslims…let us make an attempt to raise old Mother India…on both the shoulders of Hindu and Muslim brothers… Otherwise we will not be able to gain independence… It is imperative to sacrifice this food for the sake of Mother India. (*Jahera*, p. 100)

The Amir's exhortation to renounce meat for a collective means of countering colonialism can be placed within what Parama Roy calls "Gandhian dietetic ethics" (Roy, 2002, p. 63). During colonial rule, meat-eating was linked with dominance and masculinity, and vegetarianism with weakness and femininity. In her study, Roy shows that "(m)eat-eating (was a) kind of culinary masculinity" associated with the "superior and Other" (p. 66).As against this, the vegetarian 'effeminate' body, combined with Gandhi's dhoti-clad minimalist self-presentation, became a powerful tool marked by renunciation and abstinence against "colonial modernity" (p. 81).Jahera's embracing of purity and vegetarianism is a contentious issue in her community. For instance, when Fatima and Tomba Mian, her suitor, bring up her observances of dietary and daily purity, the Amir immediately recognises that part of the duo's complaint has to do with the rift between Hindus and Muslims. He thinks, "Well, one of the root causes of quarrel between Hindus and Muslims is food habit" (*Jahera*, p. 31).Anganghal deploys the cow-tiger imagery in order to drive home Jahera's isolation and helplessness: "Jahera, like a lone grazing cow killed by the fierce carnivorous tiger has been kept bound by the traditions and usages of the nation" (p. 105).However, unlike her helplessness, the Amir manages to articulate his opinion on false dichotomies that are detrimental to the collective health of the nation. His contrarian, but mainly, dialogic, position towards the Muslims arguing for the superiority of meat-eaters mirrors a

Gandhian approach to matters of binaries such as Hindu-Muslim, meat-eaters and vegetarians, and violence and non-violence.

Another aspect of Gandhi's approach towards dietetic ethics, namely, its connection or otherwise with non-violence is more complex than the way it is dealt with in *Jahera*. The novel simplifies the relation between meat-eating and violence and correspondingly, between vegetarianism and non-violence. According to the Amir,

> [i]f we govern the land with violence because we conquered it with violence there will be no end of war and strife. The country can be kept united and peaceful only by administration with non-violence and sacrifice. Let us abandon eating flesh and meat by killing animals. To bring unity between Hindus and Muslims let us take this oath. (*Jahera*, p. 101)

For Gandhi, violence is not intrinsic to meat-eating. And vegetarianism does not imply that one follows "Ahinsa (non-killing)", nor does it indicate that "every Hindu believe(s) in Ahinsa", but rather, "many Hindus partake of meat and are not, therefore, followers of Ahinsa" (Gandhi, 1997, pp.53-54). As the Editor in *Hind Swaraj* infers, "It is, therefore, preposterous to suggest that the two cannot live together amicably because the Hindus believe in Ahinsa and the Mahomedans do not" (ibid, p.54). Thus, both religion and food habit are de-linked from violence or non-violence. Moreover, Gandhi's vegetarianism was less a matter of proclaiming "Indianness" or "Hinduness", but more "out of moral conviction" (Roy, 2002, p. 81); in other words, it was an adherence to "an ethic of bodily and dietetic purity" (p.71).Also, his commitment to this matter "had a deep philosophical root and it was linked to his concept of true civilisation" (Parel, 1997, p. xlvi).

In a rare instance of the women characters in *Jahera* discussing meat-eating and vegetarianism, Tombi Bibi chides her daughter for her proximity with the Meiteis by saying, "you shun meat, do not cook food without taking your bath and you have always befriended with the Meiteis only" (p. 110). She can only offer solace to Jahera with a wishful scenario: "If Hindus and Muslims are allowed to dine together will there be enmity between them? Love comes only from dining together" (p. 113). The unlikely prospect of inter-dining between the two communities arises from the Brahma Sabha's surveillance which forbade it among other forms of inter-communal interactions. Tombi Bibi's remark therefore points towards a humane and simplified solution which would be undercut by a society anchored on discriminatory and hegemonic practices.

Even the Amir's approach to the question of Hindu-Muslim unity is through abstinence and renunciation. The issue of inter-dining and intermarriage within the dichotomous structure of Hindus and Muslims was a complex one even for Gandhi. His position evolved from being defensive about the prohibition in inter-dining and intermarriage, to an acceptance of both in order to ensure unity. Gandhi's early position was evident in journals such as *Young India*, where he maintained that—

> Interdining between Hindus and Mussalmans does take place even now on a large scale. But that has not resulted in peace. It is my settled conviction that intermarriage and interdining have no bearing on communal unity. The causes of discord are economic and political, and it is these that have to be removed. (*Young India*, Vol, 46, p.303, 1931, cited in Dasgupta, 2000, p. 854).

During his last years, Gandhi's opinion on the subject shifted considerably, where he stated that the "happy event could take place when the communities shed mutual enmity and had regard for the religions of the world." (*Young India*, Vol. 87, p.5, cited in Dasgupta, 2000, p. 948).

Such a radical change in one's perception of social norms is not really evident in the novel. When Jahera and her mother are compelled to stay with her sister and her husband in Sadia, Assam, their new 'home' starts to resemble a Hindu one. Jahera's routine of piety and vegetarianism are adopted by them, albeit without knowing herreasons. For some time, the family is 'brahminised': "(t)he family looks like a family of Brahmins" (*Jahera*, p. 183), the narrator tells us. But this congeniality is short-lived as her brother-in-law discovers through a letter Jahera's idolatry and the reason for her piety. Even Kunjo, despite having spent a whole year in anguish pining for Jahera, fails to devise a way to persuade the Brahma Sabha for interfaith union. All he can do is agonise over the impasse as far as intermarriage is concerned. They may be able to defy social barriers,

> "(b)ut it will not remove the social prohibition. Intermarriage is not allowed and because of this prohibition Kunjo and Jahera suffer… The term Pangan connotes more impurity and hence the term Yavan is to be used… The Brahma Sabha will cite proofs for disallowing it. (*Jahera*, p.178)

Kunjo tries to channelise his zeal for social reform by taking part in a play called *Chandidas*, based on the humanist Bengali poet, and by volunteering to perform the titular role. The brief sequence of

their rehearsals reminds us of Anganghal's contribution in laying the foundation of Manipuri theatre. As the Secretary of the drama party says, "the play Chandidas I propose now has got some reason in relation to the Meitei society…relating to problems of *Mangba* and *Shengba*" (p. 214).

5. Conclusion

Echoing the Secretary, the narrator underlines the role of art and intellectuals in highlighting social realities: "In the land of Meiteis so also in India a play shown for social reform is rare (sic). There are a large number of drama parties in the land of *Meiteis* like mushrooms… but no one thinks about social reforms" (*Jahera*, p. 214). Anganghal's commitment to social reform however is circumscribed within the powerful institutions of the state such as the Brahma Sabha. Perhaps for this reason, all that the novelist can do, like his male protagonist, is lay bare the social injustices of his times. The actions and choices of his ill-fated protagonists are only near-transgressive, never carried to their just ends. But the author also succeeds in presenting a realistic ending where individuals like Jahera and Kunjo's paths could have only brought ostracism and punitive measures. Thus, Jahera dies a tragic death under her lover's hands as she refuses to see him become an untouchable by marrying her.

Kunjo's amateur queries find their seasoned answers in the Amir's persuasive arguments for Hindu-Muslim unity that too without having crossed each other's paths. Both represent voices of compromise, integration and sacrifice amidst the cacophony of religious and social division, which were overseen by powerful institutions such as the Brahma Sabha. Driven by Gandhian principles, Anganghal does not demonise any particular community. His unflinching commitment to humanist values not only makes him a writer with conscience, but also puts in perspective his various contributions in the nascent stages of Manipur's cultural, linguistic and literary renaissance. The novel's resolution shows that an artist's craft is not enough in bridging insurmountable social gaps. However, more than ninety years since its inception, *Jahera*'s resonance in today's Manipur cannot be emphasised enough. Despite being prevailed over by communal ideology during the 1940s,Gandhian ethics and Gandhian worldview continue to be relevant universally and is *the* archetypal philosophy of non-violence and unity. Anganghal's legacy is testimony of Gandhi's influence, which was the main impetus for his lifelong commitment to humanism, social justice, women's

education, promoting *Meiteirang* (khadi), and purity of purpose in place of mere ceremonial purity.

Notes

1. The present paper is an extensive development of a small argument from this author's doctoral dissertation, i.e., the Gandhian views expressed in the novel by Anganghal through Kunjo and the Amir.
2. All citations from the novel are from the translation by E. Sonamani Singh, Sahitya Akademi, 2004.

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