

## **HISTORY – FICTION INTERFACE IN CHAMAN NAHAL’S THE CROWN AND LOINCLOTH AND THE SALT OF LIFE**

**Mr. Bheemappa M. Badiger**

**Associate, IAS**

**Asst. Professor of English**

**Govt. First Grade College,**

**Mudhol- 587313**

**Karnataka State**

Indian English fiction attained a global identity in the Post-independence period. It was mainly because of the variety of themes the writers handled and maturity it attained in the style and technique. A number of writers including Bhabhani Bhattacharya, Nayantara Sehgal, Shashi Deshpande, Chaman Nahal, Manohar Malgaonkar, Bharati Mukharjee and many others made Indian-English fiction popular. Realistic novels, historical novels and novels with socio-political dimension became popular in post-independence period. The present paper dwells on the history-fiction interface in the novels of Chaman Nahal with a special emphasis on his first two novels of The Gandhi Quartet- The Crown and Loincloth and The Salt of Life. Chaman Nahal came into popularity with the publication of his masterpiece Azadi which brought him Sahitya Academy Award. The success of his novels lies in his capacity to transform history into a wonderful fictional document. The Gandhi Quartet, the magnum opus of Nahal puts him in the line of

great historical novelists of the country. He fictionalized the Gandhian movement in four novels of which the first two are discussed in the present paper.

Chaman Nahal's The Crown and the Loincloth deals with historical events of the freedom movement during 1915-1929. The title of the novel suggests the conflict between the British government represented by the crown and the national movement for independence represented by the loincloth which stands for Gandhi. The novel deals with the socio-economic-political disturbances and effects of the freedom struggle. It articulates in fictional terms the victory of Gandhi and Gandhian ideals in counteracting the British government on the one hand and vindicates the nobility of non-violence over terrorism on the other. Gandhi is the guiding force in the novel drawing people into the national movement like a magnet and influencing their lives. The novel is remarkable history-fiction interface as it blends both historical and fictional characters harmoniously. It projects Gandhi at the macro level and Sunil at the micro level each carrying out his own destiny. In the words of K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar:

It is verily the study of the transmutation of the ordinary on to the heroic extraordinary and Sunil's end is almost a foretaste of what Gandhiji's is going to be<sup>1</sup>.

Nahal achieves a remarkable success in recreating a momentous period of Indian history with a meticulous attention to detail and truly humane understanding of people and situations. It acquires an epic sweep of the events that shaped them. The great variety of character and action, the deft mingling of the historical with the fictional, the powerful play of the tragic, and the farcical, and the moving multiplicity of sense and incident, all combine in making The Crown and the Loincloth “a forceful recordation of the first of the three phases of the Age of Gandhi”<sup>2</sup>.

The novel also projects the desire of human beings to live more honourably as human beings. This is shown by the self – denial, the power, the meek could muster in the moral war. Nahal’s novels reveal a sound commitment to moral values, to right action, to life itself. In this novel, Nahal talks about the privileged exploiting the under privileged, the caste Hindus exploiting the Harijans, or the privileged Muslims exploiting the under privileged Muslims. The universal exploitation is the meek being exploited by the strong the world over. The novelist’s chief concern is “the need for love and affirmation in the face of hatred and negation”<sup>3</sup>. Goyal finds in the novel “an individual’s quest for meaning, for the endless possibilities inherent in human existence”<sup>4</sup>.

Gandhi and Sunil dominate the entire novel. There are some other characters such as Kusum Rani, Thakur Shantinath, besides the British characters like

Brigadier General Reginald Edward Harry Dyer and Mr. Kenneth Ashby, an ICS officer.

Gandhi is one of the major characters of The Crown and the Loincloth. His main concern is to drive the British out of India. He did not believe in violence in his fight against the British. His quest is to bring freedom to India by non-violence and to identify himself with the poor and enlighten people through non-violence. The conflict in Gandhi's mind – his doubts about himself and his leadership as well as his faith in himself and his principles to a certain extent, is paralleled by the conflict in Sunil's mind as he grows in awareness, his active support to the struggle and his disillusionment with its leaders and finally his violent death with its sacrificial overtones.

Gandhi usually shares things with his people at the prayer meeting. He does not tell at prayer meeting what he thought about Non-cooperation. But he decides that he would not to cooperate with the British and would teach the rest of India to do the same. The Government arrests Motilal Nehru and his son Jawaharlal Nehru, but is afraid of arresting Gandhi at that moment. Gandhi still wants to put non-cooperation into practice and he thinks about it;

Non-cooperation means no more loyalty to this government and no more allegiance. But how to give it a practical shape, a shape that may be understood by the millions in the villages, a shape that may register some response with the

authorities remained a question. Gandhi had yet to work out these details although the vision before him was clear. They would break some law and fill the jails. If only he had the full support of his countrymen, India would win its swaraj in under a year. Might sound preposterous – considering the adversary they were pitched against – but it was possible (The Crown and Loincloth - 129-130).

Gandhi is hurt deeply and reacts seriously when Jallianwala Bagh tragedy takes place. He feels that he has identified himself with the British till the other day. He opposed them and fought with them, but considered them his friends, in the hope that they would give India an equal status in the empire, and time and again he has placed his services at their disposal. But, he became serious after the firing at Jallianwala Bagh.

That General Dyer had fired a bullet into him as well, though he wouldn't know it, he had killed Gandhi's faith in the Englishman (The Crown....126).

After the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy Gandhi decides to fight back the British with a new system. And he gives a call to the people to follow him in the cause of the motherland. Consequently Motilal Nehru aligns with Congress. Jawaharlal Nehru gives up his practice in 1920 and becomes a full time worker for the Congress. The Indians give up the British titles they have received.

To reach the common man, Gandhi had found the spinning wheel; he reached the intellectual through another wheel, that of the press. In October 1919,

he took over two existing weeklies and became their editor, printer, and publisher. *Navajivan* was a paper in Gujarati, *Young India* in English, and week after week Gandhi lashed out at the government through their columns. Then came the Congress Enquiry Committee into the British excesses in the Punjab, and Motilal and Gandhi worked together on the Committee. In 1920, Gandhi presented a new constitution for the Congress, enlarging its scope to make it a party of the masses. In July 1920, Tilak, the last of the old guards passed away, leaving Gandhi in undisputed command. In the same year, the Congress formally passed the resolution on non-cooperation, and week after week Gandhi explained in *Navajivan* and *Young India* what the movement meant. The coming year, 1921, saw the implementation of the movement (The Crown....325).

Later Gandhi tells Sunil to start a very special type of store in Ajitha as a full time worker by resigning his teaching job. Sunil happily accepts it and receives direction from Gandhi. Gandhi tells Sunil to learn spinning. Gandhi wants Sunil to learn this new language, which touches the chord of an Indian village, everywhere in any corner of India. Once peasants follow Sunil in spinning, they follow him in everything, including politics.

You will learn and teach the other villagers, how to spin, And you will buy the thread spun by them. You will then give this thread to the weavers and buy the material woven by them. And then you will try and sell this material. You will

persuade the people to wear this instead of foreign mill-cloth. Other dedicated men like you might start similar stores in other villages and towns, but you must proceed on the assumption that even if not a single other individual comes forward, you'll do it alone (The Crown.....131).

At the end of the novel, when the government wants to arrest him, he is not afraid but wants the work at Ashram must go on.

Only the work in the ashram must go on, as before. *Young India* must go on, the spinning must go on, and agitation against social evils must go on. He, for one, could not separate politics from ethics or from religion. Yes, the prayer meetings must go on. If they continued these activities, he would come out of prison ennobled and chastened – to resume the political fight with the British (The Crown.....420).

Later, the police arrest Gandhi on charges of sedition. A week later on March 18, 1922, a British judge sentenced Gandhi to six years imprisonment.

For the time being, the lion in the loincloth was caged (The Crown.....422).

The character of Sunil is beautifully delineated. He is the protagonist and a replica of Gandhian movement. The author describes Gandhian philosophy and its influence through Sunil in the novel. Sunil is a schoolmaster, and like many of other obscure men, he too is drawn to Gandhiji. He comes under the influence of Gandhi and becomes an active political worker. He confesses to Gandhiji that he

is an ordinary man. Later he rises to be heroic and extraordinary through his death in saving the Prince of Wales. He is concerned for the poor. He wants to improve their economical condition, and lead them out of slavery from the British. Sunil plays a few characteristic roles as husband and father, lover cheated of the desired consummation with Rehana; and sensualist losing himself in polyandrous Priti; and also Khadi salesman, and itinerant medicine man and Satyagrahi.

Sunil actively participates in freedom struggle. When a call was given by Gandhi to observe hartal by the entire nation, Sunil wants his wife also to join him. He tells his wife that there is a strike going to take place against the Rowlatt Bills.

Under these laws they can arrest us at will, without warrant, and try us in courts without a jury. Gandhi had given out a call that sixth of April be observed as a hartal by the entire nation (The Crown.....51).

There was a call given for a public meeting at Jallianwala Bagh on April 13, 1919. Gandhi was supposed to address the meeting. Many Congress workers have gone around the town to encourage people to attend the meeting. Sunil is also in that work. But he is caught by the police and brought before Dyer. During the interrogation he is not afraid of punishment and speaks boldly with Dyer. Dyer understands that Sunil is a follower of Gandhi.

Dyer could see the man was not a peasant. There was a cultivated air about him, and his bearing indicated breeding; he also spoke such perfect English. That was all the more dangerous, from Dyer's point of view. That meant he was one of those petty leaders who had pledged themselves to Gandhi (The Crown....87).

And Dyer wants to teach him a lesson through cruel punishment. Meanwhile Mr. Kenneth Ashby the Assistant Commissioner of the district of Amristar reaches there. He knows the loyalty of Thakur Shanti Nath and tries to protect Sunil. But Sunil once again shows his patriotism by admitting that he has been organizing people in the city to go and attend the meeting at Jallianwala Bagh. He does not feel sorry for it and says he will go and do it again if he has a chance. Later the police beat him very badly and send him back to his village in a cart with the police escort so that others could see him on the way and learn a lesson from it.

Sunil is brought to Haveli in a cart unconscious on it bleeding from the mouth and with bruises all over him. Shanti Nath is shocked and feels that he has lost his ground and the falsity of the respect he commands from the government. Meanwhile, freedom struggle brings a lot of disturbances in individuals and families. Sunil's sister Shyama elopes with Rakesh, a revolutionary. This brings humiliation to Sunil. He tries to bring back his sister Shyama to Haveli but in vain.

Sunil becomes the first volunteer in the movement of non-cooperation. He sets up in Ajitha, the first of the Khadi Bhandar stores devoted to homespun cotton material, that were soon to spread all over India. But Kusum is unhappy about Sunil's decision because there will not be any one to help her once she leaves the Haveli and lives separately with Sunil who works against his own father. However, Sunil persuades Kusum to join him and encourages working for the nation. Shanty Nath could not approve of sedition coming from his own family, which offered loyalty to the Raj for all these years. But Sunil tells Kusum that lesser loyalty must give way to a greater one and that is dharma. One morning Sunil leaves the Haveli along with his wife and his son Vikarm. He starts Khadi Bhandar in a rented house. Many of the Thakur Shanti Nath's labourers leave him and join hands with Sunil. In addition to running the store, he takes active part in enrolling members into Congress. Sunil's new house is in a predominantly Muslim population of the village. Both his neighbours on either side are Muslims. One of his neighbor's families is Muzaafar Ahmed and his wife Rehana Begum. They are childless. Muzaafar actively helps Sunil in the spinning programme. Rehana and other women work for Congress and help Kusum in running the store.

Once there is an appeal from the Congress for a public burning of foreign clothes and for satyagraha in Hall Bazar at Amritsar as an expression of boycott of

the Duke of Connaughts tour to the country. His visit is a prelude to the coming visit of the Prince of Wales.

In connection with the boycott the Congressmen, Sunil and Muzaafar are sentenced to two months imprisonment for their demonstration in Hall Bazaar against the Duke of Connaught. During the two months in jail period Kusum and Rehana run the Khadi Bandar in Ajitha.

Sunil and Kusum become friends to the people in the street where they are living. Very often Rehana comes to the khadi bhandar during the day and helps Kusum in the routine work of the store. Under the influence of Gandhi, Rehana discards wearing a veil when she goes outdoors. While one woman weights the bales of cotton, the other males make the entries in the book in the store. Rehana accompanies Sunil to the different houses of weavers or spinners in the village. Rehana and Sunil slowly get attracted to each other.

Sunil's imprisonment, the consequent estrangement from Kusum, his unconsummated love for Rehana, lead him to the mission of solving the feud between the labour and timber merchants in Shimla hills. As Sunil could not get fulfillment in sexual life either with his wife Kusum, or with Rehana, who offers him only spiritual love he seeks it in Priti, wife of Duni Chand at Shimla hills. Sunil feels that though Priti is wife of Duni Chand, she meets the sexual needs of

other two brothers of her husband as well. Inadvertently he enters into a sexual liaison with Priti, during a local hill festival.

Meanwhile the government makes preparations for the visit of the Prince of Wales. For relief and comfort Sunil goes to Lahore to visit one of his distant relative who is his cousin and also to see the Prince of Wales. While the Prince is standing on the dais, viewing the Tonga race, suddenly three tongas rush straight towards the dais in an attempt of assassination as planned by the revolutionaries. Sunil is sitting in the special enclosure just behind the royal dais, a few rows away.

Rakesh is also seen there from the beginning disguised as a policeman. When the tongas speed dangerously towards the dais, the prince is ushered to the rear by his bodyguards. At that moment, Sunil sees Rakesh whipping out a pistol and rushing towards the Prince. And there is confusion, disorder and turmoil. In that situation no one notices what Rakesh is doing by wearing the police uniform, except Sunil. Sunil jumps at once in between Rakesh and Prince and receives bullets into his body fired by Rakesh. Immediately Sunil is rushed to the civil hospital of Lahore. But he dies after ten hours. Sunil in his death has shown the spirit of satyagrahi.

The Crown and Loincloth beautifully describes the historical events of the first leg of Gandhian movement with greater historical reality. At the same time

Nahal was able to present the fictional incidents related to Sunil, Kusum and Rehana with artistic perfection.

Chaman Nahal's The Salt of life was first published in 1990. The novel is the second volume of The Gandhi Quartet covering the events from 1929 to 1941. The Salt of Life deals with the second phase of Gandhian movement marked by the epoch making Dandi March of 1930. Gandhi is at the centre of the novel. The title of the novel The Salt of life is a phrase from the novel itself taken from Gandhi's words to Kusum. Fictional character like Kusum is depicted in the novel to show the significance of the Gandhian way of fighting the British with non-violence for freedom of India and endurance of suffering for the cause. On the hand Revolutionary organizations like Himmat create problems to the government. Their inability to withstand the real situation of life is shown when Rakesh surrenders himself to the police. The novel focuses on the endurance of ceaseless suffering inflicted upon Indians during the civil disobedience moment.

Gandhi suffers with a feeling of failure in his first attempt of non- violence movement. Then he feels the need for a new movement. Finally he decides upon the march to Dandi to offer novel form of salt satyagraha. K.R.S Iyengar comments that:

There are the fumbling moves and counter -moves on the part of the Government and the Congress leaders, while Gandhi watches it all with anguish and anxiety. Then follows the Simon Commission, its boycott by the Congress, the demand for Independence, the war of words between the Dominion apologists and the Independence -wallahs, - and already it is 1929, and Gandhi knows that his self -imposed vow of political silence is over. It is just here that Chaman Nahal's The Salt of life begins<sup>5</sup>.

In the novel, the fictional narrative centers on Kusum's second lease of life which is but part of the story of The Salt of Life. The background sets the pace and imparts a deeper meaning to the novel. There is an overpowering influence of Gandhi on Kusum.

The most important event of Salt of Life is Gandhiji's Salt Satyagraha. Gandhi realizes that the Salt law imposed by the British is a burden to the people of India. He decides to break the salt law and offer Satyagraha to affect the need for freedom of India and struggle for it. Later in 1930 he plans for Dandi march with a vow not to return to Sabarmati until he achieves freedom for India and proposes a new Sevagram Ashram near Wardha. The importance of salt as a medicine of survival is shown in the play enacted at Sevagram in the presence of Gandhi.

Against this backdrop, the story of the novel also revolves round fictional characters like Kusum, Raja Vishal Chand and Carol Sacknicke. Kusum falls in love with Raja Vishal Chand, Prince of Lambini, who often visits ashram for comfort. However, they get married at Sabarmati Ashram. Later they leave Vikram at ashram to be with Gandhiji and go to Lambini. At this juncture, she receives a message that her mother is hospitalized and she goes to Wazirabad. There she comes to know about Gandhi's arrest for breaking the salt law and hospitalization of her son Vikram who got injured in the lathi charge. She gets ready to go to Dandi to see her son. Meanwhile Raja sends Angela Davis who is the Principal of the Public School in Lambini to accompany Kusum. When they reach the Railway station, their berths were already occupied by the British nationals - Percy Wand and his sister, who refuse to vacate the berths and try to show their authority and superiority. A large crowd gathers when the confrontation starts. Kusum takes the advantage of it and wants to fight the British power. She puts a cauldron in the middle of the rail track before the engine and breaks the salt law. Soon the Deputy commissioner of police Mr. Kenneth Ashby reach there and control the situation. Later the British vacate the berths. Accidentally Kenneth and Angela who were lovers earlier see each other at railway station. Then Kusum leaves Angela there and boards the train along with her brother, so that Angela Davis can join her lover Kenneth Ashby for whom she

came to India. Kusum stays in the hospital till Vikram recovers and brings him to Sabarmati. She goes to Lambini later to be with Vishal Chand.

In March 1931, Gandhi -Irwin pact is signed and government on its part agrees to withdraw the salt act, while Gandhi agrees to discontinue the civil disobedience movement. Gandhiji finally discards Sabarmati Ashram in September 1933 and settles at Sevagram Ashram. By that time a feeling of separation has come between Hindus and Muslims to divide the country into India and Pakistan while a section of the Indian leaders want to join the enemy of British during the Second World War, but Gandhi does not like it and he stays away. Subhash Chandra Bose leaves Congress and forms his own Forward Block in 1939 to achieve independence rapidly.

On the other hand Gandhi wants to set up a Swadeshi Exhibition in New Delhi in the place allotted to Raja Vishal Chand by British. When the British come to know that Raja has governed the land to Gandhi, they feel it was an open sedition and an act of anti-establishment. Consequently they remove Raja Vishal Chand as ruler of Lambini and replace his son Amit as a new ruler. Later Raja Vishal Chand goes on excursion to Gompha Bhuddist Monastery with a mixed group of Indians and Europeans. On his way to Gompha, Raja dies in an accident.

After Raja's death, his wife Kusum goes to Sevagram and settles there as one of the secretaries of Gandhi.

One day an Australian woman Mrs. Carol Sachnicke who is strong follower of Gandhi's principles reaches Sevagram ashram along with her group. She is inspired by Gandhi, and takes him as her model for her work in Australia and starts an ashram there. She wants to show Gandhi what she was doing in Australia through an enactment of "God or Gandhi" in Sevagram. In the show, there is a patient who is badly in need of healing, but nobody in the world could cure him in any way. Finally a pinch of salt is put in the mouth of the sick man and immediately he gets up and becomes normal. Through the show it is reminded that the supreme value of salt in human life and an endurance of suffering which brings victory.

The historical and fictional characters in the novel involved in freedom struggle. They also confront questions of love, sex, marriage, humanism and service. Gandhi seeks fulfillment in freedom movement through salt satyagraha breaking the Salt law imposed by the British government. Kusum who joins Gandhi seeks fulfillment in love, sex and marriage and finally in ceaseless suffering and endurance. Angela Davis a European meets her lover after a long time and seeks fulfillment in love, marriage and social service. While Carol

Schnicke inspired by Gandhi starts Crisis centres to help the lonely castaways, and the poor orphans. Thus she seeks fulfillment in social service.

Gandhi's determination to abolish social evils like drinking of liquor, untouchability etc is also fictionalized by Nahal. He wants his people to live honorable and respectful life. Gandhi struggles to find a new way, new symbols in order to persuade the masses to involve them in freedom struggle. Gandhi maintains paternal relationship with all the ashramites. He tries to console and comfort Kusum in her grief. Gandhi believes that the personal misery would cease when a person does not live for himself but for a cause. And that cause is readily available to all Indians at that time.

Nahal's fictitious account of idea of the Salt march is interesting as Gandhi in his real life found many novel ideas through his interactions with people. Kusum is one such fictional character representing such people Gandhi might have met.

Gandhi considers salt nature's gift to man, almost as free as air. The British have made it the instrument of imperial control and made it difficult for the average Indian to eat the salt of his own land unless he first pays tax to these invaders. Gandhi wants to break that monopoly of the British, which amounts to a colossal national insult. He thinks that his new slogan to the nation now is salt. In spite of his previous errors in judgment, he continues to fight for the freedom of

India. He desires that people of India should come together. He wants to show them a new direction by breaking the salt law. During Dandi march Gandhi gives call to the youth to come forward and take up responsibility.

He tells Vikram to note down everything that he has said, and wants it to be recorded. People call Vikram kaka. He is a loving youngster and very close to Gandhi. He commands respect like Gandhi because of his character and commitment to serve the nation. Vikram is hailed by the people that he has risen from the backwaters of Wazirabad to the forefront of the country. Gandhi has broken the salt law soon after reaching Dandi on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1930 and people expected his arrest immediately. But the government has not decided to arrest him and delayed almost a month. Meanwhile millions in all the provinces of India have broken the salt law in some form or the other.

The historic Round Table conference is beautifully fictionalized by Nahal in The Salt of Life. There is meeting between Gandhi and Willington to finalize the members to attend the Round Table conference. Lord Willington says that the government wants representation from all political parties - Muslims from Muslim league, Hindus from Hindu Mahasabha. And he treats the Congress on a par with the Hindu Mahasabha. Gandhi does not agree with the Viceroy's suggestion. He

sees the government's connivance of divide and rule policy. Gandhi wants squashing of the communal divide on which the government is bent.

Gandhi asserts that the Congress is above race and religion. Its delegation must reflect that representative nature and Congress has membership from all religious communities. Gandhi does not want to argue further with Viceroy about the composition of the delegation and decides to accept any settlement and wants to go to London because it will bring hopes of a possible swaraj for the people. During his stay at Shimla, Gandhi happens to meet an American student Matthew Craig. He tells Gandhi that the local Hindus are not allowing him to go up to Jakhu and enter the temple there. So he is going to use Gandhi's method against the local people. He offers Satyagraha by fixing a tent at the base of Jakhu on the Ridge and sits there without eating and drinking till he is allowed to go up that hill. He wants Gandhi's moral support in his struggle. Gandhi sees a banner there. He is happy. The American is willing to lay down his life for his cause. When he sees the American fighting alone against an unsympathetic crowd, then an idea flashes across Gandhi's mind to avoid unnecessary problems and confusion about delegation. He thinks of one man delegation and he is that man. He will represent the Congress symbolizing in himself the whole of India. There is an agreement between the Viceroy and Gandhi.

The agreement meant survival of the Round Table Conference, a possible solution a possible swaraj and crowds began to dance the bhangra outside Firgrove. In that jubilant mood, the Hindus of Simla not only allowed Mathew Craig to go up the hill they escorted him up there and inside the temple; they even gave him a Hindu name -Madan Craig.... In the evening, having been to Jakhu, Mathew Craig even turned up at Firgrove -dressed up in a long khadi shirt and khadi pyjamas (The Salt of Life - 356).

Gandhi's principles even attract total strangers like Mathew Craig, who give up their own calling and follow him. Gandhi tries hard to dissuade them but they insist that their call is now to go with Gandhi and to do his bidding. Finally the government accepts Gandhi's proposal and arranges everything for Gandhi's travel to London.

In The Salt of Life, Nahal projects Gandhi as an embodiment of patience and forbearance, with a tremendous capacity to endure "ceaseless suffering". He shows how Gandhi has the capacity to remain unruffled and calm even in the midst of a stormy situation. He also shows how hatred and anger are unknown to him, and how he remains calm amicable and genial throughout.

Chaman Nahal's The Crown and Loincloth and The Salt of Life present a panorama of Indian national movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. Nahal skillfully

made use of historical material to fictionalize the story of Gandhian movement. Gandhi is directly taken as a character in the novels where as some novels of Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao, present Gandhi an invisible influence. In these novels Gandhi is discussed by other characters whereas Nahal not only brings Gandhi as a character in his novels but also attempts to delineate his inner psyche which is hardly found in the books of history. His disappointments and frustrations over the failure of his non-cooperation movement find nice fictional representation. The fine blending of fictional characters like Sunil, Kusum, Vikram and Carol Schniche holds mirror to the artistic excellence Nahal achieved.

K R Srinivasa Iyengar wrote, “The future of Indian fiction and of Indo-  
Anglian Fiction, is indeed full of promise. Recent fiction has given ample evidence of vitality, variety, humanity and artistic integrity.”<sup>6</sup>

Nahal’s interface with history in the two novels is based on the historical events recorded in the time of his writing. Besides, his own interpretation of certain facts of history shows the liberty a historical novelist enjoys in representation of historical fact. Gandhi’s saga of freedom struggle has been fictionalized by various Indian English novelists like R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and K A Abbas in which they presented the effect created by the ‘Gandhian whirlwind’ on the life of nation. Nahal goes further in delineating Gandhi from his entry into the Freedom

struggle to assassination in 1948. In a way it is a fictional biography of Gandhi which also provides a comprehensive picture of National Movement.

### Works Cited

1. Reddy, K. Venkata. "The Novelist as Affirmationist: The Achievement of Chaman Nahal", *Critical Studies in Commonwealth Literature*, Reddy, K. Venkata New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1994: 167.
2. Reddy, 168.
3. Goyal Bhagwat, S. "The Possibilities of Human Existence: A Note on Nahal's *The Crown and the Loincloth*", *Cultures and Commitment Aspects of Indian Literature in English*. Goyal Bhagat S. Meerut: Shalabh Book House, 1984: 128.
4. Goyal, 129.
5. Iyengar, K. R. Srinivasa. "The Gandhi Saga". Rev. of *The Salt of life*. *Indian Literature* 34.5 Sep.-Oct. 1991:173.
6. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Indian Writing in English*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1973 : 519.