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POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIAN ENGLISH NOVELS

A Thesis

Submitted to

Saurashtra University, Rajkot

For the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in English

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work embodied in this thesis entitled ***POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIAN ENGLISH NOVELS*** has been carried out by **Mr. Nayankumar D. Tank** under my direct guidance and supervision. I certify that the work done and presented in this thesis is original and independent.

I, further, declare that the work has not been submitted to any other institute or university for any award or degree.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the research work presented in this thesis is original and wherever references to the work of others have been made, they have been clearly indicated as such and the source of information is included in the bibliography.

I, further, declare that this thesis has not been submitted to any institute or university for any award or degree.

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Chapter: 1

Introduction

It is attributed that every writer is the child of one's own age. One could perhaps say with equal force that every writer is the prisoner of one's own age; who simply cannot escape the limitations which one is born an heir to. This leads us again to measure of inevitability about the pressure of his/her age on a writer's mind. It means the writer of each age becomes very much conscious about the pressures at the time of composition. It is exactly true with Indian English novelists of post-independence era because the attainment of independence in 1947 ushered in a new era of fresh challenges and added responsibilities. At this juncture, it is necessary to mention about those factors that has given a platform to the post-independence writers to note down the political upheavals of the country in their writings.

The way how the Indian political thought has been developed is noteworthy here. The British pat their backs for creating a nation called India out of a multitude of hundreds of small states. It was the first half of the seventeenth century that British established their first footholds in India. In 1686, English fought a war with the Moghuls. In 1693, the British defeated the French. This was the beginning of their frightening grip over India. In the process of grip tightening, the British struck at the root of what constituted India. They threw away the old laws, structures and systems. In fact, they created a class of the Indians who thought like the British did and joined them in ridiculing every tradition of the country. By this clever act, English positioned themselves as natural rulers, a so-called superior race destined to rule. Indians were encouraged to look at their traditions as decadent, uncultured and uncivilized. The British were capturing the mind of the nation and simultaneously the nation was being looted systematically at a scale that was truly unprecedented.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the old identity of India had withered away almost completely. The first war of independence of India of 1857 was a ragtag affair that had no ideological grounds and lacked a clear direction. The war failed because some Indian states felt that their interests were better served by jumping to the English side. Of course, it gave a little rise to Indian consciousness regarding freedom from the clutches of the British. Meanwhile the British Government took over controls of the colony from East India Company in 1858. Then they had physically eliminated everyone who could possibly have raised a voice against their rule.

The scenario of post-1857 India was ideal for English colonialism. Political opposition by soldiers and princely states had been crushed. Religion, that in ancient India had been an integral part of individual and social life, was now segregated into a separate compartment, which helped the clergy to prosper and pushed the followers into a path of escapism from life by imbibing their brand of opium. In this dark hour, India had neither religious leader nor any political leaders. British realized that every country needs its own leaders. They were afraid that if there was political vacuum, it was most likely to be filled up by extremist elements opposed to British Empire. Hence, they created Indian National Congress in 1885 with a view to winning the favours of these Indians who had their interests firmly anchored in British colonialism.

At this time Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Swami Vivekanand both started advocating Indian culture and heritage in their own way on the Indian political arena. Both did a lot for the revival of Hinduism which was not outdated or obscurantist or uncivilized. Both inspired a new spirit of nationalism among the new generation across the country. During this period, two passionately nationalist leaders Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai emerged as the most outstanding personalities who initiated national awakening and inspired many revolutionaries. The revolutionary

movement had started causing sleepless nights to the British at the beginning of the twentieth century. Later on, two conflicting streams dominated this era. One stream may be called Gandhian ideology, while the other was Jinnah's Islamic Nationalism. Gandhian ideology rests on Truth, Non-Violence, Swadeshi, Khadi, Village industries, Decentralization, Ram Rajya, Minimum consumption etc. Gandhi did make special efforts to woo the Muslims. He also supported to the Khilafat movement.

It is interesting to note that till the beginning of the twentieth century, India had no history of communal riots. The Hindus and the Muslims had lived amicably without any major clashes at the level of people. The British policy of divide-and-rule separated the two people. For this, they encouraged the extremist elements of both the communities. It was the effect of British policies and Gandhi's policies that led to the development of a separatist Muslims Leadership. Hence, Mohammad Ali Jinnah played a vital role in advocating the Islamic nationhood. He joined the Muslim league in 1913. He opposed Gandhi's agitation plans on the grounds that this amounted to adopting unconstitutional methods. He opposed tooth and nail the tactics adopted by Gandhi to exploit the Khilafat. In a way, Jinnah was transformed from a struggling, through bright leader, to the sole representative of Indian Muslims espousing the two-nation theory. The British found in him a person with whom they were comfortable just as they had Gandhi and Nehru in Congress.

Gradually, the freedom struggle went ahead and with a lot of bloodshed and signification of many martyrs, India became an independent country on 15th August, 1947. It gave a birth to the bloody partition. Then Nehru was projected as the future Prime Minister of India. Later on, Dr. Ambedkar was nominated as the chairman of the constitution assembly which was adopted on 26th November, 1949. After this moment the political ideologies have converted towards one common direction i.e. middle-of-road pragmatism.

Congress may be credited with giving birth to this unique ideology where one has freedom to move in any direction- right or left- without calling it as ideological shift. When Indira Gandhi was nationalizing, Congress men praised her and a few years later when Narsimha Rao and Manmohan Singh started privatization of government companies, this was hailed by the same set of people. All political parties follow middle of road pragmatism.

After independence certain factors caused a lot of things that ensured Indian development and Indian political consciousness. They are as under:

Secularism

India is a secular country and every party has to be necessarily secular. Yet, there are some parties who have holier- than- thou attitude when it comes to secularism.

Communism

At one time, there used to be two brands of communism in India– Soviet and Chinese. The collapse of USSR pushed the parties aligned with the former into a crisis. Even the ones inspired by Mao Tse Tung are in a state of shock due to new policies of Chinese Government. In the past decade communists have made serious efforts to accept the new realities and develop their own version of Indian communism suitable for India. However, it cannot be denied that communism has stagnated and no one would predict a bright future for communism in India.

Socialism

Preamble of constitution of India declares India to be a socialist republic. Hence, like in case of secularism, every political party has to be compulsorily socialist. The problem is that no one really knows what the term

means. Everyone has his/her own meaning of socialism and in the absence of any authorized definition, no one can be pronounced right or wrong.

Saffron Ideology

The patent and copyright for this are claimed by Sangh clan. No one dare act as protector of Hindu faith without due authorization from them. They protect their turf with such ferocity that it appears as if they invented it. Here the view of Sangh is that it is aiming to bring together all Hindus on one forum without bothering about their different views. Officially speaking, Hindu is defined by Sangh as everyone who has emotional attachment to this land and culture of India. Unfortunately, no one outside Sangh accepts this definition of Hindu.

Islam and Christianity

Both are religions and there may be some objections to including them in political ideologies. Yet, in regions where Islam or Christianity has some strength, religion has been used as political ideology. Kashmir's population has a majority of Muslims. This has led to a separatist movement in Kashmir. In Northern India, Christianity has been growing and Church has become a strong political source.

Casteism

In post five decades, this has become the most prominent ideology of India. All parties give due consideration to caste equations while nominating candidate for elections. Rise of caste as an ideology in Indian politics can partly be traced on one hand to the influence of Gandhi, Ambedkar and Constitution of India. On the other hand, one may blame it on the adoption of first- past the- post practice. But to a large measure, it is because of the inability of the political parties and organization to offer any direction to the

country. Caste has emerged as an ideology of choice to fill the vacuum of political thought in modern India.

Looking at what has been said earlier, it would be necessary to say that every country has its own background of politics against which its political imagination in the creative field thrives. Our political background, in the strictest sense of the word, goes back only to the coming of the Moguls in India followed by the British. The Moguls period somehow has failed to appeal the Indian novelists in English or maybe it is too remote to turn its history into a novel of political conflict. The British period, however, shows clear signs of a regeneration of political awareness in the novels written by Indian novelists in English. This awareness towards politics led the writers to think of Indian political consciousness also. Before we discuss the very concept of it, it is a must to define first what the political novel is because the political consciousness is the direct outcome of the political novel.

Over the years, the Western literary critics have concisely defined, clearly delineated and carefully treated the various subcategories and varieties of the novel; the historical and picaresque novel, the psychological novel, the novel of manners, even science fiction and mystery novels. Studies of these various types are legion. The political novel however, has been less fortunate, as there are a few comprehensive studies of this sub-genre. It is interesting to note, furthermore, that it is not by chance, but rather through careful design, the very term "political novel" came into a concrete shape. One of the most basic problems in considering the term, political novel, seems to be whether it should deal with ideology or whether political events should merely act as a back drop against which literary characters are to be developed. Yet the critic's reluctance or inability to give sharper definition to the form "political novel" perhaps results from the very act of wedding politics to literary creation or vice-versa a juxtaposing which many critics consider either undesirable or impossible. As said by Carlo Coppola:

Nevertheless, the problem of defining the political novel has not been dealt with in any definitive way; hence the very nature of this particular category of novel- its proper subject matter, its scope its form remains open to question. ¹

Turning our attention to political novel in India, it is hardly surprising that we faced not merely with the questions of its definitions as in the west, but with uniquely Indian problems as well. A survey of the beginning of the Indian novel in English shows that the novelists largely wrote either romances like *Bianca* and *Kamala* or sociological novels like *The Garden Keepers* and *The Cage of Gold* or historical novels like *The Fatal Garland* and *Shivaji* or at best novels dealing with East-West encounter like *Hindupore* or *The Prince of Destiny*. It is only after the nationalistic strings gained momentum in India the novel changed its directions and attention from romances, history, sociology and culture to politics revealing a new kind and pattern of awareness and relationship of the individual with the specifications of the milieu. The object of this study is to examine the nature of manifestation of the political consciousness in Indian fiction in English, and to derive the extent to which the writers responded to the changing national scene. Not that all the novels and novelists turned political but the impact of the political upheaval was so great that even a novelist of such intense sociological concern like Raja Rao could not but help writing at least one political novel. The progress of the Indian English novels reveals the way the national struggle for independence in its various aspects and stages impinged upon the imagination of the writers to produce a new genre called the political novel.

It is said that one of the most compelling types of fiction for modern man is the political novel. Man as a political animal said by Aristotle befits exactly to the nineteenth and twentieth century man; yet, it is not easy to define precisely the political novel as a genre. Once, we accept the conceptual shift in the meaning of the term politics, the definition of the political novel begins to take a variety of interpretations. The Oxford English

Dictionary describes the political novel as no more than "a fictitious political narrative, a novel about imaginary politicians." ²

Moris Edmund Spear explains it a little more exhaustively as follows:

What is a political Novel? It is a work of prose fiction which leans rather to 'ideas' than to 'emotions'; which deals rather with the machinery of law making or with a theory about public conduct than with the merits of any given piece of legislation; and where the main purpose of the writer is partly propagation, public reform, or exposition of the lives of personages who maintain government, or of the forces which constitute government.³

But H.A.L. Fisher simplifies it to say, "The political novel concerns itself with men and women engaged in contemporary political life and discussing contemporary political ideas". ⁴

Joseph L. Blotner makes it very specific by adding that..."... a political novel is ... a book which describes, interprets or analyses political phenomena". ⁵

While Irving Howe declares that, "By a political novel I mean a novel in which political ideas play a dominant role or in which the political milieu is the dominant setting". ⁶

He further goes to add that it may be so in the mind of the major characters:

...so that there is to be observed in their behavior and they are themselves aware of, some coherent political loyalty or ideological affiliation. They now think in terms of supporting or opposing society as such; they rally to one or another embattled segment of society; and they do so in the name of, and under prompting from, an ideology.⁷

As these several definitions indicate, the term "political novel" may denote either a piece of fiction devoted to a presentation of political ideas or a species of fiction in which action, characters and settings are all firmly grounded in politics. It means all these statements point move towards the content of the political novel than its form. In other words, they do not reckon the aesthetic input but the thematic preoccupation. It is only Blocher who adds 'interpretation' and 'analysis' of the political phenomenon to the thematic concern. It should be noted here that the rest of the political lies in its socio-human ends than its theoretical formulations. All political programmes generate their reactions in the lives of the people, who ultimately fashion the course of future politics in their human way. That is why Stephen Spender states:

...the writer who refuses to recognize the political nature of the age must to some extent be refusing to deal with an experience in which he himself is involved.⁸

Further the inalienability of human beings with politics is reemphasized by John Drinkwater in the following way, "Every little boy or girl who comes into contact into the world alive is either a little liberal or else a young conservative."⁹

For that reason George Woodcock holds that:

The writer, who presents to eschew political thinking and to devote himself to his art exclusively, is motivated in his action by the importance which politics holds in the world where he works. The conscious avoidance of becoming implicated shows that in such a writer's mind politics has a place, even if an unpleasant one.¹⁰

All those considerations prove that one way or the other the writer and politics are intertwined with one another in their interaction with the public, without being emphatic or dogmatic about commitments. Wolfgang Iser holds that:

Unlike philosophies or ideologies, literature does not make its selections and its decision explicit. Instead it questions or records the signals of external reality in such a way that the reader himself is to find the motives underlying the questions and in doing so he participates in producing the meanings. ¹¹

The same author goes on to add that novels are never about reality but about models and concepts of reality and as such they could be strategy in demystification and defamiliarization. Yet Lennard J. Davis Says:

Novels are at best an adjunct to politics, an analytic support to some principles. But as a total project, it would be difficult to make the case that novels can have a major radical political effect. ¹²

For that reason George Orwell too believes:

Politicians and artists do not go well together. The goal of a politician is always limited, partial, short-term, oversimplified. It has to be, to have any hope of realization. As a principle of action, it cannot afford to consider its own imperfections and the possible virtues of its opponents. It cannot afford to dwell on the pathos and the tragedy of all human endeavors. In short it most excludes the very things that are valuable to art. ¹³

Thus, it can be said that novel cannot be fully political unless it becomes the handmaid of socialist realism intending to change the very structure of both consciousness and art ending in a kind of autocratic formalism. Such a kind of political novel will be more programmatic than creative surrendering artistic freedom in the process and bargain. The extent of the politicality of a novel, therefore, must be measured from its artistic necessity and synthesis in the creative process of the product or artifact. For literature is not reducible to, or simply derivative of another order. Nor can its process be genetically conditioned. But, as suggested by Alan Swing Wood:

...genuine creative literature, while not escaping ideological influences, will strive to criticize the existing order, to transcend its immediately given forms.¹⁴

All the above statements and definitions lead to a belief that novel can neither escape being political nor can it be fully political. It is basically given to depicting man's struggle at assimilating the discordant strands and notes of its milieu into an aesthetic whole. Politics in part of man's history and it is men who make history. It, therefore, remains to be the privilege of the writer as men to decide upon the extent to which he may participate from the political aspects going around him. In this process of participating into the political going around him, the writer throws light on the certain issues are to be considered as the political consciousness at first sight. The term political consciousness is quite related with the definition of the political novel held by Speare as:

a work of prose fiction which leans rather to 'ideas' than to 'emotions'; which deals rather with the machinery of law-making or with a theory about public conduct than with the merits of any given piece of legislation; and where the main purpose of the writer is party propaganda, public return, or exposition of the lives of the personages who maintain government, or of the forces which constitute government.¹⁵

Analyzing these several definitions by various eminent authorities it may be concluded that the term "political novel" signifies a novel which, directly or indirectly, expresses and indicates certain ideological preferences or describes and analyses existing political conditions.

But Mahadev L. Apte strongly pleads that a political novel is quite different from a novel which includes politics in one form of another. According to him, any novel containing descriptions of political actions, events ideologies or whatever is not necessarily a political novel. The essential ingredients of a political novel include all of the following:

- The plot, if any, should be based on, or should include extensive political event should directly affect the lives of the principal characters;
- The principal characters in the novel should be directly involved with political activities in various capacities or should themselves play some political roles; alternatively, the consequences of any political event should directly affect the lives of the principal characters.
- The actions of the various characters in the novel should be the direct result of, and be consistent with, their personalities, which should be so depicted as to suggest strong influences of various political ideologies;
- If political events are used as a background for a variety of non-political actions and events, such background should be used throughout the novel either to support or to contrast the actions and events; furthermore, it should not be superseded by sociological or economic elements:

In short, the characters, the interaction between them, the events, all should be interwoven in a political milieu; political phenomena should be directly described, interpreted or analyzed, and yet should be an integral part of the novel.¹⁶

An observation of these several definitions and established theories about “political novel” of various authorities and critics shows that a novel, if it is to be a political novel, should, at least, deal with a political ideology or should have a political setting against which fictional characters are seen to develop. Over and above these requirements, it may also be added that in a segmented society like India, where different linguistic, cultural and ethnic groups maintain autonomous status, novels describing their Inter-relationship shall also be considered as political novels.

There may be two broad categories of political novels- ideologically oriented and non-ideological. The ideologically oriented group consists of those novels which have been written to propagate certain “specific” political ideas, with a view to using them as vehicle of political propaganda. The

characters are mainly used as instruments of ideological goals. In these novels the novelists interpret the political events on the basis of their own value orientations; they do not depict political reality, objectively; they distort it to reinforce their propagandistic goals. On the other hand, the non-ideological novels are solely concerned with the depiction of political conditions and do not aim to propagate any specific political values. Their works have greater artistic objectivity. If there are expressions of certain political values in their novel, they can be attributed to their personal political orientations, rather to this desire to propagandize.

There also arises the difficulty in distinguishing between political and historical novels. Even if the novel is written about contemporary political events or about current political personalities, it may come under the label “historical” because political events and personalities become part of history. One solution to this problem is the position of the author because he who writes about political events during his lifetime seems to consider his novel more political than historical. Another difference lies in the interpretation. A political novelist’s interpretation of political events during his lifetime can be considered predictive, though particular projections may or may not come true. On other hand, the historical novelist’s interpretation is more likely place.

At the same time it is too narrow and mechanistic to interpret a political novel as one portraying a political movement or depicting political condition, for most social problems have political dimensions. On this point V. N. Rao rightly remarks:

On the one hand, a novel about a social evil like untouchability becomes inevitably political in the context of Gandhiji’s movement to eradicate untouchability. On the other hand, there are novels that have used a political movement only as a means of projecting the personal situation of the characters. Moreover, there are political situations but which nevertheless have a strong political message.¹⁷

The scope of 'political novel' in Indian writing in English is very wide and large. It covers all the political problems and social problems in the history of Indian Society between it it (history) political change is the most important change to which other changes become subordinate. It is difficult to distinguish between social problems and political problems since every social problem acquires a political dimension, pointing towards an all encompassing political solution. The political novel has flourished in Indo-Anglian literature. But a political novel must preserve the integrity of its fictional values for its artistic success by a skilful handling of fictional elements- like the presentation of political idea or ideologies or setting, action and characters. So long as this fictional law is observed by the Indo-Anglian novelists there will be a stream of artistically successful political issues, may be seen to define the political consciousness of the Indian writer.

The term political conscious is defined by Miller as a

Way of seeing, caring about and acting in the world. It is guided by a commitment to human rights and justice and an understanding of power and inequity in social, political and economic system, relations and values ¹⁸

The term politics has been derived from the Greek word 'polis' which meant city, state; politics had to do with the live of the community. Therefore, politics or political consciousness involves caring about community and seeking the common good. It is about hating injustice and the systems and the structures that perpetuate it, but not hating people. It is the art of respecting and working with one another, seeing the 'other' as a fellow human being—shaped by social forces both perverse and praiseworthy, joined in a common quest and struggle for dignity.

Actually speaking, consciousness typically refers to the idea of being who is self-aware. So far political consciousness is concerned; the views of Karl Marks are to be noted worthy. For Marx, consciousness describes a

person's political sense of self. It describes a person's awareness of politics. It was always political, for it was always the outcome of politic-economic circumstances. For the condition of inequality create ideologies which confuse people about their true aspirations, loyalties and purposes. Thus, for example, the working class has often been, for Marx, beguiled by nationalism, organized religion, and other distractions. Their ideological devices help to keep people from realizing that it is they who produce wealth, they who deserve the fruits of the land, all who can prosper, instead of literally thinking for themselves, they think the thoughts given to them by the ruling class. Thus, Marx believes that consciousness is a reflection of the political economy. A person's thoughts tend to be shaped by his or her political and economic circumstances. At the same time, for many South African Blacks, consciousness meant rejecting ideas about Blacks, rejecting white rule of the nation, and restoring Black identity, history and power. Thus, political consciousness is often meant to connote that people have awakened to their true political role, their actual identity.

It is, thus, said that political consciousness is a lifelong exploration of who we are, how we have been shaped, and how our values, world view and action can contribute to a better world for all. It is a journey filled with conflict and growth that can be both liberating and painful. Political consciousness not only involves questioning current power dynamics and demagoguery but also building new forms of more inclusive and transformative power that improve human life and forge bridges of cooperation across culture, racial, ethnic and religious differences. It requires a new concept of human security which is founded on human dignity, not on weapons of war. As Valerie Miller holds the meaning of human security in a large content that:

Means a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, an ethnic tension that did not explode, a dissident who was not- silenced, a human spirit that was not crushed. ¹⁹

It is thus, needless to say that there could be isolated number of factor which 'politicize' literature and lend to the relationship between literature and politics a sharp possessive character. Boris Suchkov cites:

the intensification of the class struggle and national liberation movements, the crystallization of political and social urges, born as much out of the changing patterns in the mode of production, distribution and possession as the widely spread consciousness of the encircling environment ...²⁰

It is true to say that the modern literature has witnessed the invasion of its aesthetic sanctuary by themes of immediate human interest because political situations have changed and polarized, as national interests have given way to international problems, as the emphasis on theological and ontological issues has been transferred to ethical and political formulations. Moreover in the present times the individual mode of living and the collective context of socio-political organization have become so interfused that no dividing line can be drawn between the two socio-economic interest as well as political consciousness has now assured the character of a dominant emotion. The novelist obviously cannot remain an idle spectator. There are also conscious endeavors on the part of novelists to espouse general aspirations socio-political in nature. This way the intellectuals alienated from both the rulers and the ruled can relate themselves to the political mainstream. Their artistic preoccupation gives them the halo of a visionary. The present study aims at tracing the growth of such political consciousness which functions as a dominant emotion and examining how Indo-Anglian fiction has been fully-responsive to the political consciousness with special reference to the selected works of Khushwant Singh, Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Arun Joshi, Rohinton Mistry and Nayantara Sahgal. It is also examined here that these novelists reflect not only a political consciousness but also a political message from the Indian point of view.

Coming to the Indian context, one discovers that politics as a discipline and political consciousness as a component of the mental makeup of the people is of quite origin. The political system and social structure, so far from having grown up together have only recently been introduced to each other. Historically, the India has lived in a state of political indifference for thousands of years. Right since the earliest times, a vast majority of the people- not merely the peasantry but also the traders and professionals- lived and moved within their set grooves thoroughly immunized from politics. The affairs of state were entrusted exclusively to the kshatriyas under the Varanasharm dispensation, and they, in tacit alliance with the Brahmins, kept the other strata in a virtual state of depoliticization.

Unlike in China and Greece, politics was never a major concern in India until recent times rather there was a positively a political orientation inherent in the traditional ethos of Indian society, an obvious proof of which would be the traditional indifference of Indians to recorded history. Unlike the Chinese and the Arabs, Indians have had no comparable account of recorded history until comparatively recent times. Before this recent growth of political consciousness is traced from Indian perspective, a good illustration of such a consciousness emerges from the following rationale given by a prominent Telugu Short Story writer for his thematic concerns:

In these days of acute political awareness the love theme has lost its popularity. Readers tend to think that all love stories are deceptive and that their authors are enemies of the society. These are days for critics of institution who condemn the feudal values in our society. God and Karma are no more the causes of injustice and unfairness to man. People have found out that it is the economic system that is at the root of all evil and that it can be corrected by collective action.²¹

In the specific context of country like India, political consciousness primarily becomes an acute concern with people. It borders on the individual's intellectual involvement with political questions like who governs, what the

governance is like and how it affects the individual in his day-to-day living. In the pre independence times, this consciousness manifested itself as national consciousness. Even after the attainment of freedom, discerning observers of a temporary reality did not cause probing the political process to determine the role of the individual therein; even though with the obvious change in rulers, the thrust of such questions had undergone a corresponding change which is related with such political awakenings which are discussed here.

It is an undeniable fact that the British rule in India was repressive and exploitative. It became deliberately so after Indian revolt of 1857. The ruthlessness with which this revolt was suppressed and the future policies hardened is unparalleled in history. Manmatnath Gupta says:

The British destroyed cottage and small scale industries in the most inhuman manner to clear the road for capitalist exploitation. And the British, who intended to remain as a company of aggressive traders, found out that they could do this better with iron hand.²²

D. P. Mukherji through the analysis of the British political machination observes that

an alien civilization impinged upon every detail of Indian life, changed its pattern and created new values. This Indian wealth ceased to become treasures; money became capital, goods became commodities, land become a source of monopoly rent and the self-sufficiency of rural economy was transformed into the independence of urban and world economy.²³

Not only this, the entire façade of introducing the English system of education in India with a view to bringing about enlightenment was an attempt at making cultural inroads into the Indian identity turning it alien to its roots and thus making it loyal to the British designs of perpetuating its rule in India. In fact, the main aim of colonialism is to change consciousness by the superimposition of an alien order on the native order, so that the individual is

divided in his loyalties towards, himself and his community, thus developing a 'marginal personality'. More so the English education and system had also generated a supercilious attitude among Indians regarding most of the native acceptances and suppositions as inferior and the western prescriptions as superior, thereby justifying the colonial rule and domination. The roots of colonialism in fact, lie in the maximum disorientation of the ruled in this direction which is achieved either by keeping them ignorant of the real exploitative designs of the colonialists or by misleading them to a belief in the colonialists as saviours. Thus, the British worked with great caution and severity of a determined ruler exercising utmost discrimination, tyranny and oppression in all their policies and conduct. All this paved the way for resistance in the country.

Apart from these, there are the major factors which are the key components to make people conscious politically. They are;

The Rise of Nationalism

The India National Movement faced many problems. The foremost problem was the absence of real political unity. India divided into hundreds of semi-autonomous princely states and the provinces created by the British. Besides, no national languages could serve as a unifying element. Religion appeared another grave handicap. The Hindu caste-system kept the masses divided. Despite these obstacles, the forces of nationalism proved irresistible.

At first, the nationalist movement in its formative stages (1885-1919) moved at a leisurely pace drawing its support from the emerging intellectual middle class journalists, businessmen, religious leaders and lawyers. In the latter part of the 19th century well to do families sent their sons to study abroad where they were exposed to the concepts of liberty and democracy and stirred by the writings of Locke, Paine, Jefferson and Mazzini: and

inspired by the successful campaigns for national unity of Bismark in Germany and Cavour in Italy. These ventures in reorientation kindled in them the hope of elevating their country's fallen-predicament and the winning political freedom from the British Rule.

Meanwhile, in the late 1870's Britain's Indian policy became harsher. Handicaps were placed upon Indian civil service applicants who were already denied right to compete for high positions. Laws were also passed restricting liberty to the freedom of press and the Indian jurists trying cases involving British officials and citizens. Entry of Indians to the British quarters and clubs were also barred. All these condition goaded further the Indian nationalists to political action.

Indian National Congress

The birth of Indian National Congress in 1885 was a landmark in the history of nationalist in the country. This forum was created under the guidance of Allan Home, a retired Indian civil service officer in India. The guiding spirits of the new organization were western educated intellectuals – chiefly Surrender Nath Banerjee and Gopal Krishna Gokhale.

The initial objects of the Congress were moderate. It advocated social reforms and improved employment opportunities for Indians in services. Its ultimate goal was self-rule, but this was to be achieved by constitutional means. Until the First World War, the Congress exerted a limited influence. More radical nationalists like Aurobindo and Bal Gangadhar Tilak kept up their pressure of resistance on the British. The partition plan of Bengal in 1905 further accelerated the pace of national movement against the foreign rule, giving the extremists an upper hand in the freedom movement.

By the middle of 1916, the moderates were losing control of the Congress to the younger radicals. Though the British passed a bill in 1919,

providing Indians control of public works and education on provincial and local levels, as well as a majority position on the viceroy's – Legislative Council, the reforms were unacceptable to the radical faction, and the breach in the nationalist ranks widened. It was at this juncture that Gandhi first rose to prominence.

The Rise of Gandhism

The coming of Gandhi on the national scene changed the course of the national struggle for independence. Gandhi was essentially a religious man. He was religious not in narrow sense of orthodox creed but a follower of truth or satya as moral order in the services of humanity at large, which is called Sarvodaya. He therefore, affiliated this concept with Non-Violence and Satyagraha. Then he applied it to politics, it took the form of technique seeking to develop the moral resistance of the people to injustice and the change of heart on the part of the wrong- doer.

Gandhi launched his campaign against all exploitation of man by man and state. His protest against British rule also kept in view the loss of individual dignity in foreign rule. He therefore turned his attention to the suffering of the masses, which faced humiliations, exploitations and injustices of all sorts, both in a capitalistic and colonial rule. He therefore, initiated great Satyagraha campaign, non-cooperation, work stoppages, closing of shops and non-violent demonstrations to throw out the foreign rulers. He toured through the rural India and lived with the poor and the downtrodden to lend them dignity befitting a human being. He struggled for the socio- cultural emancipation of women and the untouchables in the truest sense of liberation of the country from the evils of slavery.

Gandhi dreamed that after independence, India would build her unique civilization, based on her glorious traditions of the past. He feared the potential destructiveness of modern science, technology and industries. He

also preferred a decentralized family and policy of self-sufficient villages. 'Swadeshi' and 'Khaddar' were thus means of recovering individual self-sufficiency, dignity and independence. He considered urban industrialism the greatest threat to the family and the causes of the exploitation of man by man.

Partition and Independence

The Muslim league distrusted a possible dominion status for India with the Congress party in the governing position; for the leaguers argued that the Muslim minority would remain in a subordinate position. Though Gandhiji and Pt. Nehru stressed in the secular structures of the party, the league agitated for a separate state. Finally the Viceroy Lord Mountbatten was permitted by the British Parliament to undertake creation of the two independence states; India and Pakistan in 1947. The creation of Pakistan led to communal riots. Twelve million people had to take to the road in search of new havens, leaving their homes and properties; half a million of them did not make it. They were slaughtered on the way. Over a hundred thousand women were abducted, raped and mutilated. Villages were put to flames and people burnt alive. The bloodiest holocaust like of which had never been witnessed rudely shocked the conscience of the civilized people all the world over and made them shudder with dismay at man's ruthless cruelty to man in the name of religion. This crisis also caused an unprecedented questioning of identity and it affected directly at the political consciousness of the country.

Abolition of Princely States and Making of Republic

With end of the British rule on 15 August, 1947, the question of the integration of 562 states comprising what is known as princely India, as distinguished from British India, came to the force. The rulers wanted to make the best of the bargaining position in which the lapse of paramountcy placed them. The government apprehended the attempts of balkanizing and isolating the country, as a sever threat to integrity. As V. P. Menon notes: "And so the

prophets of gloom predicated that the ship of Indian freedom would founder on the rock of the states" ²⁴

Hence the state ministry headed by Sardar Patel and assisted by V. P. Menon, as its Secretary effected the accession of these states to the Indian Union. The White paper on India states has rightly summarized that: "The accession of the states to the dominion of India was a momentum event in India's history." ²⁵

The next stage in the national reconstruction being the re-organization of the states was on linguistic basis. And the political map of the country was further re-drawn with the creation of linguistic states in 1956.

The Foreign Aggressions

India was formally declared a sovereign Democratic Republic on 26th January, 1950 with the formation and implementation of its Constitution. But its newly acquired sovereignty was put to severe tests and threats in the first three decades. Soon after Independence, the country was confronted with many external and internal problems which seriously challenged its existence, supremacy, sovereignty and integrity. India faced an armed rebellion by Pakistan in Kashmir. Not less than three eventful wars were fought during this period: the wars with Pakistan in 1965 and 1971. Then India was faced with an armed conflict with China in 1962. While the French Government vacated Indian colonies peacefully, the Portuguese colony of Goa, Daman and Diu could be freed in 1961. All these events contained wide range of political problems of this period.

The Life of Indian Politicians

The corrupt and affluent lives of the high-ranked British officials had left a deep mark on the thinking and policies of those enjoying power on and authority in the independent India. The high ranked ministers and those

seated in grand chairs were so maddened and dazzled by their narrow selfish motives that they turned a deaf ear to the woes and grievances of the public. Even the planning commission referred to the alarming growth of corruption in the national life of the country in the post-independence India. Realizing that corruption was fast becoming a cancer to our society, the then Congress Government's Home Minister Shri G. L. Nanda, announced in parliament the government's decision to set up central vigilance commission to enquire into transactions in which public servants are suspected to have acted improperly or in a corrupt manner. It was separately designed to ensure that complaint of corruption or lack of integrity on the part of public servants was given prompt and effective attention and that offenders were brought to book without fear or favour.

The selfless and dedicated political leaders who fought for India's independence and worked for the uplift of the poor and glory of the country are either dead or have been replaced by the opportunist and corrupt leaders who care only for their personal gains and vested interests in collusion with the rich industrialist who have voted them to power. The common masses of India feel disillusioned because their miseries and grievances remain unabated even under the Self-Government public exposure of acts of corruption and various secret happenings going on in the corridors of power, has been the utmost concern of the common people as all these directly related to their consciousness regarding politics.

All three above mentioned factors have certainly intensified the political consciousness among people of India. The same thing has been reflected among the writings of writers of Indian fiction who have written in English in which the political motif has been especially prominent from the beginning. Since the Indian novel in English was born before independence the politics of the freedom movement plays an integral part in the genre's development. In fact, it is possible to analyze the intimate connection between the growth of

the freedom movement and the rise of Indian novel in English. As it is observed by M. K. Naik:

Up to the 1930's there was no Indian novelist who could claim sustained and considerable achievement in fiction originally written in English. Then came a sudden flowering, and it is significant that it came in 1930's a period during which the glory that was Gandhi's attained perhaps its brightest splendour. The Indian freedom struggle was already more than a generation old, yet with the advent of Mahatma Gandhi it was so thoroughly democratized that freedom consciousness percolated for the first time to the very grassroots of Indian society and revitalized it. It is possible to see a connection between this developments and the rise of the Indian novel in English; for fiction, of all literary forms is most vitally concerned with social conditions and values.²⁶

In novel after novel, therefore, the political theme is a focus of the work. Political developments after the attainment of independence in 1947 also ensured that the excitement heat of the political drama would continue. The holocaust of the partition, the tumultuous merger of the princely states; the murder of the Mahatma; the ongoing oppression of the Indians in Goa, who achieved independence some years later; and the wars with Pakistan and China during 1960's all there readily invited fictional treatment. More recently, the working of political democracy in India and the clash of personalities among those who wield power have also formed the subject matter of sore novels.

It is also noted here that there are few novels fully devoted to the presentation of political ideas. Most of them are political novels in the sense that action, character and setting would appear to be more or less grounded in politics. Here the writers of such works are able to deal with politics in artistic terms for instance, Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* and Mulk Raj Anand's *The Sword and the Sickle*. *Kanthapura* is an unforgettable depiction of the impact of the Gandhian ideology of non-violence, non-cooperation on an obscure

village in South India during 1930's. The whirlwind of the Gandhian revolution shakes this little community to the core. Hence, *Kanthapura* does not so much expound a political ideology as it shows its cataclysmic impact on the rural mind. While, *The Sword and the Sickle* by Mulk Raj Anand takes place during the 1920's, which saw the waning of Tilak's influence and the development of Gandhi's mass appeal, thereby ushering in a new and far more intense phase in the Indian freedom struggle. It also coincided with the introduction of communist ideology in India.

Some Inner Fury by Kamala Markandaya is another political novel but it fails to integrate the private lives of its characters with the events of the political milieu. There are few political novels in which the artificiality is observed for eg. K.S. Venkataramani's *Kangan the Patriot, A Novel of New India in the making* is set against the background of the non-cooperation movement of the 1930's. Here the action of the commitment of an Oxford-educated youth is obstructed by superfluous romantic conventionalities. Mulk Raj Anand's *Death of a Hero: Epitaph for Maqbool Sherwani* is another novel where the artificiality is produced by realistic techniques that make the novel inconsequential and superficial.

More or less romantic portrayals of the Indian struggle for freedom abound in Indian fiction. But there are also examples of novelists attempting an anti romantic and even ironical-portrayal of the revolutionary struggle. In the novels dealing with the politics of the post-independence period, the use of irony is, quite predictably, more common. Rabindranath Tagore's fiction, though not originally written in English, has been translated into English. It does not therefore legitimately belong to Indian Writing in English. But since it has always been included in surveys of this body of writing, it may be considered here in passing. In Tagore's two novels with a distinct political orientation Indian revolutionaries are subjected to sharp satire. Both *Home*

and the World and *Four Chapters* describe the underside of revolutionary activities.

R.K. Narayanan's *Waiting for Mahatma* has vigorous but ironical treatment of The Impact of Gandhism on some Indians underneath its ostensibly routine love-story. The irony in Khushwant Singh's *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* is not nearly as subtle. The reactions of many of his characters to the freedom movement of 1942 are portrayed rather sardonically. The strident use of satire is accentuated by the author's obsession with sex. There is a distinct note of irony in Nayantara Sahgal's novels such as *This Time of Morning*, Manohar Malgonkar's *Distant Drum* is an army novel that takes place during the post-partition period provides a highly satirical portrayal of a crude, grasping party boss, Lala Vishnu.

If political material has been given romantic and satirical twists, it can also be seen in melodramatic novels. *A Bend in the Ganges* by Manohar Malgonkar is such a political novel full of melodramatic effects. Essentially a story of a Gandhian and a terrorist youth, this novel represents the cleavage between the ideologies of Gandhi and of terrorist groups in the broad context of India, Pakistan and the Andamans. At the same time, K. A. Abbas has in his novel *Inquilab* furnished a detailed account of the Indian political personalities such as Bhagat Singh, Tilak, the Ali brothers, Gandhiji, Nehru and Patel and on crucial political developments such as the Simon Commission's visit and its aftermath, and the Salt Satyagraha. How the air of political consciousness is depicted here in *Inquilab*:

In the country, the political temperature rose higher every day... In Bombay there had been yet another outbreak of communal rioting... In other towns, wherever the Simon Commission had gone on its tour of inquiry, it had been greeted with hartals, strikes, black flags, hostile demonstration, and shouts of "Simmon, go back."²⁷

Nayantara Sahgal, born in an illustrious family of freedom fighters, is eminently qualified to write political novel of a high quality. Her first-hand acquaintance with political issues and personages is an enviable asset. Her political characters seem authentic. Her *This Time of Morning*, *The Day in Shadow* are novels with political ideas. Manohar Malgonker's *The Princes* must be considered an example of political fiction in which the action and the characters are so firmly grounded in politics that they come alive only through politics. *The Princes* is a memorable portrayal of the troubled times of the merger of the separate states into the Indian Union. Indeed, this brief period in Indian history was one of intense political dramas which is exposed with a lot of care by the novelist.

Moreover, the depiction of the horrible communal violence and bloodshed and bewildering problems of identity faced by both the communities uprooted from their nativity is a major trend visible in the Post-Independence Indian English novels like *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh, *A Bend in Ganges* by Manohar Malgonkar, *Azadi* by Chaman Nahal etc. Some of the writers, who had treated the theme of partition of India, belong to the Punjab or Sikh community and had suffered the physical and mental agony caused by the tragic events in the wake of partition. The novelists have treated the events with great artistic detachment. In the Preface of *A Bend of Ganges*, the writer writes: "Only the violence in this story happens to be true; it came in the wake of freedom, to become a part of India's history..."²⁸

Azadi by Chaman Nahal is one of most comprehensive fictional accounts in Indian English Literature of the partition and its horror which held the subcontinent in a nightmare for months and left a trail of phenomenal bitterness and misery. B. Rajan has also merged the personal and national experience of partition in his *The Dark Dancer*. The novel *A Storm in Chandigarh*, by Nayantara Sahgal, projects the scene in chilling horror and

inhuman violence which could be witnessed with the naked eyes at the time of partition. The novel *The Suitable Boy* by Vikram Seth, narrates in retrospect the ghastly event of separation. He conjures the images of the uprooted 'marginal' man fleeing across the borders, the scene of transition which has been set in train by the separation and independence. Thus, it can be observed that the horrible violence and bloodshed by the tragic division of India-Pakistan, has sprinkled its blood drops on some of the novels written in post-independence era.

Another major political trend traced in these novels is the depiction of the decline and fall of the feudal glory. Many writers have given in their novels a sensational and graphic account of the merger of princely states, the decline of feudal glory. In *The Private Life of an Indian Prince* Mulk Raj Anand describes the socio-political situation of the post independence period when the Indian Government was appealing to the princely states to merge themselves with the Indian Union. *The Princes* by Malagonkar also narrates the collapse of princely India:

The map was red and yellow. The red was for British India, the yellow for the India of the princes... then the British left, and in no time at all, the red had overrun the yellow and coloured the entire map of uniformed orange. The princely states were no more.²⁹

E. M. Forster's *Hill of Devil* also discusses the possibility of a resurgent prince asserting power over the authority of the British. As mentioned in the novel:

That will be the time for the princes to unite and rise, to drive away the British and put down the nationalists and set up our rule in country...³⁰

The novel *Zohra* by Zeenut Futehally, depicts the luxurious life of the Nawab Sahib of Hyderabad and depicts the conflict between the old feudal and conventional social life that was dying out and new resurgent life and

nationalism. The novel *Remember the House* by Santha Rama Rau relates the historical events of the merge of Kashmir in the Indian Republic. Rama Mehta has elaborately delineated the atmosphere of the feudal glory of Udaipur in her novel *Inside the Haveli*. The writer has successfully portrayed the actuality of this world, which has a consciousness of well-being, culture and the richness luster and the dignity of tradition. The novel traces the lessening grip of feudal system in India of the post-independence era.

There are certain novels carrying the notes of nationalist movement and Gandhian ideology. The freedom movement in India was not a political struggle, but all-pervasive emotional experience for all Indians also. The Indian writers were so much emotionally attached with the movement for freedom that even after independence it was difficult for them to escape its influence. Therefore, most of the Indian English novelists recollected it in tranquility and depicted this national experience into their fiction. This was the consciousness that was national in nature and was felt far and wide beyond the boundaries of language and community. Apart from this national movement, the Gandhian force was also the most appealing factor to the novelists. The call given by Gandhi and his truthful and non-violence struggle overcame all established political strategies and ushered in new ideas and fresh methods which shook the Indian life in several spheres to the core. As Nehru puts it: "Gandhi... who was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and took deep breaths" ³¹

Raja Rao in his novel *Kanthapura* has presented Gandhiji as the most potent force behind the freedom movement. R. K. Narayan's *Waiting for Mahatma* also deals with the impact of Gandhism on Indian political life. Mulk Raj Anand in his novels *Untouchable* and *The Sword and the Sickle* also shows his awareness and association with the great national event of the struggle for independence under the potential leadership of Gandhiji. Ruth Pravar Jhabvala also depicts this struggle for independence in her novel

Esmond in India, Nayantara Sahgal's *This Time of Morning* deals with the lives of politicians in the capital of the post-independence India. Manohar Malgonker's *A Bend in the Ganges* is crowded with events from modern Indian history, beginning with the Civil Disobedience Movement of the early thirties and ending in the post partition riots in the Punjab. K. Nagarajan shows indirect influence of Gandhi on the people in *The Chronicles of Kedaram*. While the novel *Inquilab* by Ahmad Abbas is shaped directly by the forces of history. All major political incidents of the decade between Jallianwala Bagh and the Gandhi pact (1919-1931) are recorded in *Inquilab*. It is a novel of the Indian revolution, which started with the Khilafat movement and which ultimately brought independence to India. The novelist's intention is to project the Gandhian Revolutionary Age in its entirety. Venu Chitali's *Transit* is another Gandhian novel in which personal and political histories are artistically blended. Arther Lall's *The House at Adampur* is set against the background of the National Movement for freedom, beginning from 1930 and ending with 1944. The no-salt tax campaign and other string events of the great struggle which rocked Delhi have been vividly rendered before us. Attia Husain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* is also a novel of the political background of the troubled times of pre-independence and post-independence era. Arundhati Roy in her novel *The God of Small Things* paints out the unnoticed shades of the dalit and the deserted which generally escape the eyes of a social scientist.

Thus, it can be said that the Indian English novelists were also greatly influenced by the Gandhian consciousness. It is revealed even in the works of the post-independence Indian English novelists also A.V. Krishna Rao throws light an Gandhi's inflame on Indian English fiction :

Almost all the Indo-Anglian novels have one or more of the following nuclear ideas, predominant in them; and the evil of partition, the cult of 'Quit-India'; and the Gandhian myth... It is a significant fact that the

image of Gandhi is present in all three types of novels, though the details and emphasis may vary.³²

There are certain novels depicting the Second World War, Azad Hind Fauz and the Foreign Aggressions and their impact over political consciousness. Manohar Malgonkar's *The Distant Drum* shows that INA officers have not paid much attention to the political change in the country, and that the relation between the government and the army were strained. His novel *A Bend in Ganges* presents the freedom struggle in the background of the Japanese invasion of British Asian territories in World War II. In *The Princes* he describes the confusion and chaos resulting from the retreat of the Indian army from Burma with graphic details. Khushwant Singh in *I Shall not Hear the Nightingale*, set in northern India during the War years (1942-43), vividly delineates how with the Japanese at the gate of India, the British face the imminent collapse of the Indian Empire, and the Indian nationalists, sensing the end of the Raj, are tensed for revolution. One major problem of the Indian Sovereign Democratic Republic treated in these novels is that of the freedom struggle in Goa and its merger in the Indian Union, depicted in Lambert Mascarenha's *Sorrowing Lies My Hand* and Khwaja Ahmed Abbas' *Maria*.

At the same time there are certain novels expressing the effect of Indo-British relations on the political scenario. The idea of the white man's burden found its way into Anglo- Indian society and allowed many of them to feel a sense of superiority and indispensability towards the Empire which they administered. The over – bearing, snobbish and segregating attitude of the British was felt by the Indian thinkers and the patriots also. The atrocities and cruelties committed against nationalists in their struggle for freedom did not leave any respect or sweetness of relations in the hearts of Indians. Even after their departure from the country, the literature especially the novel of post – independence India harp in one way or other on the strained relation between the Indians and the Britishers. The post-independence novels are a

record of the satirical attitude of the Indians towards the luxurious and affluent life of these Englishmen.

The novelists like Manohar Malgonkar have written in a reflective vein, depicting the problems which confronted their sahibs during the last two decades of the British Raj, Ruth Jhabwala has concentrated entirely on the Englishmen in India today without any reference to the past. The novelists like Khushwant Singh and Kamla Markandya have delineated the other shades of Indo British relations, the love- hate relationship. For instance, *Combat of Shadows* by Manohar Malgonkar throws light on the particular English society who loves snobbery. The same kind of issue is discussed by Ruth Jhabwala in *Esmond in India*. Here she highlights truth of the low ebb of the English's prestige in modern India. *Possession* by Kamla Markandaya contains a very impressive commentary on Indo-British relations in the post-independence India and another work *Some Inner Fury* highlights the British apathy and their self-seeking and self-pleasing nature. Kamla Markandaya aligns herself with the moderates among Indian politicians. She is opposed to terrorism and violence. *All about H. Hatter* by G. V. Desani discusses the British and the Indian aims and means of achieving status and respectability. *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* by Khushwant Singh throws light on the strained relations between the bureaucracy and the common people. These novelists have presented with their pen dipped in sarcasm, the unimaginative and arrogant British with their luxurious and colourful life, and their strained relations with the Indians and their impact over Indian political consciousness.

Sometimes it is also found that the public exposure of acts of corruption and various secret happenings going on in the corridors of power, has been the utmost concern of novelists of the period. The malpractices and unfair mission of the so called political leaders have certainly troubled the common civics of the country. For example Nayantara Sagh in her novels liberally draws upon her knowledge of what happens in the drawing rooms of

politically very important people or in the lobbies in parliament. Her novel, *This Time of Morning* deals with the lives of politicians in the capital of the post-independence India, New Delhi, which is also the political nadir of intrigues where ministers and government officials jockey for power. *A Time to Be Happy* is another novel by Sahgal where she paints the selfish and narrow pursuits of the politicians at the cost of the public whom they are supposed to serve.

Apart from these *The Princes* by Manohar Malgonkar is a novel in which the social and political developments of the native state of Indian are outlined against the background of the private life, glamour's and tragedies of Indian princes. The contrast is enforced by depicting the corrupt and dishonest practices of the new rulers, the politicians and the petty officers. *The Flame of the Forest* by Sudhin Ghose presents the devilish designs of the political boss. It highlights the demagoguery after independence. In *The Financial Expert* R. K. Narayan also depicts the miserable conditions of roads, streets and gutters. The novelist pinpoints the Government's apathy towards public works and sanitary conditions in the towns. Salman Rushdie is also a political novelist and prefers to write mostly on political issues on Indian sub-continent. His recent novel records almost all the major political events of India such as Emergency, Indira Gandhi's assassination, communal politics of Shiv-Sena in Mumbai, Maruti car scam, Bofor's cannon scam, Bihar's fodder scam etc. He has also ironically referred in his novels almost all the major politicians of India like Indira Gandhi, Bal Thakery, Sunil Dutt, Rajiv Gandhi, Sanjay Gandhi, M.G.R. Jayalalita and others. His famous novels are *Midnight's Children*, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, *Ground Beneath her Feet*, etc. Rohinton Mistry is also a leading novelist whose novel *Such a Long Journey* set in India in 1971, at the time of the War with Pakistan which ended with the independence of East Pakistan (Bangladesh). The novel throws light on the political corruption, communal riots, nationalism etc.

Looking at the development of the political consciousness when in the Indian writing in English, it can be said that the major political upheavals of the post – independence as well as pre- independence India have been used as either main theme or background of the post-independence Indian English fiction. The heart rending stories of bloodshed in the wake of communal violence offer partition of India and Pakistan, the successful abolition and merger of princely states into Indian republic, the historical nationalist movement and the enchanting and overwhelming impact of Gandhi on Indian life and literature, world war II and formation of Indian national Army, Chinese aggression, Pakistani invasions and Goan struggle for independence, the common man's hatred towards the British, and the life of Indian demagogues are some of the important political events which have been effectively projected by the novelists.

The novelists of post independence Indian writers in English have certainly looked at the above mentioned development of Indian political thought. They have also observed all the undercurrent ideas that shape the future of India. They have, thus, tried to focus on the concept of the political novel and political consciousness of India. They are true while depicting the political consciousness because any idea begins its journey almost like a small sperm among millions. The journey from existence as a sperm, to life as an embryo, then as an infant and finally growing up through childhood to adult life seems full of so many risks that one cannot even attempt to predict chances of success. Yet, just as life goes on through this difficult journey, ideas also do grow up and mature. At the moment, many of these men and women appear to be groping in the dark. Yet, they are the ones who inspire hope.

The above story of development of political thought in India talks of the ideas that have grown, attained adulthood and are now headed towards their final resting place the graveyard of history. One cannot write story of the ones who are not yet born or are just born or are

struggling through childhood. Yet, these are the ones who will rule the political thought of tomorrow's India.³³

It must be noted here that the Indian English novelists, though writing in foreign language are rooted in the soil, whereas the pre-independence writers were more lured by the British politics, the social economic policies of the government and the British milieu, the novelists writing in free India, feel more at home in the delineation of Indian political milieu, and important national events. They have reacted and represented the very spirit of Indian political ethos in their novels. Keeping in mind this, I have focused in this thesis on the selected works of the selected writers who render political consciousness not as passive reflectors. Their novels are imbued to the core with an awareness of the political happenings and the manner wherein these circumscribe the potential of the individual for self-fulfillment. They also probe deeper and come out with a diagnosis of the afflictions of the body politic as well as with a suggestive prescription to cure these distortions. With a view to analyzing this, they have reacted and represented the very spirit of Indian political ethos in their novels and they have also depicted the agony and the plight of dislocated people who had been victim of political game.

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Chapter: 2

The Trauma of Partition in *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh and The Foreign Aggression and Its Impact on Indian Politics in *Shadow From Ladakh* by Bhabani Bhattacharya.

The Trauma of Partition in *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh

Khushwant Singh was born on Feb. 2, 1915 in West Punjab. He got his schoolings in Delhi, Lahore and London. He was appointed information officer of the government of India at Toronto and Canada and Press attaché and public officer for the High Commission of India in the United Kingdom and the embassy in Ireland in 1948-50. In 1950 *The Mark of Vishnu* was published. He attended UNESCO Sixth General Conference in Paris in 1951 as the member of the Indian delegation. During 1952-53 he edited periodicals of the government of India. In 1956 *Train To Pakistan* was published and received award of the Grove India Fiction prize. *The Voice of God and Other Stories* was published in 1957 and then followed his second novel *I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale* in 1959. In two volumes *A History of the Sikhs* was published in 1963 and received Rockefeller Foundation grant for extensive travel and research on Sikh history and religion. He got teaching and research assignment of Princeton in 1966. He was made visiting professor at Swathmore College, Pennsylvania and later joined as the chief editor of '*The Illustrated weekly of India*'. As a journalist he has written on a variety of themes on the world of fact, men and affairs. His narrative ability distinguishes his writing from that of the other leading journalists of India.

As a novelist Khushwant Singh is famous for *Train To Pakistan* and *I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale*. *Train To Pakistan* made him internationally known, though he had made a literary reputation with publication of his short stories *The Mark of Vishnu and other stories*. Khushwant Singh is what his

British education made him, a cultured humanist. He gladly confessed that he is the product of both East and the West. The Punjab countryside, Urban Delhi, and the liberal, the sophisticated city of London are the three dominant factors that influenced Khushwant Singh. Thus exposed to the ideas and attitudes of the West, Singh is essentially an orientalist in outlook who has Indian self and individuality of personality. His journey is not without travails and tribulations, it is a ceaseless quest for identity which is reflected through the medium of his literary career and art.

Thus, Khushwant Singh is one of India's distinguished men of letters with an international reputation. A brief account of his achievement as a novelist, short-story writer, historian, essayist, journalist and editor is sufficient to establish him in Indian Writing in English as a versatile genius. Till date he has produced few novels, a considerable number of short stories, an authentic history of Sikhs, biographies of Sikh leaders and many articles which reveal his thought and feeling of a great writer. His presentation of the real and the comic makes him stand as a pillar and peer among modern Indian writers on subjects of concern to contemporary man.

His creative urge as a novelist, short – story writer, historian and essayist has been the gradual achievements of self expression and a continuous search for self seeking. Though his mind and personality as a whole have been moulded by western education and culture, he is at heart a Sikh and a pure Indian. He values Indian art and culture and is deeply rooted in the soil of India. His writing has grown out of the grass roots of the social milieu as his experience of rural India is the base of his creative endeavour. Singh has portrayed India both as an outsider and an insider. On his novelistic art Anthony Burgess comments:

The most notable writer from the Punjab is undoubtedly the Sikh Khushwant Singh; whose *I Shall Not Hear The Nightingale* is a fine

chronicle of life in a Sikh community in the period 1942-43. We have here a formidable novelist who writes too little. ¹

Khushwant Singh once described himself as a writer of history and fiction. He submitted that while historian called his history books mere fiction, critics felt that his fiction appeared to be heavy going history. On the fundamental quality of Singh, V. A. Shahane writes:

although Singh's consciousness appears to range from fiction to journalism certain basic qualities govern his creative talent and characterize the development of his art. His critical as well as creative, writing fall into a pattern which emerges from and is imperceptibly linked with, the primary characteristics of his creative mind. ²

Train To Pakistan is a magnificent novel where Khushwant Singh tells the tragic tale of the partition of India and Pakistan and the events that followed which will be remembered as one of the blackest chapters of human history. Just on the eve of independence India was partitioned causing a great upheaval in the whole continent. Independence brought in its wake one of the bloodiest carnages in the history of India. The upshot of this was that twelve million people had to flee leaving their home; nearly half a million were killed. It is also on record that over a hundred thousand women, young and old, were abducted, raped, mutilated. Thus, thousands fled from both sides of the border seeking refuge and security. The natives were uprooted and it was certainly a ghastly experience for them to give up their belongings and rush to a land which was not theirs.

The harrowing and spine chilling events of 1947 had shaken the faith of the people in the innate human beings. It had driven them into a state of wonder over what man has made of man. To Khushwant Singh, this was a period of great disillusionment and crisis of values, a distressing and disintegrating period of his life. The belief he had cherished all his life were shattered. Giving vent to his inner struggle and agony, he says:

The beliefs that I had cherished all my life were shattered. I had believed in the innate goodness of the common man. But the division of India had been accompanied by the most savage massacres known in the history of the contry... I had believed that we Indians were peace loving and non- violent, that we were more concerned with matters of the spirit, while the rest of the world was involved in the pursuit of material things. After the experience of the autumn of 1947, I could no longer subscribe to this view. I became... an angry middle-aged man, who wanted to shout his disenchantment with the world... I decided to try my hand at writing. ³

The sinister and venomous impact of partition and the indignation it spawned in him has been realistically expressed in a scathing irony in *Train To Pakistan*. Originally entitled *Mano Majra*, the novel portrays with a bold and unrelenting realism, the brutal story of political hatred and violence during the turbulent and fateful days that proceeded and followed the partition of British India when the spirit of communal frenzy and a passionate zeal for self-expression were fanning and fumbling within the mass. Every citizen was caught up in the holocaust. No one could remain aloof; no one could be trusted to be impartial. The administration, the police, even the armed forces, was caught up in the blaze of hatred. Mob ruled the streets, burning, looting, killing, dishonouring women and mutilating children; even animals sacred to the other community became the legitimate targets of reprisals. As Malgonker quotes;

The entire land was being spattered by the blood of its citizens, blistered and disfigured with the fires of religious hatred; its roads were glutted with enough dead bodies to satisfy the ghouls of a major war. ⁴

It is true to note that partition touched the whole country and Singh's attempt in the novel is to see the events from the point of view of the people of Mano Majra, a small village which is considered to be the backdrop of this

novel. All the actions depicted in the novel, the dramas enacted by the characters take place in this tiny and typical Punjab village. Before narrating his story the author gives a brief but adequate account of the heart rending national tragedy. What impresses us most in this description is the author's balanced and unprejudiced account of this tragedy. He writes:

Muslim said the Hindus had planned and started the killing. According to the Hindus, the Muslims were to blame. The fact is, both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured, both raped.⁵

In the first part of the novel, the writer has repeatedly pointed out that even after the savage blood bath throughout the Punjab, in the wake of independence; Mano Majra remained surprisingly free from communal stress and tension. It was in fact like a small oasis in the vast desert of communal violence and unprecedented carnage. The slow process of corruption of the village by communal virus, in fact, forms the crux of the novel. The writer painstakingly points out all the factors leading to this process of corruption and how the peaceful life in Mano Majra suddenly came to a jolt. Here Singh effectively depicts the pangs of partition of the Indian subcontinent which was certainly a dark chapter in its history. Khushwant Singh made the very appealing comment regarding the pangs of partition during one of his interviews after the screening of the film version of *Train to Pakistan* directed by Pamela Rooks at International Film Festival in New Delhi. (11-20 January, 1998). It seems to be very pertinent even today i.e. fifty years after the unfortunate tragedy of partition took place. Khushwant Singh commented that partition must be remembered and it is relevant today. It did in fact happen and can happen again. That's why people who clamour for an independent Kashmir, Khalistan or Nagaland are reminded to realize the possibilities of recurring what happened in 1947. Thus he advised people never let partition happen again.

The partition serves both as a background and a foreground to the novel's vision. The action of the novel centers around a tiny village called Mano Majra on the Indo–Pakistan border during the partition. As P. C. Car writes: "Singh weaves a narrative around life in this village, making the village a microcosm representing a larger world".⁶

Though dominated by the Sikhs, Mano Majra has as its inhabitants the Hindus and Muslims too. The chief protagonist of the novel is the village itself. The four sections of the novel – Dacoity, Kalyug, Mano Majra and Karma – are variations on a single theme, but each section foregrounds the action of the next and moves the story forward to a deeper vision. The novel begins with a focus on Mano Majra but slowly moves to suggest that Mano Majra transcends its geographical identity and becomes a metaphor. Its well defined physical and psychological properties become murkier as the narrative progresses towards its end.

The progression in the novelistic vision gets more and more complex as we move from section to section. In the first section, "Dacoity" a major metaphor is worked out. The murder of Ram Lal by a gang of dacoits from a neighbouring village sets the tone of the narrative by suggesting an additional dimension to the event. Dacoity has caused dismemberment and has made some innocent persons scapegoats for the action. Figuratively, it stands for the political dismemberment of the country by the British government who blamed the local leaders for causing the partition. Thus an ordinary event is transformed into a powerful symbol. All the events that follow seem to have resulted from the dacoity; Sing here introduces most of the important characters in this section. The next day of the murder, the train unloads at Mano Majra station a group of armed policemen and a young Marxist radical named Iqbal. Hukum Chand, the Deputy Commissioner of the district also arrive in the village around the same time. The police arrests Iqbal and Jugga suspecting them for the murder. Thus, the sleepy village awakes to life and

slowly joins the turbulence outside. The sudden activity in the village brings history in motion and the isolation of the village gradually disappears.

In the next section, appropriately called "Kalyug" suggests that the novel has a cosmic vision. In the Hindu concept of epic time, Kalyug comes at the end of the cycle when the old order is destroyed and foundations for a new one are laid. The train that carries corpses from Pakistan to be cremated at Mano Majra suggests a symptom that the old world has died. The incident of mass cremation completely disturbs the rhythm of the village's life. There is a pall of gloom on the village. Everybody in the village takes the train as a premonition of evil times. Imam Baksh, the Mullah, who had maintained regularity in his prayer every evening, does not pray that morning. As the author writes; "His sonorous cry did not rise to the heavens to proclaim the story of God".⁷

This disruption in the rhythm of Mano Majra's life suggests that the end has come.

The third section, "Mano Majra", takes the action to its further intensity. It is built around the image of the village in transformation. There is a perceptible change in not only the appearance of the village, but also in its awareness of the human condition. The section opens with a note on the changed climate:

... a heavy brooding silence descended on the village. People barricaded their doors and many stayed up all night talking in whispers. Everyone felt his neighbour's hand against him, and thought of finding friends and allies.⁸

As Mano Majra loses its healthy seclusion and gets embroiled in the national cataclysm, the action of the novel moves into the surreal. The Head Constable divides the village into two halves between the Sikhs and the Muslims and even succeeds in convincing the Sikhs that Muslims deserve

punishment for their atrocities on their Gurus. As the mass exodus begins, the village turns into a ghastly scene. The houses of the Muslims are robbed, and ironically, Malli, who had robbed Ram Lal, is entrusted by the police to look after the property of the evacuees.

The last section is "Karma" that gives the novel a metaphysical dimension. Singh seems to suggest that in such an atmosphere of brutality human action is meaningless. Even a heroic act done in such a time does not carry any consequences whatsoever. In a strange reversal of roles, the anti-hero Jugga turns into a hero and the dacoit Malli becomes a custodian of the Muslim's property. The novel closes with such an ironic reversal order. Jugga's act of sacrifice saves the lives of thousands of people, but their fate remains uncertain. Through Iqbal the author reflects philosophically on the nature of human action and on the price of freedom:

If you look at things as they are, he told himself, there does not seem to be a code either of man or of God on which one can pattern one's conduct. Wrong triumphs over right as much as right over wrong triumphs. Sometimes its triumphs are greater. What happens ultimately you do not know? In such circumstances what can you do but cultivate an utter indifference to all values? Nothing matters. Nothing whatever...⁹

Khushwant Singh seems to think that only appropriate response to the partition would be indifference, which is another way of accepting the idea of Karma as total surrender to a deterministic world.

It is true to admit that the harrowing incidents of 1947 had shaken the faith of all the sensitive and thinking people of India in the intrinsic nobility of man, taught by its sages and saints including Mahatma Gandhi during various stages of its cultural evolution of thousands of years. They brought great disillusionment and crisis of values in the life of Khushwant Singh also. It is therefore not surprising that *Train To Pakistan* is both a grim and pathetic tale

of individuals and communities caught in the swirl of partition. Therefore, the author effectively depicts the pangs of partition of the Indian subcontinent which was certainly a dark chapter in its history.

The novel begins with a reference to the summer of 1947 which was noted for its scorching heat and rainlessness and marked for hot and dusty atmosphere:

The summer of 1947 was not like other Indian summers. Even the weather had a different feel in India that year. It was hotter than usual and drier and dustier. And the summer was longer. No one could remember when the monsoon had been so late. For weeks, the sparse clouds cast only shadows. There was no rain. People began to say that God was punishing them for their sins.¹⁰

The summer before, communal riots, precipitated by reports of the proposed division of the country into a Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan, had broken out in Calcutta and several thousand had been killed. The Hindus and the Muslims were blaming one – another for killing: From Calcutta the riots had spread north and east and west. In Noakhali in East Bengal Muslims massacred Hindus and in Bihar Hindus massacred Muslims. Mullahs were reported to have roamed the Punjab and the Frontier Province with boxes of human skulls said to be those of Muslims killed in Bihar. The Hindus and Sikhs who had lived for centuries on the Northwest Frontier were made to abandon their homes and flee towards the Sikh and Hindu communities in the East.

By the summer of 1947, when the creation of the new state of Pakistan was formally announced, ten million people – Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs – were in flight. By the time the monsoon broke, almost a million of them were dead, and all of northern India was in arms, in terror, or in hiding.¹¹

The action of the novel spans a few weeks of the fateful days of August and September in 1947 in Mano Majra a border village, with a river fringing it and a railway bridge spanning the river Sutlej. Though the frontier between India and Pakistan turns a scene of rioting and bloodshed, everything is quite and normal in Mano Majra where Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims still live peacefully together as they have been living since times immemorial. Partition does not yet mean much to them. Many of them do not even know that the British have left and India is partitioned and is being governed by the popular Congress ministry. One of the characters in the novel, the Sub-Inspector of police, points out to the Deputy Commissioner:

I am sure no one in Mano Majra even knows that the British have left and the country is divided into Pakistan and Hindustan. Some of them know about Gandhi but I doubt if anyone has ever heard of Jinnah. ¹².

Life in this village is regulated by the passing of trains across the Sutlej Bridge nearby. The village awakes when the mail train rushes through the bridge before daybreak. The whole village then echoes with Mullah's cries of 'Allaho-Akbar' from the mosque and the Sikh priest's prayers from the Gurudwara. By the time 10:30 morning passenger train from Delhi comes in, life in Mano Majra settles down to its dull, daily routine and when the mid-day express passes people stop to rest and men and children come home for dinner and the siesta hour. As the evening passenger from Lahore steams in, everyone gets to work again and by the time the night goods train comes in, Mano Majra gets to sleep with the echoes of the prayer of the mullah and the Sikh priest. The only thing that made an impact on the people of Mano Majra was the arrival and departure of trains. "Train" thus becomes a crucial symbol in the life of Mano Majra. But soon things began to change. Partition began to take its toll in this tiny village also. As mentioned by Manaver;

Partition touched Mano Majra's at both levels... The dark clouds of suspicion and fear arise among the Sikhs and Muslims, who have

lived together for centuries. Yet feelings of brotherliness have not disappeared, and they meet for consultation in a scene that is both intensely human and touching.¹³

The routine life of Mano Majra was disturbed one evening in August 1947 when a local money lender Ramlal is murdered by dreaded dacoits. Juggat Singh, a tall, handsome, and robustly – built farmer, known as a bad character is suspected and arrested. He was in love with Nooran which in a sense cut across religious barrier. Along with him is also arrested Iqbal, England–educated and Communist – inspired young man who has been sent by the People’s Party of India to preach Hindu – Muslim unity and stop bloodshed in the villages of Punjab. He, being a stranger in the village is suspected to be a Muslim Leaguer and is remanded to police custody.

Meanwhile the condition in Mano Majra deteriorates further and its time schedule starts going wrong because of the sudden irregularity of trains. People whisper about a train which comes from Pakistan at an unseal hour, carrying dead bodies of Sikhs and Hindus. Simultaneously are heard rumours about Muslims being slaughtered in Patiala, Ambala and Amritsar mosques being demolished and the holy *Koran* being torn by infidels. Soon the village becomes a battlefield of conflicting loyalties. Though Mano Majrans still pledge to protect their Muslim brothers, yet afraid of the angry and aggrieved refugees from Pakistan, they shift them to the refugee camp. As the flooded Sutlej brings the dead bodies of more Hindus and Sikhs, tension rises in the village. Even the tension is observed in arrival of the train also. As mentioned:

the engine driver stated blowing the whistle and continued blowing till he had passed Mano Majra station. It was an expression of relief that they were out of Pakistan and into India.¹⁴

A reference has already been made of the ghost train. The author has given a ghostly, nay, blood curdling description of the massacre.

There were women and children huddled in a corner, their eyes dilated with horror, their mouths still open as if their shrieks had just then become voiceless. ¹⁵

The communal fire is fanned by the young Sikh boys who come from outside and incite Mano Majrans to take revenge upon Muslims. They succeeded in getting the support of bad character like Mali who hopes to reap a profitable harvest by the annihilation of Muslims. They conspire to fire at the train taking refugees to Pakistan to massacre them, the Sikhs and Muslims, who were living like brothers, turned ferocious wolves overnight. A Sikh youth tells:

Tomorrow a train load of Muslims is to cross the bridge to Pakistan. If we are men, this train should carry as many people dead to the other side as you have received. ¹⁶

Khushwant Singh has depicted the bestial cruelties with objective analysis of the consciousness of people during partition. How the emotions of people are roused by the rumours spread by both the communities about the barbaric deeds of each other, is described by the author though the mounting tension between Sikh and Muslims who had hitherto lived in amity in Mano Majra. As the village gets divided into two halves, Muslims and Sikhs gather in separate group and talk of inhuman savagery of each other. Muslims brood over the rumours of atrocities compiled by Sikh:

They had heard of gentlewomen having their veils taken off, being stripped and marched down crowded streets to be raped in the market place. They had heard of mosque being desecrated by the slaughter of pigs on the premises, and of copies of the holy Koran being torn by infidels. ¹⁷

Sikhs on the other hand feel. "Never trust a Musalman"

Sikh refugees had told of women jumping into wells and burning themselves rather than fall into the hands of Muslims. Those who did not commit suicide were paraded naked in the streets, raped in public, and then murdered.¹⁸

The blood-curdling account of the bestial cruelties let loose by the partition is conveyed through the- recollection of incidents by the Deputy Commissioner, Hukum Chand. The author relates these incidents with stark realism. Prem Singh, a colleague of Hukum Chand, made his wife's jewellery from Lahore and was killed by dozen heads with fez caps and Pathan turbans. Sundari, the daughter of Hukum Chand's orderly, had been married four days. She had not yet slept with her husband. She had hardly seen even his face through her veil. As she day-dreamt of her first night with her husband, her bus suddenly blew up. Then hundreds of people surrounded them. Everyone was ordered off the bus. Sikhs were just hacked to death. The clean-shaven were stripped. The mob held the husband of Sundari and cut off his penis and gave it to her. The mob made love to her and she was molested brutally. Sunder Singh's care was different. Muslim did not kill his family; he killed them himself. Stranded for four days during scorching heat of summer on a wayside station in a small railway compartment stuffed with five hundred men and women he could not bear the agony of his children whom he could not provide even urine to drink. So he pulled out his revolver and shot them all.

Mob attacks were a common phenomenon in those days and when they attacked they never waited to find out whether the persons concerned were Hindus or Muslims. For example, the day four Sikh Sardars in a jeep drove alongside a mile-long column of Muslim refugees walking on the road. Without warning they opened fire with their stand guns. A lot of women were abducted and sold cheap. Police stations were concentration camps and third degree methods were adopted to extricate 'truth' from those who were caught. Hands and feet pinned under legs of charpoys with half a dozen policeman

sitting on them. Testicles twisted and squeezed till one become senseless with pain. Powdered red chilies thrust up the rectum by rough hands, and the sensation of having the tail on fire for several days. As Harish Raizada points out:

Khushwant Singh's treatment of brutal atrocities committed on either side of the border is characterized by artistic objectivity and detachment. He exaggerates nothing, he leaves nothing.¹⁹

Apart from these, there are certain situations like the arrival of the ghost train that makes the reader flabbergasted. The arrival of the train in broad day light created a commotion in Mano Majra. When the villagers were asked to get all the wood there was in their house and all the kerosene oil they could spare. The villagers soon 'smelt' something wrong. There was a deathly silence in the village. A train load of Sikhs massacred by Muslims had been cremated in Mano Majra. Hindus and Sikhs were fleeing from their homes in Pakistan and having to find shelter in Mano Majra. The villagers ultimately decided to be angry with the Muslims. Soon the Muslims began to come out of their homes. Driving their cattle and their bullock carts loaded with charpoys, rolls of bedding, brass utensils etc. There was no time even to say good-bye. Truck engines were started.

Contrasted against these scenes of heinous crimes is the moving picture of the people who feel utterly broken as they are compelled to leave the land of their and their forefathers' birth. When Imam Baksh is asked to leave Mano Majra for Pakistan lest he be tortured by Sikh refugees, he is moved and tears trickle down his eyes. He broke down. Meet Singh clasped him in his arms and began to sob. Several of the people started crying quietly. When after much deliberation, all come to the conclusion that in the interest of Muslims themselves, it will be better for them to leave the village. Describing the condition of the village and its people on the eve of the departure of Muslims from there, the author writes:

Not many people slept in Mano Majra that night, they went from house to house talking, crying, and swearing love and friendship, assuring each other that this would soon be over. Life, they said would be as it always had been.²⁰

Khushwant Singh has accurately depicted the real picture of the adverse effect of partition and the suffering that people were made to experience through a train journey of Iqbal as written in the novel:

Every time he had dozed off, the train had come to halt at some wayside station and the door was forced open and more peasants poured in with their wives, bedding and tin trunks. Some child sleeping in its mother's lap would start howling till its mouth. The shouting and clamour would continue until long after the train had left the station. The something was repeated again and again-till the compartment meant for fifty had almost two hundred people in it, sitting on the floor, on seats, on each other or standing in the corners. There were dozens outside perched-precariously on footboards, holding on to the door handles. There were several people on the roof; the heat and smell were oppressive.²¹

In this atmosphere of all around madness and hypertension among communities, the novelist has given a turn to the story of brutality through the universal element i.e. love. Unable to stem the tide of violence and finding themselves helpless, police authorities release Juggat and Iqbal of whose innocence they are by now fully convinced. The authorities feel that Jugga is being a friend of Mano Majran Muslims and Iqbal being a non-communal political worker, may exert some influence on the misguided people and save Muslims from being slaughtered. Iqbal, the idealist and nationalist, considers discretion to be the better part of valour and keeps himself away from the fire. As Pathan writes, "In this all round madness, the plain earthly love of a Sikh peasant for his Muslim sweet-heart asserts itself."²²

Realizing that the attack on the refugee train must mean death to his sweet – love Nooran, the tough Juggatsing, "budmash number ten" of the village, prevents the attack at the cost of his own life. He climbs over the bridge and diverts the attention of the conspirators by cutting the rope meant for killing Muslims. The train of Muslim refugees passes over to Pakistan without any damage but Jugga dies, being shot by his co-religionists. The heroic sacrifice of Jugga who is treated as a ruffian by the civilized society poses a challenge to it and unmasks its hypocrisy and duplicity. Khushwant Singh's irony manifests itself here with ruthless bitterness shattering the pretence of much extolled and highly glorified values of human life.

Jugga, though condemned by society as a criminal and irreligious person, succeeds in achieving what the Deputy Commissioner reputed as he-man and the police authorities with all their might and power, Iqbal Singh with all his rational ideologies and convictions, Meet Singh with all his religious teeth in love and brotherhood and the *lambardar* with all his sincere fellow feelings fail to accomplish. This inhuman situation is counter balanced by the tender love of Juggat and Nooran. The novelist succeeds in showing the supremacy of love and finer human qualities over communalism and brutality. Regarding this humanistic turn to the novel, Harish Raizada observes:

Khushwant Singh believes that often the most Nobel acts of generosity and self-sacrifice are performed by persons who are looked down upon by the people as immoral deviants.²³

Apart from the depiction of the trauma of partition, the crisis of values suffered by people during this period of unprecedented human tragedy is conveyed by the author through his satirical portrait of three characters typical of their three different situations epitomizing the civilized human life. These are Hukum Chand the high officer in the Government administration, Meet Singh the Sikh priest, and Iqbal Singh, the rationalistic and idealistic non-

communal political worker. Jugga's moral stature stands out in strong relief against the hypocrisy, cowardice and shame of these characters.

Hukum Chand, the Magistrate and Deputy Commissioner of the district is a worldly wise man of easy morals. He always kept his Sahibs pleased and they gave him promotion. He is true to his friends and always gets things done for them. He is one of a hundred. Nothing counterfeits about him. He is, however, lascivious and carries on a liaison with a Muslim dancing girl Haseena. His fatalism has made him face the buffets of destiny with equanimity. He firmly believed that the only absolute truth was death. The rest love, pride, ambition, value of all kinds – was to be taken with a pinch of salt. He is however, terribly shocked when he sees the heaps of dead bodies of men, women and children huddled in a train from Pakistan. A cold numbness overtakes him and all his emotions are dead. As mentioned by the novelist;

But a trainload of dead was too much for even Hukum Chand's fatalism. He could not square a massacre with a philosophical belief in the inevitability of death. It bewildered and frightened him by its violence and its magnitude.²⁴

It is interesting to hear from Hukum Chand more about how he looked at partition and its impact. He was for getting the Muslims to go out peacefully if possible. He was of the view that bloodshed would not benefit anyone. His official responsibilities, however, compel him to save the lives of people under his charge. He believed that an individual's conscious effort should be directed to immediate ends like saving life when endangered, preserving the social structure and honoring its conventions. Hukum Chand's interest in saving Muslim lives is however not motivated by humanitarian consideration. He is only concerned about the maintenance of law and order lest his official position is compromised. Later when he feels utterly broken by the increasing incidents of arson and looting, he lapses into inactivity and wants just to maintain a pretence of having acted responsibly. Cowasjee aptly remarks:

Through the portrayal of Hukum Chand, Khushwant Singh shows how the much maligned Indian bureaucracy was itself caught between the hatred of a people and the bungling of politicians.²⁵

Meet Singh is a peasant who has taken to religion as an escape from work. He is not learned in the scriptures nor has he any faculty for conversation. But he is a man of peace and goodwill and sincerely believes that everyone is welcome to his religion. When Sikh boys try to incite Mano Majrans against Muslims, he even argues with them to stop the instinct of such revenge. But when it comes to taking steps to avert the imminent danger to Muslims, he recoils in timidity. He says:

My duty is to tell people what is right and what is not. If they insist and do evil, I ask God to forgive them. I can only pray; the rest is for the police and the magistrate.²⁶

For Meet Singh indulgence in immoral practices could be overlooked if it was motivated by the desire to help and protect a friend. He was rather horrified by the ugly act that Jugga was a professional robber or dacoit but he was shocked by his alleged action of murdering a fellow villager. For him, fellowship was more important than blind adherence to an abstract moral code.

Iqbal Singh is the England-educated young man of communist leanings. No other character in the novel is subjected to such an ironic and brutal exposure as he. He is very forthright, rational and logical in his criticism of social evils in the country. He has all the theories but lacks the courage to put them into action in times of crisis. He is a social worker. He has been sent by his People's Party of India to forgo unity between Sikh and Muslim and check them from violence but the moment he learns of a murder in Mano Majra he gets frightened. As the communal tension mounts in the village he wishes that the party had sent someone else to Mano Majra. He finds himself

in a predicament and is not in a position to do anything to save the situation.

He thinks:

Could he stop killing? Obviously not. Every one Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Leaguer, Congressite Akali or Communist was deep in it. It was famous to suggest that the bourgeois revolution could be turned into a Proletarian one.²⁷

Iqbal Singh believes that criminals are not born. They are made by hunger, want and injustice. His food habits his way of life and his mode of thinking and feeling are at great variance with those of the Mano Majras. He is anti-British and reacts violently to the British colonial and imperial power in India and elsewhere. He is misunderstood and arrested to be a Muslim and leaguer by the police. He values personal freedom and dignity. But when he learns that he has been arrested as a suspect in a criminal case and not for political unrest, he is greatly perturbed.

Contrasted against these Moral decrepit respected by the civilized society, Jugga a robust and tall Sikh who is feared and condemned as a bad character is represented with ethical code and conduct of life. He is in reality a typical Punjabi peasant in his strength and weakness, in his courage, fearlessness, loyalty, unsophistication, roughness and bluntness. He is self-sacrificing and humane. He shows his mettle on several occasions. He also courts imprisonment to protect the honour of the girl he loves. It is, however, his heroic self-sacrifice to save the lives of the innocent Muslims of his village that makes him put to shame all those timeservers who notwithstanding their resources, power, learning and prestige falter and vacillate to take a decision. There is a rare grandeur and singular nobility of character about his heroic resolution to save Mano Majra Muslims from death-trap. Juggat Singh plays a dual role of the creator and the destroyer. He destroys only to create again and they symbolize the triumph of good over evil within him and also the concept of renewal. As Vasant Sahane marks:

His soul, like that of the phoenix, rises from its ashes only to proclaim that at least this 'Train to Pakistan' is a symbol of hope and light amidst the cruel world of darkness and despair.²⁸

The novelist has also applied certain symbols to express the sinister and venomous impact of partition. The first symbol is Mano Majra which is representative of the spirit of India herself - India, the land of ahimsa. Here the picture of unity in diversity is nicely portrayed as the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims had been living since time immemorial together peacefully. Though the frontier between India and Pakistan turns into a gory scene of riots and massacre, everything is calm and quiet in Mano Majra. Partition does not ruffle the normal tenor of life in Mano Majra. Mano Majrans are unaware of the political situation of the country. Mano Majra is in fact a symbol of staticity, of immobility and passivity. The harmonious atmosphere and the idyllic tranquility of this village is a veritable oasis of peace. The villagers remain unruffled by the fanatic acts of murder, plunder, arson, abduction and rape.

Deo, the local deity becomes the symbol of communal harmony like the goddess Kenchamma in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*. The Kanthapurians rise to the call of Gandhiji and involve themselves in the impending movement but the Mano Majrans remain passive spectators to the whole scene of pre-independent struggle. They have heard the name of Gandhiji but remain unmoved by the call of Mahatma to out firanghi from our soil.

As contrast to the tranquil and static environs of Mano Majra, the train serves as an important symbol of mobility. It stands for all that is dynamic. Though at the outset of the story, it acts as an almanac and a regular for the people of hamlet, later on it acquires a sinister and formidably horrific dimension when its swift and placid tenor of life receives a shocking jolt in the wake of the bloody partition.

The irregularity of trains symbolizes the disturbance in the smooth flow of life in Mano Majra. It presages chaos and disorder, riot and violence. The odd arrival of a train from Pakistan in the morning with heaps of mangled and mutilated corpses lets loose a reign of terror. Bestiality manifests in violence, revenge, mass rape of women in public, arson, infanticide and carnage. All this leads to the massacre of Mano Majra Muslims leaving for Pakistan by a train, i.e. *The Train to Pakistan*. *The Train to Pakistan* again reveals the humanity in Jugga, his sense of integrity in love and self-dedication. The train to Pakistan thus becomes a unique symbol in the novel. Further the train is symbolic of the rhythmic pattern of the novel. It is at the heart of Mano Majra, a village which has always been known for its railway station. The villager's activities are patterned by the to and fro movement of the train it fills the villagers with the very pulse of life as V. A. Shahane observes:

The use of the word "train" is significant in other ways too. The train signifies groups or multitudes of people who are on the move... the train implies the movement of vast communities, torn from their links of nativity, from their places of birth and upbringing and areas of traditional growth in search of a new Jerusalem'. It indicates the harrowing process of this change, the awful and ghastly experiences of human beings involved in a historical, objective and almost dehumanized process. The train suggests the fate of the individuals, the destinies of two newly formed- dominions...secondly, the train is also a symbol of the machine age...modern mechanistic, materialistic age has caused severe destruction of- humanistic values. ²⁹

The arrival of a ghost train at Mano Majra stuns the villagers. They are awe-struck at the sight of the train being loaded with dead bodies giving out the acrid smell of searing flesh. It unveils the horrible and ghostly drama of communal violence – the sinking and erosion of human values. The sight of the geckos pouncing on the moth and catching it fluttering in the jams is symbolic of the genocide (since there is mass killing of Hindu and Muslims), a

common feature of the partition. Even the magistrate's fear of spending the night all alone in his room is symbolic of terror and apprehension leading to insecurity and indecision.

Violence in the human world is symbolized by violence in the natural world. The flashing crash of lightning and thunder symbolizes murder and looting of people after partition. The swelling Sutlej presents a terrifying sight. Flood in the river suggests and foreshadows the flood of violence. The river's appearance in the night like a sheet of paper, symbolizes the black beastly acts of violence. The new American engine also symbolizes the diabolic deeds of horror and degeneration of long cherished socio-moral values. The cries of the jackals symbolizes predatory craving. The red tongue of flame symbolizes the poisonous and aggressive nature of the snake and shows how men in the heat of their destructive lunacy turn into venomous reptiles and spout poison.

Moreover all the other parts of the novel have symbolic significance. The first 'Dacoity' part symbolizes that humanity itself has been looted of its human attributes. It symbolizes that the humanity has been deprived of its values. The second part 'Kalyug' symbolizes the inner blackness of human heart and the darkness all around the whole of India and Pakistan. According to Hindu mythology, Kalyug is the fourth and last phase in the four cycles of existence. It is the age of darkness at the time of partition in both India and Pakistan there was darkness everywhere. Millions of people were uprooted from their homes and hearts. They feel restless, rootless and helpless. 'Karma' is the last part of the novel which is also very much significant. It denotes the totality of a person's action in one of the successive cycles of his existence. It determines man's fate in his next phase of life. It may also be used to denote the unpredictable ways of fate or wheel of fortune. It also indicates the Indian way of life in relation to man's experience with the unknown cosmic design stored for him. Arthur Lall aptly comments:

Its intrinsic qualities as a novel grip the reader. Throughout, the action sweeps one along. The characters are vivid and highly credible, and Khushwant Singh keeps them going magnificently on two levels; in their quotidian matrix compounded of their passions of love and revenge, their tremendous sense of belonging to a village community, and their insolence and heroism; and then again on the wide stage set by the tornado that breaks on their lives in the shape of the cataclysmic events of the partition of India in 1947.³⁰

After going through the detailed analysis of the novel *Train To Pakistan* it can be said that the partition of the Indian sub-continent was the single most traumatic experience in our recent history. The violence it unleashed by the hooligan actions of a few fanatics, the vengeance that the ordinary Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs wreaked on each other worsened our social sense, distorted our political judgments and deranged our understanding of moral righteousness. The real sorrow of the partition however, as portrayed by Khushwant Singh in *Train To Pakistan* was that it brought to an abrupt and a long and communally shared history and cultural heritage. It is also true to say that for millions of peoples, the independence of the country brought terrible but avoidable suffering and humiliation, a loss of human dignity and a frustrating sense of being uproot. This is not what they had aspired for in the name of freedom- the partition was a dirty trick Khushwant Singh brings to the centre stage the fact of the partition of the question of the subsequent violence on both sides of the border in a very effective, vivid and graphic manner.

The Foreign Aggression and Its Impact on Indian Politics in *Shadow From Ladakh* by Bhabani Bhattacharya.

Bhabani Bhattacharya, the earliest of the social realists of post-Independence Indian English fiction, is a well-known Indo-Anglian novelist. His books have been translated in more than two dozen foreign languages.

The coveted Sahitya Academy award to him in 1967 for his fifth novel, *Shadow From Ladakh* is a fitting recognition of his standing and achievement in Indian English Fiction. He started his career as a freelance writer. With a doctorate degree from London University on historical research he worked for several years as press attaché to the Indian Embassy in Washington. He travelled widely and was associated with a research, centre at the University of Hawaii.

Bhattacharya is a novelist strongly influenced by the ideas of Tagore and Gandhi, while both his fictional theory and practice show his affinity with Mulk Raj Anand. He is a believer in the social character and significance of art and literature and believes:

Art must teach, but unobtrusively by its vivid interpretation of life. Art must preach, but only by virtue of its being a vehicle of truth. If that is propaganda, there is no need to eschew the word.³¹

Bhattacharya's view of art, however freeing to aesthetically inclined writer in the West, is not at all uncharacteristic in modern Indian literature with its intense social-political consciousness. He is a novelist of ideas, not of art. He writes for instruction, not for entertainment. Aesthetically, Bhattacharya was insensitive and he rarely wrote in idiomatic English, a language made great by literacy masters. He once remarked:

a novel must have social purpose. It must place before the reader something from society's point of view. Art is not necessarily for art's sake. Purposeless art and literature which is must in virtue do not appear to me to be a sound judgement.³²

All Bhattacharya's novels present a true picture of India and its teeming millions. His outlook is highly constructive and they record the hopes and aspirations of people heroically involved in the struggle between the old and the new and inspired by the vision of a just social order. He portrays full-

blooded men and women, creatures of their society, victims of its unjust persecutions and yet possessing inevitable strength to carry the banner of the ideals of a new India. He faithfully and soberly depicts the horrors characteristic of alien rule and the old mode of life; he portrays the grandeur of the peasants and the downtrodden and their role in remarking the motherland, the dream of the Indian nationalist. As the saying under quoted by Meenakhi is quite appropriate to Bhabani Bhattacharya as:

Contemporary public issues, whether social or political, began to interest the writers, and the national movement for independence offered them rich and ready material.³³

Bhattacharya's works consist of translations from Tagore, entitled *The Golden Boat*, *Indian Cavalcade Towards Universal Man*, *Steel Hawk*, *Gandhi the Writer*; *The Image as It Grew*. Apart from these, his novels are *So Many Hungers!*, *Music For Mohini*, *Shadow From Ladakh* and *A Dream in Hawaii*. Prema Nandkumar aptly says about the literary journey of Bhabani Bhattacharya as:

The one novelist who has attempted new pastures in each novel and has tried to come to grips with the reality of independent India is Bhabani Bhattacharya.³⁴

Bhattacharya's fifth novel *Shadow From Ladakh* enabled him to get recognition even in his own native country. Bhattacharya, the native son of the soil of India, who earlier received several attentions of the Indian readers and won the Sahitya Akademi Award for 1967 for this novel *Shadow from Ladakh*. It has been suggested that the title is based on the popular proverb 'coming events cast their shadow before'. The *Shadow From Ladakh* is an unexpected and ill-boding omen, threatening the security of our nation. Against this background, the theme of the novel is woven. It registers the conflict of ideologies during the critical period of the Chinese aggression of India and Bhattacharya with the fine acumen presents a vivid, moving and touching

depiction of the events against the background of the love story of Bhashkar Roy and Sumita.

While India has been on the path of progress, the tragic period came in 1962, when China stabbed her in the back. Ladakh is one of the points of her attack. The shadows of moist dragon loom large from that snowy region to the remotest village of India. The friendship suddenly snaps. Communist Mao breaks away from Marx. He wants to walk in the footsteps of his imperialist ancestors. India is shaken. The values of peace and peaceful co-existence she had assiduously tried to strengthen and which Mao himself had applauded, face sudden threat. How should meet the menace? By Gandhian approach? But then it was too human an approach for Mao? By industrialization? Yes. But the best way would be to find out a meeting point between the Gandhian social ethic and tremendous forces of science and technology. That is the message of *Shadow From Ladakh*.

Bhattacharya who experienced a sense of involvement in Gandhian principle of simple living and high thinking and who attached the deepest significance to the Gandhian ways of life, made this novel his first commitment to the ideal of Gandhian life. The Gandhian life as interspersed in *Shadow From Ladakh* is not merely in the theme of the story but in the veins and nerves of the characters felt in the blood and felt along the heart. The core of the novel deals with the conflict of values and ultimate triumph of the Gandhian principle. Bhattacharya has depicted two modes of existence, two ways of life-the industrial complex and the rural serenity. Bhattacharya's mind is imbued with the Gandhian way of life as it is aptly remarked by Elizabeth Draw;

The novel is bound to concern itself directly with the emotional and moral standards men live by and all the problems of conduct which beset us every day. ³⁵

In *Shadow From Ladakh* Bhattacharya takes up a war theme in the beginning and then keeping it in background he switches over to the social and economic conflict. The novel starts with quiet atmosphere of Shantiniketan. Satyajit is a teacher in Shantiniketan and is Cambridge educated. He is selected by Gandhiji to guide and mould the destiny of the model town of rural India founded by Vinoba Bhave. Satyajit Sen, though a foreign educated young man, is a staunch follower of Gandhi. He meets his wife Suruchi for the first time in Shantiniketan. They have a daughter named Sumita. Who is carefully brought up by Satyajit according to his own ideas of what is called 'Satyajitism'.

Satyajit makes Gandhigram an ideal and model village, which is economically self-sufficient. Satyajit wants to set an example before the people of India that rural social life can be made ideal and virtuous and rural economy can be more self-sufficient. Thus, Gandhigram, in short is a microcosm of India. India is a mirror of many villages and what is happening in one village does happen in any other village and Gandhigram is no exception. It tries to resist the onslaught of a machine-oriented life as mentioned in the novel:

the apparently insignificant village was building up a model for the whole of India. The new community of people was creating a social order in which all were truly equal. All land belonging to the cooperative. Food from the fields distributed according to needs. Other needs met by small industries based locally, economic self-sufficiency was the set aim.³⁶

Thus, when Gandhigram stands for rural social life and rural economy, the neighboring town, Steelton, Lohapur, stands for modernity and industrialization and technological development of the country. The two stood poles apart and were never likely to meet physically or ideologically. Thus the

clash between the traditional and modern values becomes evident in the form of the discord between Gandhigram and Steeltown.

The Chinese aggression of 1962 raises suddenly the need for more weapons, money, food and other things. Bhashkar Roy U.S.A. trained young chief engineer of Steeltown, believes that more production of steel is the only way to protect the infant democracy of India, and the industrial growth is the only source to make the country economically self-dependent; with great enthusiasm he prepares a plan for the development of the steel plant and gets it approved by the government. The expansion of the plant that he wants to establish is on the side of Gandhigram and for that he is prepared to annex Gandhigram. Bhashkar thinks Gandhigram a road-block in the path of progress and for him the assault on Gandhigram was ideological, not economic. He is of the view that Gandhigram has no relevance in modern times. It is his earnest wish to let life easier, freer and happier, instead of being choked with taboos. He is convinced that after enjoying the modern facilities which are available to the city people, the village folk will certainly favor Steeltown type of life. They will start adopting new ways of life. And thus gradually Gandhigram will be merged into the pattern of Steeltown. At place Bhashkar and Satyajit have a long disillusion - regarding the Chinese aggression and what India should do to prevent it. Bhashkar's modern outlook is shown, "our troops must have modern arms. Much of the equipment they now have is old, obsolete. And steel is the core of all armament." ³⁷.

Bhasker further argues:

Steel means economic progress. Machine tools, tractors, big industrial plans, locomotives, steel to fight poverty and hunger. But steel has gained a second meaning. It stands for our country's freedom. That is an inescapable fact, not to be changed by wishful thinking. Development plus defence is a compulsion of our current history. ³⁸

The aim of Satyajit and Bhaskar are the same. Both are working in the interest of the nation. But the means of achieving the goal are different. Satyajit plans out to take a peace march to Ladakh and touch the basic nobility of the Chinese people. He wants to bring transformation of the hearts of the Chinese with the weapon of love and Satyagraha. He, therefore, goes to Delhi to convey his plan of a peace march of five persons to Ladakh to the government and get their approval. While his negotiations are going on, the war news has already started being released on the radio. Delhi station is overcrowded with the soldiers, the workers of the canteen for the soldiers and the war activities. Bireswaar, a member of parliament and Satyajit's best friend shows him the absurdity of the idea of a peace march. But Satyajit being a blind follower of Gandhi does not believe in this. He meets the minister and the minister also disapproves of the plan saying:

Satyajit your march would be plain suicide. The Chinese would not understand what it was all about. You can't even blame them for that. If only you know something about their ruthlessness.³⁹

Satyajit is bluntly told:

the situation is fluid. I cannot make a promise. I hate to think of innocent lives being sacrificed. All for an ideal that has no chance. No chance at all in a situation where human life has no value whatever.⁴⁰

Satyopajit gives a call to the nation to join his peace mission and make it successful. But he does not receive any response regarding his appeal. His idea of taking a peace march fails that way. By this time, he calls Sumita to Delhi. Sumita joins Nandini, in the work of running a canteen for the soldiers. Satyajit meanwhile comes to know about the plan of Steeltown to abolish Gandhigram. He is surprised to know that the government has also approved the plan; and his whole attention is diverted in the direction of saving Gandhigram from the iron grip of Lohapur, Steeltown. Now, he is free to return to Gandhigram to oppose the evil designs of Steeltown. Satyajit is not the

mere echo of Gandhi, but he is a true social philosopher. His soul-force is a good match for any political or legal force. His spiritual strength is so high that he can easily meet and oppose any force used against him. Bhashkar knows:

Satyajit is the very soul of Gandhigram. He is Gandhigram. Without his guidance the structure of ideas he's been building will topple like a thing of sand. ⁴¹

Bhashkar prepares to strike at the village with fanatical zeal. He knows it all right that he has not got any technical ground to destroy Gandhigram but he wants to destroy the conservative way of life for which Gandhigram stands. He thinks:

To annex not a village, but an entire way of life. There could not be two Indians, back to back gazing at opposite horizons ready to match off and get further and further apart. ⁴²

Bhashkar is an intelligent and imaginative. He foresees the future of India and growing needs of India. He can visualize the India to be:

The means of life for two hundred new born babies. The babies would not eat steel. But steel was the spine of the economy. Steel was food and clothing and dwelling. Steel was culture and art and ritual. And steel was soon to be the honour of the people, the shield of their freedom. ⁴³

Meanwhile Bhattacharya gives a romantic turn to the story and creates a very symbolic situation as Bhashkar falls in love with Sumita that creates a hope that she will become the compromising link of the conflict. On the other hand the progress of the Chinese army in the Indian Territory and the urgency of time, forces Bhashkar to take a drastic step against Gandhigram. He is forced to use violence to swallow Gandhigram and start production as early as possible. When the final crisis comes and Satyajit declares his fast unto death then Bhashkar understands Satyajit, the values for which he stands,

unknowingly he is passing through the orientation. Thus it is Bhashkar who solves the crisis. He leads the procession to Gandhigram to declare that he withdraws his plan of expansion of Steeltown on the side of Gandhigram. They two will co-exist. As Chandrasekharan states, "The co-existence, however, is not merely a matter of live-and-let live; it is a result of compromise and readjustment of values on either side." ⁴⁴

The *Shadow From Ladakh* voices not only the hopes of Gandhi but also the life-long quest of India's Nobel Prize poet Rabindranath Tagore: "Integration of the simple and the sophisticated the ancient and the modern, city and village; east and west". ⁴⁵

Of course, the whole novel is not about the Chinese aggression but it does portray the dilemma most Indian faced then and discussed at several places; should it abandon the peaceful co-existence and arm itself to teeth? Should it abandon the path of Gandhi and his non-violence to be able to show an eye for an invader's eye and tooth for a traitor's tooth? The Chinese invasion was virtually the death-knell of Gandhian values. During the traumatic experience the nation had, people in their suppressed tone blamed Gandhiji for incapacitating the nation to fight by advocating non-violence as they blamed Nehru for not visualizing the Chinese designs in spite of many warnings to the country after their annexation of Tibet.

It is here that Bhattacharya's synthesis of the two comes in the picture. For him Mahatma Gandhi's advocacy of non-violence and cottage industries was both a political and economic weapon to transform the country into Ramrajya where each village would be self-sufficient and would not have to look to the city for guidance and help. Nehru wanted to place the country on the world map of technical, scientific and industrial advancement. The question became urgent after our humiliating defeat in confrontation with the Chinese and merited a literary representation.

Gandhigram and Steeltown in the novel are not simply two localities but concrete symbols of Gandhian and Nehruite ways of life—one believing in simple living and cottage industries where as the other in Western ways of life and industrialization. The only way to have a smooth sailing for Gandhigram and Steeltown is to have a synthesis between the two. In other words as Sharma says, "He (Bhattacharya) pleads for the synthesis of soul and flesh, revealing the supremacy of the former over the latter".⁴⁶

Ultimately Bhashkar and Satyajit understand one another and the clash between Gandhigram and Steeltown embodying two thoughts and ways of life disappears and a true adjustment takes place between the two. The workers of Steeltown and Gandhigram visit each other's homes. Through Mrs. Sarojini Mehra the novelist tells us that adjustment is essential for and inevitable in life. "Life is all compromise. One yields a bit here and gets it back elsewhere."⁴⁷

Thus, Bhattacharya shows, in his novel, the old ways of life in villages and praises for it. He presents the good that co-exists in old values as well as new values; orthodoxy and reforms can co-exist. Similarly in free India, Gandhian ideology and concept of rural economy can and must co-exist with modern industrialization on a large scale. After passing through the diverse effects of Chinese- aggression, the novelist presents a compromise between Gandhi and Nehru and points out that both are necessary for India.

It is true to say that an important national crisis, the Chinese invasion on the Northern frontier in 1962, forms the setting of Bhattacharya's *Shadow Form Ladakh*. The novel deals with the question of the country's defense policy after independence and its dilemma in choosing a national industrial policy as between the cottage and small scale-industries and the major and large scale industries. During the period of struggle for freedom, the entire nation followed Gandhiji with unswerving faith in him. Nehru, despite his-ideological differences, also unquestioningly accepted Gandhiji's leadership.

China's unprovoked attack on India, however, brought these conflicting ideologies to the fore-front and the people started debating whether India should meet force with force or following Gandhi's ideals of truth and non-violence, meet force with soul force. Regarding this *Shadow From Ladakh* as Blairshimer remarks, "It is felt that its patriotic ardour contributed to the singling out of this particular book" ⁴⁸

In the novel *Shadow From Ladakh*, Satyajit and Bhashkar are, thus, symbolic presentation of Gandhiji and Nehru. Gandhigram is patterned after Gandhiji's Sevagram and the Steeltown is an echo of Nehru's 'New Temples'. Thus, they represent two distinct socio-political ideologies. Satyajit remarks:

The challenge is not just between Gandhigram and Steeltown. It is between two contrary thoughts, two contrary ways of life. The spinning wheel set against the steel mill! ⁴⁹

Gandhigram symbolizes the spiritual India and Steeltown, the aggressive China. With Chinese invasion, India has lost some of its territory to the enemy. But what is really lost is the very concept of non-violence. If on one level Gandhigram and Steeltown symbolize the past and the present respectively, on another level, by turn of events, they change their positions. Steeltown stands for the country's present needs and Gandhigram, for its envisioned future. When all the material requirements to make the country strong, peaceful and prosperous are adequately met, comes naturally an urge to turn the focus on spiritualism to give a meaning and contentment to the lives of the people. Thus at some stage or the other, the nation needs both Gandhigram and Steeltown, they are like the body and the soul. The country cannot afford to discard either except as its peril.

The author of the novel suggests not merely co existence of these two ideologies but also their integration and synthesis. Reconciliatory approach of Bhashkar is reflected in his setting up Meadow house, a meeting place of

Gandhigram and Steeltown. Bhashkar adopts the path of reconciliation instead of confrontation. His decision to expand the Steeltown in another direction without encroaching on the Gandhigram is indicative of his cherished desire to leave the clashing ideologies juxtaposed to smoothen their possible integration in due course. This is precisely what the country needs today as quoted by Sharma:

... in the contemporary context none of the ideals of Gandhi and Nehru can alone be the national ideal; only a balanced combination of the two ideals would be an answer to the problems facing the nation today.⁵⁰

In this way compromise is a key to synthesis for a happy life in this novel. Thus the two ideologies are to co-exist and Bhashkar's marriage to Sumita is the marriage of Steeltown to Gandhigram while Bhashkar has changed his ideal and attitude to the village, Satyajit also has changed a lot. G.P. Sharma rightly describes this synthesis, "A happy combination of Gandhi, Nehru and Tagore together".⁵¹

Apart from this, the novelist also puts forward the belief that our blind and irrational adherence to our glorious past, decayed Tradition and culture is mainly responsible for retardation of progress and healthy social change. The novelist very clearly suggests that we may have respect for our traditional values and cultures but only to an extent. Our blind adherence to them would be dangerous and imperil our national liberty and prosperity. As it is said by Bhashkar:

We have been sitting tight over the ages. Let us start moving along. Let us mobilize all the resources we possess. And let's not be distracted by wrong ideology...⁵²

The confrontation in *Shadow From Ladakh* between Gandhigram and Steeltown i.e. between cottage industry and heavy industry, between East

and West; between ancient and modern culture and between two divergent ideologies and ways of living, is eased and harmony is restored when Bhashkar falls in love with Satyajit's daughter Sumita. In the words of Lila Ray;

The new industrialization comes to an understanding with ancient ethical tradition in the love of Bhashkar and Sumita. In them India, stands united and strong in the face of her external enemies.⁵³

Sumita's marriage with Bhashkar is symbolic of the integration of two different cultures and ways of living. Sumita is irresistibly drawn towards Bhashkar when she loves and ultimately marries. Thus she forms the bridge of cultural synthesis between Gandhigram and Steeltown, between village and city. The amalgamation of heavy industry and cottage industry is essential for the peace and prosperity of the nation Bhabani Bhattacharya always pleads for a wise compromise between two conflicting ideologies:

Let there be a meeting ground of the two extremes; let each shed some of its content and yet remain true to itself.⁵⁴

In this novel, the novelist refers to Tagore's philosophy of integration of different culture vales. The solution which the novelist offers to the problem of east-west confrontation has been influenced by Tagore's philosophy of cultural integration. In the novel, Suruchi herself is instrumental in putting this theory of cultural integration into practice. She encourages Sumita's love with Bhashkar for she knows that they can be no better blending of East and West, ancient and modern than the wedlock of Sumita and Bhashkar. Sumita, the symbol of ancient India, needs brilliant engineers and technocrats like the C.E. of Steeltown to fight poverty and famine and protect national liberty. Bhashkar who has obtained the knowledge of modern technology in America needs Sumita to make a controlled and judicious use of his scientific knowledge. Since knowledge without wisdom is dangerous and wisdom without knowledge is lame, the co-existence of knowledge and wisdom is

inevitable to build a happy, peaceful and progressive nation. Bhashkar Roy, the representative of modernity prefers Sumita to Rupa, who belongs to his own modern world so that the purpose of cultural synthesis may not be frustrated. He likes Sumita and her Gandhigram for the attainment of spiritual pleasure that his materialistic life badly requires.

Science without spirituality is destructive. A right balance between science and spirituality can set the country on the dynamic path of progress and prosperity. Science in itself has no controlling power. That controlling power to use science for the maximum good of maximum number springs from the very spirit of man which Bhashkar hopes to gain from Gandhi's spinning wheel. Neither his Steeltown nor Satyajit's Gandhigram alone can ensure permanent peace and happiness. Both are complementary to each other. So let them be juxtaposed. Each must contribute to the creation of prosperous India. Satyajit the champion of cottage industry realizes the need for Steeltown which in the beginning, appeared to him as a source of Western contamination. He feels that a healthy balance between spiritual and materialistic values of life, science and religion, ancient and modern, village and city will make us happy and prosperous.

It seems that Bhabani Bhattacharya has imbibed the principle of dynamic equilibrium from *Bhagvad Gita*. It is only dynamic equilibrium between ascetic and aesthetic values of life, two different cultures, spiritualism and materialism that can make the life worth living and the society ideal. The novelist was also influenced by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore in his approach to his philosophy of cultural integration. The views of Tagore from the core of Bhattacharya's own attitude and have become a glaring aspect in his *Shadow From Ladakh* also. Moreover it is also suggested that an Indian is ordinarily so much influenced by his heritage that the Indianness within him cannot be obliterated even by prolonged and close contact with the West. The

same feature can be seen by Rupa into Bhashkar who was fully westernized and he was sucked at once into five thousand years of Indianism.

The conduct of China in stabbing India in the back and deliberately trying to thwart her progress along the path of democracy naturally claims considerable attention in the novel. The importance of the first border incident near Ladakh is at first minimized by India. But subsequent events gradually reveal the real intentions of China. Poisoned by the teachings of Mao, the Chinese embark on a career of aggression with the aim of dominating all Asia. Perfidy, hatred and hypocrisy are the qualities they display in the course of their campaign against India whose democratic way of life is taken by them to be a serious challenge to their new-found ideology. Bhattacharya's description of the aggression is factual and the sentiments he expresses in the novel are the sentiments of all patriotic Indians.

One remarkable feature of *Shadow From Ladakh* is that while dealing realistically with the treacherous Chinese aggression, it also artistically pleaded that India should show love and friendship for Chinese people. The novel repeatedly and consistently makes a distinction between the people and their government. It refers to the long history of friendly association of the people of the two countries. It points out how the greatest of our thinkers and leaders have shown their affection and respect for the people of China and their old culture. Tagore set an example by instituting a chair for the Chinese language and culture at Shantiniketan and inviting a Chinese professor to adorn it. Nehru disillusioned as he was by the treacherous conduct of the communist government, made it clear in his broadcast to the nation that India had no ill-will towards the Chinese people. Even the Dalai Lama, victim of Chinese aggression and brutality, declared in an interview that he had no quarrel with the people and added that there are no better people.

The novelist is not, however, content to record these views and statements in the novel; he makes literary use of the sentiment by embodying it in one of the most moving episodes of four Chinese children, daughters of a Chinese shoe-maker who is arrested along with other enemy citizens, given asylum in Bhashkar's house. There is apparent contradiction in Bhashkar, a bachelor, who believes in the policy of fighting steel with steel, acting as the father to these alien children, all the latent tenderness in Bhashkar is aroused and he tells himself if China is to find salvation, it has come through the younger generation. There is a suggestive incident in the novel which is intended to show that inspired by the hostility between India and China, the hearts of at least of the younger generation remain untouched by hatred. When the time comes for them to leave India, they are grief-stricken at the thought of having to be away from Bhashkar. What Nu-hsin tells, reveals the synthesis of hostility and friendship:

All that love and joy and... I don't know the words... all that feeling has gone into our bond and blood. ⁵⁵

In *Shadow From Ladakh*, the novelist makes artistic use of parallelism and contrast in order to focus attention on what he wants to communicate. Satyajit is contrasted with Bhashkar and to a less extent with Bireswar. Satyajit is a prisoner of his own scruples and moral principles and never able to live a full-blooded life. Bhashkar and Bireswar are differently made. Bhashkar particularly regards such affairs as mere 'moments in life'. Bireswar is a critic of Satyajit's asceticism and reproaches him for having destroyed the happiness of Suruchi. At one stage Satyajit feels that Bireswar would have been a more suitable husband for Suruchi and even toys with the idea of encouraging her to join him. It is on Bireswar's advice that Satyajit decides towards the end of the novel to give up all his unnatural asceticism and to live a normal life if he survives the fast.

There is a similar contrast between Sumita on one side and Rupa and Jhanak on the other. Sumita is a better example of Satyajitism than Satyajit himself. Her life has become one of dedications. The dedication has acted as a restraining force and has hampered her natural development. She has become an ascetic woman. In contrast with her Rupa refuses to accept any kind of restraint and lives an uninhibited life. It is not that she does not recognize the finer ingredient of love, but she refuses to make much ado about an occasional human lapse. Jhanak represents in the novelist's words a woman's primal urge to be nothing but a woman. Suruchi defends her and refuses to join the chorus of censure directed against her in Gandhigram. She rejoices when in the end Jhanak is free to love and to marry the man of her choice. There is no doubt that the novelist's concept of sexual morality is not the traditional Indian concept; he gives a clear hint that our ascetic code will have to be revised in the new era of industrialization.

The novelist makes Gandhigram a microcosm of India. In the novel he shows that the Gandhian economics and ethics are true everywhere and at any times. He also hopes that even China can find salvation through the younger generation. The village sets new set of values-equality, fraternity and non-violence in thought and action. At the same time the Steeltown stands for three notions; steel standing for machines of mass production, steel representing the weapons for the country's defence and not to take vice as sin by avoiding all inhibitions. The reconciliation between Gandhigram and Steeltown with which the story ends is the most appropriate conclusion to a novel which advocates the way of integration and synthesis. In the process each meets the other half-way and each surrenders and makes a sacrifice to make the synthesis possible. The Steeltown that stands is a Steeltown that has bowed to Gandhi gram and sent out its workers and its chief engineers to cry victory-victory to Satyajit. Similarly the Gandhigram that emerges is a fortress whose walls have fallen. The way of life represented by each has been so radically transformed that neither is what it was before. It is true to

say that the end of the novel is a fan-fare of trumpets announcing the birth of a new era. As Krishna comments:

Bhattacharya's *Shadow From Ladakh* may be viewed as a fictional-chiaroscuro of the changing national tradition. It effectively illustrates the deterministic patterns of life in modern India under the impact of multifaceted change.⁵⁶

Looking at it as a whole, It can be said that *Shadow From Ladakh* is a beautiful combination of nationalism, social changes and economic revolution. So far Bhattacharya is dealing with the events happening in our country but in this novel he has taken up the vast panorama of India-China conflict of 1962. He had taken up the wide screen of social changes in modern India and the growing need of technology, against the background of the Chinese invasion of 1962. Bhattacharya has a free range to handle social, political and economical need, of changing values in India according to his own free will, and Bhattacharya very artistically exploits the economical social and political situation of our country. Thus *Shadow From Ladakh* takes a pragmatic view of the evolving Indian- society right from the stage of attainment of independence to the stage of the Chinese aggression. It also questions the validity of the very ideals of Gandhiji in the changed context of post-independence scenario.

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Chapter - 3

The Decline and Fall of the Feudal Glory in *The Private Life of An Indian Prince* by Mulk Raj Anand and the Wielding of Political Power in *The City and The River* by Arun Joshi.

The Decline and Fall of the Feudal Glory in *The Private Life of An Indian Prince* by Mulk Raj Anand.

Mulk Raj Anand, one of the most remarkable contemporary novelists of the world having over three dozen books to his credit, is a champion to explore and express the agonies of downtrodden people. As he is a humanist, his novels bring out human predicaments in a very vivid and lively manner. M. K. Naik rightly says; "R. K. Narayan is the novelist of the individual just as Mulk Raj Anand is the novelist of the social man." ¹

Mulk Raj Anand was educated at Khalsa College, Amritsar and at the University of London. In England, he came in contact with famous writer like Lawrence Binyon, D. H. Lawrence, F. R. Leavis, Middleton Murry, Herbrt Read and others. He read voraciously world philosophy and travelled widely in Europe. He organized the Progressive Writers' Movement and fought against Fascism and Imperialism. After returning to India, he was appointed as the Tagore Professor of Arts and Literature in Punjab University. Writing is only part of his life. An art critic of international reputation, he edited an art-journal, *Marg* devoted to the rediscovery of Indian culture including painting, architecture, sculpture, dance, drama, music, art and crafts. The range of Anand's interest is astonishingly wide which includes literature, philosophy, dance, art, criticism and cookery etc. In 1966, he was appointed as the Chairman of the Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi. He was honoured with Padma Bhushan award in 1967.

As a modern Indian writer, Anand is very much conscious of the Alps of the European tradition and the Himalaya of Indian part. Hence, the confrontation between tradition and modernity is one of the chief themes in his works. Anand is known for his humanism, which includes the best and most vital elements in Western as well as Asian philosophies. Denying the existence of God and supernatural he affirms the centrality of human life and enhancement of human happiness. He is perhaps the most prolific writer who had a great love and respect for ancient Indian culture. He once remarked; "The kind of humanism, in which I believe the kind of world I hope for.... is yet integral to the Indian tradition in which I grew up." ²

The novels M. R. Anand has been credited with include: Untouchable, Coolie, Two Leaves and a Bud, The Village, The Sword and The Sickle, The Big Heart, The Private Life of An Indian Prince, The Road, The Bubble etc.

The advent of Indian Independence gave rise to a new literary awareness. The re-organization of the states, the plight of the Anglo-Indian community in India, the departure of the British after centuries of colonial rule, the sensations of the Independence movement, the repatriation of people either to Pakistan or Hindustan, the communists' effort to turn India into a Bolshevik state, the activities of the congress, the response of 562 or more princely states to the call to join the Indian Union etc, were dexterously exploited by many creative writers. M. R. Anand was one of those writers.

In the years just before Independence, one of the most popular topics of discussion in India was the obstacles caused by some princely states to the formation of the Indian Republic. The common man, intoxicated with the newly acquired democratic rights, openly criticized the princes, without trying to understand their position or deep resentment at having been deceived by the crown. The princes, whose principalities had solidly supported the Empire during the two World Wars and had fought at home for the comfort of the British Raj, fervently hoped that when the rulers leave India they would stand

up to the pledge given by Her Majesty Queen Victoria in 1858 to respect the rights, solemnly affirmed by her successors to the Crown.

However, the British Government came up with a different interpretation of the pledge. They said that the pledge to the princes was solely based on Paramountcy, on their effective control of India as a part of British Crown and not merely on treaties and assurances. By their giving up of that effective control of India, the Paramountcy automatically lapsed and so they were no longer in a position to protect the princes and their principalities. However to the complaining princes, the British Government gave a hint to seek their own means to remain Independent of the Indian Union. They were assured that Paramountcy would not be transferred to any successive Government. But this assurance meant nothing to the princes. The then Viceroy and Governor General of India, Lord Mountbatten in fact advised the princes against seeking a path of Independence. Most of the princes accepted the advice, but there were a few who, by all means, wanted to preserve their independence, like the Maharaja of Travancore, Indore and Kashmir, the Nawabs of Junagadh and Bhopal, the Nizam of Hyderabad and of course, the hero of Mulk Raj Anand's *Private Life Of An Indian Prince*, the Maharaja Ashok Kumar of Sham Pur. Then the Deputy Prime Minister, Home Minister and Minister in – charge of the States of Indian Union, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel adopted various pressure tactics to force the recalcitrant princes to join the Indian Union: some were offered attractive Privy Purses and high ranking diplomatic assignments abroad, others were compelled to sign the Instrument of Accession on the ground that they were no longer in a position to maintain law and order. The story of Sham Pur's accession to Indian Union as presented in the novel epitomizes what happened in several other princely states.

One of the most controversial among Anand's fictional works, *Private Life of An Indian Prince* attempts to recapture the post – Independence period of political turmoil which saw the accession of the princely states to the Indian Union. It presents a human drama in the midst of a chaotic situation and has at its center a prince himself, a central figure in the political transition, whose tragedy is brought about by social as well as personal causes. As Rajan states; "The decline and fall of monarchy in the states of Sham Pur coincides with the basic destruction of the Prince himself."³

The hero of Anand's *Private Life of An Indian Prince*, the Maharaja of Sham Pur is an individual as well as a type. He is a type in the sense that he embodies all the weaknesses of his Maharaja class, namely pride, vanity, arrogance, political intrigue, flirtation, and intemperance. He is also true to his type as he spends his days like most of the Indian princes by taking part in polo games, hunting expedition, orgies of drink and debauchery and by enjoying the company of his mistresses and English guest. At the same time, he is an individual too, as his mind is obsessed with a unique problem which he can unravel only to his most intimate friends and which continually gnaws at his private life and ultimately drags him to madness. Commenting on this novel, Anand says:

Actually my knowledge of Indian life at various levels had always convinced me that I should try to do a 'comedies humaine'. In this the poor, the lowly and the untouchable were only one kind of outcasts. The middle section, and the Nawabs and Rajas were also to be included as a species of untouchables. Unfortunately, there has not been time to show poor – rich of our country, who deserve pity more than contempt. ⁴

Beyond that, there was also a personal reason which prompted Anand to write *Private Life of An Indian Prince*. It was written as the suggestion of Melpo, a Greek dancer who nursed him in Bombay, in order to save him from complete mental breakdown. As Anand says:

I taught 2 or 3 princes as a tutor in the early 20s, so I know the background. Maharaja's novel *Man's Fate* was very much in mind for ten years before I wrote 'Private Life' and the novel rushed out of me in one month is understable.⁵

Saros Cowasjee wrote; "The immediate impulse behind *Private Life of An Indian Prince* was to provide therapy for his (Anand's) own illness."⁶

The central character of *Private Life of An Indian Prince* is Maharaja Ashok Kumar of Sham Pur, a princely state in the north, and the narrator is Dr. Hari Shankar, his personal physician. As Cowasjee comments:

There is as much of Anand in his prince as in his narrator, and this partly accounts for the penetrating analysis of the prince's character. Dr. Shankar is the irrational side as seen in the Prince.⁷

The Maharaja's full name is Victor Edward George Ashok Kumar; Victor after Queen Victoria, Edward after Edward VII; George after Emperor George V; Ashok after the ancient Indian Emperor Ashoka. He is better known as Vicky. It appears that he wanted to please his British masters even by his "impressive" name in which East and West merge. His Highness name also indicates his vassalage, his all – out attempt to please the Imperial Crown for the sake of safeguarding his little crown. Not only a ceremonial occasions but also when he finds occasions to seduce girls, he never fails to give his full regalia of little and honors' as mentioned:

Maj. Gen. His Highness Farzand – I – Khas – I – Daulata – I – Inglisha. Mansur – I – Zaman, Amir - ul – umra, Maharajadhiraj Sri 108, Sir Victor Edward George, Ashok Kumar, K. C. S. I., K. C. I. E, D. L. (Banaras), Maharaja – of – Sham Pur.⁸

The Maharaja has had his college education at the chief's college, Lahore. There he framed his motto of life, an inspiration from Shelley's passionate poems. With this motto ever in mind, he royally moves about, like the Absalom of Dryden, without being cursedly confined to a single woman, at

a vibrant period of Indian history, “When nature prompted and no law denied promiscuous use of concubine and bride.”⁹

When Sham Pur was in turmoil, their rulers had nothing more important than involve him in a scandal with a Eurasian girl Miss Bunti Russell. This typical Maharaja, who claimed to have descended from the God India via The God King Rama, whom

The most barbaric impulses of both civilizations (European and Indian) dominated ... not a virgin or a rupee was safe in his realms... he was the majestic proclaimer of new firmans and wielder of the power over the life and death of half a million or more of his people.¹⁰

The novel opens dramatically with a public scandal caused by the Maharaja when he took out Bunti Russell to the ravines for the obvious purpose. The Maharaja’s peccadilloes become a talking point for everyone. Dr. Shankar reflects sardonically that the British who had forced the Princess into a political strait-jacket left them no more territories to conquer, not much to do, except to achieve, “the only other conquests left to them, the conquests over women.”¹¹

Vicky with the Private Secretary Munshi Mithan Lal and Dr. Shankar went Simla to put up a complaint against the Russell. There he received a wire from the Prime Minister, Srijut Popatlal. J Shah asking him to return to Sham Pur at the earliest for urgent consultation regarding the merger of Sham Pur into Indian Union. Though they set out from Simla in response to the Prime Minister’s telegram, after reaching Sham Pur the Maharaja is slow to respond to him. Therefore at their encounter, the *Diwan* in unequivocal terms states his position to the Maharaja:

Maharaja Sahib, I am here in Sham Pur to fulfill the order of the Sardar. I am willing to send a memorandum, which you may give me, to the States Department. Only, if I may advise you in your best interest, I think you should consider acceding, because most of the Princes in India have already done so. After all, these – accessions are intended to promote the unity of the country. And, as a patriot, I am assure you will consider it your duty to come into the family.¹²

As the *Diwan* has left the place, Vicky discloses his future plan for Sham Pur to his nymphomaniac mistress Ganga Dasi and Dr. Shankar:

I have some American friends.... I shall call them here ... Actually, one of them sounded me about making a pact, for Sham Pur borders upon Tibet as well as Kashmir and India.¹³

Ganga Dasi also supports the action plan of Vicky and offers her help of any kind to win the game. Then Victor affirms:

I shall be strong enough to stand my ground against the sales Department. I will offer the British and Americans the use of some strips of territory if need be. Later, I can turn them out.¹⁴

Vicky tries to exploit the strategic position of his states by inviting Peter Watkins of the American Embassy—believing that the Americans are the coming power in India. Vicky's ignorance of world affair coupled with almost pathological misunderstanding of his people's aspiration. Revolts in several parts of the states were supposed with bloody violence, mass arrest and detentions due to which the people's movement gathered force and a Praja Mandal was formed which obtained the moral support of the Indian National Congress in British India. Under the leadership of Pandit Gobind Das, the Praja Mandal is preparing for a *hartal* to protest against the misrule of Victor. Still Vicky boasts that he has been practicing of *Ram Raj* in his state.

Meanwhile Vicky arranges the hunting for his American friends and Buta, an expert hunter is allotted this job to hunt panther. Ganga Dasi is busy with trapping the Prime Minister Popatlal J. Shah. She also lays in bed with Kurt, an American friend. When Vicky sees it, he can't tolerate but helpless to act as he has feared that due to his action, his friends will leave. And then an awkward event takes place. Buta is not satisfied with the wage given to him. He protests and Vicky gets annoyed and kicks him brutally. Vicky has an intense hatred of the middle class and tells Dr. Shankar:

...The middle – class leaders get their opportunity when the literate have destroyed the traditions of loyalty and good habit and weakened the people's will. They were usually kept in control by the Princes, But nowadays when there are wars and famines and newspapers, men like Nehru and Patel break loose and corrupt the minds or the praja...¹⁵

At this juncture, the American loses all enthusiasm and without offering any help for the independence of Sham Pur, they leave and Vicky has to attend the meeting with Sardar Patel at Delhi. The Sardar firmly says, "I have called you to sign the papers for the accession of Sham Pur to the Indian Union. The old order has to go..."¹⁶

As they return, Sham Pur, Vicky's face reveals his defeat, exhaustion and disillusionment. After the accession of Sham Pur state to the Indian Union, The Praja Mandal Leader, Pandit Gobind Das becomes the Prime Minister, working on Patel's concept of collaboration between the Indian Government and the Princes on a new basis. He informs Vicky that his name has been proposed for the Raj Pramukhship of the border union in addition to the Privy Purse of twenty-five lakh rupees per annum. In this new alliance the common man had neither any place nor any say. The atmosphere was charged with contradiction in the nationalist movement and the political situation. The new ministers fought over the Portfolios. The socialist leaders were campaigning to oust the Congress ministers and the states soldiers

were fighting the communist guerillas. These forces gave rise to insidious intrigues, corruption, nepotism and black market. The Ministry of Pandit Gobind Das is sacked and the Indian army marches in to suppress the communist insurgents. According to Dr. Shankar, the peasants suffer at the hands of both the feudal lords and the bureaucracy. Shankar confesses:

We may evoke them in our talk to show our sentimental love for them, but in fact we disdained contact with them and thought of them as crude, rough people who stank no better than their own oxen....¹⁷

In this way, Anand depicts the emergence of a new force and a new clash – the clash between the peasants and the bourgeois and Dr. Shankar accepts the historical inevitability of the process and accepts the ‘historic transition’:

I felt at heart that the situation in which Victor had found himself was part of an historic transition that was by no means finished and would bring still more shocks and surprises to all in the next few years...¹⁸

Vicky happened to face one more mental stroke when he comes to know that Ganga Dasi has run away with Bool Chand. He, thus, beats his head with his fists, in a mad, inchoate despair at being abandoned. Meanwhile Vicky is suggested to enjoy holidays in Europe by the Administrator in order to keep him out of the state. After reaching London, things do not change much for Victor. He is obsessed by the thought of Ganga Dasi. One day, while shopping, Victor’s libidinous hunger is aroused by a shop girl named Miss June Withers. He develops flirting and physical relations with her. In London, from the pangs of thwarted love, he hatches a conspiracy to have Bool Chand murdered. When the murdered is out and the prince’s part in it known, he tells Dr. Shankar: “Oh, now hate her, the whore looked what she had made me do. She murdered me and I have murdered back...”¹⁹

Then Vicky receives an order from India House asking his highness and his staff to return India immediately to give evidence. While coming back Vicky has completely turned into a mad man. Finally he loses his sanity and is taken to an asylum in Poona for treatment. The novel closes when Indira, the real wife of Vicky, comes to tend her husband.

Dr. Shankar analyses Vicky's case with objectivity and compassion and says:

I felt a strange sense of cruelty and ugliness of Indian life which was driving so many people insane... In a way the whole of India was a kind of lunatic asylum, part of the bigger lunatic asylum of the world, in which only those who struggled against the status quo and gave battle to authority seemed to find some sense of balance through the elaboration of a new sense of value...²⁰

Dr. Shankar ultimately reviews his life in the service of the Maharaja. His introspection fills him with guilt and disgust, and he wants to atone for his association with this decadent prince. He decides to go back to Sham Pur to serve the people whom – generation of maharaja and jagirdars had broken. He wants to save the wronged people from further plunder. He seeks personal fulfillment in joining their nascent struggle. He determines to carve out a pathway for himself and others, away from the wrong roads, where he could walk upright among the men who were straightening their backs. By utilizing Dr. Sankar as the narrator of Vicky's life and concentrating on a few characters only Anand achieves the dramatic intensity. As Sinha praises:

The decline of the princely order has been sincerely depicted as part of the social phenomenon in resurgent India in which the prince symbolized the self negating, destructive, id as a symptom of modern disorder.²¹

It is observed that Feudalism is the chief concern of *Private Life of an Indian Prince*. Throughout the novel, Anand exposes and denounces all

feudal values and their heavy handed proponents, the Rajas and Maharajas, represented in this novel by Victor, the Maharaja of Sham Pur. The social and economic system in Sham Pur is directed only to extort and exploit from the wretched people of the state innumerable varieties of taxes for the luxury, comfort and happiness of Victor, his nymphomaniac mistress Ganga Dasi and his intimate friends. The people of his state dramatically call him: "The tyrant of Sham Pur, the levier of illegal taxes and the egotistical head of a lawlessly lawful government, whose sanctions lay in his whims and fancies." ²²

The oppressions, extortions and deprivations are chiefly conducted by Victor under the influence and for the benefit of his mistress Ganga Dasi. He knows that the Government of India would not allow him to bestow any legal status on her. So he begins to amass wealth for her by direct and indirect means. Various draconian taxes are levied upon the people in order to build up a fortune for her. Illegal dues, known as *Nazaranas*, are taken from people. Money is extorted from reversionary or heirs of those who died childless, from people who adopt children and even from people who arrange rightful succession. Anyone who dare disobey those decrees is cruelly treated and his property is confiscated.

Victor's uxoriousness for Ganga does not prevent his hunting of other hearts. As instead of procuring essential commodities for the miserable masses of his state he keeps many agents in different parts of his state for procuring young girls for him. The author says, "He demanded any woman who came within the orbit of his lustful vision...not a virgin or a rupee was safe in his realms." ²³

Those who protest against his exploitations are arrested and detained without any trial in prisons which are dark chambers of Death. In the jail also, the prisoners are tortured liked anything and they are made to chant, "Maharaja Sahib ki jai! Sham Pur Raj ki jai!" ²⁴

Even when people under the banner of *Praja Mandal* are observing *Hartal* in protest against starvation, illegal extortion of taxes and other crimes of the ruler, Victor, unmindful of them, is entertaining his American friends at Sham Pur Lodge with French Champagne of 1905, delicious food, panther hunt, wild orgies and egg eating competition.

The object poverty suffered by the people of Sham Pur is well reflected in the *Shikari* Buta's desire even to dispense with his most cherished souvenir of hunt, the head and skin of a panther, in return for some money. He says:

I will present the American sahib with the head and the skin, and he can take it home and say he shot it. I don't mind, Huzoor. To me a little cash is more valuable than a lot of prestige! ²⁵

Sham Pur is portrayed as a typical Princely State of the late Forties. There is ample evidence of its connection with the British Crown. The main street of Sham Pur is named after Queen Victoria, which reminds one of the important treaties signed by Maharaja's grandfather. Even the name of the Maharaja shows affinity with the Crown and the former's dependence identity. His full name Victor Edward George Ashok Kumar brings to mind the policy of appeasement the British indulged in to keep the Princess happy by conferring titles and honours upon them. Anand Mahanand rightly remarks, "Anand parodies the Indian Princes who are foolishly happy in acquiring 'Angrezi Titles'". ²⁶

Anand exposes the imperialist form of administration of the British. As far as the administrative structure of the State is concerned, it is framed to suit the colonial clime. Though certain minor changes are seen in terms of appointment of officers after Independence, the prevalent colonial administrative set up is still in action. Sham Pur has its British Resident. The Political Department still regulates the administration. British offices such as

Colonel Russel, Sir Hortly Withers and many others hold important offices in the administration. Though Maharaja Ashok Kumar is the ruler of the state, he is in a weak position.

Anand not only shows the British monopoly over the administration of the state, but also exposes the princes and their exploitative treatment of the common people. Forced labour like *veth* and *beggar* is rampant in the state. The subjects are compelled to work at any time and for any period that the state may require. The forced labour that the people render for the shikar of the Maharaja is following him and his hunting parties, from village to village, over hills and through dense forests and burning sands are instances of it. Through this scene, Anand intends to project the feudal and autocratic attitude of the Princes with respect to the common people.

The Maharaja's imposition of illegal taxes, exploitation of state property for his personal pleasure and appeasement and his ill treatment of the prisoners all reveal his feudal character. When the Indian army attempts to take over Sham Pur, the Maharaja makes preparations on its border wearing the uniform of an Honorary General. His actions anger the people as the tanks and jeeps roll over their crops. This scene is good example of how Anand uses real historical fact in this fictional representation of the Maharaja's repression of the people.

Anand not only targets the Princes for his misrule of his State, but also exposes the whole administrative system including the officials associated with the Prince. The Maharaja's Minister and associates play an important role in his failure in understanding the problems of the people. For instance, he is surrounded by a sycophantic Private Secretary in the person of Munshi Mithanlal and Dr. Shankar, the personal physician who hardly prevents the Maharaja from taking unjust and unfavorable decisions against the people. Apart from this Victor's schooling and upbringing create a large gap between him and his people. His education and preparation do not help in

understanding the problems of the people or in his being a good administrator. The British also did not take any measure to effect reforms in the area of administration taking into account the changing situation when people were mere assertive about their rights with the influence of the freedom struggle.

The novelist shows the change in the attitude of the people with the change of time especially when they come into contact with the freedom movement they are exposed to democratic values as against the feudal order. Hence, they no longer consider the Maharaja when he is ill treated and excluded from the pictures. People realize that the Maharaja is an obstacle to their progress. They no longer believe in the Divine Right of Princes. Boolchand, the Praja Mandal Leader remarks: "His highness is a trespasser on the sacred soil of the Indian Union! There is no divine right of kings left any more age."²⁷

The Maharaja however, like his compatriot princes, questions the introduction of a democratic form of Government in the place of the monarchy. He attacks Shankar saying:

People like you and the Praja Mandalis keep shouting, Democracy, Democracy. What is Democracy? Where is it practised?..To attain equality with the ignorant rabble, to reduce everyone to uniformity with the stupid herd! Wah, what barking is this?²⁸

Through this argument the writer intends to show the conflict between the traditional rule and the emerging democratic set up.

Mulk Raj Anand records the role of the Praja Mandal and the States Department in paralyzing the administration of the state and in accusing the Maharaja of misgoverning his State and asking him to sign the instrument of Accession. Accusing the leaders who are involved in bringing down his administration, Victor comments:

...now a days when there are wars and famines and newspapers, men like Nehru and Patel break loose and corrupt the minds of the Praja, appoint their agents and bring about revolution with Hitler's tactics, from within.²⁹

Victor's thoughts are nourished by the feudal, aristocratic idea that all excellence is inheritance. His ways as shown in the novel are the ways of feudalism. Anand's fear that India, this very long – ago land of ours, after its independence might not be able to completely shake off the feudal values which it embraced fervently for many centuries is based on his correct understanding of the Indian society with its attachment to the hangovers of history – the tolerance of feudalism and a mystic veneration for the princes as the descendents of God. Anand says in the novel: "The trouble with liberal democracy is that it takes a long time to mature."³⁰

Hence, during the quick accession of and change over in Sham Pur as in other parts of India, there is complete confusion. So instead of reforming the society, old values are pooh-poohed and intrigues, corruption, nepotism and black market spread in intricate coils around the houses and office of Sham Pur. Anand attacks colonial rule as well as the feudal order. He knows that independence from the colonial rulers or accessions of kingdom to Indian Union mean nothing to the majority of the people unless they are able to attain economic independence. So he wants the social and economic systems of the country to undergo a through transformation so as to give a fair deal to all sections of society and thereby ring the knell of feudalism once for all.

Private Life of an Indian Prince is Anand's protest against the wrong rulers. That he should expose the tyranny, debauchery, despotism, delinquency of a feudal fossil is quite natural and expected but more significant is his exposure of the so-called democratic rulers who succeed Vicky. Their lust for power, greed for money, propensity for corruption, laxity of morals, hypocrisy of conduct and an utter disregard for the welfare of the

people whose well-wishers they claim to be are all ruthlessly bared. That Anand sees through the cunning of the Indian politician's and paints them in their true colors so soon after the country attained independence is proof of his sound judgment. H. M. William observes:

The picture of India is full of gloom and fore boding. Victor's madness is equated with the neurotic tendencies of an Indian State pulled between the feudal past and the industrialized so-called "progressive" future, an India where only the political revolutionaries are sane.³¹

Here the author does not rejoice at the transfer of power from feudal elements to bourgeois interest is quite clear. His sympathies are with the revolutionaries and the guerilla rebels who have launched a struggle against the vested powers.

It is also noted that the so-called private life of the prince is very much the concern of the public, because it affects them. Though the action constantly revolves round Vicky's doings—personal, social and official – yet the public looms large on the canvas and its power and presence are never forgotten. We are constantly reminded of the havoc the irresponsible acts of the rulers cause and how prolonged misgovernment has ruined the people till their patience is worn thin and they show signs of resistance for sheer survival. The struggle has just begun and the cherished revolution is still a distant dream but the awareness of their long – denied rights gives the people a new hope. Dr. Shankar's long delayed decision to renounce the life of luxury and go over to the struggling masses to ameliorate their lot and to accelerate the pace of revolution indicates where Anand's own sympathies lie. Dr. Shankar's action symbolizes the author's desire image. Vicky is an anachronism and is bound to perish in an age of popular upsurge. The forgery does not lie in his doom; it lies in the fact that even after his deposition, power does not come to the people but into wrong hands.

Anand has also focused on the unwillingness of the educated people in India to give up the age – old superstitious beliefs. Victor and his entourage on reaching the Sham Pur railway station wait there at the suggestion of Munshi Mithan Lal for the *Muhurat* to enter the state. Though Prince had been education in the English Public School tradition and yet whose home background encouraged the darkest superstitions and the most obscurantist ideas. The discovery of the *Muhurat* by the state Astrologer is an essential ritual for Victor. It is also the factor responsible for his fall.

Victor, the Indian prince whose private life is scrutinized in this novel, exists outside total definition. He drifts from eccentricity into absurdity, and thence to lunacy, never totally comprehended by his wife, his concubine, his shop-girl mistress, his court, his ministers, his doctor or his people. Anand succeeds in making his prince a complex character – as complex as human nature. One picture of the Prince that the novelist paints is that he is absurd and atrocious, cruel and crafty, sensual and vainglorious; on the other side he is shown to be loyal to his friends. He discusses philosophy and state craft. The fact that he quotes Shelley, Plato, Manu and Buddha evinces enough evidence of his interest in philosophy and religion. Yet despite these positive virtues, he turns out to be a self – pitying character. It is perhaps because, beneath the mask of royal regality he has essential human element in him, a heart that throbs and pulsates with diverse emotions. Otherwise Vicky is a man of stupendous courage. He faces the hostile Praja–Mandal volunteers who hoisted their flags on the State Administrative Building. He rides through the tense milling crowds without once looking back, mounts the steps of the building, briefly addresses the crowd, hauls down the flag, turns round with the aplomb of a consummate actor and pushes his way through the cheering throng of people. Dr. Amarjit Singh rightly states: "Vicky's mind is only a microcosm that mirrors the national malady".³²

It is also true that in this novel Anand attacks colonial rule as well as the feudal order. He is also critical of the States Department for its manipulative policies. But he does not approve the manner in which the princes were forced to merge with the Indian Union. It is seen with Sardar Patel's soft policy of negotiation and bargain, which he employed as a weapon to integrate the Princely States. Anand exposes the States 'Departments' hard heartedness towards the Princes. Sardar Patel addresses Victor as "Raja" though he is a "Maharaja". Victor tries to explain his points but Sardar Patel who is styled, as Bismark is not ready to listen. He does not even bother to explain anything to the Maharaja and makes Maharaja sign the papers of Accession. The Maharaja has no option except to sign the papers. Thus, Maharaja whose name is ironically Victor finally becomes the loser of his State and his lover.

Looking at it if as a whole, it can be said that the first movement of the novel depicts the decay of order represented by princes but the second movement of the novel centers around the perversions of Vicky and his insanity. Both the movements are closely related and run simultaneously intersecting each other at various points. Anand tries to present the conflict between prince and people as a human problem by endowing the Maharaja with pathological traits which not only cause his ruin but also explain his behaviour as unchangeable. The fall of the princely order was a historical necessity but what replaced it was a bourgeoisie strengthened at the cost of the masses. Mulk Raj Anand achieves a remarkable position, telescoping a whole range of developments independence, integration, monopoly and communal guns in the distance. The novel remains essentially inconclusive, hinting at a continuity of struggle, between the peasants and their new master.

The Wielding of Political Power in *The City and The River* By Arun Joshi

Arun Joshi is indisputably one of the few front-ranking fictionists of today. He is an original talent exploring deeper into the moral and spiritual crisis of the contemporary Indians. He made his debut in Indian-English literature with his novel *The Foreigner*. With it began Arun Joshi's odyssey into the dark, mysterious and uncharted hinterland of the soul to plumb some perennial problems of human existence. His novels deal with their social-alienation and self-alienation and the concomitant restless and their search for a way out of the intricate labyrinth of contemporary life. They simultaneously explore in the Indian context some universal questions of human existence. He gives a proper shape and form in fiction to the chaos and confusion in the mind of contemporary man. His coalescing of self-introspection with self-mockery adds a new dimension to the art of Indian English fiction.

Unlike the other authors, Joshi's novels are not a mere pathological study of his characters. Like a realist he does suggest a pragmatic way out of the labyrinth of the contemporary beleaguered existence. He avoids mere didacticism. His fiction demonstrates the universal lessons of our spiritual heritage that might have been temporarily relegated to the background but are relevant despite the materialism and rapid westernization of our country. He has to his credit other novels which are *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, *The Last Labyrinth*, *The Apprentice*, *The City and The River*.

The forgoing analysis of Arun Joshi's novels demonstrates that he has been preoccupied with the problem of twentieth century's dilemma and its repercussions. In an age when religious faith is fast disappearing and man feels culturally uprooted and socially alienated on account of his own (mis)doings, the message of serious artists like Joshi is most welcome and called for. Tapan Kumar Ghosh says:

Joshi may be regarded as avante garde novelist in the sense that for the first time in the history of Indian novel in English he has powerfully exploited and given sustained treatment to a very potent theme of his times, namely a maladjusted individual pitted against an insane, lopsided society which is unhinged from its cultural as well as spiritual moorings, and his uncompromising search for identity.³³

Arun Joshi's *The City and The River*, the fifth and last novel strikes a unique note different from his earlier novels in many respect. In a way *The City and The River* is "a continuation of and an improvement upon Joshi's major thematic concerns"³⁴

The nature of the novel is explained on the blurb of the book which reads as under:

Narrated with humour and a gentle irony *The City and The River* strikes an entirely different theme from Arun Joshi's earlier novels. At one level, it is a parable of the times; at another it deals with how men, in essence entirely free to choose, create by their choice the circumstances in which they must live. It also explores the relevance of God to man's choices and whether all said and done; the world indeed belongs to God and to no one else.³⁵

It is about an anguished man's quest for survival and search for a viable alternative amidst materialism, corruption, cynicism, alienation and dwindling spiritual faith. Unhinged from its cultural heritage and spiritual moorings, his protagonists find themselves lost in a grossly materialistic industrial society. In this quest they are led into the labyrinths of life and death, and sometimes into the labyrinth of the world of spirit. As a matter, *The City and The River* is a departure from the existing oeuvre of Arun Joshi as Mazumdar says, "it as a commentary on the times and a political parable."³⁶

Joshi has made use of prophesy, fantasy and politics and presented the story in a wider backdrop. The book is a severe commentary on the times, containing echoes of the Indian Emergency in the 1970s. Parallels may be found between the Emergency regime of 1974-75 in India and the one portrayed in the novel. The huts of the mud-people are erased in the manner of what the then government did to widen the streets in the name of beautification, “sundarika”, of the city of Delhi during the Emergency. Even there is a close resemblance between the power structure of the two. The way the Grand Master acquires unlimited powers and leaves no stone unturned to anoint his son to the throne is reminiscent of what the then Prime Minister did as Amur writes:

The City and The River is a parable about human choice between allegiance to god and allegiance to man or, in other words, between religion and politics.³⁷

Tyranny and repression, hypocrisy and deceit, selfishness and corruption, violence and destruction are rampant in the “city” of the Grand Master. The events portrayed are reminiscent of the Emergency in India, as the aftermath in both the cases proved ruinous to the rulers. It rightly claims a privileged place among the political novels of our literature as it powerfully comments on the political scenario of the past, the present and the future.

The City and The River is divided into eleven sections including a Prologue and an Epilogue. The Prologue throws light on two very important characters, the ageless teacher Yogeshwara, and the disciple; the Nameless-One that symbolizes the processes of regeneration and decay. In the evening of his thirtieth birthday, the Nameless-One is told about his own identity who is “the illegitimate child” sent on a raft into the unknown. The great Yogeshwara wants to inform his pupil about the past city and the cause of its end before the Nameless-One enters the unknown world.

The city as it is conceived in the novel is a hierarchical structure with the Grand Master at the top. It is divided into three parts- the mud quarters inhabited by the nameless people, the brick colonies which produce administrators and intellectuals and the Seven Hills, the actual seat of State power, the Grand Master. The other landmarks are the pyramids where the previous Grand Masters lie and the Gold Mines to which state prisoners are condemned. An Advisory Council consisting of an Astrologer, a Minister of Trade, an Education Advisor, a Police Commissioner and a Master of Rallies assists the Grand Master in ruling the State. There are internal rivalries and latent ambitions but the members of the Council are firm in their allegiance to the Grand Master who is in perfect control except for the Boat people whose sole allegiance is to the River which for them is a symbol of the 'divine mother', 'of God Himself'. The Boat men do not believe in personal possession, though ironically the- accumulation of the City's wealth depends on their cooperation, and refuse to be absorbed into the hierarchical social structure of the city. The boatmen assert their allegiance to the river because, "They consider themselves to be the children of the river, and to the river and river alone do they hold allegiance".³⁸

The uneasy balance between The City and The River is upset when the Grand Master is visited by a dream in which he has become king and, encouraged by the Astrologer who brushes aside the ambiguous elements in the dream, decides to act upon it. The Astrologer announces "the Way of Three Beatitudes' in front of a large crowd, "My children, god has sent the Grand Master to be your servant. Looking after this city is a *Yajna* from him, his life is the *ahuti*..."³⁹

Then he announces the way of Three Beatitudes:

One, the Grand Master of the city is the father and mother of the city. All citizens are his children equally. Let them offer their allegiance to the Grand Master as a child to his father.

Two, the wealth of the city belongs to everyone. However, since there are too many of us, let it be resolved that henceforth there shall be one, and only one child to a mother and two to a home.

Three, while happiness and prosperity await the city and all those who follow the triple way, for him who choose the opposite path and prefer to become a millstone round the city's neck let him be received. Without mercy and be treated according to ...Law of compassionate righteousness.⁴⁰

The announcement of “the Era of Ultimate Greatness” follows the “Three Beatitudes” which leaves the city people with fear and foreboding. In the guise of it, the Grand Master orders the police to crush the people who have denied allegiance to him. The expression like “Three Beatitudes” is an enforcement of a new code of conduct for the people where as “The Law of Compassionate Righteousness” means ruthless punishment to the unwanted people. Likewise “The Era of Ultimate Greatness” means the loss of individual freedom resulting in arbitrary arrest by which innocent people are condemned to a debased life of suffering and agony.

At a Festival of the River a *yajna* is performed by the Astrologer and the Grand Master's son is coronated as his successor. The Grand Master's plans, however, meet with stiff resistance from the Boat people, whose headman is a woman, and Bhumiputra or Master Bhoma, a teacher of mathematics who belongs to the mud quarters. State terrorism is let loose and a large number of arrests take place. Bhumiputra is held. The Headman, who refuses to swear allegiance to the Grand Master and the professor who takes

up the cause of Bhumi Putra, are condemned to the Gold Mines. Systematic attempts are made to destroy the Boat people's way of life and the Grand Master who hates music even destroys their simple musical instruments. But it is the River which triumphs in the end:

For seven days and nights it rained without a stop. On the eighth day the sun rose and from a clear sky started down at a vast sea of water. The sea was calm and gave no hint of the agitation that had gone into its making. Of the Grand Master and his city nothing remained.⁴¹

Thus the river which is an embodiment of Time becomes almost "the stormy sea" and wipes out everything. The city has met its end but it is not an end. A new city has to emerge on its ruins. The end of the novel is full of optimism and hope for affirmation. The Great Yogeshwara tells the Nameless-One, "on the ruins of that city, as always happens a new city has risen ..."⁴².

In this novel, the novelist depicts the horror and terror unleashed on the society when a handful of individual like the Grand Master becomes ambitious and selfish. The political scenario of the city is used as backdrop of the novel which helps the novelist in presenting contemporary problems as well.

It is observed here that The Indian political scenario of the Emergency especially the game and aim of 'Might is Right' is nicely depicted by the novelist. He presents the malpractices in which people wielding political power indulge and the ways in which people respond to them. Taxonomically speaking the malpractices presented here are of two kinds: the malpractices resorted to in order to gain and retain power and malpractices resorted in order to eliminate dissent. The responses of the victims range from total surrender to uncompromising resistance.

So far as the malpractices resorted to in order to acquire and retain political power presented here are concerned, the first of these is the practice of manipulating people and incidents in order to lift oneself to the apex by giving the impression that one is very popular and that it is the people who want to have power. The Grand Master, the ruler in the novel, is the person who employs such tactics; he has a Rallies Master to organize rallies in his support to give the impression that he is loved by his subjects and he makes the Master of Trade propose in the meeting of the “Supreme Council” that he be made king, and argue that it is in the interest of the people, rather than that of the Grand Master, that the Grand Master is made King. The following words of the Master of Trade:

I shall briefly put forward certain criteria that the king of the city should meet. First, as already decided, he must be a wearer of the sacred thread. Second, he must come from a family which has already demonstrated its willingness to make sacrifice for this city. Third, he must command the affection of our masses and the trust of the armed forces and the business class... Now gentlemen, the only person who meets these criteria is our beloved Grand Master.⁴³

Here the Grand Master stage – manages what he himself wants to achieve.

Apart from this, the Grand Master tries to ensure that he is succeeded by his descendant. In the novel, the Rallies Master is made to organize rallies also for the Grand Master’s son so that people may gather the impression that he too has endeared himself to the masses. The Astrologer is also the tool of the Grand Master in the novel. He advances attractive arguments in order to justify the perpetuation of the rule of family when he argues:

No sacrifice is greater than the sacrifice of a young son. But we know we are asking this sacrifice from a family that has for a hundred years sacrificed its men, women, its children, its wealth its very all for the sake of this city... This city needs his son and he must give him to us.⁴⁴

Another political device in the novel is the ruler's making people regard himself as the nation. In the novel the Astrologer identifies the Grand Master with the river, that they are the symbols of the ruler and the nation respectively. He advises the Headman to swear to the Grand Master because he and the great river are one. Thus, the Astrologer tries to prove that The Grand Master himself is the state.

Besides these, the malpractice presented here is one of keeping one self in the seat of power with the help of guns and thus using the army and the police which are expected to protect the state from external and internal aggressions, in order to protect oneself from even the dissenters. There also comes a time when the police use guns to eliminate opposition, nay even people who are staging a peaceful sit-in.

The novelist also shows the ruler indulging in the malpractice of giving ministerial posts to persons for political reason rather than for their talents and capabilities. For instance, the post of the Education Adviser has been given in the novel to a person who has won the support of students and teachers, whose support the Grand Master wants to win, and talent or capability is not taken into consideration at all Giving posts for political reasons is likely to encourage politics rather than bring efficiency in administration.

It is also mentioned in the novel how the public funds are misused by some rulers to gratify the needs, the wishes or even the whims of their near and dear ones, rather than meet the needs of the people. In this novel, the road called the Avenue Great River is straightened because the Grand

Master's wife wants it to be so far no reason other than one of having a nicer view. Even though this involves making people living there lose their homes and hearths. It is sheer tyranny to deprive people of their homes and hearths only to make the view look nicer to the ruler's wife! Views do matter no doubt, but they do not matter more than homes and hearths.

The efforts are made by rulers to cajole people to continue tolerating poverty in the name of leading a life of spiritualism has been shown in the novel when the people who have been deprived of their homes and hearths are exhorted to accept poverty on the ground that they belong to a country the civilization of which is spiritual rather than material, as if spiritual civilization fails to provide people even homes and hearths! Here spiritualism is being used as a narcotic to keep people homeless and reminds one of the religion, which as Karl Marx put it, was made to work as opium.

Another political malpractice hinted at in the novel is the authorities' manipulating the prices and the trade of commodities in order to earn money for the state or for oneself. It is this malpractice that has been hinted at in the following piece of conversation between Pinstripe and the Minister for Trade:

In the light of the approaching Festival of the River cooking oil can bring in excellent revenue. Prices can be pushed very high if the produce of the Gold Mines is concerned.⁴⁵

Yet another political strategy presented here is the ruler's declaring that people's demand will be accepted even when he has no intention to implement the decree and, thus, cheating people. The malpractice has been employed when the Grand Master instructs the Astrologer to issue a decree but not to think of implementing it. The ruler who makes announcements of this kind is a cheat rather than a statesman.

The malpractices employed by a ruler in order to eliminate dissent as presented in the novel, are again various. One of them is using coercion in order to frighten people into loyalty. In this novel, a large number of boatmen are sent to prison only because they refuse to declare that they are loyal to the Grand Master. Then 'the Era of Ultimate Greatness' declared. It enjoined the people to beware of the enemy within and the enemy without and reminded them of the Astrologer's Three Beatitudes. The new era was inaugurated with the arrest of a boatman and a clown. The boatman's wife had borne an illegal child. The clown was arrested because he had been heard to laugh when the old boatman was being put in chains. Actually speaking, there is no point in arresting a boatman for his wife's having borne an illegal child as it is his wife who deserves to be arrested for having cuckolded her husband rather than him, likewise, a clown is there only to make people laugh and so there is no point in arresting a clown for laughing. Moreover, laughing is an innocent exercise and one indulging in it does not deserve any punishment. It is evident that the boatmen are arrested not because they have committed any crime but because they have refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Grand Master and have raised a voice of dissent against the Grand Master's hypocritical announcement of the beginning of "The Era of Ultimate Greatness'.

Another such malpractice presented here is one of restricting the freedom of the press and not letting any independent news paper flourish. It is this state of affairs that prevails in the Grand Master's "City" in the novel. The fact has been brought to light by the Little Star who informs the Professor that there are two newspapers in the city. One is owned by the Astrologer and other is by a girl of five years old age. A little girl cannot manage, thus it is managed by the Master of Rallies. The Master of Rallies also controls the satellite which is the private property of the Grand Master. It is thus, almost impossible for people trying to find facts through newspapers and radio. Here people can know only the establishment's version of facts. In the novel the

Grand Master and his men are successful in spreading the fiction that Master Bhoma has hatched a conspiracy to unseat the Grand Master. The press is further restricted in the novel by forcing newsmen not to use their papers against persons in power.

Another malpractice adopted to discourage dissent is that of harassing the dissenters and causing them inconveniences in one form or another. It has been highlighted in the novel when the Grand Master gets the boatman's musical instruments destroyed only because he himself has an "antipathy to music".

Yet another such malpractice is that of creating a phobia of external and internal threats. It is used by the Astrologer even in his public speech when he says:

In the darkness of the night there has come a new wave of deadly assassins. Daggers in hand, they have crept out their holes. They stalk the night, determined to strike at the very root of our lives, at the very heart of the man whose heartbeat is the heartbeat of the city itself.⁴⁶

A barbarous malpractice adopted here in order to suppress dissent is one of disabling the dissenters. This malpractice has taken the form of blinding the Headman, the lady chief of the boatman. During the night the guards pierced the Headman's eyes with long pointed needles and poured acid into the perforations.

Still another political malpractice to discourage dissent presented here is that of the ruler's trying to restrict the growth of the population of the section of the people who are not loyal to him. The Grand Master tries to freeze the population of the boatmen, as they are politically so conscious that at the slightest excuse they raise rebellions standards. However, the system of giving power to one who is supported by majority of the citizen is very likely to

encourage the rulers to try to speed up the growth of their men and to restrict the population of the dissenters and sooner or later the group manipulating the growth of the population of the country or even of the world, irrespective of principles, is likely to come to power and hold it.

One more political malpractice to discourage dissent adopted here is that of laying the blame for every unhappy incident at the dissenters' door irrespective of facts. The wrong – doer blames the victims even for his own repressive measures and, thus, tries to direct the edge of people's anger towards the dissenters. The fact comes to light when one finds the Grand Master blaming every boatman for his having been using the police and the army against the latter. The novelist is ironical here and is laughing at the wrong – doer's blaming the victim for the wrongs heaped on the latter. As Sharma writes:

The malpractices resorted in order to gain and retain power and the malpractices resorted in order to eliminate dissent. The response of the victim ranges from total surrender to uncompromising resistance.⁴⁷

The responses of the ruled, as presented in *The City and The River*, range from total surrender to armed struggle. They can be ground into two broad categories namely those of non–resistance and resistance. The path of surrender falls in the first category and that of struggle of any kind active or passive, physical or intellectual, literary or non–literary can be included in the second category. The path the common people other than the boatmen choose to adopt is that of non–resistance as they do not know what the announcement by the Astrologer implies. It means those who do not understand the political implications of political steps can do nothing but surrender. The path that Bhumiputra, the Grand-Father, the Professor adopt is one of resistance and all of them in one way or the other resist the steps the Grand Master is taking in order to gain more power.

The resistance of the victims presented in the novel is broadly of two kinds: passive and active. Those who do nothing to counter the measures of the Grand Master but at the same time refuse to surrender can be called passive resisters and those who do anything physical or intellectual to counter those measures can be called active resisters. The Grand-Father's resistance is an illustration of passive resistance as he does nothing to counter the moves of those wielding power but only keeps Bhumiputra at his rose-farm and puts a few obstructions in the way of the Police Commissioner and the son when they come to arrest Bhumiputra as a result of which he gets his house destroyed and loses his life along with Bhumiputra.

The active resistance presented in the novel is again of two kinds: physical and intellectual. The resistance of those who take up arms against the oppressor is physically active resistance while the resistance of those who simply educate people and explain to them what is wrong with the Grand Master's policies is intellectual active resistance. For instance, the resistance of the boatman who take up arms to fight oppression and defend their way of living is physical active resistance. But the resistance of Bhumiputra who tells people the symbolic story of the naked king is intellectual active resistance.

The novel embodies the view that one who misuses political power cannot escape undergoing punishment for it even if he succeeds in eliminating all his opponents. In the novel, punishment comes to the offender from nature. Even though none of the men rising against the Grand Master succeeds in removing him as the Headman is blinded and later, deserted by her own followers, Bhoma's telling people that the king is naked comes to a stop when he comes to stay with the Grand-father and, later on, dies when the son demolishes the Grandfather's house in an attempt to arrest him, the Professor dies as a result of his fast unto death in prison, there comes in the river a flood in the face of which the king finds himself helpless:

The waters now reached the top of the fourth hill on which the offices of the new Grand Master stood... the inmates of the place shuddered in horror as the new Grand Master's building broke in the middle and floor by floor, frame by frame, fell into the sea. The water swept over the top of the hill and cascaded on to the other in a loud waterfall. ⁴⁸

One feels that when human beings have failed, Nature is using water, one of the elements, to punish the guilty. The fact signifies that Arun Joshi posits his faith in, what has come to be known as, the Divine justice. As Usha Bande aptly remarks, "In its demonic image, the city becomes the city of destruction, a great ruin of pride". ⁴⁹

It is interesting to note that *The City and The River* is a parable about human choice between allegiance to God and allegiance to man or, in other words, between religion and politics. Here the novelist has put *The City and The River* as opposing symbols, though it is not the intention of the novelist to set up a permanent opposition between them. In the totality as his vision they are reconcilable. The Astrologer who guides the destinies of the City and the Hermit who identifies himself with the River are both disciples of Yogeshwara, but the choice they make turn them into adversaries. Similarly, the ancient prophecy about the coming of the king is shared by the Astrologer, the Hermit and the Boat people but their interpretations conflict with each other. In fact it can even be said that it is the separation of the City from the River that shows the seeds of destruction and death.

In order to make the concept of political power strong, Arun Joshi has applied the technique of fantasy. As mentioned on the blurb of the novel:

The City and The River is a mixture of fantasy, prophecy and a startlingly real vision of everyday politics... that is truly a parable of the times. ⁵⁰

The City and The River follows the technique of fantasy which E.M. Forster treats to be one of the aspects of the novel. Forster gives an example of the description of fantasy through the definition from an essay on *Erwhen as a Book That Influenced Me*:

I like that idea of fantasy, of muddling up the actual and the impossible until the reader isn't sure which is which, and I have sometimes tried to do it when writing myself. ⁵¹

This technique of muddling up the actual and impossible is dominant one in Arun Joshi's *The City and The River*. To understand its mechanism it will be useful to quote in full Forester's cataloguing of the device:

which writers of a fantastic turn have used-such as the introduction of a god, ghost, angel, monkey, monster, midget, witch into ordinary life; or the introduction of ordinary men into no man's land, the future, the past, the interior of the earth, the fourth dimension, or diving's into and dividing of personality, or finally the device of parody or adaptation. ⁵²

The City and The River is a work of fantasy on the model of the above description. There are in it the descriptions of the supernatural that provides it with the atmosphere of make- believe. There is a deliberate mixture in *The City and The River* of the real and the imaginary. Arun Joshi takes his characters into no man's land, the past as well as the future. The device of parody or adaptations of life and literature are also definitely here in it. Arun Joshi also studies his characters in which he is concerned with the diving's into and diving of personality. In the life of the Professor even the stars have their say. One of his little disciples that materializes from the sky is called the Little Star who had once been called Patanjali. The Little Star quote that he is 'thousands of years old', the raft sailing on the river has also an element of fantasy. It has no oars and no boatmen but it sails on with the tune of music. Master Bhoma's disappearance is held up to be a mystery because- this man simply disappeared between his house and the first lock -up. This incident

generates lot of fuss. The truth was that Master Bhoma had simply walked away when the jeep carrying him struck against a pole.

There are several other fantastic references in *The City and The River*. It is said about the Police Commissioner that he had developed a machine for examining people's ears and determining the extent of contamination. This makes a travesty of draconian regulations which banned even the listening to criticism against the government. Bhoma's parable of weaving of the invisible clothing for the king and the king's putting it on in a special festival is also effective constituents of fantasy. Everyone sees that the Astrologer wove no fabric and that the king put on no robes, yet nobody except a child, dare comment that he king is naked. In this Arun Joshi makes a travesty of the Era of Ultimate Greatness which admits of no dissent. The scroll containing the city's horoscope has also muddling up of the actual and the impossible. There is much debate regarding the interpretation of the illogicality as mentioned:

A hundred years ago, as young students, the Astrologer and the Hermit had long debated this particular parallelogram. Their dispute had centered on a single line. Where the Hermit reads 'The river, I see, from a teacher rise'. The Astrologer maintained "A teacher, I see, from the river rise". They had disputed that line endlessly. One day the great Yogeshwara had said, ' cities, my children, even as men, make their own horoscopes'...⁵³

It is, thus, observed that there is consistent mode of fantasy from the beginning to the end of the novel. The merging of fact with fantasy and coalescing of time past, present and future into one mighty sweep transforms the sad, sorry tale of the novel to a level of politico- allegorical satire. As it is observed by Beniwal:

In *The City and The River* his canvas has widened and the crisis of individual has been replaced by socio-political and existential crisis of the “city” and by implication of the whole- humanity. In his novel Arun Joshi still raises his favourite questions about faith, commitment and identity. But these questions are now being analysed from the stand point of politics...⁵⁴

Apart from this there is the impact of Gandhian thoughts in the activities of the Great Yogeshwara, the Headman and the Bhumi Putra. The Hermit never incites anyone for a rebellion but tries to the last extent to persuade the Grand Master and his allies to learn by themselves. According to him, for the upliftment of the whole society every individual has to be purified. Once this is done, the endless repetition, the periodic disintegration will be prevented and a stable society will come in existence. All this meets the Gandhian vision to achieve *Ramrajya* by resistance and service.

The political scenario becomes both the backdrop and an active agent in the drama that unfolds as the novel progresses, making the question of authenticity acquire significance in the lives of both the people and the city. The authenticity of the self becomes the most important element which stresses the sanctity of the subjective individuality. The boatmen assiduously safeguard their authenticity as they mock the threats and dangers hurled on them by the Grand Master and his coterie. They openly refuse to kow-tow to the Astrologer and boldly defy him, refusing to take the oath of allegiance to the Grand Master. Of course, they have to pay a heavy price for their recalcitrance, and their resistance. Their Headman is the symbol and repository of strength, courage, honesty and commitment to freedom. In her hoary wisdom, she understands the phoniness of the Astrologer’s speech to the boatman. She challenges the intentions of the Grand Master that the welfare of the boatmen is merely a façade, hiding the fact of repression to be practiced on the poor. The boatmen follow the path shown by their Headman and defy the Triple way intended to fortify the position of the Grand Master.

Moreover, The Era of Ultimate Greatness turns into the Era of gloom and suppression for the boatmen. The Commissioner of Police swings into action at the instance of The Astrologer and the nightly activity of arresting the defiant boatmen, who had refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Grand Master, is launched. Every night a few boatmen vanish; they are transported to the Gold Mines, the dark, dingy, suffocating underground jail where a long detention causes a slow but steady decay of body and mind and where the idea of self is suitably dissolved. A representative case of the authenticity of the mud – people is the old man, Patanjali. He is arrested as a substitute of Master Bhoma because he is not available for arrest.

The rule of the New Era is, if the actual person evades arrest, then his immediate neighbour would be picked up. Patanjali's boldness is revealed when he is told by Dharma, the arresting police officer, that he has only to apologize and he would be set free. But Patanjali replies that he has done no wrong. Rather the Grand Master should apologize for making such absurd rules. The other boatmen follow in his footsteps. They are picked up by the police, incarcerated in the ghoulish Gold Mines, fired upon and killed, but they do not buckle under. The boatmen prove the authenticity of their selves. Their liberty flows from their resistance, and therefore they remain free in their incarnation.

Bhumiputra again is a mud – hut man who stands for all those who are opposed to the dictatorial, self – service regime of the Grand Master and his cohorts. He largely succeeds in enlightening the people about the tyrannical nature of the Grand Master's rule and rousing them to open revolt, though eventually he along with others is mowed down in an operation commanded by the King's Son. There are some brick – people, too, who are concerned about the authenticity of their slaves. The Professor persists in making enquiries, writing out representations and meeting the higher echelons of power to find out the whereabouts of Bhoma. When in spite of the warnings to

desist from doing so he continues with his search, he is consigned to the Gold Mines, where he languishes to death. In this way the boatmen and a few others choose to preserve the authenticity of their selves, but it is at the cost of their lives. However, there is a subtle infusion from affirmation and hope in the prophecy the Great Yogeshwara makes about the emergence of another city with another Grand Master and the Great Yogeshwara's sending his disciple, the Nameless-One to teach people to fight for their freedom and authenticity. The oppression goes on, but so does the fight against it.

After going through *The City and The River* by Arun Joshi, it is, thus, observed that the crisis of an individual has been replaced by the socio – political and existential crisis of the “city” and by implication of the whole humanity. Here the novelist raises his favorite questions about faith, commitment and identity. He also dexterously weaves a graphic and poignant tale of modern politics, thus raising the novel to a level of politics – allegorical satire. Tapan Kumar Ghosh rightly says:

Indeed as a re-affirmation of Indian and as an experiment of the parable as fictional mode to convey mythic truths and political satire, *The City and The River* is a remarkable tour de force in contemporary Indian English fiction.⁵⁵

The main event of the novel is structured around an all-too- obvious premise of power struggle and behind-the scene manipulations and intrigues on the part of the ruler in collaboration with his coterie to keep not only the ruled but also the secondary centers of power under his rule, and the consequent repercussions this policy has on the human being at large. The conflict develops here through a series of symbolic and ironic incidents– incidents that are chilling, repelling, bewildering and incredulous but always, thought provoking. The whole narrative is wrapped in an ambience where sophisticated scientific gadgetry co-exists with magical feats, where fact merges with fantasy and where the time present merges with the time past to

project its legacy ominously into the time future. Finally the whole thing is dissolved into a mighty deluge. But the cyclic march of humanity continues. A new city springs up on the ruins of the old. The river flows on and the seven Hills continue to rule. Nevertheless, the novel is a powerful and pungent comment on the political scenario that was, that has been and that shall be. This novel surely claims a pride of place among the political novels of the day.

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Chapter – 4

The Rise of Parochial Tendencies in *Storm in Chandigarh* by Nayantara Sahgal and The Brutality of Tyrannical Politics in *A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry.

The Rise of Parochial Tendencies in *Storm In Chandigarh* by Nayantara Sahgal

Nayantara Sahgal, the second of the three daughters of Mrs. Vijya Laxmi Pandit, this 'angel faced' niece of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, is a writer of very sharpened sensibilities, who has brought fiction to new dimensions which underline a rich heritage co-mingled with strong western impact. She is a prolific writer. She has to her credit eight novels, two biographies, two political commentaries and a large number of articles, contributions to various newspapers and magazines. She is a recipient of the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for her novel *Rich Like Us* and the Sinclair Award and the commonwealth Award for Eurasia for her novel *Plans for Departure*.

Nayantara Sahgal is perhaps the only Indo-English woman novelist who is also a political columnist. As a political columnist her newspaper articles are characterized by their topicality, simplicity and boldness. She makes a point of keeping in touch with the latest political controversies and her writings are often presented in the best tradition of western liberal journalism. As a novelist her contribution to Indo-English fiction lies in writing novels that mirror faithfully the contemporary Indian political scene. She seeks to present in each of her novels a consistent point of view, and moves from satire and irony to a positive constructive vision. Her's is indeed a post-Independence sensibility, born of the new challenges the Indian were faced with after gaining Independence.

Sahgal does not profess any specific political ideology nor does she propagate any definite political values, or reveal futuristic anti-utopias. She neither glorifies ancient India nor exhibits chauvinistic nationalism. Her novels portray and interpret contemporary political realities and explicate the somber mood and widespread disillusionment of the post-Independence generation. Unlike ideological novels, her works are endowed with greater artistic objectivity. Politics can be called her “primordial predilection”, the central point of whatever she writes. That is why almost all the major characters of her novels are drawn irresistibly to and deeply involved in the vortex of politics. Against this backdrop, she analyses and interprets various political events with an intelligent and perceptive mind and reads the individual responses of the characters to these events with the unusual sensitivity of a mature artist.

Nayantara Sahgal’s work ranges from factual and emotional autobiography to fictionalized autobiography. In her address to the colloquium at Radcliffe Institute she had this to say about the close link in her life and writings:

I grew up during the national movement. My parents went to jail repeatedly during our fight for freedom. My father died as a result of his last imprisonment released too late to be cured of the serious illness he contracted in jail. My uncle became our first Prime Minister. I was born and brought up within the atmosphere and hopes and ideals of the Congress party. Its leaders were familiar to me. Our home was their meeting place and many decisions momentous to India were taken in it. I became a novelist and a political journalist, and all my writings, fiction and non-fiction, has been about contemporary India.¹

The Storm in Chandigarh is one of the best political novels written by an Indian in English. It deals with the partition of East Punjab on linguistic lines just when the state had recovered from the trauma of the 1947 partition. The novel centers on the theme of forced linguistic bifurcation of Punjab twenty years after its first post independence communalistic partition. The

forced linguistic bifurcation of the communally truncated Punjab into two States-Punjab and Haryana with Chandigarh as their common capital rouses passions equal to the other greater partition at the time of independence. The story, though primarily belongs to the political part of the narrative, is vitally and unwittingly involved in the private lives of the characters also. Thus, it is rightly mentioned on blurb:

The novel is delicately juxtaposing the ordinary pain of individual existence with the larger anguish of the political turmoil of the region. Nayantara has created a book of great beauty.²

The novel shows us the clash between Gyan Singh, the powerful Chief Minister of Punjab and Harpal Singh, the Chief Minister of Haryana. Chandigarh, the joint capital of the Hindi speaking people of Haryana, and the Punjabi speaking people of Punjab, is the scene of action. Vishal Dubey is an intelligent administrative officer who has been assigned the task of bringing out an accord between the two warring factions and to restore peace and harmony among the people of Chandigarh.

The fight between Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh is a fight of ideologies. It is a fight between the cult of violence and the ideal of non-violence. Nayantara Sahgal brings out the evils of hypocrisy, pretence and snobbery existing at the human level. The novel affirms the endless possibilities in human life both at political as well as inter-personal level. The novelist's primary concern is the confrontation of human spirit in a changing cultural milieu. As Jain remarks:

Sahgal's work has a strong realistic base and reflects not only her personal values but also the changing values of the society exposed for the first time to both freedom and power.³

In *Storm in Chandigarh*, Vishal Dubey, the young intellectual Indian administrative officer, is the protagonist whose point of view remains fairly

constant throughout the novel. Gyan Singh, the Chief Minister of the Punjab and Harpal Singh, the Chief Minister of Haryana together with the Home Minister of Union Government in New Delhi act out their political roles. Prasad, Trivedi and Kachru complete the set of Civil servants, who fully represent the bureaucracy in the central Secretariat, both old and new. The most important and interesting characters are, however, neither the politicians nor the civil servants except Dubey but the well-to-do business magnates and their high living and thinking executives.

Mrs. Sahgal's point of departure in this novel is the dramatically forced linguistic bifurcation of the Punjab twenty years after its first communalistic partition in 1947. Her chosen artistic moment is the critical confrontation between Gyan Singh, the violent Chief Minister of the Punjab who has announced a General Strike in the whole region in order to demonstrate his political strength and Harpal Singh, the sedate Chief Minister of Haryana. The scene of action is Chandigarh, the joint capital of the Hindi speaking Haryana and the Punjabi speaking Punjab. The Union Home Minister, who modestly calls himself a "relic" of Gandhian past in modern Indian history, assigns the task of effecting a re-approachment between the two warring factions in the Punjab to Vishal Dubey, an honest and upcoming central officer, already with an established reputation of being a trouble-shooter.

The novel opens with the Union Home Minister's statement: "violence lies very close to the surface in the Punjab." Violence that was so common a feature on the national scene during the sixties, that becomes the central concern in *Storm in Chandigarh*. As mentioned:

Outbursts of brutal, calculated violence had become a feature of the cities. There were too many in the congestion and chaos who had nothing to lose by violence, too many others who sat inert and indifferent, their sap sucked dry, watching it mount and ebb like some great tidal wave, waiting for it to engulf them...Violence had become

routine and unexpected. It was given different names-indiscipline, unrest, disorder. It was dealt with each time and forgotten. ⁴

Mrs. Sahgal concentrates in this novel on the artistic value of violence in the context of political events as well as ordinary human relations. The confrontation between Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh is more significant than a mere clash of personalities. It is, more fundamentally, a conflict of ideas: the cult of violence and the creed of non-violence. Gyan Singh, who symbolizes the former, is a political murderer in league with the very devil of money and power. His moral turpitude and political rascality date back to the partition days of 1947 and continue to shrink and shadow his conscience even when he occupies the highest democratic office in the Punjab. As success is the measure of a man's political worth, he achieves it by hook or crook, though many of his opportunities have been rather fortuitous. An uneducated truck driver, to begin with, Gyan Singh has played successfully, if unscrupulously, the roles of a political campaign-manager, ironically enough, for Harpal himself on an earlier occasion, and of an industrialist; and now is the Chief Minister of the Punjab. Gyan Singh is a megalomaniac whose visions of grandeur and glory and supreme strength have to be realized only in a negative fashion. A call for a general strike is his characteristic way of demonstrating strength. As Dubey says:

What Gyan plans is a demonstration to show the strength of his demands. He'll call it off once he makes his point. It's a political trick, not a mass movement. ⁵

Due to the strike, how the uncertainties of general life consequent on political machination are depicted nicely by the novelist. As Saroj puts it succinctly:

Oh, I'm not worried about any great disaster. I'm afraid of *usual* things going wrong, like milk not being delivered and my tins and packets running short, and the iron not working and not being able to get it

repaired...It's when ordinary things go off the rails that life becomes unbelievable.⁶

In contrast, Harpal Singh has always counseled caution which continues to be his watchword in his career. A stout-hearted integrationist, he is the political counterfoil to Gyan Singh in all matters. He is easily altruistic where Gyan could be cynically egoistic. As he himself recalls, introspectively:

He could not remember a time when he had wanted power. What he had passionately wanted was recognition as a champion of the underdog. And he had earned that.⁷

The two Chief Ministers Vishal has to deal with are not only two persons diametrically opposite in their approaches, they are also two political forces on resorts to the methods of intimidation and suppression of the political opponents by sheer brutal force. The one stands for opportunist shrewd and diplomatic politician, whereas the other stands for justice, broader perspective and liberal outlook. Vishal evaluates the political situation as well as the principal characters. Sardar Gyan Singh, the Punjab Chief Minister, as Vishal discovers, is an unscrupulous opportunist who would let patriotism “go hang”, stint at nothing if it can advance his personal and political interests. He cuts on impressive figure at the conferences and is mentioned in the newspapers as “a living monument to the urban working class, a man who has risen from the ranks, yet remained one of the people in his dizzy rise to power. In an age that is conscious of the needs of the common man, Gyan is its most distinguished representative in the country.

Pitted against him is Harpal Singh, the Haryana Chief Minister – a sober, broad-minded gentleman with concrete and definite political aims, a true patriot whose loyalty to the nation is unquestionable. He protests against the split and believes that there is something sinister at the root of the partition-mentality and those who uphold it.

Sahgal, with a clever and imaginative use of the actual historical happening of the 1960s, leads the principal characters of the political sub-plot to a climatic point. India which had vowed to adhere to the Gandhian order of non-violence is portrayed as a country where confusion, disorder and chaos is wide-spread, where people have turned to be a furious, stone throwing, factory burning mob. By juxtaposing the situation in the country in 1947 and the one during the post-independence period, the novelist draws an appalling and bleak picture of the present where the politicians, with blinkers of self-centeredness on their eyes, have become oblivious of their responsibilities towards the country and its people. In 1947, ruminates Harpal Singh that there was still an Indian left to serve. Now there is no such vision left to bind us. The big vision has disintegrated. The conflict between Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh is thus not merely a political battle; it is a battle of philosophies.

In a generation in which leadership means strength, force and authority, people like Harpal are thrown in the shade every time. Gyan's threat for strike becomes a reality. In the evening the violent strikers make an attempt on Harpal's life. He is luckily saved, but badly injured. Ironically when he regains consciousness he learns about the Union Home Minister's death and is told that Gyan Singh has called off the strike "as a token of respect for the death of a patriot." ⁸

The "storm" on the political plane thus abates temporarily. Dubey feels an intense personal grief. To him the funeral of the old Minister—"the last surviving figure of the Gandhian era" symbolizes

...more than a state funeral. It would mark the end of an era unknown as Gandhian. In politics that had meant freedom from fear, the head held high, the indomitable Will in the emaciated body of India...If all of that had been worth anything...It will have been disbursed over this country, down deep into our blood. ⁹

Nayantara Sahgal firmly believes that the fate of the three patriarchal institutions, the family, the society and the state are interrelated because co-operation between the family and the larger society is essential, else both would fall apart. Sahgal in the novel chooses as said by Narendra:

An important juncture in history of India is a vantage point to juxtapose the past and the present in order to review the progress of contemporary generation.¹⁰

In *Storm in Chandigarh*, Chandigarh is very much symbolic of its practical approach to the problem of violence in all the three practical approaches to the problem of violence in all the three patriarchal institutions. Chandigarh, the city which was a helpless victim of the two partitions that took place within a period of two decades – the grueling partition of 1947 on the basis of religion and the cumbersome partition of the 1960's on the basis of language. Chandigarh, designed by Lei Corbaiser, ironically juxtaposes the puniness of the people and the grandeur of the architectural patterns thereby questioning how successful democracy is, superimposed on illiterate masses, exploding millions of them. It is a typical representative of the cities of the modern world where outbursts of brutal calculated violence have become a routine and expected. Thus, it is not only a symbol of terror and uprooting, but also a symbol of the journey of recovery.

According to Mrs. Sahgal violence is given different names-indiscipline, unrest and disorder. Like Gandhiji she also thinks that violence means “to cause pain or wish ill to or take the life of any living being out of anger or selfish intent.”¹¹

In *Storm in Chandigarh* even the first Home Minister of the Independent India, who is in-charge of the law and order situation of the country humbly considers himself as the student of the subject as he thinks that he has never had much experience of violence in his life. The Home Minister manages to understand that the quarrel between Punjab and

Haryana, just carved out of the former Punjab over issues like boundaries, water, electric power is merely superficial whereas the conflict between Gyan Singh, the power craving megalomaniac politician and Harpal Singh, the passive and the vacillating Chief Minister of Haryana, is the real problem to sort out. Mrs. Sahgal clearly points out that the first generation of leaders of the Independent India has failed the nation by allowing politicians like Gyan Singh to enter into the folds of Congress.

Mrs. Sahgal Describes the emergence of Gyan Singh as an invincible force in the national politics. During the partition of India in 1947, he simply utilizes the terror of the public by transporting them to the safety zones. Soon he finds out that politics would provide ample opportunities for him. As he knows that carnal savagery has an important role in the election campaigns, he terrorizes and exploits the public which is in panic. Finally he is successful in dividing Punjab into two states only to satisfy his ambition of becoming the Chief Minister of a State in spite of the opposition of the present Chief Minister of Punjab, Harpal Singh. Mrs. Sahgal clearly proves that the very narrowness of Gyan Singh gave his arguments a crude strength that no larger vision could ever have. According to her this is the violence of attitude which brooks no compromise and rejects all but one solution. Gyan Singh is an appropriate representative of those people.

Who have no feel for the periphery of a problem, for light and shade and the nuances in between that is the source of their energy, and in a queer way, their integrity? ¹²

Gyan Singh has no respect for the individual. He tries to encash the situation so he transforms satyagraha, the sacred weapon used by Gandhiji to fight against a tyrannical foreign rule, into a demonstration of strength and a showdown, Harpal Singh is forced to think that the only option left for him is to retire from the active politics. Vishal Dubey therefore truly realizes that the battle between Gyan Singh and Harpal Singh is a conflict between idealism

and pragmatism. He also thinks that the people have not progressed from the cave period as they are in total ignorance about what's happening to each other. As a result the people like Gyan Singh reach easily to acquire power.

Mrs. Sahgal has also focused on the society how it is divided into classes. The Indian constitution proclaimed that socialism is going to be upheld, the unequal distribution of wealth created a gulf between have's and have's-not. Inder, the mill owner thinks only about efficiency and productivity. But he cannot sympathies with the workers who protest against the canteen arrangements and become furious when they find out that they are fed pigs food, shipped from America. Jit, another industrialist also comments:

When the men are roused they don't just want a bonus or an adjustment of pay scales, they want your blood if they can have it...Why don't they get their terms straight? How can they expect a bonus unless the company makes a profit? But profit or no profit it's a bonus they want. The trade unions should dream up another name for their next demand. ¹³

Storm in Chandigarh deals basically with the problem of political tension and violence originating from its being: Chandigarh, the common capital of the two states – the Punjab and Haryana. Chandigarh, being a new city, has nothing to boast of its traditions. A new type of society has emerged in this town, and the people who have come to live in it have brought their beliefs, ideas and customs with them. This has enriched the culture of this town; this has also created a sort of confusion or cultural storm here. For instance, Indian people have adopted themselves to the domineering role of English language. It is the direct result of the British rule and is one of the most modern features of Indian society. But it has not completely eroded their love for native languages. It is this love that brought about the reorganization of the earlier Punjab into Punjabi–and Hindi–speaking states were also the result of traditional thinking of people like Gyan Singh who yearned to call his soil his own in the language of his fore-fathers. And it was again the traditional

outlook of the Indian leadership that delayed the formation of this new state and in the process impaired the already frail frame of national unity. One of the most traditional features of Indian society is that people can still be provoked to fight and finish one another on the question of religion and language.

Mrs. Sahgal also explores the value crisis on political and personal planes in the post-independence India in *Storm in Chandigarh*. Values are something that one lives by and every culture is endowed with eternal values, which it seeks to reestablish continuously. Whenever there is a threat-external or internal to these values, individuals as well as nations undertake a frantic search for values. The enormity of threat determines the intensity of search. As the novelist writes:

It is a search for value...the better value, the real value in any situation, and not just do what is done or what is expected.¹⁴

The novel also makes an attempt to explore the labyrinths of the post-colonial Indian psyche from the socio-political and personal levels of existence. As the novel presents that the colonialism is neither an impending threat nor a concrete presence in India, rather it is something of a haunting and distant memory that has affected all its characters in overt as well as covert ways. Colonial rule not only brought a change in the socio-politico-economic structure of the country but also in order to legitimize this change it propagated the superiority of human individual, Susie Tharu points out:

No aspect of life in our country has been unaffected by colonialism. It disrupted existing social and economic structures, undermined the political system, forcibly retarded growth and inevitably in the process divested traditional institutions and values of their function in society.¹⁵

In doing so the colonial rule also negated the existence of traditional values as Frantz Fanon points out:

Native society is not simply described as a society lacking in values...
The native is declared insensible to ethics: he represents not only the
absence of values but also the negation of values. ¹⁶

The novel studies the situation from the point of view of three different categories of people corresponding to three different attitudes. One of those who are in their greed for power carried forward the agenda for their imperial rulers. They proved even more dangerous for they appealed to the same passions and emotions that were active in the years of freedom struggle, and turned them against Gandhian principles and traditional values of integrity and harmony, thus subordinating principles to individual ambitions. In the novel, this is represented on political plane by Gyan Singh the Punjab Chief Minister, a ruthlessly unprincipled man though endowed with a strong and imposing personality and an impressive voice. The second group comprised of those who were opposed to this opportunist attitude, but comprehending its serious proportions preferred to stay passive, because to them also their political interests were no less dear. In the novel, this group includes Harpal Singh, the balanced Chief Minister of Haryana. The third category is of that elite class of Indian youth who in spite of their ability to analyze the ancient values in the light of changing times and their rational attitude failed to strike a balance between their ingrained convictions and the world around as they were few in number. This group is represented by Dubey.

Gyan Singh, the uncouth Chief Minister of Punjab in the novel, belongs to that category of national leaders who have in their lust for power merely stepped into the shoes of their imperial rulers, at times giving wind even to divisive tendencies to suit their purpose, thus subordinating principles to individual ambition. He is successful in reaching out to the masses, because he knows how to exploit their love for traditional values and their immediate passions for his own ends. He evokes feelings of Punjabi integrity because he wants power. He purchases property and hires it because he wants money.

He wields authority. Thus norms of morality and values have no meaning for him. His own ends are all he is concerned with.

A general attitude of irrational adoration and admiration is much to be blamed for this state of affairs as a consequence of which politicians like Gyan Singh succeed in exploiting masses. Gyan Singh uses history to weave an atmosphere. On the other hand, Harpal Singh, a more rational and upright individual fails because instead of evoking the past (as Gyan Singh does), he shows his people a vision of the future and “a juster but vaguer range of possibility could seldom hold out against the violent immediate claims supported by the obvious.”¹⁷ Thus, the society portrayed in the novel is a society caught between the two worlds- ‘one dead and the other powerless to be born.’

The values of any society are determined by the preferences of the people of that society and the need of the time. In the post-independence phase while the traditional Indian values did not fit the changed circumstances, the western values were not acceptable to masses. Tremor of discord between these opposing sets of value can be felt at all levels of existence in the novel. It has given birth to the violence of attitudes. It happens in the case of Punjab and Haryana where the attitude of people in refusing to understand the actual hues of the problem and reject all but one solution.

Moreover Chandigarh stands as a very important symbol. It embodied a dream of progress and perfection. But the ensuing storm signifying an erosion of those dreams proves that any attempt at imposition of order and balance from outside is a mere illusion and it is only a matter of time before the whole façade crumbles down. The Chandigarh architecture becomes synonymous with Indian democracy for Dubey:

That was architecture transplanted not conceived here and he wounded how successful democracy was superimposed on illiterate masses exploding millions of them. ¹⁸

The reason why India's freedom or marital alliance or Chandigarh architecture fail is that all these are attempts to combine the best of the west with the best of ours without any attempt at achieving the inner harmony of spirit. Thus Fanon theorizes:

If nationalism is not made explicit, if it is not enriched and deepened by a very rapid transformation into a consciousness of social and political needs, in other words into humanism, it leads up a blind alley..." ¹⁹

It's these blind alleys born out of deep discrepancies among mass passions, individual choices and socio-political needs that the novel attempts to capture.

Mrs. Sahgal has woven the political consciousness into the total fabric of the novel more skillfully. In this novel "storm" is directly related with the political situation of the bifurcation of the Punjab into Punjab and Haryana with Chandigarh as a common capital. Chandigarh itself becomes a symbol of an alien order. For men like Harpal Singh the starkly simple lines become symbolic of a terrifying angular coldness in the new order. A confusion and disorder hang over the Punjab as Gyan Singh attempts to introduce a new order in *Storm in Chandigarh*. Portraying the actual situation in 1960s of the separation of Punjab and Haryana, *Storm in Chandigarh* builds on another situation of post-independence chaos. India is strike ridden and the disorder of a non-violent movement now takes the turn of a stone-throwing, factory burning mob. Harpal Singh, the new Chief Minister of Haryana State, ex-Chief Minister of old Punjab State has seen a more gracious form of disorder. Gyan Singh now Chief Minister of new Punjab State, ex-Industries Minister of the old Punjab State causes chaos as he clamours first for a separate state, then for a separate language (Hindi for Haryana and Punjabi for the Punjab) and

for the acquisition of Chandigarh as the capital of the Punjab. In this process, the Gandhian value of non-violence is put to the acid test. Mrs. Sahgal here concentrates on the artistic value of violence in the context of political events. As A. V. Krishna Rao avers:

Nayantara Sahgal is perhaps one of our best socio-political novelists of to-day. She is authentic and vivid in rendering the contemporary Indian urban culture with all its inherent contradictions and imposed controversies.²⁰

In short, *Storm in Chandigarh* reveals the author's deep concern for the fast fading impact of Gandhism in political and social life. The novel is historical and not merely fictional – the culmination of the populist, parochial, obscurantist forces brought to a head by the government policy of the linguistic reorganization of the states of the Indian Union. The novel traces the growth of abrasive political culture percolating upwards from the states to the Centre. The novelist succeeds not only in rendering into fiction the political issues of the late sixties, but also in capturing the zeitgeist, the political mood and intrigues of the post-independence era. She succeeds eminently in exposing the politicians and bureaucrats on whom rests the onus of the transition from servitude to freedom but today they are divided not on principle or convictions, but by nauseating hypocrisies. The novelist also analyses and interprets variegated aspects of political life in depth and through her active involvement in politics she emphasizes the humanistic values she also upholds and the novel becomes a concern for the quality of life.

The Brutality of Tyrannical Politics in *A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry

Rohinton Mistry has emerged as a significant literary figure during the 20th century. He was born in India in 1952 and came to Canada from Mumbai in 1975. There he lived in Toronto and took employment in a bank in Toronto. As a literary figure, his four important works has gained him an immense significance. His first published collection of short-stories entitled *Tales From*

Firozsha Baag followed by his novels *Such A Long Journey*, *A Fine Balance* and *Family Matters*.

Rohinton Mistry has won many awards for his writings. His novel *A Fine Balance* received Giller Prize and in the following year Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book. It was also short listed for Booker Prize and Irish Times International Fiction Prize. As a writer who lives and writes from Canada, Mistry's writings focus mainly on India. Like many expatriate writers, he continues a relationship with his country in his writings and has enriched his readers' understanding of it. As a member of Parsi Community, Mistry writes about the state of Parsi Community within the boundary of India. To quote Dr. Jaydipsinh Dodiya:

One of the most remarkable features of Rohinton Mistry's fiction is that it brilliantly captures the crowded, throbbing life of India.²¹

For Mistry, like other Parsis, India is the adopted land for shelter because of the religious persecution of the community in Iran. India with its enormous varieties figures a lot in Mistry's fiction. Having lived in Canada since 1975, Mistry preserves the memory of his early days in India alive. In an interview with Veena Gokhale, he tells her how he has kept the memory of India alive and vivid enough to work in the minute details that his novels contain in abundance:

In general, I don't think there is much one can do to keep memory alive - memory lives and dies on its own. Memory is a strange thing : when assumed to be dead, it can surprise one by returning to life. I am speaking, of course, not of memory that is concerned with things like street, names, film songs etc. These things can be found in maps and books. I refer to those moments which, at the time of actual occurrence, may have seemed banal, but which, given the gift of remembrance, become moments of revelation. My novels as not 'researched' in the formal sense of the word. Newspapers, magazines, chats with visitors from India, chats with people on my infrequent visits

to India – these are the things I rely on. Having said that, “I will add that all these would be worthless without the two main ingredients; memory and imagination.”²²

Mistry prefers to write about India, which engages his imagination. Living in Canada and writing about India. Mistry is fully aware of several drawbacks of India’s social and political life, as is discernible in his novels.

A Fine Balance has been carved out artistically by Rohinton Mistry. The novelist has covered the most volatile and violent spectrum of the contemporary history, which shook the social – political stagnation of the country. Mistry’s own concept of India in the Emergency apparently seems to be larger than life size, a mixture of joy and woe, heaven and hell. The novel is remarkably intense and enigmatic in delineating its colourful characters like Shroff, Kahliah or the Tailors. The hidden desires of the underdogs and their long cherished aspiration for delightful life weave the centrality of the novel. The novel brilliantly presents a panoramic picture of the poor struggling for their ‘survival of the fittest’ in the metropolitan city where ‘a roof to cover the head’ is a dream.

The novel explores a troublesome decade beginning with 1975 and concluding with an epilogue in 1984. Rohinton Mistry has taken only those facts into account, which can be helpful in portraying the gloomy and glaring saga of the country during Emergency. As he said to Gokhale in an interview:

It seemed to me that 1975, the year of Emergency would be the next important year, if one was preparing a list of important dates in Indian history. And so it was 1975.²³

The subject of this novel is simply to describe: the horror and cruelty of sub-continental life, especially as lived by its poor and vulnerable. Thematically, the novel articulates the sagacity of the cultures which are very much suppressed. Simultaneously the novel deals with the life and longing of

the middle class which craves for honour and dignity. In addition to this, the age-old problem of caste and communalism, the brunt of which has been borne by the down trodden, has been duly focused. Mistry perceives India as "metropolitan, sophisticated, noisy and angry."

A Fine Balance opens with a chapter entitled 'Prologue 1975' and ends with 'Epilogue 1984'. Set in Indira Gandhi's India and written with compassion, humour and insight, it is a vivid, richly textured and powerful novel written by one of the most gifted writers of our time. The novel has sixteen chapters spanning the lives of three main characters over a period of ten years. Spatially spread over an unnamed coastal metropolis, a nearby village and a small city in the Hills, the novel gives grisly details of the infamous Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi and life in the slums of the metropolis including castration of Omprakash and death of the monkey man.

The fine balance of the title of the novel is struck by opening the book with the stoppage of the suburban train service because of suicide by an unidentified character and closing the book with a similar stoppage of train service due to a suicide by one of the main young aspiring characters whose dreams of India are shattered so badly that he decides to commit suicide. Moreover in the epilogue, the country's history too is seen to have travelled a full circle—from 1947 when a Muslim has to abandon his fez because sporting a fez in a Hindu neighborhood was as fatal as possessing a foreskin in a Muslim one to 1984 when a Sikh has to give up his turban, to cut his hair and shave off his beard to escape being massacred by the goons seeking revenge for the murder of Indira Gandhi. As T. Vijay Kumar notices: "*A Fine Balance* is a depressing novel set in a depressing period of Indian history."²⁴

The novel starts with Mistry telling the story through the cynical voice of the student Maneck, sent to study in Bombay staying as a paying guest at Dina Dalal, a Parsi widow. At the same time, the tailors Ishvar and Omprakash, seeking refuge in Bombay due to caste violence in their village,

get employment at the house of Dina Dalal. Thus these characters from different class back-grounds start inter-acting with each other and get inter-connected. The four main characters of this novel suffer from a sense of rootlessness. Oppressive caste violence has driven Ishvar and Omprakash from their traditional occupation to learn the skills of tailoring and from a rural background to overcrowded Bombay. Similarly Maneck moves from the invigorating atmosphere of his home in the hills to Bombay for higher education. Dina has grown up in Bombay but her sense of independence after her husband's accidental death keeps her away from her family. Social circumstances, loneliness and a sense of uprootedness bring them together and forge a bond of understanding to maintain 'a fine balance' in their lives. In this process, the author implies that at various levels of existence, there is a see-saw struggle between happiness and despair. Life never seems to follow a placid course in *A Fine Balance*.

There are always upheavals, whether at the slums where Ishvar and Omprakash reside in Bombay or problems of food and political disturbance at the residential block at Maneck's college, amongst the beggars in the streets or the emergence of competition which shatters Maneck's monopoly of the cola drinks in his hometown. However, in *A Fine Balance*, most upheavals take place because of the imposition of Internal Emergency. The evictions of the poor from the cities, the forced labour camps, the sterilizations are the manifestations of the Internal Emergency. The novelist also shows a nexus that emerges between the police and the established hierarchy either the upper dominance in the villages or the land/building mafia in Bombay.

Mistry also tactfully portrays the victimization of four major characters – Dina Dalal, Ishvar, Omprakash and Maneck Kohlah, at the time of Emergency. Ishvar asks Dinabai:

What is this Emergency we hear about? Government problems – games played by people in power. It doesn't affect ordinary people like us" –replied Dinabai. ²⁵

They all believe that the oft heard word Emergency is a sort of game played by the power centre and it would not really affect the ordinary people like them. Hence each in his way tries to connect the pervading discomfort and insecurity to their problems of the here and now. Thus, Emergency, a defense of an insecure leader, disturbs the coherence of routine life of the average people. As B. Indira observes:

All of them are aware of something stifling their lives though they cannot link it to the existing political scenario of the country. Their struggle for survival, as far as they are concerned, doesn't have a political angle to it. Very soon when their simplest dreams get thwarted they are forced into realizing the mayhem created by Emergency. ²⁶

With the depiction of Emergency, Mistry makes some revealing political insights. The transition in rural life, the change in aspirations of the lower castes, the attempts by the upper castes to preserve the old order is aptly delineated which is mentioned through a major instance in the violence perpetuated by Thakar Dharamsi and his henchmen against Narayan's family during the week of parliamentary elections. During the election Narayan tries to assert his democratic right and cast his own vote. For his defiance, Narayan and the other two "Chamars" are forcibly gagged, flogged and tortured and they were hanged in the village square. Then the 'Goondas' of Thakur burnt the family of Dukhi (Narayan and Ishvar's father), Roopa, Radha and the daughters. Here Mistry implies that the needless arrogance of the upper castes in trying to maintain social supremacy led to the consolidation and emergence of the Dalit consciousness in Indian politics. As Novy Kapadiya writes:

The social tensions in the villages, the changing aspirations of the lower castes and caste based violence, is so well delineated, so well woven into the flow of the narrative that it makes Rohinton Mistry a very astute political novelist.²⁷

A Fine Balance is anchored in the post-independent India and more specifically in the days of Indira Gandhi's rule with Dina Dayal and other characters, who suffers a lot because of political disturbances around them. Most of the events in the novel revolve around a predicament of a layman. K. Ratna Shiela Mani observes:

Mistry narrates the story in a masterly fashion and the reader is shuffled between various time phases that mark each major historical upheaval. He highlights crucial events in the country's chronicle by depicting the background of each of the major characters. Ishvar and his nephew Om are from the village; Maneck is from a hill station in the north, while Dina lives in the metropolis. The lives of the tailor's forefathers reflect the tyranny of the caste system in rural India where unimaginable horrors are perpetrated on the lower castes. Oppressive caste violence has driven Om Prakash and Ishvar from their traditional occupation of working with leather to learn the skills of tailoring in the town. However, dwindling avenues of work in the town bring them to the metropolis. Maneck comes to the city for higher education. In Maneck's background also lies the pathetic story of India's partition. Dina's story is one of struggle-struggle to safeguard her fragile independence from her autocratic brother Nussawan; and protect her flat from her rapacious landlord. Her story is symbolic of the rebellion of the young women against their subjection. Each member of this quartet aspires in changing society to transcend the constraints of birth, caste, sex in a modern, urban world where anything seems possible.²⁸

The ending of the novel is startling and unconventional. Maneck, the brooding Parsi young man is upset at the alienation from his family. His sorrows increase, when he visits Mumbai and finds that Dina has been evicted from her house, has lost her struggle for independence and now stays

with her brother. Walking away from Dina's house, he is further perturbed at seeing Ishvar and Omprakash handicapped and working as beggars. The culmination of these series of staggering events is that it drives him to extreme despair and he commits suicide by throwing himself in front of a train. Here Mistry intends to show how a member of the privileged middle class, the sensitive Maneck, lost out in the struggle to maintain 'a fine balance between hope and despair.'

Rohinton Mistry does put the Emergency (1975-77) in his fine balance and tries objectively to weigh it through a variety of weights and counterweights. Mistry's deft handling of Internal Emergency provides a vivid and graphic picture of the turbulent times when most of the parliamentary opposition, along with thousands of trade unionists, students, and social workers were put behind the bars to enable Indira Gandhi to retain power.

The beginning of this most horrifying and shameful period in modern Indian history in the novel is so sudden that the characters cannot quite comprehend what it really means. Some of them think that it is merely a "government tamasha". Initially some of the people, especially those living in comfort, were happy at the improvement in punctuality, the instilling of a sense of discipline in the nation through measures like checking of ticketless travelling, improvement in industrial relations due to fear of the police, etc. Nuswan Dalal thinks that all these measures are necessary, for "to make a democratic omelet you have to break a few democratic eggs".²⁹ To which Manek Kohlah thinks out a reply, "A democratic omelette is not possible from eggs bearing democratic labels but laid by the tyrannical hen".³⁰

The managing director of a multinational, as reported by Nuswan, has gone to the extent of suggesting the elimination of at least two hundred million people by giving them a free meal containing arsenic or cyanide. Mrs. Gupta, a rich lady enjoying every comfort of life thinks that "The Emergency is a good medicine for the nation".³¹ The views of the rich are believed by the actual

sufferings of the masses symbolized in the preparation of 'shish kebab' with chunks of lamb and liver on the brazier placed over the burning coals.

How they glowed, thought Maneck – live creatures breathing and pulsating. Starting small, with modest heat, then growing to powerful red incandescence, spitting and snapping their tongues of flame cracking, all heat and passion, transforming, threatening, devouring³²

During Emergency, the government implemented MISA that enabled the government to take any one into police custody. As a result all those opposed to the power- that – be were put into jails. For instance, Nawaz, a tailor, is arrested by the police on the pretext of smuggling gold from the Gulf. In fact the poor tailor has only asked the influential customer for his payment. The answer from the stall owner is revealing:

With the Emergency, everything is upside – down. Black can be made white, day turned into night. With the right influence and little cash, sending people to jail is very easy. There's even a new law called MISA to simplify the whole procedure³³

It is a graphic picture of a mass revolution beginning, reaching its climax and lastly being completely suppressed. This is what could have happened during the Emergency. But it did not happen, at least not to that extent. The cancer of corruption and criminalization of politics, which had already been eating into the vitals of the nation, flares up in the Emergency and spreads its tentacles far and wide, often with a nod of official approval. The roots of the Emergency lay in the effort to subvert the law and to retain power through wrong and illegal means. Avinash, a student leader, remarks:

Under the pretext of Emergency, fundamental rights have been suspended, most of the opposition is under arrest, and union leaders are in jail.... But the worst thing is, the press is being censored.³⁴

The hoardings of Indira Gandhi and the painting of Government slogans are just the outer trappings which cannot deceive people. A campaign

with a euphemistic name, 'City Beautification Scheme', actually results in the bulldozing of the slums and forcing the roofless poor to pass their rights on pavements or railway platforms, carrying, like Ishvar and Om their things in boxes or bundles every day to their places of work. When a party worker tells this to men and women, the reaction is interesting:

The Prime Minister's message is that she is your servant, and wants to help you; she wants to hear things from your own lips. "If she is our servant, tell her to come here!" someone shouted.³⁵

But in spite of their protests the people are forced, wherever necessary with caning and slapping, to board the buses taking them to a Rally where they get very meager payment, practically starve for the whole day and also lose their day's earning in the bargain. Such incidents, which are by no means isolated, create a sense of disillusionment and disaffection among the masses. This is really forced labour for which practically no payment is made on the contrary they were compelled to listen pseudo talk justifying the need of Emergency by Indira Gandhi:

There is nothing to worry about just because the Emergency is declared. It is necessary measure to fight the forces of evil. It will make things better for ordinary people. Only the crooks, the smugglers, the black marketers need to worry for we will soon put them behind bars. And we will succeed in this despite the despicable conspiracy which has been brewing since I began introducing programmes of benefit for the common man and woman. There is a foreign hand involved against us, the hand of enemies who would not wish to see us prosper.³⁶

The text also brings in the problems of overpopulation and Mrs. Gandhi's son Sanjay's ingenious solution to it-vasectomies all the men in the crucial age-group and all will be fine. Mistry goes on to show how this vasectomy drive intensified during the Emergency imposed by Mrs. Gandhi and proved to be the undoing of the tailors. It is seen through certain camps to

which the people are taken by force, where family planning operation could be held under the guise of free medical check-ups. In such camps bachelors or even people about to be married are operated upon, sometimes even castrated at the instance of powerful people. The Family Planning Programme is used to eliminate the enemies of the establishment. It is clear from the way Om is first sterilized and then called again at the behest of Dharamsi, only to be castrated under the pretext of a free operation to save his life, which is not only pathetic but inhuman and unbecoming of a doctor as Om is a bachelor and his marriage is about to be solemnized. His uncle Ishvar's entreaties to the authorities to spare Om remain unheeded. As a result, both Ishvar and Om become cripples and turn to begging only to fall into the nightmare anonymity of the city "a world of sudden police swoops, forced labour, goonda gangs, protection money, and casual street murclers." ³⁷

The Hospitals follow standing orders to put down the cause of any death during Emergency as accidental. As such, Ashraf Chacha's death at the market square by severe beating at the hands of the police is described as accidental. The new rules of Emergency make it obligatory for every officer to encourage people to get sterilized to complete his quota otherwise there will be no promotion. Thus Family Planning Programme is pressed into service to eliminate one's enemies by confusing sterilization with castration.

Mistry makes a serious note of the gap between the passing and application of laws. The speeches made during the parliamentary elections are crammed with promises of every shape and size:

promises of new schools, clean water and health care; promises of land for landless peasants, through redistribution and stricter enforcement of the Land Ceiling Act; Promises of powerful laws to punish any discrimination against, and harassment of, backward castes by upper castes; promises to abolish bonded labour, child labour, sati, dowry system, child marriage. ³⁸

However, these hollow promises turned out to be nothing but campaigning antics assuring lively entertainment for the villagers.

Elections here are master-minded by the landlords like Thakur Dharamsi. Narayan's attempt at voting to make his mark himself results in the ruin of his family by being burnt alive by the goondas of Thakur. The police find 'nothing' to support charges of arson and murder. So no F.I.R. can be registered. In fact the police is at the Mercy of 'dakoos' like Dharamsi. Voters are bribed to ensure victory in the elections. One learns about a candidate who loses the elections in spite of giving away 5000 shirts and dhotis to the voters as these were not of a standard quality.

Despite new laws regarding untouchability passed by the government, nothing has changed. Exploitation of the low-castes by upper-castes continues unabated. The refusal of low-castes Buddu's wife to go to the field with the zamindar's son, results in the shaving of her head and being paraded naked through the square. Again the way Roopa, Dukhi's wife, is raped by the watchman of the orchard. Untouchability is deeply rooted in the village community. It is still a society of four varnas. They can't mix otherwise, there would be chaos. As one of the villagers puts it:

Government passes new laws, says no more untouchability, yet everything is the same. The upper-caste bastards still treat us worse than animals.³⁹

Ishvar and Narayan receive terrible beating from the teacher for defiling the tool of learning and knowledge. It is a forbidden world for the low-caste. Dukhi's complaint to Pandit Lalluram is futile. However Dukhi's defiance of the caste system by sending his little sons Ishvar and Narayan to Ashraf is a welcome step in the right direction. It is significant to note that only Ashraf, Muslim tailor in town, sews clothes for Dukhi as no Hindu tailor would sew for an untouchable. The suggestion is that the curse of untouchability is deeply ingrained in the Hindu psyche. Even the Parsi widow, Dina Dalal, is capable

of feeling for untouchables by giving shelter to Ishvar and Om, the two chammars. People like Lalluram have to come out of their shells of hypocrisy if the line between the touchables and the untouchables has to be really erased. Otherwise, it will be difficult, not impossible, to realize the dream of Mahatma Gandhi, which is possible only by breaking the timeless chain of caste.

Apart from these, the lives of all major characters of the novel are blighted by the Emergency. It leaves Maneck Kohlah crushed under the train. Dina Dalal a prematurely old and purblind, slaves her years out in the house of her brother. And the two poor tailors struggling only for a livelihood are utterly-crushed-Ishvar and Om converted as beggars on the streets for small charities, till death comes mercifully to release them from this burden called life. Avinash is also one of the victims of the Emergency Rule. His parents are not rich enough to offer dowry to his three unmarried sisters who are ultimately forced to commit suicide. Mistry has created Vasantryao Valmiki's character to explain the significance of the title *A Fine Balance*. His words in the novel are quite meaningful revealing the trauma of Emergency as well:

There is always hope-hope enough to balance our despair. Or we would be lost. After all, our lives are but a sequence of accidents a clanking chain of chance events. A string of choices, casual or deliberate, which add up to that one big calamity we call life.⁴⁰

Thakur Dharamsi is a political character in the novel. He is a symbol of tyranny, exploitation and injustice. People like him flourished a lot at the time of the Emergency. Ratna Shiela Mami says:

The upper caste leaders connive with the bureaucracy to preserve their interests during the Emergency. Thakur Dharamsi achieves respectability as a political leader because he organizes many sterilization camps. His cruel misuse of power indicates the beginning of the trend of criminalization of politics and politicization of crime.⁴¹

It is also depicted that during Emergency, the Indian politicians had tried to surpass one another to meet with Mrs. Indira Gandhi's approval and some had declared that 'India was Indira and Indira was India' and even some 'intellectuals' were not laggards in this game. India's modern painter, M.F. Hussain had painted a series of pictures where he had imagined Mrs. Gandhi as the Hindu goddess, Durga, riding her mount a tiger. This was a rational exercise rather political strategy to impose upon the people that Emergency is the only step to put into practice by the government for the betterment of people only.

Mistry also deals with the trauma of the millions of Mumbai's unhomed and homeless citizens, whose plight has not changed dramatically for the better since the dark days of the Emergency. The tailors have to sleep rough on the streets, carrying their belongings in a trunk, until Dina finally relents and lets them keep it in her flat. She however, refuses to let the tailors live in her flat for fear of her landlord and her own class and ethnic prejudices. As a result the tailors are rounded up with other homeless people and dragged off to the beggar's camp. Most of the events in the novel revolve around a predicament of a layman. K. Ratna Shiela Mani says:

Mistry highlights crucial events in the country's chronicle by depicting the background of each of the major characters. The lives of the tailor's forefathers reflect the tyranny of the caste system in rural India where unimaginable horrors are perpetrated on lower caste... In Maneck's background also lies the pathetic story of India's partition. Dina's story is one of the struggles to safeguard her fragile independence from her autocratic brother Nussawan; and protect her flat from her rapacious landlord...⁴²

The author appears to have overloaded one pan of his balance with despair, but there is much in the other pan also which is of great value. The Emergency is not an isolated case of tyrannous rule in India. Events like J.P.'s Civil Disobedience movement of 1975 have also been referred to in the novel.

Dina Dalal's reminiscences go back into history recalling a long chain of events. She does not remember the Quit India movement of 1942 because she was too young, but the horrors of partitions she does remember, and the novelist implies that the Emergency horrors were no match to them. At the personal level too, the murder of Avinash during the Emergency is matched by the suicide of his three sisters for their father had no money for their dowry. The novelist drives home the point that in individual life the lifting of the Emergency has made little difference:

Of course, for ordinary people nothing has changed. Government still keeps breaking poor people's homes and jhopadpattis... Living each day is to face one emergency or another.⁴³

Apart from the Emergency, the Anti-Sikh Riots in Delhi after the assassination of Indira Gandhi too which killed thousands of innocent people outbalance the Emergency. The assassination of Prime Minister worsens the situation. A taxi driver advises Maneck to shave off his beard. Homicide and arson paralyzed the city-life. The taxi-driver believes that the Prime Minister deserves her fate: "She gave her blessings to the guns and bombs, and then these wicked, violent instruments began hitting her own government..."⁴⁴

It is also noted that the upper class people are fascinated by the Emergency. For them it is a magic word, capable of curing all diseases and decay. The students were euphoric too for a different reason. They felt that by following Jaya Prakash Narayan, they would bring in a change which would invigorate all society, transform it from a corrupt, moribund creature into a healthy organism. Savita Goel Rightly remarks:

A Fine Balance, set in Indira Gandhi's India and more specifically during the time of emergency is a stark and moving portrait of life during this period. It reflects the reality of India- the predatory politics of corruption, tyranny, exploitation, violence and blood-shed.⁴⁵

The novel carries sub-plots which are also directly or indirectly related to the Emergency. In the story of Beggar master, the chief of beggars and Shankar's brother who is a very influential person who protects Dina Dalal when her landlord plans the strategy for eviction. Beggar master is murdered. Another sub-plot *that A Fine Balance* contains is based on story of Rajaram, the hair collector, who happens to be the neighbor of Ishvar and Omprakash. He cannot earn enough money by way of sale of hair. He goes to the event of killing. He becomes a motivator for family planning, which destroy the lives of many innocent people. At last he renounces the world and becomes Bal Baba—a sanyasi.

A Fine Balance is a microcosm of life in general and political disturbances, which Mistry keenly perceived around him when he was in India. He portrays the bleak realities and horrifying implications of the anarchy and exploitation that could go on in the name of discipline, beautification and progress in a democratic country. The harshness of Emergency on Indian Political arena is observed with a quotation, from Balzac's *Le Pere Goriot* in the begging of the novel:

Holding this book in your hand sinking back in your soft arm chair, you will say to yourself; perhaps it will amuse me. And after you have read this story of great misfortunes. You will no doubt dine well blaming the author for your own insensitivity, accusing him of wild exaggeration and flights of fancy. But rest assured: this tragedy is not fiction. All is true.⁴⁶

While going through the politically most sensitive aspect of the novel i.e. Emergency, it can be said that *A Fine Balance* weaves together a tale of the 1970s India and the midst of a state of Emergency through the lives of its four characters. The Emergency intrudes obtrusively into the lives of all of these characters leading to their eventual loss and destruction. The overall scenario is grim. *A Fine Balance* thus, reveals the dark period of Emergency (June 25, 1975 – March 21, 1977) which remains a blot on the history of post

– Independence India. It also throws light on the dirty political game played by the so called bigwig politicians during the Emergency that made common man insecure and unsafe.

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Chapter – 5

CONCLUSION

Fiction is complex term with many overlapping uses. Although often used synonymously with novel, it is a more generic and inclusive term. Novel has a narrower historical and ideological content than fiction – novels did not exist in Greek or Roman culture, but works of fiction in prose did. Equally, allegories in prose are works of fiction, but not novels. ‘Novel’ is thus a genre term, while ‘fiction’ is a generic term. ‘Fiction’ can more easily designate hybrid forms than ‘novel’; it can include artistic intentions and formal characteristics in prose works which indicate either simple unawareness of novels or a deliberate questioning of the assumptions of the novel-genre. Thus, by virtue of this high level of generality, ‘fiction’ can be opposed to ‘novel’ by both writers and critics alike. Fiction thus becomes a kind of umbrella, sheltering many different kinds of mental activity and cultural institution.

Fiction is thus the expression of the most intimate social consciousness in which it is born and evolves. As a creative process, fiction registers the creative evolution of the society itself. Thus, the evolution of fiction and the evolution of the consciousness of the societal apparatus are simultaneous and intermeshed. Indo-Anglian novel, right since its beginning, has had inextricable bonds with the socio-political milieu where in it took birth and has been written since. The emerging national political consciousness in India which was slowly permeating to the grass-roots has been faithfully mirrored in Indo-Anglian fiction.

It is true that our political background goes back only to the coming of Moguls in India followed by the British. The Mogul period somehow has failed to fascinate the Indian novelist in English. Or maybe it is too remote to turn its history into a novel of political conflict. The British period however shows clear

sign of a regeneration of political consciousness in the Indian Novelists in English. Coming to the Indian context, it is observed that politics as a discipline and political consciousness as a component of the mental makeup of the people is of quite recent origin. Historically, the Indian has lived in a state of political indifference for thousands of years. Right since the earliest times a vast majority of the people- not merely the peasantry but also the traders and professionals – lived and moved within their set grooves thoroughly immunized from politics. The affairs of state were entrusted exclusively to the *Kshatriyas* under the *Varnshram* distribution, and they *the Kshatriyas*, in tactic alliance with the Brahmins, kept the other strata in a virtual state of depoliticization.

In the specific context of a country like India, subjected for thousands of years, either by aliens or by indigenous over bearing authoritarians, political consciousness primarily becomes an acute concern with people. It borders on the individual intellectual involvement with political questions like who governs, what the governance is like and how it affects the individual in his day-to-day living. In the pre-independence times, this consciousness manifested itself as national consciousness. Even after the attainment of freedom, discerning observers of contemporary reality did not cease probing the political process to determine the role of the individual therein, even though with the obvious change in rulers, the thrust of such question had undergone a corresponding change.

M. K. Naik rightly goes to the extent of saying that the real Indian fiction in English started only with the upsurge of nationalism and revolt against the foreign rule around 1930. The movement took two directions-one naturally violent and another ideologically non-violent.

The course of political events also follows a twofold division – events leading to the freedom of India and events in post independence India. The pre-independence era has produced a novel that traces the overweening

influence of Gandhi on Indian political scene- to the extent of drowning the politically violent terrorists and ideologically violent communists.

Rabindra Nath Tagore asserts that political consciousness in India got wrought as nationalism under the direct impact of and as a reaction to the English rule. The English contributed in another way too. Western education through the medium of the English language exposed the Indians to English constitutions, the British institutions, the idea of freedom and other liberal political ideologies. This gave them new ambitions against the colonial experience by defining their vague aspirations into a proper shape and direction. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal were the pioneer to function in defining the political consciousness. At the same time the religious culture was increasingly evoked to legitimize national aspirations, political in character. Swami Dayananda advocated *Swarajya* and preferred freedom to the most benevolent foreign rule. Later on Hinduism was felt as an essential pre-condition for the growth of national political consciousness. As a result socio-religious crusades like Brahma Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and Arya Samaj sought to revitalize Hinduism.

The second half of the 19th century witnessed the flowering of national political consciousness and the foundation and growth of an organized national movement. With the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885, the Indian struggle for freedom was formally launched. Simultaneously, the programme of the political awakening of the masses was taken in hand in an organized way. The idea of *Swadeshi* was used by leaders like Tilak as a weapon of political agitation against imperialism and as a means to arouse and involve the people politically for the attainment of *Swaraj*. Meanwhile the ill-advised plan of partitioning Bengal (1905) gave the leaders an issue to rally the people together. The same feeling can be seen in the *Khilafat* movement (1919-20).

To recapitulate in brief the growth of political consciousness in India, there were discerned three stages, neatly marked out. Perceiving the British Raj as their *mai bap*, early Indians sought to attain political adulthood under the benign guidance of their colonial masters. This was the first phase. Then, as the awareness of the wide gulf between expectation and reality sank in and widespread disenchantment followed. Therefore, the second phase was a reaction to the first and heralded a revival of traditional values to counterbalance the shame of subjugation. The awareness of subjugation and faith in regenerated tradition was followed by a demand for greater political participation. This was the third phase.

Apart from these, the immediate post-Independence phase saw a soaring of hopes despite the pricks of prohibition, obscurantism and socialism felt in some quarters. The era of planned development was heralded and the first two plans were quite successful. However, as *realpolitik* replaced abstract, airy utopias, there grew a general dis-enchantment with politics and politicians. Demands for linguistic states led to riots in different areas. The failure of the Government to contain Chinese expansionism in 1962 made the whole nation pause and ponder over matters of national policy and security. With the death of Jawahar Lal Nehru, the affairs of the Congress became turbulent. The Congress split in 1969. The fast deteriorating economic position after a protracted war with Pakistan and the burden of the upkeep of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Bangladesh made the people wake up. To counter uprising, the government's reaction was to proclaim a national emergency and incarcerate all the leaders of the opposition. However far from being suppressed, the activated political consciousness of the people made them continue their struggle for the shaping of a system wherein they could realize themselves and it was this spirit which saw them through the interregnum.

It shows that the attainment of independence in 1947 ushered a new era of fresh challenges and added responsibilities. During the first twenty-five years of independence the nation was confronted with such burning problems and traumatic experiences as to put its inner strength, its talent, and its resilience to a fire test. The first traumatic experience, at the political level of the newly born republic was that of partition. Along with this, there was also the problem of more than five hundred princely states, which had become technically independent with the lapse of British paramountcy. The political map of the country was further re-drawn with the creation of linguistic states in 1956. Not less than three brief but eventful wars were fought during this period, such as the encounter with China in 1962 and the wars with Pakistan in 1965 and 1971. With the death of Jawahar Lal Nehru in 1964 an age appeared to have ended.

Apart from these, other events in the political history of the nation, election of Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister, bifurcation of the congress in 1969, imposition of the Emergency in 1975, defeat again in 1989 – have revealed both the strength and weakness of Indian democracy. All these events have been successfully projected in the Indian English fiction of the post-independence period. More recently Indian novelists in English have grown conscious of the problems, arising out of the working of political democracy in developing country like India. They have attempted to give a very realistic depiction of the rivalries and clashes among the new breed of politicians who wield power and use their political position unscrupulously for their own private vested interests. Their novels portray the continuing corruption, inefficiency, poverty and cumulative misery of the public under the popular Government.

Each great writer in his own way has shaped significant political and national events in some artistic pattern. With the newly achieved freedom of expression, these novelists have expressed in their novels their suppressed

fury and forceful reaction at the political upheavals of the country. It is quite explicit that political events and issues of over a hundred year period are reflected in various ways, both direct and indirect in literature.

It has now been clear that political events and issues of over a hundred year period are reflected in various ways, both direct and indirect in literature. The partition of India has been one of the most terrific and traumatic experiences of our recent history. In the history of India, the partition does not only mean the operation of a vast subcontinent but also a catastrophe for millions of people, the effect of which have not died out yet as is suggested by recent events. This political partition of India disturbed the Indian psyche and also its social fabric. It brought to an abrupt end a long and communally shared history. It caused one of the great human convulsions of history. It made the social sense of our nation course, generated a sense of vengeance and distorted the political judgments. Worse of all, it deranged the understanding of the moral rightness of the people. The bloodiest holocaust like of which had never been witnessed rudely shocked the conscience of the civilized people all the world over and made them shudder with dismay at man's cruelty to man in the name of religion. This crisis also caused an unprecedented questioning of identity and it affected directly at the political consciousness of the country.

Partition was and has remained a decisive event in India's social and political life, the reasons being its volume and scope with regard to India. Khushwant Singh in *Train in Pakistan* has picked up the event of the partition. He explores the impact of it on a small village of Mano Majra. The village allegorically stands for India. The multiple responses of people reveal the responses of people in general. He tries to expose the true Indian response. He does so by juxtaposing the people, their views and also their actions. He tries to present the Indian, Punjabi, Sikh ethos and identity. He convincingly presents true Indian response to the event through this novel.

Train to Pakistan juxtaposes the plight of Mano Majra before the summer of 1947 with their plight after the partition. Mano Majra is the setting for almost all the incidents of the novel. The novel covers the time-span of a few months. During this period, the people of the whole village pass from the state of happiness and steadiness to that of bitterness, disturbance, insecurity and uncertainty.

The plot is realistic as it deals with the historical event of partition. Before the partition, the life in Mano Majra is described to be very peaceful, harmonious and unaffected by the political events of the country. The villagers represent the true spirit of India. The peaceful life of the village is disturbed when the communal virus infects the people. The train coming from Pakistan brings the dead bodies of Hindus and Sikhs and thereby generates them, terror, chaos and disorder. In turn, how should a train to Pakistan go? Should it not be sent with the dead bodies of the Muslims of Mano Majra? Though it is intended to be so by many, the self-sacrificing love of Jugga breaks the rule of the jungle, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." On this battleground of Mano Majra, the forces of evil are vanquished by one of the forces of good that is love.

The train in novel implies the harrowing process of the change, the awful and ghostly experience of human beings involved in a historical impersonal and almost dehumanized process. The scene of the train from Pakistan, which brings in countless corpses to Mano Majra is awful and heart-rending. The dehumanization of life is demonstrated in the cold, massive mechanical burial by a heavy bulldozer. The most pathetic and impressive is the last scene of kindness and sacrifice of Juggat, a thief and murderer, who realizes the fury of Sikh fanatics and save Muslims leaving Mano Majra by preventing Sikh fanatics from ambushing the train carrying Muslim refugees to Pakistan.

Of course, the novel sets the tone of forthcoming doom. The naked dance of death moves forward unabatedly. The puny politicians failed to gauge the devastating impact of horror and holocaust on the minds and lives of millions of citizens. The massacre was carried out unabatedly on both the sides of the border. The death lurks all around. Humanity wilted away, the hearts and minds of people were filled with panic, unheard, and unknown before. The country, which won her freedom from the shackles of mighty British rulers through non-violence, could not contain within humanistic tradition. No rationality or humanity could wean away the violent frenzied mobs to control their irrational behavior.

Thus, *Train to Pakistan* is the story everyone wants to forget, yet one cannot overlook this stark reality of our past. When the nation was on the threshold of new dawn, it also faced unprecedented destruction, bloodshed and trauma. However, the novelist does not focus on the political realities and the predicament of the victims of the partition in the form of loot, arson, rape, abduction, mutations, murders and displacement. Rather, he chooses to narrate the disturbing and agonizing impact that this event has on those who have not been the direct victim of the partition and yet been affected deep at the psychological and social levels. Partition comes to divide the people of the some community leading to tension amongst them. Moreover, the author reveals the awakening of the conscience of a few like Jugga who had been otherwise ill-reputed. Though the author avoids focusing on the very event and its leading to the worst ever holocaust in the recent history, he does not fail in making the readers experience the horrors of the partition and its ugly face. He does so because he being a Punjabi Sikh, suffered from the division of his homeland. Thus, his treatment of the sufferings of people affected by the partition is authentic and realistic and even today it is displayed in the communal disharmony frequently occurring between the Hindu and the Muslim communities. This is certainly a great hindrance towards shaping the healthy political consciousness of our country.

India was formerly declared a Sovereign Democratic Republic on 26th January, 1950 with the formation and implementation of its constitution. The newly acquired sovereignty was put to severe tests and threats in the first three decades. Soon after Independence, the country was confronted with many external and internal problems which seriously challenged its existence, supremacy, sovereignty and integrity. *Shadow from Ladakh* by Bhabani Bhattacharya is set against the backdrop of threats i.e. the background of the Chinese invasion of 1962. It is a study of Gandhian ethics, reassessing their validity and relevance in the post-Independence India- an India confronted with the problems of nationhood.

The Chinese invasion in India had shattered and overhauled the Indian political life, which the novelist has powerfully and graphically depicted in the novel *Shadow from Ladakh*. The whole action of the novel is enveloped by the shadow of Chinese invasion; many of the characters are also engulfed by it. Satyajit is Gandhi's shadow, and Bhaskar, the Chief Engineer of Steeltown is likewise one of the dream-edifices of Nehru, one of the new 'temples' in the secular imagination of Nehru. Gandhigram and Lohapur, representative of two ways of life, lie nestled close to each other as non-interfering neighbours when the sino-India conflict threatens Gandhigram with extinction.

In the wake of the Chinese invasion in 1962 what was imperceptible and ignorable had suddenly become significant. The Steeltown (like Chinese forces) started moving first to invade the meadow (Indian territories) and then Gandhigram (India of Gandhiji). Gandhigram like India was an experiment with simple community living and economic independence. Satyajit represents India's philosophy and foreign policy of peaceful co-existence. He is against innocent lives being sacrificed for an ideal that had no chance at all in a situation where human life has no value at all.

Gandhigram symbolizes the spiritual India and Steeltown the aggressive China. With Chinese invasion, India has lost some of its territory to

the enemy. However, the real lost is the very concept of non-violence. If on one level Gandhigram and Steeltown symbolize the past and the present respectively, on another level, by turn of events, they change their positions- Steeltown stands for the country's present needs and Gandhigram, for its envisioned future. Thus, at some stage or other, the nation needs both Gandhigram and Steeltown; they are like the body and the soul. The country cannot afford to discard either except its peril. The author's answer to this seems when Satyajit's daughter Sunita who is moulded in her father's image and will yet marry Bhaskar. She can bring Steeltown and Gandhigram together. As a result, Bhaskar also adopts the path of reconciliation instead of confrontation. His decision to expand the Steeltown in another direction without encroaching on clashing ideologies juxtaposed to smoothen their possible integration in due course.

The novel presents a survey of the pre and post independence era in the history of India. The difference of the two periods is brought out through the conflict between Satyajit and Bhaskar. It is not a clash of personalities, but a historical inevitability that had to come to the fore sooner or later. The Chinese invasion had put the conflict in the focus and thus hastened the process of self-discovery. India might have gone on sleeping for decades together, if Mao had not shown his true face in 1962 enforcing India to make a choice between hollow idealism and practical wisdom. The novel, thus, deals with the question of the country's defense policy after independence and its dilemma in choosing a national industrial policy as between the cottage and small scale industries and the major and large-scale industries.

It is obvious to note that the novel suggests not merely co-existence of these two ideologies but also their integration and synthesis because in the contemporary context none of the ideals of Gandhi and Nehru can alone be the national ideal. Only a balanced combination of the two ideals would be an answer to the problem facing the nation today.

Thus, *Shadow from Ladakh* takes a pragmatic view of the evolving Indian Society right from the stage of attainment of Independence to the stage of the Chinese aggression. It is thus, conveyed here that the true political consciousness regarding national spirit is not just the straight jacketed objective of fighting external aggression. True nationalism encompasses the entire gamut of ever- evolving interests of a county- its security from forces within or without, preservation of the means to ensure peace, happiness, prosperity, safety, security, and progress of its people and a true nationalist is one who helps to strengthen such interests and eschews, in thought, word and deed, and move that is even remotely likely to weaken those interests.

The social-political situation of the post-independence period is nicely fictionalized in Anand's fictional work *Private Life of an Indian Prince*. The novel attempts to recapture the post-independence period of political turmoil which saw the accession of the princely states to the Indian Union. It presents a human drama in the midst of a chaotic situation and has its centre a prince himself, a central figure in the political transition, whose tragedy is brought about by social as well as personal causes. The decline and fall of monarchy in the State of Sham Pur coincides with the tragic destruction of the Prince himself.

According to the Queen Victoria's proclamation, the princes became an integral part of the empire owing allegiance to the British monarch. It was decided to educate them to become enlightened despots on the eighteenth century model with nineteenth century standard under British security. As the nationalist and democratic consciousness matured, their existence became threatened and the princes, therefore, emphasized their right of internal independence before the Round Table conference. The Nawab of Bhopal and certain political officers attempted to form a "third political force" of the princes to assert in national politics. The Congress Party earlier believed in nonintervention in the princely states but later changed its policy. Jawaharlal

Nehru was elected as the president of state peoples' conference at Ludhiana in 1939 and advocated that this system cannot continue. No civilized people can tolerate it. In 1945 the conference resolved to achieve a responsible government as an integral part of a free and federal India. Praja Mandals – the State Peoples Movement in the early stages sought a democratized administration and later on integration with the rest of the country but the Princess failed to comprehend the growing aspiration of people and finally underwent the agonizing though historically inevitable process of withering away in independent India.

In *The Private Life of an Indian Prince*, Mulk Raj Anand describes the decline and fall of the feudal glory when the Indian Government was appealing to the princely states to merge themselves with the Indian Union. Thrown into the middle of a political maelstrom, Prince Victor, brought up indulgently and committed only to the gratification of his sensual desires, disintegrates, ruins his marriage, becomes involved in sordid and violent political intrigues, abdicates and goes mad.

The novel delineates vividly the changes that were revolutionizing the entire structure of life in India, especially the life of Indian princes, who were torn between two alternatives. Their ambition was to become sovereign states with the help of foreign powers and their desire to strike an honourable compromise with the Indian Union. Here Anand depicts the India of glittering princes, their mistresses, their English guests, their Shikar parties and orgies of drink and debauchery.

The novel further elaborates the Maharaja's drinking parties and the life of flattery, intrigues and debauchery- quite common in the native states during the British Raj. Though the Maharaja is reluctant in the beginning, the seething dissatisfaction in the public and the Praja Mandal Movement by Pandit Govind Das and the revolt by Sardar, force him to consider signing the instrument of accession. His efforts to seek foreign help also are lost in

wilderness. Sardar Patel, in a straightforward discussion, brings him face to face with the bitter truth of the decline of feudal states and their replacement by democratic structure of the Government. Victor has to sign the instrument of accession. But the administration of the State of Shampur continues to be rotten.

Victor has fresh troubles and he goes to the United Kingdom on an enforced holiday. Here he falls in love with an English Lady miss Withers. But he is soon called back, being in the meanwhile implicated in the murder of a rival in love. Returning to India, Victor goes mad and enters an Asylum. Intends to show what happened to Victor happened to almost all the Princes of India when they had to give up their power. They had to pass through the same psychological crisis. The corrupt atmosphere of the States of Shampur is a faithful reproduction of what was going on in all other princely states.

Victor is presented as a tragic victim whose inevitable doom is foreshadowed from the beginning. He is seen to struggle hard against an inexorable reality over which he has absolutely no control and which, from within and without, overpowers him and breaks his very spirit. Out of tune with the new times, he cannot cope with the exigencies of the new political order; and out of tune with himself, he cannot get over his fatal obsession. As an integral part of a dying world, he is baffled by the new world; as a prisoner to his neurotic fantasies, he is driven to a state of lunacy. Thus through a fusion of the private and the public, of the personal and the social, the novel emphasizes the political ruin of Victor as well as the dawn of a new political consciousness.

Victor is seen, as the victim, not merely of his own vices, but also of the weaknesses and villainies of democratic India where capitalism still reigns supreme and untamed, even after the British are gone Democratic politicians seek to use him and his State for their own ends, and ally themselves with the exploiters of Victor's peasants of whom he feels a paternalistic affection. Dr.

Shankar is the spokesman of democratic humanistic socialism. He sees feudal monarchy as outmoded, foolish and an absurdity. The future lay in democratic socialism, so the Prince's madness is the madness of political irrationalism.

Anand here suggests that Prince is the epitome of the feudal, colourful but false India, the India of the past wrongly idealized by European 'orientalists', Vedantists and British romantic imperialists. The novelist had tried to project that the feudal order is declining and along with it is crumbling the glorious citadel of these feudal as the outmoded, outdated institution of absolute monarchy.

The novelist tries to present the conflict between prince and people as a human problem by endowing the Maharaja with pathological traits which not only cause his ruin but also explain his behavior unchangeable. As a political narrative, the novel not only deals with the political problems pertaining to the accession of the Indian princely states but portrays the transition from a feudal order to a democratic order with its attendant political convulsions.

One more issue has been given discussion here is that of the fights between political parties and the practices of statesmen in order to wield power. Arun Joshi's *The City and The River* being a political novel presents the malpractices in which people wielding political power indulge and the ways in which people respond to them. The novelists seems to ponder over the question as to what kind of political system is safe for the people and what kind of political consciousness should be there for the betterment of the society.

The title *The City and The River* is conjoined by the cumulative conjunction 'and'. This serves to juxtapose the first noun phrase 'the city' with the second 'the river'. Both these are inanimate objects which have been used as symbols of the two ways of life. The city represents the city state governed

by the Grand Master, who runs it with the assistance of a council of Advisors. The river passing by the city symbolizes the endless flow of life. The real sons of rivers are the boatmen living in mud-houses that lie scattered by the river on the outskirts of the city. The brick-people have all lost their authenticity and are not concerned with what goes on in their city state. The mud-people, on the other hand, are all deeply involved in the anti-repressive measures adopted to subjugate them.

The Grand Master with his advisors creates a reign of terror and the state terrorism is let loose. The Grand master assisted by his son and advisors use the latest scientific equipment to suppress boatmen's rebellion. Boatmen are tortured, their headperson, who is a woman, is blinded. There is much destruction of life and property. Finally, nature has its own revenge as the river rises to an unprecedented level and washes away the entire city including its buildings and inmates, leaving no traces of any habitation. Yet, out of the ruins of the old city a new one rises up; and it has all the ways of life that had been there in the old city. Out of the flood only one person survives, and he has been simply called nameless-one, who is an illegal child and who is sent to the city with the mission to reestablish it.

Tyranny and repression, hypocrisy and deceit, selfishness and corruption, violence and destruction are rampant in the "city" of the Grand Master. The events portrayed are reminiscent of the emergency in India, as the aftermath in both the cases proved ruinous to the rulers. It powerfully comments on the political scenario of the past, the present and the future.

The metaphysical questions that the novelist seeks to explore in the political context that reflect men's ambition, egoism, selfishness, defiance of truth and the suffering consequent upon them. He stresses the need for spiritual commitment and collective responsibility to do away with evils. In doing so, the novelist uses the political scenario of the city as backdrop of the novel relating with contemporary problems as well. The novelist mainly

focuses on the malpractices in which people wielding power indulge and the way in which people respond to them. The malpractices presented here are of two kinds: the malpractices resorted to in order to gain and retain power and malpractices resorted in order to eliminate dissent. This is very common strategy among politicians to maintain power.

Ultimately it seems that the novel favours the Divine Justice. In this sense, the novel is a parable about human choice between allegiance to God and allegiance to man. It is, thus, observed that the crisis of an individual has been replaced by the socio-political and existential crisis of the “city” and by implication of the whole humanity. Joshi dexterously weaves a tale with a view to communicating the horrors and terror that are unleashed on a society, when a handful of individuals become overly ambitious and selfish. Cruelty and corruption, violence and destruction, hypocrisy and lies come to dominate the political and administrative fabric of society in which people’s lives turn into fodder for the canons of the ruler’s aggrandizing competitiveness. The political vision incorporates the message that once the rulers resort to tyranny for their own ends, suspicion and distrust mark the relations amongst themselves and each plots to destroy the other in order to go up the ladder of power. *The City and The River*, thus, focuses on the aspect of authenticity in the lives of individuals who are caught in the flux of the complicated business of living and wielding power.

Along with this, it is also noted here that how certain political situations also affect the political consciousness of the country as a whole. The same is seen in *Storm in Chandigarh* by Nayantara Sahgal. The political situation in Chandigarh provides the novelist with the nucleus of the story. Following the division of the truncated post-partitioned Punjab, Chandigarh, through remaining with the centre, is claimed by both Haryana and Punjab. The Punjab C.M. Gyan Singh has additionally claimed the Bhakra complex, and to

paralyze the administration by a crippling strike on the Bhakra issue. This has thrown the city into a state of continuing crisis.

Vishal Dubey, a senior member of the I.C.S. is dispatched in this taut situation, as officer on special duty, with instructions to counsel patience and ease tensions. Dubey is an intelligent officer and takes no time to size up the political situation. The Punjab C.M. is a thorough-going political opportunist, the kind of unscrupulous, narrow-minded man, a jingo who would let patriotism go hand in hand with self interest. He stints at nothing if it can advance him politically. Harpal Singh, the Haryana C. M., however, thinks himself out of tone with the times and in utter bewilderment thinks of throwing up the Chief Minister as he is unable to come out of the game of political chicanery agog. Dubey, however, succeeds in backing Harpal Singh and persuades him to accept Gyan's challenge of a strike.

Violence erupts inevitably and Harpal is wounded and hospitalized. Just then the aged Union Home Ministers dies, and discreet moves are initiated to bring the two warring state of political affairs at the high ministerial level. Here the novelist succeeds in painting the selfish and narrow pursuits of the politicians at the cost of the public whom they are supposed to serve.

In *Storm in Chandigarh*, Nayantara Sahgal has ironically portrayed the projection of corruption cancerously spread in the high ranks of politics. The high rank ministers and those seated in gorgeous and grand chairs are so maddened and dazzled by their narrow selfish motives that they turn a deaf ear to the woes and grievances of the public. The selfless and dedicated political leaders who fought for India's independence and worked for the uplift of the poor and glory of the county, are either dead or have been replaced by the opportunist and corrupt leaders who care only for their personal gains. The common masses of India feel disillusioned because their miseries and grievances remain unabated even under the self Government. This kind of corrupt politician is represented by Gyan Singh who is an unscrupulous

opportunist – who would let patriotism go hang, stint at nothing if it can advance his personal and political interests.

It is also observed that in *Storm in Chandigarh* violence ensues from selfish and narrow attitudes of which the consequences are petty agitations, *bandhs* and *satyagrahas* – all distorted versions of Gandhism for they lack the purity and spirit of sacrifice that marked Gandhian resistance. Thus, *Storm in Chandigarh*, in many ways, a disturbing book, for the India which it projects is not a very comforting place, and the division of Punjab into two states carries forward the act of the country's division on a smaller scale. Suddenly what had been adequate for the freedom struggle is no longer adequate for a free country, and somehow the men who ruled India appear to be different from the ones who had worked for freedom. It also throws light on the corridors of power and of visible and invisible violence. It depicts man's desire to gain control over each other's mind, and analyses the deceptive layers of human behavior.

How the political consciousness of India was influenced by the increasing criminalization of politics in India and the rise of Mrs. Indira Gandhi brand of red politik is effectively depicted by Rohinton Mistry in *A Fine Balance*. The novel is a saga that spans the momentous events of India's history from the turbulent times of the country's partition in 1947, through the horrors of the Emergency in 1975, to the macabre aftermath of its Prime Minister's assassination in 1984. The internal emergency imposed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi in 1975 to save her tottering government from increasingly strong attacks by the opposition parties that resulted in the unleashing of systematic terror on political opponents and common man too.

Because the Emergency saw the suspension of the basic fundamental rights guaranteed to every citizen of India by the constitution of India. These draconian measures were supposed to safeguard the country from what Mrs. Gandhi and her cohorts referred to as 'threats from outside'. By 'outside' were

meant Pakistan and her supporter, the United States of America. These threats were really a pretext to crush the opposition to Mrs. Gandhi's rule. Opposition and criticism is what all democratic government have to contend with and if you suppress them, you are jeopardising the very foundations of democracy. This is exactly what happened during the Emergency and for the very first time since India had been decolonized in 1947, democratic institutions were suspended. What followed was one of the most inglorious chapters in independent India's history.

A Fine Balance is a story of the intertwined fates of four ordinary lives of "the dispossessed who come together by chance at the height of Mrs. Gandhi's Emergency in 1975. Set in the city by the sea, the main action centres on the cramped apartment of Dina Dalal. To her come, as her lodger, Maneck study at technical college, and the jobbing tailors Ishvar and Omprakash from a country village. They are descended from Dukhi a *Chammar* who had his sons apprenticed as tailors to break out the subjection of caste. Each member of this quartet aspires in a changing society to transcend contains of birth, caste, or sex in a modern, urban world where anything seems possible.

Meanwhile Mrs. Gandhi declared Emergency and her radical enforcement of slum clearance and population control increased the misery of millions; politics is destiny, changing only in form, not essence. Mistry's narrative moves between the present and the past that formed the character's lives and India's, contrasting the illusory hopes of independence with the bitter corruption of society where justice is sold to the highest bidder- Individual selfless acts, as when during the partition riots Ishvar and his brother Narayan save their Muslim patron and his family, are obliterated by crushing misfortune; later, Narayan, for attempting to vote freely in independent India, is tortured and killed by his village's dominant landowner, Thakur Dharamshi. No investigation or punishment follows: the malevolent Thakur will later

victimize Ishvar and Om during the forced vasectomy campaign on Emergency. Meanwhile Maneck returned from Dubai and gripped by anti-sikh riots after Mrs. Gandhi's assassination and feeling rootless somehow he committed suicide.

A Fine Balance is a socio-political, cultural historical novel, more in the nature of a documentary about the situation and lives of people that inhabit the novel. As a political and historical novel, Mistry juxtaposes the lives of its four main protagonists with the historic moment (the emergency) of modern India to focus on the mechanism of political government that constitute modern India. In fact, Mistry sees India as a country with bad government policies, unclear objectives, lack of will, corruption and many other problems that have directly affected the consciousness of an individual and the consciousness of the politics also. The reason is obvious that a few years after attaining independence, a wide chasm divides the different strata's of society, social and political unrest is the call of the day, talk of choices frustrates human endeavor for dignified existence, malpractices grow society at all levels and opportunism rules everywhere. Corruption has crept into the system, law is being manipulated for selfish interest, politicians lack vision and caste oppression and gender discrimination is prevalent to date.

Mistry has also concentrated on the pessimistic image of his lost motherland, gives an insight into rural India and mentions the atrocities committed on the untouchables through the story of the family of Dukhi. The novel is also a realistic portrayal of trains crossing the new border, carrying nothing but corpses, the conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims, fanatics burning shops and houses involved in arson and bloodshed and the entire country in the grip of communalism. It also faithfully describes the communal conflicts of 1984 caused by the death of Indira Gandhi when the Sikhs were ruthlessly burnt alive. It also exhibits how the Indian society is decaying from top downwards. The corrupt leaders have exchanged wisdom

and good governance for cowardice and self- aggrandizement. For votes and power they play with human lives and accept money from businessmen needing favours. The pre-election speeches of leaders are crammed with false promises of powerful laws. During elections, the illiterate villagers are cheated and the ballot papers are filled by men hired by the politicians. The novelist lays bare the election system of the world's largest democracy and the hypocrisy of the politicians. Thus, in *A Fine Balance* the novelist has told us his 'true' tale which is organized into sixteen evocatively chapters, preceded by a prologue dated 1975 and ending with an Epilogue dated 1984. Between these two cataclysmic political events are the stories of Dina, her tailors her lodger and their friends and acquaintances. Mistry here provides us with a horoscope of Emergency and its impact on Indian political consciousness.

From what have been said and cited above, it can be said that the term political consciousness is used in a broad sense, covering those works of fiction which, directly or indirectly, express and advocate certain ideological preferences of describe and analyze existing political conditions. Moreover in a segmented society like India, where different linguistic, cultural and ethnic groups maintain autonomous status, novel describing their interrelationship shall also be considered as political consciousness. It involves caring about community and seeking the common good. It is about hating injustice and the system and the structure that perpetuate it, but not hating people. It describes a person's political sense of self. Thus, political consciousness is often meant to connote that people have awakened to their true political role, their actual identity.

The political consciousness of the every country is always reflected through the creative field of writing fiction. It is observed in the writing of post-independence writers in English who discussed social, cultural, religious and political issues. For them nationalism becomes a preoccupation and they

wrote not just for their art but also with a view to helping the nation to an awareness of itself, its aspirations, its troubles. Moreover, it is also noticed that the political developments after the attainment of Independence in 1947 also ensured that the excitement of the political drama should continue. The holocaust of the partition; the merger of the princely states; the murder of the Mahatma; the wars with Pakistan and China, the clash of personalities among those who wield power, the division of states on linguistic base and Emergency all has certainly developed the political consciousness of the people of India.

In this regard, the Indian political fiction in English passes through various phases in its development. All these phases show the nature of the political struggle involved and the extent to which they affected the lives of the people. One of such phases is the sufferings caused by the partition of India. *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh is a novel presenting the picture of the bestial horrors enacted on the Indo-Pakistan border region during the terror haunted days of partition. It was perhaps the darkest period in the history of modern India which witnessed a movement of hatred and bigotry of men who had been living like brothers for centuries. This politically dramatic novel conveys a hint of the grossness, ghastliness and total insanity of the two-nation theory and partition tragedy with its pity and terror.

Shadow from Ladakh by Bhabani Bhattacharya projects a contrast between two conflicting political ideologies and leans towards idealism through Gandhian ideologies. It also reveals the threat the neighboring countries pose for India and the need to spell out loyalties and reevaluate the ideologies in the changed context of time. It is evident that the novelist is aiming at a vision of social regeneration in Indian by synthesizing Gandhism and Nehruism because Mao's China trying to annex India. Thus there is a need of political consciousness that can synthesize Gandhism and Nehruism.

It is nicely depicted through the conflict of ideologies of Gandhigram and Steeltown.

One more phase of such political upheaval can be studied in *Private Life of an Indian Prince* by Mulk Raj Anand. It reveals the inability of the prince to come to terms with the changed political set up in the country. It throws some light on the corrupt practices, affluent living and various conspiracies hatched by the ministers in politics. It also depicts the corrupt and dishonest practices of the rulers, the politicians and the officers. It exhibits how the selfish instinct and craving desire of misusing power by the princes directly affects the political consciousness of the time. Arun Joshi also reflects the degradation of political leaders through their malpractices in order to wielding power in *The City and The River*. He intends to convey that for such political leader power is the chief aim and they are just selfish opportunist like the Grand Master who can put into practice any devilish act for their power orientation. Such mentality certainly narrows the consciousness of common people who are the foundation of the politics of any country.

Apart from this, one more phase that shows the petty and pitiable behaviours of characters involved in making poor politics. It is nicely portrayed by Nayantara Sahgal in her novel *Storm in Chandigarh*. She has focused on parochial aspect of the politics that will certain break the consciousness of the nation into pieces. She has exposed the world of politics through conferences and committees, public meetings, discussions, processions, demonstrations, boycotts, protests etc. The issue of independent state based of linguistic is minutely designed by the novelist through the conflict of Haryana and Punjab. If such practices go on than a time will soon come when the whole India would turn into different segments and once again the concept of freedom would certainly be colonized. The madness and craze for power is minutely depicted by Rohinton Mistry in *A Fine Balance*. It is a novel discussing Emergency imposed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi that is considered to be the

darkest period in Indian Democracy. No one with any claim to rationality would dispute that the period of Emergency was a sordid chapter in modern Indian history. It was Emergency that reduced the world's largest democracy to a tin-pot dictatorship. How Emergency paralyzed the lives of common people and checked the political development of the nation is portrayed in the novel. It is true to say that the act like Emergency is certainly a great obstacle towards the perseverance of political consciousness.

While going through the study of political consciousness, it is found that political consciousness reveals the weaknesses as well as the strengths of our society as a nation. This strength is the tremendous capacity of Indian society to come out of the most traumatic crisis like partition, emergency, foreign aggression etc. Its capacity tolerates whatever pain and shock and returns to normalcy soon again. This capacity to rise again after the setback has kept India alive in spite of constant onslaughts for over two thousand years. This is because of psychological toughness as well as the flexibility on the part of the society.

This has been a weakness too. Indian society tends to forget everything so soon. This forgetting and forgiving nature of the society has disabled India to learn some hard lessons from its past. India has remained blind to history. It could not develop the historical sense. It continued to face calamities and disasters, invasions and betrayals, but did not as a society try to stop them forever. Thus, it failed to take wise stock of circumstances, the communities and the other nations. Within 50 years, India is facing partition like the situation in Kashmir, Kargil war, demand of independent state, corrupt politicians, fastest growing Industrialization etc. and the leaders, the bureaucrats and people in general are indifferent to the problem. People are at loss to discover what they stand for, what they owe to others and the nation, what is good and what is bad. The many qualities which have been

our strength, because of the weakness at the cone, turn out to be our weakness.

The study of the works of Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Mulk Raj Anand's *The Private Life of an Indian Prince*, Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh*, Arun Joshi's *The City and The River*, Nayantara Sahgal's *Storm in Chandigarh* and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* reveal some similarities, dissimilarities and individuality of the writers. The thematic preoccupation of all the writers under study is identical but versions are so unique and different those display their genius. They render political consciousness not as passive reflectors. Their novels are imbued to the core with an wakefulness of the political happenings and the manner wherein these circumscribe the potential of the individual for self-fulfillment. They also probe deeper and come out with a diagnosis of the afflictions of the body politic as well as with a suggestive prescription to cure these distortions. With a view to analyzing this, they have reacted and represented the very spirit of Indian political ethos in their novels and they have also depicted the agony and the plight of dislocated people who had been victim of political game.

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