It was an extremely pleasant moment when the ship of the nation came out of the centuries of darkness of slavery into the bright sunshine of freedom on August 15, 1947. With the attainment of freedom, India entered into an era of high national hopes and great expectations for progress and prosperity. In the beginning years of Independence, there was a fervour and willingness to build India one of the strongest nations of the world along with the over emphasis on the continuation of past glory. People were hopeful of an instant miracle for the eradication of their poverty and solution of their problems with the dawn of freedom. Those people who fought for nation’s freedom turned itself into a political party and formed the Government and took a vow to serve the people with all their honesty and sincerity. No doubt, the country therefore picked up the fast speed of development and progress with the selfless devotion and dedication to the larger causes of national prosperity. But alas! the limited supply of those who guided the destiny of the nation during this period was soon depleted and their vacant places were repleted by white-clad self-seeking politicians jostling one another for power and riches. For them, the newly acquired power was a licence for affluence. Principles and ideologies have been thrown to the winds, and opportunism and lust for power became the order of the day. The politicians of today have indeed created a problem of credibility. *Mahatma Gandhi has outlined for them the role of trustees who should be a model of simple living to
their charges-the people-and ensure that the nation's wealth was utilized only for the people's good. *1

But today, we witness the dawn of an era when most of the politicians have failed to realise the dreams set by their great leaders like Gandhiji, Nehru and Patel. They swear by the high ideals of Mahatma and other great freedom fighters, but once they are rocketed to the position of power and pelf, they excel the highest degree of impudence of their previous rulers (British) towards the oppression and exploitation and opportunism and corruption. Now the eternal process of exploitation was kept continued even with more vigorous force upon the poor and the downtrodden by the opportunist leaders after Independence who were eagerly waiting to step into the shoes of the retreating imperialists. The place of national pride and Indian identity has been gradually taken over by self-interests and insolence. Our disillusionment reached culmination when in the recent past we were encountered with incredible reality that a good number of the underworld dons and mafias were officially inducted into politics as our political representatives legislating the national policies and laws. This was recorded as the fall of national values to the abysmal depth.

Thus, our leaders' vision to lead India in the 21st century was dashed into pieces and how disillusionment looms large on our nation. Personal interests took precedence over national

interests. Our nationalism has been benighted by the profligacy and opportunism of the abject and venal politicians. ... In such circumstances, nationalism becomes a pre-occupation of the writers. They are important not just for their art but also as teachers, helping the nation to an awareness of itself, its aspirations, its troubles. *1

Turning our attention to Indian-English fiction, it is interesting to note that politics has exerted a deep and profound influence on many literary artists. The fact is that Indian novel in English flourished during the freedom struggle, and hence obviously, the impact of politics of freedom struggle is clearly seen on the contents of Indian-English fiction. It does not mean that the novelist became unmindful to the politics of India after India won freedom, rather they were more mindful to the execution of political democracy in India and to the clash of personalities among those who wielded political power after Independence.

Indian political novels fall into two categories—the first category consists of those novels written in pre-independence era, and the second of those written after Independence. Pre-Independence political novels advocate the theme of exploitation of Indians by the Britishers, of Indians’ aspiration for freedom, and of freedom movements launched by great patriots and Indians’ active involvement in them. On

the other hand, the political developments after Independence have been at the centre of the post-Independence novels. The partition holocaust, the turmoil of the merger of princely states, the murder of Mahatma Gandhi, India’s confrontation with Pakistan, and more recently the degeneration of politics, all these national events invited fictional treatment of post Independence era.

The post-Independence novelist faced perplexing reality; initially hopeful with the achievement of freedom and with the expulsion of evil forces from our land, but later on bittered with frustrations and disillusionments with his encounter to political deterioration which was dragging our nation down to the ditch. Sensing a grave danger to the Independence and national image, the Indian-English novelists took up to convey this reality to Indian masses and made them aware of impending tragedy of moral downfall social hypocrisy, cultural shallowness and political corruption. Such fading spirit of national identity has been well treated by a number of Indian-English novelists like Nayantara Sehgal and Arun Joshi etc.

Nayantara Sehgal, the daughter of Vijia Luxmi Pandit has more vividly portrayed the Indian political scenario of the post-Independence era in her novels. Born to a royal family of political leaders, politics has always been an integral part of her life. She herself explained that politics is absorbed in her *bones and marrow* and in her *emotional and intellectual*
makeup *1 so intensely that she cannot remain aloof from the arena of political activities. All her novels except *A Time to be Happy* (1958) are deeply concerned with the development of post-Independence politics. She forcefully highlighted various perspectives of the contemporary issues of degraded politics.

Nayantara Sehgal’s second novel *This Time of Morning* (1965) seeks to expose the national political spectrum of the last days of Nehru’s Prime ministership in India. The action of the novel takes place in Delhi. As the niece of Jawaharlal Nehru, she has first-hand knowledge of what is happening in the corridors of political power. The main feature of the novel is the fall of one of the important personalities of the Government, Kalyan Sinha.

The novel attempts to focus on two political issues first the portrayal of political deterioration, and second, the process of India’s attempts of nation building in an emerging democracy. The culminating tension between these two contradictory perceptions is portrayed through the two characters of the novel- Kailash Vrind, a Gandhian idealist and Kalyan Sinha, a non-Gandhian pragmatic activist.

Kailash Vrind is a true follower of Gandhian ideals hence he highlights the multi aspects of Gandhi’s charismatic politics. He observes that the process of transition of the

congress from a movement to a political party has been frustrating. Today, congress is drifting away from Gandhian ideals. The forces of change in a new democracy at every level of society, economy and polity are so powerful that they cannot be restrained. In this critical situation, Kailash advocates for the upkeeping of the ideals as during freedom struggle. But it is impossible for Kailash to rejuvenate Gandhism in the crisis of the transition of values. The Gandhian ideals of Kailash Vrind are counterbalanced by the pragmatism of Kalyan Sinha. He is fully disenchanted by the Gandhian values, and hence pleads the policy of catching up fast. The noble feelings like pity, compassion and place have no faith in Kalyan’s conscience.

“As long as there were starving, ignorant men, there could be no relationship between a government and the governed, except in terms of rapid accomplishment.”*1

Thus, the novel is applauded to explore the operational paradoxes of democratic political structures degenerated in the pursuit of power. Nayantara Sehgal has beautifully portrayed a clash between Gandhian ideology and the changing political scenario of the post-Independence period.

The another novel of Nayantara sehgal depicting the degeneration of Indian political system during the sixties and

early seventies is *Storm in Chandigarh* published in 1969. In its theme it is not different from the second novel, *This Time of Morning*, rather it shows the continuation of the same theme of clash between the old order of the dedicated politicians and the present generation of opportunist politicians.

Harpal Singh, the chief minister of undivided Punjab represents the old generation of politicians. He is firmly against the bifurcation of the Punjab upholding the Gandhian ideals of national integration. While Gyan Singh, the leader of Sikh community in Punjab belongs to the generation of new politicians having no sound ideology. He favours the division of Punjab for his own vested interest, and hence he plans to win the confidence of the native people of Punjab by raising some sentimental issues. In this context, the author draws an infamous image of the opportunist politicians engrossed in the pursuit of the fulfilment of their inordinate ambition to grasp power and pelf. They did not even hesitate to arouse the feelings of mutual hatred among various factions of society inciting racial animosity against each other-

"Outburst 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 the mount and ebb like
some great tidal wave waiting for it to engulf them ... Violence had become routine and expected. It was given different names, indiscipline, unrest, disorder.”\textsuperscript{1}

The author discloses the reality of the dwindling of old values and the stronghold of the present generation of venal politicians in the victory of Gyan Singh over Harpal’s dreams of integrated nationhood by effecting the division of Punjab into two states Haryana and Punjab. Harpal Singh becomes the chief minister of Haryana and Gyan of Punjab but the tension between the two continues to mount up:

“In the new states, Punjab and Haryana, just carved out of the former Punjab, the quarrel over boundaries, water, electric power continued, intensified by the presence of both new state governments in a common capital, Chandigarh which was claimed exclusively as its own.”\textsuperscript{2}

Very frequently both the newly created states find themselves at loggerheads with each other owing to the cunning and crafty political tricks of Gyan Singh. On the sensitive issue of Chandigarh, Gyan Singh attempts to fulfil his evil designs of political publicity to win the hearts of the people, and hence

\textsuperscript{1} Sehgal, Nayantara, \textit{Storm in Chandigarh} (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, n.d.), p.6.

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid, p.13.
he gives a call for general strike in which general masses go berserk and Harpal Singh gets severely injured, and at the same time the Home Minister also expires in Delhi, but Gyan’s opportunism knows no restraint.

Thus, it is noted that the novel abounds in the depiction of various ills of contemporary politics such as ‘rise of violence to fulfill the vested political end of personal publicity’, ‘Social and political exploitation of the people’, ‘selfish pursuits of politicians aiming at winning power’ and many other erosions of political and moral values of politicians. For example the novel begins with political distress:

“The map of India, once a uniform piece of territory to administer, was now a welter of separate sensitive identities, resurrected after Independence. Psychology seemed to play as important a part in understanding them as did history, geography and economics. Much more than facts and figures were required in coping with political rivalries that had now ceased even to make bargains.”*1

In this way, the novelist by displaying the contrast between moral values of old political system with high moral ideals and devoted nationalism, and the present political system with moral deterioration and opportunism, attempts to portray the impending tragic downfall of the universal values in the recent politics.

Nayantara Sehgal’s fourth novel *The Day in Shadow* (1971) is also an attempt the expose the murky scene of the contemporary political system dealing with the politics of the late sixties when India was passing through the critical years of indecision and uncertainty after Nehru’s demise. In its political aspect the novelist shows how contemporary politicians are engrossed into power mongering and career hunting games, and for them personal issues took precedence over national issues.

The scene of degraded politics in the novel has been presented through the principal character, sumer singh, the new petroleum minister of the union Government. He replaced Sardar Sahib who, in his spirit of sacrifice and patriotism, resembles Harpal Singh of the earlier novel *Storm in Chandigarh*. He strongly believes in the ideals of Nehru and Gandhiji, but for opportunists like Sumer Singh it is *time to throw away sentiment, the weak, the wornout liberation of the past, time to bury Gandhi, and write a new page of Indian history.* *¹* He has no respect for the past glory of India. He thinks that, *the entire sentimental framework of parliament and Constitution would have to be scrapped.* *²* He intends to bring this change neither for people’s welfare nor owing to his deep love towards country but because he is more after power and affluence. He admits the Russian proposal of exploring


oil in the region of Jammu and Kashmir not for bringing welfare change in the country’s economy but he foresees the prospects of his promotion to foreign ministry from the ministry of petroleum. The novelist observes:

“For him he was convinced, it meant big things ahead- the prize- the Foreign Minstership which in the coming reshuffle would almost certainly be his. He was sick to death of it and its complications, the never ending controversies about crude, about refinery agreements, and all the homework it meant. He did not want that Ministry. The Foreign Minster was a key figure on the world stage.”*1

Sumer’s opportuned rush for power is further revealed when he discloses the reality of his political ambition to his mistress pixie. He states:

“If things went as he expected, he would be a force to reckon within his party in a few months’ time. Privately he knew he could really count on the support of both the communist parties, too. And one or two of the other leftist groups were solidly behind him... And the independents had not been

much of a problem in the vote—thirty thousand rupees per vote was not too much to hand out when the stakes were global.”*1

In addition to the depiction of the present deterioration of political ideals which is more a malaise than a happy sign, the novelist has also attempted to present the remedies which will rescue nation from this quagmire. He makes an attempt to teach the unscrupulous leaders a lesson of high ideals of morality through a journalist and professor (Ram Krishna) for building up a strong nation based on the principles of the past. Ram Krishna exhorts:

“We had it under Gandhi. He took ahimsa non-violence—Hinduism’s oldest idea and sent a whole nation into battle with nothing but that ... you in your generation may have to find a different springboard, but there is no scarcity of ideas among us.”*2

Furthermore, Sehgal suggests a way to come out winning from the political trials and tribulation by following the ideals of Gandhiji and Nehru etc. She regrets for the erosion of Gandhian ethics and Nehruvian values in the politics of India. K.R.S. Iyengar also quotes:

“Mrs. Sehgal’s flair for politics may be seen exemplified

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*2. Ibid, p. 234.
here too, and the feel of present-day Delhi, the pace of change, the passing of Gandhism, the defiant amorality of the jet set, the new style of politics, the chronic sense of uncertainty, all may be inferred from the pages of the novel."*1

Nayantara Sehgal’s next novel *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977) is also written on the post-Independence political developments. It analysis the political crisis which India faced in the late sixties and the early seventies after the death of Nehru.

The novel begins with the information of sudden death of Prime Minister, Shivraj (in the figure of Jawaharlal Nehru). Following his death, his sister Devi is inducted as the education minister into the new cabinet of the Government of India. The death of Shivraj symbolises the end of an era, a way of life and a style of politics. The novel portrays the erosion of Nehruvian values in socio-political setup through several recent mishappenings such as the rape of a young girl Madhu on the university campus highlighting complete defencelessness of women in India, rise of the creed of violence in the countryside, college hooliganism and description of many prodigal, lavish and extravagant parties suggesting the collapse of law and order. All these instances evidently charge the Government of India of mal-administration.

Devi’s nineteen years old son Rishad’s involvement in violence is an open revolt against the contemporary political crisis:

“This cult of violence had to be clean, cold and disciplined ... violence of the sane, with a passion for justice ... only then could the new social order arise... Utopia for the poor and the downtrodden. An Indian utopia.”*1

For Rishad socio-economic freedom for India is as significant as political freedom:

“The huge population, described as casteless (the untouchables) ‘under-privileged’, the weaker section of society, hadn’t yet known they were human beings. The law, of course, said they were, and all their rights were on the statute book. But they couldn’t read and those in authority had not taken the trouble to see that the laws were observed, and if they did, justice was slow and layers of sluggish procedure clogged each step of it. The outskirts of Delhi or the fringe of society or the edge of history, it was all the same thing.”*2


*2. Ibid, pp. 97-98.
The signs of growing discontent among the Indian people, disorder in the university, the creed of violence, the murkiness of socio-political structure suggest the vanishing ideals of Nehru from public life and the complexities of political process in perspective of emerging political repression preceding the emergency. Thus, the novel conveys the gravity of the national crisis with the depiction of the deterioration in the political situation of the country after Nehru’s demise. *The strength of the novel, as of its predecessors, is Mrs. Sehgal's uncanny understanding of the ambiguous and sinister rumblings in the corridors of power in New Delhi. If in the earlier novels we witness the collapse of Gandhism, now it is the rapid scuttling of Nehruism as well.*

Sehgal in her last novel *Rich Like Us* (1985) makes an attempt to present the dark sides of Indian political scenario after Indira Gandhi’s declaration of Emergency in June 1975. It lasted till March 1977 when Indira Gandhi’s Congress party was defeated and Janta Party regime under the leadership of Morarji Desai came into power. The period of Emergency has been very traumatic and brought a number of atrocities to the common people. It also created among the people a feeling of revulsion against totalitarian rule. All the evils perpetrated during the Emergency have been delineated in this novel.

through some of its major characters with authentic details.

The leading characters in the novel are all fictional but they, indeed, are the embodiments of the real political figures. They are not addressed by their real names as Indira Gandhi is often referred to as ‘Madam’, occasionally as the *P.M. or as the supremo*. Her son Sanjay Gandhi is addressed in the novel as *Madam’s son or the Supremo’s son*, and the famous political leader Jay Prakash Narayan is referred to as *J.P.*, the initial by which he was widely recognised throughout his political career. Thus, these fictional figures are the shadows of real political characters. Sehgal presents the consequences of the Emergency through the lives of these fictional counterparts and endeavours to unveil the reality as an impending grave danger to our democratic freedom.

The action of the novel is set in New Delhi and ranges to trace the happenings of one month after the promulgation of the Emergency. Sehgal exposes the evils of Emergency through the portrayal of politicians’ moral and ethical degradation by bringing bureaucracy under their powerful influence and causing an unprecedented damage to the democratic values. Before the Emergency there was a clear demarkation between politics and administration. But this line was rubbed out by and by in the years leading up to the Emergency under the influence of Mrs. Gandhi, and this erosion became the cause of humiliation of the ideal and honest civil servants and other political rivals of the ruling party.
“Once upon a time we had thought of the civil Service as \textit{We} and politicians as \textit{they}, two different sides of the coin ... Our job was to stay free of the political circus.”*1

Another evil consequence of Emergency is portrayed through the character, Kishorilal who has been beaten mercilessly and imprisoned due to his allegiance to Jan Sangh. His loyalty to the ‘Jan Sangh’ becomes \textit{positively dangerous since the emergency had marked his political party out for surveillance and put all its leaders and crowds of its workers in jail}. *2

Further, the dark aspect of emergency can be seen through the dictatorial actions of Dev, son of Madam. He symbolises the dawn of new order to which belongs the Emergency. In the beginning he is portrayed as an incompetent person unable to handle even the family garment business, but soon he rises aloft and becomes the leader of the New Entrepreneurs having a high position in Happyola business. Finally he is rewarded with an appointment as a cabinet minister. His miraculous rise to the position of importance in many ways during the Emergency reminds Sanjay Gandhi’s rocketing rise to political power. In the novel Dev’s active participation in the organization of Youth Camps recalls the

\begin{itemize}
  \item *2. Ibid, p.74.
\end{itemize}
camps organized by Sanjay Gandhi and reorganization of the Youth Congress. The P.M.'s son and his wife Nishi is also shown active in vasectomies campaign which was cruelly conducted by Sanjay Gandhi.

This is the gloomy side of Emergency presenting an ugly picture of duo-nepotism, attempts to foist family rule, P.M.'s designs to make herself the president, and to bring her son to power by the back door, violation of all norms in making the P.M.'s son an entrepreneur overnight, government-arranged rallies to hail the promulgation of Emergency. *1

The chaotic wilderness and the dismal aspect of emergency shows that the talented people like Sonali (representative of the established order of the civil service) lose their jobs and honest and patriotic men like K.L. are beaten mercilessly and imprisoned after snatching away their liberty, and on the other hand the untalented dishonest men like Dev are raised incredibly to the stalwart heights of their fortunes overnight.

Thus, the novel discloses a number of evil aspects of Emergency like the adoration of the dictator, the hypocrisy of political leaders, attempts to prolong and impose the family rule, the nexus between unscrupulous politicians and criminals, selfish political manoeuvering, the repressive police raj, inhuman tortures in jail, forced and cruel sterilization, corrupt

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and politicized bureaucracy, censorship and a pervading sense of fear.

After Nayantara Sehgal, another novelist of greater skill who has attempted to explore the hidden aspects of the contemporary political scenario is Arun Joshi. He, in his celebrated novel *The Apprentice* (1974), has successfully portrayed the corrupt socio-political situation of the country after Independence and revealed the complexities of modern politics through a government officer, *Ratan Rathore*.

The novel is written in the form of dramatic monologue. This technique enables the narrator to unfold his life before a silent listener. Ratan Rathore, the protagonist of the novel is himself the narrator of the story and the silent listener is a young student from the foothills of the Punjab. Ratan tells him the story of his own life—his journey from political and material prosperity to the moral downfall in the hands of factual adversity reducing him to a man of utter dejection and *a man without shame or honour*. *1*

Through his story, we learn that Ratan is a man of impoverished middle-class family and is the product of two conflicting values of life—moral and material. On the one hand, his father was an exponent of moral virtues and a true follower of Gandhiji faithfully devoted to the cause of country’s freedom.

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and used to advise his son To be good! Respected! To be of use! *1 While on the other hand, his mother was a product of material world and regards material prosperity as the greatest achievement of life. Man without money is worse than a beggar's shoe. *2 She often reminded his son that It was not patriotism but money, she said, that brought respect and bought security. Money made friends. Money succeeded where all else failed. There were many laws, She said, but money was law unto itself. *3 In this way Ratan is a man of double inheritance contrasting to each other.

When his educational career comes to an end, he struggles for job in the corrupt society of post-Independence India. He comes to Delhi in search of a career which his father called Bourgeois filth *4. Here he succeeds to find a clerical job in the ministry of Defence. From here the novel begins to show the clear picture of corrupt politics and mal-administration of the country where all political leaders, ministers, secretaries of government offices are all sunk into the abysmal depth of corruption. Ratan, till then young, has been an idealist and worshipped the old time virtues of his father. But soon after getting his job, he comes in the grip of corrupt atmosphere of the government office whose officers

*2. Ibid, p.62.
*4. Ibid, p.32.
are thriving on corruption and bribery. Ratan is also drawn into the quagmire of corruption. In his words:

"Freedom did not bring that elevation of the spirit that the great leaders had hoped for ... there was no elevation of the spirit. Instead, there was only corruption. Corruption! ... The Indian people ... were a glorious monument in ruin, a monument of which even the foundations had caught canker."*1

In such a rotten state of affairs, it was not difficult for Ratan to rise high through money and manipulation. The higher he rises, the more unscrupulous he becomes. To gain underserved prosperity and affluence, Ratan does not hesitate to use several tricks of deception. Now he feels elated like an addict to take bribes which once upon a time he used to detest. The satirical remark of Himmat Singh (an underworld don) on Ratan’s degenerated character is noteworthy here-

"You are bogus, Ratan Rathore ... Bogus from top to bottom. Your work, your religion, your friendships, your honour, nothing but a pile of dung. Nothing, he said, but poses a bundle of sham."*2

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*2. Ibid, p.131.
Just before the breaking out the Indo-China war, he takes an enormous bribe from Himaat Singh, a prince of the underworld, in the deal of clearing the supply of defective and useless war materials to the war fronts which ruined the lives of hundreds of the soldiers and resulted in the suicide of his dearest friend, the Brigadier in Indian Army. This incident brings a radical change in Ratan’s attitude causing his nemesis. But he finds himself in a state of utter confusion getting no way out of this hellish world of corruption and decay. He emphasises upon the need of another revolution to purge our country of the pestilence of corruption and political deterioration. He seriously contemplates:


Ratan’s retributive journey of life begins when he in search of his self-rehabilitation comes to the temple daily and wipes the shoes of the worshippers reminding the words of his

own father. *Be good. Be decent and Be of use.* *1* Ratan's wipping of shoes in the temple symbolises his endeavour to wipe out the sinister stains of guilt from his soul owing to his involvement into the corruption and other nefarious activities. Ratan's life story ends with a note of an affirmation and the dramatic monologue is changed into confessedional monologue.

Thus, the novel skilfully discloses the rotten state of political deterioration, opportunism, hypocrisy, corruption and the downfall of moral values through the narration of Ratan's own experience. The narrator exposes the changed reality of the post-Independence period and observes:

"Freedom. Freedom. What is freedom but a word, my friend? Freedom of men, of nations. No more than a word. We thought we were free. What we had in fact, was a new slavery.

Yes, a New slavery with new Masters; politicians, officials, the rich, old and new. Swindlers in fancy cars."

*2

In the post script of **K.R.S. Iyengar's 'Indian Writing in English',** there is an apt remark on the reflection of the political rot of the contemporary period in regard to the novel *The Apprentice*.


*2. Ibid, pp. 60-61.
"As a fictional study of the anatomy and dynamics of the almost omnipresent corruption in the country, *The Apprentice* is a powerful indictment. The human story and the stark message both come through."*1

Arun Joshi's latest novel *The City and the River* (1990) deftly traces a number of concerns of modern Indian politics, and all the political events delineated here have distinct links with the emergency period of India. The novel is a political allegory, and the novelist, with his rare insight and mature skill, portrays through his novel the harsh realities of modern day politics with an emphasis on the machiavellian art of winning and sustaining the political power. The allegorical representation of the contemporary political scenario raises the novel to a level of a politico-allegorical satire.

The main plot of the novel revolves round the theme of power struggle. The novel portrays a conflict between the Ruler (Grand Master) inhabiting on the highest hill of the city and the lowly people living in brick and mud houses, spread along the River. The Grand Master, the ruler of the city is determined to become an unchallenged king of the city. His urge is accentuated by the existence of the old prophecy (regarding his becoming the king) which is differently read by the Astrolonger and the Hermit of the mountain. In order to usher a welfare state and to fulfil his obsessive ambition, the

Grand Master along with the Astrologer (the mouth piece of the Grand Master) issues a decree where by the allegiance of the people to the Grand Master is made compulsory. Seeing through the Grand Master’s trick of becoming a king, the brick and mud people led by their headman express their allegiance to the ‘River’ as the headman remarks:

“If it is matter of allegiance-our allegiance is only to the river and cannot be shared, that is all that I want to say.”*1

Their allegiance to the river incites the conflict between the City and the River, between the Grand Master and boatmen, between the desire to dominate and the desire to affirm one’s identity, between allegiance to man and allegiance to God.

The so-called conflict resulted in cruelty and corruption, and violence and destruction. A number of ruthless measures are adopted by the Ruler to crush his dissenters and to pave the way for the realization of his ambition of anointing himself as the king with uninhibited powers. In this respect The Era of Ultimate Greatness is promulgated by the Grand Master apparently for the progress and prosperity of the city (but in fact its main purpose was to consolidate his power and accomplish his urge). The ensuing events of ‘the Era of ultimate Greatness’ was a very close similarity with those of India’s

Emergency regime which had proved detrimental to Indian democracy and fatal to human rights.

If we examine the novel from the political point of view, we find that Arun Joshi has given varied reflections of contemporary Indian political scenario in the detailed picture of political malpractices in which people like Grand Master wielding political power indulge chiefly to fulfil two motives—first to win and sustain political power and second to suppress their opponents.

The Grand Master's trick of appointing a man who has the support of students and teachers to the post of Education adviser without taking into consideration his talent, to prevent him from joining hand with the rivals (boatmen) symbolises the evil-designs of the modern politicians indulging in such malpractices of distributing the lucrative posts either to their favourites or to the obsessively ambitious people to stop them from joining the rivals camps and to prolong their evil rule. As we know in the novel through the conversation between the boy and the Professor, The boy tells him:

"When the Grand Master inaugurated the New Era, the Astrologer advised him to appoint the Education Adviser to the Council. That was the only way of keeping his shock- brigades from joining hands with the boatmen."*1

Further the Grand Master’s act of straightening ‘Avenue Great River’ road to satisfy the whims of his wife as to have a nicer view of the road even though it causes many people to lose their homes, signifies many such evidences of wasting and misusing public funds by the politicians to gratify the wishes and whims of their nears and dears even though it might prove injurious to the nation as a whole.

At another place in the novel, we are made aware that the mischievous politicians endeavoured to sustain the seat of power with the help of guns using the army and the police which are meant to defend us from the internal and external aggressions, for protecting themselves either from their political enemies or from the dissenters. Such an event is reported by the narrator:

“Then all exists were barred from the outside and all lights were switched off. For the next two minutes the machine guns sprayed the pitch dark hall with bullets ... At the end of the two minutes the lights were switched on and the gunners were given another two minutes to finish their job.”*1

Another political trick in which the contemporary politicians actively indulge in order to acquire political power is that they try hard to win the support of the masses through

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organizing rallies and processions in their support to give the impression that they are very popular among public and deserve to be their rulers. The Grand Master of *The City and the River* follows the same trick to gain the political power. He convinces the Master of trade to propose his name for becoming the king in the meeting of the supreme council. The Master of trade justifies his name in the following words:

"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. Fourth, he should be above the petty squabbles of the bazaar . . . Now gentlemen, the only person who meets these criteria is our beloved Grand Master. I propose, therefore, that he be requested to accept the onerous burdens of the king’s high office.”*1

The GrandMaster succeeds not only to enthrone himself as the king of the city but also paves a way to the accession of his son to the throne through the means of getting

rallies organised by the Rallies Master (an important member of the Government) in support of his son. As the Rallies Master reports a journalist that, *I must gather rallies not only for the Grand Master but his son as well.*

The hypocritical announcement of a decree from the palace known as ‘The Era of ultimate Greatness’ was the ugly step of the draconian rule to harass the freedom of common people like Boatmen. When boatmen refuse to be loyal to the Grand Master, they are badly tortured and condemned to a life of suffering and pain. A large number of boatmen are put in chains. The Headman of the boatmen was mercilessly blinded as the narrator reports:

“During the night the guards pierced the Headman’s eyes with long pointed needles and poured acid into the perforations.”

In order to restrict the population of dissenters the Grand Master orders an impractical family planning only for one section of society of the boatmen. *One and only one child to a mother and two to a home.* The ruler does not hesitate to adopt repressive measures at the slightest excuse to follow this policy of population.

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*2. Ibid, p.164.  
“Let their numbers be frozen by law... the force of arms if necessary. Nothing else will suffice.”*1

One chief intention of the ruler behind the implementation of such compulsive discriminating policy of population control was to restrict their dissenters from seeking the seat of political power.

Furthermore the novel discloses several other evil tricks of politicians like the banning of the press that did not favour their obsessive interests. They even attempted to use repressive measures to restrict the freedom of independent print and electronic media. The GrandMaster’s pet, ‘the Master of Rallies’, in the novel is portrayed to control, on his Master’s behalf, the satellite, radio and newspapers, and forces them to spread the propaganda in favour of the evil designs of the Master. It is aptly reflected in the novel:

“The Master of Rallies also controls the satellite. The satellite controls the radio and the video. The Master of Rallies controls the satellite on the Grand Master’s behalf because the satellite is the private property of the Grand Master.”*2

All kinds of atrocities were inflicted upon the

*2. Ibid, p.88.
rebellions against the Grand Master because they did not confide their allegiance to him, and hence vehemently opposed the declaration of the beginning of 'The Era of ultimate Greatness which ultimately turned for them into 'The Era of gloom and suppression'.

These are unambiguous parallels between the Emergency administration in India and the one depicted in the novel. These incidents following the Era of ultimate greatness delineate the events leading to the 'Emergency' and its various ugly phases like censorship of the Press, forced vasectomies, a corrupt democracy, a reign of terror, inhuman tortures in jail the ever pervading sense of fear and insecurity in Indian masses, the hypocrisy of the rulers, bulldozing of residential houses of the poor only to fulfil their whims and tactfully manoeuvering rallies in support of the so called rulers. Thus, the novel *The City and the River* is a powerful and pungent satire on the modern day politics of Emergency period when the democratic values went down to the abysmal depth and the very peril of democracy seemed in the offing.

These are the significant political works of fiction of Nayantara Sehgal and Arun Joshi portraying in detail the chaotic period of Indian politics and administration. How, for their trifling benefit and self-interest, our politicians suppressed and subjugated the democratic values without any moral scruples, is vividly drawn in their novels. Besides these, there are some other novelists like Anant Gopal Sheorey and
Salman Rushdie also who have made scathing attacks on the corrupt and opportunistic politics of the post-Independence period in their novels.

Anant Gopal Shrorey’s political novel of distinction displaying an extreme deterioration of the post-Independence socio-political situation is *Dusk Before Dawn: A Novel of post-freedom India* (1978). The title of the novel itself suggests the prevailing picture of the post-Independence political dilemmas and pathetic plight and predicament of Indian people. The novel is a powerful and frank indictment on democratic norms, sanctioning the centralization of authority, which ultimately got deteriorated into power crazy politicking and dishonest and dictatorial gestures of the venal politicians of the country.

The plot of the novel revolves round an editor, Dhananjay of a newspaper ‘Yug Samachar’. He aims to bring to the surface objectively through his newspaper the deep rooted and hidden all round corruption in the police, judiciary and in the conduct of political ministers. But some stubborn elements in the police and the Government could not digest his freedom of expression, and therefore, resolve to persecute the editor Dhananjay for his critical journalism. Consequently, Dhananjay is sent into penal servitude on a preplanned criminal charge. The government withdraws forcibly even all normal facilities to which the editors, in general, are entitled. The revengeful temper of the minister of government becomes so
fierce that a number of false cases (of civil, criminal) concocted against the editor. But with the support of the public, Dhananjay wins the case in the supreme court which debares the concerned minister from contesting the next general election also owing to the charges of forgery and cheating, and hence ultimately he commits suicide, meeting his divine justice *the wages of sin is death*.

It shows that the obsessive ambition of political power became so potent after Independence that the politicians who fought for the freedom of the country were soon converted into the power hungry politicians leaving aside all the principles of Gandhiji. Contrary to the ideals of Gandhiji *to Shun pomp and show and live simply in austerity in keeping with the poverty of the nation* *1*, the post-Independence politicians have submerged themselves into the dark ocean of political evils of all pervasive corruption, opportunism, rush for power and self-aggrandisement.

The worst aspect of the barbaric political power as highlighted in the novel was concerned with the suppressing of the freedom of Press which was the only means to make common people aware of the national happenings. It proved extremely detrimental to the democratic image of India.

In Salman Rushdie’s celebrated novel *Midnight’s Children* (1981), the reference of the political issues of the

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time are quite overt. It is the saga of nation covering the national events of 62 years commencing from 1915 upto 1977. The novel is properly structured into three parts with thirty chapters.

The first part covers the historical events beginning from 1915, and ending with the birth of the narrator hero of the novel Saleem Sinai at the precise time of India's arrival at Independence i.e. 15 Aug., 1947. Part-11 ends with the delineation of Indo-Pak war on Sept. 23, 1965 and the third part concludes with the end of Emergency in March, 1977.

It is only the third part which explicitly brings out the rotten state of recent politics of India with the depiction of Emergency which proved to be an eclipse for Indian democratic values. The announcement of Emergency in June 1975 is marked as the worst interlude in the political history of India. The leading and succeeding event of Emergency are underlined in the novel. The novelist through his protagonist Saleem Sinai, analyses the political situation of India under the suppressive rule of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. After coming back to India, Saleem found that intolerance of dissent, erosion of democratic values, centralization of power were the current features of the modern polity. The democratic ideals were degenerated into the political and moral corruption like-manipulation during elections, poll-fixing and other malpractices focusing the evils of electioneering in Indian politics. It is very painful to see a cabinet minister engaged in taking bribes, it mocking
democratic norms rather than thinking about the nation’s welfare. It appeared that Indian polity had reached such a degenerated state that the strong protests against the malpractices of the ruler became very frequent, and hence anticipating the impending danger, the Emergency was imposed.

Thus the novel not only highlights the various phases of Emergency but also encompasses its repercussions in the form of exploitation and oppression of satanic stature. The perforation of political profligacy with an inordinate ambition to become uninhibited dictatorial authority became so potent that the universal human values including democratic principles were ruthlessly suppressed, and the masses were subjected to all kinds of atrocities, suppressions and humiliations. It was an unparalleled and unprecedented political degeneration recorded in the entire democratic history of India.