The Spiritual Conflicts and the Politics of Salvation in the Novels of Nikos Kazantzakis

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Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **"The Spiritual Conflicts and the Politics of Salvation in the Novels of Nikos Kazantzakis"** submitted by **M. V. Suresh Babu** to the University of Calicut for the award of the Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** in English is a bona fide record of the research carried out by him under my supervision. No part of this thesis has been submitted before for the award of any degree or diploma or any other similar title.

Thrissur — Dr. C. P. Jose, Chiramel

25-08-2009

Declaration

I, M.V. Suresh Babu**,** hereby declare that this thesis entitled **"Spiritual Conflicts and the Politics of Salvation in the Novels of Nikos Kazantzakis"** submitted by me to the University of Calicut for the award of the Degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** in English is a bona fide record of the research carried out by me and that no part of it has previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, or any other similar title of any University.

Thrissur M.V. Suresh Babu

25-08-2009

Dedicated to my dear

Teachers,

whom everything is due.

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Preface

The idea of studying Kazantzakis has never been a sudden decision. It was a matter of joy and pleasure to work on Kazantzakis because his novels have held a peculiar fascination for me ever since the beginning of my university education. My first acquaintance with Kazantzakis began with *The Greek Passion* which is a very challenging philosophical and theological novel set in Greece during the last days of the Turkish occupation, probably in the early 1920's. As part of my research I got the opportunity to go through the masterly literary pieces of Kazantzakis once again and to feel the specific quality of his art and philosophical thoughts. I must affirm that Kazantzakis never fatigues the reader even at repetitive phases of reading; he in fact rejuvenates our mind and heart.

Apart from the spiritual conflicts in the novels of Kazantzakis, his preoccupation with politics is also a major concern of this work. In this context I would like to admit that the 'Politics of Salvation' which is part of my research title is borrowed from the critical study of James Lea, *Politics of Salvation.*

For documentation and references, I have followed the guidelines in *MLA Hand Book for Writers of Research Papers* Sixth Edition with some marginal variations for practical convenience.

Following titles have been shortened for the convenience of parenthetical citations

Report to Greco	*Report*
Christ Recrucified	*Recrucified*
Politics of Salvation	*Politics*
Zorba the Greek	*Zorba*
The Saviours of God	*Saviours*
God's Pauper: St. Francis of Assisi	*God's Pauper*
The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel	*Odyssey*
Cretan Glance	*Cretan*

It may be noted that *The Greek Passion* which at first was published in the United States was published later in Britain as *Christ Recrucified*. My preference was to use *Christ Recrucified* for the thesis. This is the volume referred to in the parenthetical citations. However, for certain explanations in the thesis, the title *The Greek Passion* was found to be more suitable. Similarly, *Freedom and Death* was published in the U.S as *Freedom or Death.*

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Chapter I

Introduction

Nikos Kazantzakis (1883- 1957) is regarded as one of the most significant and controversial literary men of 20th century Greek literature. However, in terms of his greatness, imaginative quality, political convictions and affiliations, Kazantzakis qualifies as the true descendant of the rich Greek tradition of Aristotle and Plato. Kazantzakis is generally considered a philosophical writer who has been deeply influenced by the thoughts of Christian divine theology, elements of humanism in the Marxist theory of dialectics, Buddhist teachings on negation, and the existential thoughts of Nietzsche. In his works, he attempted to synthesize these different world views. The dualism of flesh and spirit greatly puzzled his personal life and his literary works.

Kazantzakis is part of the Greek Cultural Renaissance of the twentieth century. One of the most widely translated authors of poetry, plays, novella and travel books, Kazantzakis spent much of his life travelling and studying, bent on seeking to redefine the purpose and meaning of man's existence. In his novels such as *The Last Temptation of Christ* and *Zorba the Greek*, by which he is best known all over the world, Kazantzakis probes the conflicts between man's physical, intellectual and spiritual natures. *The Last Temptation* was considered quite controversial when first published in 1955, and prompted angry reactions

from the Roman Catholic Church which banned it, as well from the Greek Orthodox Church which tried to excommunicate the author.

Before we go deeper into the works of Kazantzakis a brief profile would help us to understand the basic facts related to his life and career. Nikos Kazantzakis was born on 18th February 1883 in the town of Heraklion in Turkish-held Crete during the years of the fierce Cretan uprising for freedom. He was greatly inspired by his father, Capetan Michales, who was one among the freedom fighters. Young Nikos completed primary education in schools in Heraklion and Naxos. Later he joined Athens University, where he received his degree in Law. In 1908 - 09, he went to Paris to continue his studies, where the French philosopher, Henri Bergson left a lasting impression on him. “Friedrich Nietzsche on the Philosophy of Law and Society” was the thesis he prepared during his study of Philosophy in Paris. From 1910 he lived in Athens where he concentrated on his writing and philosophical translations and the Greek classical works of Plato and others. In 1911, he married Galateia Alexiou, but divorced her in 1926. From 1917 onwards, he extended his travel to places outside Greece. The first was a visit to Switzerland. Here, once again he engaged himself with the works of Nietzsche. He was appointed as the General Director of the new Ministry of Public Welfare in 1919 with the responsibility for overseeing the repatriation of the Greek refugees expelled from the Caucasus after the installation of the Communist regime in the Soviet Union. 150,000 refuges were repatriated. This monumental task was successfully concluded. The life and sufferings of refugees that he intimately

experienced influenced his later novels like *The Greek Passion* and *The Fratricides*. The mining venture he undertook on the Cretan coast resulted in his meeting with George Zorba, whom he immortalized as Alexis Zorba in his novel, *Zorba the Greek*. He made many journeys in and outside Greece. In 1921 and 1924 he visited Germany, Austria and Italy, where he visited Mussolini. For a while, he stayed in Assisi, the town of St Francis on whom he based his work, *God's Pauper: St. Francis of Assisi.* His frequent returns to Crete energized him to continue his work.

1924 was a significant year for Kazantzakis, as he met Eleni Samiou, who became his ideal companion in times of crisis and happiness. He married her in 1945. He continued his travels around Greece and during the span of 1925 to 1938 visited the Soviet Union, Cyprus, Palestine, Libya, Spain, Italy, Egypt, Sinai, Czechoslovakia and China. His great epic in lyric poetry, *Odissa* was published in 1938 but its English version *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel* appeared only after his death in 1957. The prolific and fruitful period in the life of Kazantzakis was the decade starting from 1940 which witnessed his great works like *Christ Recrucified* or *The Greek Passion, Zorba the Greek, The Fratricides, Freedom and Death, The Last Temptation* and *God's Pauper*. He temporarily settled in France and travelled to the surrounding countries, but his health began to fail him.

After World War II, he became involved in politics again and was appointed Minister in the Greek Government without a specific portfolio, but he

resigned after only one and half months. From 1946 he was being constantly driven away from his homeland. In spite of the persecution, his heart always belonged to Greece. Although a restless wanderer throughout his life, Kazantzakis, hailing from the small island of Crete, remained very much a Cretan. The Greek Orthodox Church demanded the removal of some pages of his novel *Freedom and Death* and the complete withdrawal of *The Last Temptation* although the novel had not been published in Greek. At this time the Vatican placed the same book in their index of banned books. However, the ban was later withdrawn and in 1968 the Ecumenical Patriarch Athinagoras of the Greek Church said that the books of Nikos Kazantzakis had been placed in the Patriarchal Library. While returning from China in 1957 he was infected by Asiatic flu which aggravated his leukemia. He was transferred to the University Clinic of Freiburg in West Germany where he succumbed to the fatal disease on 26th October (Stavrou.www. Kazantzakis – museum)

Kazantzakis' writing is often appraised as a single body that reveals the author's philosophical and spiritual values. Most critics agree that his writings are in this sense autobiographical. Although his works seek to reconcile the dualities of human nature, mind and body, affirmation and despair, and even life and death, it is suggested that the author's ultimate concern is more with striving to overcome inherent human conflicts than in resolving them. "Every one of Kazantzakis' major works can be read as a portrayal of man seeking reintegration," explained

C.N. Stavrou, “some succeed, some enjoy a partial success, some fail, and others are completely indifferent or find integration by repudiation rather than a reconciliation of the eternal duality. In his works more importance attaches to the struggle to arrive than to the fact of arrival itself” (*Some Notes* 320).

While Kazantzakis’ stature as a unique voice in modern literature is uncontested, critical opinion about the literary quality of his individual works is frequently divided. Many hold the view that Kazantzakis subordinated his artistic concerns to the philosophical ideas he wanted to offer. All the same one can not ignore but admire the passionate poetic voice in which the author communicates with his readers. This is complemented by the realistic description, metaphors and profuse imagery that comprise Kazantzakis’ writing style. In *Report to Greco* Kazantzakis has frankly revealed his allegiances and affiliations:

> My life’s greatest benefactors have been journeys and dreams. Very few people, living or dead have aided my struggles. If, however, I wish to designate which people left their traces embedded most deeply in my soul, I would perhaps designate Homer, Buddha, Nietzsche, Bergson, and Zorba. The first, for me, was the peaceful, brilliantly luminous eye, like the Sun’s disk, which illuminated the entire universe with its redemptive splendor; Buddha, the bottomless jet-dark eye in which the world drowned and was delivered. Bergson

> relieved me of various unsolved philosophical problems which tormented in my early youth; Nietzsche enriched me with new anguishes and instructed me how to transform misfortune, bitterness and uncertainty into pride; Zorba taught me how to love life and to have no fear of death. (445)

This revelation, apparently, is the key to the thoughts and influences of Kazantzakis which are transparently expounded in all his works without any conscious concealment on the part of the writer. Kazantzakis, though he is known as a voice from Greece, essentially and emotionally belongs to an island called Crete which is a part of Greece marked by its own uniqueness. Therefore, any discussion on Kazantzakis would be incomplete if his Cretan heritage is not traced. It must be both the starting point and the ending point of any in-depth study of his fiction, the metaphor around which all of his art and his life developed. In all analysis inevitably we return to his Cretan heritage. Kazantzakis, though he was on self exile for the larger part of his life, never denied the force of his heritage, but very ardently attempted always to transcend it.

Kazantzakis witnessed the increasing political struggles when the Cretan people rose against the Turks in 1897 and the consequent failures and tensions on his native island in his childhood itself. As years advanced such impressions became deeper and a sense of futility gripped his mind. He was a teenager when he was sent to the Franciscan monastery on the Greek island of Naxos where he learned French and Italian. It was here that Kazantzakis was introduced to the

Western Philosophies, and grew familiar with the mysteries of Christianity, in the form of a monastic school of thought. In 1906, after receiving his law degree from the University of Athens, he moved to France and became the pupil of the French philosopher Henri Bergson. It was at this time that he began his career as a writer. Early attempts were limited to translations of the works of the Western scientists and thinkers as well as compositions of verse dramas (Trosky 212).

Anyone who surveys Kazantzakis' fictional world would discover certain consistencies related to Crete and autobiographical impulses which permeate all his works. The deliberate consistency shown in his entire career is in fact the strength and weakness of his narrative technique. For Kazantzakis, Crete the fabled island served as a bright, focusing lens which helped him to illuminate and enrich the world around him. Cretan touches and influences can be found everywhere in all the literary works of Kazantzakis. Crete has always been a source of inspiration and strength for him. He says:

> Compassionately, tranquilly, I squeeze a clod of Cretan soil in my palm. I have kept this soil with me always, during all my wanderings, pressing it in my palm at times of great anguish and receiving great strength, as though from pressing the hand of a dearly loved friend. (*Report* 17)

The impact of childhood existence was such that he would later say of Crete: "This soil I was everlastingly; this soil I shall be everlastingly. O fierce clay of Crete, the moment when you were twirled and fashioned into a man of struggle

has slipped by as though in a single flash" (*Report* 18). Crete seemed to be the meeting place of two contradictory forces. The idea of dichotomy between God and man actually gets ignited from the Cretan soil itself. Kazantzakis continues: "What struggle was in that handful of clay, what anguish, what pursuit of the invisible man-eating beast, what dangerous forces both celestial and Satanic!" (*Report* 18). Crete served him as a crucible where he refined the raw materials for perfection. The fundamental principles about his writings and the essential concepts of life and literature were formed from the traditional past and turbulent present of Crete.

In Crete he knew and loved ordinary uneducated people and it was to them that he always had his greatest allegiance. Though he travelled over most of the world, restless and uprooted in a self imposed exile, his native Crete remained his true spiritual home which became an important ingredient of his writing. It was in Crete that he first came to know the shepherds, peasants and ordinary people who abound in his novels. In his "Translator's Note", P.A.Bien says that it was in Crete that Kazantzakis first experienced the revolutionary zeal and ardour and unparalleled heroism of the highest order (*The Last Temptation* 509). During a nostalgic visit to Knossos in Crete he had the opportunity to enjoy and experience the frescoes and paintings and columns in the queen's apartment. While watching them, he was "overwhelmed by inexpressible gladness and sorrow for this extraordinary world which had perished for the doom of every human exploit" (*Report* 454). A particular fresco of flying fish corresponded to his 'soul's

concerns and hopes'. "I experienced great agitation and fellow feeling as I gazed at this flying fish, as though it was my own soul I saw on that palace wall painting which had been made thousands of years before" (*Report* 454). While deeply contemplating over the ancient fresco he murmured to himself, "This is Crete's sacred fish, the fish which leaps in order to transcend necessity and breathe freedom." This is a never-ending attempt "to transcend man's destiny and unite with God, in other words with absolute freedom." Kazantzakis feels that "every struggling soul seeks the same thing: to smash frontiers" (454). Kazantzakis reflected that Crete should have been the first place "on earth to see the birth of this symbol of the soul fighting and dying for freedom." The flying fish symbolizes the soul of the struggling, indomitable man. "Shaken and disturbed, I reflected that it is here in this terrible moment of confrontation between the Cretan and the abyss that Crete's secret lies concealed" (*Report* 455). This revelation of a great mystery made him identify himself with the ancient past and its great unknown artists.

> He found the solution, as well as other forms of the mystery, not only in union with the Minoans or with the great, anonymous rebels of his father's and grand father's generations; he found it also in the artists of the Cretan Renaissance of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: it is no accident that his spiritual autobiography is a *Report to Greco,* to the man he called "grandfather," the greatest of his precursors. (Levitt, *Cretan* 8)

All through his literary pursuits Kazantzakis had been trying to build a bridge between God and man. However, he was not a bewildered human being awed by the omnipotence and the might of God. He asserts that there is a synthesis which supplements each other. He also believes that God is being built by man. This apparent interdependent dualism is the essential concept of God and man in Kazantzakis. It is not acquired from any external sources, but mostly inherited.

From his father's side Kazantzakis' ancestors were bloodthirsty pirates on water, warrior chieftains on land fearing neither God nor man. On the other hand his mother's stock was "goodly peasants who bowed trustfully over the soil the entire day, sowed, waited with confidence for rain and sun . . . and placed their hopes in God" (*Report* 24). These virile and vibrant contrasts he inherited continue to structure his works. "Fire and soil", he writes, "How could I harmonize these two militant ancestors inside me?" (24). It has been his duty to reconcile the primordial irreconcilables and to transform the ancestral darkness which lies deeply buried in him, and glow it up into light. Kazantzakis admits that the sediment of darkness continues to remain in his heart and it is an oppressive and insatiable duty for him to fight it. The age old paternal ancestors are thrust deep within him and it is very difficult for him to discern their faces in the fathomless darkness. Kazantzakis strove to transubstantiate these inhuman ancestors into men. "I was finally able, by blending the voice of the visible world and my hidden inner voices, to penetrate the primordial darkness beneath the mind, lift up the trap door and see" (*Report* 27).

While tracing the parental stock of Kazantzakis, it can be seen that two currents of blood, Greek from his mother and Arab from his father, ran in his veins. This significant blend had positive and fruitful consequences, and gave him strength to continue his creative work. He writes, “My struggle to make a synthesis of these two antagonistic impulses has lent purpose and unity to my life” (*Report* 30).

The literary life of Kazantzakis is primarily related to the politics of Crete in particular, and Greece in general. Crete provided him with the raw materials for his major works like *Freedom and Death*, *The Greek Passion* and even *The Fratricides* to some extent. The undercurrent of these novels is the strife between Crete and Turkey.

> But what influenced my life incalculably far more than schools and teachers, far deeper than the first pleasures and fears I received from viewing the world – was something which moved me in a truly unique way: the struggle between Crete and Turkey. (*Report* 67)

Had this struggle not been there, his life would have taken a different course, he remembered. Crete was the seed. From this seed the entire tree of his life germinated, budded, flowered and bore fruit. The struggle for the freedom of Crete stirred Kazantzakis’ youthful imagination and shaped his political convictions. However, he braced himself with a sort of self-education and cherished the conviction that to gain freedom for Crete was only the first step; he had to continue the struggle forward: in order to gain freedom from the inner Turk

- the ignorance. In course of time, as he grew up, his mind broadened, the struggle intensified as well. It crossed the bounds of Crete and Greece and Turkey and embraced the purviews of wider dimensions of history of mankind where good and evil perpetually struggled and battled in a recurring whimsical fancifulness.

Kazantzakis' childhood was filled with horrible stories of Turkish atrocities and the sacrifice of helpless Cretans and their brave chieftains. What he describes in *Freedom and Death* is, in fact, the photographic reproduction of the actual scenes he had seen in his childhood. "It's a terrible thing to be born a Cretan" became the terrible truth for Kazantzakis. The fictional world that we find in *Freedom and Death* is not fictional at all. Cretan life with all its glory and misery is a creation not of the artist's imagination alone but of ancestral memories and everyday life of a kind of the folk tradition in which Kazantzakis was raised. He elevated this heritage to a narrative as consistent as the life itself, though sometimes it appears to be hyperbolic to the modern reader (Levitt, *Cretan* 25).

Despite his inherent spiritual quest, political and geographical peculiarities of Greece have had a deep impact on the creative abilities of Kazantzakis. The essence of his contradictions truly originated from his own cultural milieu of Greek life. He felt that Greece's spiritual as well as geographical location carries with it a mystic sense of mission and responsibility. As two continually active currents collide on her land and seas, she has always been a place subjected both geographically and spiritually to incessant whirlpools.

> Greece's position is truly tragic; on the shoulders of every modern Greek it places a duty at once dangerous and extremely difficult to carry out. We bear an extremely heavy responsibility. New forces are rising from the East; new forces are rising from the West. Greece is placed in the middle; it is the world's geographical and spiritual crossroads. (*Report* 175)

By means of their struggle the Greeks sanctified each region and by means of beauty and disciplined passion they converted each region's physical nature into something metaphysical. Kazantzakis believes that it is a sacred and most bitter fate to be a Greek. The agonies of the times impose a tragic duty on every Greek. They think, love and struggle.

> The struggle today is spreading like a conflagration, and no fire brigade can ensure our safety. Every man is struggling and burning along with all humanity. And the Greek nation is struggling and burning more than all the rest. This is its fate. (*Report* 176)

His ancestors lived not only within the inner core of Kazantzakis but came to life in various characterizations in his works. In *The Greek Passion*, *The Fratricides*, *Zorba the Greek, Freedom and Death* and other novels and plays, Kazantzakis focused on his ancestors and examined and reexamined their personalities (Lea 5).

Apart from the parental, geographical and political influences, Kazantzakis was greatly touched by many literary and religious personalities from the East and the West. One of those who exerted a tremendous force in the life and attitude of

Kazantzakis, was Buddha. Buddha had been a passion for Kazantzakis ever since his youthful days. It was in Vienna in 1922 that Buddha philosophically intervened in the intellectual and spiritual arena of his mind. There he strongly embraced the doctrine of complete renunciation, of complete mutation of flesh into spirit. Buddha, like Christ, was for Kazantzakis a superman who had conquered matter and mind. He intensely experienced Buddha; it was such an unusual ascetic mystical struggle. Later in 1956, a year before his death, he was finally able to publish his play *Buddha*. It was a project that had obsessed and haunted him most of his life. But Kazantzakis did not have any allegiance to any particular school of Buddhism. His *Spiritual Exercises* is the culmination of Buddhist influence and other oriental religions.

"My method", Kazantzakis said, "does not involve a denial of spirit and body, but rather aims at the conquest of them through the prowess of spirit and body" (Bien, *Buddha* 252). Though he has been trying to harmonize them, this attempt exerted a great deal of stress on him, because to remain "Buddhistically aloof from the events" and to desire to participate in the "world's ephemeral shadow dance" was an internal conflict for Kazantzakis (252). He could never have been a Buddhist disciple in the strict sense of the word, though he was enchanted by the Buddhist resignation from active life. He said that one should harmonize within oneself "to create a new synthesis unknown in nature, and to play masterfully upon life and death as upon a double flute". For Buddha, all the beauties on the earth and human struggles to sustain this life mark only a

"phantasmagoria of nothingness". But Kazantzakis does not negate life altogether. Rather, he feels that we should know the secret of world's vanity first. Our salvation comes only after the cessation of all desires and the welcoming of death as a release from life's torments. Buddha helped him to continue his struggle to experience not only the vanity of all human endeavour but also, simultaneously, the eternity of every moment (Bien, *Buddha* 259). What Kazantzakis has learned in the course of his internal struggles is to transform this inherited metaphysical position into an existential validity. By arriving at this stage he created his own essence and this fact of human consciousness gives him a pride and dignity. In this unique way Kazantzakis transforms Buddhism into a strangely affirmative, valid and noble reaction to the fact of death. For Kazantzakis negation and annihilation of desires are not merely an intellectual abstraction to evade the responsibilities through the sieve of metaphysics. Therefore, the view of complete negation of life practised and propagated by the ardent Buddhists is not acceptable to Kazantzakis. He is of the view that the irreconcilables are to be reconciled and all contraries are to be placed in the stream of evolving time. Regarding the Buddhist sense of the futility of all actions, he makes us arrive at the ultimate futility by undergoing a process. This process, according to Kazantzakis, is of getting actively involved in life -- living the life or loving the life, and not negating life altogether. He insists that our passivity and resignation must be earned by indulging in the living stream of life. Activism and futility are reconciled with each other, because activism, according to Kazantzakis is the precondition of the genuineness of the Buddhist

position. Kazantzakis argues that we can never conquer desire if the desire has never been felt. In this way, he justifies the frantic attempts of human beings to make their world a better place. At the same time he warns us that we must not justify this striving in terms of the material result it produces, since such results are so hopelessly deceptive and ephemeral (Bien, *Buddha* 269). Moreover, mad pursuit after the pleasures of life would spoil the spirit of the fundamental meaning and value of life.

Apart from Buddha, Bergson and Nietzsche were the other dominant intellectual stimulants for Kazantzakis; and they strongly influenced Kazantzakis' thought and life. He was particularly interested in the concepts of Nietzsche outlined in *The Birth of Tragedy*, that the primary tension in human nature exists between man's physical drives and his intellectual and spiritual endeavour. This idea of conflict is central to Kazantzakis' themes. But he was also profoundly attracted to Bergson's concept of progressive spiritual development as man's attempt to escape the constraints of his physical and social existence and to unite with the *elan vital*, which is the universal creative force of life (Trosky 212). Though many had influenced Kazantzakis, Bergson and Nietzsche, influenced him the deepest. However, like Bacon, Dostoevsky, Plato and Machiavelli, he drew intellectual sustenance from all. Therefore, a basic awareness of these individual influences on Kazantzakis' thought is a necessary prerequisite to a deeper and better understanding of his literature and politics. In fact, his philosophic and spiritual mentors were Nietzsche and Bergson (Lea 15). Bergson's vitalism, the

idea that the life force which can conquer matter and baser elements in human beings, impressed him tremendously, and this vitality and the positive lead are the marked differences we find in Kazantzakis in contrast with the nihilistic influence of Nietzsche. Kazantzakis' philosophical base is a mixture of Bergson from whom he borrows the notion of *elan vital,* whereas Nietzsche passed on his great pessimism, the concept of the Superman and the myth of eternal recurrence. Kazantzakis' vision of the universe is totally dynamic. He asserted that everything in this universe is in the process of an endless evolution forced upon matter by the spirit. The spirit is imprisoned in matter, and its struggle to escape and transcend matter constitutes the universe. Everything must be subordinated to the great thrust of the spirit. Each individual thing and man is merely a stepping stone for the spirit (Chilson 72).

Writers on Kazantzakis often define certain stages to see the extent of influence exerted by great figures in formulating his political thoughts and intellectual development. Nietzsche, Bergson, Buddha, Christ, St.Francis and Odysseus preoccupied Kazantzakis' mind at different periods. But Pandelis Prevelakis, Kazantzakis' disciple, confidant and biographer, in his 400 Letters says that "The fourth prophet – in order to win Kazantzakis after Nietzsche, Christ and Buddha was Lenin." Kazantzakis himself had written about his "spiritual longitude and latitude" to Prevelakis who was only "startled to see it pass from Lenin to St. Francis". The nature of his different stages suggests that his thought was a collage of the philosophical attitudes reflected in great names. One would be

amazed to see “communist activism and Buddhist resignation” in the personality of Kazantzakis.(Prevelakis 27) However, Georgopoulos in his study, *Kazantzakis, Bergson, Lenin and the Russian Experiment,* is trying to establish a unique argument that the integral character and the thread that lent it continuity was the philosophy of Henri Bergson. “I can say,” he asserts, “that the single philosophical star that showed the way to Kazantzakis from the early days in Paris to the very end of his career was Bergson” (34). The ambivalent nature of his attitude towards Lenin and Communism was determined by his influence on Bergson’s thoughts about humanism and vitalism. In addition, Kazantzakis’ love for Russia was born in his early childhood years in enslaved Crete which awaited its emancipation by the military intervention from Moscow. However, his leniency towards the left wing and enthusiasm for Socialism and his admiration for Lenin and communist Russia took its full shape when he was in Vienna in 1921-24. Kazantzakis continued to remain a fellow traveller or communist sympathizer without being a member in any party outfit; and it was for this reason that he was targeted by the right and left in Greece. It is natural that his exposure to human misery and the economic and political injustices around him must have aroused his socialist feelings and fashioned his initial commitment to Lenin and the Russian Revolution. Even when displaying his heartfelt affinity towards Lenin, Bergson’s humanistic philosophy occupied the core of Kazantzakis’ mind. That’s why he could not wholeheartedly embrace Communism and Marxism and their over dependence on science and materialism. Kazantzakis felt that Communism failed

to provide new paths for the spirit to evolve, because life for both Kazantzakis and Bergson was synonymous with movement, heterogeneity, novelty and creation (Georgopoulos 43). Notwithstanding his profound disagreements with Marxism, Kazantzakis referred to Marx as “the legislator of the era”. He saw Marx’s doctrine as having provided the slogan and faith for our times, though he disagreed with the philosophical basis of that slogan, or with the hopes of that faith. But he was convinced that this defined the contemporary need for a new and higher culture. Communism is a new renaissance. It is for this reason that he stated that we ought to be communists, but the enlightened ones. He believed that the duty and the agony of the creative thinker of the contemporary world would be to define this new slogan of Communism. However, he knew very well that Bergson’s evolution would find more refined embodiments of the spirit than those promised by Marx (Georgopoulos 44).

Bergson’s lectures that he had attended in Paris were deeply imprinted in Kazantzakis’ memory. Being his teacher, Henry Bergson had been a formidable influence in shaping the thoughts and writings of Kazantzakis. In contrast to Nietzsche, Bergson is responsible for animating and enriching him with a positive point of view. Without the cheerful and calm philosophy of Bergson, Kazantzakis’ characters would have been dull. Though Zorba is the outcome of the direct impact of Nietzsche, the character acquires magnitude through Bergson’s fresh sparkling ideas about life and the efforts to attribute meanings to it. This has been the yearning of the generations over the years. From Bergson, Kazantzakis

acquired a creative pulse for change that was always promising and new. In addition, Bergson contributed spirit, vitality, movement and intuition. This assimilation is precisely the secret in the success of the character of Zorba:

> Without Bergson, Kazantzakis' Zorba would have been a dry dogmatist or a fanatic cynic. This can be projected through Bergson's ideas a fresh, sparkling and variegated attitude that breaks the monotony of human existence, condemned to follow faithfully the same hard-beaten path of disciplined routine and regulated behaviour, a dark black path that leads to nothing new and startling and beautiful. (Poulakidas, *Kazantzakis* 267)

It is obvious that both Kazantzakis and Bergson believe that only when one is able to sense the creation in its totality, and conceive it even intuitively and mystically, that one can give life a meaning and purpose. It is this overall view that enables man to realize his freedom and destiny in their full meaning (Poulakidas 268). Bergson points out that it is not a mere casual operation that determines man's destiny, but freedom itself is something instrumental in determining the destiny. Being a true student of Bergson, Kazantzakis proceeds with the affirmation of man's irrevocable freedom which is his destiny, and therefore destiny can be interpreted as evolution (Poulakidas 268). The concept of destiny, man's freedom and meaning and meaninglessness of life are logically and beautifully expressed in *Zorba the Greek*.

Of Kazantzakis' novels, the one that best illustrates Bergson's concept of time is *Freedom and Death*. Here Kazantzakis attempts to crystallize Bergson's abstractions and elaborate thoughts into a literary language. The mystery that Bergson's philosophy created is carried into the works of Kazantzakis. He believes that man's spiritual boundaries are limitless and they are not restricted by the material world or man's nature or reason (Poulakidas, *Kazantzakis* 272). Bergson's philosophy spelled out a positive, affectionate, and affirmative worldview, whereas Nietzsche had stripped off the human factor from man's history by teaching eternal recurrence, and revealing the abyss with its nihilistic implications. Bergson taught a creative evolution that provided existential potentiality to history. Because of his intense concern with the divine element in man, Kazantzakis defied the belittling implications of evolutionary biology by following Nietzsche and consistently emphasizing the boundless potentiality in man. In a like manner, Kazantzakis followed Bergson and attributed to man, and particularly to the artist, the elevating capability to grasp the meaning of the creative life-pulse in the world (Lea 12, 20). Thus, Kazantzakis owes much to Bergson for humanism whereas, for the thoughts of existentialism he was influenced by the indomitable Nietzsche alone.

Andreas Poulakidas observes that Kazantzakis' major characters are predominantly Nietzschean in their laughter but his secondary or minor characters are Bergsonian in their comic appearance. They have been intended to arouse laughter from the reader. The Bergsonian laughter from the comic characters

seems to balance out the Nietzschean laughter from the tragic characters. The former are the *laughable*, the latter are the *laughing*. Zorba, Captain Michales, and Father Yanaros laugh at the meaninglessness of existence but they themselves are never laughable. They always maintain a tragic and serious laughter. According to Bergson, comedy:

> begins, in fact, with what might be called a growing callousness to social life. Any individual is comic who automatically goes his own way without touching himself about getting into touch with the rest of his fellow beings. (Poulakidas, *Kazantzakis* 274)

In *Zorba the Greek*, the boss falls into this category, because he has lost the true feelings for life and finds himself lost from the society. We can find similar characters in *Freedom and Death* in which the Metropolitan and the Pacha, the representatives of their respective communities, turn out to be clowns, because they have lost their touch with reality. At a time of crisis, they attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable parties. This ludicrous act on the part of serious leaders makes their own people lose their respect for them. The Metropolitan in particular delivers sweet and flowery speeches and false hopes when commitment, action and strength are required.

Nietzsche is one of the deep and lasting influences on Kazantzakis' personal and literary life. He identified himself with Nietzsche and discovered the co sufferer in him. For Kazantzakis, Nietzsche is an antichrist who struggles harder than Christ himself. He makes this point clear by presenting the two

dialectical forces -- Lucifer and God. Saint Blasphemer's impious rejection of God implies that the "good and evil are enemies". Higher observation reveals that "good and evil are fellow workers." But the most startling truth that he learned from Nietzsche was this: "good and evil are identical" (*Report* 320). In fact, Kazantzakis started a contest with Nietzsche. As time went by, this contest became obstinate and even without his own knowledge this struggle transformed and finally became an emotional and intellectual embrace. Kazantzakis learned that the same could happen when 'good' wrestles with 'evil'. While accepting the adversary or by giving recognition, 'the great synthesis' can be achieved. Kazantzakis' life has always been a quest to reach the summit - the 'great synthesis' or 'Cosmos' as he put it. It was this rare knowledge that made Kazantzakis create Zorba. Nietzsche's thoughts are successfully ventilated through the character of Zorba who represents the good and the negative impulses of man at the same time. In his early acquaintance with the works of Nietzsche, Kazantzakis was terrified by his impudence and arrogance. Despite his unyielding mind, sarcasm and cynicism, Kazantzakis plunged into the works of Nietzsche which was "a bustling jungle full of famished beasts and dizzying orchids" (*Report* 319-320). He was swept away by Nietzsche's idea of man making himself into the superman by his own will and perseverance. His deep indebtedness to Nietzsche made him go on a pilgrimage to all the towns in Germany where Nietzsche had lived. Nietzsche taught him that the only way a man could be free is

to struggle and later to lose himself in a cause, to fight without fear and without hope of reward.

Nietzsche also taught him to distrust every optimistic theory. Kazantzakis knew that man's womanish heart has constant need of consolation. He believed that every religion which promises to fulfill human desires is simply a refuge for the timid, and unworthy of a true man:

> I wanted whatever was most difficult, in other words most worthy of man, of the man who does not whine, entreat, or go about begging. Yes, that was what I wanted. Three cheers for Nietzsche, the murderer of God. He it was who gave me the courage to say, that is what I want! (*Report* 338)

The impact of Nietzschean concepts on Kazantzakis was on various levels. There are differences and similarities. For example, the philosopher-narrator in *Zorba the Greek* represents Kazantzakis' ideas, and Zorba represents Nietzschean concepts. The differences between the two men can be illustrated through the Nietzschean concept of weak pessimism and strong pessimism. Both characters tend to be fatalistic. Zorba represents the Dionysian principle and Nietzsche an ethic of resilient pessimism and activism in the face of universal disorder. Nietzschean ideas served to illustrate the necessity for revaluation and suggested to Kazantzakis that the old order should be changed and new systems initiated. Kazantzakis found this new sense of life in the woks of Tolstoy also. This seemingly incongruous combination of two different sets of ideas can be seen in

the character of the philosopher–narrator who can't give up life altogether. The humanism of Tolstoy and the ardent desire to life are explicit in the philosopher though he withdraws himself from the activism of life as opposed to Zorba. Kazantzakis has his own world view of life; therefore he disagrees with Nietzsche who totally rejects life. Kazantzakis had always been striving for a mystical combination of Oriental, Christian and Western philosophies of art in all his literary pursuits. For him, the most basic natural law of the universe is the transubstantiation of matter into spirit (Merrill 110).

It was the philosophical thoughts of Nietzsche, Bergson and Buddha that enriched and beautified the structure of *Zorba the Greek*. The philosophies of these three great masters work hand in hand in Zorba. The greatness of Kazantzakis is that his mind was receptive enough to amalgamate anything foreign. Nietzsche inspired both the life and works of Kazantzakis. He continued to be a literary and philosophical source book and a support for his own developed ideas. There are resonances from Nietzsche everywhere in the works of Kazantzakis. He converted these devices and themes to suit his own needs. The cycle of eternal recurrence binds man to its inevitability. This thought makes man to free himself and to resist the forces of fate. The character of Zorba is the outcome of such a thought in Nietzsche. "The cleansing fire, the perilous ascent, the silence at the edge of the abyss" in *The Saviours of God* are essentially Nietzschean (Levitt, *Cretan* 93). However, Kazantzakis tries to restore hope to a world doomed to the eternal cycle and endless suffering. His heroes do not feel

terror as those of Nietzsche. They can accept both life and death. Almost all heroes of Kazantzakis, Priest Fotis and Manolios in *The Greek Passion*, Jesus and Judas in *The Last Temptation*, Father Yanaros in *The Fratricides*, Francis in *God's Pauper* and Zorba in *Zorba the Greek* reach divinity but remain tied to mankind (94). The words of Zarathustra predict those of a humanist Jesus and Zorba, "My will clings to mankind; I bind myself to mankind with fetters" (Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* 164). Naturally, the Jesus of Kazantzakis has learned to love the earth and his death is insisted on by his best loved disciple Judas; it is also an act of strength and fulfillment.

Kazantzakis learned the basic concepts of life and its ultimate futility from the thoughts of Nietzsche. The Dionysian principle suggests that life is brutal and bitter and irrational, yet that one must learn to accept it with ironic laughter (Merrill, *Zorba* 103). Creation of a character like Zorba is certainly rooted in the Nietzschean concept of irony. This irony is based on the realization that there are multiplicities of dualities in life. These dualities are irresolvable because they are part of the ongoing dialectic. The essential irresolvability of things, must lead to the recognition of a universe of antithesis. For these thoughts Nietzsche is often classed as an anti-rationalist, but the fact is that he opposes reason only when reason is opposed to life, or to whatever makes life possible (Merrill, *Zorba* 107).

Much has been written about Kazantzakis' reverence for Nietzsche. His philosophy was obviously shaped by Nietzsche's for it concerns itself with many of the fanciful, brilliant, and brutally penetrating intuitions and insights of

Nietzsche. Kazantzakis' great teacher before he met Zorba, was Nietzsche. This philosopher-poet assisted Kazantzakis in breaking away from the barriers of his traditional and cultural past (Poulakidas, *Kazantzakis' Zorba* 234-35). He saw in Nietzsche a rich metaphysical critique of the de-spiritualization of contemporary man. It was through Nietzsche's famous proclamation "God is dead!" (Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* 124) that Kazantzakis first saw clearly the abyss, the void of nothingness, that he had barely sensed in his early years. Nietzsche's vivid philosophy portrayed to him the ultimate capacity and the potentiality of man in the world (Lea 16). However, his was the struggle not for disintegration and discord, but for harmony and peace. In all his literary life and career Kazantzakis had been attempting a happy blending of the thoughts of "the great sirens Christ, Buddha and Lenin." He acknowledges that it was a complex and painful task for him to create a mosaic of these contradictory personalities: "I struggled all my life to save myself from each of these sirens, without denying any one of them, struggled to unite these three clashing voices and transform them into harmony" (*Report* 493).This dialectical endeavor is Kazantzakis' inner quest to transmute diversity into unity, which gives rise to the central tensions in Kazantzakis' thought for artistic synthesis.

Kazantzakis remained relatively unknown as a writer for much of his career, finally achieving popularity during the last decade of his life with the 1946 publication of *Zorba the Greek*. His fame was intensified by the controversy

surrounding several of his subsequent works, beginning with his description of modern Christianity. The major works of Kazantzakis are: *The Last Temptation*, *Zorba the Greek*, *The Greek Passion* or *Christ Recrucified*, *Freedom and Death*, *The Fratricides*, *God's Pauper: St.Francis of Assisi*, *The Saviours of God: Spiritual Exercises*, *Report to Greco*, and *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel.*

The Last Temptation is a portrayal of an uncertain, emotional Christ troubled by the temptation to renounce his calling and to live as an ordinary man. The furor raised by *The Last Temptation*, when it was published in 1955, brought the author worldwide notice and established his reputation as a significant writer. His portrayal of Christ is profoundly human which helps us to understand him and love him and to pursue his Passion as though it were our own. Kazantzakis emotionally reveals:

> If he had not within him this warm human element, he would never be able to touch our hearts with such assurance and tenderness; he would not be able to become a model for our lives. We struggle, we see him struggle also, and we find strength. We see that we are not all alone in the world: he is fighting at our side. (Prologue to *The Last Temptation* 8-9)

Through the sheer power of imagination Kazantzakis reconstructs the last temptation that Christ suffered, Jesus' vision of a domestic life in which he falls in love,

marries, has children, and lives to a ripe old age. Such thoughts about the joys of domestic happiness and comforts have to be repudiated when he decides to die on the cross. Thus it becomes a great challenge for Christ, and hence Kazantzakis says:

> Every moment of Christ's life is a conflict and a victory. He conquered the invincible enchantment of simple human pleasures; he conquered temptations, continually transubstantiated flesh into spirit, and ascended. Reaching the summit of Golgotha, he mounted the Cross. (Prologue to *The Last Temptation* 9).

Kazantzakis' *Zorba the Greek* is a masterpiece, second only to *The Last Temptation*. It is a delightfully refreshing story which in its exuberance does not seem to make excessive demands on the intellect, and yet its spontaneity and casualness in narration may lead the readers to assume shallowness. In fact the whole novel is a very carefully constructed philosophic parable treating the clash and eventual fusion of the forces of different temperaments and attitudes which make up the theme of the novel. It is unfolded in the form of a series of philosophical and existential questions and answers between a bookish intellectual and an unsophisticated peasant in an unspecified Cretan coast. Kazantzakis himself has admitted in one of his letters that *Zorba* was mainly a dialogue between a scribbler and a great man of the people, a dialogue between the

advocate of mind and the great popular spirit (Helen Kazantzakis, *Nikos Kazantzakis* 486).

The Greek Passion is the first novel written by Kazantzakis which probes the nature and meaning of Christ's crucifixion in a political context. *The Greek Passion* concerns the inhabitants of Lycovrissi, a Greek village, which was under the domination of the Turks in the 1920's. The novel opens with the village elders casting the town people in their roles for the following year's enactment of the crucifixion in the annual passion play. Consequently the actors begin to assume the identities of their characters, as a result of which, crime, hypocrisy and prostitution begin to decline in the village. The protagonist, Manolios, chosen to play the role of Jesus, takes up the blame of others and offers to sacrifice himself as the murderer of the Turkish ruler's assistant. Or else, every one of the villagers would have been executed one by one. Eventually, as the real culprit is booked, Manolios is spared. Further, when the starving refugees seek protection, Manolios accommodates them in Christian fashion by sharing his land and possessions with them. Manolios' deeds infuriate the village priest, who deems him a heretic and incites the residents to demand that the Turkish officials sentence and condemn him to death. The villagers, with the aid of the priest, eventually murder Manolios by re-enacting a twentieth century version of Christ's martyrdom.

Freedom and Death, the most explicitly Cretan of his novels takes its origin from a famous event of local history, the unsuccessful revolution of 1886 against

the Turkish rule. *Freedom and Death*, as the title suggests, is the nostalgic dream and the heart breaking cry of every Cretan. Cretans continue their struggle for political independence. But they rarely win the battle they have been waging over the years. In *Freedom and Death* Kazantzakis' personal history has been altered considerably, yet many of the episodes and characters are unmistakably drawn from his own life. Captain Michales, for example, resembles Kazantzakis' own father. The myth of Captain Michales is most dramatic. He finally dies the futile heroic death that his father might have desired for himself. The Europeanized nephew of Michales, Kosmas, a man of letters and a socialist returning to his homeland, is based loosely on Kazantzakis himself. Helen Kazantzakis records in her biography that *Freedom and Death* is not only a tragic story about the struggle for freedom but the soul's passionate longing for liberation as well.

The Fratricides is about internecine strife in the village in the Epirus during the Greek civil war of the late 1940's. The political ideology of Communism and Christian spirituality and its universal brotherhood are sharply contrasted at a much deeper level. Each character and each act is played against the backdrop of the modern Greek tragedy. The novel at times seems almost a dramatization of *The Saviours of God*. The physical description in *The Fratricides* is characteristic of Kazantzakis. Epirote Castillo, the centre stage of novel which resembles some village in Crete, becomes a microcosm of the entire world; and the brother-killing that fills the hills provides a forceful comment on the human condition at large.

Many of the villagers including Captain Drakos, the son of Father Yanaros the local priest, shift to the mountains and join Communist rebels. It is Holy Week and with murder, death and destruction being perpetrated every day, Father Yanaros feels that he himself is bearing the sins of the world. The characters are drawn out of the notions of Greek Tragedy with Father Yanaros as a hero who thrusts himself out in wild-eyed fashion from the page. Like an Old Testament Prophet he wrestles with angels and the demons in disguise.

The very choice of the subject matter in *God's Pauper: St. Francis of Assisi* shows Kazantzakis' intense interest in asceticism and primitive Christian ethics. Throughout the novel, Kazantzakis compares and contrasts the primitive church with the institutional one and finds the latter wanting in many worthwhile and important qualities. Specifically, St.Francis' life is a continuous struggle to elevate the spirit above the flesh to subdue all demands of the flesh and to live in absolute poverty. In the prologue to the novel Kazantzakis admits that he had altered and added some details in the life history of St. Francis; it is

> ….not out of ignorance or impudence or irreverence but from a need to match the Saint's life with his myth, bringing that life as fully into accord with its essence as possible….Art has this right and not only the right but the duty to subject everything to the essence. It feeds upon the story, then assimilates it slowly, cunningly, and turns into a legend. (*God's Pauper* 1)

The Saviours of God is the culmination of Kazantzakis' spiritual exercises. It is poetic and philosophical in content and spirit. Its poetry is apparent in its language of personal and spiritual confession. It is like vivid dream imagery. Above all, *The Saviours of God* is Kazantzakis' strikingly original conception of the relationship between man and God. The notions of creative evolution expounded by Bergson and the existential thoughts of Nietzsche are combined into a unique set of discourses in *The Saviours of God*. According to Kazantzakis, God is the result of whatever the most energetic and heroic people value and create.

Report to Greco is the romanticized autobiography of Kazantzakis. It is rather the summing up, by the great artist, of a lifetime's ideas, work, experiences and friendships. In *Report* he searches for the roots of his own genius and describes his early interests. His wife, Helen Kazantzakis notes that,

> The *Report* is a mixture of fact and fiction – a great deal of truth, a minimum of fancy. Various dates have been changed. When he speaks about others, it is always the truth, unlettered, exactly what he saw and heard. When he speaks about his personal adventures, there are some small modifications. (*Report* 9)

However, it is a book of epic themes, dominated by Kazantzakis' agonized search for a means to combine his love of life and art with his ceaseless quest for spiritual truth.

The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel is the monumental work of Kazantzakis, and his greatest achievement. It is considered to be “one of the great encyclopedic works of our time, encompassing the major motifs of our civilization and Homer’s, bridging the gap of our common heritage not only for Greeks but for all those to whom Homer is both ancestor and guide” (Levitt, *Cretan* 115). It retells the spiritual exercises by means of picture, metaphor, character and plot and functions at an allegorical as well as autobiographical level. *The Odyssey* is a highly poetic work of epic dimensions in the language of personal and spiritual confession. A kind of dream imagery permeates the whole work. Above all, it explains the author’s strikingly original conception of the relationship between God and man. God, to Kazantzakis is neither the Christian nor the Hebrew divinity, and not even the ultimate force beyond man’s reach. Kazantzakis believes that like man, God “is a process in being, a natural force of great creative potential”, which is “ceaselessly striving to purify material into spirit” (Levitt, *Cretan* 12). In *The Odyssey* Kazantzakis wants to convey the message that man as an artist can create his own mythology, can control the progress of his life and the life of mankind. His Odysseus impels us to be the masters of our own myths, to make of our lives a work of art that is worthy of belief. This is the central theme of *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel*, and indeed of all Kazantzakis’ life and art (Levitt, *Cretan* 138).

Chapter II

Spirit versus Flesh: The Perennial Conflicts

The Last Temptation of Christ is perhaps the most challenging and original recreation of a myth in 20th century literature, more subtle and intense than any of the novels of its kind. Kazantzakis never intended to write a historical biography of Jesus. He sought to describe the human struggle of existence and the hope which breaks through, as modelled by Christ. The uniqueness of Kazantzakis' Jesus is that he is modelled after the human person who like us struggles to follow the call of God, and who in the struggle itself finds freedom. Kazantzakis remained obsessed all through his life with the figure of Jesus. Always, he had been in search of spiritual heroes after whom he could model his own life. He first became fascinated with Jesus when he was placed in a school run by the Franciscan Friars on the island of Naxos. This early Christian zeal and conspicuous impulse toward asceticism remained throughout his life and to a great extent this motivation inspired his philosophy in his great novels. Later Kazantzakis turned away from Christ when his spiritual and bodily exercises failed to produce the results he was longing for. Anxious to end his search, he experimented with a variety of intellectual positions. His allegiances range from youthful mysticism to nationalism, communism, nihilism and many other ideologies. In brief, he held on firmly to many fictional and non fictional heroes

like Jesus, Buddha, Odysseus, Don Quixote, Bergson, Nietzsche and Lenin at different stages of his intellectual growth and maturing years. However, after the mystical explorations of his youth Kazantzakis came to regard Jesus as a spiritual hero on a level with other heroic personalities. This resulted in the fictional transfiguration of Christ in his two great novels, *The Last Temptation* and *The Greek Passion* (Ziolkowski 124-125).

Levitt P. Morton in his study on The *Last Temptation* comments on the presence of Crete as metaphor in the fiction and life of Kazantzakis. As a metaphor Crete represents man's limitless potential for striving toward the unreachable, the abysmal depths to which he might fall and the supreme heights which his spirit might attain (Levitt, *The Modernist* 104). Christ struggles hard and suffers desolately, ultimately redeeming himself by his own sufferings like the quintessential Cretan who, never wins in material terms. In this novel, Kazantzakis sets a different yardstick to evaluate the sufferings of Christ and he achieves a bold new vision through the originality of his views. In the prologue to *The Last Temptation*, he elucidates his concept of God and his own struggles to attain the supreme:

> The dual substance of Christ - the yearning, so human, so superhuman, of man to attain to God or, more exactly, to return to God and identify himself with him - has always been a deep inscrutable mystery to me. This nostalgia for God, at once so

> mysterious and so real, has opened in me large wounds and also large flowing springs. (7)

He continues:

> My principal anguish and the source of all my joys and sorrows from my youth onward has been the incessant, merciless battle between the spirit and the flesh. Within me are the dark immemorial forces of the Evil One, human and pre-human, of God – and my soul is the arena where these two armies have clashed and met. (7)

The personality of Kazantzakis exemplifies many of his dualities. He had been a disciple of Bergson; at the same time he admired Nietzsche. His zeal for a drastic change made him love Lenin and his experiments in Russia. He was an ardent admirer of Buddha and he wanted to live according to Buddhist ideals of compassion and kindness. The characterization of his fictional heroes has been greatly influenced by this apparent contradiction. His characters are the extensions of his own psyche which is torn apart on core issues concerning God and man, anarchy and order and on many metaphysical questions.

The anguish and agony that Kazantzakis experienced has been intense. He loved his body and did not want it to perish. So is the case with his soul. He loved it, and did not want it to decay. All through his life he sought to reconcile these two primordial forces which are so contrary to one another, to make them realize

that they are not enemies but rather fellow workers, so that they might rejoice in their harmony. Kazantzakis elaborates this idea by stating that every man partakes of the divine nature in both his spirit and his flesh. The struggle between God and man breaks out in everyone, together with the longing for reconciliation. He says that more often this struggle is unconscious and short lived. A weak soul does not have the endurance to resist the flesh for very long. It grows heavy, becomes flesh itself, and the contest comes to an end; but among responsible men who keep their eyes fixed day and night up on the Supreme Duty, the conflict between flesh and spirit breaks out mercilessly and may last until death. The stronger the soul and the flesh, the more fruitful the struggle and the richer the final harmony. Kazantzakis says God does not love weak souls and flabby flesh. The spirit wants to wrestle with flesh which is strong and full of resistance. Using a terrifying image, Kazantzakis compares the spirit to a carnivorous bird which is incessantly hungry; it eats flesh and by assimilating it, makes it disappear (*The Last Temptation* 7-8).

In the first part of *The Last Temptation* we find the conflicting mind of Jesus of Nazareth who was chosen by God, unto the way of Cross, Passion, Crucifixion and Resurrection to save humanity. But it can be seen that this choice was much against his will at the beginning. Certainly, he realizes the meaning and greatness of martyrdom at the end. The dilemma of Jesus is clearly depicted in the following passage:

> There was a strange disquieting calm – thick, suffocating. He heard nothing, not even the villagers' breathing, much less God's. Everything, even the vigilant devil, had sunk in to a dark fathomless dried-up well. Was this sleep? Or death, immortality,God? The young man became terrified, saw the danger tried with all his might to reach his drowning mind to save himself – and woke up. He was soaked in sweat. He remembered nothing from the dream. Only this; someone was hunting him. Who? (17)

Jesus was unsettled and uncertain of the mission in preparation of which he suffers greatly to the extent that he is torn between the forces of spirituality and the flesh. When confronted with a direct and piercing question by Judas, he says that a great conflict is going on in his mind:

> "What happened to you? He asked. "Why have you melted away? Who is tormenting you? The young man [Jesus] laughed feebly. He was about to reply that it was God, but he restrained himself. There was a great cry within him, and he did not want to let it escape his lips.
>
> "I am wrestling" he answered.
>
> "With whom?"
>
> "I don't know . . . I am wrestling." (27-28)

Evidently, this struggle is not the struggle of Christ alone, but it is the struggle of Kazantzakis as well. In his autobiographical novel *Report to Greco* he admits that, unlike other artists who write for pleasure or beauty, he writes for deliverance. He could not derive any pleasure when he wrote beautiful phrases and matching rhythmic sentences. He wanted to be delivered from his own inner darkness to be filled with light. The terrible bellowing ancestors in him had to be transformed into human beings (451). For this reason, Kazantzakis always invoked great figures who had successfully undergone and endured the most elevated and difficult ordeals. He wanted to gain courage by seeing the human soul's potential for triumphing over everything.

One of the most controversial questions during Kazantzakis' life time was how he saw the figure of Jesus Christ. His portrayal of Christ earned him a place on the index of the Roman Catholic Church as well as censure from the Greek Orthodox Church. What Kazantzakis wanted to portray in his Jesus' story was a thoroughly human Christ who underwent all the personal struggles with which he identified his own struggles and those of his country. The genesis of this struggle, the basic element of his philosophy and the reason why he is driven to create, sprouts from his Cretan nationality. Crete was caught in an age-old struggle for freedom, and in this bloody war she had been impelled to willingly sacrifice her numerous sons (Chilson, *The Christ* 69-70).The struggle, he had seen and experienced in and around Crete continued to haunt him, and he later elevated it

from the mere physical milieu of Crete to the boundless metaphysical and spiritual levels of humanity as a whole. Kazantzakis reveals in *Report to Greco*:

> It [struggle] was the inexhaustible motif of my life. That is why in all my work these two wrestlers, and these alone, were always the protagonists. If I wrote, it was because my writings, alas, were only means I had to aid the struggle. Crete and Turkey, good and evil, light and darkness were wrestling uninterruptedly inside me, my purpose in writing, a purpose at first unconscious and afterwards conscious, was to do my utmost to aid Crete, the good and the light to win. My purpose in writing was not beauty; it was deliverance. (452)

The essential thought in Kazantzakis' life and literature is the struggle for deliverance from angels and demons who, according to him, are fellow workers, never enemies. *The Last Temptation* is perhaps the only work of Kazantzakis in which the hero is positioned between the divine and the diabolic. Christ suffers as he wrestles with certain indefinable forces about which he is quite unaware of:

> "Someone came last night in my sleep," he murmured under his breath, as though he feared the visitor were still there and might overhear him. "Someone came. Surely it was God, God . . . , or was it the devil? Who can tell them

> apart? They exchange faces, God sometimes becomes all darkness, the devil all light - and the mind of man is left in a muddle." He shuddered. There were two paths. Which way should he go, which path should he choose? (22)

Jesus is tormented throughout the first half of the novel by inner demons that whisper unthinkable ideas to him. He attempts to combat these voices by fully engaging himself in the profession of building crosses in order to crucify God's Messiahs. He confesses that a demon within him tells him he is God himself. Finally in the desert Lucifer whispers and reveals to him that he is the Son of God. At first Jesus wrestles against these ideas, but eventually he gains control (Chilson, *The Christ* 88). Like the turbulent mind of Christ, Kazantzakis was also a tormented soul that was seeking answers to the puzzling questions about the existential problems of human life in relation to God. When finally Christ reaches the monastery after a great deal of physical and mental turmoil and temptations, he is asked by the rabbi:

> "Why did you come to the monastery?"
>
> "To save myself"
>
> "To save yourself? From what? From whom?"
>
> "From God"

> “From God!” the rabbi cried out, troubled.
>
> “He‘s been hunting me, driving his nails in to my head, my heart,
>
> my loins . . . he wants to push me . . ..”
>
> “Where?”
>
> “Over the precipice”.
>
> “What precipice”?
>
> “His. He says I should rise up and speak. But what can I say? Leave me alone,
>
> I have nothing to say.” (149)

Kazantzakis portrays the divided and uncertain mind of Jesus who feels hunted by God. But later the dramatic situation comes in when Jesus has something to say to the public. Jesus trembled secretly and struggled to find courage. This was the moment he had feared for so many years. It had come; God had conquered, had brought him by force where he wanted him in front of men in order to make him speak. And now, what could he say to them? The few joys of his life flashed through his mind, then the many sorrows, the contest with God, and all that he had seen in his solitary wanderings. From where will he begin? After all he is a simple man whose mind is in great conflicts. Jesus thought, “My heart has much to say, but my mind is unable to relate it. I open my mouth and without any desire on my part, the words come out as a tale.” Finally he spoke out with renewed energy, “Forgive me, my brothers, but I shall speak in parables” (188). The Christ, here,

is an ordinary man. Kazantzakis' attempt is to portray him as naturally as possible and to share all the ordeals he had undergone until the end of his mission. After the first sermon, Jesus gains control over his unbridled mind and becomes more resolute. A kind of spiritual calm and certitude take possession of him until the end of the novel.

However, he is viewed with a great deal of suspicion by the rabbi who never swallows Jesus' sermon as genuine. He thinks whether this man could be the Messiah whom God had promised him. All the miracles he performed could also be performed by Satan, who could even resurrect the dead. The miracles therefore did not give the rabbi sufficient basis to pass judgment; nor did the prophecies. Satan was a sly and exceedingly powerful archangel. In order to deceive mankind he was capable of making his words and actions fit the holy prophecies to perfection. For these reasons the rabbi lay in bed at night unable to sleep and begged God (381). The rabbi is not the only one who suffers out of suspicion and mistrust; there is Judas who follows Christ, like a shadow, wherever he goes. Judas could not believe the beautiful words and the parables of Christ. He was not interested in the abstract ideas of the immortality of the soul and the kingdom of heaven preached and promulgated by Christ. There is a great deal of conflict in the mind of Judas whose only concern is for the kingdom on earth, and that too, not of the whole earth, but only of the land of Israel which is made of men and stones, not of prayer and clouds. He thinks that Romans are barbarians

and heathens. They were trampling over the land that belonged to them. First, they must be expelled; rather political salvation should be the top priority. Only after this can spiritual issues like kingdom of heaven and immortality of soul be taken up. This is the conviction and strong assertion of Judas.

Father Yanaros in *The Fratricides* experiences the same dilemma. But the only difference is that his mind is divided between two roads of action: political and spiritual. Marxist philosophy which offers equality and food for all people attracts Yanaros, though it said nothing or cared not about the spirit of man. For Yanaros, however, anything that rejected the spirit would not be acceptable; he looks up to heaven and then to the earth. Yanaros is totally tired and confused about the future course of action for which God alone can guide him. "… I am still alive, that I am still struggling with God above and with the demons below. These are the two millstones that grind me…To save my body or my soul - which of the two? … as long as we live, those two beasts never part company." God seems to be indifferent to the questions of Yanaros: "I called to God, but I found no relief; God never answered me" (62-63). Yanaros comes under a great conflicting situation where he is left with two options; Communism and nationalism. The spiritual and political concerns of his tragic choice are discussed in the chapter, "Politics of Salvation," which focuses on three political novels of Kazantzakis.

Kazantzakis believes that man has to struggle and create a proper equilibrium of his inner self: he needed first to reconcile passion with reason, the

concrete with the universal, the Dionysian with the Apollonian. This is the conflict expounded in *The Last Temptation* between Judas, the eagerly self-assumed Marxian revolutionary, and Christ the visionary mystic (Savvas, *Kazantzakis* 291). Judas himself is a dual personality comprising both the elements of God and devil. "It was not one, but two. When one half laughed the other threatened, when one half was in pain the other remained stiff and immobile; and even when both palm became reconciled for an instant, beneath the reconciliation you still, felt that God and the devil were wrestling, irreconcilable"(*The Last Temptation* 21). The endless conflict of these two opposing forces continues to be the focal point everywhere in the works of Kazantzakis:

> Judas shook his head, infuriated. "first we have got to chase out the Romans," he said, "we must liberate our bodies before we liberate our souls – each in its proper order. Let's not start building from the roof downwards. First comes the foundation".
>
> "The foundation is the soul, Judas"
>
> "I say the foundation is the body".
>
> "If the soul within us does not change, Judas, the world outside us will never change. The enemy is within, the Romans are within, salvation starts from within." (355)

In a very broader sense, what Jesus means is the salvation from all earthly and unearthly bondages. He makes this clear: “But freedom, Judas, is exactly what I want too.”Judas knew that Jesus is cleverly trying to convince him of the greater freedom of the abstract kind in which he is least interested. His concern is a political one. So, Judas has just one thing to know, he asks a point blank question, “You want to free Israel from the Romans?” Judas is prepared to wait for an answer if Jesus, “were the One awaited by Israel” (209). To get the satisfactory answer has been the only aim of Judas who is troubled by thoughts of trust and mistrust.

The question of means is also explored in *The Last Temptation*. Judas, the firebrand revolutionary, casts his lot with Jesus because he believes Jesus spearheads the fraternity of disciples and possesses the fortitude to lead a successful revolt against the Romans. Jesus slowly leads Judas to make him understand that violent revolution is not the best way, but rather, the spiritual revolution brought about by his sacrifice as God’s son which will bring about the desired demolition of injustice. Therefore, Jesus enlists Judas’ aid to ensure that the crucifixion will occur. Consequently, Christ tries to soothe him: “Heaven and earth are one, Judas, my brother”, he would say, smiling at him; stone and cloud are one, the kingdom of heaven is not in the air, it is within us, in our hearts. Change your heart and heaven and earth will embrace, Israelites and Romans will embrace, all will become one” (201).

But the political conviction of Judas is very clear and he articulates it in unmistakable terms to Christ. “My heart will change only if the world around me

changes. Only if the Romans disappear from the land of Israel will I find relief!" (201). Judas has been sceptic about the mission of Christ. He ventures to accompany Christ even to the desert to confirm whether he is the one awaited by Israel. Patience is something unbearable to Judas, he gets angry:

> I don't know what to call you – son of Mary? Son of the carpenter? Son of David? I still don't know who you are but neither do you. We both must discover the answer, we both must find relief! No, this uncertainty cannot last. It's we two who must find out who you are and whether this flame that burns in you is the God of Israel or devil, we must! We must. (210)

Judas feels that he should know the truth of the matter before he dies. He is in hurry because he is a human being, obviously he can't wait. "God lives for many years," he shouted. "He is immortal; he can be patient therefore and wait. But I'm human" with all human weaknesses. It must be noted that Jesus too is an ordinary man with an unsteady and unprepared mind for the great mission he has been assigned to. However, Jesus assures Judas that, "God is waiting for me in the desert" (252). Jesus' mind is overburdened with the thoughts of great spiritual responsibility that he has to undertake if he is actually the one awaited for. Judas and Jesus experience intense agony of uncertainty for two diametrically opposite ideas which are politics and spirituality. "Go talk with God in the desert," Judas urges impatiently, "But come back quickly, so that the

world will not remain all alone" (259). Judas hopes and anticipates a political liberator in Jesus who, on the contrary in Kazantzakis' version, is an ordinary man with no ambitions at all. "I am ready to be killed, and I am also ready to live," (163) is the true reflection of the ambivalent mind of Jesus.

Christ himself felt that he still had much mud and clay within him, much of man. He was still subject to anger, fear, jealousy and other human weaknesses. However, Christ assures Judas that he must die at his own will for the sake of mankind. A Messiah who preaches love and tolerance was not at all acceptable to Judas. He had expected a different Messiah, a Messiah with a sword, a Messiah at whose cry all the generations of the dead would fly out of their tombs in the valley of Joshaphat and mix with the living. The horses and camels of the Jews would be resuscitated at the same time, and all – infantry and cavalry – would flow forth to slaughter the Romans. And the Messiah would sit on the throne of David with the universe as a cushion under his feet for him to step on (396).This was the Messiah Judas Iscariot had expected and vivified in his mind: a political Messiah who will free them from the bondage to Rome. He offers instead, spiritual salvation which is certainly secondary according to the conviction of Judas. 'What a disgusting Saviour is this?' is the impression of Judas. The soothing words of Christ would no longer satisfy or console the agitated mind of Judas that knew no tranquillity for years.

The conflict and agony that Judas experiences during the betrayal, that too much against his will, elevates the character of Judas to a higher plane which is contrary to the conventional understanding of the Bible story. Many, however, were also very upset at the positive depiction of Judas as a heroic figure who shares a co-saviour relationship with Jesus. Jesus had to be stern with him so as to prepare Judas for committing the terrible act of betrayal. This great sacrifice on the part of Judas earned him the name synonymous with betrayal, for the posterity to remember with contempt and anger. Kazantzakis' art however exempts Judas from the accusation of being the infamous traitor. "Don't shout, [Jesus tells] Judas. This is the way. For the world to be saved, I, of my own will, must die. At first I didn't understand it myself. God sent me signs in vain: sometimes visions in the air, sometimes dreams in my sleep" (396). Therefore, Judas is condemned to accept the will of God for performing the so-called sacred duty. Kazantzakis reiterates the same idea of holy betrayal in *God's Pauper*, that betrayal is a duty assigned by God, Francis tells, "Even Judas is good, Brother Leo… even he is a servant of Christ, and if God destined him to be a betrayer, it was precisely in betrayal that he did his duty"(*God's Pauper*199). Thus Kazantzakis discards the popular belief of betrayal and gives Judas a new dimension and throws light into the obscure realms of his mind and reveals his purity of intention and goodness of the purpose. Kazantzakis finds goodness even in darkness. "Every man," he says, "is half God; he is both spirit and flesh." This conviction of Kazantzakis made him create the character, Katerina, the whore in *Greek Passion*. For her, there is nothing

unnatural about men becoming God. Because "All men, even Panayotaros (the one who acts as Judas in *Greek Passion*), are God for a minute. A real God, not just in words!" (72). Kazantzakis does not reject anything as evil and bad as he knows that man is composed of divinity as well as humanity.

As for Christ, his crucifixion is the culmination of wrestling with God for which Judas, the traitor is inevitable. Finally, when he arrives at this state of mind at the end of the painful journey, Christ is absolutely submitted before the will of God:

> "I'm delighted to see you, Judas, my brother. I'm ready, It wasn't you who hissed, it was God - and I came. His abounding grace arranged everything perfectly. You came just at the right moment, Judas, my brother. Tonight my heart was unburdened, purified: I can present myself now before God. I have grown tired of wrestling with him, grown tired of living. . . I offer you my neck, Judas - I am ready". (160)

Later when Judas is convinced of the necessity of Christ's martyrdom and is entrusted with the terrible duty of betraying his own master, he requests Christ:

> "You say it in order to give me strength. No, the closer we come to the terrible moment . . . no, rabbi, I won't be able to endure!" "You will, Judas, my brother. God will give you the strength as much as you lack, because it is necessary – it is necessary for me to be killed

> and for you to betray me. We two must save the world. Help me". Judas bowed his head. After a moment he asked, "If you had to betray your master, would you do it?". Jesus reflected for a long time. Finally he said. "No, I'm afraid I wouldn't be able to. That is why God pitied me and gave me the easier task: to be crucified. (430-431)

Here Kazantzakis implies that betrayal is a greater task than crucifixion. But just as Judas needs Jesus, so also Jesus is equally dependent upon Judas. He must continually prove himself to Judas alone. For if Judas is too materialistic, Christ is too much of the spiritual. Thus Judas becomes, in a way, co-redeemer with Christ. The core of Kazantzakis' outlook is the pervasive duality of the material and the spiritual. The spiritual, represented by Jesus, is the higher element wherein salvation rests, but it must work and struggle through the material order and this involves crucifixion of the spirit. The whole relationship between Jesus and Judas functions in the novel on the level of allegory and acquires great dimensions at the end of the novel (Chilson, *The Christ* 84-85). It is remarkable that Jesus and Judas remain true to each other to the end.

The artistic recreation of the great moment of betrayal, despite its religious ramifications, is indeed intense and beautiful. Kazantzakis justifies his distortion of the Gospels asserting that he has only filled up the gaps which were ignored by others (Levitt, *Cretan* 66). Although Judas is pressed and persuaded to undertake

the bitter task, at the final moment Christ himself is torn within and struggles hard and yells to God:

> “Father,” he murmured, “here I am fine, dust with dust. Leave me. Bitter, exceedingly bitter, is the cup you have given me to drink. I don’t have the endurance. If it is possible, Father, remove it from my lips.” (441)

While he is nailed to and hanging on the cross, he is tempted by the Devil. This is the last greatest trial – stronger and severe than those dreams, more demanding than those in the desert. These are temptations which confront all mankind. The temptation to lead a normal human life, with all its little sorrows and joys is exactly the temptation experienced by Christ. He is portrayed as a simple human being with all the shortcomings that are generally shared by humanity. But, as Jesus discovers when he wakes on the cross, his domestic desertion exists only in his subconscious. He has not deserted his post and abandoned the struggle to reach God; he has fulfilled his duty. The temptations are defeated and he courts martyrdom. A wild indomitable joy takes possession of him. He has proved that he is not a coward, and proved that he has not yielded to the temptations. He has stood his ground honourably to the very end; he has kept his word. “The temptation had captured him for a split-second and led him astray. All were illusions sent by the Devil. He uttered a triumphant cry: IT IS ACCOMPLISHED!” (507). In other words, he has accomplished his duty. He is

being crucified; he has not fallen into temptation. The mission entrusted by the Lord is fulfilled. He has reached the summit of sacrifice: he is nailed up on the cross.

The Last Temptation is a surrealistic fictional biography of Christ, whom Kazantzakis considered the supreme embodiment of man's battle to overcome his sensual human desires in pursuit of a spiritual existence. The novel focuses on what Kazantzakis imagines as the psychological aspects of Jesus' character and how Christ overcomes his human limitations to unite with God. Hanging on the cross, Jesus dreams that a guardian angel rescues him and allows him to reject his role as God's representative on earth and live instead as an ordinary carpenter, husband, and father. In his dream he experiences erotic bliss and worldly life. Later, however, Judas Iscariot, whom Jesus has ordered to betray him, appears. Angry that Jesus has not carried out the saving of mankind, Judas accuses Jesus of succumbing to Satan at which point Jesus awakens from the dream and affirms his role as Christ (Trosky 210-214).

Kazantzakis writes, in the Prologue to *The Last Temptation*:

> …this book was written because I wanted to offer a supreme model to the man who struggles; I wanted to show him that he must not fear pain, temptation or death – because all three can be conquered, all three have already been conquered. Christ suffered pain, and

> since then pain has been sanctified. Temptation fought until the very last moment to lead him astray, and Temptation was defeated. Christ died on the cross and that instant death was vanquished forever. (10)

Kazantzakis states that every obstacle in his journey became a milestone, an occasion for further strength. “We have a model in front of us now, a model who blazes our trail and gives us strength. This book is not a biography; it is the confession of everyone who struggles. In publishing it I have fulfilled my duty, the duty of a person who struggled, was much embittered in his life, and had many hopes” (10). Peter Bien, who translated *The Last Temptation* into English observed that it is the summation of the thought and experience of a man whose entire life was spent in the battle between spirit and flesh. Out of the intensity of Kazantzakis’ struggle, and out of his ability to reconcile opposites and unite them in his own personality, formed his art which succeeded in depicting and comprehending the full panorama of human experience. The scope and diversity of his life is remarkable. He was always in search of a spiritual tranquillity. Attracted to the thoughts of Nietzsche and Bergson, Kazantzakis later became a student of Russian literature, but his disquieting temper led him to the calm and composed Buddha. A restless traveller even in his thoughts, Kazantzakis was still seeking something more than that he had experienced before. His ascetic temperament was introduced to a new virtue, contemplation, and to the heroism of a very different kind of father, Christ. In writing *The Last Temptation* Kazantzakis

was not primarily interested in reinterpreting Christ or in disagreeing with, or reforming the church. He simply wanted to lift Christ out of the church altogether and to rise to the occasion and exercise man's right to fashion a new saviour and thereby rescue himself from a moral and spiritual void. His own conflicts enabled him to depict with great penetration Jesus' agony in choosing between love and axe, between household joys and the loneliness and exile of the martyr, between liberation of the body alone, and liberation of both body and soul. Kazantzakis tried to draw Christ in terms meaningful to himself. Since his own conflicts were those of every sensitive man faced with the chaos of our times in the twentieth century, he wished to make Jesus a figure for a new age. In recreating the great moments in the Bible story, he retained everything in the Christ legend which speaks to the conditions of all men of all ages (509-512). However, one of the most controversial questions during Kazantzakis' life time was how he saw the figure of Jesus Christ. In fact, his portrayal of Christ invited widespread anger and protest from some sections of believers among Christians all over the world. As for Kazantzakis, Christ becomes one of the *Saviours* of God. He belongs to the race of men who helps the spirit which is struggling through matter to attain freedom. In this sense Christ is the saviour and a model and he has fought the battle and won. Kazantzakis wants us to engage ourselves in the same fight and it is our duty to bring the spirit to birth. Christ is:

> … not the harbour where one casts anchor, but the harbour from which one departs, gains the offing, encounters a wild, tempestuous sea, and then struggles for a lifetime to anchor in God. Christ is not the end, he is the beginning. He is not the 'Welcome!' He is the 'Bon' Voyage!" He does not sit back restfully in soft clouds, but is battered by the waves just as on the helm. That was why I liked Him, that was why I would follow Him. (*Report* 52)

In *The Last Temptation,* Kazantzakis provides an answer. Through his hero we learn what harbour it is that our souls continue to seek. He believes that in a rotten world there is no perfect ideal for man, but being a Cretan, Kazantzakis shows us metaphorically that we should redeem ourselves by struggling and suffering as Christ did. Kazantzakis has constantly been torn between the need for action and for ascetic withdrawal. His untiring search for his true saviour to find meaning of his life and existence took him to many ideologies and personalities. He had to leave one for the other. Kazantzakis renounced Nietzsche for Buddha, then Buddha for Lenin, then for Odysseus. When he returned finally to Christ, as he did, it was a Christ not only a saviour but a co sufferer as well.

It would be interesting to note that the concept of temptation comes from Buddhism. Kazantzakis borrowed the idea and transplanted it into Christianity. The last temptation is there even on the path to enlightenment. According to Buddhism, the reason for suffering in the world is our desire. It doesn't matter

what we desire. A simple equation which Buddha recognised is that suffering comes from desire and from suffering comes re-birth and then more desire and more suffering and so on. The only way to break the cycle of birth and rebirth is to let our free will enter and stop desire. That's what Buddha was able to do. But to wish for enlightenment and later to cherish the cycle to be broken is a desire. And so, as long as we desire enlightenment, it will never be the last temptation (Allstrom, www.firstunitariantoronto.org). However, this concept, as Kazantzakis adapted from Buddhism, is not completely absent from Christianity. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever man will save his life shall lose it and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:23-24). Christ invites the disciples to give up desires and temptations. What he means is that the one who loves life loses the freedom from desires and the one who gives up his desires gains freedom from desires. Kazantzakis' desire is a greater freedom from all that curbs him, physical and spiritual and political and religious ideologies and dogmas.

The significance of *The Last Temptation* can be summed up with the beautiful observation of Levitt P. Morton that Jesus "truly lives and dies with his visions. In the silence at the edge of the precipice, confronting himself across the abyss of human desires and forgetfulness, he has at last sprouted wings, his life is

a dramatization of all men's struggles, a living metaphor that grows from the rhetorical imagery of *The Saviours of God*" (*The Cretan Glance* 79).

Another major work of Kazantzakis, discussed widely is *Christ Recrucified* or *The Greek Passion* which is more social and political whereas the religious impulse remains the undertone of the structure and development of the novel. But this becomes the theme and substance in *The Last Temptation* in which the Christian story is an actuality and not a metaphor. Jesus of Nazareth is not an archetypal figure in the back ground but the protagonist himself. In *Christ Recrucified* Manolios, the hero acts at times as if he were Christ. "When I open my mouth," Manolios says, "Christ will put the right words on my lips . . . that's the decision I have taken" (255). His emotional assumption and acceptance and final martyrdom is the theme of the novel. Meek and polite Manolios turns resolute and becomes the centre of the political actions which are described extensively in Chapter 3. Before becoming a political messiah, Manolios confronts with the tense dichotomy between the spirit and flesh. How he endures and survives the demands of the flesh is the subject of study here. Like Christ, Manolios too undergoes conflicts and sufferings at the beginning. But once he is convinced of his role as social reformer and fighter against injustice and corruption of the clergy, he is never disturbed or held back with any hesitating spiritual thoughts. Christ's mind has always been turbulent, but Manolios enjoys unusual calm and peace even in agitated political situations. However, at the

beginning of the novel when he is not completely ready for the mission he suffers from indecision and uncertainty about his own potentialities to carry out the great task.

Manolios, though not late, recognizes and accepts the ephemeral nature of sensual experience and the supremacy of spirit over body. But the flesh continues to lure him as in the case of Jesus in *The Last Temptation*. He is able to give up Lenio, his fiancée, but he remains obsessed by the widow Katerina, the town whore. Unable to resist the temptation he has decided at last to visit her in the night and go down to her in the village. Manolios reflects:

> I left her, but I took her with me, in my thoughts, in my blood; day and night I now dreamed only of her. I pretended to be thinking of Christ; lies! Lies! It was of her I was thinking. . . One evening I could hold out no longer . . . I took the path - I was going to the widow. I told myself: I'm going to save her soul. I'm going to talk to her and lead her into the way of God . . . Lies! Lies! I was rushing to sleep with her. Then . . ." (*Recrucified* 185)

The already divided mind of young Manolios is further divided on the thoughts about flesh and spirit. Kazantzakis portrays this conflict that takes place in the mind and its miraculous manifestation through a rare physical phenomenon experienced by Manolios. The vivid sensual thoughts of Manolias as opposed to

his self-assumed role of saving her as and when he dreamt of enjoying sex with her, are obvious from the following passage as he imagines Katerina's impassioned welcome:

> Manolios stopped his ears; his head was buzzing; the veins of his neck swelled. He could feel flaming blood mounting to his head. His temples were throbbing violently, his eyelids grew heavy, there was a prickling all over his face, as though thousands of ants were biting his cheeks, his chin, his forehead, and were devouring his flesh. (*Recrucified* 118)

Here, flesh is willing but the spirit exerts great control over on the body of Manolios. What Kazantzakis describes afterwards is logically unconvincing, yet he tries to explain the sudden transformation of the youth's face. He wants to establish it to be the result of the potential revolt of the slumbering spirit:

> A cold sweat flowed over his whole body; he passed his hand over his face … cheeks, his lips, his chin… felt swollen. His lips were so distended that he could not open his mouth … and gave a cry: it was all bloated, his eyes were no more than two tiny balls, his nose was lost between his ballooning cheeks, his mouth was a mere hole. This was no human face, but a mask of bestial flesh, repulsive. No, it was

> no longer his face; a foreign face fixed itself over his own. (*Recrucified* 119)

Manolios' innocent and angelic face is completely transformed into a horrible one that women could look at only with repulsion. The leprous tragic mask saves Manolios from his physical self and enables him to fulfil his spiritual role. Later he reveals himself to the widow, calls her sister and redeems her as well. "You have said the word which has set me free…You called me sister," Katerina said as if she were relieved of all the sins she had committed. Manolios' visit and consoling words transform her from whore to Magdalen and "delivers" her, as she puts it (*Recrucified* 166). However, Manolios' deliverance from this temptation is, perhaps, one of the less impressive parts of Kazantzakis' story as it has a melodramatic effect. It comes about through the sudden eruption of the skin of his face in a kind of repulsive leprosy. This loathsome mask remains until his soul is totally purged. After a considerable passage of time, the mask itself disappears miraculously as Manolios makes up his mind to offer himself as a sacrifice for the people. It is only when he is ready to be sacrificed, willingly and joyfully, that, to his own amazement, he realizes the mask to be falling from his face with an instantaneous smoothening of his skin. The fire of the temptation which has purged him of his pride and his lust has made him a lamb ready to be led to the slaughter on behalf of his fellow-villagers. (Dillistone, *The Shepherd*, 84 -85). "In amazement Manolios stopped, his heart throbbing: he saw with his eyes a hand

passing over his face, stroking it without haste, cool like a morning breeze…The exuded flesh had melted like wax"(*Recrucified* 213-214).

Kazantzakis claims that he himself had a similar leprous disease when he was in Vienna. He confesses in his autobiography that because of his swollen face he was unable to keep his date with an unknown woman. The moment he dropped her from his mind ". . . swelling in my face had entirely disappeared . . . The demon had fled; once more I was a human being" (*Report* 356). Kazantzakis believes that our subconscious mind can affect the physical system of the body. "Ever since that day," Kazantzakis recollects, "I have realized that man's soul is a terrible and dangerous coil spring" which is stronger than the body itself. "How terrible not to know that we possess this force! If we did know, we would be proud of our souls. In all heaven and earth, nothing so closely resembles God as the soul of man" (*Report* 356-357). According to Kazantzakis, human soul is a potential force that can play havoc over flabby flesh but not in the ordinary people who possess only the weak soul. For those who have strong soul and those who perceive life for a deeper meaning and understanding, the conflict is higher and greater.

Yet man's spirit does not entirely negate the body. Kazantzakis personifies the soul in his experience that body and soul are truly entwined, because all human life is a kind of duality. Kazantzakis realized that this very duality is the substance of life such as saint and sinner, virgin and widow, Greek and Turk, life

in this world and in heaven, the road of man and that of God (Levitt, *Cretan* 39). He says that this very duality is the essence of life and the negation of any of the parts would lead to imbalance and disintegration.

Zorba the Greek is another remarkable and amazing work of art by Kazantzakis discussing the spiritual conflicts related to life and death. In its Prologue, he makes a strong assertion that "Throughout my life my greatest benefactors have been my dreams and my travels; very few men, living or dead, have helped me in my struggle." It is only a truth that Kazantzakis was an untiring wanderer seeking new vistas of experiences wide and vast. These travels had been the sources for his prolific literary outputs. And *Zorba the Greek* is a fictional recollection of his own mining venture which meets with a catastrophic end. The novel reveals a world-weary thirty six year old man, who has retired from intellectual pursuits of his European existence and lands on the coast of Crete. He is very frequently addressed by Zorba as Boss who in fact represents Kazantzakis himself. Boss is accompanied by Zorba whom he has just met in a Greek sea port and hired as his aide.

The Boss and Zorba start living together in an unknown Cretan village on the pretext of a mining venture. At the beginning of the novel, Kazantzakis introduces the Boss as a philosopher who carries his manuscript of Buddha and volumes of Dante and the other, Zorba who is carries nothing but his own rich experience and unlimited and absolute freedom. "One lives through his art; the

other possesses a life that itself has the quality of art and inspires art in those who observe him" (Levitt, *Cretan* 91). Zorba's Character embodies those qualities of Cretan life that function as metaphor throughout the Kazantzakis' literary works. Zorba is full of life, vitality and daring. His closeness to nature and willingness to confront the abyss shocks the passivity and Buddhist aloofness of the boss. In the course of time he teaches the boss his own active philosophy which is a unique synthesis of the thoughts of Bergson and Nietzsche that life is composed of being and nothingness.

From the beginning of the novel it is clear that the two men are totally different in their temperaments and attitudes. The philosopher-narrator represents Kazantzakis' ideas, and Zorba represents Nietzschean concepts. The whole structure of the novel is built up in the form of dialectics between the two men. The autobiographical narrator-philosopher is contemplative and introspective, and almost until the final part of the novel, acts as the analytical expositor of vanity of human life. The philosopher's passive and negative withdrawal from life is contrasted with Zorba's active and generally affirmative saturation in life. Gradually the philosopher learns to understand Zorba, whom he assumes at first to be a kind of non-reflective hedonist. By normal standards Zorba could not be considered as ethical or moral man, yet everything he does results in a kind of ethic beyond good and evil, and hence classification of his character becomes difficult.

Characterization of rationalism is also a theme brilliantly worked out by Kazantzakis in *Zorba the Greek*. The Boss represents one who has withdrawn into the world of intellectualism. He moves away from this enmeshment as he tries to free himself of "all these Phantoms . . . Buddhas, Gods, Motherlands, Ideas." He continues and rebukes himself: "woe to him who can't free himself from Buddhas, Gods, Motherlands and Ideas" (198). He is led to face his surrendered state by Zorba who, uncontaminated by learning and esoteric intellectualism, has instinctively overcome the void and followed his passions as his mind dictates. Zorba's vibrant and active personality is the antithesis of Kazantzakis, who philosophizes the mystery of life (Lea, 58). Zorba, on the other hand, has only contempt towards these abstractions and he thinks that life is to live, and there is nothing mysterious about it. During their brief sojourn on this island there is a great deal of mutual understanding between each other. Before he met Zorba his mind was dwelling aimlessly in the intellectual abstractions of the Buddhist philosophy of resignation and philosophical disinterestedness. Later the philosopher learns great truths from Zorba, many of these eye opening truths are the answers he has been seeking over the years. Their philosophic and spiritual give and take is perhaps the theme and content of this novel. The philosopher's admiration grows further; in fact the master turns a disciple of the all knowing but simple and rustic Zorba:

> Yes, I understood, Zorba was the man I had sought so long in vain. A living heart, a large voracious mouth, a great brute soul, not yet

> served from mother earth. The meaning of the words, art, love, beauty, purity, passion, all this was made clear to me by the simplest words uttered by this workman. (14)

Kazantzakis' life as well as his art has always been a quest for a strange yearning for mystical revelation. In Zorba, Kazantzakis finds answers, the meaning and the meaninglessness of the agonizing drama of human life enacted on this earth. The Boss writes the life of Buddha as a literary exercise, for the purpose of alleviating his sufferings by individual creation through his experience and intuition. "Writing *Buddha* was in fact, ceasing to be a literary exercise. It was a life-and-death struggle against a tremendous force of destruction lurking within me, a duel with the great NO which was consuming my heart and on the result of this duel depended the salvation of my soul" (146). Personal salvation from all the spiritual and material entanglements by negating the desires of earthly life is hardly possible for him. Contemplating on Buddhism is an attempt towards freedom for Kazantzakis.

The attitudinal differences between Kazantzakis and Nietzsche should be admittedly noted in the context of *Zorba the Greek*. Kazantzakis perceived the exaltation of tragedy as the joy of life from Nietzsche. He also learned from Nietzsche that a certain tragic optimism of the strong man who is delighted to discover that strife is the prevailing law of nature. "Zorba's philosophy is based upon Nietzschean nihilism, an acceptance and affirmation of life in the face of

emptiness and of unflinching contempt for systems based upon hope and unfulfilled desires – metaphysical or otherwise" (Merrill, *Zorba* 104). Their characteristic differences can be illustrated here, when Zorba speaks out:

> I think about what mankind is and why he ever came onto this earth and what good he is . . . No good at all, if you ask me. It makes no difference whether I have a woman or whether I don't, whether I am honest or not, whether I am pasha or a street porter. The only thing that makes any difference is whether I am alive or dead. Whether the devil or God calls me (I think the devil and God are the same), I shall die, turn into a reeking corpse, and stink people out. They'll be obliged to shove me at least four feet down in the earth, so that they won't get choked! (157)

The difference between the two principles in the novel is the difference between the conservative indwelling weak pessimism of the philosopher and the intuitive and activist strong pessimism of Zorba. The philosopher has created his metaphysics through an other-worldly blend of the Oriental, Stoic and mystical ideas; he longs for final peace and salvation from the woes of life through some sort of transcendence of spirit (Merril 104). He is least interested in embracing life passionately as others.

Zorba is the character whose creation is the direct effect and influence of Nietzsche. He believed that Christian ethics, which interpreted nature, history and human life on earth in terms of God's care and moral order, are now an invalid thing of the past. As a sequel, he assumed and prescribed the view that "God is dead". In a godless world Zorba explodes himself in a free and unbridled manner and enjoys the fruits of life in an unethical and immoral pace. Nothing disturbed him in his mad pursuit of pleasures. Zorba's mind flies far beyond the contemporary events that they had already ceased to be anything. Everything appears out of date, outmoded and rubbish for him. Current morality and religion are just like "rusty old rifle. His mind progressed much faster than the world" (18). However, Nietzsche believes that even in a godless world man searches for his values, looks for guides, aspirations and expectations. Man is essentially alone, according to Nietzsche, but he must create from his loneliness, and the accompanying despair and alienation, a new fresh, creative, and more wonderfully human attitude towards life and to the world. He must "revalue all values" in free, forceful, human terms (Lea 17). Though Zorba does not share the second part of Nietzsche's words, Kazantzakis takes it to his heart, as he always yearns for the harmony in the midst of the discord. The stoic acceptance of life and its failures are beautifully philosophized by the boss:

> When shall I at last retire in to solitude, alone, without companions, without joy and without sorrow, with only the sacred certainty that all is a dream? When, in my rags – without desires – shall I retire

> contented in to the mountains? When, seeing that my body is merely sickness and crime, age and death, shall I free, fearless and blissful - retire in to the forest? When?, oh when? (27)

Zorba, on the other hand, does not favour any thing that neglects physical activism; he believes that indulgence in carnal pleasures is not a sin and he criticizes the philosopher for giving complete emphasis upon the mental abstractions. The mystical abstractionist, the philosopher reasons out: “The greatest prophet on earth can give men no more than a watch word and the vaguer the watchword the greater the prophet” (68). It is man’s duty to work out his philosophy of life, and however vague it is in the beginning, we should continue to search for an ideal and be a prophet of that ideal and of ourselves.

But Zorba rejects any philosophy for man, and he has a strikingly different concept about here and hereafter. He doesn’t nurse any philosophical and spiritual abstractions like his boss. Zorba’s blunt yet candid reaction is: “For me paradise is this: a little perfumed room with gay-coloured dresses on the wall, scented soaps, a big bed with good springs, and at my side the female of the species” (163). His paradise is not the reward for the good deeds that a man does in this life. The obvious mockery on the false hopes of heaven is revealed in the words of Zorba. This is a typical Nietzschean ironical laughter. The extent of Nietzsche’s influence on Kazantzakis and Zorba, can be seen in two important points. The first is that Kazantzakis found in Nietzsche not just a thinker whose ideas he could borrow,

but a full human prototype in whose joys and anguishes he could see his own struggles glorified. Though Kazantzakis has not accepted the pessimistic nihilism of Nietzsche in its full sense, a mellowed nihilism or passive nihilism is obviously seen in the philosopher's views. On the other hand, as far as the ideas and attitudes of Zorba are concerned, Nietzsche acts as a negative force. This negative attitude, to some extent, is in tune with Kazantzakis' conviction that the old order must be evaluated, challenged and overturned in the interest of developing a new and more viable civilization. They seem to admit that individual life is of no account and the world itself is just a purposeless spark surrounded by darkness (Bien, *Kazantzakis'* 249). Zorba does not attribute any other spiritual or even material significance to this life. Life is just life for him, neither greater, nor mean, whatsoever. He tells his Boss:

> Can you tell me, boss, he said, and his voice sounded deep and earnest in the warm night, "what all these things mean? Who made them all? and why? and, above all"- here Zorba's voice trembled with anger and fear – why do people die ? I want you to tell me where we come from and where we are going to. (289-290)

Zorba's questions are of ordinary nature but they are the eternal questions of mankind. He has only contempt for the philosopher's bookish knowledge and his abstractions. While rejecting outright the intellectualism of his boss, Zorba asks in a blunt and sharp manner: "During all those years you have been burning yourself

up consuming their black books of magic, you must have chewed over about fifty tons paper! What did you get out of them?" (290). For Zorba, literature and fine arts are the refuge of the privileged and the lazy who are afraid of real life, its beauty and ugliness. He faces and challenges life and its so called values with open defiance and contempt. Zorba is the quintessential free sprit who can't get enough of the boss' wisdom and he is getting frustrated with him because he can't answer the questions. His asks all traditional impossible questions.

"We do nothing; we neither negate, nor affirm ourselves . . . we live dead lives - we are immobilized and devitalized" (Lea 28).This is the theme that Kazantzakis develops in *Zorba*. He also expands and presents his thoughts on the resolution of the human predicament. This resolution lies in the negation of the negation; in the affirmation of life; in the oppressiveness of the void. It lies in the recognition of fate, of mortality, of the misfortunes of life and the ultimate unalterable nature of death. It confronts the void but does not submit to it. Life comprises struggle, suffering, and rebellion, both in affirmation of life and in transcending of the strictures of that life. It is at the same time a negation and creation. "Say yes to necessity, fill the vacuum with joy as Zorba does, or… redeem life's anguish by transubstantiating matter into spirit, Dionysian reality into tragic myth"(Lea 28). This idea of transubstantiation of matter into spirit is the underlying thought system of Kazantzakis in all his works.

Zorba continues to ask questions, a volley of simple but puzzling questions about life, death, and God. The boss answers in a philosophic, but plain and simple manner. It is the answer of one who has travelled, experienced, struggled and learned the great truths about the limits and possibilities of human life. The most artistically perfect and hence the most powerful expression of the 'Cretan glance' which is explained in detail in chapter 3 of this dissertation, is also found in the Boss's answer:

> We are little grubs, Zorba, minute grubs on the small leaf of a tremendous tree. This small leaf is the earth. The other leaves are the stars that you see moving at night. We make our way on this little leaf examining it anxiously and carefully. We smell it; it smells good or bad to us. We taste it and find it eatable. We beat on it and it cries out like a living thing.
>
> Some men – the more intrepid ones -- reach the edge of the leaf. From there we stretch out, gazing into the chaos. We tremble. We guess what a frightening abyss lies beneath us. In the distance we can hear the noise of the other leaves of the tremendous tree, we feel the sap rising from the roots to our leaf and our hearts swell. Bent thus over the awe-inspiring abyss, with all our bodies and all our souls, we tremble with terror. From that moment begins … poetry. (290)

The Philosopher continues to describe the terrible moment that an individual confronts his abyss: “Some grow dizzy and delirious, others are afraid; they try to find an answer to strengthen their hearts and they say: “God!” others again, from the edge of the leaf look over the precipice calmly and bravely and say; “I like it” (291). The acceptance of the worst with a touch of playfulness is the unique thought behind the ‘Cretan Glance’ of which Zorba could be the best example among all the characters in Kazantzakis.

Besides the endless arguments of dialectics between the boss and Zorba, the superiority of art and particularly the redeeming quality of poetry is greatly dealt with. In the midst of the turbulence of daily life and anxieties about the unknown future, poetry acts as a refuge and it alleviates the miseries of life. In addition, art sublimates all the vain glories of man and finally art or poetry prevails:

> Pure poetry! Life had turned into a lucid, transparent game, unencumbered by even a simple drop of blood. The human element is a brutish, uncouth, impure - it is composed of love, the flesh and cry of distress. Let it be sublimated in to an abstract idea, and, in the crucible of the spirit, by various processes of alchemy, let it be rarefied and evaporate. (145)

Zorba seems to believe that everything that exists is good; sin as well as holiness, wisdom as well as folly. He embraces life with all its beauty and ugliness. As for

Zorba, he has learned a stark truth that his body and soul are necessary for him only to sin. It is true that he needed lust - that he was to experience the bitter sweetness of life and the depths of despair in order to learn to love the world. In doing so, he no longer compares it with some kind of desired imaginary world or some imaginary vision of perfection as his boss thinks. Zorba leaves life as it is, to love it and be glad to belong to it. In his character we find a scorn for morality together with a compassionate concern for man's destiny. Zorba is an ardent worshipper of creativity and he views man as the sole creator. His nihilism is not merely a passive withdrawal from active life. Zorba redefines the nihilism which revolts against life; he makes it a deliberation of conflict as a spur to higher and higher forms of life (Stavrou 55).

Zorba is the man who has freed himself from everything - religions, philosophies, political systems - one who has cut away all the strings. He wants to try all forms of life, freely, beyond plans and systems. Keeping the thought of death before him as an inevitable reality and perceiving that the life given to him is an ephemeral one, Zorba indulges in every possible pleasure exhausting everything so that when death finally comes, it would find an entirely squandered one in Zorba. Zorba is not afraid of death, but is conscious of it; he describes an encounter with an old man:

> An old grandfather of ninety was busy planting an almond tree. "What, grandad!" I exclaimed. "Planting an almond Tree?" [Almond

> is a slow growing tree that would take years to bear fruits]. And he, bent as he was, turned round and said, “my son, I carry on as if I should never die.” I replied “And I carry on as if I was going to die any minute.” “Which of us was right, boss? I kept silent. Two equally steep and bold paths may lead to the same peak. To act as if death did not exist, or to act thinking every minute of death, is perhaps the same thing. (38)

Both Zorba and the ninety-year old man face and accept the finitude of human life and incorporate ‘death’ into their way of life or view of life. For Zorba, death is something not to be dreaded, but to be treated as a silent fellow traveller. It is precisely Nietzsche’s Dionysian attitude that makes Zorba face death with contempt and casualness. Not only the existential thoughts and anguishes of Nietzsche, but also of Kazantzakis borrow many ideas such as the concept of superman, the will to power, and the terms, Apollonian and Dionysian, and the laughter and dance motifs. An Apollonian dreams of the world’s harmony and beauty and sees it in serene forms. He stays cool, calm, composed and tranquil at the turmoil of life. His look is full of light; even sorrow and indignation do not shatter his divine equilibrium. This is exemplified in the character of the boss. On the other hand, Zorba is a Dionysian who shatters individuation and rejects all the so called sanctities attributed to life and its meaning. Men and beasts become brothers; death itself is seen as only one of life’s masks.

This fusion of Apollo and Dionysus provides important revelations for Kazantzakis' *Saviours*. Historically, in this process "the unsettled cry of the Orient grows pellucid when it passes through the light of Greece and is transformed and humanized. Greece is the filter which, with great struggle, refines brute into man, eastern servitude into liberty, barbaric intoxication into sober rationality" (*Report* 165-66). Kazantzakis uses the conflict between the dream world of Eastern withdrawal and the actual world of Western commitment as the foundation of the new synthesis. Hellenism's synthesis produced a paradigm of harmony and creativity, in contrast with the present one which, in fact, is the paradigm of discord and destruction. In that taut, symbiotic moment in time, Apollo and Dionysus collaborated to produce a wedding of the divine and the diabolic, irrationality and rationality, beast and God, in order to eke out for a spiritually creative civilization. Kazantzakis' reliance on this ancient synthesis is evident extensively in one of the chapters in the *Report* (157). Kazantzakis' journey passes from spiritual victory to spiritual victory in an uninterrupted and magic unity. This unity is demonstrated by Greece's temples, art and architecture through an ideal organic linking of spirit and matter, myth and reality, tragedy and beauty, individuation and unity, love and struggle, effort and serenity, discipline and passion (Lea 117). Ancient Greece achieved splendid simplicity, balance and great serenity by compromising the fierce opposing forces that struggled relentlessly. "In Greece the light is entirely spiritual. Able to see clearly in this light, man succeeded in imposing order over chaos, in establishing a "cosmos"- and cosmos

means harmony" (*Report* 164). This inspiring recognition of the demonic dual forces is the vital lesson that Kazantzakis wanted to expound through the actions and utterances of Zorba.

In the prologue to *The Last Temptation*, Kazantzakis explains this common life - dominating inner struggle - the supreme duty, to reconcile the divine and the demonic:

> I loved my body and did not want it to perish; I loved my soul and did not want it to decay. I have fought to reconcile these two primordial forces which are so contrary to one another, to make them realize that they are not enemies but rather fellow-workers, so that they might rejoice in their harmony - and so that I might rejoice with them. (7)

The idea of the blending of these antagonistic impulses has been Kazantzakis' lifelong yearning which unconsciously or deliberately occupies the centre stage of his mind and art. Undoubtedly, the manifestation of this harmony is portrayed in the characterization of Zorba. Kazantzakis relates a tale of his meeting with a priest in an abbey in the Sinai Desert. This holy man who spoke only to God, passed on to Kazantzakis the fruit of an entire life spent in apprenticeship to the flesh and the spirit: "Angels are nothing more – do you hear! - nothing more than refined devils. The day will come – oh if only I could live to see it! – when men will understand this, and then…" (302). He leaned over to Kazantzakis' ear and in a trembling voice he uttered:

> …and then the religion of Christ will take another step forward on earth. It will embrace the whole man, all of him not just half as it does now in embracing only the soul. Christ's mercy will broaden. It will embrace and sanctify the body as well as the soul; it will see – and preach – that they are not enemies, but fellow workers. Whereas now what happens? If we sell ourselves to God, He urges us to deny the body. When will Christ's heart grow sufficiently broad to commiserate not only the soul but also the body, and to reconcile these two savage beasts? (*Report* 302- 303)

Kazantzakis believed in this counsel and incorporated both the devils as well as the angels in his thought system.

The insight that we must recognize the savage Dionysian powers within each of us individually and within all of us collectively can be seen as the recurring theme in Kazantzakis. This should act like a new visionary rhythm for the man to save himself and to ennoble his mundane life when confronted with the twin, terrifying abysses; of human's death and his life. Kazantzakis' ideal concept is to maintain the proper harmonious balance between mind and body. This ideal order must be founded on a comprehensive understanding of the natural world and human nature -- the diabolic as well as the divine. As Kazantzakis thought that Hellenism is insufficient in confronting this challenge, he probed the other dominant source of his view of future man. In this enquiry he was trying not to

negate the lessons of ancient Greece but rather to augment them with the spiritual criteria of Christianity. (Lea, 123)

Seemingly an atheist and nihilist, Zorba himself is not sure of the riddle of human life and its meaning. However, he is not tormented by the thoughts and agony of existential dilemma as his boss, instead he is ecstatic and Zorba questions: “Boss, d’ you believe that? That God became man and was born in stable?” His philosopher boss is completely at loss to unravel the purpose and meaning of God, he could only say, “I can’t say I believe it, nor that I don’t.” Zorba, on the other hand, can only say that “man is a mystery!” (126). Generalizing human life as mystery is an acceptance of life with all its good and bad. In a different context he defines man in a humorous but more philosophic way than the philosopher himself: “What a strange machine man is!” he said with astonishment. “You fill him with bread, wine, fish, radishes, and out of him some sighs, laughter and dreams. Like a factory. I am sure there is a sort of talking – film cinema in our heads” (274).

As for Zorba, these sighs, laughter and dreams are the stuff by which human life is made of; naturally bread, wine and women become his God. For Captain Michales in *Freedom and Death* God is his struggle for Cretan independence, while for Father Yanaros in *The Fratricides* God is his sermon of love and brotherhood. The God of each of them gives value and substance to his life and existence. God, in Kazantzakis’ view, was not merely a master who

authoritatively controlled His subjects in an arbitrarily manner. “When I say the Invisible, I do not mean any priestly version of God, or metaphysical consciousness, or absolutely perfect being, but rather the mysterious force which uses man - and used animals, plants and minerals before us –as its carriers and beasts of burden, and which hastens along as though it had a purpose and were following a specific road”(*Report*, 402). Zorba too believes in this ‘mysterious force’ and enjoys the life given to him in his own way ‘as though it had a purpose’; the purpose of life according to him is to ‘drink life to the lees’.

In *Zorba the Greek* Kazantzakis portrays the essential dilemma of human beings with Greek culture as the point of reference. The governing belief of western civilization according to his mentor Nietzsche, is the optimism, which is ignorant of the core of things. Western civilization is bankrupt because it bases all its thought and action on illusion. But Buddhist renunciation, the withdrawal from the life of desires as followed by the boss is equally reprehensible and one sided. Ancient Greeks were able to fuse the Apollonian and Dionysian principles. Being placed between East and West, they managed a classically pure third mode of existence (Bien, *Zorba* 148). Men and nations from time immemorial grow, attain fruition and finally dissolve or disintegrate into nothingness without being benefited by the chemical fusion of these opposing forces. By blending optimism and weak pessimism in *Zorba*, Kazantzakis reaches out to the ancient method of compromise to resolve the perennial human predicament.

In *Zorba* Kazantzakis presents the boss who has reached a philosophical impasse. Though a product of the west, he can no longer function as a creator of beauty optimistically because he has seen the Dionysian truth of contradiction and flux. He becomes pessimist and seeks refuge in the weak pessimism of Eastern renunciation, the weak pessimism. At the same time, however, he is not fascinated in the same way with the Buddhist solution. In other words, he clings to his western sense of identity and individuation. Unable to appease his Apollonian needs through western art he tries to remedy this paralysis by starting a capitalistic western mining venture. It is strange that the philosopher boss designs ambitious lignite mining with his mind which should have been primarily preoccupied with the Buddhist negation of desires. Here, ambition and negation, the two opposing impulses go hand in hand. At this point, enters the strong pessimist, Zorba, with his candid and blunt Dionysian utterances and actions. By virtue of their intimacy and co living, the boss solves all his problems that have been tormenting him over the years. He learns to feel, re-establishes contact with the soil, abandons all inactiveness of Buddhist abstractions and says yes to all the contradictions and ugliness which life is actually composed of. He also hopes for salvation through action, not through passive inaction or annihilation of desire.

The great scene in this connection occurs when the cable project which costs a lot of money disintegrates and the entire lignite venture ends in ruin. Such an ambitious investment suddenly collapses leaving no scope for recovery. To our

dismay, the boss reacts with irrational joy. A rare delight and relief take possession of him and he extricates himself from both hope and fear:

> I had rarely felt so full of joy in my life. It was no ordinary joy, it was sublime, absurd and unjustifiable gladness. Not only unjustifiable, contrary to all justification. This time I had lost everything- my money, my man, the line . . . it was all lost. Well, it was precisely at that moment that I felt an unexpected sense of deliverance. (314)

He is free from all fetters of spiritual and human bondages. But this does not mean that he has become a Zorba. In fact he has been redeemed from Western paralysis and eastern negation. Now he can function as a tragic artist, fuse his western spirituality and Zorbaic barbarism and create a third mode. After the cable catastrophe, when the boss asserts that he is free, Zorba knows the truth that his boss is not completely free, he is still tied to reason and asserts:

> No, you're not free, he said. The string you're tied to is perhaps longer than other people. That's all. You're on a long piece of string, boss; you come and go, and think you're free, but you never cut the string in two …you need a touch of folly to do that: folly,d' you see ? You have to risk everything. (323)

Zorba understands that his boss lacks “just one thing – folly,” When he comes to possess this, he would achieve complete freedom. The Boss agrees with Zorba whole heartedly, “I nearly wept. All that Zorba said was true” (324). The Boss relieves himself of all the burdens of philosophies he had been carrying and instantly he acquires the innocence of an infant. The self assurance that the boss had at the beginning is contrasted at the end with the simple truths of the rustic Zorba. There is an additional and more important dimension to the philosopher’s anguish, for he realizes that Zorba in his folly has achieved a true knowledge of the illogical, contradictory core of things. Zorba, he knows: “simply cracked life’s shell – logic, morality, honesty – and went straight to its very substance (151). Folly can do that; reason cannot. Reason is analytic and argumentative. The boss is controlled by his understanding, set limits, separation of the possible from the impossible, and the human from the divine. Zorba accepts contradictions and acts in contradictory ways.

The boss can neither love nor hate with passion. He says he does not want troubles. He is a dualist obsessed with the conflict between matter and spirit, body and soul, darkness and light. In Zorba, body and soul form one harmonious though contradictory whole. Finally, the boss sees that all abstractions –Buddha, God, love, hope, country – are life denying. Without deluding himself about the superficial nature of things, he realizes that ephemeral things truly exist and they are good. The flesh is good; clay, seed, excrement and blood are good – as he

discovers once and for all when he sleeps with the widow. And he has learned something about the abstractions such as the soul and the spirit (Bien, *Zorba* 161). “That night for the first time”, he says, “I felt clearly that soul is flesh as well. Perhaps more volatile, more diaphanous, perhaps freer, but flesh all the same. And the flesh is soul” (256).

Finally the two arch rivals, the flesh and the soul, are reconciled. Bien observes that the reconciliation between art and politics is parallel to the reconciliation between activism and resignation that we find in *Zorba the Greek*. He argues that the novel is devoted precisely to depicting the process whereby art and politics are reconciled. Bien clarifies that the word ‘politics’ is taken in the root sense of active participation in the community. Art, on the other hand, is presented as an exit from fear, hope and despair as in the case of the boss in the novel. But the metaphysical exit must come only at the end of the journey of active participation as Zorba does. The aesthetics and the politics are reconciled because active participation in life is the only path whereby imagination earns the right to step back from life and treat it with engaged aloofness. The artist accepts the unaesthetic as a precondition of saving himself through the aesthetics (Bien, *Buddha* 270).

Zorba actively indulges in life despite the irrationality and brevity of life. When his infant son dies he explodes and questions everything that dictates man. He stands at the abyss without awe, unafraid of God’s judgment, willing even to

judge Him. His protest towards God is in the form of an eccentric wild dance. “For Zorba’s dance was full of defiance and obstinacy. He seemed to be shouting to the sky: What can you do to me, Almighty? You can do nothing to me except kill me. Well, kill me, I don’t care! I’ve vented my spleen, I’ve said all I want to say; I’ve had time to dance … and I don’t need you anymore!” (291). It is his dance that frees him from the seeming bondage of nature’s unyielding cycle. Thus Zorba declares his freedom from the fear of death, the ultimate abyss where life terminates itself into nothing.

It can be asserted beyond any doubt that Zorba’s philosophy – the focus of admiration in the novel is not his own but the author’s. The two characters and their discourses are part of the dialectics, or the struggles of the author himself. None of Kazantzakis’ other novels contain a character like Zorba. On the contrary, most of the important characters in Kazantzakis’ works are rather ascetic, puritanical and preoccupied or overwhelmed by the problem of good and evil. Kazantzakis himself was such a man, a modern ascetic, who dreamed of starting a religion, and who refused the pleasures of the flesh in his desperate struggle to transmute the flesh into spirit. It is only a truth that Kazantzakis created his fictional hero, Alexis Zorba from the real George Zorbas, who was the author’s contemporary. One should not, however, underestimate Kazantzakis, the author, just because of these facts, because, the novel is not based on the facts surrounding the real Zorba alone. Kazantzakis' powerful talent for narration and verbal dialectics make this novel a distinct one among the other novels he has authored.

Or else, George Zorbas would have been buried in anonymity along with many of his acquaintances. Kazantzakis took the real George Zorbas whom he knew and loved, idealized him, polished him and gave to us as Alexis Zorbas, a great figure in world literature. It is Kazantzakis' art that metamorphosed the crude, unlettered and uncivilized George into a pleasant, humanistic and witty-tongued Zorba of the fiction whom the lovers of literature remember (Richards, *Facts* 353-356). Zorba is a man whose character Kazantzakis would himself like to be, but could not as his mind was bent on to Apollonian ideas whereas Zorba was a hardcore Dionysian who enjoys life in its fullest extent. *Zorba the Greek* is the explicit attempt of Kazantzakis to bring together these two struggling forces; the flesh and the spirit, the dark and the bright, and whatever is contradictory in the human psyche. *Zorba* carries undercurrents of various philosophies that influenced the life and thoughts of the twentieth century world. In a precise statement Poulakidas rightly observes the magic myriad of ideas in *Zorba.* "Kazantzakis' existentialism is synthesis of Nietzsche's atheism and Dostoyevsky's humanism but this combination leads to a kind of spiritualism that has extremely strong ties with Bergson's mysticism and vitalism"(Poulakidas, *"The novels,2260A"*).These ideas represent the actions and beliefs of Zorba and the boss at various levels in the novel, and this makes it remarkable compared to the other works of Kazantzakis.

The spiritual conflict that we find in *The Last Temptation* and *Zorba the Greek* reaches a harmonious blending of spirit and flesh in *The Saviours of God*.

The focal point of *The Saviours of God* is that man is not an outsider; instead, he is very much a part of the sacred. Kazantzakis "places man in the absolute; we are not separated from the world or from the universe. All thought is a meditation within existence. The union between soul and the universe is of the same nature as between soul and body" (Bessa 442). Kazantzakis believes that the world is an endless pageantry. Therefore nothing begins or ends with itself. The world is passing from eternity to eternity so there is no separation of anyone from anything. To exist is to be alive, to be borne along the living stream, on the crest of a wave. The past is gathered into the present, and later it is carried along and finally it presses itself forward into the future. This forward movement incessantly continues without any intermission. This very reality is life. It is an unceasing becoming, which preserves the past and creates the future. By the acceptance of this cosmic reality Kazantzakis reminds us, in a way, of the essence of Indian Vedic philosophy that 'when infinity is taken from infinity, infinity remains'.

Kazantzakis believes that life is a great river which flows endlessly as the river in *Siddhartha* of Herman Hesse. Life is a riddle without past, present and future. He asserts in *Report to Greco*, "There is no such thing as progress; destiny is not governed by reason; religion, morality, and great ideas are worthless consolations, good only for cowards and idiots. The strong man, knowing this, confronts the world's purposeless phantasmagoria with tranquillity and rejoices in dissolving the multiform, ephemeral veil of Maya" (*Report* 322).

Kazantzakis believes that existence and man are indefinable because man exists only as an individual and this individual is not something fixed but a reality which stands in the dialectics between being and nothingness. This nothingness in man is conceived by Kazantzakis as a dynamics which constantly drives him out of himself, as a soul. Nothingness is not only a given fact of existence; it is also something that man creates in order to realize his existence. Anxiety for one's own existence is manifested in concern for one's permanent being (Bessa 443).

It is death that brings man's being into question, and therefore life is related to death, and the absolute comprehension of death is possible only in the light of the other. For man, to live in this world is to know that he must die one day; life will be closed off by the curtain of death. Although there is an uncertainty about the exact death-hour, sure boundary between life and death is marked out beyond doubt. Kazantzakis does not want this life-curtailing frontier to be something outside life. In fact death is something which defines life. By limiting life, it is death that gives life its true being. This awareness of death made Kazantzakis incorporate death with our everyday life. That's why Zorba is not afraid of death. Like Nietzsche, Kazantzakis too is trying to experiment with the nihilistic tendencies which are the undercurrents of twentieth century literature. In *Zorba*, he seems to believe that consciousness of nothing and the absurdity of life need not drive one to resignation but it can be a stimulus to indulge in life. Kazantzakis' nihilism was, in fact, a creative one for the constructive accomplishments in life.

The burning concern in *The Saviours of God* is the essential human question to know what is to become of consciousness after each one of us dies. The problem that he confronts is that of man, of the human person and of his survival. Death poses the question of discovering what dying is. Does it mean merely annihilation or extinction from earthly life? What happens to man after death and can he enter everlasting life? Does it mean that man ceases to be, that nothing happens to him thereafter? Kazantzakis realizes the imminence of this problem. At the darkest point of nihilism Kazantzakis looks only for reasons to go beyond. His point of departure from nihilism is for man himself and his yearning for survival, for immortality. For Kazantzakis, not God but man himself is the immediate basis of religious feeling; it is man who leads us to postulate God. Kazantzakis' religion was to seek truth in life and life in truth (Bessa 445).

The real basis for the nature and character of life is the awareness of man's destiny which is the inevitable departure from the life given to him. For Kazantzakis this destiny is freedom from the fetters of earthly life, therefore it becomes the possibility as well. "Destiny - this freedom and possibility - is nothing other than the unknown into which Kazantzakis sailed" (Bessa 445). For Kazantzakis human freedom holds up the mirror to infinity. The fierce breath of life brings into human life the vastness and fearful passionless force of non human things. This is the vision that drives all philosophy. Philosophy is primarily an attitude towards life, a discipline of the mind and heart, a lay religion liberated

from groundless fear or anxiety, and superstition. *The Saviours of God* speaks of a new state of being. Kazantzakis with his vision of history and a movement of the spirit, grasps the essence that man is confronted with a new kind of freedom – man is more than a mere unit of society, a member of a species; he becomes as unique as God. In *The Saviours of God* we find a new metaphysics of energy - a principle of creation which allows one to place man in nature and at the same time invites him to rise above it. It expresses the purest part of Kazantzakis' unique vision which is a vision of intimate freedom resulting from personal effort and creation. He has deep faith in the destiny of man which is the final triumph of light over darkness. Kazantzakis' concept of destiny is not a well knit programme from birth to the end for everyman who is born into this earth. It is universally believed that human destiny and death are complementary and man's fatal flaw is his mortality. Kazantzakis rejects this traditional view about the death and destiny of man, because our attitude towards death is influenced by hope as much as by fear. Therefore, he asserts that hope and fear are the great enemies of man. But for the Greeks like Kazantzakis destiny is not simple but complex. This belief strengthened him to face life's challenges with unusual calm and fortitude. So, Kazantzakis hopes for nothing, if one is free from hope, he is free from fear as well. Eventually he is free from all fetters of life and what comes after it. Father Yanaros in *The Fratricides* feels the same about death, "Death, I fear you not," he addresses the Death again and acclaims:

> Death, I do not fear you, he murmured, and suddenly he felt free. What does it mean to be free? He who does not fear death is free. Father Yanaros stroked his beard, satisfied. God, he pondered, is there a greater joy than freedom from death? 'No," he went on. "No!" (55)

One of the striking messages in *The Saviours of God* is that destiny is not death. Destiny is composed of everything that imposes on man an awareness of his fate. Precisely stated, Kazantzakis' theme is that man in his entirety goes from his birth to his death with his flesh, his personality, and above all his desire which is never to die completely. Nietzsche was also deeply troubled by the problem of life and its survival. For Kazantzakis life is continuous creation and continuous consumption, and is, therefore, unceasing death. Life must be made, created and imagined by him in an endless manner.

Maria Bessa observes philosophically that, "Kazantzakis is an agnostic as far as world-view is concerned, but an ethical mystic where life-view is concerned" (446). He discovered that life has a meaning in itself that lies in the will-to-live which for him stands as the only manifestation of the divine source. Here he draws a contrast with Nietzsche's 'will to power' and comes closer to Bergson. There is a striking similarity between Bergson and Kazantzakis in the concept of God which is life itself acting in all things. They also agree that cosmic force is not blind but purposeful and that there is a sharp dichotomy between

matter and spirit. For looking with the eyes of the spirit upon nature, we find that in us also there is matter and spirit. Searching into the phenomena of the spirit in us we learn that we belong to the world of the spirit and that we must let ourselves be guided by it. This spirit is light, which struggles with matter, which represents darkness. What happens in the world and within us is the result of this encounter which is the theme and content of Kazantzakis' literary output. This realization is the base of the spiritual conflicts in Kazantzakis' entire philosophical and fictional world. "*The Saviours of God* is not only a major work of poetic vision, it is also the realm of mediation between man and the absolute, in which man encounters his own individual fatality and that of his time. To think and to feel this fatality is the whole of man. What man thinks and feels is his God" (Bessa 447).

The Saviours of God is the philosophical basis for Kazantzakis' position in which he makes it clear that an individual human being proceeds through a series of steps - the Preparation, the March, the Vision, and the Action to the Silence. In the same way the human soul has to keep on climbing to hazardous heights, look down over the abyss, and confront the frightening truths. In the spiritual struggle, man has to ascend the mountain of peace and silence for which he has to prepare himself. Kazantzakis prescribes three duties to man to attain the abode of peace. They are: to see boundaries, to reject boundaries, to become free of hope as well as of fear. This is the only way through which man can prepare himself for the march towards God. On the march itself, he moves from the ego, to

the race, to all mankind and finally to the earth: from an awareness of self to a recognition that the individual is also one of a race of men with ancestors and descendants; from a further acknowledgment that both he and his race are but parts of a greater humanity to a final discovery that mankind, too, is united with all the other creatures of the earth in a single entity (Levitt, *World and Art* 173).

Living in a new age, Kazantzakis devises a vision of God different from those of earlier ages, for these have now lost all meaning and relevance. Man today serves God by going to His aid in his unending struggle for survival. If God falls, man falls with Him; if He is victorious, man is saved. This heretical vision perceives a divinity with dramatic possibilities. The vision is the result of Kazantzakis' life long-effort to reconcile the universals of Christianity with the ideals and rhetoric of Marxism, to combine the clear unassuming simplicity of Buddha with the Nietzschean view of the death of God. In addition, Kazantzakis blends Tolstoyan and Bergsonian ideas with which he attempts to counter Nietzsche's shocking message that 'god is dead'. It was in this context that Kazantzakis declared that his mission was to save God (Hartocollis 208). No one would have dared to call man "*Saviours* of God" as Kazantzakis did; Nietzsche issued the pronouncement "God is dead!", but Kazantzakis came to herald the most radical message of resurrection: "Man becomes God and saves God." Man takes on properties of the divine by accepting his responsibilities of the divine to save God (Anton 61). The essence of our God, Kazantzakis says,

is struggle. In *The Saviours of God* the basic motif is "not God who will save us - but it is we who will save God, by battling, by creating, and by transmuting matter into spirit" (*Saviours* 19). This involves a radical view of God. All the traditional religions which made man dependent upon God are rejected. This repeated rejection is expressly seen in Kazantzakis' legendary hero Odysseus in *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel* where he remains determined to cast down every idol and to denounce every form of worship, and every philosophy and political ideology that binds man to itself. He stays free to reject and to seek and be ready to transcend everything, including himself. This is true about Kazantzakis himself. The true hero can never turn back; nor can he denounce the ceaseless demand that comes from the inner self for continuous self-transcendence (Anton 64).

The ultimate stage of our spiritual exercise is called silence. Leaning out over the abyss, the man who has reached the peak of silence sings a profound and magical incantation of belief in God, of belief in the man who has climbed to the peak of the belief in the ultimate unreality of existence of both man and God. This view may lead us to believe that Kazantzakis is an atheist. But on closer observation, it can be understood that his philosophy is tantamount to a theology, the Indian metaphysic of "*Aham Brahmasmi*" implying that everyone is God.

Blessed be all those who hear and rush to free you, Lord, and who say:

Only you and I exist.

> Only you and I are one.
>
> And thrice blessed be those who bear on their shoulders and do not buckle Under this great, sublime, and terrifying secret:That even this one does not exist! (*Saviours* 27)

Another prominent novel in which Kazantzakis discusses the conflicting forces of spirituality and the demands of flesh is *God's Pauper:St: Francis of Assisi* . Unlike *The Last Temptation, Saint Francis* is much more a biography than fiction. The entire novel is written as a recollection of one of the disciples. The main fictional element Kazantzakis uses is making Brother Leo the constant companion to Saint Francis, and thus presenting him as an eyewitness to all the miracles in his life. In reality, although Leo was one of his first brothers and biographers, he did not accompany him on all the journeys. Leo also conveys the irresistible charisma of Francis, and his vision of abandoning all worldly desires to pursue and serve God through boundless love for not just every person, but everything in the universe with determined peace, and perfect simplicity. The novel starts slowly, with Brother Leo mourning the death of his friend Francis and recalling the years of self-denial he suffered in following Francis and his life of self-imposed deprivations. He begins to write the life of Francis, at first erratically, and then, chronologically, recording how he met him, and how God began the process of changing Francis.

As the novel proceeds we realize that Francis is not merely a character for Kazantzakis, but a safe vehicle for his own struggles and conflicts which are found unmistakably in characters like Jesus in *The Last Temptation* and Manolios in *The Greek Passion* and Father Yanaros in *The Fratricides*. Kazantzakis' mind has always been preoccupied with gods and spirituality. It grew complicated and complex as his mind broadened. The term 'God' served him many ways; it enabled him to express many facets of his own struggle towards self-definition and self-transcendence. Though Kazantzakis' own education took him straight to Bergson and Nietzsche, who enkindled the passion for self-transcendence, the concepts of philosophy of divinity and existentialism had already sprouted in the early days of his life itself. In addition, the brief stay he had in 1924 in Assisi, the home town of St. Francis, inspired him to know more about the saint. Later Kazantzakis felt intimately that he and Francis are fellow travellers searching for the same goal which eluded them as they advanced. Therefore Kazantzakis addresses himself most obviously to the philosophical and existential set of questions. For St. Francis it was a passionate, self-obliterating search; the search for God is in some ways the discovery of himself. What Kazantzakis calls God is also referred to as the soul or spirit. His God is devoid of any external existence other than what he perceived as refuge and consolation in times of misery and distress. To Kazantzakis, God is merely a human creation, as he explains through the words of his hero Saint Francis: "Perhaps God is simply the search for God"

(31). Therefore, God for him is the dynamic principle, the primordial force which drives man to surpass himself.

The massive single-minded and explicit enquiry of St. Francis is not within Christian theology alone, it is the quest of Kazantzakis himself. He finds new ways of saying, through Francis, that man is intimately, entangled in God. At one point Francis remarks: “Brother Leo, open your mind and engrave deeply there what I am about to tell you. The body of man is the bow, God is the archer, and the soul is the arrow. Understand?”(180-81). What he tries to explicate in these words is the interdependence of mind and body, and essentially the mutual dependence of God and man. God is both in and outside the body. The body contains the soul which in turn is eager to shed the body. Those interrelationships, and distinctions, could not be expressed more concisely. Here we find that the theology of Saint Francis is brought more forcefully into one image (Will 115). But Francis never attempts any harmony of the body and he undergoes the same mental ordeals as experienced by Jesus. The opposing forces always waged war in his mind; each of them being equally strong. This typical Kazantzakian temperamental predicament is clearly seen in Francis who tells Brother Leo:

> …my mother and father, Brother Leo. The Two of them have been wrestling inside me for ages. This struggle has lasted my whole life… They may take on different names - God and Satan, spirit and

> flesh, good and bad, light and darkness, but they always remain my mother and father. My father cries within me. (27)

His father exhorts him to become a noble man because he thinks that only the rich and the nobility deserve to live in the world. He never wants his son to be good in this world. To be good means he is finished, according to him. On the other hand, his mother in a trembling and soft voice advises him:

> Be good, dear Francis, and you shall have my blessing. You must love the poor, the humble, and the oppressed. If someone injures you, forgive him! My mother and my father wrestle within me, and all my life I have been struggling to reconcile them. But they refuse to become reconciled; and because of that, I suffer. (27)

Contradictory parental influences and Kazantzakis' efforts of reconciliation are discussed elaborately in *Report to Greco* as well. What is found in *St. Francis* are but an echo of those experiences expressed in *Report to Greco* especially about the domineering father and the kindly mother.

Kazantzakis wants to portray the inner struggles of an individual man, largely aloof from the society around him. In this struggle he is least concerned about the political implications of the revolution he has begun. Caught up in his own personal struggle, he evades other political and religious issues and their ramifications.

Though Kazantzakis had a great scope to raise Francis to the level of a martyr as Father Yanaros and Manolios, he restricts the protagonist to the role of a

simple pauper. Father Elias the intellectual, who plays the dual roles of Saint Paul and Judas, represents the opposite poles of Francis' struggle. A third pole in the fiction is Sister Clara, who leads the Poor Clares, the Second Order of the Franciscan world. She is his greatest temptation, a sort of Magdalene as in *The Last Temptation* (Levitt, *Cretan* 145). Francis experiences intense agony of choice between spirit and flesh that he cannot endure it any longer:

> There are many roads. Which is my road? How shall I conquer the demons within me? They are many, and if Thou dost not come to my aid, I am lost! How can I push aside the flesh, Lord, so that it will not come between us and separate us? You saw for yourself, Lord, how troubled my heart was when I faced the young girl at San Domino's, how troubled it was when I faced my father. How can I save myself from my mother and father and, from women, friends, from comfortable living; and from pride, the yearning for glory, from happiness itself. The number of mortal demons is seven, and all seven are sucking at my heart. How can I save myself, Lord, from Francis? (72)

Kazantzakis always maintains the view that the body and soul should harmonize and the rejection of either of them would make the other incomplete. That is why his characters suffer to align themselves with the soul or with the body. Francis tortures his body as if it is an enemy. He asserts that, "The body does not exist!

Yes, Brother Leo, there is no such thing as the body; nothing exists but the soul!" (51). But at the end of the novel Kazantzakis makes Francis apologize for his neglect of body and nature alike. "Forgive me, Brother Donkey" [Very often he describes the body as a donkey that carries him] he said:

> …forgive me, my old ramshackle body, for having tormented you so much … And you, my revered Mother Earth: you must forgive me also. You gave me a splendid, radiant body, and now look what mud and filth I am returning to you! (386)

It is obvious that Francis regrets having punished the body severely and the final confession is the realization that the spirit and the flesh are the fellow sufferers and fellow travellers as well. Thus Francis accomplishes Kazantzakis' typical and age old yearning for the blending of the two rival forces in *God's Pauper*.

In *God's Pauper* Kazantzakis recreates the life of Saint Francis and shows his deep and abiding love for asceticism. On the contrary, he also points out the basically different priorities and attitudes on life and religious practices followed by the Bishop who is the representative of the organized church. The spiritual struggle, not political, is the central theme of *God's Pauper*. Therefore, the strife in Franciscan Order is left unexplored deliberately. What Francis anticipated and what is accomplished is just suggested, but not expanded. It appears that Kazantzakis did not want to start new controversies by being very critical of the established church and clergy. So the very choice of the subject matter in *God's Pauper* shows Kazantzakis' intense interest in asceticism and primitive Christian

ethics. Saint Francis' life was a continuous struggle to elevate the spirit above the flesh, to subdue all demands of the flesh, and to live in absolute poverty. Francis' refusal to marry, his reluctance to satisfy his hunger as well as his deliberate and savage punishment of the flesh are in direct contrast to the life of any church official (Richard, *Christianity* 52).

However, the critical view is that *God's Pauper* is the least successful of Kazantzakis' fictions. The major flaw, according to Levitt Morton is that, "he rejects nature, senses, and rejects life in this world and suffers from excessive holiness" (144). On the other hand the greatness and literary merit of *The Last Temptation* is that Jesus offers possibilities of universal salvation. There is freedom to fail in his mission and "he [Christ of Kazantzakis] is prey to the failings of all men. He thus overcomes the narrow asceticism – that substitute for orthodox divinity – which attracts most of Kazantzakis' heroes but which Francis alone, succumbs to" (Levitt, *Cretan* 143). It seems that Kazantzakis has fallen into the trap of his own philosophy and given us excessive colour and metaphor while portraying the life of St. Francis:

> In the dichotomy between his early and later life, in his appeal to the oppressed and impoverished masses of people, in his use of the vernacular for his teaching, in the apparent final betrayal by his organized followers, even in his relationship with his domineering father, the historical Saint Francis seems the very type of the Kazantzakian hero. He too makes the difficult ascent up the

> mountain of human fears and desires- the Nietzschean Mountain of dreams –and confronts himself and God across the abyss of human experience. (Levitt, *Cretan* 144)

Therefore, it is felt that the available contradictions in the life of the Saint are not artistically recreated as done with regard to Jesus in *The Last Temptation.* His other messianic heroes, Manolios, Father Fotis, and Father Yanaros are much more feared than loved. Every one of them follows Kazantzakis' concept of struggle relentlessly throughout the life and finally transubstantiates matter into spirit as the culmination of their life's mission. In *St. Francis,* Kazantzakis could have elevated the historical 'pauper' to the level of a fictional martyr by exploring the ways how he suffered while his own ideas and dreams were flouted in the air as insignificant or unnecessary. At the end his concept of perfect poverty is contrasted with the poverty of perfectness. He falls into silence when his simplicity and sacrifice are replaced by luxury and extravagance. However, Kazantzakis' retelling of Francis' life despite its defects in characterization of the protagonist, remains the story of a saint, whose life was so radically distinctive in purity, poverty, and peace, that he created one of the most lasting and far reaching reformers in the history of the Church.

While concluding this chapter on the perennial conflicts of flesh and spirit about which Kazantzakis is pondering over time and again, it can be rightly assessed that his mind has always been preoccupied with the opposing elements in

life or nature. His writings are the manifestations of his tragic attempts to find deliverance by passing through all the stages of contemporary anxieties by pursuing the most daring hopes. Thus, it is natural for an artist to be a fighter and a loser as well in this world. No matter, the victory or defeat, Kazantzakis wrote the story of man's battle against the personal or impersonal forces in nature. In the midst of his simple joys and great sorrows, marginal successes and utter failures and with his disappointments, Kazantzakis continued to fight always his anguished struggle consciously and unconsciously. He can never give up the struggle. He writes: "I can never cease wrestling with God … I shall be wrestling with Him even at the very last moment when I present my self before Him. I believe this is my fate. Not to reach my destination…but to wrestle" (*Report* 302). As his mind is preoccupied with the ideas of struggling with God, it is quite natural that the motif of wrestling with divine becomes the primary theme in his major works like *The Last Temptation*, *The Greek Passion*, *Zorba the Greek* and *God's Pauper*.

The process of clash and fusion underlines Kazantzakis' thinking, whether he describes the miracle of ancient Greece or prescribes a path for contemporary man. This clash and final fusion become the constantly recurring theme in his works. He philosophizes that Greece is placed geographically and spiritually between the East and the West and defines the Greek experience as the constant struggle between these antithetical forces. Therefore, the position of Greece is truly tragic, Kazantzakis' writes in his autobiography:

> New forces are rising from the East, new forces rising from the West and Greece, caught as always between a whirlpool. Following the tradition of reason and empirical enquiry, the West bounds forward to conquer the world; the East, prodded by frightening subconscious forces, likewise darts forward to conquer the world. Greece is placed in the middle; it is the world's geographical and spiritual cross roads. Once again its duty is to reconcile these two monstrous impulses by finding a synthesis. (*Report* 175)

Therefore, being a Greek, most significantly a Cretan, Kazantzakis takes up the responsibility of the world, all by himself to find a solution and a synthesis. Like his own Odysseus, Kazantzakis seems to believe that "man's greatest duty on earth is to fight his fate" and that is the only way by which "the mortal man can even surpass his god" for deliverance.

Chapter III

Politics of Salvation

Kazantzakis' political and social concepts are most unique and very provocative. He is considered one of the most intriguing and controversial figures of the twentieth century. These concepts and an exploration of his political philosophy is the subject of this chapter. Explication of his literary and political views, beliefs and thoughts and their evaluation and analysis are important as far as literature and politics of his age are concerned. Kazantzakis was personally and actively involved in Greek and world politics at every step of his career, sometimes by choice, sometimes by the social and political compulsions of the day. "No writer who lives in Greece can avoid politics" is the assertion of Peter Bien (Bien, *Nikos Kazantzakis* 137). His major political works, for example *Freedom and Death*, *The Fratricides* and *The Greek Passion,* would lose much of their interest if we fail to see how they reflected the political events of the day. Nevertheless, he has never been a political writer and his most basic interest, rather than the political, has been his own personal salvation. One of the accusations against Kazantzakis was "his failure to make the crucial distinction between a man who is truly political and one who is sincerely involved in politics." Peter Bien clarifies:

> The problem was a failure to see that Kazantzakis' political and non-political or metapolitical aspects were symbiotic. His critics continually analyzed him into two separate persons, the metaphysician and the politician failing to see that neither 'person' could exist independently of the other because the very method employed by Kazantzakis to win his salvation was political involvement. A political involvement which, by definition, could never be truly political". (139)

His basic interests were in matters concerning God and his own salvation. However, we can't completely disentangle either Kazantzakis' politics or his metaphysics from the rest of his personal life. "His politics grew out of his metaphysics, his metaphysics grew out of his politics", as Bien establishes (139). He did not leave one interest behind in order to proceed to the next, but carried all his past interests with him while he accumulated new ones. Since the purpose of our inquiry is to examine Kazantzakis' political thought, and spirituality, and to see the extent of their influence in his works, the attention has to be diverted into those writings in which his philosophy is expounded. It would be interesting to note the following observation which exactly summarizes the political and aesthetic concepts of Kazantzakis:

> His nationalism, for example, was a continuation of his aestheticism, his communism of his nationalism, his anticommunism of the very

> ingredients which produced his communism. And all his political positions were manifestations of certain continuing attitudes toward death, God, the bourgeoisie; of certain psychological needs; and of a metaphysical system which attempted to bequeath universal, cosmological significance to his drives and accomplishments. (Bien, *Nikos Kazantzakis* 139)

Essentially, his politics reflected the needs of his creative personality. They were thrust upon him by his times or by the specific climate in Greece. In his creative personality he was very much like his own invention “Odysseus”, who travels the road of political participation in order to reach the destination of an individual salvation by withdrawing from the concrete world into the spiritual world of imagination. For Kazantzakis such flights of fancy were the declarations of his own salvation. ‘Love all things on the bright earth yet stick to none’, (*The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel*, 691) is Odysseus’ motto. This is an accurate description of the personality of Kazantzakis as well. Like Odysseus, he took the road of active political participation in order to arrive at a self knowledge and meaningfulness. He was denied this participation, so naturally he tried to forget it in the interest of the self. This describes Kazantzakis’ creative personality and also indicates the precise paths trodden by many of his characters. His concern was that which made man eternal, and his political engagement was the means “by which he actualized the non political potentialities within himself” (Bien 140).This

means that Kazantzakis was involved in politics because of a basic concern that reached beyond politics.

Naturally, he was abused by both the left and the right wings of politics, as "politics and paradox do not mix" always (Bien 140).To many, he appeared to be essentially political, but he often earned the support and hatred of a variety of contradictory elements. Kazantzakis had differences and disagreements with the authority and the regimes because he seemed to embrace everything instead of defending one position consistently. Perhaps, his temperamental detachment from any ideology might not have allowed him to embrace anything for a long while. Therefore he was greatly misunderstood by the world and, sad to say, rarely understood by his own countrymen even. There cannot be any other writer who has been as misunderstood as Kazantzakis:

> While the Greek communists could call him decadent, fascist, bourgeois, incurably religious, and a warmonger, the Chinese communists could hail him as an apostle of peace, the Orthodox Church could try to prosecute him for atheism, the monarchists could see him as a Bolshevik rabble-rouser, and the communist-controlled resistance movement during the occupation could reject him as secret agent of German intelligence! (Bien, 141)

Kazantzakis himself knew this better. He was all these, but never had any blind allegiance to any of these. He once said, “There is no regime that can tolerate me – and very rightly so – since there is no regime that I can tolerate” (Helen Kazantzakis 402). Certainly, Kazantzakis had affinities to Socialism and Communism, but he never allowed this affinity to grow itself to any political affiliation or dimension. He was seeking something different. “I have ceased to identify my soul’s fortunes – my salvation – with the fortunes of this or that idea. I know that ideas are inferior to a creative soul” (Bien, 142). This assertion reveals that his political inclinations were meant for, or even to some extent an excuse, for his personal salvation, and nothing else.

In *Zorba the Greek*, Kazantzakis speaks of his endless search through the character of the Boss. “I fell into the word ‘eternity’, and afterwards into other words such as ‘love’, ‘ hope’, ‘country’, ‘God’. Each time I thought I had been saved, and continued on my way. But I had proceeded nowhere. I had simply changed words” (*Zorba* 162). However, his nationalism, communism, socialism and metacommunism and the non political allegiances such as aestheticism and Buddhism were not mere ‘words’ as he put it. They were the means to his own salvation or emancipation. The cry for freedom was at the core of all these is marked by an enduring dualism: the unmistakable Kazantzakian temperament and personality. “Freedom, for him, meant an escape from the material into the spiritual or imaginative; his obsession with freedom explains why, from the start

of his career to the end, he was correspondingly obsessed with what he termed transubstantiating flesh into spirit" (Bien 143).

Kazantzakis' walk through political experience enabled him to actualize his own personal potentialities for a mature and meaningful idealism. This meaningful idealism is a spiritual accomplishment "to fulfil his need to transcend the flesh and be free" (Bien 143). By observing Kazantzakis' career, it can be seen that his romantic zeal for perfection impelled him into radical political allegiances through which he dreamed of remaking the world and freedom. But later, he must have realized that in a political system, the ideal concepts of freedom and perfection are hardly possible. This is the reason why he turns away from the Russian Socialism and the experiments done by Lenin there, despite his being a great admirer of him.

Kazantzakis' obsession with freedom which is equated with the 'transubstantiation of flesh into spirit' is the theme of all his works. It is also the final fulfilment of freedom. This ultimate freedom is actualized by his heroes – Odysseus, Manolios, Captain Michales, and Christ who chose death as an antidote to despair. Sometimes this search ends in a kind of purposeless heroism that we find in the death of Captain Michales. This identification with the spirit is the only exit to escape from the enslaving materialistic reality of our life. Later we see that "all his future permutations – his socialism, nationalism, communism, metacommunism - were conditioned by these obsessions" (Bien 146). In every case he was seeking an exit from one another to heal his own soul. Although

Kazantzakis has never admitted this completely, “the hidden motif behind his political as well as aesthetic and religious thought was how to win freedom from despair” (146). Kazantzakis believed that the person who creates is truly free, particularly the one devoted to the search for the cry of a spiritualized future.

Winning of freedom whether political or otherwise, is his only concern. This supreme manifestation of freedom as the title rightly suggests is the theme of *Freedom and Death* which is considered to be Kazantzakis’ modern version of *Iliad*. The context is Crete in the late nineteenth century; its backdrop is the epic struggle between Greeks and Turks, and in the broader sense, between Christianity and Islam. The action is triggered by a new uprising which takes place in retaliation of those abortive struggles of 1854, 1886, 1878, and the island is thrown into confusion and chaos yet again. The history of Crete is unlike that of any other Western nation, a long and virtually unbroken succession of foreign dominations and unsuccessful revolts. There were villages whose entire adult population consisted of widows only; such a village appears in *Freedom and Death*. Though certain amount of religious and political independence was granted, Crete was the most poorly governed province in the Turkish Empire, as well as the most harshly ruled (Levitt, *Cretan* 5). For Kazantzakis, it is like a personal recollection from the early childhood and a kind of nostalgic yearning for the past mixed with patriotism and heroism. He writes:

> I lived it in sanguinary way when I was four years old and later on all time I was growing up in the tragic atmosphere of Crete. The human beings in this book, the episodes, and the speech are true even if they appear incredible to people who were born in the light or half-light of western civilization. (*Report* 486)

The mythological and heroic quality of Cretan folk art resounds throughout Kazantzakis' art; his view of man is at once naturalistic and heroic; his heroes are many faceted, capable of great cruelty and injustice as well as great flights of spirit. It is the brother of Captain Michales who blows up the monastery of Arkady to save it from Turkish atrocities and mutilations. This is the spirit of the people. And it is this spirit which distinguishes the art of Kazantzakis from those of all contemporaries. "If art and life appear to imitate one another in Crete – if past and present, fiction and fact, seem virtually interchangeable – it is merely a reflection of the continuity of Cretan tradition, of a living heritage which itself seems almost a work of art"(Levitt, *Cretan* 24).

Kazantzakis' basic motif that the contradictory forces eternally struggle with each other is actualized in his characters. Whatever their ostensible nationalities, Kazantzakis' heroes are all Cretans and their adversaries whether they are called Turks, or Pharisees or Dominicans – represent the forces that have opposed Crete throughout its history, the same forces that eternally confronted God and man at abyss. Torn between intellect and spirit, like the boss in *Zorba the*

Greek, entangled between the demands of patriotism and those of flesh, like Captain Michales in *Freedom and Death*, or caught between their desire for normal life and their compulsion to martyrdom like Francis in *St. Francis*, and Jesus in *The Last Temptation* and Manolios in the *Greek Passion*, Kazantzakis' heroes strive and struggle for unity and self knowledge and very rarely succeed. His metaphysical conflict is played out in all the fiction against a back drop that is at once naturalistic and symbolic, demonstrating both the sources of Kazantzakis' art and uniqueness (Levitt, *Cretan* 165).

The political atmosphere and the strong aspirations of the people for securing freedom are mixed up with spirituality and faith in *Freedom and Death*. With regard to the Pacha, the representative of Turkey in Crete, though he is a political person his spiritual convictions are sound and clear. When he was asked by Metropolitan, the Christian priest, whether he was disturbed by evil spirits or good spirits for their oppression and tyranny in Crete, he retorts:

> "I be disturbed?" exclaimed the Pacha. Don't you then know that a true Musulman is never disturbed? For, he knows that everything that happens in the world was already written, and no one can strike it out. And if at this moment the Sultan were to send me a *firman and* demand my head, I might well bewail, I certainly would bewail, but not be disturbed. It stood written so. Shall I put my hand into God's plan? (170)

Similar fatalistic reasoning is seen in *The Greek Passion* as well. When Agha, the Turkish official clarifies Manolios' view, who believes that there are two classes, the rich and the poor and their inevitable conflict, Agha totally disagrees with Manolios, because he has already submitted himself to the God's plan according to which world moves. He is trying to convince Manolios:

> Are all the fingers equal? There are little ones and big ones, God made 'em like that. And that's how He's made men too, some little, the others big. Some masters, the others slaves. That's how He's made fishes – the big eat the little. In the same way God has placed the sheep along side the wolves: for the wolves to eat the sheep. This is God's order . . . (363)

The novel begins with Agha's reflections on life and its finitude. There is no room for any question on the perfection of this work of art, namely, the world. "All that the good God has made is perfect, he thought: this world's a real success" (7). Human life enacted on this earth is a flawless programme which would happen in its due course under any circumstances. On another occasion Agha speaks about the unalterable destiny: "It was written . . . Who can lay blame on God? He willed it so, He had written it. All that happens, happens by his will; bow the head and be silent . . . All is written" (230). All that happens happens because He wants it to happen, so it happens. Similarly, old Sifakis, the father of Captain Michales justifies his being *palikare* (captain). The role assigned to him in this life is to fight

Turks. “I’ve lived my life well and soundly and like a *palikare,* I don’t regret it. God made me a wolf and I eat lambs. If He’d made me a lamb, the wolf would have eaten me, and rightly! That’s how the order of things will have it. Is it my fault? It’s the fault of Him who made wolves and lambs” *(*431). He seems to acknowledge the divinity and its system of distribution without any apparent protest. In a way, his simple conclusion about life and Turkish fatalism are of the same kind. But Kosmas the nephew of Captain Michales who shares the communist philosophy and who dreams for the political salvation rejects this Turkish view and bluntly affirms: “There is no such a thing as fate” (391). His uncle seems to agree, for he fights on in the mountains so that the Turkish oppressors should not claim that Crete had surrendered at her own free will. “In the conflict between Turkish fatalism and Cretan free will, between naturalistic and a heroic view of man, it is the latter which somehow wins out, so that man is ennobled by his apparent defeat and not degraded” (Levitt, *Cretan* 170).

It can be affirmed that the character of Kosmas, the Europeanized nephew of Michales, a man of letters and a socialist, who returns to his homeland with a Russian-Jewish bride is unmistakably Kazantzakis himself. His long stay in foreign lands and the belief in westernized theory of liberation remind us of the long exile and the sway of socialistic principles undergone by Kazantzakis. Captain Michales is the prototype of Kazantzakis’ father himself. He was trying to resurrect his father through the mighty captain who was a relentless fighter against

the Turks. The uprising of 1770 which was aborted when the promised Russian fleet failed to appear is the theme of the novel. However Kazantzakis' accounts of these actual incidents seem exaggerated and attain epic dimensions because of its excessive richness of incidents and the domineering personalities. In *Freedom and Death*, everything seems larger, inflated and unreal. The Crete and the political struggles for independence abound in the novels which bring about a mythological and epic world, but a real one, a creation not of the artist's imagination alone but of ancestral memories and of everyday life.

There are people and individuals who call God with prayers and tears or a disciplined, reasonable self control. But the Cretans called and implored Him with guns. They stood before God's door and fired rifle shots to make Him hear. Captain Michales is no exception. Political salvation of Crete dominated the centre stage of his mind which was never disturbed by spiritual or emotional conflicts as in the case of Jesus and St. Francis. Whenever he thought of Crete he stinted no energies in hesitation and readily disputed with God. "A violent blasphemy pressed forward to the tip of his tongue. He did not lament before God, he was angry with Him. He asked for no sympathy; he asked for justice" (147).

Kazantzakis imparts a political colour and dimension to everyone in the novel, and even the local priest is not spared from this. Freedom and struggle, God and religion often get mixed up in his speeches. The Metropolitan believes that he has failed in his religious duties because he has not been a good patriot. He is

supposed to speak of religion and spirituality but very often he forgets his calling and delivers an unusual political sermon not spiritual one:

> My children, the old man said, "now comes a great time of fasting, the sufferings of Christ are approaching, fear must dominate Man, and he ought to direct his thoughts only to the blood which was shed upon Cross. And yet God forgive me! I speak of the suffering of Christ, and I am thinking of Crete . . . I have sinned, O my God" muttered the Metropolitan, and his eyes filled with tears. "I have sinned! I am guilty. Instead of speaking of Thy sufferings, I spoke of Crete. (107)

The Metropolitan's comparison between Christ and Crete is his religious optimism that Crete some day would be resurrected like the martyred Christ. Later on the Metropolitan realizes that Crete could be resurrected only by the political intervention of Russia. He seems to have lost faith in the providence. He reiterates his faith in the new master: "I understand what believing means. What God means, and how He comes down upon earth and goes about and speaks with men. As long as Russia exists, I have no fear" (390). Kazantzakis' faith in Socialist Russia and its power to liberate Crete is explicitly articulated by a spiritual person here in the form of a sermon. He solely relies on the political philosophy of Communism instead of the redeeming quality of Christianity to save the mankind

from injustice and slavery. Being a Cretan to the core of his heart, his spirituality is in no way in conflict with the politics of salvation of his country.

However, Captain Michales feels pity for the plight of Crete. “Forsaken Crete,” . . . “For how many generations have you cried out, unlucky land, and who has heard you?” He does not share any belief in miracles. For him politics means action and miracles never happen unless man prompts. He tells his countrymen, “Even God needs a threat for his miracle. The mighty ones of the earth want good threatening. Grasp your gun once more, you fool: that will be your Muscovite. There is no other!”(65). The helplessness of Cretans does not leave Captain Michales desperate but he relies on his own strength for resistance. Of all the characters Kazantzakis had created, Captain Michales would remain unforgettable because of his brave personality and strength of character.

Turkish domination and the consequent loss of freedom affected every sphere of social and religious life of Cretans. Crete lives through the years in a kind of perpetual Passion Week. People endure sufferings and it resembles the sufferings of Christ. “In the whole of Christendom there were no people that shared so deeply, so bloodily, in so special a way in the sufferings of Christ as the Cretans during these decades. In their hearts Christ and Crete were mingled, the sufferings of both were the same: the Jews crucified Christ and the Turks Crete”

(176). Politics and spirituality are interwoven in the novel. The tragic irony of Cretan people is that this was not their first battle; for a thousand years they had been fighting, a thousand times they had been defeated and killed and they had risen again. The struggle never ends in Crete. Through the struggles and sacrifice the Cretans redeem themselves from the apparent political context to a higher spiritual level. This is perhaps the only reason why the Cretans, despite the failures, continue their commitment to the great cause. Cretans continue to dream, not of themselves, but of Crete, and it is the dream of all Cretans through the centuries: *Freedom or Death*. Unsuccessful striving for freedom and a tradition that distinguishes them from other people impelled Kazantzakis to develop and expand a unique sense of liberty for his life. As Kazantzakis put it:

> Love of liberty, the refusal to accept your soul's enslavement, not even in exchange for paradise; stalwart games over and above love and pain, over and above death; smashing even the most sacrosanct of the old moulds when they are unable to contain you any longer - these are the three great cries of Crete.(*Report* 440-41)

Crete is resurrected anew with each new generation; looking at the grand sons gathered around him old Savakis smiles. "Everything is in order . . . I have confidence. The old go under the earth and come again out of the earth, made new. Crete is immortal (303). This rebirth, of course, will be political, and it presumably reflects in some way the Marxist view of the regeneration of man through

revolution. It tends to be a natural belief for Kazantzakis as he is a Marxist sympathizer and fellow traveller who has been educated in Germany and travelled through Russia. But the Metropolitan has faith in the continued Orthodoxy of the Russian church and its people; Kosmas however believes in a new God, a cruel and powerful one. Captain Michales calls out to his fellow soldiers who are undecided about the final attack on Turkish army, "We who are dying, are doing better than they who will live. For Crete doesn't need householders, she needs madmen like us. These madmen make Crete immortal" (467).But the Cretan revolution in fact did not make any social or economic or even political impact. "Its concept of freedom," Levitt P. Morton observes, "is in no way theoretical, but a vital force to be experienced sensuously, one of the essential forces of life . . . when Kosmas dies alongside his uncle, it is not because of any dialectical belief; his death is an inevitable and necessary act of his life. Marxism for him is not a cause of Cretan revolution, but a manifestation of it; he has found in this seemingly alien theology not an excuse for dreaming of freedom, but an intellectualized, Western version of this ancient Cretan dream" (Levitt, *Cretan* 29). That's why Kosmas is excited to meet his uncle Captain Michales at the war-front.

> "Well met, uncle," the other answered, as though drunk with joy. He was transformed. A dark unfathomable ecstasy possessed him. He felt light, and released, as if at this precise moment he had at last come home to his own country. He thought of nothing anymore. All

> Frankish, intellectual ideas had vanished, together with mother, wife and son. Nothing remained standing, except this single, ancient duty. (471)

It is the continuation of the self sacrifice of his race from time immemorial for freedom. So, death of Kosmas and Captain Michales become part of a bloody ritual enacted upon the Cretan soil. Thus the ancient duty at once is political and personal.

Kazantzakis' fictional characters become heroes despite their insignificance in life. They acknowledge it in this hostile world. They are heroic because they relentlessly refuse to accept the fact of their insignificance. Sometimes, of course, they look hyperbolic but it does conform to the realities of Cretan life. Most of the Cretan characters portrayed by Kazantzakis attest to the ultimate nobility of the man who will not be defeated by his surroundings, who will not be ruled by history or fate or even by God. Every one of his fellow fighters retreats from the battle, still Captain Michales alone refuses to sign a truce and bravely accepts his fate and final death. He neither surrenders nor escapes instead dies, in harness, charging the enemy. Kosmas, convinced of the imminent death or in frenzy dies fighting alongside his uncle. "Don't flinch, nephew," said Captain Michales to Kosmas. "There's no hope. Long live Crete!'' You are right" answered the young man. "There is no hope. Long live Crete!"(472).The heroism and tragic nature of

the stoic acceptance of death by Captain Michales at the end of the novel, cannot be missed or ignored by any reader:

> A wild light haloed his face, which was filled with an inhuman joy. Was it pride, God-like defiance, or contempt of death? Or limitless love for Crete? Captain Michales roared; "Freedom or …" and did not finish. A bullet went through his mouth. Another pierced his temples. His brains spattered the stones. (472)

Captain Michales and Kosmas choose to struggle despite their knowledge that they will be defeated and killed. The ultimate honour is to fight bravely without hope. Accepting his fate stoically, the individual must meet his fate only by pressing it to its limits, through which he would go beyond further and discover his freedom. Captain Michales says near the end that he should have written on his banner Freedom *and* death not *Freedom or Death* (465). As for him death is very much identified with freedom. In the final analysis salvation is conferred by death; life's goal is to die honourably.

For Kazantzakis, the tragic conflict is rooted in the fundamental contradiction that pervades nature and man. This is the continuous conflict between man's will to freedom and the knowledge that total freedom is unrealizable. Kazantzakis is aware of conflicts from which there can be no final escape. Once man is caught in the snares of cosmic tensions, he must

reject both optimism and pessimism, and then be ready to arm himself with the defiance to face death itself. Captain Michales who opts for death for defending the motherland in *Freedom and Death* and Manolios who accepts death willingly for political and social cause in *The Greek Passion* are, in fact, rejecting the life given to them in a heroic casualness. In both heroes we witness a meeting of freedom and death as the peak experience of human life (Anton, 61). "So he and Kosmas die, not as Nuri does or the Pasha will, not because of external forces that control their fates, but as free men, the wielders of their own destinies"(Levitt, *Cretan* 32). He did not insist on others to follow his stubborn decision to continue fighting. "All night Captain Michales had weighed which course he should choose - not for himself, which he had already chosen, but for his companions. There was no hope of winning, and he did not want to burden his conscience with their fate. So let each of them be free to go his way" (431). In the epic tradition of Homer, honour is the hero's chief impetus to rise above insignificance, then in the case of Crete; it has produced a great many Homeric heroes. Another heroic instance is the depiction of old Sifakas who, even at the late age of one hundred at least, gains the mastery to write so that he may deface every wall in and around Crete with the slogan "*Freedom or Death*". He is adamant and does not want to learn any other alphabets than this three-word combination (Bien, *O Kapetan* 157).

Though Kosmas married a Jewish girl who is alien to the traditions of Crete, he is supposed to reject his European cosmopolitanism and remain barricaded behind its own traditions. Kosmas, as he is away, will not be returning for Easter this time. Crete, we learn later, is crucified and will be resurrected only if her sons are willing to die for her. In sum, he is an apostate who has deserted his post. In the same context, we hear about Emine, the deceased wife of Nuribey distracting the iron willed Captain Michales just as Kosmas is seduced by cosmopolitanism and western science (Bien, *O Kapetan* 160). Eventually, Kosmas returns to fulfil his duty to the homeland and Captain Michales murders Emine so that lustful thoughts about her should never shake his determination to free the country. Peter Bien very critically comments: "The strongest force determining character in Crete is family pride. Individuals can be led into apostasy by intellectual errors or by emotional ones. Mind and heart, each having gone astray, must return to the strait and narrow path that history imposes on Cretan families"(161).

Although *Freedom and Death* is generally praised by Greek readers who approve of its patriotic theme, Bien feels that it is flawed politically. The political flaw is "that the hero does not act from political motives although the novel would like us to believe that he does" (165). Captain Michales has all the worthy qualities required for a leader such as unshakable determination, single-minded devotion and extraordinary courage. But he also has an independent soul

which refuses to comply with the decisions of the revolutionary leadership. “I owe no explanations to anybody . . . only to myself” (337) is the strong assertion of Captain Michales. ‘Limitless love for Crete’ made him stiff and stubborn. That’s why despite the repeated requests from his own co patriots, Captain Michales and Kosmas court death just for the sake of it. No one would question the integrity and commitment of Captain Michales. He proudly proclaims, “I am Crete” (468). We cannot say that he exaggerates, “instead, it is Cretan life that exaggerates. Kazantzakis creates a hyperbolic fiction based on hyperbolic reality” (Bien, *O Kapetan* 164). Captain Michales is a tough leader with rare magnetism. His manly features are admired even by Turks. Nury Bey, the Turkish counterpart of Captain Michales who is his arch rival in Meghalo Kastro glances at his heroic figure. “What a man!” he thought, “what pride and what courage! He never says a superfluous word, he never boasts. He doesn’t quarrel with those beneath him. He knows no fraud. He has no respect even for death. Happy the man who has such an enemy” (27). ‘Cretan Glance’ with all its glory and possibilities is found in its full expression in Captain Michales. Kazantzakis once wrote about the underlying philosophy of this phrase:

> Crete, for me is the synthesis which I always pursue, the synthesis of Greece and the Orient. I neither feel Europe in me nor a clear and distilled classical Greece; nor do I at all feel the anarchic chaos and the will-less perseverance of the Orient. I feel something else, a synthesis, a being that not only gazes on the abyss without

> disintegrating, but which, on the contrary, is filled with coherence, pride, and manliness by such a vision. This glance which confronts life and death so bravely, I call Cretan. (*The Odyssey* xix)

The Cretan Glance is the peculiar attitude towards the enigma of life and death. Kazantzakis represents this as man's finest confrontation with his destiny and his best hope for continuing the struggle towards an ineluctable failure. But even in the tussle with destiny, dignity is preserved at all costs. It is a state of mind that refuses itself to be defeated even when imminent death is at the door steps with all its powers of destruction. The metaphor is borrowed from the Minoan frescoes in Crete, in which semi-nude young men and women are depicted in ritual dances in front of fierce bulls over whose deadly horns they are to raise themselves and leap. He was greatly impressed by the frozen rhythms of matchless heroism of the ancient culture and history in those fresco paintings. We learn that "the Cretan glance" became Kazantzakis's special phrase for the particular posture and temper which these young people assumed in accepting, with unusual grace, at the risk of their own destruction. Gazing into their eyes Kazantzakis was able to perceive a kind of combination of playfulness and fearlessness that death is challenged, and is not feared. There is no hope at all, yet never to give up. Thus the Cretan transforms terror into a high game wherein man's virtue, in direct contact with the beast, becomes tempered and triumph. The Cretan triumphs without killing the fierce bull because he does not think of it as an enemy but as a collaborator. He

knows that without a prominent adversary, his body would not become strong and charming and manly. Kazantzakis exemplifies his thought about Cretan Glance:

> . . . to endure and to play such a dangerous game, one needs great bodily and spiritual training and a sleepless discipline of nerves; but if a man once trains himself and become skilful in the game, then every one of his movements becomes simple, certain, and graceful. The heroic and playful eyes, without hope yet without fear, which so confront the Bull, the Abyss, I call the Cretan Glance. (*The Odyssey* xix)

The Cretan Glance for Kazantzakis, therefore, was an attempted synthesis of those contradictory forces which he believed to underlie all human and natural endeavours in life. This same metaphor serves Kazantzakis in identifying the synthesis of values he has drawn from the troubled history of his native island of Crete. The centuries of rebellion against foreign overlords, and its recurring tragic defeats, and its determined will to rebel again has always impressed Kazantzakis. The will and heroism while courting inescapable death, is unique.

> On a philosophical level, we know that Kazantzakis utilized this metaphor to characterize, still iconographically, the “heroic and playful eyes” with which modern man may, “without hope yet without fear,” face the Nietzschean abyss and determine to

> continue the Bergsonian struggle for one's ultimate destruction. (Rexine 92)

Thus, Captain Michales, Kosmas, Father Yanaros and to a great extent, Zorba too face their ultimate destruction with neither hope nor fear of anything known or unknown.

While examining the political, philosophical and literary contribution of Kazantzakis, Morton P. Levitt and James Lea support the view that Kazantzakis sought salvation through his art and that he believed that individual and societal salvation were inextricably bound together. Lea thinks that Kazantzakis accepted the notion of revolutionary resistance and the possibility of a new form of community. His views include personal, political, and metaphysical levels but it also emphasizes freedom from enslavement to ideologies, left or right, Eastern or Western. It also means freedom from fear and hope, yet the human being cannot support the claim for absolute freedom. "The circle is closed," says Lea, "and man goes beyond freedom to come back to the struggle to freedom. Thus, limitation of absolute freedom leads to an unending quest for affirmation in the face of negativity. This gives purpose and therefore a measure of harmony and satisfaction to our lives" (152). Marxist political theory which envisages freedom from poverty and oppression becomes the hope for humanity. Thus Kazantzakis links up hope and politics and freedom.

Political struggle for freedom on the part of his oppressed people so deeply impressed the young Nikos throughout his life, that he championed the cause of the oppressed and the downtrodden. It instilled a sense of rebelliousness in his make-up, the rebelliousness that was to uphold religious and metaphysical as well as political levels. The struggle also conveyed a stark picture of human suffering, degradation, and a resultant sense of duty to humanity. These were the basic concepts that Kazantzakis later translated into more philosophical and political terms. And perhaps most important of all, thereby, Kazantzakis gained a burning thirst for liberty: "Freedom was my first great desire" (*Report* 71).

While concluding the discussions on *Freedom and Death* and the politics of his motherland, it must be noted that Kazantzakis' realm was a world of expanded horizons. It is not restricted to the political milieu and the aspirations of Cretans alone. He learned that Crete and Greece are not the only lands which struggle and suffer for freedom. "The world was larger than Greece, the world's suffering was larger than our suffering, and the yearning for freedom was not the exclusive prerogative of the Cretan, it was the eternal struggle of all mankind" (*Report* 96). Later Kazantzakis liberates himself from the politics of Crete and diverts his creative urge to new pastures of art for complete deliverance. He confides: "Only two or three primitive passions had governed me until this time; fear, the struggle to conquer fear, and the yearning for freedom. But now two new passions were kindled inside me: beauty and thirst for learning" (*Report* 96). However, we find

that he cannot altogether give up politics from the priority of writings and he continues to dwell on politics and spirituality in other novels as well.

Kazantzakis' other political novels are *Christ Recrucified* and *The Fratricides.* Each draws heavily upon Greek folk religion, custom and attitude and puts them into a political context, indicating how complex and intertwined political ideology and cultural orientation are. The particular ideas dealt with in these novels are principally the conception of Christ's death and Resurrection. In *The Greek Passion* the people chosen to act the Passion Play eventually emerge in their identification with the characters they portray. As a result of this identification, the inevitable confrontation between good and evil would follow. They, in effect, act outside the roles assigned to them as Christ, Judas, John, Magdalena. Manolios, in particular, who is chosen to act the role of Christ soon outgrows the plot of the Passion Play and moves to the reality of spiritual and political experience.

The novel falls roughly into two halves: the first part deals with the hero's private religious development up to the point where he wholly assumes the identity that was initially thrust upon him by others. The second part expands the action to embrace the public and political involvements of the hero who now actively seeks out of his own Passion. The events of the first chapters are concerned only about preparation for the Passion Play. Once the different roles are assigned to the villagers, they start identifying with the respective characters. Manolios' transfiguration takes place gently in silence at first, because it is

concerned only with his personal religious development; but the action becomes political as he comes into conflict with authority (Ziolkowski, 129-134). The organized church and the village notables turn deaf and blind to the appeals made by Manolios on behalf of the refugee brothers. Such appeals later take the form of violent protests and disturb the peaceful ambience of the tradition-bound Christian village.

The novel is set in the background of a Greek community which is ruled over by a Turkish Agha, the representative of Constantinople. Life and society are somewhat primitive and at first we might imagine that the book is set in an earlier century, but it gradually emerges that the action takes place in Anatolia, some time in the mid 1920s, after Turkey recaptured the region in the First World War. It is an artistic remodeling of the story of the Gospels, with the Agha cast as Pontius Pilate, various villagers dressed up as Christ and the disciples, and the local Orthodox Hierarchy as the Sanhedrin. Lots of surprises are noticeable for those who expect something Biblical, as very often the story deviates from the Bible tale and passes through spiritual, religious, social and political twists and turns. However, Kazantzakis has genially maintained the style of narration like that of a fairy tale. In Kazantzakis' novels the time and history in the Greek view are not critical or particular but only general. The cycle of events which make up Kazantzakis' stories could have happened at any time in Greek history. In *Freedom and Death* and *The Greek Passion* Turkey happens to be the foreign

overlord of the Greek, but it might have been any other. Greek nationalism and religiosity reverberate everywhere:

> The constant cry of faith rings out that Greece is immortal. She dies only to rise again. History literally repeats itself: the struggle between the affluent and the dispossessed, between the humble and the self-righteous, between the Christ and the Anti-Christ will never be brought to a conclusion one way or the other. On every Easter Christ dies and rises again. In every conflict of good with evil He dies and rises again. In the revolving seasons He dies and rises again. (Dillistone 77-78)

Manolios is wondering how he can become worthy to bear the terrible weight of the cross. Pope Grigoris is speaking metaphorically that Manolios is to become Christ, or even Christ like; he is merely to play the role of Christ. The Passion Play, to the elders, is a sign of the continuity of tradition. It also serves as a Greek affirmation before the Turks of their essential identity, unity and solidarity. The play is designed in such a way to tender a warning to their own people of the sanctity, integrity and authority of the social and religious institutions under which they lived. At the same time, it is a devise for the conservation of their culture as well. But for Manolios, their chosen Christ, it is revolutionary; the role for him is real, not symbolic, his sacrifice is a matter of life, not of play (Levitt, *Cretan* 37). He grooms himself for the great role for which he has to cleanse all the impurities from the mind. Quite often he is confounded with the dilemma. How far can he be

sincere to that mission with his simple and ordinary mind of a common man. Manolios looks into his inner self, realizes his human weaknesses, but determines to go ahead with the mission:

> "Aren't you ashamed, Manolios', I said to myself, 'you think it's play, the Crucifixion? Do you imagine you are going to take in God and men like that? You love Lenio, you want to sleep with her, and you'd like me to believe that you're Christ? Shame on you, impostor! Make up your mind, hypocrite!' From that moment I resolved: 'I won't marry! I won't touch a woman! I'll remain chaste. (183)

He decides to accept the role religiously in its true spirit. Instantly, Manolios becomes Christ himself with all his love and compassion for the suffering fellow beings around him. Kazantzakis forges his character in the crucible of life's scalding sufferings and excruciating experiences and not alone on the stage of the Passion Play.

On the very day when the roles are assigned for the play, an entire village of refugees, driven from their homes by the Turks, arrives at Lycovrissi. Completely exhausted and famished, they seek aid, hoping that their three month long wandering exodus would end. The leader of the refugees, pope Fotis is equally tired of want of food and rest. Later he is posed as sharp foil to the well fed and complacent local priest, Grigoris who is his rival and religious counterpart. This predicament of refugees grants ample occasion for Kazantzakis to criticize

institutionalized Christianity and the thoroughgoing selfishness of the villagers. The prosperous inhabitants of Lycovrissi are unwilling to render even the slightest assistance to their fellow Christians. Pope Grigoris and his people attempt to drive the starving refugees away. “Cholera!” cried pope Grigoris once more: “These strangers are bringing the appalling scourge into our village; we are lost!” (50). In contrast, the Turkish Agha turns out to be more humane and charitable than the Christian elders of Lycovrissi.

But it is with the arrival of the refugees, that the dichotomic spirituality of the Christians of the village is poised and thrust into a political context. At the beginning itself, the novel acquires increasingly political implications in the struggle between the villagers and the refugee-new comers. “The old, regular pattern of life in Lycovrissi alters with their arrival, takes on a form still more ancient: in *The Greek Passion*, the Cretan experience, the metaphor of man struggling against history to renew himself, is relived on the mainland of Asia” (Levitt, *Cretan* 35). Kazantzakis poses Greek refugees against the well-to-do Greeks of the village of Lycovrissi and relates how the latter drive away their dispossessed brethren. An inevitable confrontation approximating class war is mildly suggested at the beginning as they step into the village. For the basic need of dwelling somewhere, they undergo staunch sufferings and starvation. The attempts to establish a community and settle somewhere, even if it is the deserted mountain-tops, is not allowed by the village heads and the high priest. As a last

measure, prompted by the constant confrontation with acute famine, the refugees are outraged and assault Lycovrissi and they are repulsed by the villagers. Thus they learn that resorting to violent methods would not make any significant improvement from the present situation of uncertainty and they decide to continue the quest for the new community. However, Kazantzakis does not totally reject violence. The central figure of the novel, Priest Fotis, the spiritual leader of refugees, who eventually becomes a political leader as well, summarizes Kazantzakis' view in a revealing monologue: "There was a time when I too used to say: Why struggle for this life here below? What does the world matter to me? I am an exile from Heaven and I yearn to go home to my country. But later I understood" (378). Pope Fotis learns that one cannot attain heaven unless he has first been victorious on earth, and one cannot be victorious on earth unless he struggles without rest against injustice. He discovers that earth is the only spring board, if at all man is to "fly up to heaven. All the pope Grigorises, the Ladases, the Aghas, the big proprietors, are the forces of evil which it has been allotted us to combat. If we throw down our arms, we are lost here below on earth, and up there in the sky" (378). Priest Fotis and his starving refugees strive out all possible avenues of compromise before turning to violence. Just like Kazantzakis' other heroes such as Jesus, St. Francis, and Father Yanaros, pope Fotis too struggles hard for survival and political existence in a society where spiritual leaders dominate and control the polity of the land.

Agha, the Turkish Sultan's representative rules the village as he wishes and engages himself whimsically for his own personal joy. He does not do anything that upsets the religious freedom and belief of the Christian community. Kazantzakis draws a very precise parallel between the political circumstances in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus and the Anatolian Greek village in the years immediately following World War I in *The Greek Passion*. Correspondingly, the Turkish Agha who represents the political authority in the village is the apt counterpart to Pontius Pilate in the Bible story (Ziolkowski 128). The Greeks of Lycovrissi, especially the elite and notable ones, lead a fairly comfortable life that is devoted to indulging themselves in all the sensual pleasures available in the village. The first elder, George Patriarcheas, recalls the pleasures of his youthful days and attempts almost desperately to relive them in old age. Pope Grigoris drinks his favourite wine, and praises the justice and mercy of God; even old miser Ladhas who denies himself food and clothes continues acquiring new property with a sort of unusual greed. Captain Fortounas, of course, is singularly honest in his self- indulgence. The structure of *The Greek Passion* is built up on a never ending cycle of seasons. The Passion Play takes place every seventh year thus commemorating the seventh day of the new creation. It is an old custom, transmitted from father to son in the village to name five or six of the villagers to revive in their persons, when Holy Week comes round, the passion of Christ (*Recrucified* 17). The story itself moves in perfect harmony with the seasons - the freshness and hope of spring time, the heat and passion of summer, the bounty and

yet the foreboding of autumn, the rigour and even the cruelty of winter - all prelude to another cycle and the repetition of the same pattern of events. Birth and Death, Spring and Autumn, Sowing and Reaping, Joy and Suffering, all are included within the perpetual death and resurrection of the Christ Himself (Dillistone 78 -79). Life in pastoral Lycovrissi is part of the 'wheel of the earth" and the life in this mountainous village follows closely the movement of the seasons. The refugees arrive in spring; in summer their hopes of establishing a community flower; hardship and despair set in autumn; and in winter they rebel. Manolios' new life also follows the seasonal pattern: in winter he gives his life for the people that they may be reborn in the spring. What is unusual is that Manolios' Christ figure is something greater, for he was chosen by the people and condemned and killed by the same people as well. He crystallizes their guilt, yet absolves them of it. Later, he is torn to pieces in the church of Lycovrissi by the same people on the eve of the birth of Christ (Levitt, *Cretan* 44).

In the seemingly peaceful and silent village the action is suddenly triggered when the refugees decide to occupy and to take possession of the land gifted to them by Michelis. This is the major event in the novel which leads to the climax and the inevitable tragedy. Michelis, though belonging to the class of notables in the village, develops a particular fascination for the innocence of Manolios and joins his group. Later, Michelis becomes an active supporter and sympathizer of the plight of the refugees. After his father's death, he donates all his inherited

property to the refugees as a gesture of Christian charity. But the physical possession of the land is objected to by the pope Grigoris on the pretext that Michelis donated it when he was out of his mind. But in fact, he suspects that this occupation and possession would spread out to other areas, just as Communism does, and would overthrow the church. There is a heated exchange of words between Michelis and pope Grigoris whose daughter is betrothed to Michelis. Pope Grigoris' real concern in this deal is that his would be son-in-law will be virtually a pauper if the refugees take possession of the land that he has gifted. Michelis strongly argues for the refugees by quoting the Ten Commandments and reminding the learned priest about the sanctity of the norms. He leaves pope Grigoris saying that theirs is the Christ of the poor and the week: "Good bye, you others!" Michelis repeated. "Our Christ is poor, persecuted; He knocks at doors and no-one opens to Him. Your Christ is a rich notable, who hobnobs with the Agha. Our Christ cries out: "This world is unjust, dishonest, without pity; let it perish!" (*Recrucified* 344).

Moreover, Manolios and his herd begin exposing the hypocrisy and hollowness of the pious words of love and charity frequently quoted by pope Grigoris. Although the villagers are persuaded by Manolios' words, his behaviour arouses the hostility of the pope Grigoris, who sets out to destroy his work and to drive out the detested refugees along with their priest, who competes and challenges his authority. If the new move led by pope Fotis and Manolios is not checked, it would turn into an insurgency against the authority that pope

Grigoris has been wielding over the years. Therefore, he anticipates a class war between the refugees and his people and accuses Manolios to be an agent of Moscow: They "receive orders from Moscow to overthrow religion, country, the family and property, the four great pillars of the world! And pope Fotis has come from the other end of the world bringing, by way of a new Gospel, Moscow's orders!" (*Recrucified* 338). That's how he incites the ignorant people of Lycovrrisi to rise against the refugees. Pope Grigoris cleverly twists the political issue to a religious one, branding Manolios as a heretic and as antichrist. Pointing at Manolios, he angrily cried out, "Here is Antichrist! He it is that is sowing discord among us. He it is who is filling the people's heads with hazy ideas" (*Recrucified* 304). Later it is declared that "Manolios is a Bolshevik!" (*Recrucified* 310). It is in the name of Christ and Christendom that he demands the people to excommunicate Manolios:

> There is, in our Christian sheepfold, a scabby sheep. Brother Christians, it is Manolios. He has rebelled against Christ; it is our duty to strike him a straight blow. He has rebelled against our country, the family and property; he has raised the standard of revolt, a red standard, to plunge us all into bloodshed. He is receiving the orders of Moscow. The faith, our country and honour are in danger. He's a Bolshevik! Our duty is to excommunicate him: that is to say, to separate him from the healthy sheep and drive him towards the

> precipices of Satan, that he may fall down then and we may be saved. (*Recrucified* 342)

But Agha who does not share the Christian faith and brotherhood shows unusual concern and sympathy towards Manolios. He finds no reason to kill Manolios though he is accused of heavy charges including his being an accomplice with Russia to destroy the Turkish Empire. He knows very well that this humble rustic can do no harm to anybody even if he wants to:

> "Devil's own race, these Greeks," Agha thought, "the foxes, the ruffians, the demons! Wolves don't eat one another; Greeks do. Here they are now, wanting, for all they're worth, to eat Manolios Why? What's he done to them? He's innocent, poor fellow; a bit crazy, but he never did anyone any harm. (*Recrucified* 457)

But the excessive urge to court martyrdom forces Manolios to make a dishonest confession that he is a Bolshevik which is far from the truth. It should be remembered that Agha needed more provocation to sentence him to death: "Come admit that you're a Bolshevik, so I can get in a rage and give you up without its breaking my heart. Otherwise I'm afraid of giving a lamb to the wolves… If you confess you're a Bolshevik, that's perfect" (*Recrucified* 459). Readily without any hesitation but spurred up by the urge for martyrdom, Manolios confesses in a kind of hysteria, and bursts out to Agha:

> This world is unjust and wicked . . . the best are hungry and suffer, the worst eat, drink and govern without faith, without shame,

> without love. Such a world must perish! Come all who are starving and persecuted, let us unite, let us set fire to it that earth may purify itself and rid itself of bishops, notables and Aghas! . . . I should like to proclaim revolution over the whole earth. To arouse all men, white, black, yellow; to form an immense all-powerful army and enter into the great rotten towns, into the shameless palaces, into the mosques of Constantinople, and set fire to them! . . . Agha: let him vanish from our lands, let him go to blazes! And then . . . (*Recrucified* 459 -60)

This is more than enough to enrage and drive Agha to madness. The confession made by Manolios should be deemed as an ecstatic one. What he pours out is the anger and indignation of a class which has deep roots in the subconscious of the helpless shepherd. "The Shepherd calls for a class revolution, but his call is not really Bolshevik: it is mystical and not dialectical, a revolution of the spirit and not one of matter" (Levitt, *Cretan* 53). But it is difficult to agree with Levitt Morton's observation because Manolios' arguments are loosely based on the dialectics itself. It may not be explicitly Marxist materialism that all changes result from the inevitable class war between the opposing forces in society. For Manolios, bishops, village notables and the Agha are the representatives of the might and authority by which they oppress powerless people. The war that he proclaims is the war of the weak and the oppressed against the forces that have been suppressing them from time immemorial. In this political struggle, Kazantzakis

knows that winning, as in the case of Cretans, is not the only aim, it involves death as well. For Kazantzakis, death and freedom are complementary. So Manolios' death is a sought after one and inevitable for greater freedom. Manolios' act of kindness and hospitality towards the refugees and their leader pope Fotis provoked the villagers who brand him mad, anti Christ and Bolshevik. They scream, 'Excommunicated… Bolshevik… Manolios the excommunicated … Manolios the Bolshevik "The hand that kills Manolios will be sanctified, shouts the crowd" (*Recrucified* 343). It is at this point that a parody of Christ's passion actually begins. Panayotaros, the Judas, delivers Manolios to the Agha who, in the novel, assumes the part of Pilate and interrogates his prisoner. Dragged to the church, he confronts his pharisaical accusers and pope Grigoris, the chief among them, who in pious words of hate inextricably connects Christianity and the Greek nation. Manolios justifies the accusation of his being Bolshevik, "If Bolshevik means what I have in my spirit, yes, I am a Bolshevik, Father; Christ and I are Bolsheviks" (*Recrucified* 463). Reading the Bible out of experience rather than theology and interpreting it and trying it out in the social context suggests strongly that Kazantzakis had anticipated a kind of Liberation Theology which revolutionized Latin American faith and politics. Manolios and his friends struggle against the social reality of opposing forces by dint of Christ's own words and the essential principles of Christian brotherhood and charity.

It is interesting to note that it is for the sake of Constantinople that pope Grigoris demands the death of Manolios. Clever enough to realize that he would

only lose by attacking. Manolios' Christian charity on religious grounds, Grigoris alleges that he is a Muscovite and a political threat to Turkey. He persuades Agha to arrest Manolios, whom he calls a dangerous Bolshevik: "He has one aim only: to overthrow the Ottoman Empire. Behind him stands the Muscovite, pushing him on. If we let him live, he'll have us all" (*Recrucified* 490). Though Agha has no intention to involve himself in this issue, he is finally persuaded to act in favour of the pope. But when Manolios refuses to defend himself, Agha resolves to let the Greeks have their way and judiciously utters the very words of Pontius Pilate. If Manolios insists on playing the saint, he must suffer the consequences. Agha, deciding that it would mean too much trouble if he tried to defend the shepherd, makes up his mind to hand him over. "There he is, take him, you blessed romnoi, and enjoy your meal! I wash my hands of it" (*Recrucified* 497). But gradually everything converges upon Manolios. Nothing will satisfy Grigoris and his followers except the death of this arch-Bolshevik, Manolios the excommunicated. The last chapter reproduces many features of the Gospel-story, of the arrest and trial and death of Jesus. In a solemn and pious manner, as if in a sermon, pope Grigoris exclaims:

> Kneel down, and let us pray… Lord, here he is at Thy feet, the excommunicated; he is waiting for Thy sword to fall on him! . . . As long as this man remains alive, O Lord, religion and honour will be in danger . . . Christendom and the Greek race, those two great hopes of the earth, will be in danger. He is paid by the muscovite, that son

> of Satan . . . .We have assembled this evening in Thy church to judge this criminal, this blasphemer; descend, Almighty, from the vault of the church and judge him; and guide our hands to the execution of Thy judgment, Lord! (*Recrucified* 462)

Instantly the frenzied mob pounces on Manolios who voluntarily courts martyrdom. As a final irony, we realize that it is now Christmas Eve. Christ has died before his birth. "When will you be born, my Christ, and not be crucified any more…?" asks pope Fotis, in amazement and anger. All that remains is the great Christian paradox that Manolios, a Christ, has been reborn, resurrected in death. In *The Greek Passion* Kazantzakis used the Passion Play essentially as a device for delineating characters and for making unmistakable identifications of his characters with greater messianic figures. The idea that man crucifies Christ again is the novelist's own theme, and the Passion play is the vehicle chosen for the literal re-enactment of the that event (Caro 797). It is left to pope Fotis to give the final commentary:

> Dear Manolios, you'll have given your life in vain . . . they've killed you for having taken our sins upon you… In vain, Manolios, in vain will you have sacrificed yourself. He continued. In vain, my Christ, in vain, . . . two thousand years have gone by and men crucify You still. When will you be born, my Christ, and not to be crucified any more, but live among us for eternity? (*Recrucified* 467)

One is compelled to ponder on what the offence of Manolios and his group was. They demanded only justice, because they had already tried and failed to arouse the love and compassion that the Christians generally share. The ethnic sentiments of Greek nationalism had not worked either. Yannakos, giving up soft methods, looks for fire as the symbol of divine punishment. The metaphorical flames of God's justice become literal in the hands of Yannakos (Levitt, *Cretan* 48). "If Christ came down on earth today," he asks Michelis, "on an earth like this one, what do you think He'd have on his shoulders? A cross? No, a can of petrol" (*Recrucified* 382). It is Yannakos who performs the miracle of the petrol, turning it into fire in the storerooms of Ladhas. Yannakos, the simple tradesman has himself turned revolutionary though he has been a minor character without much substantial role in the novel. Creation of a character who sets fire to the heavyweights in the village is not an accident. Twenty years before *The Greek Passion*, in his verse drama, *Christos*, Kazantzakis had visualized a revolutionary Messiah who descended to earth "like fire to cleanse the heart, the mind and the inner being of man." His hero is no simple, Christian saviour, but a destroyer who commands his disciples to set fire to the earth so that a new world may rise from the ashes. "My Apostles, scatter and burn the earth to its root; do not pity it, my brothers . . . And if the just must burn in the fire let them become ashes if it is God's will" (Levitt, *Cretan* 49). Therefore, the character of Yannakos in *The Greek Passion* is a deliberate recreation of Kazantzakis who is in favour of radical changes for which even violence could be resorted to.

Manolios' sacrifice has no practical effect in alleviating the problem raised by the refugees, but it actually aggravates and exacerbates their plight. Manolios is crucified on the cross of his own personal salvation but motivated by the existing political reality of 'the haves' and 'the have-nots'. "He is saved not in the traditional Christian sense of eternal reward, but in the more immediate sense of his personal freedom, because he has achieved at last the awareness of his own identity"(Levitt, *Cretan* 55). He is cock-sure that he is dying for a certain social cause.

Manolios the shepherd, chosen to play at Christ's Passion, follows Christ and his commandments to the letter and the spirit. It is a tragic story of an idealist who presumes to save mankind through his own sacrifice and who naturally fails to do so. His developing role makes a feeling that man would again crucify Jesus if He came again to earth, as the original title of this novel, *Christ Recrucified* very well suggests. We praise the shepherd's decisions because we must reorder our lives and our institutions as well if we hope to groom a new generation. But the poor Manolios forgot that we are dealing with men and not with divinities.

> *The Greek Passion* is the story of man becoming God, not a literal version of the New Testament Passion, not even a close parallel to it; it is a metaphor of the divine possibilities open to all humans willing to struggle with themselves, with their societies, with their conceptions of God… The metaphor of Christ is not the end of the

> book, but one of its means, one start among many to a new life for man. (Levitt, *Cretan* 57).

The wider theological setting of the book is vividly expressed in one of the chapters, titled: “God is a Potter. He works in mud.” The phrase is uttered by pope Fotis and he is indeed the theologian amongst all the varied characters. His theology has grown out of his own life-experience, an experience in which he has seen the judgment and the mercy of God to be dramatically intertwined. He himself has been guilty of the most violent outbreaks of human passion which have parted him from God: yet through bitter loss and grief he has been brought back to Him and now can praise God for all the evil and all the good which he has received. The nature of the relationship between church and government, revolution and bloodshed, the theories of society and personal property all get involved in the tragedy of Manolios. But the crucial question is whether Manolios’ ultimate death should be regarded as that of a Christ-figure or whether it is rather the inevitable penalty of social revolution. Kazantzakis wants to highlight Manolios and pope Fotis as the harbingers of social change and revolution in the politically unconscious village. Manolios himself feels a kind of messianic call from within but it has not been shaped politically until he meets pope Fotis. Later, he begins asserting the role he has to play other than the assigned one in the Passion Play. “Yes! every man,” Manolios responded ardently, “can himself save the whole world. I’ve often had that thought, Father, and it makes me tremble” (*Recrucified* 322). With renewed confidence and

commitment he speaks of his mission, however, he is still not sure of the course of the action: "Have we then such a great responsibility? What must we do, then, before we die? What way must we follow?" Pope Fotis gives him a very simple answer with very great dimension: "By loving men, my son" (*Recrucified* 322).

Religion and spirituality are only means for the politics of salvation. In the Gospels the death of Christ was brought about not as a result of any attempted revolution concerning the ownership of property or the distribution of goods. He was crucified primarily because of his criticism of the religious authorities and because of his identification with the Messianic vocation. But in *The Greek Passion* Manolios takes upon himself the burden of the starving followers of pope Fotis and proposes a definite programme of social revolution to his own compatriots of Lycovrissi. This is precisely the reason which arouses the hatred and animosity of pope Grigoris and the village elders and finally leads to his death. As for pope Fotis and followers, they use the weapons of war in the name of Christ and plunder old Ladhas' house for the sake of the starving brethren. They take up arms in what they call a holy war. A political action is made religiously right and legitimate in the words and actions of pope Fotis. "To suffer, endure injustices and struggle –that's what it means to be a man". The inference is that it is only the man who is prepared to sacrifice himself in the struggle for liberty and justice that is acceptable to God (Dillistone, 86). That's why Yannakos looks for a Christ with a can of petrol to set fire the rich who always rob and exploit the poor and helpless ones.

Politics is the major developing theme of the novel, however, the idea of God and His invisible ways towards man are also highlighted as part of life of the politically awakened village. But it is not very critical as in *The Fratricides*. First and foremost, God is beyond all human understanding. Man is a blind earthworm at God's feet. What can he understand about the incommensurable greatness of God? To illustrate his point pope Fotis recounts the parable which he had learned from his superior in the monastery about a group of blind villagers desiring to gain some comprehension of the mighty elephant. Each touches some portion of its anatomy and gives his report (*Recrucified*180). Evidently, the various fragments of several reports could never succeed in giving a clear depiction of an elephant's true nature. Similarly, God is infinitely greater than human beings; hence His magnitude can never be comprehended by man with his limited knowledge. He can recognize parts of God's ways: but who can understand His thunder and other mysteries? Pope Fotis elaborates this point when Manolios' face is covered by the repulsive flesh. This has, in fact, been his salvation. Because, when he might have succumbed to the passionate urge of the flesh, the leprous mask on his face saves him from lustful intentions towards any woman. "Who, then, had brought about the mysterious and foul affliction?" Then, the priest answered, "God is never in a Hurry," and continued: "He is still, He sees the future as though it were already past. He works in eternity. Only ephemeral creatures, not knowing what will happen, hasten out of fear. Let God work in

silence, as He likes to do. Don't raise your head, don't ask questions. Every question is a sin" (*Recrucified* 187).

Finally, coming back to the very reality of the village after Manolios death, the refugees have to leave instantly or face immediate capture by the Turkish army and consequent death to every one. Therefore, they should save their lives and continue the struggle for bare existence on this earth. As for pope Fotis, who has long since been deprived of his worldly position, he is the first to lead his famished group. Looking up at the peak, foreseeing the fate of his people, "his eyes plunged in to the abyss". That winter, his people beaten and starved, he leads them to rebellion. "We have reached the edge of the abyss," he tells them all now (*Recrucified* 392). The vineyards gifted to them by Michelis are under their possession but they are forced to flee before the Turkish army arrives. Left with no option he urges his helpless and tired ones to march forward with an extraordinary determination: "Let us be off! Let us leave Lycovrissi and Sarakina!" (*Recrucified* 468). All of them confront for themselves the bleak future and from the grave of Manolios they start the next journey to an unknown land. "In the name of Christ, he [pope Fotis] cried, "the march begins again; courage, my children! And again they resumed their interminable march toward the East" (*Recrucified* 470). The novel ends with the forward movement of the famished and the helpless ones under the untiring leadership of pope Fotis.

Pope Fotis, as he leads the refugees in rebellion, carries a mask, of Christ the warrior, with a gaping wound painted red from the temple to chin. He tells his

flock, “Christ is not only a sheep. He is also a lion. And it is as a lion that he will come with us today” (*Recrucified* 392). Using religious terms, he excitedly exhorts the helpless refugees with the slogan that physical encounter has become inevitable. “We shall not vanish!” Pope Fotis asserts on the first day of their arrival in the village, “For thousands of years we have kept alive; we shall keep alive for thousands more” (*Recrucified* 35). In the same vigour at the end of the novel as they leave Lycovrissi, he proclaims proudly with determination, “We are no longer anything but a handful of Greeks on the earth; let us grit our teeth and go forward. No they shall not get us; our race can not die.” This resolution to continue struggling has the reverberations of perpetual Cretan resistance against the Turks. *The Greek Passion* presents some superficial similarities between Manolios and Jesus. Miraculous tales grow around both of them, but it is only for the death of Manolios that the frenzied crowd cries - for excommunication and death. Manolios is too eager to play the role of the political martyr, but his death now poses the problem of human existence - of the right to live and die honourably. It may be futile to struggle against an established social order, but man must continue to do so. Kazantzakis humanizes this struggle and raises it above his own limitations and makes each man a potential Christ. As for Manolios, it was long inherent within him, his role as saviour in the play only accelerates the hidden urge.

The Greek Passion, poses a question against the existing social and religious and political order in which individual freedom is greatly curbed, to do

right or wrong. Organized Church and the governments that come from time to time are always in conspiracy against the personal liberty of the people. Had Manolios remained a harmless shepherd devoid of any political involvement, they would have allowed him to live with his mystical utterances and aloofness. His words and deeds become a matter of concern only when he crosses the accepted borders set by the established social and religious and political institutions. Thus, *The Greek Passion* becomes Kazantzakis' political and social novel in which the role of Church and faith and personal freedom stand analyzed and critiqued.

The Fratricides is a poignant tale of the Greek Civil war following World War II, which centres around two groups in opposition.

> Their life is an unceasing battle with God, with the winds, with the snow, with death. For this reason the Castellians were not surprised when the killing began, brother against brother… And they would pounce on each other, flesh against flesh. And the sweet fratricide would begin" (8).

Marxist ideology of dialectical materialism and the Christian theology of love and forgiveness are sharply contrasted in *The Fratricides.* Father Yanaros, the village priest who shares the matchless humanism of both Christianity and Marxism suffers greatly to harmonize these opposing ideologies. His thoughts on salvation, anguish and concern about spirituality and politics is the theme and content of the novel. Father Yanaros finds it extremely confusing to align himself with any of the factions and he remains dazed at the turns and developments of events in the

novel. He is the spokesperson or the voice of Kazantzakis whose spiritual anxieties and political affiliations have been sharply in conflict with each other. It is on the basis of various influences and events in his political, religious, and moral life that Kazantzakis built up his metaphysics. At the early stage of his evolvement it was basically the metaphysics of rebellion; first, a political rebellion against Turkish rule; second, a religious rebellion against Christian church's hypocrisy. These two inclinations are explicitly manifested in *Freedom and Death* and *The Greek Passion* respectively. On the other hand, *The Fratricides* deals with the salvation of the human being, both political and spiritual.

Politics and spirituality have been the fond subjects of Kazantzakis. Religious and patriotic fervour are confronted predominantly in the conscience of Father Yanaros who is the protagonist in *The Fratricides*. Father Yanaros is depicted as an infinitely strange, deeply Christian man, the only character in the novel who is so profoundly distressed by the fratricidal struggle that he is unable to support any one group or the other. The religious rituals performed in the villages acquire political character when the villagers proceed to dance, walk and kneel up on the fire. In a state of religious ecstasy and exaltation, clutching the icons all the while they cry out, "Long live Greece or Greece will never die". These ecstatic patriotic exclamations spring from the subconscious, wherein the Greek character, religion and nationalism are so closely interrelated as to make it practically impossible to determine where one ends and the other begins.

The conventional question ‘what is your religion’ has no great relevance in Greece and if at all this were posed to a Greek, he or she would immediately retort: “I am Greek”. In other words, ‘Nationalism’ is religion to them; the two are synonymous. Greece is a tradition-bound nation caught up in a deep religious mystique strengthened by centuries of resistance to Muslim Turkish domination. This mystique is vividly portrayed in *The Greek Passion* and *The Fratricides*. Anguish of any civilization is to struggle for deliverance from the many oppressive political, religious, and philosophical masks that dominate it. Greece was not an exception to this. Kazantzakis feels that he too is a co-struggler for the deliverance. “I chanced to be born in an age when this struggle was so intense and the need of help so imperative that I could see the identity between my individual struggle and the great struggle of the contemporary world” (*Report* 452).

As for Yanaros his life and mission are not merely individual deliverance through struggles. His is the deliverance of the whole congregation of which he is the head. He is an exceptional man out of his time and exile from his home. It is the light of truth and the essence of love which animate Yanaros throughout the novel. It is unfortunate that all the other characters fail totally to comprehend him and his plans to bring peace to the war torn village. The irony of the situation is that his attempt for solution itself brings about the ultimate tragedy in which he himself becomes the first martyr. The inner conflicts in terms of his political and spiritual anxieties take him to a very disturbing choice of two opposing groups. As the representative of the religion and church he is bound to be a Christian but his

leniency to communism leaves him confused. Being quite a lone man among them, Yanaros is unarmed and disillusioned, his arms outstretched and empty. He stands alone, looking to the left and to the right, not knowing which way to turn, constantly asking himself that same agonizing questions:

> If Christ came down to earth today, whose side would He take? Would He go with blacks? With the reds? Or would He, too, stand in the middle, with arms outstretched, shouting, 'Brothers, Unite! Brothers, unite!" (9)

Father Yanaros, God's representative in Castello, stands in just this manner and calls to the people. He cries out, but they pass him by, all of them, the blacks and the reds, jeering and shouting: "Bulgar! Traitor! Bolshevik!" "Tramp! Fascist! Traitor! Bolshevik!" (9). No where in the annals of literary creation would a priest be chantingly addressed and deprecated by the people of his own breed and breath in such a disrespectful manner. But all throughout, Father Yanaros maintains a kind of saintly calm and composed attitude towards the severe and adversary comments which question his integrity and morality. However, the ordinary man in him as Christ in the *Last Temptation*, is susceptible to the weaknesses shared by all human beings:

> And Father Yanaros would shake his head, dazed, and walk on. "Thank you, Lord," he would murmur. "Thank you for choosing me for this dangerous task. I can endure it, even though I am not loved here. Only don't pull the rope too tightly, Lord. I am a man, not an

> ox or an angel. I'm only human; how much more can I endure? One of these days I might snap. Forgive me for telling you this, Lord, but at times. You seem to forget it, and You ask more of man than of Your angels. (9)

Yanaros wants to protect the village from the ongoing fratricidal self destruction and he is even ready to give the village to the communists if they are able to bring about peace for all. He falsely believes that the Greek brothers on both sides will unite in love and freedom. Unfortunately, Yanaros pays a heavy price for his mislaid trust in the people. All events have a close identification of religion with politics and nationalism. Yanaros speaks to God on equal terms. His mind is divided on politics and religion.

> "Lord," he murmured, "I can't go on any longer; I tell you truthfully, I can't. For months and months I've been calling You - why don't You answer me? You have but to spread out Your hand over them, and they will be pacified; why don't You do it? Whatever happened in this world happens because You want it to; why do You want our destruction? (44)

Yanaros keeps on asking questions and he earnestly believes that some miracle will save the village from the total destruction. In the world of Kazantzakis' art if Greece is crucified, obviously Greece must be resurrected. Most of the characters see the struggle in religious terms, with the one sided blindness of the politics of

salvation but Yanaros goes further to the extent that the ending of the struggle must also be a religious action, symbolically as well as in real terms. It is the idea of the Resurrection looming large and vivid in his mind, always with the resurrection ceremony as the culmination of this idea in the background that dictates his subsequent actions. It initially makes him realize that he can not wait for God to act, but that he himself must act in the name of God. In a momentary vision Yanaros cries out, “Don’t desert Christ on the cross . . . Hurry and get on with the Resurrection” (159). Yanaros acts on behalf of the whole Christian community in the village and he does not want to forsake Christ though he feels that he himself is forsaken by Christ. Kazantzakis presents through the figure of Father Yanaros the divine element in man in opposition to the evil portrayed by other characters. It is an irony that Father Yanaros happens to be the natural father of Captain Drakos who engages himself in unscrupulous carnage in the village for the sake of a certain faith. On the other hand his father’s task is to discover God’s road to ending the fratricidal horror. Father Yanaros has deep and lasting trust in the force of love, brotherhood, and the divine spirit of man against the forces of evil as he turns the village over to the rebels to stop the slaughter. He compromises with the rebels hoping that there shall not be any more bloodshed. But Drakos, his own son, betrays that trust by breaking their agreement and slaughtering several village elders in the name of freedom and justice. Father Yanaros rails against this “Tyranny, force and the whip? So that is how we get freedom? No, No, I won’t accept that” (248). He, as his prototype Kazantzakis, is the fearless champion of

freedom and he believes that torture and persecution should not be the means of attaining freedom. It is a great fulfilment; there is aspiration and joy for it.

In *The Fratricides*, Kazantzakis relates through Father Yanaros his own belief in one of the three possible roads of the Greek civil war on which the novel is based. They are God's intervention, the leaders' good will, and the people's path, out of which, only the last offers any hope.

> What third road? There is no road! It hasn't opened yet. We have to open it with our labour, pushing onward to make it a road. And who are the 'we'? The people! This road begins with the people, goes ahead with the people, and ends with the people. (155)

Although Yanaros believes in people, he is not sure of himself and the ways his mind travels. As Christianity and Marxism offer the same salvation for mankind, the difference lies only in the dialectics; the former is concerned with spirituality, between the body and the mind; and the other materiality, by the class war between the oppressor and the oppressed. He needs, however a solution -- spiritual or political or otherwise.

The whole novel is the sum total of the anxieties and uncertainties experienced by this village priest whose mind never knows peace and quiet. Alone in his cell, the voices wake within him, asking questions but receiving no reply. Father Yanaros is greatly disturbed, but he finally makes a decision:

> "I'll go to church," he said to himself. "I am burdened with heavy cares; I must find out what to do; my village is in danger; my soul is in danger. He must give me an answer - whether to go to the right or to the left - I want a response. In the name of God - a response! . . . I'm going to talk with God; I want no words with men right now." (136-137)

His allegiance to God remains unshaken, though he fails to understand the language and the silences of his almighty in whom alone lies his great expectations. But he can no longer remain quiet. Father Yanaros is enraged:

> "Speak to me with human words," he shouts, "so I can understand. You growl, but I am not an animal to understand what You say. You chirp, but I am not a bird; you thunder and flash, but I am not a cloud - I am a man; speak to me in the language of men!" (147)

Yanaros poses a volley of point blank questions to God; He has to answer in black and white. *The Fratricides* is perhaps the only novel in which Kazantzakis presents the helplessness of God at the sheer free will of man.

> "Where, on the soil of Greece, are Your images," Father Yanaros asked, "that I may follow them, my Lord? There, that's what I wanted to ask You! Where are You? Whose side are You, on? The blacks'? The reds'? Whose side – so I may join You? (147)

Throughout his life, Kazantzakis has been searching for an answer to these essential questions of right and wrong. He knew that this enquiry never ends and it is an agonizing journey to freedom which is both right and wrong. Kazantzakis has always been upholding freedom as his greatest fulfilment in life. But the very same freedom becomes bondage in *The Fratricides*. This contradiction is the essential core in the thought of Kazantzakis. Yanaros acts himself as he assumes that God has granted him freedom to act on His behalf. However, the freedom that Kazantzakis was yearning for is a burden for Yanaros:

> "Lord, freedom is a great burden; how can man hold on to it? It is too heavy, Father." He placed his palm on his chest. "I take upon myself," he said loudly, as though taking an oath, "I take the responsibility for the salvation or loss of my village, upon myself; I shall decide! You are right, I am free. To be free means that I will accept all the honour or shame - it means that I am human. (149)

Kazantzakis realizes that freedom is an unearthly thing which is not found on this earth. All we can find here is the struggle for freedom. We struggle to obtain the unattainable - that is what separates man from beasts. Kazantzakis does not have any blind faith in the divinity and asceticism if man is kept outside its parameters. Yanaros defines what asceticism should be:

> You call that asceticism? Christianity? Is this what Christ wants? No, no! Today prayer means deeds. To be an ascetic today is to live among the people, to fight, to climb Golgotha with Christ, and to be

> crucified every day. Every day, not just on Good Friday! . . . But that is not Christ, the real Christ walks with the people, struggles with them, is crucified with them, is resurrected with them. (21-22)

Yanaros is completely identified with the people and his religion is mixed up with the politics of his country. He is consistent in listening to the people's needs however insignificant they may appear to be. He turns his religion to those needs in terms of the politics which decides the social life of common man. "I am no longer Yanaros," he would often say to himself in jest, "I am no longer Yanaros - I am Castello" (26). Similar identification between individual man and nationalism can be seen in *Freedom and Death* in which Captain Michales proclaims, "I am Crete" (468). Nationalism, politics and religion are thought to be the self-same interchangeable feelings for the Greeks.

Kazantzakis' obvious leniency towards left philosophy makes him view Christianity very critically and it is made in sharp conflict with Marxism in the novel. Marxist theory of salvation is considered to be the panacea to cure the ills of the world such as poverty, inequality and injustice. Therefore, it is falsely propagated that the presence of such ills is the fertile prerequisite for rooting the Marxist theory of liberation. So, it is nothing unnatural if they start unlearning the old texts of religion in favour of a new theory of liberation. A mother whose child dies of acute poverty shouts with little reverence to God:

> "It's dead, Father Yanaros," she shouted, "It's gone, too. Go tell that to your Master! You mean to say He didn't have a little piece of

> bread to give the child? And He's supposed to be the Almighty? And He claims to be the All-powerful? And He didn't even have a little piece of bread to give this child?" She cried out again: "Tell me, Father Yanaros, what kind of God is this who lets children die of hunger?" (86)

She questions the very authority of God who imposed on Himself the duty of protecting His subjects. And precisely in accomplishing this duty He fails. There is a similar situation of acute poverty and consequent blasphemous outbursts by one of the characters in *The Greek Passion* as well. Yannakos, one of the comrades of Manolios, is angry and indignant with the way in which God's system of distribution is being done. It is unfair and unacceptable for him; he too shouts as the woman in *The Fratricides*: "What is this God who lets the children die?"(*Recrucified* 405). The anger and indignation in these statements are pointed not exactly against God, but aimed at Communism, as Kazantzakis was dreaming for the fair system of Communism in which all are fed and treated equally. Here, Father Yanaros, God's representative in the village is quite helpless and can only look up: "Look! Look around You," he said to God. "Forget the heavens, You're not needed up there; we need You here, my Lord, here in Castello" (85). What Castello demands is food for the children who are hungry and thirsty. In fact the government or the political system should have provided the basic amenities to the people. The political leadership that has no scruples diverts its energy and attention to the ideology just for the sake of clinging on to it without going deeper

into the harsh realities. The majority of people at the grass roots level suffer and die. It is only a truth that any struggle between religion and state, anywhere else in the world, would end in distress and disease and death. In *The Fratricides*, Kazantzakis vividly exposes how absolute helplessness drives men to feed on leftovers and stinking garbage.

Kazantzakis believes that any ideology including Marxism would never succeed in transforming the world if it completely negates spirituality and humanity. Man can not live by bread alone and also vice versa. There must be an interface between the body and the mind, religion and politics. Negation of any one of them would lead to an inevitable failure as happened in Soviet Union. Any political form of government that does not heed to the voice of the inner self of the individual can not bring justice and freedom that can last. It was a belated wisdom for Captain Drakos who realizes and regrets for having killed a monk for the sake of a faith which he thought right:

> It was not the monk he crucified; no, it was that new voice within him; he killed it so it would be silent. But the voice cannot be crucified; you may kill the body, you may cut the throat, but the voice remains; and tonight, again, it rose within Capitan Drakos and tore at his chest. "Change the world, you say? Bring freedom and justice, you say? But how can you change the world when you cannot change man? The heart of man? (199)

Ultimately, good or bad, it has to come out of the heart of man. So Kazantzakis wants the systems and theories to educate men first and purify their hearts so that something good may come out. He believes in the essential goodness of man: “The heart of man is a jumbled mass of caterpillars; blow on them, my Lord, so they will become butterflies!” (211)

Kazantzakis always believed that the essential core of the physical world and the human life and the continuance of mankind are primarily based on contradictory forces and elements. He also believed that these struggles at many levels are inevitable for the survival of life on earth. However, the strife between two opposing factions in Castello and the ruthless fratricide should end because it would deliver nothing good but only ruin. Yanaros initiates peace talks with the two factions several times, all for nothing. One day, keeping the thoughts of harmony in mind, Father Yanaros listens keenly to the Monk who comes from the mountains after encountering the revolutionaries:

> I found the Comforter among the guerrillas, the monk replied quietly, “but they do not know who sent him and they call him Lenin. They don’t even know why he was sent; they think that he came to create a new world, a more just world. But he did not come to create. He came to destroy! To destroy the old world and prepare the way for the One who is coming?” The monk informs the arrival of a new Saviour who is not destined to be crucified by anybody. . . He’ll come and He’ll lead the guerrillas. And won’t be crucified

> again. He won't leave earth this time, . . . Earth and heaven, Father Yanaros, will all become one. (67)

Father Yanaros is excited about the merging of heaven and earth. A world without injustice and exploitation, full of joy and happiness; an ideal he has been cherishing over the years is coming true. Was this the same dream he was praying for every Sunday in the church? He exclaims:

> "That's what I've been hoping for; that's what I've been waiting for, all my life - for earth and heaven to become one," still he was not convinced of the way, "but I don't know the way, and that's why I am tormented"(67).

He thought of the harmony between the warring brothers and the final peace that is yet to be resurrected in the village.

Kazantzakis was attracted to Marxism by its equalitarian economic system and political, and philosophic appeal. Emotionally and intellectually he accepted socialist Russia as the alternative philosophy of salvation which he was seeking. But he was dismayed to discover that, in practice, Marxism followed "many of the aspects of bourgeois Christianity, the inquisitional religion that he opposed". Like many of his more sensitive and compassionate contemporaries, Solzhenitsyn and Pasternak, Kazantzakis saw communism as a religion endangered by materialistic emphasis. He could never have accepted the materialistic bias of communism. As a philosophy Marxism might be the greatest in its humanistic approach. But Kazantzakis knew that later Marxists used injustice to bring about social justice,

committed atrocities against religious men in order to attain the so called brotherhood or 'comradeship'. He exposes this in *The Fratricides*; after killing many of his own people, one revolutionary justifies his act of cruelty and the means he chose to attain the end: "The true communist does not falter when he sees injustice; he accepts it if that injustice helps our cause, everything is for the cause - everything for victory" (235). Marxism, in application, had been intolerant and oppressive to achieve equality, thus it brought about a tragic conflict between the idea and its realization. For Kazantzakis, Marxism became a necessary way out for ordering an ideal for our lives and the sole and absolute vehicle for man's salvation on earth; just as religions claim to be the absolute vehicle for man's salvation after death. The centralist and compulsory means were used to assimilate society into one and the individuals were made to act and think like a collective machine in order to preserve the structure intact. This regimentation process allowed for no deviation, no spontaneity, and no freedom either of opinion or of action. It is only a historic fact that such a vibrant theory of liberation has been misinterpreted and fatal errors have been committed even to the extent of freezing free thinking. Pursuant to his intense involvement with Marxism, Kazantzakis became disillusioned with Soviet Marxism, with all its materialism, bureaucratization, and because of these, its loss of dynamism. However, he never abandoned socialist goals (Lea, 111). While staying in East Germany, where the political situation was very discouraging, Kazantzakis discovered that communism can do a lot to cure the ills of the world and became an admirer of Lenin. But to

continue to become a consistent communist was difficult as he invariably possessed a free soul. Moreover, Kazantzakis witnessed the rise of Joseph Stalin and the atrocities committed by his regime which eventually disillusioned his concept of ideal Soviet style of communism. Around this time, his earlier nationalist beliefs were gradually replaced by more universal and liberal ideologies.The trip that he made to Russia in 1928 was to write about the glory of the new saviour. He planned to travel from one end of the vast country to the other in order to feel the pulse of the people. But he found that his mind and thought, instead of dwelling on the glories of the Revolution, drifted constantly to art and its creative world. He realized that everything he saw and heard must find expression not in propaganda, but in art. He learned that the big ideas of Marxism, despite its great humanism, never satisfy the spiritual needs of men and consequently by early thirties Kazantzakis' allegiance to communism had come to an end. He continued to dream, however, of an ideal system, which he called Meta communism (*The Last Temptation* 512).

In *The Fratricides* he rails against the use of force and bloodshed just for the sake of building a welfare society. He rejects institutionalized Christianity and Marxism with its dialectics in favour of a world view when he formulated his alternative concept of saving God. Kazantzakis was very critical about the blind allegiance and reverence that people attribute to a certain faith, whether political or religious. He always upheld the independence of his mind and intellect which are

ruled by none. That is why he was able to point out the dangers of totalitarianism in Russia:

> Only the leaders ask questions and hold discussions and make decisions; we – the others – only take orders and carry them out. That's the only way a struggle is won. One day they asked a Russian communist, 'Have you read Marx?' And he replied, 'No, why should I? Lenin read him!' You understand, Captain? That's why the Bolshevik revolutions won the victory. (236)

Kazantzakis knew that it is ludicrous to give one superman the absolute power to act on behalf of the majority; he also knew that such a system would eventually fail.

In *The Fratricides*, Kazantzakis contemplates deeply on the morality of fighting and killing even for a liberating ideal from an oppressive one. Leonidas, a sensitive young nationalist soldier, writes to his love in anguish and distress:

> Why am I fighting? For whom am I fighting? They say we fight to save Greece, we, the Royal Army, the blackhoods as they call us; and that our enemies in the hills – the redhoods – fight to divide and sell Greece. Oh if I only knew . . . Is it possible that we are the traitors, the ones who are selling Greece, and can the so called traitors in the hills be the armed mountaineers and the rebels of 1821? How can I tell justice from injustice, and decide with whom to

> go, and to which side I should give my life? There is no greater torment, to a fighter, than this doubt. (102)

Leonidas, who symbolizes Kazantzakis' thoughts, realizes that sincerity and commitment expressed through individual bravery and fortitude is only a sham. He questions the very sanctity of the so called commitment for any cause when his group captures five young rebels as prisoners. Rather than joining the nationalists, they choose themselves to be executed. Leonidas, instead of being impressed by the rare bravery of these young enemy soldiers, wonders how, then: "can I separate truth from the lies? How many heroes and martyrs have sacrificed for some damned ideal; God has his pure heroes and martyrs; Satan has his pure heroes and martyrs; how can I tell them apart?" (102-04). Kazantzakis has an answer to the query of Leonidas. The answer is found in his equation of God with freedom in his ultimate interpretation as the attempt "to transcend man's destiny and unite with God, in other words with absolute freedom" (*Report* 454). The struggle for freedom is the essential duty of every man whether in Marxist social justice, Hellenism's synthesis, or Christian humanism; but struggling alone is not the attainment of freedom but it is the passionate quest for something greater within the parameters for freedom.

The primary contribution in Kazantzakis' works, as in life, is struggle, the struggle for freedom. The recognition of this theme as the culmination of Kazantzakis' thought is shared universally. Struggle to save God is, in a way assertion or affirmation of freedom itself. Yanaros is caught between two

formidable forces, ". . . I am still alive, I am still struggling with God above and with the demons below. These are the two millstones that grind me . . . To save my body or my soul - which of the two?" . . . as long as we live, those two beasts never part company" (61). His struggle is endless as his freedom is infinite. The journey of Christ from the carpenter's shop to the summit of Golgotha and the march of pope Fotis with his dispossessed refugees to the distant land of freedom in *The Greek Passion* are also struggles. These struggles are undertaken neither by blind instinct nor by the knowledge of the goal and its rewards. But it is experienced as painful ascent towards greater freedom, and suffering is its only reward. Therefore, Kazantzakis' heroes refuse to yield to human power for its own sake. They maintain certain ideals by which they live; regardless of the failure in establishing their ideals, because their worth as heroes lies in their struggle and spiritual self-attainment, not in defeat or victory. They do not yield to human power for its own sake because they are uniformly motivated by the great passion that underlies all liberating political movements – the unquenchable desire for freedom. This struggle allows the release of the spirit from the inhibitions of institutionalized ideology and religion (Lea 135).

While discussing *The Fratricides, The Greek Passion,* and *Freedom and Death* we understand that Kazantzakis has much to offer for political Philosophy and thought; but there are those who disagree. Bien, for example, argues that Kazantzakis was only "circumstantially and never essentially" concerned with politics, but he was "concerned primarily with his own salvation" and not with the

welfare of society. He holds that political involvement was for Kazantzakis only a path to individual salvation: “We may speak, therefore, of ‘Kazantzakis and politics,’ but not of Kazantzakis as a political writer” (Bien, *The Politics* 156-57).

The most enduring characteristic of Kazantzakis’ life, art, and political theory was the struggle for freedom. During his life time Kazantzakis was bombarded with philosophies, religions, and development to questions on man’s freedom. He was reared as a Christian in a family and society that believed very strongly in God’s providence. Many of his childhood neighbours as well as the rulers in Crete during his youth, were Turks who believed firmly in Muslim fatalism. As years passed by Kazantzakis formed or rather evolved his own politics of salvation. And later he sought to deliver man from the inhibitions of these forms of political and religious dogmas by offering a new liberating myth or ideal for the modern man which is the struggle for freedom. Seeking to define the worth of this struggle, Kazantzakis explored the questions of metaphysical versus socio-political freedom including individual emancipation. Most importantly it must be admitted that the essence of man is freedom which can not be exchanged with anything greater. This view and various levels of freedom are invariably expressed through his literary characters. However, absolute freedom, according to Kazantzakis, is something non existent whose attainment would be its negation. Therefore, it is through a never ending and never fulfilled quest for freedom that we both create our freedom and transcend the hope for freedom. The dominant passion of his heroes is to be free. However, we would not exaggerate that his

concern with liberty is the only dominant theme of Kazantzakis. There are many dimensions to his philosophy of freedom. Kazantzakis' comprehensive view of freedom includes interrelated personal, political, and metaphysical levels, and both he and his characters express these levels of freedom. The basics of Kazantzakis' philosophy of freedom are his evaluation of the degree to which modern man does or does not continue to struggle for his liberty. Yet Kazantzakis also believed that for man's existence to be truly free and just the soul must rule both mind and body (Lea 140).

Kazantzakis believed that the intellectually liberated man would scorn the inhibitions of conventional social strictures. This is precisely the view and attitude of his mentor, Nietzsche and it is with this view that Kazantzakis moves out of the personal realm of freedom into the public arena. Kazantzakis' philosophy of freedom on the political level can also be discussed in terms of physical and intellectual realms. Viewing the latter, he emphasized freedom from the enslavement of ideology, whether left or right, East or West, Buddhist or Christian. To become a free person one must look with a clear eye upon contemporary reality and must admit the vice as well as the virtue, the dark as well as the light, because here in this world every living thing and ideas have always been composed of both.

Kazantzakis was concerned not only with the intellectual dimension of political liberty but also with the physical realm of political freedom. Two views of the political freedom can be found in *Freedom and Death*. First, there is the

traditional quest for liberty acted out by Captain Michales and his fellow freedom fighters. Second, there is his philosophical view of freedom, expressed in political terms, that the man who has an ideal or myth to believe in is free even though ruled by others. Captain Michales knows the futility of his position after one uprising has been put down and others have returned to their villages, and yet he fights on valiantly under the banner '*Freedom and Death*'. The next and highest level of freedom, the metaphysical level has important political implications. Zorba, one of Kazantzakis' most brilliant characterizations, is an attempt to portray the metaphysical freedom - the immortal free spirit of man. This spirit only fulfils its freedom and immortality so far as man persists in the affirmation of life. The struggle for freedom of spirit over matter is essential to Kazantzakis' metaphysical level of freedom (Lea, 143). Zorba expresses it thus: "Guileful matter has chosen this body…slowly to dampen and extinguish the free flame which flickers within me" (*Zorba* 113). The mortality of the body, of mundane material existence, can lead man to two enslaving traps from which he must escape. Bien relates Kazantzakis' view that man must "extricate himself from hope and fear, the two great millstones which grind Socratic man" (Bien, *Zorba* 154).

Hope, therefore, is capable of channelling men's lives into false and unattainable quests which can be enslaving. Hope can lead, to quote Bien further, "to optimistic illusion, whether it be the false optimism or western capitalism or the Salvationism of western religion, or the romantic dreams of non-tragic art"

(155). Kazantzakis thinks that comforting ideas and beliefs are dangerous to metaphysical freedom. What man must do is to mobilize the immense powers and capabilities of his spirituality and combat whatever threatens his humanness. For Kazantzakis freedom is the essence of life. His Zorba goes to the extent of saying, "I think only those people who want to be free are human" (151).

Freedom is the force that sustains life for Kazantzakis, therefore in *The Odyssey,* Odysseus cuts himself off from Ithaca, from the generation which replaces him there, and from the system of moral, social and political values which dominates now on the island. His freedom, through which he finds self-transcendence, leads to divinity and absolute freedom. Kazantzakis is very much concerned in *Odyssey* with man's possibilities of making himself more than man. "Odysseus entertains a vision of God as the great killer of man, and of man as the great resister of God. To become God and to let God become him is the culmination of Odysseus' psychic search" (Will 111).

The principal importance of Kazantzakis' view is in the application of his personal, political, and metaphysical concepts of freedom to the experimental *Odyssey* of twentieth century man in his characterization. *Odyssey* is the most monumental work of Kazantzakis, and his greatest achievement. He presents a unified world view, transcends the antithesis of flesh and spirit. Odysseus sets out once again in quest of the elusive and invisible cry of freedom, immortality and truth. Odysseus seeks the meaning of life and arrives at the perspective afforded by the Cretan Glance – which is freedom (Lea 148). He has "freed himself from

everything – religions, philosophies, political systems . . . He wants to try all forms of life, freely, beyond plans and systems, keeping the thought of death before him as a stimulant . . . when death finally came, it would find nothing to take from him, for it would find an entirely squandered Odysseus" (*The Odyssey* xi). Odysseus begins his quest for attaining the union of personal, political, and metaphysical freedom forsaking wife, family and all that belongs to him. This journey is an agonizing portrayal of Kazantzakis' effort to solve his perennial problems and to provide meaning to human life while at the same time preserving freedom. This seemingly excessive concern with absolute freedom may tend one to brand Kazantzakis an anarchist. But his concept of freedom was not detached from the ultimate essence of freedom which is virtue and goodness. "Freedom without virtue or goodness is of the devil; does freedom mean leaving your husband, burning villages, killing? I don't understand it" (*The Fratricides* 173). Again in *Report to Greco*, he says:

> The human being can not support absolute freedom; such freedom leads him to chaos. If it were possible for a man to be born with absolute freedom, his first duty if he wished to be of some use on earth would be to circumscribe that freedom. (469)

Thus, limitation of absolute freedom leads to an unending quest for affirmation in the face of negativity. This gives purpose and harmony and satisfaction to the life.

When we analyze Kazantzakis' life and thought, in addition to his intense concern with freedom, we would discover that he had recognized the irrevocable

link between hope and politics. Kazantzakis' political thought is a strong rebuttal to the false, ideological offerings of illusory hope for certainty of the right and the left. Instead, "he offers an important, affirmative, affectionate, and stimulating politics for the spirit of hope and freedom" (Lea 150).

Kazantzakis resolutely condemns false hope and earnestly advises man to fight forever the battle for the ascent. Modern man should learn that in questing for the summit of men's souls he should cast off misleading hopes and illusory freedom.

By following Kazantzakis' politics of salvation, mankind successfully overcomes the epoch of nihilism and achieves the vital evaluation of an outmoded morality. They learn with Zorba, Odysseus, and El Greco how to link with the cosmos in a truly meaningful existence that defies the abyss. They reject the ethic of homicide and realize that every moment is eternity and all men are brothers. And finally, they strive to emulate the religious individual who lives on only the highest level beyond the confines of the present (Lea 162-163). Thus, it can be observed that Kazantzakis' politics and salvation are not merely words for him; they are the very essence of life. His politics is salvation, and his salvation is achieved through the politics of active participation in life with all its beauty and ugliness.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

Beyond Struggles and Conflicts

Even at the beginning of the 21st century, the novel, one of the most flexible of literary genres, continues to remain a powerful form for authors to represent the human experience both on the individual level and on the societal level. Writers everywhere use the versatility of the novel to offer new insights into people's actions, ideas, and aspirations. Kazantzakis' works, of course, cover an incredibly vast range, cutting across genres and forms. He has authored philosophic essays, travel books, tragedies, and translations into modern Greek of such classics as Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Goethe's *Faust.* He has also produced lyric poetry and the epic *Odíssa* (1938; *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel*), a 33,333-line sequel to the Homeric epic that represents the full range of Kazantzakis' philosophy, and which could be deemed to be his greatest achievement. But Kazantzakis is perhaps best known for his widely translated novels: *Víos kai politía tou Aléxi Zormpá* (1946; *Zorba the Greek*), a portrayal of a passionate lover of life and poor-man's philosopher; *O Kapetán Mikhális* (1950; *Freedom and Death*), a depiction of Cretan Greeks' struggle against their Turkish overlords in the 19th century; *O Khristós Xanastavrónetai* (1954; *The Greek Passion*); and *O Televtaíos Pirasmós* (1955; *The Last Temptation of Christ*), a revisionist

psychological study of Jesus Christ. Published after his death was the autobiographical *Anaforá stón Gréko* (1961; *Report to Greco*).

Kazantzakis is counted among the greatest novelists of modern Greece and among the foremost men of letters of an admirable European generation. He belongs to the great tradition of twentieth century writers like Thomas Mann and Hermann Hesse who, like him often engaged in struggles to define their ideas in a world in which old philosophies are decaying. In Mann's *The Magic Mountain* we find characters torn between romanticism and rationalism. Similarly, in *Steppenwolf,* Hermann Hesse explores the necessity for individuals to overcome their social training and traditional ideas to seek their own way in their own worlds. Although, Kazantzakis and Hesse were contemporaries, both apparently remained in total ignorance to each other's works. The focus of their writings was one and the same, an earnest, dedicated endeavour to reconcile the flesh with the spirit, the temporal with the eternal, the finite with the infinite and real with the ideal. They seemed to share the thought that everything that exists is good – death as well as life, sin as well as holiness, wisdom as well as folly. It is true that, like Hesse, Kazantzakis went through several philosophies, ideologies, attitudes towards life, before he arrived at his final position (Stavrou, *The limits* 54-55).

Kazantzakis' theory of history is that the twentieth century is a transitional age. We have lost the primitive, spontaneous appreciation of the beauty of the world. We are far too sophisticated for this attitude. The spontaneous

unquestioned faith in God has not been restored after it was interrogated and challenged by Darwinism, evolutionism, and their philosophical and scientific variants.. We can not be pagans, because Christianity has civilized us: and we can not be Christians in the traditional sense as faith of this kind stands challenged. Kazantzakis distrusted both Christianity and the authenticity of modern western civilization. These factors led him to see modern man as the melancholy victim of his age. Yet Kazantzakis should not be seen as an absurdist or existentialist, like so many of his European contemporaries. He is able to bridge the gap between these thoughts with his own theory of transubstantiation of matter into spirit (Dombrowski 27). The key insight of this thought is elaborated in *The Spiritual Exercises* which says that we come from a dark abyss and we end in one as well. Life is a luminous interval between these two black voids. One can say that life is a transition from one void to another. In Kazantzakian terms, the void at the beginning of a human being is inert, unconscious matter and the void at the end is death. Life itself is an evolutionary spiritualization by means of transubstantiation, the ability to transform matter into spirit (Prologue to *The Saviours of God* 1-2).

It should be admitted that due to the constraints of language barriers, the present study has limited itself to in depth analysis of the English translations of the six most renowned novels of Kazantzakis, named earlier. As we have seen in the core discussion, Kazantzakis had his own distinct ways. In his autobiographical work, *Report to Greco* he declared that the decisive steps in his

ascent were the sacred names: Christ, Buddha, Lenin, and Odysseus. His journey from each of these great souls to the next was a great struggle and a great cry. “My entire soul is a cry and all my work the commentary on that cry” (*Report* 15). It would be accurate to say that the works of Kazantzakis embody a crystallized cry that rose from a struggling heart. Despite his affiliations to westernized liberal philosophies and ways of life, he and his art retain a sense of identity with the common people of his land which permeates all of his works. His long self exile in other European countries never diminished his love for Crete, and therefore, he incessantly glorifies the bravery and heroism of his people. But it can be seen that his characters give the impression that they apparently never succeed, but fail and continue to fail in achieving their mission. Perhaps Kazantzakis’ tragic conception of life might have influenced him to create characters like Captain Michales in *Freedom and Death*, who heroically courts death with ‘an inhuman joy’.

Reference has already been made to the predilection of Kazantzakis for the phrase “the Cretan glance" indicating the particular posture and temper which the miniature characters of young people in the Minoan Fresco in Crete assumed in accepting, full of unusual grace, and at the risk of their own destruction. Gazing into their eyes Kazantzakis perceived a blend of playfulness and fearlessness with which death is challenged without fear. There is no hope at all, yet they never give up. As Kazantzakis acclaims: “The heroic and playful eyes, without hope, yet without fear, which so confront the Bull, the Abyss, I call the Cretan Glance” (*The Odyssey* xix). On a philosophical

level, Kazantzakis utilized this metaphor to characterize, iconographically the “heroic and playful eyes" with which modern man may, “without hope yet without fear,” face the Nietzschean abyss and determine to continue the Bergsonian struggle for one’s ultimate destruction. It is this belief that characterizes the experience of Crete, and it is this insight that mostly distinguishes Kazantzakis’ life and art.

It can be truly observed that Kazantzakis’ life and art are interwoven with the complexities of spiritual, political and metaphysical issues concerning human life and God. His works reflect the struggle to resolve the problematic. This is made clear in Kazantzakis’ own words as recollected by his wife Helen Kazantzakis:

> I have struggled, that’s true, throughout my life. And I’m still struggling to keep my soul from dying. I know how the mortal becomes immortal. And this is precisely the great torment of my life . . .The major and almost the only theme of my work is the struggle of man with God, the unyielding inextinguishable struggle of the naked worm called man against the terrifying power and darkness of the forces within him and around him. The stubbornness, the tenacity of the little spark in its fight to penetrate the age old boundless night, the anguished battle to transmute

> darkness to light, slavery to freedom, have been my prime motifs. (Helen, *Nikos* 471, 507)

This untiring struggle is the literary manifesto of Kazantzakis. Anyone who surveys his works would discover that he remains true to this position.

Kazantzakis spent his whole life seeking to master darkness and to assert human significance even on the sacred. Darkness remains a powerfully marked and dominant presence in Kazantzakis but he never allowed it to dominate the his mind. In the midst of this darkness, there are sparkling moments of mystery and insight. Such moments rise above the silence and darkness and burst into pure song. Maria Bessa, in her study, *Nikos Kazantzakis and the Saviours of God* comments on the role of art and the artist: "throughout the ages one of the achievements of art has been to exorcise the powers of night and deliver the artist and those of his time and situation from its grip and fascination" (441). Kazantzakis always discovered this darkness in the heart of man and transformed it into truths. The focal point of his entire work "is the haunting concern to define man's role in the dialogue between the human and the sacred." Kazantzakis has been a fighter against what is considered sacred. "In art such fight or rebellion is creative; it challenges the present, it reduces the past to metamorphosis, securing it in a chain of creative filiations; it creates the vision that ensures future transformation; and so it belongs to duration, and not merely to time" (Bessa 441). If this beautiful definition on creative art is true, it is not difficult to identify why

Kazantzakis is still read and enjoyed by those who approach literature for a deep and serious understanding and perception of human life. Kazantzakis does not merely record the events that he sees around; so his works belong 'not merely to time' but to the world that is endless. The role of a creative writer has always been "reserved for those who could pierce the veil of appearance to reveal what lies beneath and beyond. From Tiresias to Kazantzakis the gift of second sight is the province of those who could penetrate into the Universe" (Bessa 442). Kazantzakis penetrated to the core of human passions hopes and fears and managed to distil this into the very marrow of his characters. As an artist, his long struggle was an intense dialogue which he carried on for years with his destiny, his God, and even with his own temperament. "Art is the slowly mastered expression of the artists' feeling about the universe" (Bessa 442). As far as Kazantzakis is concerned, this observation by Maria Bessa is true, because there is a progressive growth and maturity in his works. This slow progression finds consummation in his romantic autobiography, *Report to Greco*. Often he is after a philosophic synthesis; rather a unity in creative process. He knew that art is at the service of something sacred, some dominant value beyond the artist himself (442). For Kazantzakis, his art was a struggle with gods. "The artist recreates the world and art is a recreation of the universe". In that sense *The Last Temptation* is, no doubt, a masterful recreation of the conventional bible story, and though greater attention went to the controversies it generated, it remains an amazingly brilliant achievement.

Kazantzakis, in the prologue to *The Saviours of God* briefly describes the view that life consists of two opposing but harmonizing forces, one constructive and one destructive, stemming from the depths of the primordial essence. He observes that the struggle and the final harmony is the built-in organic process in the very psyche of man. The life-force emerges from the depth of our subterranean cells in which "five senses labour; they weave and unweave space and time, joy and sorrow, matter and spirit" (*Saviours* 2). It is the dark abyss from which man began and in which he will eventually end, despite his hopes that life has no beginning and consequently, no end. Life for Kazantzakis "is the luminous interval that is in a state of becoming; it is a constant evolution between man's two dark points: the womb and tomb" (Prologue to *The Saviours of God* 1). As life is just a colourful space between the two abysses, Kazantzakis feels that there is no room for fear, or hope either. When man has ceased to hope he can say: I know: now I do not hope anything. I do not fear anything, I have freed myself from both the mind and the heart, I have mounted much higher, I am free. This is what I want. I want nothing more. I have been seeking freedom (*The Saviours* 6).

Kazantzakis gives a new contemporary face to God. For him, God is not a distilled product of our brains because God and man are one. It is not God who will save us –it is we who will save God, by battling, by creating and by transmuting matter into spirit. Man's present duty is to help liberate that God who is stifling in us, in mankind, in masses of people living in darkness. The salvation

of man is possible only by struggling; each one must do it in his own way (Poulakidas, *Spiritual Exercises* 210). God and man are interdependent and finally they become a unique and comprehensive soul which could accommodate the universe as a whole. The reverberations of *The Saviours of God* can be seen in the dialogue between God and Father Yanaros in *The Fratricides*. God is in need of man as he is in need of Him. God speaks to him in a voice a little sad yet sweet:

> "Father Yanaros, Father Yanaros! I ask one favour of you; do not be frightened."
>
> "Favour of me? Favour of an ant, my Lord? Command!"
> "Lead me!"
> "Lead You, Lord? But You are all-powerful!"
> "Yes, I am all- powerful, but only with the help of man; without you on the earth that I created I find it difficult to walk – I stumble, I stumble on the stones, the churches, the people." (148)

This does not mean that God is weak and man is strong. Kazantzakis wants us to know that if God in us is weak, we become weaker; if He is stronger, we become equally stronger.

Kazantzakis believes that man's intellectual endeavour would be of no lasting value if not tempered by a regenerated heart that could love this world. Without this redeeming love, faith being dead, our imaginative efforts can produce

only dead souls unable to bear any suffering and incapable of profiting from their suffering (Paulakidas, *Dostoevsky* 310). Kazantzakis elevates this concept of humanism to the levels of political freedom and spiritual emancipation of the entire humanity. Kazantzakis' thought is based upon the assumption that at best man can know only himself and his own soul. Man's task is to impose order on the chaos within himself. This self ordering by man's spirit leads to spiritual freedom and salvation, as well as God's Salvation. Kazantzakis does not reject mortality, but places immortality above and beyond it. The dance of physical sense is confronted with the counter dance of physical awareness, and how each individual resolves this confrontation determines the way and direction of his personal world. If the physical sense and awareness, the life and mortality are confronted, comprehended and acknowledged man can make his life a meaningful existence. Kazantzakis' Ithaca in *The Odyssey*: *A Modern Sequel* is the realm of spirit or individual soul in which each man lives. He calls for individual responsibility for human existence. Responsibility involves understanding and using the spiritual and imaginative forces in oneself to the fullest; this may lead to individual spiritual freedom and the salvation of God as a spirit (Savvas 289).

Kazantzakis' spirituality has never been just for the sake of spirituality. It crosses itself to the geography of his country to which he belongs politically and spiritually:

> *The Spiritual Exercises* demonstrates dramatically the blending of Western and Cretan sources which characterize Kazantzakis' fiction. The image of the ascent for example, has roots in the naturalistic novel and in the Marxist theme of the inevitable revolution, as well as in the perpetual Cretan struggle for freedom. (Levitt, *Cretan* 180)

In history, it is seen that Cretans never give up fighting. The motif of ascent and encountering the inevitable defeat or death with no fear but with an unusual display of heroism is the theme of *Freedom and Death*. The Cretan glance, the third eye of the soul, is freedom, the ontological attitude that can grasp life and death; the life pulse of the universe. It is "that vision which can embrace and harmonize these two enormous, timeless, and indestructible forces, and with the vision . . . modulate our thinking and our action" (*Saviours*, 44). Kazantzakis believes that human beings are in a certain unfavourable situation in the world. In his view, they live in the world detached from the cosmos and are ignorant of the pulsating life force of the world. They are unaware of the meaning of life and are uncertain even as to the possibilities of their true existence. Naturally man becomes a kind of slave to certain beliefs which are never questioned but followed. But man is not meant to lead a life dominated and ruled merely by ideologies. In fact, beliefs and ideas are bound to be subservient to man for perfecting his life. According to Kazantzakis, man must fulfil three basic duties in

the world which reveal different levels of perception of life before he can escape this unreality (Lea 29).

The first duty is that man must explore the realm of the phenomenal with the mind's eye, to impose order, discipline, law, and rationality, to the chaos of things. To bleed in agony and to live it profoundly is the second duty. It is more a duty of the heart. The third Duty is to free oneself from both mind and heart, from the illusory yet tempting hope (*Saviours* 50). As for Kazantzakis this duty is perhaps the most paramount as it declares liberty from all fetters and entanglements of life. This should not let us think that he advocated the negation of the material world. However, unmistakably the third duty is:

> ….the metaphysical acceptance of nothingness; the transcendence of ill-fated illusions that hide the nonexistent; the transubstantiation of our materiality through the burning power of the third eye of the soul into free, self–conscious spirit. (Lea 30)

Here Kazantzakis emphasizes the all pervading power of spirit over matter. The victory and domination of the spirit over all that exists in the universe will ultimately lead to freedom which is absolute. This freedom elevates him to a greater freedom of existentialism and he declares with full confidence that: "Nothing exists! Neither life nor death. I watch mind and matter hunting each

other like two nonexistent erotic phantasms – merging, begetting, disappearing – and I say: This is what I want!" (*Saviours* 6).

Kazantzakis' mind was consistently contemplating on the abyss of nothingness. He believed that freedom should be the true essence of man. This faith was so strong that he endeavoured earnestly to liberate mankind from the enslaving inhibitions of human mortality and historical and political temporality. For him, these efforts of reconciliations were not restricted to Greek literature or local politics alone. His views were catholic and cosmopolitan. With this vibrant attitude, he explored through his life and art, the advantages and disadvantages of social involvement versus literary activity as weapons in this battle (Lea 36-37). However, Kazantzakis' politics represents a striking contradiction of his earlier asceticism. He upholds the morality of absolute and orthodox Marxism with which he passionately identified himself. Later we find him contradicting directly all that he exalted and believed, in favour of an existentialistic and nihilistic approach to life. He states that our duty is to stare at the abyss and not to succumb to the false masks of "Buddhas, Gods, Motherlands, Ideas . . . woe to him who cannot free himself from Buddhas, Gods, Motherlands, Ideas" (*Zorba* 198). By the time *Zorba the Greek* was written Kazantzakis' mind must have started mounting the uphill path of nothingness. But it is only a truth that however strongly Zorba rejects the conventional morality of right and wrong, the Boss, though in gentle fashion, asserts his allegiances to the cherished ideals of Buddhism and its righteousness.

The Saviours of God: Spiritual Exercises and *The Odyssey*, depict artistically how an individual may attain the expanded consciousness and proper perspective to discover the true harmonious and unified evolutionary face of his age. This discovery is to save 'God,' which is the divine in man. Key elements of Kazantzakis' salvationist perspective are individualism versus community, nihilism and the human condition, atheism and spiritual values, and classical versus modern views of the nature of man (Lea 26). He seems to believe that salvation, whether political or spiritual can only be attained as the outcome of the conflict between two opposing forces. In *The Saviours of God* Kazantzakis makes his quest clear to himself. He has one longing only: to grasp what is hidden behind the appearances; then to discover the mystery which brings him to birth and later takes him back in the form of death. Kazantzakis naturally thought that behind what is visible and in the unceasing stream of the world an invisible and immutable presence hides. At the same time he thinks that we can never see beneath appearances because man is condemned to remain on the surface of his experience. He is bound into the cycle of existence, which surrounds him in time and space. Kazantzakis says that the saviours of God are the co-strugglers as well. They are deeply aware of their unity with the others who struggle. We are aware that God cannot be saved unless we save him with our own struggles, but at the same time we know that our struggles are continually being counteracted and that we are being thrown back. Kazantzakis believes that whenever man closes matter in his heart or blocks the spirit in his soul he actually restricts and restrains God in

his heart and soul (Will 117-119). For many, God is an instrument of the established religious and social order. For Kazantzakis, God is no abstraction. He is immediate, and a force to be encountered in the daily life of each man. Morton Levitt elucidates that, for Kazantzakis,

> God is neither the Christian nor the Hebrew divinity, not some ultimate force beyond man's reach, not even the final goal of his achievement. God, like man, is a process in being, a process in being, a natural force of great creative potential. (Levitt, *Cretan* 12)

Kazantzakis believes that God and man engage themselves in an age old struggle which is self discovery and self realization for harmonizing the darkness in humanity and divinity.

> The form and function of *The Spiritual Exercises* are the same, the ascent to God and beyond. The soul of man must climb to perilous heights, must lean out over the abyss and confront terrifying truths: God is as dependent upon man as man is upon Him; to save himself, man first saves God; . . . neither man nor God the two fighting together can save themselves. Knowing this but continuing to struggle, man discovers his dignity, becomes himself a kind of God. (Levitt, *World and Art* 173)

Thus *The Saviours of God: Spiritual Exercises* becomes the culmination of struggles and conflicts that Kazantzakis has been pondering over most of his life

time. The conflicts, spiritual and political or of any kind finally merge themselves with a greater eternal conflict which is freedom: a complete salvation from everything to which man is bound to in his life. Kazantzakis believed in freedom, to be precise, individual freedom. Individual alone can act with freedom and save himself and he must respect his own life as well as the life of others.

Kazantzakis' writings created a linguistic revolution as he upheld people's language, demotic as a necessary vehicle for transmitting his thoughts and their culture and as directing force of destiny which stirred his youthful imaginations from early childhood. His Cretan birth among the common people, his mistrust of pseudo-intellectuals and self serving politicians, and his maltreatment at the hands of various academics and literary critics, all led him to identify himself with the people and their language. Kazantzakis tells how impressed he was, during a Russian trip in 1929, upon meeting one hundred and fifty Greeks and discussing world issues with them:

> If I were Christ surely my apostles would be people like these. Love, warmth, trust. The intellectuals are barren, dishonest, doomed. I had felt tired and sad. And with these simple people I regained my confidence in man. (Lea 179)

Kazantzakis always loved to be with the people, especially with the simple and straight forward people of Crete. It was in his childhood that he was able to mix and mingle with his folk. As he grew older, though he remained a Cretan emotionally, his intellectual and spiritual sphere widened larger than his little

island. In the later part of his life Kazantzakis worked in several capacities as a public servant. In 1945 he became the Greek Government's minister of state, and he tried to resolve political differences dividing the government. But he had to resign without achieving any significant success. Later, he served briefly as minister of education before the civil war in 1947. He also held the post of Director of UNESCO's Translation Bureau until 1948.

In championing the demotic, Kazantazakis felt he was defending the soul of the common people against the unimaginativeness of pedantic intellectuals, and more importantly, against the ever-expanding forces of newspaper jargon as well as the faulty composition courses in schools. In this attempt, he was violently attacked not only by the purists, but also by advocates of the demotic as well. They accused that he went out of his way to use obscure words. But he strongly defended his position, and the fact that his works truly reflect and convey the spirit of the people is perhaps the best proof that he was right (Translator's notes to *The Last Temptation*, 516). Kazantzakis' adoption of the demotic as the literary vehicle for carrying his thoughts to the people had the effect of reinforcing his identity and sense of unity with the common man. In the same manner he rejected the pseudo-intellectual, academic literary language that ignored the people's needs and exigencies. The political processes and solutions in which the common people were not involved or marginalized were utterly condemned by him. He argued that any regime that does not take people into confidence is no longer represents the aspirations of the ruled.

Kazantzakis' was a vigorous voice raised in defence of man against the inhuman forms of scientific progress taking place throughout the world. He levelled his criticism against the artificial needs that were created by an increasingly scientific, technological and industrial culture that is leading man to an alarming future. This over dependence on materialism diverts his attention from real values of life and spiritual potentialities inherent in man. He also condemned the dehumanizing manner in which scientific and technological innovations were utilized to produce these material needs (Lea 73). In diagnosing the ills of contemporary Western civilization, Kazantzakis believed that the widespread suffering, injustice, and despiritualization stem out from man's escapist surrender to the masks of ideologies which only stifle the spirit. The dominance of technocratic-materialism is perennially on the rise. On the other hand, artists, intellectuals, and religious leaders of the world become mere spectators and their synthesizing vision is either lost or deprived. As Yeats has rightly put it in *Second Coming* "The best lack all conviction, / And the worst are full of passionate intensity" make the present world scenario inhospitable and unfriendly. Kazantzakis left quite detailed accounts of his view of the role and duty of the artist in society and of the contribution that art can make to improve the human condition. He provided valuable guidance for the writer who is involved in socio-political themes. His invaluable social and political criticism and the philosophical beliefs that he expounded as remedy for excessive materialism, despiritualization, despair, and societal and governmental wrongs of his day, reflect his humanism

and sincere concern for man (Lea 103). It was not science that Kazantzakis was condemning but the perversion of civilization and the submission of the individual to the forces of technology. Any serious reader of Kazantzakis would realize that he saw the ultimate human goal as the spiritualization of matter. Science has failed to rehabilitate man because it has been unable to provide a human goal that has ethical validity. Kazantzakis intellectualized his personal passage from birth to death in terms of thoughts concerning human liberation. His entire life is a portrayal of the path to freedom, to a higher human existence beyond hope and rationality, despair and nihilism, overcoming the many obstacles in our life. His life was an unceasing battle with the abyss, an unceasing quest for immortality in an age when man has succumbed to the materialistic interests of the modern age.

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of many scientific inventions and many revolutionary ideologies which, as a whole brought new perceptions in human societies all over the world. In such an age of ideologies, Kazantzakis strove after many of the major ideologies in different stages of his life. He foresaw with surprising clarity that the blind pursuit of science and materialistic fervour of life in the modern West would extinguish the spark of freedom that gives vitality and beauty to the human soul. He railed against injustice of all sorts, whether carried out by the leftists or the rightists, the Eastern or the Western. In an age of despair he sought rigorously for a higher synthesis of socio-political life, a new awareness to provide meaning and purpose

in place of the anxiety and absurdity of contemporary life (Lea xii-xii). Believing this and viewing his personal salvation as an artist and humanist in danger in this world, Kazantzakis could only say, through Father Yanaros, "Now, all is chaos, and I, the worm, must bring order" (*The Fratricides* 177). This has a distant echo in one of the philosophical utterances of Shakespeare's tragic hero, Hamlet: "The time is out of joint. O cursed spite, That ever I was born to set it right" (1.5.196-197). It is an irony that a seemingly weak person like Hamlet is chosen and designated by arbitrary fate to set the things right in this world where everything is out of frame and time. Similarly, Kazantzakis assumes a great role for the artist, who must be prepared to bear heavy responsibility for the society to which he belongs.

While summarizing the various comments on the works of Kazantzakis, it can be seen that he has always been obsessed with the idea of God, immortality and religions of the world. The struggle undergone by Christ is in fact the struggle experienced by Kazantzakis himself in his life. Though he was greatly inspired by the existentialist thoughts of Nietzsche, and the Buddhist philosophy of negation, he continually explored the idea of Christ, even spending time in a monastery in an attempt to understand man's relationship with God. His religiosity is often questioned by the heads of conventional religions and Christianity. Kazantzakis was always a controversial writer whose writings particularly, *The Last Temptation* was criticized severely and alleged to distort the Bible story. It was banned by the Orthodox Church in Greece. In writing *The Last Temptation*,

Kazantzakis was attempting to portray Jesus Christ the man in all his strength and weakness, which earned him both curses and cheers. Perhaps, next to *Zorba the Greek*, *The Last Temptation* is the most important work of art by which he will be remembered by the posterity. At the same time, *Freedom and Death* is basically the heroic story of the Cretan struggle and its historic significance is limited to Crete alone.

Kazantzakis had profound fascination for Marxist ideology and great admiration for the Russian Revolution. For him the Russian experiment symbolizes the hope and possibility for progressive change. He was eager to see that inequality of all kind and the squalid hunger of the people all over the world be eradicated. His humanity is not restricted to Greece alone. Kazantzakis always maintained the view that blind nationalism would only destroy us and internationalism would allow us to open up to the wider horizons of the world and face human race's common fate as fellow beings of the same planet. *The Odyssey*, *Saint Francis*, *Zorba the Greek* and *The Last Temptation*, all express this necessity for elimination of restrictive national boundaries, and advocate the universal brotherhood of man (Savvas 288). It is evident that although he took to heart much of the ideology of communism, his own personal philosophy of religion could not reconcile with it. His work comprehends a new theoretical formulation, which embraces socialism, and elements of Buddhism and Christianity. He hoped for a way of life free from materialism, and free from a rigid social and religious

structure that would dictate and impose morality as a burden on the individuals. Kazantzakis visualized a society which allows greater personal freedom for everyone so that each one could figure out his life and destiny as he wished.

While examining Kazantzakis' heroes we discover certain common traits: all of them are poor economically, but rich in spirit and courage. His courtship with communism made him feel that as an intellectual he has a moral obligation to people. Believing in the necessity of action as opposed to negation, he modified the communist approach with the ideals of Buddhism. It must be admitted that he was attempting an impossible harmony of these divergent views of life. One cannot ignore the host of saintly heroes that fill Kazantzakis' novels that are prime examples of holiness and suffering. In *The Fratricides*, Father Yanaros a martyr for the Christian concept of freedom, love and justice; in *God's Pauper*, Francis abandons this world, its desire and glory for the sake of Christ and for his love of man; in *The Last Temptation* the son of Mary, who becoming conscious of his divinity and sacred mission, dies on the cross for the sake of mankind; and finally, in *The Greek Passion*, Manolios who by practicing to become Christ in the Passsion Play, willingly sacrifices himself in the hope of bringing peace to the village (Poulakidas, *Dostoevsky*, 309). Kazantzakis' heroes of epic dimension have something in common -- they all stand and strive for a certain faith for which they sacrifice their lives. The works of Kazantzakis provide authentic insights into the nature of man. On this issue, Anton P. John observes that:

> Kazantzakis is modern in, at least two senses: (a) his heroes are meant to reflect the very essence of life; (b) his Literary works mirror life at the peak of human experience and therefore its truest movement. (60)

Literature being a supreme expression of life must reflect life in all its glory and ugliness. He further observes:

> After much searching and agonizing, he came to the conclusion that, since life is ultimately tragic, its irreducible antithetical forces define both the poet and his work. The tragic contradictions of life are the bread and blood of the artist. Kazantzakis as poet and philosopher was quick to explore the thematic richness of the idea of the irreconcilable forces in life for his literature. (Anton, *Kazantzakis* 60)

Kazantzakis perceived that life consists and sustains the very reality of contradictions and the consequent struggles. His socio-political, cultural and family traits influenced and shaped the basics of his philosophy of life. As Kazantzakis matured as a writer, Christ, Nietzsche, Buddha, Bergson, Lenin, and Odysseus began to provide the metaphysical and intellectual foundation for his political ideas. Kazantzakis' Cretan glance, his ultimate philosophical perspective, is a synthesis of the influences of his native island, family, his childhood experiences and memories of which his personality is actually composed. It is this unique artistic landscape of his mind that produced the rich, complex, and

harmonious mosaic of his literary out put. Similar to his peculiar mindset it can be seen that various regions in Greece are also dual in nature, and the emotions which spring from them are also dual in nature. Harshness and tenderness stand side by side, complementing each other and coupling like a man with a woman. Kazantzakis argues that this basic duality extends from individuals to the geographical locations in Greece. For example, he quotes the smooth landscapes and sloping meadows and the tough and stiff cliffs in Sparta which are the source of both tenderness and harshness (*Report* 158).

Kazantzakis believed that art has a great ennobling capacity that can alleviate the sufferings and distress of humanity. He drew this idea about the perennial nature of art from EL Greco, a gifted Cretan artist, who according to Kazantzakis, is an enormously imaginative and vital individual who wrought creative confirmation of reality within clearly defined limits. It was to him that finally Kazantzakis reports his life's victories and failures in the candid language of personal confession. That is why he named his autobiography *Report to Greco*. He describes an El Greco painting as lying bare and revealing

> …the whole fate of man, the entire soul of the world, flooded with the tragic-comic powers of good and evil. . . From every perfect work of art rises a cry of pain, joy, hope, strife. And, above all, the unchanging cry of liberation. (*Report* 102).

Liberation is possible only through struggle and suffering. Therefore, art has important implications to politics as well. This is so because political reality is a

central element of the historic flow. Kazantzakis reflected on this and concluded that the genuine role of the politician is not to freeze the creative impulses of the people but to work in harmony with them. The underlying thought of this belief is that politics and art must work in hand in hand, with the former following the lead of the latter (Lea 91).

Thus Kazantzakis believed that through art one could establish contact with life and reality. Explicit expression of this abiding allegiance to art can be seen in all of his major works. Art is "a mysterious science, a veritable *theurgy*. Words attract and imprison the invisible spirit, force it to become incarnated and to exhibit itself to man" (*Toda Raba* 90-91). One must learn "that art is not submission and rules, but a demon which smashes the moulds" (*Report*, 503). When he comes to *Freedom and Death* the 'artist' transforms and sublimates himself and becomes "a sort of angel…" (118). Thus, Kazantzakis defines his concept and reiterates the belief that art is superior and it has ennobling and enriching power over the baser things. The great, though agonizing, duty of the artist is one of exorcism - to separate the angel from the demon. In all his works, Kazantzakis attempted to preserve what is noble and universal.

Anyone who analyzes the concept of God and His relation with man would naturally pose a question, whether Kazantzakis can accurately be described as an atheist. Critical opinion, however, is divided on this question. At least three scholars, Kimon Friar, Prevelakis, Bloch and his wife Helen Kazantzakis portray Kazantzakis as a pure atheist, while Poulakidas and Stavrou believe that

Kazantzakis may have returned to Christian membership late in life (Lea 107). The Christian church and the believers were shocked by the seemingly implicated atheism of *The Saviours of God* and *The Last Temptation*. Controversy over these works spread beyond the borders of Greece. And later, his cherished ideals of nationalism were questioned because of his ambiguous treatment of Cretan political issues concerning the Anatolian villagers. Greece never gave him the honour that an artist deserved. *The Greek Passion* raised a furor over Greece which brought him close to excommunication. Later when *Freedom and Death* was published the newspapers branded him a traitor to Crete and Hellenism as he had shown both the good and bad sides of Greek heroism without romanticizing the peasants.

Regarding the propriety of the location of his burial in the Venetian Wall, controversy is waged even today in Greece. This makes us ask a question whether the great artist was rewarded or condemned. Although this is a difficult question to answer, the fact remains that he lost the Nobel Prize in 1952 by the margin of only one vote because, it is said, the Greek government refused to sponsor his candidacy (Levit, *Cretan* 61). In Greece, many of his contemporaries accuse that he falsifies everything Hellenic, while some see in him the very epitome of Greek culture and tradition.

By way of summing up, it has to be noted that Kazantzakis continues to inform, challenge, entertain and even embarrass the guilty. This thesis is based mainly on *The Last Temptation, Zorba the Greek, Freedom and Death, The Greek*

Passion or *Christ Recrucified, The Fratricides, The Saviours of God, God's Pauper: St. Francis of Assisi* and marginally on the other novels and *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel*. This is an attempt to clarify the ideas of Kazantzakis which lie buried in the mire of spiritual and political beliefs and complexities.

It is unfortunate that Kazantzakis' greatness and his genius have not been properly appreciated by the people in Greece. In this context, it would be appropriate to glance into his letter addressed to his literary friend, A. Sahinis. The words reveal his phlegmatic and saintly temperament about the gains and losses in this long journey of life:

> No external passion ever upset me, be it wine, women, vanity or, ambition. Only one passion excited me: contacting the Invisible Presence. At times it would be a struggle, at other times a conciliation, and only occasionally identification with it. Give this Presence whatever name you wish. Call it God, Matter, Energy, Spirit, Mystery, Nothing. My entire work is nothing but this struggle, this conciliation, this identification with the Invisible Presence which I always fought to make visible." (Anton, *Kazantzakis* 55)

Based on this frank statement of denial or admission on those controversial abstract ideas, one is left free to infer an answer to the question whether Kazantzakis was a believer or an atheist. However it is my conviction that a man

who pronounces strongly that; “I have God behind me . . . I have God in front of me, God to the right of me, God to the left of me; I am encircled by God” (*The Fratricides* 242) can never be an atheist.

Kazantzakis’ attempted to revive Cretan heritage and his struggles became alien and incomprehensible to his contemporary Greek intellectuals. This is why Kazantzakis remained estranged and solitary in Greece. Kazantzakis has not been viewed favourably by the political regime as well. The memorial services which were to have been held at his grave on the tenth anniversary of his death were banned by the Military junta in 1967. This was an indication that even ten years after his death he is not honoured, but opposed and detested. However, the great artist was not discontent or unhappy about worldly gains and glories. Kazantzakis anticipated very well that he would, “at last retire into solitude, alone, without companions, without joy and without sorrow, with only the sacred certainty that all is dream . . .” He continues to contemplate through *Zorba* on himself after his death and he concludes that he would be “free, fearless and blissful”(27).
Therefore, his mind is truly reflected in the statement inscribed on his grave stone which reads:

“I hope for nothing I fear nothing I am free”

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