

**CHAPTER - II**

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#### THE GANDHI QUARTET

Nahal's fictional work mainly deals with India's freedom movement and its socio-political consequences. On the whole, it appears that he looks towards the history of Indian freedom movement with liberal attitude which is reflected through some of his ideas about the Indians and the British. The Gandhi Quartet is a very significant historical work of Nahal which consists of the following novels : The Crown and the Lioncloth, The salt of Life, The Triumph of the Tricolour and Azadi. A number of novels have appeared in India in response to the massive political movements and events such as Civil Disobedience Movement, Non-Cooperation, Dandi Yatra, Quit India and the Partition of the country. The historical period he is dealing with is the past which he himself has lived and experienced. The fictional characters created by him intermingle with the real historical figures like Gandhi, Nehru, Sardar Patel, Bose,

Jinnah, etc. It is quite obvious that in all the novels of the Quartet the focus is more on Gandhi than on any other national leader. The presentation of characters of these real historical personages imposes limitations on the writer of a historical novel. He has to keep in mind historical accuracy of the events and situations as well as the thought and action of these characters. Chaman Nahal is himself aware of this additional burden that the historical novel places on the artist. He is obliged to carry out careful research into the period and the life of the historical people he is presenting.

Nahal has mostly made use of omniscient narrator's technique in presenting his novels. Even the turmoil in Gandhi's mind and the retrospective view he takes of his life, as he is travelling on board the SS Arabia are presented by this technique. But there are fictional characters as well who talk about the national leaders and discuss their actions and ideas. Gandhi's conversations with Kasturba, his sons and the national leaders, his interactions with the Ashramites and the Visitors of all kinds are imaginatively presented by Nahal. He appears to have

extensively drawn on biographies, letters, historical records, interviews and many such sources to present the historical characters.

The Crown and the Lioncloth, the first of The Gandhi Quartet novels, is a fictional presentation of India's freedom movement. Nahal concentrates on the years 1915-22, and on the towering figure of Gandhi, whose burning idealism fired an entire nation's patriotism, and whom the author sees as a symbol of moral and spiritual strength triumphing over physical odds. Through him, the novel follows the fortune of Thakur Shanti Nath, a landowner of Amritsar in the Punjab, and his family of eight, all of whom are inexorably drawn into the hub of political activity, as Gandhi's ideology crystalizes into a policy of non-violent resistance against the British. Into that web are woven their private lives, which run their own course, though often parallel to the national one. Sunil, the son of the family, and his wife Kusum, in particular, fight a hard battle with each other, which ends only with the death of Sunil. The endearing portrait of Kenneth Ashby, a British ICS officer, highlights the love for India many of the British displayed and the

close bond that existed between them and the Indians. "The title is symbolical suggestive of the theme - battle between two unequal forces - the Crown and the Lioncloth; power of the rulers versus the power of the meek and subjugated masses, 'Mighty British Empire' the Crown, versus the newly awakened India under the leadership of Gandhi, the flimsy Lioncloth."<sup>1</sup>

The national leaders who figure in this novel are Gandhi himself, Motilal Nehru and Jawaharlal Nehru. The novel begins with Gandhiji on board the SS Arabia, his mind tossing and turning like the boat he is travelling on, as he views his life in retrospect. As a school boy he was a weakling, full of fears and it was since then he has acquired the sense of moral wrong the weak have to suffer in this World. He is also full of doubts about what he would do in India, and how the people of this country can be made to forget their fear and fight for freedom. Nahal, thus, presents Mohandas, (who has yet to become Mahatma), emerging as a leader, shaping his policy, perfecting his methods of non-violence and Satyagraha. He becomes Mahatma through his practice of self-denial in his own way of life. And he teaches the use of this

instrument of self-denial to the masses to fight any kind of tyrant. Mohandas becomes Mahatma by strictly obeying all his vows and never forgiving himself any lapses. Nahal has shown this through Gandhi's life in the Ashram. Gandhi has realised, from his experiences in South Africa, that moral right is the only answer to the moral wrong. He decides to try this in India. We can see that Nahal's Gandhi, in this novel and the following novels also, is not a static character. He is all the time experimenting and learning from the events and situations. He starts with the faith in the British character and their friendship. But after the incident of Jallianwala Bagh, he feels that his faith has been shaken. It is after this event that Gandhi invented the phrase 'non-cooperation' at one of his prayer meetings. He did not anymore trust the British sense of justice.

There is an instance where the fictional character Sunil, a young man from a rich family meets Gandhiji for guidance. The interaction between them is a good example of how Gandhiji was able to evolve concrete programme of action to fight the British Raj. He gave a message of Swadeshi to involve the common people in the fight for freedom.

Nahal shows Gandhiji to be perpetually at war with himself. The debate is constantly going on in his mind. One example is the decision to stop non-cooperation movement after Chouri-Chowra incident.

References to Nehru and Patel are comparatively very few in this novel (and in other novels also). Nahal's Gandhi in his thoughts describes Nehru as 'mercurial, Patel as 'self-possessed' and Maulana Abul Kalam as 'fastidious'. There is an interesting exchange between Gandhiji and Motilal Nehru how it is essential to allow Jawahar to do what he likes. Young Jawaharlal is delighted to get his father's permission to enter politics eventhough after one year. Nahal has shown how in the prison Jawaharlal dutifully lays table for his father's dinner, washes his clothes and takes care of his daily needs. Nehru and Patel are compared with respect to their achievement and personal appeal. Patel was very successful in his Bardoli Satyagraha, but Nehru was not so successful in U.P. But, it is noted how Nehru had charismatic personality and how he greatly appealed to the masses.

The secular image of Gandhi stands out in this novel



when he reacts to the talk of Muslim's emigrating from India and settling in Arabia or some other Muslim country in the following manner in his speech in the prayer meeting.

*"A Hindu may perhaps be happy to get rid of the Muslims. But he would be a stupid Hindu, an ignorant Hindu. For what would India be without the Muslims! Talk not to me of the atrocities they committed upon the Hindus and the Sikhs. Given the chance, the Hindus would have committed as many atrocities upon them. Talk to me instead of the beauty they have brought to India, talk to me of their architecture, of the roads they laid, of the inns they built, of the wells they dug, of the gardens they planted. And talk to me of the amalgamation of cultures which the best of the Muslim kings aimed at - in their own lives and in the life of the community. If they married Hindu women, they married them as equals and didn't promote a race of half-breeds. And the same Muslim heads that wouldn't bow or bend before a Hindu adversary on the battlefield, prostrated themselves*



*before Hindu art, before Hindu music, before Hindu dance. Go and listen to a Muslim musician, if you doubt me. In all probability he will be singing of the love of Radha and Krishna. If Hindu art and dance survived intact today, it was because of the Muslim patronage of the art. No, I would say if Hinduism survived today, it was because of the challenge the Muslims threw to it as a religion. They made many converts, but not too many; they were in a minority even after centuries of rule. They made the Hindus sit back and think and put their house in order. Bereft of Muslims, India would be like a face with an eye missing. No, what touched the muslims should touch the Hindus."*<sup>2</sup>

This speech reflects nothing but Gandhi's comprehensive soul. It also shows that there is no feeling of racial discrimination in the mind of Gandhi. He gives equal status to Hindus as well as Muslims here.

The national leaders of India, who figure in the next novel, The Salt of Life, are again Gandhi himself,

Jawaharlal Nehru, Patel, Subhash Chandra Bose, Mahammed Ali Jinnah and the revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh. Being the second novel in The Gandhi Quartet, it deals with the second phase of the freedom movement, from 1930 to 1941. Nahal gives us the glimpses of Gandhi's image through a variety of situations like the problem of dealing with the monkeys in the Ashram, the mercy of killing of a calf, etc. Gandhi's principle of non-violence is on test in such situations.

An interesting episode here is how Gandhi hits on the idea of salt Satyagraha. Gandhiji is in search of a new word, an idea, how to mobilise the masses. He happens to visit Kusum's class in the Ashram, where she is teaching science to the children. A boy questions whether salt is a mineral and Kusum explains how salt is made. This gives Gandhiji an idea of symbolic breaking of the laws of the British government. While Gandhi is getting ready to set out for Dandi march, Kusum informs him she is marrying Raja Vishal Chand, the ruler of a small princely state. She had come to the Gandhi Ashram in Sabarmati in 1922 along with her son Vikram soon after her first husband, Sunil Kumar, was killed while saving the Prince of Wales during an attempt on

his life in Lahore. Vikram elects to stay on in the Ashram and joins Gandhi in his famous salt march. Kusum's second hasband, Raja Vishal Chand was also dead in a mountain accident. And so, Kusum decides to return to Gandhi. In the political scenario, a dramatic alternative to Gandhi is established through the introduction of Bhagat Singh and Subhas Chandra Bose, but Gandhi remains the master of the situation. Actually this novel deals with some historical incidents such as Gandhi's life in Ashram, his mass movement against the British, role of Subhas Bose and his attitude to Gandhian movement, and Jinnah's demand for Pakistan. Within this historical reference, Nahal creates the image of Gandhi in this novel. Such image is projected through the eyes of the Indian as well as British characters.

Ashramites are deeply reverential about Gandhiji. He is a father figure for them. Kusum, the wife of Raja Vishal Chand, respects Gandhi as a father. When Raja Vishal Chand tells her that the Government wants him to arrest Gandhi when he comes to Lambini, she becomes nervous :

*" Gandhi had been like a father to her for many*



*years. He would be their honoured guest in Lambini. Would they stab a father and a guest in the back ?"*<sup>3</sup>

There are foreigners who believe Gandhi to have spiritual powers. A Spanish woman would like to talk to her dead mother. An American young man seeks moral support of Gandhi in his Satyagraha. There is an interesting episode of one Australian lady presenting a small skit 'God or Gandhi' at the Ashram. The humorous, comic skit finally shows how the patient i.e. India can be cured by salt. This is a reference also to Gandhi's salt Satyagraha.

Nahal takes help of fiction and history both in presenting Gandhian image. For example, when the news of Gandhi's arrest reaches the international capitals, there are demonstrations all over. Romain Rolland, the Swiss who had written a brief biography of Gandhi, went on a day's fast. George Bernard Shaw plants a sapling in his garden and called it 'Gandhi'. Charles Chaplin takes a brief walk on the pavement outside his house, imitating Gandhi and dragging a crown behind him with his umbrella. The Time magazine in New

York declares Gandhi as man of the year and carries his picture on the front cover. It seems that Gandhi is not only fighting for the common people of India; he is fighting for the dignity of the common man everywhere. And yet in the eyes of the revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh and Rakesh, who were under the spell of communism, Gandhiji was only 'a bourgeois renegade' like the British, and therefore he would care more for the rich and the middle-class people. How thousands and thousands of people gathered just to see him and do what he wants them to do was however a wonder to Jawaharlal and others. Gandhiji, Nahal shows, was enigmatic to the Indian leaders as well as to the British authorities.

In The Triumph of the Tricolour, the third novel of The Gandhi Quartet, Nahal deals with the third phase of India's freedom movement, the 1942 Quit India period. Gandhi is the central figure even here, though the violent revolutionaries now play as significant a role in the challenge to the British rule. The novel deals with Kusum's two sons, Viram and Amit who adopt different postures. Vikram, being the product of the Gandhi Ashram where he has lived from the age of five, follows the Gandhian path. Amit,

Kusum's son by Raja Vishal Chand, is more inclined towards the violent revolutionaries. Historical circumstances force the British to announce an interim Indian government in 1946 before India's full freedom. While most of the Congress leaders accept office in that government, Vikram declines the honour. Here Vikram, a fictional character, represents Gandhiji in his unselfish, virtuous and honest leadership, because though the Government was formed, Gandhi did not share the power. Nahal shows how Gandhi was different from others in these words :

*"Gandhi had opted to stay at Bhangi Colony - the Sweepers Colony - at Delhi as a measure of protest. By staying with these untouchables, may be he could shame his people into a mood of reconciliation. He was extending himself to the limits. But Nehru and the senior Congress leaders had already shifted into government bungalows in New Delhi in preparation of the new role they would soon be playing. They were already moving around in official cars. They were already being provided with official security."*<sup>4</sup>

These words indirectly criticise Nehru and other Congress leaders. They were as if in a hurry to grab power.

Kusum's two sons, Vikram and Amit, have two different images of Gandhiji. Vikram, who was brought up in the atmosphere of the Ashram, worshipped Gandhi. Vikram says :

*" Bapu has the most intelligent eyes, ever shining and burning with a glow. In the worst of days, in the worst of tragedies, those eyes didn't lose their blaze."*<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, Amit, who was brought up in Lambini, away from his mother, considered Gandhi's non-violence as humbug. Amit represents the younger revolutionaries disillusioned by the ways of Gandhi. In 1945, with the defeat of the Japanese, Subhas Chandra Bose on the run, Gandhi quiet at Sevagram, and everywhere in India the Indians rising against the British in violent manner, there was no one for them to turn to. Amit takes part in abducting British officers alongwith his friend Kapil and the tribal leader Padamrai Kranti. Amit talks about Gandhi in a very irreverential manner. Attitudes to Gandhiji change from

person to person. Even to the leaders like Jawaharlal and Patel, he becomes an embarrassment. Nahal brings out all these aspects of Gandhian image. And yet he is shown to be constant in his principles and actions.

Azadi, the last novel of The Gandhi Quartet, "highlights the psychological consequences of the Partition. It strongly depicts how the minds of people were dismembered by this unprecedented tragedy." <sup>6</sup> It gives us photographic details of the catastrophic episode that was enacted on the Indian soil immediately before and after the declaration of the British decision in June 1947 to vacate India after partitioning it. It deals with "the political, social economic, religious, psychological and cultural implications of 'Azadi' which India achieved in 1947." <sup>7</sup>

The story of this novel begins on the third June, 1947 on which the Viceroy was to make an important announcement. It is centred round the family of Lala Kanshi Ram, a grain merchant in the city of Sialkot. It tells us how the tenants are made to suffer for no fault of theirs when the Viceroy makes an announcement of partition as a result of which two



free nations are created - India and Pakistan. The novelist recreates in a vivid detail the consequences of the partition with reference to a Hindu family. Common people are aware of the dire consequences of the partition but the national leaders were oblivious of it. Nahal has projected the image of Gandhi as a contrast to the other national leaders. Through Lala Kanshi Ram, Nahal voices the confidence and faith of a common man in Gandhi. Kanshi Ram believes that Gandhi will never let partition happen. He says :

*"The Congress had a promise to keep with the people. For the last thirty years, since that wizard Gandhi came on the scene, it had taken the stand that India was a single nation, not two. And Gandhi was not only a politician, he was a saint. He had his inner voice to satisfy, too. Would that nagging voice of his let him accept the slaughter of so many? That's what it would mean, if Pakistan did come into existence. And Gandhi was shrewd - surely he saw it all. He wouldn't give in to such butchery. If nothing else worked, his fasts unto death always did."*<sup>8</sup>



Chaudhri Barkat Ali, a bosom friend of Lala Kanshi Ram, and Lala himself express deep respect for Gandhi. The narrator says :

*"For them Gandhi was a mahatma, a religious figure, and they had come only to pay homage to a saint."*<sup>9</sup>

In the meeting of the merchants in Lala Kanshi Ram's store, the merchants, both Hindu and Muslim, express their faith in Gandhi. Kanshi Ram says, "Mahatmaji is going to save us", while Lala Shamshe Bahadur says :

*"Bapu has a shakti, an inner power, which no one else can dream of"*<sup>10</sup>

It is interesting to see how contrary opinions about Gandhi's role in the partition were expressed by common people. The discussion between Arun, Sundanda and Bibi Amar Vati after Gandhi's assassination is worth studying:

*"It is all happened because of the partition. And it was Gandhi who sanctioned the partition. 'That's not true'. Arun felt he had to put the*

*record straight. 'It was the other congress leaders, like Nehru and Patel.' 'They were his stooges'. 'No, auntie. You're wrong there. In the final days, they didn't listen to him.'*<sup>11</sup>

We can see from this that the common people were not aware of what actually happened at the time of Partition. They knew about Gandhi's hold over other political leaders. Naturally, some of them held Gandhi responsible for it. Nahal brings out all these views and opinions in the narration of this complex historical situation.

Chaman Nahal has created the character like Lala Kanshi Ram in the image of Gandhi. When the partition is announced, Lala does not go to India soon after the declaration of the partition. He continues to live in Sialkot only because he has a deep attachment with the 'land of the five rivers'. Like a real Congress leader, he believes in living with the Muslims looking upon them as brothers. The young generation of Sikhs and Hindus, on the contrary, is ready to pay the Muslims in the same coin, but the Lala, like the Mahatma, tries to maintain peace through non-violence. He takes

Gandhi's death very deeply to his heart. Like Gandhi, he endures several personal losses very bravely. In short, Lala Kanshi Ram is Gandhi incarnate and goes through identical ordeals and sufferings. As Rama Jha says, " He is deliberately modelled as a Gandhian character to register Gandhi's death as a personal loss."<sup>12</sup>

Nahal has shown how Gandhiji liked to own his mistakes, how he would like to be proved wrong. Even British officers knew that all his actions would be open, and there would be no secret about them. Gandhiji was all the time in search of a new language and new ideas. Nahal shows how Gandhiji got an idea of the salt-Satyagraha in his own Ashram in Kusum's class, when a little boy was talking about salt. His own near and dear ones were very critical of him. Ba, his wife, described him as a typical Baniya. For here he was hard-hearted, and ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of his movement, his objectives. At one time, Kusum, his very loyal and reverent follower also accuses him of this hard-heartedness. Through a number of events and situations of the life in the Ashram, Nahal has projected Gandhiji's single mindedness, honesty, sincerity, his transparent thinking, his

ability to persuade people, inspire confidence in them, and his open-mindedness. At the same time he could be very rigid, very autocratic and very demanding.

Nahal has also presented the image of Gandhi through the revolutionaries like Rakesh Kumar and Rai Bahadur Hemant Kumar. They did not think much of Gandhi's principle of non-violence and his method of Satyagraha. Hemant Kumar, for example, says :

*"Gandhi was a fool who was not taking the people forward but backward. What would going to jail achieve -- or fasting?."*<sup>13</sup>

He further says:

*"They must have read about Lenin. If not, they should. We too had leaders like him. Like Lala Hardyal or Rash Behari Bose or Jathedar Kishan Singh. We should follow them, instead. Why follow Gandhi? since he had actually done nothing seditious."*<sup>14</sup>

In The Triumph of the Tricolour, Joseph Daniel, a

revolutionary is highly critical of Gandhi. He describes Gandhi and expresses his anger about him in the following manner:

*"The Mahatma was only a white-collar revolutionary if you ask me. The British were ever bending over backwards to satisfy his whims - special living quarters, special food, special interviews with his family. He, Joseph Daniel, had lost all contact with his family. He knew his father had apple orchards in Kulu. But he had not visited Kulu in twenty - five years nor eaten an apple - out of sheer spite. Did the Mahatma lose touch with his family? Did the Mahatma change addresses to save himself from the police? Did the Mahatma go without food - there being nothing to eat ? He was living in luxury and continuing with this farce of a non-violent struggle. Non-violent, my foot."*<sup>15</sup>

But all revolutionaries were not of the same opinion. Bhagat Singh, for instance, expressed great regard for Gandhiji, when Nehru went to see him in a prison in Goa.

The British characters, specially the military officers like Brigadier - General Reginald Edward Harry Dyer, always suspected Gandhi's moves. Dyer describes Gandhi as the arch villain. He says :

*" The concessions the government had made to that seditious Gandhi, the arch villain! Since the day of his arrival from south Africa he had caused nothing but trouble. And the way he was trying to placate the Muslims and carry them with him through sheer fraud. What love could there be between a Hindu and a Muslim - and wasn't Gandhi an out- and out Hindu? There he was making all that noise about Khilafat, as though what happened to the Caliph of Turkey concerned every Hindu in this land! That renegade, the Caliph, had openly sided with the Germans in the World War, and it was only natural the British should break up his empire and clip his wings at the end of it. And hadn't the Ottoman Empire humiliated the Christians, the true faithfuls, for the last so many centuries ? No, it was a historical necessity that the Ottoman Empire*

*go. But then Gandhi would know nothing of that, since historical facts played so small a part in the Hindu imagination. Only he was clever, this Gandhi, wasn't he? No, not clever - that was being complimentary to him."*<sup>16</sup>

When Gandhiji refuses to back the British Government in the war, they think he is making way for the Japanese to take possession of India. Among the British in India this was a common misunderstanding about Gandhiji. On the other hand Gandhiji himself thought that the presence of the British in India was the invitation to Japanese invasion. Nahal describes Gandhi addressing people in the special meeting of the All India Congress Committee at Bombay, where the monumental resolution was passed :

*"Squatting on the dais against a couple of round pillows, his supple legs crossed and curled under him, his round glasses in his nose, his long nose almost buried into the mike, Gandhi spoke on. He was skinny but hard and his iron chin stood out resolutely, His thin arms and his hands gestured*



*constantly in impatience; they constantly jabbed-  
and cut the air before him" <sup>17</sup>*

Nahal gives us a graphic picture of Gandhi on the dais. Notice the adjectives Nahal uses to give us an idea of not only Gandhi's physical appearance but his mental make-up, his strong will-power. Nahal, a young man in those days, must have seen and heard Gandhiji himself, which enables him to present his fictional Gandhi in consonance with historical Gandhi.

Nahal's Gandhi goes through introspective bouts now and then. He is aware of his own limitations and weaknesses. Nahal gives expression to his innermost thoughts. While taking a walk with Kusum in his Sabarmati Ashram, he would think of her beauty and the personality of Punjabi women in general. Sometimes Nahal's Gandhi reflects on his own strategies and his ability to carry them out. On his way to Dandi, for Salt-Satyagraha, he has one of his introspective moments, in which he says :

*"I have no power to throw the British out of India  
either, I can only try, I can only pitch my faith*

*against theirs, put myself and them on the scales of justice, in divine justice at least, and we will throw the British out and tip the scales in our favour if all of you were to lend me a small hand, you know I'm an old man, I cannot even walk without stick, without a staff, I just hate the idea of it, when a man cannot walk on his own, he has no right to walk at all, his journeys are over, he better take the road to the Himalayas, what am I doing on this road to Dandi."*<sup>18</sup>

Nahal's portraiture of Gandhi is dynamic. He has presented Gandhi in personal, social and political context. And though he appears to be rigid sometimes, he is ready to change his views and assessment of the situation. In 1942 Quit Movement, the government blamed the Congress for violence and lawlessness. Gandhiji, who once categorically condemned the revolutionaries for their violent ways, but in 1944 he couldn't condemn even one of them:

*"Today, in 1944, he was willing to hail Bhagat Singh as a great son of India. Today, in 1944, he*

*was willing to hail Subhas Bose - with whom he had such basic difference - as a great son of India."*<sup>19</sup>

Nahal has noted the turmoil that went on in Gandhi's mind as he went to see Jinnah. In this meeting, Jinnah is shown to be impatient and distrustful. He has already made up his mind about the separate state.

In The Salt of Life, Nahal has sharply brought out the difference between Nehru and Sardar Patel in the following words:

*"For Nehru, living was a matter of delicacy, of sophistry, something he had inherited from Motilal. Vallabhbhai, though a lawyer by training like Nehru, had more the mind of a peasant : rough and instantaneous. The masterly way Vallabhbhai had handled the Satyagraha in Gujarat had made Gandhi confer on him the sobriquet of Sardar, a leader. Jawaharlal's handling of the same in the U.P. was not as effective. Yet in personal charisma Jawahar was far ahead of the Sardar: he*

*drew immense crowds..... The Sardar was patently irritated by this."*<sup>20</sup>

Like Gandhi, the images of other Indian national leaders like Pandit Nehru, Subhas Bose, M.A.Jinnah and others are presented through the fictional Hindu, Sikhs, Muslims and the British characters by Nahal in The Gandhi Quartet. For example - in Azadi, Pandit Nehru is blamed and held responsible for the partition. This sentiment is expressed through Lala Kanshi Ram. He reacts furiously to Nehru's role in the partition politics. In this respect he says:

*"What stupid thing was he talking about? Was he really Nehru? The drawl was the same, the emotion in the words was the same, the disjointed, queer Hindu syntax was his alone, but what had happened to his akal, his mind? Have partition if there is no other way, have it that way - we're willing to make sacrifices. But what nonsense was this of no panic, no violence, full protection from the government, peace the main object! Had he gone mad? Didn't he know his people? Didn't he know the*

*Muslims? And why the partition in the first place?  
what of your promise to us, you pandit Nehru ?"*<sup>21</sup>

Lala Kanshi Ram is also highly critical of the Congress leaders Jinnah and Kripalani. For him Nehru and Jinnah both were villains. Lala has expressed this view in the following manner:

*"What the leaders of India were offering the people of the Punjab was an enormous bluff. They had neither the power nor the intention of maintaining the minorities in their homes; they had not the power of saving their lives. They should have devised means of mass migration to begin with, before rushing to partition. Now they should at least keep their mouths shut and not mislead the poor, credulous people. Jinnah and Nehru were villains enough. This president of the Indian National Congress Kripalani, was the worst offender. More than the others, it was he who was so loud about the minorities staying where they were."*<sup>22</sup>

Lala Kanshi Ram is very harsh with Nehru and so Sardar Niranjan Singh. He wants to 'take out his sword and hack Nehru to pieces.'<sup>23</sup> Here we must remember that these expressions were the result of common men's anger, frustration and anxiety rather than the true image of these leaders in general.

Subhas Chandra Bose was much more popular with the common people, specially in the period of the World War II, than other Indian national leaders. Even the revolutionaries like Joseph Daniel admired and worshiped Bose. Daniel says :

*"If Subhas Bose can establish a foothold there, we will at least have a leader to look up to. Now we have no one ..... Bose can fill that void."*<sup>24</sup>

Nahal has captured the general sentiment about Subhas Bose, while describing the phenomenal famine in Bengal in 1943. The attention of the whole of India was diverted to Bengal. And at the same time Subhas Bose was at the door-step of India, with his Indian National Army. Subhas Bose was perceived there as a great hero. There was a romantic story of his thrilling escape from India, which had caught

imagination of the people. Nahal writes :

*"The whole of India knew that Subhas Chandra Bose, who had left India in 1941 to seek aid abroad, had arrived at the door of India at the head of an army. Yes, the same Subhas Bose, Bhai, the same. Who hoodwinked the British and slipped out of their hands in no time. Who then went to Russia and to Germany from both of which countries he had spoken on the radio, exhorting the Indians to rise. And then he had spoken from Japan - from Tokyo. The Soviet Union and Germany had got needlessly embroiled in a war, and the strike against India would now have to come from the East. So Bose had travelled East in a submarine from Berlin to Tokyo, spending ninety - three days on that journey. Under the sea, deep under the sea, where the valiant Bose had kept himself submerged these three months for the love of his country. Yes, that Bose. That very Bose was now camped in Burma alongwith the army he had formed - the Indian National Army. And any day, any moment, he would be striking at*

*Imphal - on his way to Delhi."*<sup>25</sup>

We have already seen how in the changed atmosphere of 1942, even Gandhi had accepted Bose as the great son of India.

We find the portrayal of Jinnah mostly in the third volume of the Quartet-viz The Triumph of The Tricolour. Like Nehru and other Indian leaders, Jinnah also comes in for severe criticism when there is fear of partition. Jinnah appears first in the second volume The Salt of Life. The rationale behind his demand for Pakistan is reported by Nahal through Muzaffar Ahmed, in the following words :

*"The two-year Congress rule in many of the provinces, from 1937-1939, had convinced the Muslims of the totalitarian intent of the Hindus. The Congress rituals were all essentially Hindu rituals and the Muslim consciousness had been asphyxiated in the provinces ruled by the Congress. The Act of 1935 was a blessing in disguise for the Muslims. It had shown them how the Congress would operate in a free India. Hence the Muslims League's demand for Pakistan a separate sovereign state for the Muslims. At Lahore in 1940, and now*



*in Madras, the League had passed clear resolutions to this effect, and under the able leadership of Qaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah they would Insha-Allah see the Muslims of India got justice at the hands of British."*<sup>26</sup>

The very word 'able' used in the case of Jinnah clearly shows the Muslim attitude towards him. We can see how Jinnah distrusted Congress party and Congress men. His demand for the separate state was based on this distrust.

Nahal sets the record straight giving a dramatic account of the discussion of the Congress leaders with the delegation of the Muslim League. It was Rajaji, who accepted Jinnah's proposal as a good plan and everyone was stunned. Gandhiji took ethical stand on it and the decision was postponed.

Arun Kumar, the son of Lala Kanshi Ram, voices a common opinion in Azadi that there was no need to separate the Muslims from Hindus. He blames the leaders like Jinnah and Nehru who rush into Azadi hurriedly. He expresses his anger and annoyance in the following manner :

*"He knew the conspiracy of politicians behind the whole move. Jinnah and Liakat Ali Khan were coming into an estate; as was Nehru. Why else would they rush into Azadi at this pace - an azadi which would ruin the land and destroy its unity? One would have to go around with tweezers through all the villages to separate the Muslims from the Hindus"*<sup>27</sup>

Azadi is all about the Partition and its aftermath. The Muslim leader, who shines through the pages of Azadi is Maulana Abul Kalam Azad presented as undisputed and noble Congress leader. Azad opposed the stand taken by the Muslim League and Jinnah. According to him, the glory of Islam would shine more in a free undivided India. This nobleness is projected through the historical character, Maulana Azad himself in The Salt of Life. In this respect he says:

*"Islam had spread in India on the authority of the Muslim monarchs. Yet no Muslim king in India had ever insisted upon an Islamic presence in India. They had encouraged the spread of Islam but never*

*imposed it upon others; the Hindus in India otherwise could have been easily wiped out. If a Muslim was a true believer, he made the Islamic presence felt through his faith; he did not need a political patronage for that presence. Would the Muslim League rather that Islam were confined to a few pocket of India, the so - called Pakistan, or that it should flourish, as it always had, through the entire length and breadth of the country? The fear of the Hindu rituals was misplaced. In a free India, new rituals could be evolved, would be evolved, should be evolved. The glory of Islam would shine more in a free undivided India and the Muslims should work for that."*<sup>28</sup>

Nehru himself pointed out how the argument behind separate state for Muslims was illogical. But Nahal is successful in showing how the national leaders were confused and half-hearted in their thinking. It was Gandhi's and it was a gross failure of the other leaders that they were completely oblivious to the common people's fear and anxiety. They could not visualise what would happen when partition is

announced. Only common people like Kanshi Ram knew it. He poses a question "Don't you know your people ? ". And Nahal shows in Azadi how the Indian leadership, whether Nehru or Jinnah, utterly failed in this.

In The Gandhi Quartet, Nahal has focused his attention almost entirely on Gandhi. The other national leaders appear briefly in person or through the talk of other characters. As stated in the beginning itself, Nahal has presented all the four novels from a third person point of view. In such narration the writer is likely to impose his views and ideas. However, we can see that Nahal has judiciously used the means of dialogue and dramatic representation to present his characters from different angles and points of view. This has been amply illustrated in the foregoing pages.

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