

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 weak: "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 Lycovrisi 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 SatanWe 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 evolution 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.