Chapter 2:

Postcolonialism and The Development of Political Novel in Indian Writing in English
The previous chapter introduced the rationale of the study and the relevant parameters that are applied to the analysis of the selected novels. The present study deals with the selected postcolonial Indian English novels. One needs to understand the colonial ideology and its impact on postcolonial phase to study the selected novels. The selected novels have the hang on of colonialism either in characters, modes of expression, habits or lifestyle itself. Like Jemubhai Patel in *The Inheritance of Loss* has imitated the life style of the colonizers and has adhered to it throughout his life.

The term ‘postcolonialism’ emerged quite gradually. *The Empire Writes Back* (1987) defines postcolonialism as “The term postcolonialism covers all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day.”

Colonialism fundamentally affects the modes of representation. Language is used as a medium to express ‘truth’ or ‘reality’ of postcolonialism. After independence comes, the larger power no longer has control of the former colony. That is the beginning of postcolonialism. Now that the larger power is gone, the pre-colonial culture of the native people is left. The subject of culture is deeply explored in postcolonial literature. Postcolonialism partly involves the challenge to colonial ways of knowing, ‘writing back’ in opposition to colonialism.

One main concern in a postcolonial nation is its system of legislation which will match the needs and expectations of the natives. Also the natives are inefficient administrators with no experience of administration. The new system of legislation is supposed to act in the best interest of the people. One finds that Indian democracy also underwent this turmoil after independence since the early administrators had no experience of wielding power.

As far as postcolonial literature is concerned, postcolonialism brought in new ways and perceptions of writing and reading. After colonialism, Commonwealth literature came into existence which paved way for postcolonial literature. Theories of colonial discourses have been influential in the development of postcolonialism.

Characteristically, postcolonial writers evoke or create a pre-colonial version of their own nation, rejecting the modern and the contemporary which is tainted with the colonial status of their countries. The first characteristic of postcolonialism is an awareness of representations on the non-European as alien. Language itself is a second
area of concern in postcolonial criticism. The emphasis on identity as doubled or hybrid or unstable is a third characteristic of the postcolonial approach.

To trace the origins of postcolonial literature, one needs to scan the prevailing approaches to colonial discourses. One of the earliest approaches to the study of colonial discourses was psychological. Mannoni’s *Prospero and Caliban* (1956) examines the psychological processes of colonialism. He is of the opinion that Europeans believed that the non-civilized are non-civilizable. Ultimately, they thought that European way of thinking is the right one. Mannoni argued that the European who comes out of the colony suffers from a “psychologically inferior personality” and the native a “psychologically dependent one.” In order to get rid of this inferiority complex, the European exploits the natives and casts himself in a paternalistic role of the parent and the master and becomes the protector/provider to the native child. We find this approach in Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss*, where the tribal culture is considered inferior by the foreign infiltrators which are the outcome of tribals’ exploitation. The tribals are not given government jobs and admissions in colleges to keep them backwards. Due to this, the immigrants smartly keep the tribals ignorant and claim their own culture to be superior. It is a sort of neocolonialism which affects the psychology of the tribals.

In *Black Skins, White Masks* (1967), Frantz Fanon feels that the soul of the colonized have experienced the death and burial of its local cultural originality which have created an inferiority complex. Fanon opines that the settler points the native as a sort of evil and a negation of values. This was accompanied by the description of the native as an animal usually snakes, vermins, rodents and other less liked animals. Fanon points out this in his discussion in *A Dying Colonialism* (1965) that the white man stands for the father. The colonizer thus becomes the father and the colonized is the child who has to obey the colonized ‘law of the father.’

After psychological approach, sociological study of colonial discourses was put forth by Albert Memmi in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1965). He feels that the colonizer arrives in the colonies with a moral and cultural mission and also has the economic base for colonialism. He distinguishes between the colonial, the colonizer and the colonialist. A colonial is a European living in a country but without any special privileges and with the same economic conditions as the colonized. The colonial is generally benevolent. The colonized on the other hand, is projected as lazy, with no sense of economy, jealous, fanatical and weak that requires protection. Finally, there are only
two options for colonized: assimilation or petrification. Since assimilation is denied to him, he cannot plan his future; he must restrict himself to the present. His linguistic ambiguity is a cultural ambiguity. In Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, we find that the character of Saleem’s grandfather, Aadam Aziz had a lot of impact of colonialism on him and considers his Islamic culture to be inferior to the colonial culture. He does not allow fanaticism to be practised in his family and is not rigid about the religious practices. He wants his wife to study western education rather than getting education of religious scriptures from a ‘maulvi.’ Thus colonialism has accomplished the moral and cultural mission of transforming the natives by making them adore and cherish the western ideologies.

An entirely different approach is presented by Ngugi Wa Thiong ’O in his *Decolonizing the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature* (1986), where he focuses on the use of English as a weapon by the colonizer. Ngugi suggests that the study of Africa has always been restricted to its tribes. Ngugi argues that one need not enrich other languages by translating African philosophy, folklore or imagery into other languages. Ngugi basically focuses upon the impact of colonialism on the African world.

In *Orientalism* (1978), Said feels that the colonial power based on Orientalist knowledge does not rely on physical force as much as the consent of the native. The native agrees to be colonized when he accepts the colonial stereotypes, justifies and consents to being colonized subjects. Analyzing this discourse, Said reads a range of texts – literary, philological, philosophical, administrative and ethnographic and others. Modern Orientalism has characteristics like expansion, historical confrontation, sympathy and classification.

In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said undertakes a massive re-reading of the colonial texts like *Heart of Darkness* (1975), *Kim* (1901) and *A Passage to India* (1943) to demonstrate their implication in the imperial discourse. Said states that his purpose is to read individual texts as products of the creative imagination and then as a part of the relationship between culture and empire. Resistance has two phases, according to Said: actual fighting against outside invasion and ideological resistance to save or restore the sense and fact of the community against the colonial system.

He feels the works of Marquez, Rushdie, Achebe and Soyinka interrogate the assumptions of imperialist discourse. There is insistence of the colonized on the right to see the community’s history as whole, coherent and integral. Thus national culture and
memory is revived and emphasized. Said has used *Midnight's Children* as an example and feels it may be the return of once “subjugated knowledges.” We find Salman Rushdie rewriting history of India in *Midnight's Children*. He gives an account of the freedom struggle, Partition, reorganization of states on linguistic basis, wars with Pakistan and Emergency since he wants the world to know Indian history from the perspective of an Indian and not what was merely put forth by historians.

*The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures* by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin posed direct challenges to the colonial centre from the colonized margins, negotiating new ways and gave voice and expression to the colonizers and the once-colonized people. Inspired by Salman Rushdie’s argument concerning the need to decolonize the English language, *The Empire Writes Back*, epitomized the popular view that literature from the once-colonized countries was fundamentally concerned with challenging the language of the colonial power, learning its world view and producing new modes of representation. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin claimed that writers were creating new ‘englishes’ (the lack of capital ‘E’ is deliberate) through various strategies: inserting untranslatable words into their texts; by use of obscure terms; by refusing to follow standard English syntax and using structures derived from other languages; of incorporating many different creolized versions of English into their texts and so on. This is applicable to the Indian English writings where the writers use untranslatable words, their own syntax and structures which the non-natives find difficult to understand. Arundhati Roy in *The God of Small Things* (1997) has made use of many Malayalam words and elements of their culture which are difficult to understand even for a non-Malayalam Indian.

Gayatri Chakravorty - Spivak has a different approach. She rejects the idea that there is a pre-colonial past that we can recover. All the past has been worked over and immediately changed by colonialism. One cannot separate the pre-colonial and the colonial. What can one do is to understand the ‘worlding’ of the ‘third world.’ Spivak’s ‘worlding’ is a term that includes both a ‘creation’ and a ‘violation.’ ‘Worlding’ is a process through which the local population was persuaded to accept the European version of reality for its own modes of understanding and structuring its social world. It is therefore impossible to recover the authentic voice of the subaltern. The subaltern is a term used to signify the oppressed class. We find in Nayantara Sahgal’s *Rich Like Us* the female characters like Rose, Sonali, Mona and Nishi are persuaded to accept the patriarchy and atrocities of Emergency. They become in a way subaltern where there is
double imposition of sufferings first, as a women, they are considered inferior and then they suffer the violence of Emergency.

In her *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999), Spivak reiterates: “Simply by being a postcolonial or the number of an ethnic minority we are not ‘subaltern.’ That word is reserved for the sheer heterogeneity of decolonized space. The subaltern may simply be a “native informant” – a name for that mark of expulsion from the name of Man.”

Homi Bhabha discusses cultural influences in his *The Location of Culture* (1994). He criticizes Said for having fixed identities of the colonizer and the colonized. Identity for Homi Bhabha is an unstable reality – constantly moving between positions, displacing others and being displaced in turn. In his concept of mimicry, he further analyzes the fractured nature of the colonial condition. The colonial power requires that the natives adopt and internalize the forms and habits of the colonial master: the native should mimic the master. For him, mimicry is a defence weapon used to fight with the resistance of the native. We find this mimicry depicted in Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss* in the character of Jemubhai Patel. He mimics the lifestyle of the colonizers and continues to follow it throughout his life. The result is that he is not accepted by the colonizers due to his Indian race inspite of imitating them and is not accepted by the native Indians because of his colonial lifestyle and outlook.

When colonial discourse discovers that its authority and identity is partly dependent upon the colonized other, there is the destabilizing of colonial power. This is intransitive resistance according to Homi Bhabha. The hybridized native who refuses to return the colonial gaze and acknowledge the colonizer’s authority is placed in a position of ‘in – betweenness’ between ‘adopted’ Englishness and ‘original’ Indianness, in case of imperialism in India.

Another contemporary critic of Bhabha, Aijaz Ahmad presents an entirely different approach in his *In Theory* (1992). He deals with the impact of imperialism on the Third World and with a special reference to India. He argues that “third world” literature arrives as a category when they are marketed, reviewed and accepted as counter-canonical by the western academics.
Since colonialism and postcolonialism imparted new experiences and vision, one finds a change in the themes and expressions revealed in literature. The immediate phase after the end of colonialism led to the evolution of Commonwealth literature which is followed later by postcolonial literature. Commonwealth Literature has imparted innovativeness and depth to postcolonial writings.

‘Commonwealth Literature’ was a term literary critics began to use from the 1950’s to describe literatures in English emerging from countries with a history of colonialism. It compiled a study of writers from the predominantly European settler communities as well as writers belonging to those countries which were in the process of gaining independence from British rule, such as those from the African, Caribbean and South Asian nations. Literary critics began to distinguish a fast growing body of literature written in English which included works by such figures as R. K. Narayan (India), George Lamming (Barbados), Katherine Mansfield (New Zealand) and Chinua Achebe (Nigeria).

The greatest contribution of the Commonwealth Literature was that it laid the foundations for the various postcolonial criticisms that were to follow. In the course of time, the term ‘Commonwealth’ lost its appeal and charm. The Commonwealth Literature was replaced by ‘Postcolonial Literature and Criticism.’ As the nations associated with Commonwealth moved away from it, they realized that their experiences of colonialism are different. This new realization paved a way for the postcolonial literature.

Postcolonial Literature (or sometimes called “New Literature/s”) is a body of literary writings that reacts to the discourse of colonization. Postcolonial literature often involves writings that deal with the issues of decolonization or the political and cultural independence of people formerly subjugated to colonial rule. Protagonists in postcolonial writings are often found to be struggling with questions of identity, experiencing the conflict of living between the old and native world. There is defilement of the culture of the other and the supremacy of the culture of the settler. However, postcolonial texts are also a manifestation of the local culture and history in their own right. For example, Achebe has not only demonstrated that things have fallen apart but also that the past of his people has always had dignity. Soyinka’s African identity is self-confident and unquestionable.

Those who are born under and after colonialism write inspiringly about the struggle for independence. They write about the conflicting interests of the natives under and after colonialism. Other writers direct their attention to the conflict between the
natives and the new governments that replaced the colonialists. Postcolonialism and the postcolonial literature are also criticized due to lack of creation and its emphasis on the renewal of the past.

There are many problems with the implication of the term ‘postcolonial literature.’ The study of literal colonization is not the exclusive object of postcolonial study. Among the works commonly studied under the label are novels like Claude Mckay’s *Banjo* (1929) and Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) which were written while the nations in question (Jamaica and Nigeria) were still colonies.

Many postcolonial authors do not share the general orientation of engaging in an ongoing critique of colonialism. Nigerian writers Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka for instance, after writing powerful indictments of the British in their country, turned to exposing the deeds of native born dictators and corrupt officials within their independent homelands. For example, Achebe’s *A Man of the People* (1967) deals with the corrupt politics of the natives in his own nation. Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1956) deals directly with the Partition of India from an almost exclusively Indian perspective.

‘Postcolonial’ draws some arbitrary lines. Of those who write in English, Anita Desai is included though she is half German. Ngugi wa Thiong is included even though he now writes primarily in Gikuyu. Bharati Mukherjee specifically rejects the label “Indian – American” though she is an immigrant from India and Rushdie prefers to be thought of as a multinational hybrid. Hanif Kureshi is more English than Pakistani in his outlook and many Caribbean born writers living in England are now classed as “Black British.”

Standard British English is not what was inherited from the Empire by the colonized even in colonial times; on the contrary, the native use of the language was mocked in India as ‘Babu English.’ It had been a long running imperial joke, since the days of Kipling and of F. Anstey. Thus Indian, Australian or Canadian English is lower case ‘english’ while good old British English remains capital ‘English.’

When one talks of postcolonialism and Indian writings, it is specifically about English writings by Indians. It is almost as if writers in other languages in India escaped the historical experience of colonialism. It is also as if Indian English writers do not have access to other Indian traditions, as if they exist in vaccum. For example, Nayantara Sahgal dislikes the term because she considers it implies that colonization by the British is the
only thing that has happened to India and it denies the history that precedes the colonization and continuing traditions stemming from that earlier periods. Rushdie differs from this attitude. He insisted on English as the appropriate national literary language for India and provoked controversy when he declared that there was no worthwhile Indian writing that was not originally in English. He maintained:

“The prose writing – both fiction and non-fiction created in this period (the fifty years following independence) by Indian writers ‘working in English’ is provoking to be stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced in the sixteen official languages during the same time and indeed, this new and still burgeoning, ‘Indo-Anglian’ literature represents the most valuable contribution India has yet made to the world of books.”

Out of their selection of thirty-two works, Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West included in the anthology, *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing, 1947-1997* (1997) just one that was translated into English, S. H. Manto’s ‘Toba Tekh Singh,’ originally written in Urdu. Their claim regarding the inferiority of vernacular works or the translations of these works has been angrily contested. However, Rushdie demonstrates in his own writing that ‘Indo – Anglian’ writing takes much of its energy and distinctiveness from its contact with other Indian languages and the speech rhythms, idioms and cultural contexts are used in English. As Rushdie notes, “Indian English, sometimes unattractively called ‘Hinglish’ is not ‘English’. English, to be sure, any more than Irish or American or Carribean English is.”

Indian English Literature is supposed to be a result of displacement caused by colonialism. At the same time, one cannot expect Indian English Literature to be perfect and appropriate as per the Standard British English parameters. The resistance to appropriation, the awareness of the danger of being read in a simplified colonizer – colonized context is ever present in the Indian English novels. Even the language used by the early writers demonstrates this fact. We find this in Raja Rao’s ‘Introduction’ to *Kanthapura* (1938). It sets the linguistic agenda for Indian English fiction. Rao says that the task is to “convey in a language not one’s own, a spirit that is one’s own.” He goes on to compare English to Sanskrit and Persian. This can be seen in the works of other early Indian English novelists as well. Mulk Raj Anand has stated his reasons for writing in English in his article on “Pigeon Indian.” He took permission to write in English from Mahatma Gandhi. Initially, he wanted to write in Urdu but found corruption in the
publishing industry. Anand took Mahatma Gandhi’s advice to write the truth in any language. English, had to be broken, fractured to suit his intentions. His Punjabi - English is the result of his strategy to safeguard his truth, his examinations of class and caste conflicts which were seemingly untouched by the colonial context. Thus there is a consistent attempt to remould English to appropriate the colonial space.

Describing the postcolonial view of India and the West, Ashis Nandy has written, “India is not non-west; it is India.” He views postcolonial India as one which takes into account the colonial experience, incorporates the West, does not consider the cultural conflict between the east and the west, as the central conflict of its life and above all decides its own priorities and draws up its own agendas. The later novelists as termed by Rukum Advani “Ghosh Generation has outgrown their alleged obsession with the west.” These novels are not self-consciously Indian - neither their language nor their form betrays any anxiety about their identity. These novels do not always involve the colonial past to understand the present.

By writing in English or having their works translated, Indian writers are representing themselves to the western world, rather than having others do it for them, thus representing various cultures more authentically. One of the problems which Indian writers have is that of rendering experience in a language in which it does not occur. The following passage from Salman Rushdie’s Shame (1983), reflects his struggle with this issue:

“This word: shame, number one must write it in its original form, not in this peculiar language tainted by wrong concepts and the accumulated detritus of its owners’ unrepented past, this Angrezi in which I am forced to write, and so for ever alter what is written… Sharam, that’s the word. For which this paltry ‘shame’ is a wholly inadequate translation.”

Salman Rushdie’s novels also include a wealth of references to the Indian culture, characters and histories which will be more rapidly recognizable to readers from the Indian subcontinent than to the American or English readers. He differs from Achebe, Joyce and Ngugi, as an outsider reader is not given a significant role in his novels. Different historical narratives are contested ‘within’ the Indian subcontinent rather than between the colonizers and colonized. Thus Midnight’s Children foregrounds the marginalized history of Muslim participants in India’s move towards independence and
almost ignores the mainstream histories placing Mahatma Gandhi at the centre (except where the narrator ‘deliberately’ gives an inaccurate date for Gandhi’s assassination). One could argue also that the fluidity of Salman Rushdie’s characters and the manifest unreliability of their narratives (including that of the central narrator, Saleem Sinai), is one means of making it difficult for the outsider reader to make them representative spokesman. Similarly, the assumption of an informed national audience might be implicit in *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *The God of Small Things*, whose authors take it for granted that their readers can supply the details of an official national history barely, alluded to in their novels.

The problems faced by postcolonial Indian English writers may vary with changing times and needs, nationality and readers too. In spite of facing hurdles, postcolonial literature attracts worldwide readers. Their perceptions and interpretations may be subjective but the primary aim of literature is fulfilled i.e. delight and knowledge is derived from postcolonial literatures written and read all over the globe. With this approach, postcolonial literature becomes interpretable and imparts a new vision to its readers. In fact, it is admired by people all over the world making it “a joy forever” for its readers.

Since the study deals with the selected Indian English political novels, it is essential to look into the political background of India and trace the development of Indian political novel in English and the various phases it passes through in terms of thematic concerns and structural variations. This will throw light on the dominant ideological influences on each phase, the political movements at different stages and the way they affected the lives of masses. The objective is to examine political themes in Indian fiction in English and to derive the extent to which writers responded to the changing national scene. Not all the novels and novelists turned political but the impact of political upheaval was so great that even a novelist of intense sociological concern, R. K. Narayan and of the deep metaphysical concern like Raja Rao could not help writing at least one political novel each. The progress of the Indian English novel reveals the national struggle for independence in its various aspects and stages and its effects on the imagination of the writers to produce a new genre called the political novel.

A survey of the beginnings of the Indian novel in English shows that novelists largely wrote either romances like *Bianca* (1878) and *Kamala*, or sociological novels like *The Garden Keepers* and *The Cage of Gold* (1923) or historical novels like *The Fatal
Garland (1915) and Shivaji or at the best novels dealing with east-west encounter like Hindupore or The Prince of Destiny (1909). When the freedom struggle gained momentum in India, the novel changed its direction from romances, history, sociology and culture to politics revealing a new relationship of the individual with politics.

The definition of the political novel begins to take a variety of interpretations. The Oxford English Dictionary describes the political novel as “a fictitious political narrative, a novel about imaginary politicians.”

But Morris E. Speare precisely defines this genre as: “A work of fiction which leans rather to ‘ideas’ than to ‘emotions’ – where the main purpose of the writer is party – propaganda, public reform or exposition of the lives of personages who maintain Government or of forces which constitute Government.”

But Irving Howe remarks, “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.”

M. K. Naik also defines political novel as: “a piece of fiction devoted to a presentation of political ideas” or “a species of fiction in which action, characters and setting are all firmly grounded in politics.”

According to Mahadev L. Apte a political novel is one of which “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.”

Thus political fiction deals with a political ideology and should have a political setting against which fictional characters are seen to develop. Politics is a part of man’s history and it is men who make history. The political atmosphere and milieu is very intense to touch the core of personal and collective life.

The Indian political novel in English took its roots only with the upsurge of nationalism and revolt against the foreign rule. On the whole, the essence of Indian struggle for independence was the making of the average man political. The content of the Indian English political novel concerns with the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny caused by the rise of Indian
nationalism. The decade of the 1930’s was full of remarkable events like - the Gandhian Salt Satyagraha Movements of 1930 and 1932, the three Round Table Conferences, the passing of the Government of India Act, 1935, the Introduction of Provincial Autonomy in 1937, the Gandhian Movements for Harijan Uplift and Basic Education, the organization of Marxist parties, the involvement in the Second World War, 1939, S. C. Bose and his eventual escape to Germany and Japan and together with the next decade with climactic events contributed to the growth of pre-independence Indian English political novels. If we look at the journey of the impact of various political events on political novels, we realize that the contemporary events are dominant themes.

Another factor which has been influencing the world even today is the Gandhian ideology. Mahatma Gandhi was a follower of truth or ‘satya’ as a moral order in the service of humanity, which is called ‘Sarvodaya.’ This ideal could be achieved only through non-violence leading to the development of the soul force in a positive way. The liberation of the country from the foreign rule was subject to the liberation of individual from the slavery of his baser instincts, which in his opinion, was possible only through ‘Satyagraha.’ When applied to politics, it seeks to develop the moral resistance of the people to injustice and the change of heart on the part of the oppressor. He adopted non-violence as a cheap means of resistance since India could not face Britishers economically with advanced technology. Gandhi’s idea of ‘Purna Swaraj’ included political liberation of the nation and the epistemological freedom of one civilization from another.

We may classify Indian English political fiction according to their thematic similarities into the following groups:

1. Early Political Novels based on Armed Rebellion: The earliest fictional works in Indian English Literature, viz, K. C. Dutt’s A Journal of Forty eight Hours of the Year 1945 (1835) and S. C. Dutt’s Republic of Orissa: Annals from the Pages of the Twentieth Century (1885) have political themes based on armed rebellion. S. C. Dutt’s The Young Zamindar (1883) reflects the sporadic armed revolts of Indian Muslims and Hindus against the British and the suppression of the revolt in Orissa. Another novel of S. C. Dutt, Shunkur: A Tale of Indian Mutiny of 1857 (1874) shows the mutiny in the manner of mingling history with fiction. S. M. Mitra’s Hindupore (1909) is based on Indian insurgency and armed rebellion. R. N. Tagore’s The Home and the World (1916) is a political novel set against the
revolutionary background of 1905 Bengal full of war cries of “Swadeshi” and “Bande Mataram.” Tagore’s *Gora* (1909) voices the aspirations of the resurgent India and projects the conflict of ideals and aspirations between the East and the West.

2. Political Novels based on Gandhian Ideology: The novels in which Gandhi and his ideology recur are divided into three groups as under:


b) Novels in which Gandhi is represented by idealized characters like Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura*, K. S. Venkataramani’s *Kandan, the Patriot* (1933) and Khwaza Ahmed Abbas’ *Inquilab* (1979).


3. Political novels based on the Partition Riots: The attainment of Indian freedom was followed by the tragic drama of Partition. What interested the creative writer is the disaster in the form of trauma, disruption, displacement, dispossession, dislocation, distrust, disgust and violence suffered by the innocent people as a prelude and companion to the freedom and the partition of country. In other words, the novelists were concerned
with the human significance of the political decisions. The tragic drama of partition “inspired” many remarkable novels like Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*, Raj Gill’s *The Rape* (1974), Manohar Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* (1975) etc.

Khushwant Singh was the first Indian novelist in English to write about the holocaust of Partition with artistic concern in *Train to Pakistan*. The disintegration of Mano Majra’s harmony is symptomatic of the inner disintegration of the nation during grim crisis. It seemed as if people were thrown to the wolves without protection. The emerging prospective in the novel is that secularism as a religious ideology is far more fundamental to national harmony.

Raj Gill’s *Rape* is a novel set against the background of partition and depicting two lovers of a Sikh village, Lyallpur. The novel reflects the horrid aspects of human life, following the partition holocaust.

Another novel of the same theme is Malgonkar’s *A Bend in the Ganges*. Malgaonkar presents a different version of partition which he traces back to religious hostilities by British. There are references to the speeches and political moves of Jinnah. This aspect of political terrorism during partition is a crucial revelation made by the novelist. He makes a significant contribution in establishing the role of the terrorist outfit of Muslims in the pre and post partition phases of independence. Overall, the novel continues to be a novel of disillusionment with Gandhian non-violence as a means of achieving freedom ending in disaster.

Although *The Dark Dancer* (1976) by Bhalchandra Rajan is not about Partition, its third chapter ‘Seventy – three days to Freedom’ brings out interesting analysis of violence during partition. The chief protagonist, Krishnan, blames it on the British. Krishnan’s wife, Kamala sacrifices her life saving a Muslim girl from the vicious designs of two Hindus. It is the only novel which seeks the transcendence of the political in the philosophical in a personal way.

*Ashes and Petals* (1978) by H. S. Gill presents some new aspects of life following partition, the trauma of train massacre by Muslims and the woeful plight of the refugees in India. This displacement and trauma was added by frustration suffered following the ill treatment meted out to refugees on their arrival in India. He finds the refugees
camped in the unhygienic places, most ill cared for, indifferently treated by the government officials and the hypocritical social workers.

The novel *Twice Born Twice Dead* (1979) by K. S. Duggal discovers a new villain under the linen-the green-robed pirs, roaming about Dhamyal, fomenting hatred, distrust and violence in the name of religion. A large part of the novel deals with the atrocities committed by Muslims and privations suffered by the Sikhs and Hindus before and during partition. It is only in this novel that the role of the press has also been referred to. Duggal refers to the Muslim newspapers and the Hindu newspapers, which as part of political equipment are an anathema.

*Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1979) by Attia Hussain is a significant novel by a Muslim lady on the theme of partition. It presents a perspective different from other novels on the same theme. It emphasizes the presence of a secular section of Muslims in India. The scene is laid at Lucknow, known for its ideal integration of two cultures for ages. The communal hatred fans itself out from politics to religion and vice versa. This is the only novel which surveys partition from Muslim point of view and clears the Muslims of the charge of being communal. It speaks for the thousands of Muslims who remained, unswayed both by the religious and political passions and opted to stay in India. Another new aspect of Partition revealed by the writer is the alienation suffered by the evacuee Muslims to Pakistan. For the first time, a novelist questions the Muslim leadership about its role and responsibility in misguiding Muslim masses leading to partition and its bloody aftermath in the nation. It is again the first novel which speaks for political credibility of the lakhs of Muslims staying behind in India of their own free will. The objectivity of the novelist brings out her faith in secularism as the only practical ideology for the political well-being of the nation, especially for Muslims now inhabiting India.

Chaman Nahal’s *Azadi* (1975) is praised for its realistic delineation of the tragedy of partition. One of the worst disasters of partition which Nahal portrays is the crushing of the will of man. He gives a vivid picture of the chaos of ill organized refugee camps, lack of cooperation among two government machineries, breakdown of administration, paucity of protection force and transportation which added to the miseries of fleeing refugees. The novel is full of massacres of the innocent refugees on the move towards India. Was ‘Azadi’ worth all that human misery and waste? The government machinery handling refugees was very corrupt. Was it this that the refugees had bargained for? What were their political status and privileges in free India? Their tragedy was not
that they were displaced and dispossessed but disowned by their own people in India. The sad state of Kanshi Ram family is a reminder of the destruction the politicians can cause to human sensibilities.

Another novel reviving the pang of partition is *The Shadow Lines* (1998) by Amitav Ghosh. The focus here is on the trauma of partition ridden East Bengal psyche. Even as politicians divide the two bits of land, they would not sale away from each other. The borders would remain as shadow lines between the two hearts. The message this novel ushers in is that all divisions are basically politico-religious which the heart denies.

A new aspect of partition is seen in the protagonist of *A River with Three Banks* (1998). The novelist describes the sinister effect of Partition in terms of what happens mostly in Delhi and Allahabad: Hindu-Muslim clashes, arson, loot, murders, abductions, molestation, rape and desecration of religious places. The novel has a strange title; it points to India as a river, with Hinduism, Islam and Christianity as its three banks.

Thus the novels of partition present realistic picture of the tribulations people underwent on account of the violence let loose by the spurt of communal hatred. It is the politics behind the partition which is the devil not the people. The novelists show the cruelty and barbarism of man and letting loose the forces of destruction in man. The total collapse of morals, administrative and governmental machinery comes out in these novels. Common man has become a pleasure device for politics.

4. Political novels based on the post - independence political issues: The Independence of India and its aftermath had created a trauma and shock of displacement in the minds of people; also it created a sense of insecurity and threat of dispossession in the lives of the several rulers of the princely states on particular. They suffered threat of dispossess of power, property and privilege so some entertained the idea of keeping themselves free even with the help of a foreign power. The varieties of responses to the situation have been graphically fictionalized by Mulk Raj Anand in *The Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953) and Manohar Malgaonkar in *The Princes* (1963).

*The Private Life of an Indian Prince* is a severe indictment on the decadent princely order. Shampur is symbolic of what was happening in the other parts of the nation.
The responsibility of all the upheaval and crisis in Shampur is traced not to the British Imperialism but to the insensitivity of Indian rulers towards their subjects. The politics in the novel lies in asserting the fact that even the private life of an Indian prince has political implications.

*The Princes* by Manohar Malgaonkar is a political epic which shows political change and the manner in which people respond to change. The novel also brings out the inability of princely order to understand the nature of revolution overtaking the subcontinent.

*Shreya of Sonagarh* (1993) by Uma Vasudev is a novel which deals with disputes between the feudal lords and politics. Raja Shivnarain Singh of Sonagarh controlled a number of business enterprises to ensure a steady flow of income in the family and reaped the benefits of the newly emerging democracy by inducting his wife, Sumitra Devi into politics. Sumitra Devi plans for a gradual entry of her reticent daughter-in-law, Shreya, into politics. During the course of recording Shreya’s growth in politics, the novelist exposes the character types and elements operating in politics. Shreya walks into the trap deftly laid down by her family of pushing her into politics. Shreya compromises with her conscience for political gains.

Kamala Markandaya deals with the problem of relationship of princely states with the British in *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977). The economic exploitation of India by the British is condemned and demand is voiced to seek that money for the rehabilitation of the exploited and deprived masses of the nation.

Lambert Mascarenhas’ *Sorrowing Lies My Land* (1955) depicts the freedom struggle in Goa during Goa’s liberation in 1961.

For Indians it was easy to throw off slavery but difficult to confront freedom along with the partition. Freedom brought in a large number of issues and problems the nation was not prepared for. Firstly, there came a wave of successive attacks on the borders from Pakistan and China which challenged the basis of India’s faith in peaceful coexistence, non-violence and neutrality. The problem of feeding masses and fulfilling their basic needs demanded large scale industrialization of the nation. The death of Mahatma Gandhi had already blunted the thrust of rural based economy and gave way to the Nehruvian kind of science based socialistic economy and planning. There were clashes
of narrow irresponsible interests revolving around caste, language, community, region, demarcation of boundary, sharing of water and power resources etc. The steep fall in the personal morals of the people resulted in a greater crisis. The sense of dedication insisted by Mahatma Gandhi in all walks of life was replaced by opportunism. The Indian English novelists were quick to respond to the situation and projected it creatively.

Mulk Raj Anand did well in portraying this phase and aspect in his *The Death of a Hero* (1963). The protagonist, Maqbool wonders as to why, instead of putting up resistance to aggression, had people run away from Srinagar? The invasion evokes two types of responses in Kashmir. Some people believed in accepting the Pakistani rule but some others believed in resistance to aggression symbolizing religion as the basis of human dignity as a basis of resistance. His actions raise the objection of regarding religion as the basis for political surrender of human rights and dignity.

The first novel showing conflict between the Gandhian rural economy and fast industrialization and mechanization of the country was *Shadow from Ladakh* (1968) by Bhabani Bhattacharya. The menace of the Chinese aggression on the northern borders of India forces Bhaskar Roy, the Chief Engineer of the Steeltown, to plan commissioning of another furnace for production of steel for the defence needs of the country. This move is resisted by Satyajit, the moving spirit of Gandhigram. The Chinese were mounting pressure for some fifty thousand square miles more at the eastern end of the frontiers and so the government approves of Bhaskar’s plan and dispatches its forces to contain the Chinese aggression. The futility of the Gandhian ideologies against the changed context of time is seen. Bhaskar finds his fulfillment in the Gandhian model of life and ideology. He therefore envisions a happy blend of the two: the spinning wheel and the turbine.

Yet another kind of disillusionment came of Jawaharlal Nehru’s political leadership and his blind pursuit of visions that landed the country to political failures and humiliations. Girish Karnad used the life history of Mohammed Tughlaq to show his disillusionment with Nehru in his play, *Tughlaq* (1972).

The latest in fiction comes from Shashi Tharoor. In his *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), Tharoor uses the mythical framework of *The Mahabharata* to liken Nehru to Dhrirtrashtra. Drawing parallels from *The Mahabharata* and the Indian political scene, Tharoor puts the events of history leading to the partition of the country and the subsequent misuse of power by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. The use of mythical framework of
\textit{Mahabharata} has enabled the novelist to enjoy both distance and freedom to record his reactions to political personalities, history and the political upheavals facing the nation.

Soon after independence, India was plunged into an unprecedented violence at Noakhali, Bihar and Delhi, rendering hundreds of children orphan. The political history had created a trauma in the psyche of thousands of children born on the momentous midnight of India’s independence. Rushdie creates a moving picture of the change in \textit{Midnight’s Children}. The novel deals with the political history of India from the time of Jallianwala Bagh to the end of the Emergency in 1977. The novel shows Saleem’s ordinary - extraordinary life and projects the multitudinous life in India, the squalor, the confusion, exasperation and equally the vitality, charity and silent heroism of the millions.

Another important novelist in this group is Nayantara Sahgal. Her \textit{This Time of Morning} (1965) deals with the important wings of the nation - the politicians and the bureaucrats, failing to acquit their moral and professional responsibilities. The state of affairs with bureaucracy is no better. The bureaucracy has become an institution infected with group alignments and privilege hunting.

Her \textit{Storm in Chandigarh} (1970) deals with the utterly ruinous and dreaded territorial reorganization of states on the unsound linguistic basis. It gathers frustration in the case of Punjab where it repeated itself in the further bifurcation of Punjab into Punjabi speaking Punjab and Hindi speaking Haryana in 1967. It led to the shocking outburst of brutal and calculated violence.

Her next novel, \textit{A Situation in New Delhi} (1977) deals with the aftermath of Nehru’s death, the Naxalite movement and the student unrest. In the two new states, Punjab and Haryana, there were quarrels over boundaries, water and electric power and both claimed Chandigarh to be their capital. It exposes the inner hypocrisy and working of bureaucracy which is supposed to be an ideal and bold model of non-partisan thinking, policy execution and action. The novelist traces the presence of two breeds: one, the fading lot, which was guided by the spirit of service, dedication and learning and the new one, which looks only for privileges, promotion and pleasure.

Her \textit{The Day in Shadow} (1971) shows the farce of big business with the radical politics in the figures of Som and Summer Singh. The old kind of dedicated oil minister, Sardar Sahib, who grew up under the rigors of Gandhi -Nehru era is replaced by the flaunting
figure of a radical leader Summer Singh under the new Prime Minister after the death of Nehru. Summer desired to destroy all the last vestiges of Gandhian from the country. Summer wants to rebuild politics on the dynamics of exploitation and achievement. This leads to interference in national life reflected in the misdirection taken by the younger generation towards violence thus destroying the foundations of both Gandhi and Nehru in national life.

Her next novel, Rich like us (1987) focuses itself upon Emergency which Mrs. Indira Gandhi had imposed upon the nation from June 1975 to March 1977. She is critical of politicians and bureaucracy who form an essential link in running democracy in the nation. Emergency was not merely demoralizing but it was disastrous in many other ways affecting even the freedom of speech. The novelist exposes corrupt politicians and bureaucrats and also condemns passivity in the face of injustice, cruelty and deprivation.

Days of the Turban (1986) by Pratap Sharma analyzes the possible causes of terrorism in Punjab. The novel puts up the idea that Punjab is composite of Hindus and Sikhs all rolled into a big unit. The novelist also gives a glimpse of the way the pro-Khalistanis abroad reacted to the terrorist blood bath in Punjab. The novel traces an apprehension in the mind of Sikhs against the Hindu community marginalizing Sikhs in the state. It is a fine exposition of the terrorist situation in Punjab and of the politics of religion playing with the cultural harmony of the nation.

Upamanyu Chatterjee’s English, August has dealt with the experiences, beliefs and attitudes of Agastya Sen, a bureaucrat. Through him the novelist gives a glimpse of the corrupt administration of bureaucrats. It also speaks about the training in corruption given to the trainee bureaucrats. It portrays how public has been deprived of the various welfare schemes and provisions designed for their benefit.

The latest to arrive in this field is The Salt of Life (1990) by Chaman Nahal. It is the narration of the history of India’s struggle for independence from 1930 to 1941 with Mahatma Gandhi as a key figure. The theatricality of Mahatma Gandhi’s insistence upon discipline in ashramites is pointed. For him, politics was more of a concern for humanity. This aspect of concern for humanity and man has been very well brought out in the novel. The greatest quality of this novel lies in bringing alive the person of a politician for the first time in Indian fiction in English.
Arundhati Roy is a novelist and activist who won the Booker Prize in 1997 for her first novel *The God of Small Things*. The book is semi-autobiographical and a major part captures her childhood experiences in Aymanam. The story primarily takes place in a town named Aymanam now part of Kottayam district in Kerala, India. Malayalam words are liberally used in conjunction with English. Some facets of Kerala life which the novel captures are communism, the caste system and the Keralite Syrian Christian way of life.

Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss* deals as its main themes with migration and living in between two worlds and in between past and present. Set in the 1980s, the book tells the story of Jemuhbai Popatlal Patel, a judge living out a disenchanted retirement in Kalimpong, a hill station in the Himalayan foothills, and his relationship with his granddaughter Sai. The novel shows the encroachment on their lives by a band of Nepalese insurgents and portrays Naxalite movement. Another concern of the novel is the life of Biju, the son of Mr. Patel’s Cook, an illegal immigrant in New York.

To conclude, the novels discussed deal with three kinds of disillusionment - with the ideology of first generation leaders which centers round the tenets of Gandhi and Nehru; with a fallen political conduct of second generation politicians; with the degenerate conduct of bureaucrats preventing political process of change from colonialism to democracy. The disillusionment with application of certain ideologies and tenets of Mahatma Gandhi in novels like *Shadow from Ladakh* and *The Salt of Life* calls not for abandonment but reappraisal in the context of the changed post-independence contingencies. While Nehru’s policies and conduct are severely criticized in *The Great Indian Novel* they are remembered with a sense of loss in the novels of Sahgal. On the whole, the novels present the mood of frustration at the political goings and conduct of men in power and position in the country with dangers in future, calling for second awakening in the masses for action against the malaise.

The Indian political novel in English thus passes through four phases in its development – the novels dealing with the struggle for freedom; the novels dealing with two major developments in the form of partition of India and the liquidation of princely states following the independence of India; the Pakistani and Chinese invasions on India and the novels depicting the general political forces in the country. All these phases show the nature of the political struggle involved and the extent to which they lean towards idealism and present Mahatma Gandhi and his ideologies as dominant influence on the political scene of the time in the first phase. The novels of the second phase turn realistic
in studying the sufferings caused by the partition of India and the inability of the princely states to come to terms with the changed political set-up in the country. The novels in the third phase reveal the threat the neighboring countries pose for India and the need to spell out loyalties and revaluate the ideologies in the changed context of times. The novels of the fourth phase show the pitiable behaviour of characters involved in making poor politics. All these novels explore either the personal or group response of people towards the political movements and the manner in which the lives of the individual or the masses were affected by them. It is in this context that the common man is a helpless pawn in the hands of politics and politicians.

The characters, by and large, act as types - Gandhiites, terrorists, pro-Raj, anti-British, pro-Maharaja, anti-feudalists, idealists and realists. Even though these novels do not deal directly with the conventional framework of politics like party meetings, manifestos and campaigns, elections and intricate machinations of power, they do have embedded in their structures political attitudes either of the times or of the author. These novels show that though the politicians have given up Gandhian ideology, it has not become irrelevant. The violence unleashed during the partition of India is ascribed to the basic savagery rooted in the collective mind of man and to the shortsightedness of the politicians.

These novels survey the impact of political movements and ideologies from the rural masses to the urban Indian with considerable objectivity. Given this background, the Indian political novel in English is as political as is politics political in India. In this case, the political novels deserve to be studied as a genre. These novels mirror the society and life of the times.

The total mood and vision emanating from the political novel is one of disillusionment, defeat, distrust and frustration. Its objectivity is remarkably pristine corresponding to the spirit of democracy in the nation. On the issue of finding a way out of the present political chaos and crisis, Ved Vyas in The Great Indian Novel concludes:

“we are all in a state of continual disturbance, all stumbling and tripping and running and floating along from crisis to crisis. And in the process, we are all making something of ourselves, building a life, a character, a tradition that emerges from and sustains us in each succeeding crisis. This is our dharma.”
With colonization, power just changed hands without changing the plight of the common man. Independence brought new hordes of problems like corruption, terrorism, unemployment, poverty etc. Politics if used positively can bring in great changes. Mahatma Gandhi used politics positively which has its impact around the globe even today. Politics should not be used negatively but to make human lives beautiful and worth living.

From the next chapter onwards, the analysis of the selected novels is done. The first novel to be analysed is Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*. 
References


5. *Ibid.* XIII.


