

**METROPOLITAN CULTURE AND THE MAJOR
CHALLENGES IN SELECT POST 2005
INDIAN ENGLISH NOVELS**



A
THESIS
Submitted to the
University of Kota
For the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
ENGLISH LITERATURE

Supervised by:
Dr. Anita Kothari
Lecturer, Dept. of English
Govt. College, Kota

Submitted by:
Mrs. Vijayata Pareek

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
Govt. College, Kota

February 2016

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work embodied in this thesis entitled “**METROPOLITAN CULTURE AND THE MAJOR CHALLENGES IN SELECT POST 2005 INDIAN ENGLISH NOVELS**” has been carried out by **Mrs. Vijayata Pareek** under my direct guidance and supervision. I certify that the work done and presented in this thesis is original and independent.

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

Date: 24/02/2016

Signature of the Guide

Dr. Anita Kothari

Lecturer, Dept. of English

Govt. College, Kota

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Ph.D. constitutes an intellectual journey, a journey at once arduous and rewarding, journey which I could not have made alone. It would not have been possible to complete the task without the help and support of the kind people around me, only some of whom it is possible to give particular mention here. It gives me great pleasure in expressing my gratitude to all those who have supported me and had their contributions in making this thesis possible.

First and foremost, I must acknowledge and thank The Almighty God for blessing, protecting and guiding me throughout this period. I could never have accomplished this without the faith I have in Him. I am very grateful for His spiritual power as I always fall short of words and feel impossible to describe His grace in words.

I express my profound sense of reverence to my mentor, supervisor and promoter Dr. Anita Kothari for her constant guidance, support, motivation and untiring help during the course of my PhD. I can't imagine my current position without her. It's an honor to get her as my motherly and affectionate supervisor. Her in-depth knowledge on a broad spectrum of contemporary literature has been proved extremely beneficial for me. She has given me enough freedom during my research, and has always been nice to me. I will always remember her calm and relaxed nature. I am thankful to the Almighty for giving me a mentor like her.

A very special thanks to my lovable mother, Mrs. Santosh Pareek whose contribution to all aspects of this Ph.D. no words could do justice to, for walking this journey with me, holding my hands, lifting my spirits, and lighting the way. Then, I would like to appreciate and pay regards in tons to my adorable father, Mr. Dinesh Pareek for all his love, moral support, care

and encouragement, who raised me with love of literature and co-operated in all my pursuits. My husband Varun's name is also needed to mention who co-operated me in whatever way I wanted. My cute son Aarav inspired me to complete the task. My close friends and colleagues Anjali Ramaria and Tushar Nair deserve to get big appreciating words as this task would not have been possible without their moral support and encouragement. My gratitude goes to all the well-wishers who truly are precious part of my life.

To all above mentioned and to the others whose contributions to my work, both tangible and intangible, have been invaluable.

I thank you all deeply with the core of my heart.

Mrs. Vijayata Pareek

Table of Contents

Chapters	Title	Page No.
Chapter 1	Introduction	1-26
Chapter 2	Treatment of Metropolitan Culture in the Selected Novels	27-81
Chapter 3	Ethnic Challenges in the midst of Cultural Erosion	82-134
Chapter 4	Psychological Challenges and the Existential Dilemma	135-181
Chapter 5	Narrative Techniques in the Selected Novels	182-204
Chapter 6	Conclusion	205-223
	Bibliography	224-237



Chapter 1
Introduction

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The postmodern period has opened up fresh avenues for exploration before the human world and human beings are faced with bewildering choices. Postmodernism has broken down boundaries and as a result, the twenty first century Indian novelists writing in English are faced with trans-cultural and transnational issues which give rise to sub-cultural patterns. These patterns then make their appearance in the writings of the postmodern writers. In the postmodern age, works of literature are polished and well crafted products reflecting the global, commercial and socio-economic trends. The novels of the postmodern period written by Indian writers writing in English exhibit a more cosmopolitan culture, sophistication and urbanity. The erstwhile themes of the pre-independence era have gracefully given way to a paradigm shift, in which the complexities of life have been brought to the fore. Several concepts have been deconstructed and ideals have been questioned and transformed. The new generation Indian English novel is a post Rushdian phenomenon. It makes a diversion from the weird and technique conscious fiction of the tradition set by Rushdie. It is free from the craze for modernity and is concerned with real characters and their destiny. Rather it is about reality, the roots of Indian psyche, family centered life, generation gap, to be precise, about the challenges faced by the youth and the irreparable splits that have taken place in their consciousness. Every generation has its own dilemmas and pitfalls, so has the contemporary youth. The new generation English novel is on the whole representational in style, and registers a revival of the traditional narrative manner and explores the significant

role tradition plays in gaining psychic stability. The first thing to be noted about postmodern Indian English fiction is the shift in the locale. Postmodern writers of Indian English novel have gradually but gracefully moved away from the rural orientation of the Gandhian era to the urban based life of metropolitan culture. There is a shift in the thematic concerns of the writers who have left behind the Indian village in order to focus their attention on the metropolises of the country. Many of the writers have ventured to write about life in foreign lands. Within the pages of the Indian novel today, the entire world appears to be a sophisticated village; a global village. The pristine immaculate culture which once pervaded the Indian rural society has encountered a wide variety of urban influences to which has been added the influence of the East-West encounter.

It appears that contemporary writers have concentrated their themes around sociological, diasporic elements, feminine subjects, science and technologies, explorative writings, and much more. India has significantly contributed to the overall world literature. This contribution of India has been chiefly through the Indian writing in English, novelists being in the forefront in this regard. A number of novelists on the contemporary scene have given expression to their creative urge in no other language than English and have brought credit to the Indian English novel as a distinctive force in the world novel writing. To attempt a creative expression on a national scale in an alien medium has seldom happened in human history; and it speaks of the prolific quality of the Indian mind to assimilate the newly confronting situations and the complex dilemmas of modern world. The new English novel exhibits confidence in tackling new themes and experiments with new techniques and approaches to handle the themes. The novelists come to their task without any

preconceived notions of what constitutes literary content. This encourages them to focus on a vast and comprehensive canvas and to invest their themes with epic dimensions.

Thus, in present times, the emerging form of novel bears many new trends of writing which are usually based on metropolitan culture and the major challenges. It is in this context that the research aims at exploring the culture of metropolises with above discussed features undertaken by the selected postmodern Indian English writers and their works. Indian English writers Aravind Adiga, Chetan Bhagat, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Manu Joseph and Tarun J. Tejpal are chosen for the research as they hold centrality in the contemporary literary scenario with their focus basically on the darker aspects of metropolitan life and culture and in a way they are a critique and a window to the contemporary society. They have received national and international recognition in the arena of novel writing. Their works are selected for this study as they are based on various real life incidents happening in metro cities. Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* is a true picture of metropolises like Delhi and Bangalore where chauffeurs are seen murdering their masters for the sake of their benefits, daily news headlines are seen covering such beastly killings; Chetan Bhagat's *The Three Mistakes of My Life* leads with realistic tragic events of Bhuj earthquake and Gujarat's Godhra riots, how such disasters cause havoc in peoples' lives and make them face psychological and ethnic challenges; Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni's *One Amazing Thing* is based on the Haiti earthquake as she is inspired by this realistic incident occurred once and how this put many people in the trauma of psychological and ethnic challenges; Manu Joseph's *Serious Men* presents class conflict as still shown in metropolis Mumbai, and realistically reveals the

psychological and ethnic challenges faced by down trodden people living in tenements; Tarun J. Tejpal's *The Story of My Assassins* deals with the real tragic news of the assassination of the journalist of Tehelka, who exposes corrupt life of underworld people and how he faces challenges to escape from the troubles and paints the disturbing picture of metropolis Delhi. These novels are selected for the research work because of their realistic approach to the lives in metropolises with bitter truths of cultural and ethical erosion. Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni's novel *One Amazing Thing* has been especially selected because it deals with the issues of immigration and multiculturalism, as immigration and multiculturalism are salient features of metropolitan culture nowadays. Without describing these aspects, study of metropolitan culture remains incomplete. Thus, the selected novels justify the theme of research *Metropolitan Culture and the Major Challenges*.

Before going through the metropolitan culture, metropolis can be understood by crowded major cities with urbane characteristics and values. Metropolitan culture can be seen in a region consisting of populous dense, urban core and outlying low-density surrounding territories both of which are socio-economically connected by various industries and infrastructures. It usually encompasses multiple neighborhood, townships, cities, suburbs, exurbs, counties, and even states, where unity in diversity can be observed. Thus, metropolitan culture can be defined as a globalised society where the inhabitants face major challenges to survive and succeed, as it reflects the modern vision of society. Being the representatives of globalised metropolitan era, the selected contemporary novelists write with realistic approach presenting the scenario and various aspects of new challenging society. Through the medium of fiction, they are successfully creating a deep impact on society by their thought-

provoking writings. Moreover, their work reflects a global world with all its regional variations which authentically encompass metropolitan culture where their gaze is confined to metropolises like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, San Francisco etc. Their novels lend a dominant impact on urban elements and major challenges. This they accomplish by their power of multilayered story-telling, hinting thereby the multiplicity and diversity of the metropolitan culture where one lives in. These writers show the metropolitan globalised world basically from the perspective of youth who undertakes all the major challenging tasks to survive and succeed. Their concern is with youngsters who live in metro cities and face many challenges to fulfill their dreams and aspirations. Their novels work as a mirror in which roller coaster ride of youth living in metropolitan society can be observed minutely and with great clarity. This treatment of metropolitan culture has become a core concept in contemporary novel writing and in this research too.

When we talk about metropolitan culture, it is very explicit that culture plays a vital role. The culture of a nation is of utmost importance to the people of a land for emotional and psychological reasons. Indian culture imbibes the best of all that is available by way of attitudes towards life. The Indian village has for long been the repository of culture and it is in the Indian village that one finds the real roots of Indian culture. These rural sites have always had the ability to strengthen the bonds among people through shared habits and customs. A general sense of humanitarian sympathy and respect for all forms of life are a cardinal feature of the Indian rural individual. However, the fast moving pace of life exerted a strong influence on these rural sites and introduced them to a number of external influences. The present phase of cultural confluence across the globe has claimed major shifts in the patterns of

human behavior and its socio-cultural manifestation. Be it the representation through literatures or other performing arts, the changing geo-political contours of the world are clearly visible. In the movement of skilled human resources and resulting cultural configuration, never has there been such shuffling of people and shifting of boundaries, intertwining of histories and overlapping of cultures as observed during the transition of the twentieth and twenty-first century. The advancement of science and technology played a major role in awakening the rural individual from his state of peaceful slumber. More and more individuals left the shelter of the rural nest to seek their fortunes in urban spaces and from thence, they moved on to the huge metropolises. It was only a matter of time that internal migration began on a large scale, bringing thousands of rural individuals to the various metropolises in India. This shifting of rural to urban and often from urban to foreign land for the sake of one's betterment is visible in the selected novels. Moreover, psychological aspects like existential dilemma and anxiety of helplessness, the depressive restlessness, claustrophobia, and rivalry for the apex are also seen at the core and as a result individual is seen surrounded and intertwined with various ethical and psychological challenges and erosion of cultural and moral values.

The present thesis will analyze and critique the selected novels with the leading theme of *Metropolitan Culture and the Major Challenges* as follows: *The White Tiger* (2008) by Aravind Adiga; *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008) by Chetan Bhagat; *One Amazing Thing* (2010) by Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni; *Serious Men* (2010) by Manu Joseph; and *The Story of My Assassins* (2010) by Tarun Tejpal. With the help of these novels, the research depicts in-depth vision of the *Metropolitan Culture* and keenly peeps into its various facets like cultural pluralism, expatriation,

immigration, globalization, and various issues related to caste, class, religion, race, generation, identity, etc. *Major Challenges*, being the other aspect of this research, explores the real metropolis society where characters face ethical and psychological challenges to succeed and survive; they make strenuous efforts to establish their identity. Their psyches are also seen suffering from Existential dilemma. They find themselves people thrown in this world without any reason; and thus, feelings of isolation and hopelessness haunt them and in order to make their lives meaningful they take resort to any means to succeed. Thus, the concerned research work deals with the treatment of consequent issues of metropolitan culture and the described major challenges. Below is an introduction of the leading theme *Metropolitan Culture and Major Challenges in Select Post 2005 Indian English Novels*:

With the help of Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) research work explores a hyper-ambitious protagonist Balram who shifted in metropolitan cities, first Delhi and then Bangalore. He hails from the suppressed, under-privileged peripheries of Bihar. He struggles against the limitations of culture to achieve success at any cost. What ethnic challenges and psychological dilemma he faces to fulfill his dreams give a new dimension to the metropolitan era. Adiga puts forth a lively instance of Balram who suits well in the modern society. The research puts a deep insight into the novel and brings out rural and elite class together and explores the corrupt worlds of both. Metropolitan culture being the main essence in the novel shows devastating tale of political power, its malignity and the depths of power that are out of control in the backgrounds of metropolises, Delhi and Bangalore. The novel holds a mirror to the contemporary society that is unequal, corrupt, unjust and blind. It provides a dark aspect of modern day life in metropolis. It is a realistic ride through a rising

global power and reveals brutality of the metropolitan culture. Its dark sides include corruption endemic to Indian society and politics, familial loyalty versus independence, and communal tensions. Cracking ethical values can be seen at the fore in metropolitan culture. Drawbacks of modern life full of violence, corrupt society and politics, moral and religious disbelief, cracking traditional factors etc are shown. The protagonist resembles a real aspiring person living in metropolis whose indomitable voice shapes a story of struggle, retribution and defiant survival. Even he is seen surrounded with existential dilemma.

Bhagat's *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008) has been observed as an example of metropolitan culture as it revolves around the lives of many aspiring characters living in a growing metropolis, Ahmedabad. Research explores characters seeking for the meaningful life and career of their own choice. Female character, Vidya wants freedom but traditional values and family relationships restrict to let her a life of an independent individual; kid, Ali seems to be in search for identity and fame; and the ambitious youth, Govind, Ishaan and Omi struggle strenuous to succeed in a globalised world of cut-throat competition. These are all realities of metropolitan life where escalating aspirants face ethnic and psychological challenges to reach their destination. Their struggle is shown in the backdrop of real tragic incidents like communal violence (Godhra riots) and Bhuj earthquake. Apart from this, research work throws light on the crucial issues such as corrupt politics intertwined with religion, governmental injustice etc which are very commonly found factors of the metropolitan culture. Psychological expressions like ethos, frustration, depression and isolation of an entire modern generation are also brought out with existential dilemma. Entrepreneurship is always seen as the front forerunner in metropolitan

culture. The research concludes that the novel comes with an optimistic outlook as it has a quest for success and gives a vision and a dream to people who have ambitions in their hearts. As such, ability to struggle seems to be a positive trait in modern youth living in metropolises. Bhagat has endowed the genre with sanguine approach to life. He chooses the personnel from the real-life metropolis. The novel goes around the lives of the youth. He exactly depicts their real-life pictures and portrays all class and cadre of people living in modern age and representing the metropolitan culture with major challenges.

As far as Indian literature is concerned, it has perhaps been easier for it to reflect the new challenges and changes because of the simple fact that its vehicle itself is a globalized language. Some leaders of the new fiction like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni have also been a part of the Indian Diaspora. Living in the West (for brief or long periods), and using English almost like a mother tongue, they have been thoroughly exposed to significant modern western literary movements like post-modernism. At the same time, the best of them continue to have strong roots in India, so that they remain true to the kindred points of India and the West. *One Amazing Thing* (2010) by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni presents various issues of the global world, like multiculturalism, immigration, expatriation etc and narrates intricacies of contemporary concerns. The Diaspora novel is about a multi-cultured group of nine people trapped in a visa office. The novel's genesis is deeply rooted from real disasters, hurricanes Katrina and Rita occurred in 2005 and major California earthquake which created havoc in 1989. The research observes novel collapsing the walls dividing characters and varied cultures as a chorus of voices in one single room. Here, along with cultural pluralism, ethnic and psychological challenges to

survive can also be seen. The novel is a creation and psychology about survival; and also about the reasons to establish self-identities successfully in the metropolitan culture. On the basis of the concerned novel, new identity of the immigrants who validate their cultural past to reconstruct a meaningful present in the new world has been explored in the research. The novel proves theory of existentialism i.e. meaningfulness of human experience itself and makes us aware about what dilemma and challenges have been faced by people living in metropolitan culture to establish themselves and survive successfully in global world. Thus, research examines the novel's theme which deals with bitter experience of immigration and celebration of cultural diversity. It is an interweaving of multiple cultures into one story. Thus, it is perceived that till date, the western impact, the infusion of English literature and European thought, and resulting cross-fertilization have been the means of emergence of Indo-English literature. *One Amazing Thing* is a study of the concept of unity in diversity. Divakaruni has chosen an American metropolitan city San Francisco as the backdrop of her work, since it is not uncommon to find people of various nationalities and cultures rubbing shoulders together in the business of existence. A young graduate student is part of the group, and as the tension of the situation mounts, she suggests that each of them narrate one amazing thing from their lives, which they have never given voice to before. The urgency of the situation is the backdrop against which the individual human experience finds a voice. The one amazing thing that each of them narrates is a collective affirmation of life and its miraculousness. Existential dilemma and quest for survival and identity rotates in all the stories told by characters to each other. Apart from this, cultural erosion is also seen at many places, in almost all the stories told to and by each other. Characters face ethical

challenges in the midst of loss of moral values. Thus, Chitra Banneerjee Divakaruni's novel *One Amazing Thing* is a brilliant portrayal of a blend of cultures, witnessed in a city in the United States. It portrays various aspects of metropolitan culture as well as ethnic and psychological challenges which resembles to the theme of research.

Serious Men (2010) by Manu Joseph is a story about differences between Dalits and Brahmins. Manu Joseph reflects a realistic satirical view on metropolitan life's challenging tasks like love, class, relationships, veneration of science etc. Collisions with an unyielding status quo, ably counterpointing the frustrations of the powerless with the unfulfilling realities of power are highlighted. The novel looks at the competition, ambition and class-divisions of modern era set in the fictitious Institute of Theory and Research in metropolis Mumbai's humid tenements. Caste issue, cultural differences and inequality have become perhaps the most popular theme of novel and caste issue has always been one of the most sensitive and controversial topics in India. Besides, there is a quest for love in novel, so it portrays run away egos and ambitions with a moving portrait of love and its strange workings. The struggler and aspiring protagonist, Ayyan Mani is in quest for success. Working at the scientific institute as lowly personal assistant, he dreams of more for himself and his family. He is not constrained by the traditional values and thus seems to be a person of globalised metropolitan culture. Thus, a Brahmin astrophysicist and his Dalit assistant are the interdependent poles who belong to varied castes. The psychological aspects and ethical challenges of metropolitan culture are introduced in the research. *Serious Men* is an example of the degrading cultural values, psychological conflicts and existential dilemma.

The Story of My Assassins (2010) by Tarun J. Tejpal is an angry true-to-life novel which seems to be a journey of the depths of a planned crime which reflects an empathetic descent of the underclass in metropolitan culture. The novel attempts to unravel contemporary India. It begins as the world-weary protagonist learns that the police have foiled an assassination attempt against him. It deals with several key issues that are faced by individuals in twenty first Century India. Behind all the beauty of several tourist locations in the country, there are several individuals who are facing injustice and humiliation, and constantly live under fear. The author desires to throw light on that section of society never spoken much of, moving past the elite ones. The novel brings to light the life of urchins living at well-known railway stations, who pickpocket every day to survive, and sniff glue to relieve themselves of their worries. It also shows that behind the beauty of the Ganges plains work fearful farmers, who are afraid of being harassed by members of higher castes. It is shown that the urban middle class knows the stratum of modern society best. Through the course of the novel, the light is thrown on the division between Hindus and Muslims in the country. Further, it is noted that in present day India, democracy is nothing but a joke, which is never practiced, due to exploitation by individuals loaded with money and possessing power. The research based on narration leads to the ills and inadequacies of man and modern society where he lives in. Metropolis Delhi is shown as the ultimate place of assassins and seems to be the reality of any metropolitan culture where corruption, fraud and dishonesty have penetrated very deeply into the social set-up. It depicts the modern age world which has terribly gone wrong. Behind the facade, a tale lies of true corrupt world and on its basis, the research speaks of a picture of modern society in which poverty, violence, decay and

death can be seen floating around. It holds up the mirror to the coarser life, which exists close to the civilized one. The research deeply studies about ethical erosion and psychological challenges which include lust for power, sex, violence, governmental injustice and crime based on meanness of modern culture. The research probes multi-layered novel that shows divide of language, wealth and class with an accurate glimpse of metropolitan culture where vivid characters are recognizable in everyday modernized life. Thus, Tejpal captures metropolis Delhi's innards and evokes its power-machinery realistically. This novel is a perfect medium to relate with the theme of research work and marks an exact presentation of contemporary metropolitan culture with all its regional variations. Research acutely examines the scenario of basically dark aspects of the metropolitan culture and major challenges faced by people. Tarun J. Tejpal, a journalist and part of the new elite in India maintains a gripping narrative of a journalist who comes to know that five hit men are on his trail, out to kill him. Although they are captured by the police, the journalist feels a compelling need to learn about their motives and so he launches on an investigation of their lives. The novel is an autobiographical attempt to present the realistic happenings going on in metropolises in day-today life. In the process, he uncovers India in all her aspects from the metropolises to the sleazy slums. The novel is an exposure of postmodern India and almost all the aspects of urbanization and modernization are brought to the fore. Metropolitan life is beset with power, passion, corruption, wealth, disease, poverty, crime and disaster; all woven into one intricate web of novel and the research unravels it all.

There are many similarities between the selected novels as they all minutely explore the various globalized issues and problems, and realistically portray elements

of urban culture. The selected novels are the realistic narratives written by the contemporary novelists of the twenty-first century who themselves are the part of a multi-challenging globalised metropolitan culture. The selected novels are just like social vehicles which exactly and accurately reflect the metropolitan culture and offer an engaging glimpse into people, especially youth's lives and give a vivid record of exactly what happens to them. Their narratives minutely observes aspiring and challenging strugglers who come out of their shell, face various disasters and strive to survive, and make all the attempts to make themselves succeed. How they face various challenges to become successful through their hard work and firm determination is worth focusing in the research work. While struggling, often they are seen surrounded with meaninglessness of life. The theme of research work peeps in the world of struggling people living in metropolis with a hope to make their dreams come true in every venture of life. The research work also throws light on how old trends and moral values are descending as modernity advances. In the concerned research work, modernized culture has been presented with its positive and negative aspects as well. Exploring metropolitan culture along with concerned challenges is the leading theme of the present thesis. The research is based on selected novels which prove all the discussed statements and assertions. The theme is justified in the highlight and support of five selected novels of post 2005 era.

The aim of this thesis is to initiate critical thinking and interpretations of scholars about the problems and challenges related to metropolitan life in India and how scholars and writers have articulated this idea in various literary works related to the postmodern period. A proper understanding of the issues associated with metropolitan life will facilitate scholars and writers to probe deeper into the problems

and challenges, and consequently, help to pinpoint several sensitive and unpleasant repercussions of living a life of existential dilemma in the huge metropolises of India. This will initiate a positive approach to other scholars. The study aims at highlighting the existential issues as they appear in the postmodern novels chosen for the study; and also proposes to delineate how these issues intertwine with metropolitan life and create challenges that are unique to metropolises. The thesis proposes to examine how far the idea of assimilation is reflected in the multicultural, metropolitan life in the Indian metropolises as they appear in the novels, and to what extent they find such an assimilation which is oppressive and disadvantageous. In other words, it proposes to examine the degree to which the old culture has been able to maintain its own in the face of changed environments and circumstances, and to what extent it has added to itself in various ways. It proposes to move forward to a focused study of the challenges in metropolitan culture as they appear in the novels. The purpose is to examine five post modern novels; namely *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga, *The Three Mistakes of My Life* by Chetan Bhagat, *One Amazing Thing* by Chitra Bnnerjee Divakaruni, *The Story of My Assassins* by Tarun J. Tejpal and *The Serious Men* by Manu Joseph.

The objective of the study is to provide readers to identify the problems and challenges related to metropolitan life and to identify the areas of cultural erosion, as well as cultural integration in a fast growing metropolitan culture. The thesis will examine the novels selected for study from the perspective of some related issues, associated with metropolitan life and culture. It will highlight certain psychological and cultural concerns that are revealed in this context, and how they are dealt by the characters.

The limitations of the study are that it will focus wholly on the cultural and psychological aspects of metropolitan life and the challenges encountered in the life of the individual, without touching upon other broad areas of study such as the economic and the feminist aspects. The philosophy of existentialism as put forwarded by Soren Kierkegaard, Jean Paul Sartre etc will be analyzed with reference to the above mentioned novels. The thesis will draw on the ideas of other scholars and writers.

The study *Metropolitan Culture and the Major Challenges in Select Post 2005 Indian English Novels* hopes to be a worthy contribution to knowledge. It is intended to be a study of an aspect of postmodernism and metropolitan culture which has been neglected so far. Several practical aspects of metropolitan societies have hitherto remained in the shade. Metropolitan culture is an integral part of the postmodern context and the study of the various aspects of metropolitan life, its advantages and disadvantages, the major challenges involved in such a lifestyle, the position of the individual in a metropolitan culture, are more in the nature of being unfolding stories. The entire experience of metropolitan culture is a large web into which many voices have been woven and inter woven. It is hoped that the study will prove to be a well articulated voice in order to gain a clearer understanding of the practical implications of life in the Indian metropolises and the challenges to such a lifestyle, as they show up in the postmodern Indian English novels referred to earlier. Literary texts often serve as vast repositories of the culture of a nation, and they highlight the general trend of moral and ethical codes as practiced or upheld within the society of a nation. The postmodern Indian English novels of the period after 2005, selected for the study show a marked shift in sensibilities as well as a cultural turn. Among other things, the proposed study examines the wider implications of the urbanization of rural

India and her rapid advancement towards a metropolitan culture. Such a shift is not only a physical movement for the population, but it is a cultural movement resulting in inter-cultural and multicultural associations.

An attempt is made to probe the various issues of globalization and its impact on metropolitan culture in the research work. The research work tries to go through the inner factors of modernized era with all the pros and cons.

Research work aims to find out the ethnic and psychological challenges being faced by the characters, and tries to prove how factual and real they are in the actual contemporary world. Explanation is sought about what types of efforts they do; what sort of failures they meet with; what solutions they find to cope with these adversities; and how sheer efforts and struggle bring success in their life.

A new shape and dimension is given to the theme as it shows the realistic picture of the globalised metropolitan culture. Attempts are made to show how appropriate, suitable, relevant and intense is the theme *Metropolitan Culture and the Major Challenges in Select Post 2005 Indian English Novels*. Thus, the research theme is just like a challenging question to answer its contemporary relevance and purpose. To prove above mentioned arguments and statements regarding the concerned research theme, appropriate answers are mentioned with suitable explanations in the light and support of detailed analytical study. Particularly these novels are chosen for an intense exploring study because these are found apt for the theme as all have appealed the most as their challenging characters and plot resembles the real metropolitan world. Moreover, the research work identifies recommendations for further research.

The theme *Metropolitan Culture and the Major Challenges in Select Post 2005 Indian English Novels* being contemporary and recent era based, has not much past status. All the selected novels chosen for the research work have been published a few years ago. The topic chosen for the research work is a completely originally created subject based on the realistic aspects of the lives of aspiring youth living in contemporary era of global society. The theme is too new to assimilate this work from others, as not much prior work has been done on metropolitan culture and the major challenges, yet some recent relevant works can be considered as follows:

Ashok Chaskar's published critical work *Multiculturalism in Indian Fiction in English* (2010) asserts that concept of multiculturalism recognizes ethnic diversity within a society. It encourages others to be enlightened by worthwhile contributions to society made by people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Multiculturalism has acquired a wide range in the fields of politics, sociology, anthropology and literary studies. As a social theory, it brings together different themes such as cultural diversity, recognition, mutual concern, and peaceful co-existence of many cultures and sub-cultures. Though multiculturalism opposes cultural hegemony, it appreciates cultural diversity and respects the notion of multiple identities at individual, cultural, ethnic, religious and national levels. The book aims at showing how social theory of multiculturalism helps in maintaining social health through mutual respect, love, tolerance, acceptance, recognition and accommodation of different cultures. It attempts a close examination of Indian novels in English in the light of both support and violation of the principles of multiculturalism by eminent Indian writers. It makes an attempt to look at multiculturalism from sociological perspective and spotlights about how the principles of multiculturalism are infringed or violated in works of

some eminent Indian writers. It attempts a close examination of *Untouchable* by Mulk Raj Anand (1935), *Train to Pakistan* by Khushwant Singh (1956), *Bye Bye Blackbird* by Anita Desai (1971) and *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy (1997). It encourages others to be enlightened by worthwhile contributions to society made by people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Chaskar has taken instances of old books for his critical research on *Multiculturalism*. On the other hand, the present research *Metropolitan Culture and Major Challenges in Select Post 2005 Indian English Novels* highlights multiculturalism with new dimensions having the light and support of recently published novels with a background of aspiring characters and various major challenges faced by them in metropolitan culture. Along with the concept of multiculturalism, the research examines globalization and various issues related to these two aspects of metropolitan culture.

Other book to discuss is Anu Shukla and Sheobhushan Shukla's critical book *Post Colonialism and Fiction in English* (2004) which paves the way for globalization, metropolitanism, and post-nationalism and explains their affinity with fictions. Post-colonialism, a major critical discourse in the humanities, especially in literary studies, has been amply interrogated but needs further interrogation in respect of its potentialities and prejudices, privileges and paradoxes. Whereas it paves the way for globalization and post-nationalism, it also leads to fierce contestation and controversy. It aims at the generation of non-dominative and non-coercive epistemology but politicizes the works and gets mired in the politics of power. Some eminent scholars from distant and different parts of the world make a serious endeavor to define, what has so far remained indefinable, post-colonialism and its various contrary dimensions, its extensions and limitations and its collateral and coterminous sites. The work

would not lay any claim to its being definitive but it certainly offers seminal insights into some current raging questions about post-colonialism, its special affinity with fiction, feminism, ethnic and linguistic issues of self. These writers have examined the process of changing cultural and social patterns in modern times. The discussed work is placed with an historical perspective whereas the present research work relates to the new findings and presents new dimensions. This research work examines the above mentioned statements but in a different way with new arguments and explanations.

Another important work related to Postmodernism and Indian society is S.L. Doshi's book *Postmodern Perspectives on Indian Society* (2010). The book is a methodical study of the major social institutions in Indian society from the postmodern perspective. The book has a decidedly sociological tone and colour and examines modernity, postmodernity, family, village, community and the impact of postmodernism on the various walks of Indian life and culture. Doshi has studied the familial scene in its traditional, modern and postmodern aspects. He has interpreted caste and the village community in the postmodern context. He has made an insightful study of Indian culture in the modern and postmodern contexts. Yet, the subject of metropolitan culture and its fast paced life and the ensuing challenges remain unexplored which this present research tries to explore.

Yet another work in this reference is Dawson Varughese's *Reading New India: Post-Millennial Indian Fiction in English*. It presents an overview of Indian Fiction in English by Indian writers. While fiction is the most interesting genre for the general reader, the story of the story, i.e., an analytical overview of it over a period

of time would equally be interesting especially when it relates to a brief but momentous span of time. And here is such an attempt by Dawson Varughese to focus on the New Indian fiction in English in the new millennium by Indian writers published within India. This is an ambitious and novel project, strenuous though, considering the vast body of literature to be considered. And she has done it with a sense of academic objectivity. *Reading New India: Post-Millennial Fiction in English* is not a critique or a collection of reviews of individual novels or a generalized assessment of the individual writers, but a representation of various trends, themes, motifs, lineaments, zeitgeist, dynamic and conflicting cultural mores and values informing the fiction in hand, and an analysis of the core themes of some of the individual typical novels written in different voices. Dawson opines that the spur was due to Salman Rushdie's success in reaching out to a larger international readership in the 1980s and the Booker Prize for Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997). And the tempo has been maintained with compelling novelists like Aravind Adiga, Vikram Chandra and Chetan Bhagat entering the arena. Capitalizing on the increasing metro culture, Penguin in 2010 launched its 'Metro Reads' targeting the 'reader on the go'. The vibrant New India with its challenges and aspirations is equally agitated with evils like corruption. There is wide thematic diversity in the new fiction - politics, rebellion, terrorism, corporate world, call centers, sexuality, crime etc which are also reflected in the selected novels of the present thesis.

Though, exemplary studies are highlighted, the research work relates to the previous studies as well as differs in many aspects and dimensions. Selected authors and their work for review draw similar conclusions, but comparison and contrast to their views on the concerned theme is foreshadowed in the present research work.

The research work rationalizes the significance of the problem and hence it differs from the discussed works of other authors. Thus, the study relates and resembles to the contemporary novels and its focus is to prove what others have accomplished so far and how this research work differs from their work. If this study would be placed in the context of existing critical works, it is not based on the things that are already known; it is the research which is needed to be known as it deals with psychological challenges and existential dilemma, cultural challenges and treatment of metropolitan culture with its darker aspects in the light of five selected novels of post 2005 period.

The present study *Metropolitan Culture and the Major Challenges in Select Post 2005 Indian English Novels* does not involve working with primary sources in the manner of having personal interviews with the writers. Yet an attempt will be made to conduct a study of the interviews which may have been featured in newspapers and journals. Certain theories and approaches related to the postmodern period like Postmodernism, Existentialism, Multiculturalism and Globalization etc will be applied to the texts selected for this study. Though post modernism period started a long time ago in the field of English Literature, yet it is continued.

The chapter entitled *Treatment of Metropolitan Culture in Selected Novels* examines that the gulf between rural India and metropolitan India which is not as wide as it once was. The Indian postmodernist novel is like a virtual beanbag, and it incorporates within itself, diverse elements relating to every aspect of life. A city is by no means an enlarged village. A village facilitates a sense of homecoming and belonging; a homeliness which is not to be found, generally speaking, in urban spaces, and more so in metropolitan cities, where lifestyles are determined by the

nature of employment and the level of education. The postmodern Indian English novelists have attempted to blur the boundaries between rural and urban, national and global, and in doing so, they have crossed borders and set their gaze on that which is expansive, unfettered and broad. In keeping with this new idea, it is not surprising that the Indian English novel has made a long and arduous journey from the rural to the urban and even to the metropolitan, within the boundaries of the nation and even crossing the national boundaries. When the geo-space changes; attitudes, lifestyles and values often undergo vast changes. The shift in location engenders a shift in aesthetics. This chapter of research examines the treatment of metropolitan culture with reference to the selected novels in a post modernistic approach. Culture of metropolises is shown in all its perspectives.

The next chapter entitled *Ethnic Challenges in the Midst of Cultural Erosion* deals with the aspects of culture and the impact of other cultural influences on the time honoured culture of India. Life in the metropolises is cosmopolitan and embraces the influences of a variety of other lifestyles with greater ease than is possible in rural or quasi urban settings. While there is much to be said in favour of enlightened attitudes, there are some aspects of culture which are rapidly declining. This chapter examines whether the postmodern Indian English novels reveal an erosion of Indian culture in postmodern times, or whether they point towards an integration of various cultural influences. The chapter presents a deep study of multiculturalism with all its nuances and examines multiculturalism as a form of cultural erosion, as well as a means to cultural integration. The postmodern Indian English novels selected for the study reveal the influences of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is a social theory which recognizes and values the existence of several cultures and sub-cultures within

a society; and which opposes the hegemony of a single culture. It recognizes and applauds cultural diversity, and envisages a state of peaceful co-existence for the members of a pluralist society. The preservation of diverse lifestyles helps in building up an integrated community which believes in the healthy exchange of ideas, the spirit of tolerance and the recognition of a core set of values underneath its various layers and colours. The meaning of culture, Indian culture, the erosion of cultural values, the impact of other cultures on Indian culture and multiculturalism as an integral part of metropolitan life are examined in the light of the selected novels.

Next chapter entitled *Psychological Challenges and Existential Dilemma* is a critical and comparative study of all the five novels chosen for the study, namely, *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga, *The Three Mistakes of My Life* by Chetan Bhagat, *One Amazing Thing* by Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni, *The Three Mistakes of My Life* by Chetan Bhagat, *Serious Men* by Manu Joseph and *The Story of My Assassins* by Tarun J. Tejpal. The quest for identity involves the characters of the novels selected for the study in an eternal search for more fulfilling experiences. It deals with the inner landscape of the characters in their search for their own particular truths. The quest for identity brings about a deep feeling of alienation and isolation. Embroiled in a series of unhappy or unfulfilling situations, the characters experience all forms of anxiety and despair, which may be termed as the Existential dilemma. This drives them to act against the norms laid down by society.

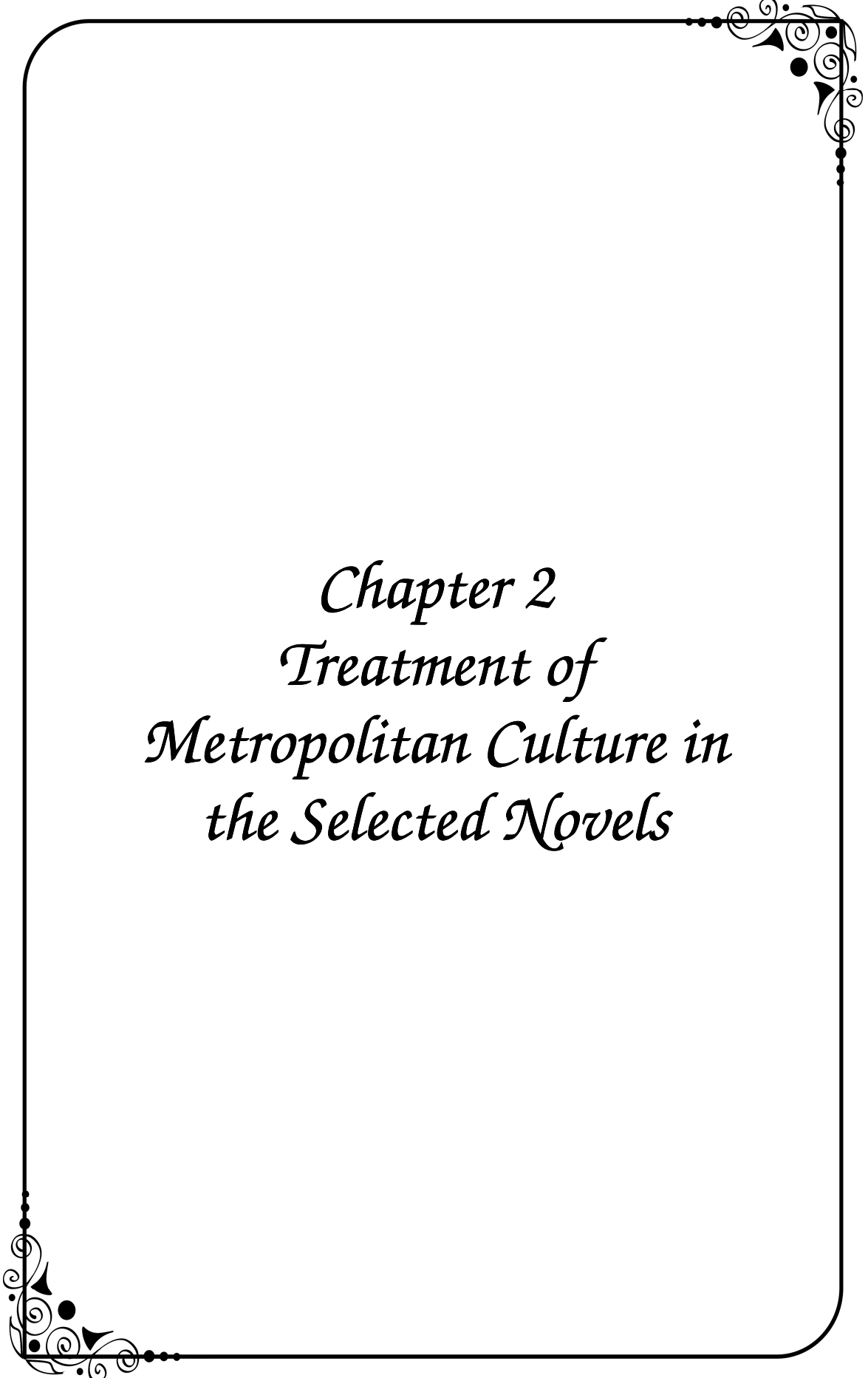
Next chapter entitled *Narrative Techniques in the novels selected for the Study* deals with the various techniques of narration used in the chosen novels. Narrative techniques, a brief introduction, kinds of narrators, embedded narratives, narrating

time and an analysis of the titles of the novels selected for the study is described. This chapter by the help of the examples chosen from the novels tries to prove that how the narrative techniques makes the work more compelling and effective in relation with the theme.

The conclusion aptly and neatly sums up the ideas and themes put forth in the preceding chapters and evaluates the selected novels as study of the challenges faced in metropolitan culture. The selected Indian English novels hold its gaze steadily on the metropolises in India. It holds on tenaciously to the inhabitants of the metropolises, their attitudes to life, the challenges they are faced with, and their ways of dealing with the challenges. It also gazes on the darker aspects of metropolitan culture in which corruption, violence, meanness, crime etc are highlighted along with psychological conflicts hanging on in the minds of all the characters, either major or minor. In order to pour extracts of meaning in life, they choose and tread on immoral paths. The novels examine that high flying modern urban culture is destroying Indian culture and tradition. Money and selfishness has taken place of human affection. Materialistic success of urban world has wiped out all human values. Selected novels for the research are like reflection of urban culture where all human relationships can be examined losing their values. Existential dilemma encourages one to find meaning in life either from ethical or unethical sources. Even, people living in metropolitan culture don't hesitate to commit crime in order to make their dream come true. Their undeserving aspirations make them tread on illegal path and as a result violence and corruption prevail in modern society. The postmodern individual of metropolitan India as shown with the support of the novels places great value on his personal freedom and the enhancement of his own life. He does not wish to sacrifice his

personal freedom to any higher authority, whether divine or man-made. He wishes to remain unfettered in his choices. Thus, the research work deals with the culture of metropolis with ethnic as well as psychological challenges faced by the characters in the selected novels. These characters resemble to the real people living in metropolises from all perspectives. Along with the portrayal of the darker aspects, the aim of the novelists is to bring about reforms in the contemporary society.





Chapter 2
Treatment of
Metropolitan Culture in
the Selected Novels

CHAPTER 2

Treatment of Metropolitan Culture in the Selected Novels

This chapter aims to observe minutely the life in metropolis. Here, the word culture in the title is not used literally but it deals with the life of metropolis in general. How life is going in metropolis and what happens there with inhabitants is shown by the characters presented as individuals. Basically, dark aspects are revealed when peeped inside their lives. This chapter is an attempt to unveil the inner sides of the characters. This chapter is justified in relation to the characters and novels chosen as they express the realistic scenario of metropolises.

India has always been primarily a land of villages, and a large portion of the Indian population has been rustic. However, the last quarter of the twentieth century witnessed a complete metamorphosis in the lifestyles of the Indian population. As India entered the twenty first century, she geared herself to an entirely new orientation, whereby began to shed some of her ethnicity, to embrace a postmodern, metropolitan identity. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to study the trajectory of the change from rural India to metropolitan India, and from metropolitan India to shifting in foreign country. The gulf between rural India and metropolitan India is not as wide today, as it was in the past. Life in rural India fostered a sense of belonging; a feeling of homeliness which can only be defined in emotional terms. However, life is always calling people to better opportunities and more promising careers and life styles. Politics, religion and economy join forces to lure the individual away from his rural home and soon the stage is set for a transformational journey to unfold. The postmodern Indian English novelists have attempted to blur the boundaries between the rural and

urban set up; and in the process, the national and global scenario too are impacted. Postmodern Indian English novelists have a fascination for the broad, expansive and unfettered side of metropolitan culture.

Seemingly, as a result of novelists' attention towards metropolitan culture, Indian English novel has gone through sea changes since its inception and has attained a whole new dimension. In a few past years, shifting from rural to metropolitan area in Indian English novel can be seen with crystal clarity. The early pioneers of modern Indian English novels were in favor of projecting rural Indian sensibility and problems of rural masses, but currently the giant wheels of industrialization led vast growth of metropolitan cities. Such fast growing modern metropolitan culture became the laboratory experience for the Indian English novelists. The metros like Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, Chennai, Bangalore, Ahmedabad etc became the focal points of Indian English novel. The selected contemporary Indian English novels based on the theme of metropolitan culture reflect Indian middle-class anxieties surrounding globalization and social-cultural change. The recent proliferation of foreign business process outsourcing companies in India has changed the financial and lifestyle opportunities available to young, urban Indians who embrace what they perceive to be westernized lifestyles. Thus, the shift from rural to metropolitan and western way of living can be easily examined. Nowadays, culture of metropolises resembles to western living as well as thinking.

Metropolis is a Greek term which means the mother city. A metropolis can roughly be defined as a large urban area, which is an important political, economic and cultural center within a country, and which is an important hub for trade and

commerce and which has regional, national and international connections. The term now applies to any large, important city in a country. It refers to a metropolitan area, which implies an urban center interconnected to a cluster of cities around it. The term is directly related to the concept of a global city, having a definite impact on all forms of global life through the socio-economic medium. The rise of globalization has encouraged travel and communications and advanced levels of producer services. In India, there are several metropolitan cities, all of which are thickly populated. The term *metropolitan* enjoys a fluidity of meaning, but it comprises a major urban space with suburban areas surrounding it.

Metropolises, metropolitans or, more popularly, metro cities can very much be identified by the sky-scraping buildings, huge shopping-malls, smooth and accessible roads, technically advanced hospitals, establishment of various corporate units, pleasing restaurants and other such amenities. These metropolitan cities in current India are also very much economically well developed, with the Central Government shelling out every kind of treasure to make Indian metropolises appear the most appropriate to the overseas market. Metropolises are fashioned with modern facilities and comforts of all kinds, which bring umpteen aspiring ambitious people in search of prospects to fulfill their dreams. They also incessantly furnish excellent means of enjoyment and fun, with the contemporary Indian state of affairs also attracting the night life revelers enjoying to their heart's content in a class and section of their own. Educated, affluent, fashionable and gorgeous outsiders are the cosmopolitans in metro cities. On the other hand, the laborers from the northern states are merely 'migrants'. Metro cities welcome all sorts of outsiders with open arms. Thus, metropolitan culture exists in metropolises which are large urban areas having significant economic, political

and cultural centers for a country or region, as an essential hub for regional and international connections and communications. International communication gives birth to a term known as *global city (world city)* which means a city that has a direct and tangible effect on global affairs through socio-economic means. The term has increasingly become familiar, because of the rise of globalization i.e. global finance, communications and travel. The conditions of doing business have rapidly changed. The World Wide Web (WWW) and related advances in technology has significantly affected the way organizations operate their business in this 'global village'. This global village is interconnected and thus termed as globalization which is a symbol of modernization. Since, metropolitan culture is concerned with various wider socio-cultural and political challenges along with dark aspects whose glimpse can be seen in the selected novels based on glittering metropolises in the following factors: modernization; changing living standards, i.e. lust for luxurious life and search for more; liberalization; industrialization; raging ambitions for career and strive to eradicate poverty; changing aspects in human relationships; corruption; unemployment; rapid increase in various institutes regarding socio-economic, cultural, educational and scientific welfare; over-crowd; growing slums; trade raising from internal, domestic, regional, national, international and finally global status; national-international meetings of political parties, sporting events and foreign affairs; link between countries via transport and network via telecommunication; multiculturalism; immigration; and urbanization (urban development) as a result of migration from villages to cities, and from cities to foreign countries.

The landscape of contemporary literature has been transformed by the rising tide of globalization; texts are now crossing the borders of nations and cultures as

newly emerging authors express myriad voices of those once considered the downtrodden. The landscape of contemporary literature has been transformed by the rising tide of globalization; texts are now crossing the borders of nations and cultures as newly emerging authors express myriad voices of those once considered the subaltern. In today's global world, the urban and rural opposition is increasingly becoming a more relevant marker of the acculturation of foreigners whose adoption of national values is reflected by the spaces they inhabit. As they bring with them traditions related to the healing and balancing forces of the earth, immigrants prompt a reconsideration of the urban and rural dichotomy in the metropolitan spaces they come to inhabit. When cultural difference arises, it is still in nature that the answers are sought. In this instance, the rural, is opposed to the urban, associated with the erasure of differences triggered by globalization and is invested with values related less to integration than to the preservation of the authenticity. The world (and India) since 2005 has been passing through unprecedented proliferation of culture. Globalisation, explosions in information technology, new market economics in book publishing and promotion, and other factors have not only affected a lot of social mobility but also new definitions of the changing realities. There has been considerable immigration, which has created a sizeable Diaspora of Indians in both developing and developed countries. In fact, diasporic writing has of late been very influential. As Monica Ali Says in *Atlantic* series of essay, *Borders Crossing*:

In our age of globalization, when immigration and the Internet and multinational conglomerates have made cultural transmission across borders easier than ever, does the idea of a national literature still have meaning?

The five selected post 2005 Indian English novels for research work i.e. *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga, *The Three Mistakes of My Life* by Chetan Bhagat, *Serious Men* by Manu Joseph, *The Story of My Assassins* by Tarun J. Tejpal and *One Amazing Thing* by Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni closely examine the metropolises respectively Delhi, NCR, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Kolkata, Mumbai and New York as grappling with major challenges of enormous proportions. Considering the above discussed aspects, research on the second chapter *Treatment of Metropolitan Culture* with all pros and cons is done with a keen observation and explanation on the basis of *Select Post 2005 Indian English Novels* as follows:

The White Tiger is like a mirror of Delhi life. This novel is selected for the study because it suits to the theme of metropolitan culture and justifies the work. It covers all the aspects related to the culture of metropolises. It exactly examines the lively and realistic picture of metro life with the backdrops of rampant corruption, greed, inhumanity and poverty. Simply, it deals with the treatment of the metropolitan culture with its myriad shades. Mainly darker aspects of the metropolitan culture can be observed. Balram's rise through India's stagnant class system is exemplary of a good entrepreneur. Here, urbanization can be seen as Balram leaves his birthplace and sprawling family behind in the village of Laxmangarh and heads to the city of Delhi in search of a better life. He uses the opposing concepts of darkness and light to mark the contrast between rural life on the mud banks of Ganges and life in the modernized city Delhi. As he says, "Like all good Bangalore stories, mine begins far away from Bangalore. You see, I am in light now, but I was born and raised in Darkness." (14) In Delhi, he seeks employment and soon discovers that privileged classes of India inspire him to attain independence and to work for himself.

However, he soon finds out that the price of freedom is costly and extreme in metropolitan culture. Portrait of dark aspect of metropolitan culture is racked and unveiled by corruption and servitude. The downtrodden, uneducated son of a rickshaw puller turned into amoral entrepreneur and killer. Class resentment is shown in the novel by Adiga as the novel portrays and provokes modern India's truth where poor people suffering from tuberculosis can't even get the proper treatment. The novel introduces a grotesque caricature of the poor in public imagination. This caricature primarily focuses on the filthiness, barbarity, and sub-standard quality of economic, social, emotional and intellectual lives of the poor. Balram is the representative of such a poor class man who is shown crude, vulgar and mouthpiece of bitter statements. The inability to see the poor as capable of dignity dehumanizes them and makes them victims to be targeted for intervention rather than agents themselves of drastic change. Whether, be it urban or rural poverty, the novel provides a good illustration of the contradiction between concern for the poor and ignorance of the political economy underlying the suffering of poor with an instance of tuberculosis. Tuberculosis is a death sentence to the poor and hence proved to be a major cause of malnutrition. Poor people fear and endure this disease which kills 1000 people a day as a result of corrupt politics which makes a mockery of democracy. Novel presents the brutal injustices of modern Indian society. Protagonist is also shown as such an exemplar who reflects an extraordinary rise from village teashop waiter to succeed as an entrepreneur in the alienated, post-industrial and call center hub of metro Bangalore where bribery, corruption, skullduggery, toxic traffic jams, theft and murder are the commonly found sights. Metro cities like Bangalore draw people from villages in the discussed process of urbanization. Balram has come from what novel calls the Darkness- the heart of

rural India, and manages to escape his family and poverty by becoming chauffeur to a landlord from his village, who goes to metro city Delhi to bribe government officials, the servant who kills his master to achieve his freedom. Really a pathetic dark perspective of the metropolitan culture in emerging India is shown. Humanity stands at the crossroads, confronting crises so profound, all encompassing, and alarming that this moment is seen as unprecedented in human history. The novel teems with indignities masquerading as employee duties where Delhi rises like a more Eastern Dubai which experiences the pangs of urbanization that racked the west two centuries ago. The pulse of metropolitan culture is seen peeping through the window of New Delhi, the capital of the largest democratic nation of the world. Thus, the novel gives following instances where we relate the research from aspects of inequality, difference between living standards of rich versus poor, corruption, pollution, traffic jam, over-crowd, growing slums, poverty, various sorts of pollution, challenges for inhabitants living in busy metro lives etc.

The novel shows a carefree life of the upper class and the hard, grim and pathetic life of the lower class. Especially Delhi life is primarily to be noticed where this inequality is visible fairly. When at first, novel talks of metropolitan culture in the novel in Balram's conversation with Wen Jiabo, he says:

Now since I doubt that you have rickshaw pullers in China or in any other civilized nation on earth-you will have to see one for yourself. Rickshaws are not allowed inside the posh parts of Delhi, where foreigner might see them and gape. Insist on going to old Delhi, or Nizamuddin- there you'll see the road full of them- thin, sticklike men, leaning forward from the seat of a bicycle, as they pedal along a carriage bearing a pyramid of middle-class flesh-some fat man with his fat wife and all their shopping bags and groceries. (27)

The White Tiger is brought in the study as critique of metropolitan culture squarely at the economic and political elites in Delhi and the technology entrepreneurs of Mumbai and Bangalore. Novel shows Balram as one of the persons, their struggles, their sour experiences, dreams, beliefs, and their cultural alterations to succeed at any cost. Novel offers a completely unadorned portrait of the metropolitan culture. It is an authentic scenario of the modernized India with a character who accurately resembles to an authentic person dwelling in the metropolitan culture and shows a severe urge to make himself a remarkable identity. He is shown as a rural Indian trying to move up in the world. Balram Halwai's determination to leave behind poverty of his childhood and rise above his caste lifts the veil of life in modernized India and reflects the metropolitan culture. He changes his lifestyle and goes against his beliefs to allow him to become successful. One can trace the stark changes in Balram. He alters his beliefs from the beginning to the end on what is "right" in his mind and what he used to believe was right. He fights and struggles to break free of many physical and metaphysical "cages" such as his job, caste, or his small living quarters. As Balram progresses through his life, he seems to lose his human ability to care for others. He makes his life begin to appear like the sort of awful road accident and he seriously avoids while driving the insane streets of Delhi. Here, the novel depicts conniving driver devouring people and vicariously experiences the biting darkness of the upwardly mobile Indian underclass. It is seen as a way for the novel to sort through and come to terms with the poverty, desperation, conniving, theft, and murder that made it possible for Balram to join the ranks of the upwardly mobile in metro city Bangalore. His attitudes towards his master Ashok and the subsequent murder of his own family seems at the vengeful family love, and beyond the rare

misty-eyed lament about missing his village and his family, no affection for anything from his former life. They are the means by which and reasons that he is kept in the “Rooster Coop”, an ideological analogy to describe the social circumstances in which people such as Balram lives. He portrays his master and himself as victims of a corrupt metropolitan world. But there is no joy anywhere seen in Balram’s life. His family is shown as an “oppressive and evil force that can and should be sacrificed to get ahead in life”. The accurate picture of brutal and malign thoughts of a corrupt and wicked person is portrayed who succeeds by all the wrong means in the metropolitan culture. Actually man and the metro Delhi are interconnected, each one has affected the other and at times it appears that man has not only lost his originality rather has degraded and debased himself and cannot escape his decline, and this declination corruption continues in chains for top to bottom. As Balram commits about the transformation of two innocent people into corrupted ones:

All these changes happened in me because they happened first in Mr. Ashok. He returned from America an innocent man, but life in Delhi corrupted him and once the master of Honda City becomes corrupted, how can the driver stay innocent. (197)

Crime, murder and dangers of every sort lurk in the dark corners of a metropolitan city. Not all men are criminals, yet there is a burgeoning of criminality seen in humans, in the vast spaces of a metropolitan city, in words of protagonist Balram:

Just because drivers and cooks in Delhi are reading *Murder Weekly*, it doesn’t mean that they are all about to slit their masters’ necks of course, they’d like to. Of course, a billion servants are secretly fantasizing about strangling their bosses- and that’s why the government of India publishes this magazine and

sells it on the streets for just four and a half rupees, so that even the poor can buy it. You see, the murderer in the magazine is so mentally disturbed and sexually deranged, that not one reader would want to be like him- and in the end, he always gets caught by some honest hardworking police officers (ha!), or goes mad and hangs himself by a bed-sheet after writing a sentimental letter to his mother, or primary school teacher, or is chased, beaten, buggered and garroted by the brother of the woman he has done in. (125-26)

A realistic observation of corrupt metro life can be observed when Balram aspires to become a millionaire by wrong means and imagines his life further in following way:

Every day, on the roads of Delhi, some chauffeur is driving an empty car with a black suitcase sitting on the backseat. Inside the suitcase is a million, two million rupees, more money than that chauffeur will see in his lifetime. If he took the money he could go to America, Australia, anywhere, and start a new life. (174)

Besides, the corruption rampant among the people of Delhi, it is also captured that how corrupt administrating services harass inhabitants in metro cities and make their earnings:

The main thing to know about Delhi is that the roads are good, and the people are bad. The police are totally rotten. If they see you without the seat belt, you'll have to bribe them a hundred rupees. (124)

Through the support of novel, study in this chapter has also brought many environmental, social, cultural, political and moral drawbacks before the people living in metropolises. There are a few instances cited from the novel which are clear pointers to environmental degradation in our country. Through these reflections of environmental issues in *The White Tiger*, Adiga seeks to draw the attention of the

country and the world at large to the imminent disaster threatening our planet in the form of 'Environmental Degradation' along with other discussed dark aspects. The people cannot breathe outside the car rather the people sitting in car breathe 'just nice, cool, clean, air-conditioned air'. The traffic jam a common problem in Delhi and NCR is mirrored clearly as:

There was a fierce jam on the road to Gurgaon every five minutes the traffic would tremble we'd move a foot-hope would rise- then the red lights would flash on the cars ahead of me, we'd be stuck again. Everyone horned every now and then, the various horns, each with its own pitch, blended into one continuous wail that sounded like a calf taken from its mother. Fumes filled the air, wisps of blue exhaust glowed in front of every headlight, the exhaust grew so fat and thick it could not rise or escape, but spread horizontally, sluggish and glossy, making a kind of fog around us. Matches were continually being struck- the drivers of auto-rickshaws lit cigarettes, adding tobacco pollution to petrol pollution. (137)

A perfect glimpse of metropolitan culture can be seen as how pollution of metro cities have spoiled the life and health of people:

Rush hour in Delhi... Cars, scooters, motorbikes, auto rickshaws, black taxis, jostling for space on the road. The pollution is so bad that the men on the motorbikes and scooters have a handkerchief wrapped around their faces- each times you stop at a red light, you see a row of men with black glasses and masks on their faces (133). There was a good reason for the face masks; they say the air is so bad in Delhi that it takes ten years off a man's life (133). To my left I saw the domes of the President's House-the place where all the important business of the country is done. When the air pollution is really bad, the building is completely blotted out from the road... (134). The entire city is masked in smoke, smog, powder, cement, dust. It is under a veil. When the veil is lifted, what will Bangalore be like? (317).

The study has also highlighted the water pollution issue with special reference to the river Ganga as Balram portrays about its filthiness to the Chinese Premier as follows:

No!—Mr. Jiabao, I urge you not to dip in the Ganga, unless you want your mouth full of filth, soggy parts of human bodies, buffalo carrion, and seven different kinds of industrial acids. (15)

Water Pollution is also a common enough sight in most parts of India, where men and animals partake of water from the same source:

Ponds in the middle of those fields choked with lotuses and water lilies, and water buffaloes wading through the ponds and chewing on the lotuses and lilies...(14).

Moreover, the metropolises are attempting measures for redevelopment. Redevelopment involves a lot of political issues and so it remains largely ineffective. As more and more people move into metropolitan cities looking for survival and growth, more and more slums are created in order to house them. On the contrary, the dark side of India reveals a different scenario where between 20 and 40% of major city population is living in slums, the highly visible squalor throughout India pounds upon local resources, especially considering the severe lack of sanitation infrastructure. Through startling and shocking images of line of men in the slums squatting in a row to defecate as small children play in a river of sewage behind them, Adiga brings home this truth in a brutal way:

The men were defecating in the open like a defensive wall in front of the slums... The wind wafted the stench of fresh filth towards me... The stench of faces was replaced by the stronger stench of industrial sewage. (260)

The Indian cityscape is dotted with slums which unfortunately form a part of the urban landscape. The space crunch is further jeopardized by rapid migration. Affordable housing is one of the major challenges in the metropolitan way of life. Land costs in the metropolitan cities in India are practically astronomical. Even the peripheral areas are rarely affordable, and even when they are affordable, they are seriously deficient in even the basic amenities. Urbanization plays a key role in raising the economic standard of a nation. Economic prosperity is closely linked to industrialization, modernity and social development. The trend of migrating to urban spaces from the rural homes is fast increasing; and rapid migration is bringing to the fore, the need for planned urbanization. Clearly, India is on the upbeat, but urbanization has not been successful in keeping up to speed with the urban dwellers' basic needs. Slums proliferate in almost all the metropolises of India. The plights of the poor persons who have migrated from villages "the darkness" to capital "the light" in order to make their lives better are also captured in the study. These village people, the seekers of material pleasures have got nothing in the city and they are 'still in the darkness', in which hundreds of them, there seemed to be, on either side of the traffic, and their life was entirely affected by the jam. Slum population in metropolitan cities poses a major challenge; and is increasing at alarming rates, keeping in mind the fact that Indian cities are sadly deficient in even the basic living standards and amenities such as clean drinking water, sanitation, electricity and housing are far from satisfactory. As the narrator in the novel *The White Tiger* articulates:

And our nation, though it has no drinking water, electricity, sewage system, public transportation, sense of hygiene, discipline, courtesy or punctuality *does* have entrepreneurs. (4)

At another place the miserable lives of the poor living by the sides of the road are visible in the novel:

Thousands of people live on the sides of the road in Delhi. They have come from the darkness too- you can tell by their thin bodies, filthy faces, by the animal like way they live under the huge bridges and overpasses, making fires and washing and taking lice out of their hair while the cars roar past them. These homeless people are a particular problem for drivers. They never wait for a red light- simply dashing across the road on impulse. And each time I barked to avoid slamming the car into one of them, the shouting would start from passenger's seat. (120)

Crowds of people pour into the metropolises of India from various parts of the country in search of work, many of them may be found living in the open, or under a bridge which is still under construction. The tenements of the poorer sections of society are deplorable. Arvind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger* underlines the fact that ultimately, an individual is often forced to just go about his work, without thinking much about the state of affairs:

Noises woke me up. The wall was covered with cockroaches, which had come to feed on the minerals or the limest one in the plaster; their chewing made a continuous noise, and their antennae trembled from every spot on the wall. Some of the cockroaches landed on top of the net; from inside, I could see their dark boohes against its white weave. I folded in the fibre of the net and crushed one of them. The other cockroaches took no notice of this; they kept landing on the net- and getting crushed. *May be everyone who lives in the city gets to be slow and stupid like this*, I thought, and smiled, and went to sleep. (126).

While it is true that the nation has witnessed a sea change in metropolitan governance in the past few decades, there is a wide disparity in the level and nature

of amenities which are made available to the slum populations and the residents of elite colonies. The process of globalization is an ongoing one and it is expected to increase at a faster pace with the passage of time. However, it has weakened time tested and long standing institutions like marriage and family, community and communal life, resulting in vulnerability and imbalances at the social and cultural levels. More and more people in metropolises are developing coping strategies in order to ensure for themselves a better quality of life. Metropolitan cities have acquired a glamour and vibrancy because of their links at the national and the international levels. Global cities have developed their own economic strategies which have given a boost to the development of industries and big business houses. The lack of a balanced settlement structure which ensures a better quality of life and which is sustainable too is the prime need of the hour. All these pose major challenges before the development in the metropolises in India. Unbalanced development poses serious threats and challenges to the general quality and well being of the residents of metropolitan cities.

The call of a metropolitan city is irresistible to those who seek their fortunes in places away from the rural homeland. There is an unending demand for both skilled and unskilled workers; for professionals and managers alike. This demand paves the way for struggling aspirants who shift from villages to cities in order to make their dreams come true:

Go to any pub or bar in Bangalore with your ears open and it's the same thing you hear; can't get enough call-centre workers, can't get enough sales managers. There are twenty, twenty-five pages of job advertisements in the newspaper every week. (54)

Besides, there are innumerable examples in the novel which give graphic pictures of the busy life of metropolis Delhi from the 'Hotel Sheraton' the finest in Delhi where 'late night drinking' and accidents are so common, 'the rich people living' big housing colonies like 'Defense Colonies, or Greater Kailash or Vasant Kunj' and inside their colonies the house having numbers and letters:

'But this numbering and lettering system' follows no known system of logic. Delhi is the place where all the roads look the same, all of them go around and around grassy circle' 'where men are sleeping, or playing cards, and then for more roads go off from it'. So people 'just keep getting lost and lost, and lost in Delhi'. (119)

Thus, by sketching vividly the life of Delhi, novelist paints a graphic and disturbing picture with strikingly different aspects of modern metropolitan culture. The study has drawn the picture of metropolitan culture where governmental promises are yet to be fulfilled and we have miles to go before such fake declarations. Despite all false proclamations one cannot brush aside the fact that India has yet to win many fights with poverty, corruption and equality. Thus, one cannot stay away from the reality of our westernized India stricken with the ailments of greed, corruption, inhumanity, poverty, diseases, pollution and conflicts regarding division of class, caste, wealth and religion. Therefore, the conclusion is drawn that *The White Tiger* is a realistic mirror of metropolis Delhi in which one can look at another world of metropolitan culture. Metro life of Delhi is a window from one can estimate the state of entire Nation. The novel has proved that despite being a growing economy and super power on one hand India has her inhabitants poor still and Delhi is small part of the Nation from where one presume the state of entire Nation.

This chapter of the study observes that in the series of new trend in Indian English fiction, Chetan Bhagat's *The Three Mistakes of My Life* is a representation of metropolitan culture with some of its considerable issues and people living in, especially youth. The novelist has emphasized on the metropolitan culture with youth's perspectives. What strikes first about this novel is the fact that it is written about youth living in metropolitan culture who are ambitious, passionate and carry the same moral, social and religious dilemmas as many of the young Indians today. Today, everyone's motto is to live for one's own self. He does not bother about anything or care for others. He has a growing interest in metropolitan culture in which there is no place for emotions and feelings. Protagonist, Govind's efforts to establish himself and his friends, making extra money through cricket coaching and mathematics tuitions, the communal politics played in India, the death of his friend and how all these events became challenges in his life. Further, it is noticed that Indian youth culture has not remained Indian because of globalization in each and every domain, in fact, it has drastically changed. They changed their styles, interests, attitudes, perspectives, languages, habits etc. The novel entuses youth to purge untainted obstinacy of the social system. As knowledge is ever growing and never ending youth is ready to struggle a lot to be fit in this globalized situation. Metropolitan youth culture has been transformed as a mix culture and transcended boundaries of one culture, society, region, religion, language etc.

The selected novel for study *The Three Mistakes of My Life* portrays the culture of a city which is growing in the direction of a metropolitan city. The writer adopts a defensive attitude when he speaks of this city, as it is not as big as a metropolitan city, yet it has the homeliness of a small town and all the modernization of a large city.

I know Belrampur is not Bandra, but why should I defend being called a small town person as if it is a bad thing? A funny thing about small towns is that people say it is the real India, I guess they do acknowledge that at one level the India of the big cities is fake. Yes, I am from the old city of Ambavad, and proud of it. We don't have as many fashion shows and we still like our women to wear clothes. I don't see anything wrong with that. (8)

In the novel, the writer looks at the cities of India which are progressing towards becoming metropolises in all of their aspects, but which are not yet considered metropolitan cities:

Yes, Ahmedabad is my city. It is strange, but if you have had happy times in a city for a long time, you consider it the best city in the world. I feel the same about Ahmedabad. I know it is not one of those hep cities like Delhi, Bombay or Bangalore. I know people in these cities think of Ahmedabad as a small town, though that is not really the case. Ahmedabad is the sixth largest city in India with a population of over five million. But I guess if you have to emphasize the importance of something, then it probably isn't as important in the first place. I could tell you that Ahmedabad has better multiplexes than Delhi or nicer roads than Bombay, or better restaurants than Bangalore- but you will not believe it. (8)

The 3 Mistakes of My Life is an example of an ideal novel of metropolitan culture. The novel justifies the theme of metropolitan culture and major challenges as Ahmedabad is shown as a growing metropolis where characters bear aspirations to succeed in their goals. They want a free life style in which parents' role and interference is not much liked or welcomed. Inhabitants of this city, especially youth indulge in all sorts of worldly pleasures. Pre-marital affair and sex become as an essential part in youth's live. Other characters are also shown as social rebels who remind us the *Angry Young Men* that dominated English novel in the 1950's. Place

of action of the novel is set in the hustle and bustle of metropolitan culture Ahmedabad where life moves at fast speed. It has the protagonist Govind with his passion and acumen for accounts and business, it has Ishan for whom cricket is the element around which his life revolves and it has Omi, a priest's son and loyal friend who is ready for anything that his friends dream of, is obsessed and concerned with religion because of his parents' attachment with the city temple. The novel describes the story of these three aspiring friends Govind Patel, Ishaan and Omi, who have ambitions to get succeed in their desired arenas. These characters resemble to every youngster who lives and struggles in metropolitan culture to succeed. The three friends have occupied with different life styles, so, business, cricket and religion seem to govern the life of these growing strugglers. Govind is ready to set-up his own business. He is shown a man of strong and practical outlook and to be successful, he projects himself to be less emotional and more practical in his life. Being a modern and practical man, he has some different views regarding emotionalism, as he says:

As far as I can remember, I was never good with emotional stuff. I love mathematics, I love logic and these subjects have no place for emotions. I think human beings waste too much time on emotions. The prime example is my mother. Dad's departure was followed by months of crying with every lady in every poll coming down to sympathize with her. (4)

Today, youth living in metropolitan culture are seen preferring practical outlook rather than sentimentalism. Further, he conveys in the novel that the youth should not follow instructions of parents in a blind manner. In fact, they need to behave and act according to their own conscience. Revolutionary spirit of Govind appears in his comment in this way: "Humanity wouldn't have progressed if people listened to their parents all the time." (20) He is shown as a strategy maker and an

artist-man in true sense. He believes in himself and his potentiality. He loves to do what his conscience allows him. He has been the city topper in mathematics in senior secondary exams. If he had willed to pursue an engineering program, he could have done it successfully. However, his interest lies in business. He drops his further education and goes with business. He emerges out a true businessman. Being a youngster of modernized world, this study examines that Bhagat has portrayed his characters as decision makers where as other writers of the past have delineated their protagonists subjected to the will of their parents. This is a message in satirical tone to the youth for taking decision personally for their welfare and for the humanity as well. Female character of the modern society, Vidya marks at the selfishness of the most parents. They decide the future of their kids for the sake of their pseudo social image. They do not bother to invite suggestions from their children even in the crucial matters of the life. Vidya seems pathetic forever circumscribed within their gender and sexuality, less than human in their one-dimensional personalities. It is perceived that being a writer of metropolitan culture, Bhagat disregards this attitude of the elders towards the younger and portrays the irresponsible attitude of children for their parents.

Even religious views of people living in metropolitan culture have also changed. However, man believes in the supreme force but, in the novel, Govind calls himself an “atheist”, who is not sure whether God exists or not just like Shaw who never went to Church as he grew conscious of the hypocrisy of the shrine. Omi lives in the temple but he never realized the presence of God there. He never found mental repose and bliss in the temple. When he started business with Govind, he felt the presence of the almighty in the fatigue after the whole day travail, in serving the

curious kids asking for the sport goods, and in training Ali with body building tips. Transformation of ideologies regarding deities or spiritualism is also noted in the study regarding youth of metropolitan culture. They prefer worshipping their work rather than idols. According to them, divine satisfaction is present in their desired goals.

Considering the same ideology of worship in work, Govind Patel starts a 'Team India Cricket shop' on 29th April, 2000 in the presence of his intimate friends and some family members. In little time, the shop attracted many kids and their parents because of three obvious reasons: first Ishaan is a popular cricketer of that area and he gives bowling and batting tips to those who come to buy balls and willows; second, Govind Patel is a well-known student and the topper of mathematics and he is ready to provide tuition who need it; third, the shop is located in the temple area where people always come with their cricket-loving kids. Thus, within months their business began to give profits. Govind's dream becomes realized and he now thinks to expand his business and as a result goods other than cricket items are also available in the shop. The life of these three friends became happy, as they never dreamt at. They shared the profits among themselves at times. Govind is more conscious about the expansion of business than his two friends. Now he has one more idea to buy a new shop at Navrangpura Char rasta by saving money. Thus, they began to celebrate the success of their business. Here, dream is proved as a key to success. Every young one can be seen possessing a firmly determined will to succeed in the desired venture. In the modernized era, people became more focused and oriented on their targets because they want to lead a more sophisticated and materialistic life style.

Besides the life-style of male characters, the study notices about the concern for woman character tells us the fact that steps towards women empowerment can be seen to be speeding up in metropolitan culture. It claims women empowerment as one of the positive effects of globalization; at the same time, it is incontrovertible that it gives us cultural shocks which are an inevitable impact of globalization and modernization. These changes of trend represent an actual degeneration in the status of women as voiced forth in the novel. Novel brings out the suppressed desires of modern girls who want to become liberal. With the growing urbanization and globalization, a number of opportunities have opened up all around. Men and women are no more seen through the old spectacle which marks men as superior and women as inferior. In this global atmosphere, so far belittled women are given their due place and respect as compared to the lives of women earlier. Presently, with their own intellect and abilities, women are seen trying to behave just like men. Vidya reminds us the female characters of G. B. Shaw for their vitality viz. natural female instinct. She is portrayed as a brave character of twenty first century instead of the weak and submissive Indian woman of older times; she is pictured just like Govind, who hates emotions. Despite being mentally strong, she is crazy about the foreign land. When Govind brings sand from the Australian beach, she gleefully says, "Wow an Australian beach in my hands" (182). Here, no love for own city is seen as Vidya has no attachment towards her native place where she has been brought up for so many years. She says "I want to get out of Ahmedabad" (47). It is also a dark aspect of the metropolitan culture in which people shows indifference for their nation and home town and are always seen in search for something more exciting. Moreover, Vidya has modern and liberal thoughts on commitments of relationship, duties and

everything. This shows that freedom of urban culture, uncontrolled passion for sex and lust destroys the beautiful lives of men and women and finally they get frustration of life. The high flying modern urban culture is dominating Indian culture and tradition as the novel reveals the man's attitude changed towards holiness of the creative force of life i.e. sex during the span. Apart from cricket, business and religion, the mesmerizing love relation is shown between Govind and Vidya. It records the sexual audacity of the woman protagonist. The novel sanctifies sex as Govind and Vidya fall in love with each other and indulge in sex every now and then and keep their accounts of physical relationship update for the ready reference. Their love initiates when "They kiss each other, on the lips" (71). After getting engaged physically at the age of seventeen only, Vidya admits, "wow, I am an adult and am no longer a virgin, so cool." Her words don't accept any sort of guilt consciousness, in fact she supposes herself to be a fulfilled lady of this metropolitan world. At this, Govind remarks remorsefully, "Teenage girls can be unbelievably evil. You won't believe the kind of thing as they can say." It shows that girls have become more bold and daring as compared to boys. Novel installs it in the willingness of the woman and tries to show the actual position or condition of today's society. Society has been changed from ideal to modern aspect. It has served it as the unifying force. Today, men and women perform it and break virginity knot without social rituals. At last, they either get married or committed to live together happily without any conditions and norms. Youth of metropolitan culture in the novel has valued it with many accolades as "spark", "the flow", "instinct", "the inner voice", "the higher power", "the ultimate super power", "the inner call" etc. A perfect scenario and mind-set of people living in metropolitan culture is described.

Like Shaw, Bhagat has perceived the force working in woman, specifically in her natural instinct. The novel frankly discusses woman's dynamism and astonishment towards sex and life. These are the salient attributes of the life force also known as liveliness. The novel seems to believe that the youth bestowed with these virtues can bless the society with the world citizen i.e. the super human being. Metropolitan culture's men and women sincerely serve the ultimate purpose of the life force. The purpose goes here: "Woman must marry because the races must perish without her travail..." (5) It is felt in the novel that the feelings of youth for friend, love, nuptials, and sex are quite sporty rather than spiritual. Love is not considered as an emotion instead the young age group feels the vibrations of it every now and then. The novel depicts metropolitan reality that the young generation is more in favor of love marriages than in arranged ones. The attitude of this generation towards sex is not laden with guilt. They look at sex as a necessary way of expressing their love for their partner. Hence, the novel has deftly portrayed the element of modernization where women use all tactics to serve the female instinct. Modernized women are incarnated who chide the man for feminine behavior. They come out as the icon of vitality and bravery. They always take initiative in the courtship. Thus, they break the social protocol which says that man ever chases woman. They are the chasers and the men are the chased. The novel delineates woman as the hunter and the man as the quarry under her blind fury, moreover for the higher purpose. The novel is based on metropolitan culture and thus presents the way of thinking in the modern society.

Further, multiculturalism being the another major aspect of metropolitan culture highlights in novel at a place in which Ali goes to Australia to take the best coaching of cricket from Mr. Greener, and he says to Ali, "But you can become an

Australian as well. We are a multicultural society". (177) The above extract exemplifies Mr. Greener's eagerness in offering Australian citizenship to Ali, the indisputably gifted teenage batsman who had flown all the way from Ahmedabad with his mentor Ishan and his friends to get his talent spotted and recognized. This particular statement is baffling as it is difficult to comprehend the equation between becoming an Australian and an upholder of multiculturalism in the truest sense of the terms. Cultural plurality should be discriminated from multiculturalism as the existence of plurality at the societal level does not imply that multiculturalism as a social value system prevailed in these societies. As Gurpreet Mahajan rightly remarks in *The Multicultural Path: Issues of diversity and discrimination in democracy*:

Multiculturalism is concerned with the issue of equality: it asks whether the different communities, living peacefully together, coexist as equals in the public arena (11).

Ali, however, in Bhagat's fiction was emotionally repulsive to the idea of becoming an Australian and rigidly stood his ground against falling a prey to such ambivalent, highly contested discourse of multiculturalism by triumphantly claiming "I am an Indian. I want play for India. Not for anyone else." (178).

Multiculturalism is used to refer to a desired end-state, as a way of referring to a society in which different cultures are respected and the reproduction of culturally defined group is protected and social diversity celebrated. The culture of India easily admits other influences, and although the mesmeric beauty of the Indian way of life stands out majestically, traces of modernity are easily discernible in the rural turned metropolitan India. As Jean Francois writes in his *Plurality of Cultures*:

Eclecticism is the degree zero of contemporary general culture: one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats Mac Donald's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Pars perfume in Tokyo and "retro" clothes in Hong Kong; knowledge is a matter of TV games. (19) Further he says: Cultural plurality ensures a healthful existence. If one truly speaks of unity in diversity, one has to listen to the voices coming from the peripheries, the subcultures and then come up with something which can satisfy the needs of a diverse set of people. Indian life is plural, garrulous, rambling, lacking a fixed centre, and the Indian novel must be the same. (20)

To conclude, the study examines that this novel seems to be a social form. The novel strives to portray the mental stirrings of people's personnel living in the metropolitan culture. The characters read the words and foresee the action. It deals with a human character in a modernized social situation, man as a social being. The novel has the theme of present day outgoings and issues of modern society. The twenty first century Indian metropolitan era is seen consisting of basically dark and demoralizing aspects like fast life, dead-end-job, vulgarity, transformed ideologies, self-hood, erosion of traditional values and familial bonds, disrespect for elders etc. Thus, the study examines all the aspects and features of metropolitan culture in the novel with backdrop of Ahmedabad as a growing metropolis.

In yet another novel *Serious Men* by Manu Joseph with backdrop of metropolis Mumbai, research finds out the class-conflicts, poverty, prevailing slums, struggle for success and a severe urge to become rich and no less than others. All the metropolises and inhabitants inherit the same features in metropolitan culture where life is seen very challenging and full of difficulties. Coping up with the challenging

hurdles prove to be a difficult task. Being coloured with all these characteristics, the novelist offers a picture of a metropolitan city and the plight of its dwellers:

It was a hive of ten thousand one room homes carved inside a hundred and twenty identical three storeyed buildings that stood like grey ruins, their paint long removed by old rains. A million clothes hung from the grilles of small dark windows. Portions of the outer walls, sometimes even roofs kept falling off, especially in the calamitous rains of August. The chawls were built by the British more than eight decades ago in a belated attack of conscience to house the homeless. But the tenements turned out to be so badly constructed that the street dwellers refused to move in seeing no point in forsaking the whole world and the blue sky in exchange for a small dark room at an endless corridor of gloom. (6)

Life in a metropolis goes fast as if on wings. The business of living occupies the minds of people to an extent where the individual is not allowed the luxury of brooding over troublesome events or unhappy memories. It is the present, the *now* which concerns the individual:

The women of BDD did not expect much from their men. Ageing mothers who had lost all their sons before those boys could turn thirty were still capable of laughing till they were breathless. Here the frailties of the male folk showed all the time in the tired faces of the newly dead, or in the vacant eyes of drunkards, or the resigned calm of the jobless boys who just sat for hours watching the world go by. In a way, this was the easiest place to be a man. To be alive was enough. To be sober and employed was fantastically impressive. Ayyan Mani was something of a legend. (7)

As life goes on in the metropolis, the individual is fired by a desire to keep pace with the fast pace of life and at the same time, to be a little ahead of the others in terms of success and power. Strong feeling of being superior than others is seen

clearly in the people living in urban areas. They do tiresome efforts to prove themselves the best of all. As Ayyan Mani says in the novel about aspirations of a person:

Because what a man really wanted was to be bigger than his friends. (8)

The major drawback or one of the biggest challenges is of space as metropolitan home does not allow much privacy even to a newly married couple. It is not uncommon in a metropolitan city, to find even lawfully wedded couples, their conjugal rights in the open, at public places. Privacy is a luxury they cannot dream of, yet they prefer the anonymity of a beach or sea-face to the knowing looks and stares of the elders, siblings and children in the hencoop of the metropolitan home.

If there were ever a sudden almighty silence here, you would hear a thousand bra steps snap. Among these lovers were married people, some of them even married to each other. When night fell, they went back to their one room homes, which were as large as a Mercedes to rejoin their children, elders, siblings, nephews and nieces, all heaped under a single roof in gigantic clusters of boiling tenements. (6)

Early exposure to sexual behaviours cast a detrimental influence on young impressionable minds. Children living in one room tenements in metropolitan cities often see their caregivers engaged in sexual activities, and are thus introduced to this delicate side of life in a rather crude fashion. In Manu Joseph's *Serious Men*, a group of young children entertain themselves by coming together in pairs and playing a game where they pretend to be parents, and try to emulate the activities and behaviours of their parents. This naturally involves doing something that they are used to seeing their parents do. Ayyan Mani's ten year old son Adi is precocious, and he too partners up with a girl in this game:

The boy looked at his girl for a few seconds wondering what they must do that parents did. Then a solution entered his oddly large head. He gently eased the girl to the ground and spread her legs. She looked confused but tried to figure out what he was trying to do. He climbed on top of her and bobbed his hips clumsily. (13)

Adi played this game when he reminded what his parents were doing once:

Oja's legs were joined together and folded at the knees. Her silver anklets lay still. Ayyan ran his hand over her waist. She opened her eyes without confusion or protest. She lifted her head to check on Adi. The couple moved with skill. They could caress and even tumble and roll a bit without making a sound. They were in a sort of common entanglement, with Ayyan's shorts hanging at his knees. Oja's nightgown lifted, her legs parted, when she yawning decided to check on Adi again. He was sitting with his back resting against the wall.

'They wouldn't let me play that yesterday' Adi said. (14-15)

Thus, Ayyan decided that for the sake of their son, they would have to stop seeking their own pleasures. In the beginning, there was only Ayyan Mani. Acharya was a minor character, but later on, Acharya seems to be a central character of novel. The depth of the novel comes from the point of view of the characters, which appears to be their voice as a literary revolution in contemporary fiction reflecting the metropolitan culture. Arvind keeps getting reintegrated into the higher community of scientists, despite his enemies' will and his own self-destructiveness. This thought, this character of philosophy became one of the invisible pillars of *Serious Men* reflecting metropolitan culture. People are seen sane, mostly, in metropolitan culture. This sanity as urge to get succeed seems to be a gift to prove oneself in the respective field. Acharya possess the same sanity and struggle of humanity too to

achieve something deep within him. In this way, the novel encapsulates the pain, humiliation, and poverty of this community, which has lived at the bottom of India's social pyramid. This is truly inspiring novel that reveals untouchables' quest for dignity and the recognition of their human worth, rather than to India's own success in eradicating the evils of the caste system, for its inequalities and iniquities persist. There is much here both for the foreigner, ignorant of much that is hidden in India, and for Indians who are all too familiar with caste. The novel is a sign that change is possible in India and that indeed it is, if slowly underway.

Another dark aspect of metropolitan culture in the novel presents caste conflict with politically incorrect statements. It is a deprived man's angst and vengeance. It is the story of vindictiveness of a Dalit (supposedly lower caste within the Hindu caste hierarchy) over Brahmins (supposedly upper caste within the Hindu caste hierarchy). A novel comes out of South-Asia points to a new direction and presents caste conflict with politically incorrect statements. This novel is a metropolitan picture of a land of controversies, and it registers the contemporary crisis in the universal language. The novel sallies at overeducated Brahmins and resentful Dalits are universal. The Indian middle-class may well be rapidly growing, but regressive attitudes die hard. The novel shows a glimpse on social discrimination existing in the metropolitan culture because of multiculturalism. The story is set in the caste society of Modern India. In India, caste system is still considered a way to organize society. The untouchables are not permitted to touch members of higher castes or enter their houses. This extreme form of discrimination is deeply embedded over centuries in the Indian society. Along with the caste system, economic class struggle can also be seen. Brahmins are shown class conscious who need to maintain their status who take discrimination as

a way of protecting their privileged position in the society. *Serious Men* skewers the pretensions of any governing elite carried away by its rhetoric of progress. Although, it's not a dark satire, yet reflects those who are reserved for countries experiencing rank authoritarianism and play games of Bombay's haves and have-nots. Joseph's Ayyan Mani is a Dalit (untouchable) secretary at Bombay's Institute of Theory and Research, working for Aravind Acharya, a high-class Brahmin. While Ayyan ekes out an existence in an over-crowded tenement, sending his ten-year-old son to a Catholic school, Aravind puts the Institute's energies behind sending up a balloon in space to gather evidence that alien microbes are always raining on Earth (hence explaining the origin of life). While doing his part to inflame the Brahmin egos at war in the Institute, Ayyan cheats and lies to have his little son accepted as a bona fide genius. Class-conflicts are fully shown in the novel as a reflection of metropolitan culture. On the other hand, classic Dickensian sympathy for the perpetually trampled-upon under-dog is generated. Ayyan is seen as a resentful representative of the Dalit underclass, and on the other hand, sympathy for Ayyan by presenting Arvind so considerably is undermined. This ambiguous balance is not only the reflection of novel, but also of the metropolitan culture. *Serious Men* attempts to represent the Dalit experience. The novel try to hone in on the Dalit's psyche in order to expose the failures of the nation-state and discusses the continuing problem of the caste system. It depicts the discrimination within Hinduism and its effects on his Dalit protagonist. *Serious Men* uses satirical realism to interpret the Dalit experience and succeeds in portraying the reality of Dalit experiences without defining the identity of its protagonist. Instead, Joseph allows Ayyan to develop throughout the novel and depicts him as having agency and as being empowered. *Serious Men* revolutionizes

the literary characterization of the Dalit and creates a protagonist that reflects modern India. The novel shares an upper-caste Hindu background. Joseph is able to conceptualize the Dalit experience even from his upper caste background because of the cosmopolitan location in which he sets *Serious Men*. The city becomes a place that blurs caste divisions. It is best described in the novel as “this unnerving constriction of Mumbai [Ayyan] loved, because the congestion of hopeless shuffling human bodies he was born into was also, in a way, the fate of the rich. On the streets, in the trains, in the paltry gardens and beaches, everybody was poor. And that was fair” (5). Joseph moved to Mumbai to fulfill his journalism career. He, like Ayyan, lived in the BDD chawls when he first moved to Mumbai as a young, unmarried staff writer. He did not have to endure the dehumanizing living conditions that most families confronted, yet his experience in the city gave him a new perspective to write from, allowing him to write about national issues, but in a form that is relatable and universal to a wide demographic. Despite his own caste privilege, Joseph develops a successful Dalit character because he is able to build a bridge of understanding between the politics and the individual, due to the universality of the city. The novel shows that it is important to develop a Dalit identity that has agency and empowerment because it creates an authentic representation of Dalit experience. Joseph transforms the political nationalist novel, making it current and universal to not only the Indian elite, but also the rising lower class in the cosmopolitan cities. The prevalence of darker aspects in metropolitan culture like corruption, injustices, and dehumanization engendered a new style of writing in the Indian novel. The novel expresses frustration of the government and exposes the truth of the failures of the society. It creates a space for both realism and satire to coexist without

compromising the characters' agency and identity. Joseph's realism uplifts the dystopia reality of the nation-state because it focuses on the victories of the Dalit in modern India. *Serious Men* demonstrates that a novel can be more than a political message, but that it also has the ability to be personal. As readers, we can relate to different aspects of Ayyan – his love for his family, his humor and his ambition. *Serious Men* not only discusses the internal politics of India, but also touches upon the intimate experience of human interactions and the identity struggles embedded within it. Joseph illustrates the corruption and dehumanization that continue to exist in India; he reveals the ridiculousness within the reality of Indian society. He shows the plurality of India through its corruption and injustices, but also those moments of laughter, empowerment and beauty. This new form of writing acts as a mirror that reflects the identities and personhood of the individuals living in metropolitan culture. Ayyan is able to trick the Indian media and his employers into believing that his son is a genius precisely because he knows that the media and the elite are attracted to such stories: The Brahmins had summoned him. They had read the article in *The Times* and they had called Ayyan on his mobile. They wanted to see for themselves a Dalit genius though they had put it differently. Ayyan could not resist the entertainment of watching those great minds mill around his boy, expressing their grand acknowledgement of his infant brilliance. Genius to genius, they would make it all seem (204). Ayyan knows that the Brahmins will be intrigued by Adi because for them, it is unheard of for a Dalit to be a genius, when Dalits are often viewed as poor, illiterate and unemployed. Ayyan uses these stereotypes to his advantage in order to trick the elites into believing that Adi is in fact a genius. Joseph examines the ways that Ayyan turns Adi into a spectacle. Here, his caste is

important; however it does not completely define his identity. Joseph opens up the conversation for the possibility for one's identity to not be defined by their caste – or at least, not completely. This establishes a new power relation between Ayyan and the Brahmin scientists because he has the ability to make everyone, including the intellectual scientists, believe that his son is a genius. In this situation, Ayyan has authority over the Brahmins. However, the fact that Ayyan had to lie in order to gain this authority is a comment on the fact that corruption is the only way to change the balance of power. In order for Ayyan to achieve upward mobility he needs to lie and cheat, which Joseph alludes to as a reflection of modern Indian society at large. Adi becomes a news story for the elite to admire and praise but the real issue of caste injustice continues to be ignored. Joseph suggests that there is a problem with Indian democracy, in which people are more interested in media attractions rather than the real socio-economic struggles that Dalits have to endure to achieve a sustainable lifestyle.

On the contrary, life in the metropolitan cities is very different for the men and women who belong to elitist society though Tarun J. Tejpal describes in *The Story of My Assassins*, the lifestyles of the affluent who are often embroiled in shady dealings:

Delhi was full of such people, who worked that surreal space between day and night, legal and illegal, government and private, national and international. For his labours, European companies dropped tens of millions of dollars into Kapoor Sahib's many numbered Swiss accounts, and he in turn generously dropped tidy sums into the many- numbered Swiss accounts of different politicians and bureaucrats. There were some who said there was more Indian money in Swiss banks than in the Indian treasury. (276)

Very often, people in urban spaces and the metropolises, in the course of their daily conversations, hark back to the village, perhaps not wishing to forget their native roots. The centrality of village life cannot be disputed.

‘Why are we going to this place in the middle of nowhere Ashok ?’ Her voice breaking the silence at last. ‘Its my ancestral village, Pinky, Wouldn’t you like to see it? I was born there- but father sent me away as a boy. There was some trouble with the communist guerrillas then, I thought we could... (80)

The real India once dwelt in the villages with the fast pace of urbanization, the once sleepy towns of India awakened and came to life. Often the metropolitan cities are portrayed as distant and soulless, while the smaller towns still feel like home. A study of the select post 2005 Indian English novels makes it clear that the novelists have shifted their gaze from the rural sites to the metropolises of India. This change of geo-space involves a change in the language and culture of people. Food habits and culture practices too undergo a change. As people co-exist in large groups, a healthy cultural exchange takes place. There is a certain degree of assimilation as people try to blend into the mainstream culture, but there are elements of social and cultural practices that are so deeply ingrained and held close to the heart by people that they continue to set them apart as a curious mix of various cultures. The Indian metropolises are fast progressing towards multiculturalism.

The novel reflects a piercing glimpse of metropolitan culture that takes us from the lavish, hedonistic palaces of India's elite to its seediest slums. It is a novel of corruption, passion, power, and ambition; of extreme poverty and obscene wealth. It is a deeply incisive comment on twenty-first century India which skillfully slashes through the subcontinent’s dubious spiritual serenity to lay bare every crippling

divide of language, wealth and class. Trawling life and death in the dark underside, it inquires into the inexorable codes of power and wealth that propel societies. A triumph of disparate voices, unbearable realities, and impossible conundrums, the novel changes the way we look at the world around us. The novel depicts power in India, inequality, misguided democracy, exposed character of corruption and the other side of so called 'creamy layer' of India. It is a realistic mixture of violence, compassion and social commentary of the metropolitan culture. It exposes the most brutal truth that people are timid, meek, ruthless, exploitative, racist, intolerant, and more importantly, driven by fear, sex, greed and religion. The novel is a true story of Tarun J. Tejpal's encounters. It aims to break from the old ways of thinking about India in the hope of portraying its society in all its vastness, complexities and contradictions. It throws a social and psychological insight as it takes into the unexplored depths of modernized Indian life. A gripping exploration of the country's underworld leaves one mulling over the gnarled and vibrant tapestry and convoluted venality of modern-day India. The mayhem shown in the novel is set against India's sprawling slouch towards modernization. To remedy a "journalism of public relations" in his native India, Tejpal cofounded a muckraking magazine whose exposés earned him an assassination attempt and six government bodyguards. In this fictional memoir, Tejpal's reporter-narrator investigates five men accused of plotting to kill him. With characters flawed and redeemable, protagonist's landing like a bombshell on his comfortable life is shown, just as he's started a steamy affair with a brilliant woman, the news prompts him to launch an urgent investigation into the lives of his aspiring murderers - a ragtag group of street thugs and village waifs - and their mastermind. Who wanted him dead, and why? But the investigation forces him to

re-examine his own life, too - to confront his own notion of himself, his job, and his treatment of the women in his life, as well as his own complex feelings about the country that crafted his would-be killers.

The National Capital, New Delhi's metropolitan culture is cut open and all its veins and sinews are laid bare for viewing, resplendent in all its colors, particularly red, the color of power and blood, and exposed this city where the nexus of politics, region, goons, money, industry and power is at strongest. Novel encompasses both grandeur and destitution alike and brings the city, its people and their idiosyncrasies alive. It takes on a multitude of challenging metropolitan issues and deals practically everything that is wrong with the country. The novel is depiction of savagery of the Indian metropolitan culture. It is an argument with power, a counter-narrative from someone who has been chosen by the state to sustain a lie. The novel is an epic tale of modern day India which reflects metropolitan culture's labyrinthine social and political machinations and it works on many levels: it is a sweeping indictment of government bureaucracy, an exposure of the stunning violence visited upon victims of circumstance, and a brazen censure of how technology has quashed imagination. It is also a philosophical treatise on how to live one's life to the fullest in present violent era. It evokes the violence of modern India and shows city's power machinery with a few strokes, as when the narrator sees through the high court as a sea of penguins (lawyers in black coats), or enters a fort of a police station, or examines his unlikely assassins: "The roads, bazaars, offices of India were full of men like them."

The novel dramatizes the anxieties that many Indians are feeling over the redefinition of middle-class social structures and gender norms in the context of

globalization by depicting female characters in particular as a metaphor for social change. As the said changes are relatively recent and ongoing, limited scholarly attention has been paid to the issue. Contemporary middle-class Indian anxieties around globalization revolve around widespread perceptions of growing westernization among youth and adults and the threat of corruption. The novel represents cultural rootlessness in modern society. For eg. Pavan K. Varma sees such actions as potentially harmful for the Indian middle-class, “seriously threatening to make the world of the middle class a derivative photo copy of the dominant paradigms of western culture” (24). Nadeem encounters, “Slowly and steadily, India is becoming westernized” (117). What "becoming westernized" actually means, or is perceived to mean, is hazy, but it is generally associated with a party lifestyle, sexual promiscuity and exploration, conspicuous consumption of brand-name consumer goods, and relaxed social policing of women's behavior (Nadeem 113) “the resulting cultural change is not easily reconcilable with certain conservative aspects of Indian life”. Globalization is shaping the aspirations and identities of the Indian middle class, “they cluster around an idea of the West as a locus of modernity” (Nadeem 103). This formulation is a generalization and this novel presents a more ambivalent reflection on processes of change induced by globalization. The characters in the novel hold the West up as an ideal, the symbol of a lifestyle to aspire to, demonstrated by the fact that they adopt the outward accoutrements of what they perceive western culture to be, namely clothing, partying, consumption, pre-marital sex, etc. The author is simultaneously critical of the blind aping of what are perceived to be western ways and of unquestioning adherence to tradition. There is no doubt about the fact that in the second decade of the twenty-first century, two decades after India's economy

liberalized and opened up to global investment, profound economic, social, and cultural changes are underway.

The Story of my Assassins broaden the canvas to encompass both the cities and the villages of India, from North to South and East to West. The setting is India in the new millennium, marked by incredible progress, appalling poverty and a decadent polity. The description of the Muslim 'bastiwala' pondering upon whether they would go to Pakistan or stay back in India reminds of Khushwant Singh's *A Train to Pakistan*. The vivid and often gut wrenching portrayal of characters belonging to different strata of the Indian society from gang members in UP to the outlaws in Bihar, the farmhouse owning foul mouthed elitists of Delhi to a caricatured tea sipping woman activist, all came alive inside the metropolitan culture. Characters like Sara, Guruji, Hathoda Tyagi and Dubeyji can be visualized vividly. Ghulam, Kabir's gentle Muslim father, who alienates himself and his son from their religion and any other kind of politics, Kabir who is reduced to sculpting 'chuzas' out of wood, seem to portray diversity in the metropolitan culture. Like Dickens, Tejpal brings to life a wealth of interesting characters and exposes the dark side of metropolitan culture, including religion, politicians and institutions. Even the main character, is shown as unlikeable sexist, amoral, materialistic, disloyal, uncaring, over all a corrupt persona. Characters from every walk of life cutting across barriers of age, gender, class, caste and creed - shape and are shaped by the changing contours of the Indian nation-state. Diversity of people, Muslim and Hindu, rural and urban, well-meaning and criminal etc are shining a light into many different corners of contemporary Indian life and the metropolitan culture. The response of the citizens to forces that increasingly alter their fates is effectively captured. The novel

mellifluously paints images of twenty first century India and its multiple layered story works through the Indian sub-continent, its double faced spirituality and hypocrisy in the garb of religion and the very visible and yet, undoable the divide of language, wealth and class. The novel appears to be an unsuccessful hit-attempt on an Indian journalist. The unnamed would-be victim tells the story from his point of view in which the stories of the five men arrested for the hit are recounted by an omniscient narrator. Here one is introduced that the novel begins in 2000, with the narrator finding out he was the intended target in a just-foiled assassination attempt. A muckraking journalist who runs a magazine has no idea why anyone wants to target him. From then on he gets a security detail to protect him. Thus, we are made familiar with the realistic scenario regarding the bearable or unbearable happenings of metropolitan culture. In order for Ayyan to achieve upward mobility he needs to lie and cheat, which Joseph alludes to as a reflection of modern Indian society at large.

Thus, Tarun J. Tejpal's *The Story of My Assassins* also best suits with the taken research theme of Metropolitan culture and major challenges because of its violent and dark aspects of metropolises where crime plays a major role and such realities of assassins are seen very common. Well-known persons are often targeted by under-world gangsters for some reasons. Most are shot dead and shown as mere incidents. The novel exactly unveils the truth behind the glorious and elegant looking metropolitan cities where life appears very easy and convenient from outer perspective whereas inside is very shocking.

One Amazing Thing by Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni is selected for research work because of its multicultural aspect as it plays a major role in metropolitan

culture and it is a challenge too for the people who are migrants, who move from one place to another. Shift from urban to foreign country is the major theme in the novel. It leads multiculturalism which paves the way for development and unity in metropolises. Thus, the theme and theory of multiculturalism is shown with full swing in *One Amazing Thing* as well as the research. This chapter deals with treatment of metropolitan culture and major challenges.

If the Indian English novel has made a long and arduous journey from the rural to the urban, urban to metropolitan, and metropolitan to foreign, it is because a large part of the Indian population has made its journey from rural backgrounds to the metropolises in India. There are subtle though invisible bonds which bind an individual to his/her land and when the geo space changes, thought processes, mental attitudes, lifestyles, values and cultures feel the impact of the change too. The shift in location implies a shift at many layers of the human mind and personality. The identity of an individual is shaped by his/her world view, which is deeply rooted in family, culture and religion. One may identify with a group, or one may have a strong personal identity. Whichever be the case, there is no doubt that the quest for one's identity is at the core of one's endeavours which proves to be a major challenge. In the selected post 2005 Indian English novels selected for the study, the identity quest often becomes an Existentialist issue. When a person leaves the land of his/her birth to settle on foreign soil, he/she carries along a veritable baggage of world views, beliefs and hopes, referred to by the sociologist N. Jayaram as "the socio-cultural baggage" (Jayaram 2004, 22). This is the defense mechanism, the migrant is armed with, and it is this which will eventually help the migrant in his struggle for survival as an alien. Migrated individuals in the words of N. Jayaram:

Find in their culture a defense mechanism against a sense of insecurity in alien settings.

Such individuals soon develop a split identity which is shaky and unstable in itself. Part of the individual's consciousness grapples with issues relating to the new identity, while another part, clings on for dear life to the old cultural identity. This struggle accounts for the strong resistance in the migrant individual who is reluctant to leave his comfort zone and make his transition from the old cultural identity to the new. In the words of Makrand Paranjpe:

There is a clinging to the old identity and a resistance to making a transition.

An individual's sense of belongingness is first identified with the place of his/her birth, and this sense of identification varies from individual to individual, depending upon the roots he has grown and developed in that place. The initial euphoria and thrill of a foreign settlement quickly fades and gives way to feelings of insecurity and displacement, and brings about nostalgic feelings of the past. Home and nation acquire greater meaning and depth. Feelings of dislocation and displacement often result and a double consciousness which is described by Lois Tyson as follows:

Double consciousness or unstable sense of the self is the result of forced migration, colonialism frequently causes. In the Diaspora, this feeling of being caught between cultures, of belonging to neither, rather than to both, of finding oneself arrested in a psychological limbo that results not merely from some psychological disorder, but from the trauma of the cultural displacement within which one lives, is referred to by Homi Bhabha and other as 'unhomeliness'. To be 'unhomed' is not the same as being homeless. To be unhomed is to feel not at home even in your own home, because you are not at home in yourself: your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee, so to speak.

The novel *One Amazing Thing* by Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni, deals with a group of nine people, who are trapped in a visa office at the Indian Consulate in an American city, after it has been hit by a massive earthquake. Two of these nine characters are Indians, who are working as officers in the visa office and they are on the threshold of a clandestine relationship. Among the other seven characters, are an elderly white couple, a Chinese grandmother along with her teenage granddaughter, a young Muslim man, an ex-soldier and Uma, a young Indian-American girl who is disillusioned, and disappointed, after her parents' decision to return to Kolkata after having lived in the United States for twenty years. As the group waits to be rescued, each member tells a story of one amazing thing that has been a part of his/her life experience. Their stories are intensely human and poignant. They have the power to break down all the barriers which divide them. Such is the incredible power of storytelling; the stories reveal the entire human experience:

'Its not a game' Uma said. She hugged her backpack, wanting to tell them how powerful stories could be. But they were staring at her as though she were half-witted.

'What if we don't have a story to tell?' Mrs. Pritchett asked; sounding anxious.

'Everyone has a story' said Uma, relieved that one of them was considering the idea. I don't believe anyone can go through life without encountering at least one amazing thing.

The United States has always held a fascination for people who view it as the land of endless opportunities. The American mosaic is a rich tapestry of varied cultures and regional as well as national identities. Americans identify more with the geographical region than with any ethnic or cultural identity. Life and culture among

the Americans has several characteristic features. The individual is proud of his individuality and conscious of his freedom and self reliance. He/she is often friendly, spontaneous and uninhibited in his/her attitudes to life. American culture is more of a state of mind than a specific kind of culture. When Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492, he was under the impression that he had discovered a new trade route to India, and so he gave the name *Indians* to the native Americans.

“Great melting pot” is a metaphor that is often used for the United States, and this metaphor is connotative of the rich mix of several cultures, races, languages and beliefs in order to form a homogenous cultural identity. Although it is true that the United States saw the rapid immigration of hordes of people from diverse regions, the term *melting pot* fails to bring out the deeper implications of the process of immigration. Integrating oneself into the mainstream American culture is a process that is replete with tensions. It is a dynamic process which is both challenging and unsettling for the immigrants. The United States is the dream and destination of people from several walks of life, for varied reasons, like education, careers and opportunities of various kinds. In fact, the United States is the land of opportunities to many minds. Immigration has triggered an unprecedented social and cultural change that has resulted in a sharing of life experiences, which is almost in the nature of a cultural exchange. The revised immigration policies in the United States, following the adoption of the Hart Celler Immigration Act of 1965, opened up the American state to a vast influx of people from several parts of the world. As the numbers of immigrants grew, the United States acquired a fast growing heterogeneous colour, which in turn attracted more and more people to make their fortunes in this land of

opportunities. The entire land was transformed into a creative and flexible region of diverse food habits, speech communities, social behaviours and religious faiths.

An immigrant typically begins life in an American city. As more and more social contacts are made, the immigrant builds greater rapport with people who speak the same language, have the same food habits and follow the same religion. Very soon however, the immigrant gets involved in the educational and occupational avenues, which have beckoned him to this new land in the first place. As more and more social and residential mobility is achieved, the immigrant gives up his ethnic choices in favour of other choices which are part of the mainstream culture. These changes can be seen in matters like the choice of marriage partners, and other more personal choices in life, like adopting the behavioural and cultural practices of the new region. In the novel *One Amazing Thing*, one of the officers working at the visa office is a young lady called Malathi who has left her home in Coimbatore to settle in the United States:

She shared a tiny apartment with three other women who had been hired by the consulate and brought over from India around the same time. They spent all their spare time together, riding the bus to work and parting only at the elevator (the others worked upstairs in tourism), walking to Patel Brothers Spice House to buy *sambar powder* and *avakaya pickle*, watching Bollywood movies on a second hand DVD player, oiling one others' hair at night, as they discussed hopes and plans. (15)

The novel *One Amazing Thing* portrays the dynamics of the cultural shift, and the complexities involved in the attempt to get integrated within the larger picture, in other words, to shed one's provincialness for a more sophisticated lifestyle. The postmodern Indian English novelists have drawn a similar picture of integration,

assimilation and adaptation in the novels chosen for the study. Assimilation is a general term used to describe the way in which the immigrants allowed themselves to set aside, a vast portion of their ethnicity to contribute their part in the so called melting pot of culture, so that they could be integrated into a homogeneous culture. However, the truth is that many of the ethnic communities prefer to maintain their cultural practices even after spending decades in the United States, or for that matter in any new part of the world. Tariq Husein is a young Muslim youth, who is also a member of the group of nine people trapped in the visa office. He and his mother have spent a few years in the United States. Despite being westernized, Tariq retains all the features of a devout Muslim. He hates missing his prayers, and even dons the traditional Muslim dress and cap, while paying a visit to the Masjid:

When Ammi was advised by friends to stop wearing the hijab he sat her down on the sofa and took her hands in his. He told her, she must do what she believed in, not what made the people around her feel better. And most of all she must not act out of fear. It did not work. She folded the headscarves and put them away in a drawer. Still, some times, he would catch her watching him adjust his black cap in the mirror before he set off for Friday prayers. Pride would battle with astonishment in her face. (28)

While the first generation migrants go through a veritable see-saw of emotions following their migration, the second generation has a different experience altogether. These are the children of the first generation migrants and the land to which their parents have migrated is the land of their birth, albeit it is not the land of their origin. Such individuals identify strongly with the land of their birth, although they are precariously situated between two cultures and therefore between two cultural identities. While the first generation of migrants is helplessly tossing about, in the

in-between state of a dual cultural identity, the second generation prefers to identify with the land their parents have chosen to migrate to. Uma, the protagonist of the novel *One Amazing Thing* is happy with her life in the United States. However, she is disappointed with her parents' decision to relocate to Kolkata, and fails to understand the logic behind their decision:

In recent years, they had spoken of moving to San Diego to spend their golden years by the ocean (such nice weather, perfect for our old bones). Then, in a dizzying volte-face that Uma considered most impudent, her mother had chosen early retirement and her father had quit his position as a senior administrator for a computer company to accept a consultant's job in India. (5)

Uma is nonplussed by her parents' sudden decision of returning to Kolkata and giving up the comfortable life they had always enjoyed in the United States. Her father held a prestigious position, with all the material trappings, and her mother too had been quite enthusiastic about their new life in the United States. Uma felt that her parents owed her an explanation:

'But all these years, you complained about how terrible Kolkata was Uma had cried, aghast, when they called to inform her of their decision. Apart from her concern for their well being, she was vexed at not having been consulted. 'The heat, the dirt, the noise, the crowded buses, the beggars, the bribes, the diarrhea, the bootlicking, the streets littered with garbage that never got picked up. How are you going to handle it?'

To which her mother had replied with maddening good humour, 'But Sweetie all that has changed. It's a different India now, India Shining. (5)

Adjustments are not always easy and involve a certain degree of conflict. Adopting foreign customs and lifestyles is not something that is done in a few short weeks. It is a slow, gradual and dynamic process. Often it results in frustration which

expresses itself in various ways. Yet the process continues, and despite the challenges faced by the immigrants in adapting to, and being integrated in the new culture, thousands of immigrants continue to dream of better lives in the United States and seek their way to the land of opportunities. In the process, they undergo a huge transformation. The United States is a vast region with abundant natural resources. Once, it enjoyed the metaphor of the melting pot, as waves of immigrants poured into the vast region, bringing along with them, an array of cultures and traditions. The diverse cultures, no doubt created challenging situations, yet it made the entire mix interesting and fascinating. It is this rich variety of cultures co-existing together which gave the United States the term *melting pot*. However, with the passage of time, other metaphors came up, such as the *salad bowl* and *mosaic*, which emphasized the fact that the trend was now towards multiculturalism, rather than the assimilation of cultures:

It was not uncommon in this city, to find persons of different races randomly thrown together. Still, Uma thought, it was like a mini UN summit in here. Whatever were all these people planning to do in India. (4)

The plight of the migrant individual can also be witnessed in the plight of the individuals who hail from rural backgrounds, but are caught in the pull of the metropolises of India, which appear to them to be the land of opportunities, which will allow them the opportunities of better living conditions. The shift from the rural home to the metropolitan home is very similar to the shift from a home in India to a home on a foreign soil. Trepidation at the enormity of the change is as much a feature of the rural-urban-metropolitan shift as of the Indo-American shift. The patterns of migration, the causes, the initial thrill, the clinging on to one's native culture in the

preliminary stages, and the shedding of the ethnic identity in the later stages, the assimilation and adaption are witnessed alike in the great urban shift within the country and the settlement in foreign lands. India is essentially a rural based society, and the village has always been conceived of as a place of tranquility, culture and peace. Indeed, the soul of India resided in the village. In Jasbir Jain's words in *Narrative of the Village: Centre of the Periphery*:

The village was not merely a place where people lived; it had a design in which were reflected the basic values of Indian civilization. (53)

Within a village, there is no stranger, whereas the urban spaces and metropolitan cities afford an anonymity which is both comforting and disconcerting to the multi-dimensional individual. However, the village which was once hailed as an oasis of peace and a repository of tradition and culture has now become demystified. Globalization has erased the boundaries between the village and the city. Despite the fact that India is rapidly marching towards metropolitan culture, India's rate of urbanization is much lower than that of several other countries in the world. Yet in a slow and steady progression, urban India is now home to millions of people. The movement from the rural to the urban is known as internal migration. This concept has wide connotations, and has a wide range of political, socio-economic, demographic, environmental and sociological implications. Internal migration involves social transformation, and is closely allied to economic growth and development. As Jasbir Jain says further in his same book mentioned above:

The village too, is no longer a village in itself it is a counterpoint to the city... The village symbolizes control over self; the city reeks of self indulgence and the absence of self-restraint. Beyond the temptations and glitter of the city lies the utopia of an integrated, defragmented self, not tyrannized by the demands of atomized individualism. It is the utopia of village as a self that is the city. (69)

The drive towards modern culture provoked a renewed interest in the traditional, cultural practices of India. Science and reasoning provoked individuals to rationalize about cultural modes and practices that had for centuries been held in high esteem and revered. However, the problems which plagued Indian society continued to loom large, and remained as daunting as they had been earlier. It was clear that modernization could not provide respite to the suffering masses. The changes brought about by modernity were superficial in nature, and failed to provide satisfaction to the masses, Amartya Sen, in his work *Identity and Violence* (2006) opines:

Civilizational clash suffers from foggy perception of world history, which overlooks, first, the extent of internal diversities within these civilizational categories, and second, the reach and influence of interactions-intellectual as well as material - that go right across the regional borders of so called civilizations.

There is a distinct pattern of social, economic and political reasons which defines the trend of internal migration in India. Indeed, there are several motives behind such migration and economic reasons pre-dominate the scene. Better job opportunities, brighter future prospects and higher wages lure the individual away from his rural home, to the glamour of urban spaces, and goad him to leave even the urban space to seek his fortunes in the large metropolises of the nation.

Certain alarming facts about urbanization in India involve matters such as sanitation, sewage, water supply, public transportation, public parks and open spaces. In addition to these, there are core problems relating to air and noise pollution, heavy traffic, disposing off solid waste etc. The urban awakening in India has brought in its wake a spate of some major challenges for the urban dwellers. In fact, some of the

challenges are of gigantic proportions, and the economically vulnerable section of the population which includes migrant workers who face problems in securing for themselves even a basic healthy life. Indian cities spread over vast areas, but are largely unplanned and overcrowded. Rapid migration into these cities from rural areas is commonly seen.

Thus, the realistic modern urbanized society has drawn the thoughtful attention of novelists of the selected novels discussed above who appear to be acutely touched and moved by the dilemma depicts of the modern man in the industrialized and urbanized modern society. This inspiration made them write novels based on the culture of metropolis. The novels suit the present theme in all aspects, as mainly darker sides of metropolitan culture along with the major challenges faced by dwellers of metropolises are depicted.



Works Cited

Electronic Sources

Dictionary. Reference.com. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/multiculturalism>.

Retrieved 2010-12-10.

Krishna, Nakul. "Getting and Spending" Book review of *The White Tiger* 2 May 2008. 14 Nov. 2008. <http://www.newstatesman.com/books/2008/03/india-adiga-while-china>

Marcus, Richard. "Book Review: *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga", 2 May 2008. 14 Nov. 2008. <http://blogcritics.org/archives/2008/05/02/120029.php>

Mishra, Ravi Kumar. *Representation of modern culture and modern trend in Chetan Bhagat fiction*. Research Scholar-An International Refereed e-Journal of Literary Explorations. <http://researchscholar.co.in/downloads/46-dr.-Ravi-Kumar-Mishra.pdf>

Ali, Monika. Essay in *The Atlantic : Borders Crossing*.

Mattin, David. "The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga", 11 May 2008. 12 Nov. 2008. – [fighter-by-Aravind-adiga-823472](http://www.newstatesman.com/books/2008/03/india-adiga-while-china)>

Thomas, Lee. "The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga", 27 April 2008. 12 Nov. 2008. <<http://www.stgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/04/27/-RVNOVUMEP.DTL>>



Secondary Sources

Banerjee, Debjani. *Home and U.S.: Re-defining Identity in the South Asian Diaspora through the Writings of Chitra Banerjee Devakurni and Meena Alexander*. Diasporic Imagination Asian-America Writing. Vol-2. Fiction: Novels and Short Stories ed. Somadatta Mandal. (Prestige Books 2000),10.

Bhargav Rajeev. 2002. *The Multicultural Framework in Mapping Multiculturalism*. Jaipur: Rawat Publication.

Desai, Anita. *Voices of the City*. London: Peter Owen, 1965; Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, 1965. (64)

Deshpande, Shashi. *That Long Silence*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1989. (191-92)

Heywood, Political ideologies, 4th edition, Palgrave Mc Milan. 2007: 313.

Trotman, C. James "Introduction". In *C. James Trotman Multiculturalism, Roots and Realities*. Indiana UP P. 1X, ISBN, 2002.

Jain, Jasbir. *Narrative of the Village: Centre of the Periphery* ed. Rawat Publications: Jaipur, 2006.

Jhabwala, Ruth Prawar. *In Whom She Will*. United States: Simon & Schuster. 174

---. *The Nature of Passion*. United States: Simon Schuster.

Mahajan, Gurpreet. *The Multicultural Path-Issues of Diversity and Discrimination in Democracy*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002.

Markandaya, Kamala. *A Handful of Rice*. New Delhi: Orient, 1966. (189-90)

Nadeem, Shehzad. *Macaulay's (Cyber) Children: The Cultural Politics of Outsourcing in India*. *Cultural Sociology* 3.1 (2009): 102-22.

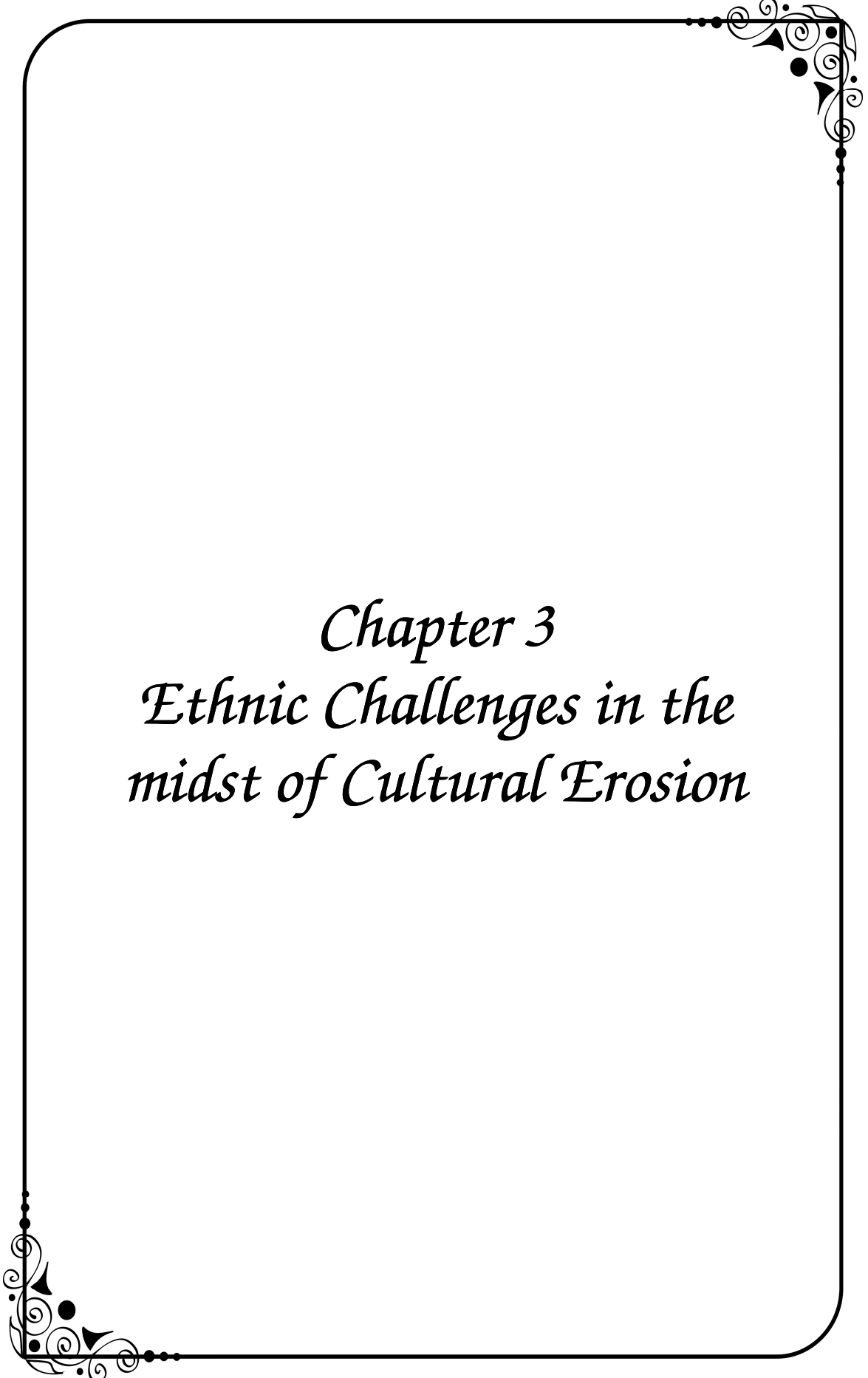
Parekh, Bhikhu C. *Rethinking multiculturalism, cultural diversity and political theory*. Harvard UP. P.3. ISBN- 2002

Reed Way, Dasen Brock. *Intelligibility and Meaningfulness in Multicultural Literature in English*. JSTOR: PMLA, vol .102, No.1 [Jan,1987],p 10-19

Singh, B.P. *India's Culture*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Williams, H.M. *Indo Anglian Literature 1800-1970*. (Orient Longman, 1976: 90).





Chapter 3
Ethnic Challenges in the
midst of Cultural Erosion

CHAPTER 3

Ethnic Challenges in the Midst of Cultural Erosion

This chapter *Ethnic Challenges in the Midst of Cultural Erosion* is an attempt to highlight the ethnic challenges against the backdrop of decreasing cultural values. This chapter deals with degradation of morals and ethical values in metropolitan culture. Through the medium of five selected novels, the gradually but steadily decreasing morality is seen in people living in metropolises. They follow western norms and want an unethical life which is far away from traditional norms set down from past times. Nowadays, people want to live a life according to their own will, benefit and convenience. Their thoughts are based on meanness of nature sans humanity. Characters in the selected novels have similarities with people living in metropolitan culture. This chapter is justified with the help of characters in the novels chosen for work. A huge change in the scenario of cultural values is seen. Contrary difference is there between past and present cultural values.

Human and societal values are intended solutions by the novelists for a better society. Money has taken place of human affection and as a result materialistic success of urban world has wiped out all human values. The novels show reflection of urban culture where all human relationships are seen having lost its values. Human relationship is one of the most important key to the greatest things in life but the failure to realize anything owed to others and the disloyalty at every level of modern life is only possible because of proud ingratitude. Parents are discarded and ignored by those who owe them so much. Husbands abandon wives, and wives leave husbands, utterly forgetful and heedless of how much at one time each may have

given the other. A conceited age is an unthankful age in which self-centered minds believe that whatever they have received is their minimum right, and no gratitude or affection is due. If parents, spouse, friends, or anyone else should offer criticism, then they are promptly regarded as objectionable. Horrible traits appear in present times because the prevailing grudges in the hearts of the people produce a perverted and twisted society. A season of extreme evil produces contempt for all God's ordained rules for relationships, not only marriage but also the prohibition of intimate relations before marriage and the prohibition of vile affections. Every age is not the same in its level of sinfulness. Presently, forms of immorality are officially approved, legalized, encouraged, assisted, applauded and protected. The listed evils seize the hearts of the people to a far greater degree than in any other age. It is certainly needed to warn about the unguarded culture of today, a new and transformed culture which is designed for sexual excitement and liberty, and this urgently needs to be recognized. The next ugly feature of human relationships in an age of apostasy is that many people to an increasing degree become without natural affection, or unfeeling and unsympathetic. Obviously if people become dominated by self-love and feel no gratitude, and if they lose respect and loyalty to family bonds, then they will become heartless people whose only affection will be toward those who currently benefit or excite them in some way. Deep and loyal love will become rare. Today, it is seen that how people behave in so many marital disputes and particularly in their ruthless indifference to their children. Love and romance, family and culture, the emotions of conflict *and* man's relationship with the world can't be hidden. Coherence across these themes is achieved by one overarching theme of relationships starting with love and tension in personal, familial

and public relationships. The selected novels portray ethnic and psychological struggles of characters in the form of how they face broken relationships.

The characters in the selected postmodern Indian English novels chosen for the study display several peculiar mental characteristics. Some of them even appear to be affected by psychological problems. Morals do not seem to concern them very much, except in superficial ways, at least in some of the characters. Both men and women are frank and forthcoming in their values. They are ambitious no doubt, but some of them are go-getters who are Machiavellian in their pursuit of goals. The idea of poverty and brutal oppression resulting in crime has been deftly handled in the postmodern Indian English novels like Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* and Tarun J. Tejpal's *The Story of My Assassins*. To a lesser degree, Ayyan Mani, the protagonist in Manu Joseph's *Serious Men*, who represents the have-nots of Indian society resorts to cunningness and manipulation, in order to get his needs met. Power politics is a game in which the poverty stricken individual becomes a helpless pawn. In the pursuit of power, the individual has indeed compromised on his sense of moral values. There are now several white tigers prowling in the metropolitan jungles. The novel gives a vivid description of the insensitiveness of the affluent big cities, their mania for conspicuous consumption, their hardness of heart, the exploitation of small fish by the big. These are the images of the modern urbanized society caught between the pull of old tradition that all but strangles him and pull of new immorality that attracts as well as frightens him. Character lurches now this side, now on the other side, and the worst of both.

Before going through research, here India's transformed culture is needed to mention. India is a large storehouse of rich and diverse cultures. The rhythm and flow of life portray a unity which underlies diverse cultural forms. The illustrious history of India reveals a rich pattern of artistic creativity, superb craftsmanship, strong value systems, honesty and integrity. The composite culture of India is a web of vibrant colours. Metropolitan culture and an essential rural simplicity co-exist peacefully. The idea of unity in diversity is the hallmark of Indian culture. The country is famed for its warmth and vibrancy. The traditional liveliness of the Indians in general and their generosity and hospitality is almost universally accepted. The Indian way of life is open, natural and in many ways, the real way of life. The country is a standing example of care, co-operation, tolerance and non-violence. The land of Gandhi and Vivekananda is the land of Vedic order. The culture of a nation is representative of its general values, beliefs and practices. It is symbolic of its traditions and attitudes. Within the global fraternity, India enjoys a unique position for its rich cultural amalgam of festival and foods, art and crafts, music and dance, rituals and customs, respect for life and open mindedness. Truly, the land of Gods holds an enviable position in the world. These features of Indian culture have continued to be expressed through every facet of Indian life down the ages. The emphasis is on a harmonious level of existence. India has always been a land of villages and nearly seventy percent of the population dwelt in villages. However, changing political and social conditions, economic needs and communal and ideological tensions forced the rural population to seek settlement elsewhere. The unprecedented growth in industry, commerce and technology paved the way for a shift in locale for a large number of people in India. Right down, from the sons of

affluent landlords to the landless labourers, a need has arisen which impelled the population to shift from one geographical region to another, and this shift also brought about a shift in outlooks and attitudes as far as culture is concerned.

Culture plays a vital role in the progress of a nation. The culture of a nation is of utmost importance to the people of a land for emotional and psychological reasons. Indian culture imbibes the best of all that is available by way of attitudes towards life. The Indian village has for long been the repository of culture and it is in the Indian village that one finds the real roots of Indian culture. These rural sites have always have had the ability to strengthen bonds among people through shared habits and customs. A general sense of humanitarian sympathy and respect for all forms of life are a cardinal feature of the Indian rural individual. However, the fast moving pace of life exerted a strong influence on these rural sites and introduced them to a number of external influences. The advancement of science and technology played a major role in awakening the rural individual from his state of peaceful slumber. More and more individuals left the shelter of the rural nest to seek their fortunes in urban spaces and from thence, they moved on to the huge metropolises. It was only a matter of time that internal migration began on a large scale, bringing thousands of rural individuals to the various metropolises in India.

First of all, going before the depth of culture and its erosion, understanding culture is most important. *Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science: A Multicultural Approach* examines culture by C Rajendran as:

According to a standard view, a culture is a complex set of shared beliefs, values and concepts which enables a group to make sense of its life and which provides it with directions for how to live. This set might be called a basic

belief system (note that such a belief system can include items which are fully explicit and others which are not, and can include matters of feeling and deportment as well as discursive claims about the world). In perhaps the most influential variant of this standard view, culture is pictured as text the vocabulary and grammar of which its members learn. Indeed, in this view, becoming a member of a particular culture is a process of enculturation conceived as learning to read the culture's basic text and making it one's own. (57)

A shift in the locale implies a cultural change. Cultural change brings in its wake, a change in values, morals, customs and manners. It involves a change in outlook and attitudes. Customs and traditions which have been prized for long begin to be reevaluated reordered. The shift in perspectives is a paradigmatic shift. Ethnicity has given way to modernity, which in turn has given way to postmodernism. Social stratification on the one hand and modernity on the other hand, has proved to be disadvantageous and crippling to the downtrodden sections of society. Urbanization has succeeded in jolting the common man into a state of anguished and perplexed wakefulness, from his peaceful rural state of existence. The postmodern Indian English novels chosen for the study aptly reflect the change from rural to metropolitan surroundings and capture the nuances of such a shift in locale. Metropolitan culture is a relatively unexplored field in academic circles, and although academicians and scholars are evincing interest in it, there are several problems which are inherent in such a lifestyle, which can only be gradually explored and unraveled. An insightful study of this nature is auspicious by its absence, and hence, the proposed study would prove to be a step forward in the rapidly unfolding field of postmodern metropolitan studies. The cutting away of roots is an experience which has various social and cultural implications with the fast pace of life which is an inevitable part

of life in the metropolises, the individual finds himself enmeshed in a web of circumstances, which are relatively new for him, but to which he must acclimatize himself, if he is to survive and move forward in life.

Multiculturalism is a school of thought which encompasses a diversity of concerns such as cultures, sub-cultures, the recognition of similarities and differences in cultures, and the peaceful co-existence of several cultures and sub-cultures within a geo-space. Multiculturalism is diametrically opposed to cultural imperialism, with one culture establishing the rules. In fact, multiculturalism does not welcome the idea of a mono-cultural society, and encourages cultural pluralism. The present chapter is an attempt to study how the pristine purity of Indian culture, be it traditional Hindu culture or Islamic culture have been impacted by varied cultural influences in the name of modernity and westernization, and to what extent there has been a shedding off of the basic elements of the traditional culture and an embracing of newer cultural features.

The present chapter is an attempt to analyze the novel with specific focus on the ethnic challenges to figure out its presentations and re-presentations in the novel amidst the cultural erosion. This chapter of research is an attempt to show how ethnic values are declining due to advancement of modern civilization in India. The gradual decline of ethical values, faith, ethic and moralities are seen in the selected novels. This chapter brings about social, cultural, religious and caste challenges.

The erosion of the assumptions and presuppositions of Indian life has proved fundamental to the study of postmodernism and metropolitan culture in India. Indian society is becoming increasingly postmodern and there has been a rethinking and

rewriting of several traditional themes in Indian society such as caste consciousness, marriage alliances, kinship bonds, religious practices and communal living. Postmodernism seems to result in the emergence of an entirely new perception of society and social movement.

Post Independence, modernization was welcomed both by the masses and the leaders of the nation as a transformative agent for Indian society. The system of caste hierarchy, the cultural practices of ethnic groups and the continuity of traditions began to be reworked and reordered. The novels selected for the study draw attention to the fact that literature does indeed play a very important role in bringing about a sense of social awareness and moral responsibility. The novelists, through the pages of the selected novels reflect realistically the numerous changes that have come about in the culture, lifestyles and mindsets of people who have not only made the physical journey from rural backgrounds to metropolitan cities, but who have also metaphorically done journey from backward mindsets to more progressive ways of thinking. The question that arises from all this is, that where does the balance lie, between adapting and rejecting. How much of the core aspects of an individual's culture are compromised in the quest for modernity, identity and keeping up with the Joneses.

Reflections of varieties of culture speak so many things about cultural challenges, as a journal of *European Cultural Studies* incorporates:

While 'culture' in the past was probably a term with mostly consensual and positive overtones, it now very often shows up in contents of discord- 'culture clash'; 'culture conflict'; 'culture wars'; and perhaps also, at a different level, 'culture shock'. A major reason for this, no doubt, is that culture speak now

very often draws out our attention to what are taken to be the interfaces between cultures; a tendency which in its turn has much to do with that polymorphous global interconnectedness through which such interfaces becomes increasingly prominent in human experience. (397)

Indian culture has always boasted of some salient features, which glorify the moral values and balanced approach espoused by almost all Indians. Indian culture can be reckoned as the basic tool for a well being. It is designed to evolve an individual into his ultimate nature. While the western cultures talk of freedom and liberation at the external levels of life; Indian culture is strategically designed to bring about internal liberation and liberation from ignorance of every sort. Cultural threads need to be strengthened in order to engender spiritual well being.

There is a certain degree of emotional content in the value attached by most Indians to the culture of India. India is a vast nation where food habits, music and dance, dress and ornaments, festivals and worship differ from region to region, and from community to community. Yet a single cultural thread binds the varied cultures together. Wherever in the world an Indian goes, he is singled out and recognized as an individual of innate culture. The stamp of the Indian culture is written all over him.

Marriage and family, the position and image of the Indian woman, kinship of bonds, simple living and high thinking, reverence to preceptors, a deep sense of connection to Gods and spiritual beings, reverence and worship of nature and a respect for all forms of life are some of the salient features of Indian culture.

The foundation of family relationships is not the individual will rather it is a sense of obligation towards the other members of the family and society as a whole.

Members of a family remain united and share duties. The performance of duties towards the family is not merely a matter of civility rather it is held sacred. Discipline, protection, love and care are cornerstones of sound family life. If parents have duties towards their children, children too are expected to honour them and look after them in their old age. The family is thus a closely knit unit.

The novel exposes the modern India with shifting values and no morals. In the era of globalization, everything became commodity where the bond of relationship reached in the position of commodity and everything is for sale. The family relationship is based upon the materialistic prosperity because the western culture injected the poison of decadence in Indian culture. Balram tries to become westernized like his masters, who are the inhabitants of metropolitan culture. When Balram returns to the village, he is shown obsessed with his masters and his job shows fascination towards them and he habitually ignores his family. The description of the journey to the ancestral village in *Darkness* is shown as when Balram says while arriving at his home-town: We drove along a river, and then the tar road came to an end and I took them along a bumpy track, and then through a small marketplace with three more or less identical shops, selling more or less identical items of kerosene, incense, and rice. Everyone stared at us. Some children began running alongside the car. Mr. Ashok waved at them, and tried to get Pinky Madam to do the same. The village to which the car is returning is not only the employer's village but also Halwai's who is returning to the place where he was born and grew up and has only recently left. Yet does it appear to be the account of a man who is returning home. It is observed that Balram recognizes no landmark and person neither he has emotion nor relationship to the land or the people.

This chaos and psychological schizophrenia was termed as modernity. What fell apart in modern era were the values of eighteenth century, the age of enlightenment, also known as age of reason probably main values of age besides reason, was the idea of progress. In eighteenth century thinkers become optimistic by thinking that by using the universal values of science, reason and logic they thought that they could get rid of all myths and idea that kept humanity for progressing. They thought that this would eventually free humanity from misery, religion superstition, all irrational behavior and unfolded belief. Humanity would thus progress to a state of freedom, happiness and progress. The current world scenario especially India in which Adiga's *The White Tiger* came into being is post-modern age in which there is no certainty of anything everything is in the state of topsy-turvy condition. From nineteenth century to present days has been period of mind and reason not soul and religion. The religion its belief, sacredness, ethical values and moralities are not essential part of life. They do not have significance for twenty four hours in life of an individual but their significance resides on some particular occasion such as on religious activities merely not as durable feeling for forever. *The White Tiger* is compendium of religious ferment. The novel portrays the real picture of Indian society including problem of caste and class, poor, labors, women and politics. The novel exposes decline of religious values from all spheres of life in derogatory and blasphemies ways. In the novel Adiga is not just discarding religious values and its significance but he is presenting them in sardonic terms.

The novelist observes metropolis both New and Old Delhi minutely. By comparing old and New Delhi, cultural change can be observed minutely. So he has

painted both the dark and light colours of metropolitan culture of entire Delhi. On the one hand he discusses 'The Light' the city, the call centers, high tech areas, big hotels, sky-kissing buildings and on the other hand, the dark sides of Old Delhi and its places and people. The wanderings of the novelist in the Old Delhi can be seen in following words:

I wandered further into old Delhi. I had no idea where I was going. Everything grew quiet the moment I left the main road. I saw some men sitting on a charpoy smoking, others lying on the ground and sleeping; eagles flew above the houses. Then the wind blew an enormous gust of buffalo into my face... Everyone knows there is a butchers' quarter somewhere in Old Delhi, but not many have seen it. It is one of the wonders of the old city- a row of open sheds, and big buffaloes standing in each shed with their butts towards you, and their tails swatting flies away like windshield wipers, and their feet deep in immense pyramid of shit. I stood there, inhaling the smell of their bodies- it had been so long since I had smelled buffalo! The horrible city air was driven out of my lungs. (255)

Adiga at a place takes both the cities, old and new together and compares them with each other:

...Mr. Premier, that Delhi is the capital of not one but two countries- two India's. The Light and the Darkness both flow in to Delhi. Gurgaon, where Mr. Ashok lived, is the bright, modern end of the city, and this place, Old Delhi is the other end. Full of things that the modern world forget all about rickshaws, old stone buildings and Muslims. On a Sunday, though, there is something more: if you keep pushing through the crowd that is always there, go past the men clearing the other men's ears by poking rusty metal rods into them, past the men selling small fish trapped in green bottles full of brine, past the cheap shoe market and the cheap shirt market, you come great secondhand book market Darya Ganj. (252)

The uncertainty of metros is also portrayed by the novelist as he sees people in rags turning into multi-millionaire within a night, or a billionaire into a beggar within seconds. It is a city of possibilities and impossibilities. Both are tracked by him equally:

But Delhi is a city where civilization can appear and disappear within five minutes. On either side of us right now there was just wilderness and rubbish. (281)

At another place, addressing the Chinese Premier he says:

It was the hour of sun set. The birds of the city began to make a row as they flew home. Now Delhi, Mr. Premier, is a big city, but there are wild places in it - big parks, protected forests, stretches of waste land- and things can suddenly come out of these wild places. (201)

In Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, the protagonist reminisces about his family back in the village home:

Once you walk into the house, you will see- if any of them are still living, after what I did- the women, working in the courtyard. My aunts, and cousins and Kusum, my granny. One of them preparing the meal for the buffalo; one winnowing rice; one squatting down, looking through the scalp of another woman, squeezing the ticks to death between her fingers. Every now and then, they stop their work, because it is time to fight. This means throwing metal vessels at one another, or pulling each other's hair, and then making up by putting kisses on their palms and pressing them to the other's cheeks. (21)

With rise in population there is influx of human from the villages to the cities in search of greener pastures giving rise to various problems:

I could see multitudes of small, then grimy people squatting, waiting for a bus to take them somewhere or with nowhere to go and about to unfurl a mattress and sleep right there. These poor bastards had come from Darkness

to Delhi to find some light-but they were still in the darkness, hundreds of them, there seemed to be, on either side of the traffic (158).

However, the journey from a rural background to a metropolitan city is also an interesting metaphorical journey. The individual sees the realities of life, which stare him in the face at every stage. Amidst the busy flow of life, the city's actual presence becomes more and more impersonal, and its beauty, history and cultural significance are relegated to the background.

In this journey from village to city, from Laxmangarh to Delhi, the entrepreneur's path crosses any number of provincial towns that have the pollution and noise and traffic of a big city- without any hint of the true city's sense of history, planning and grandeur. Half baked cities for half baked men. (52)

But, life in metropolitan cities in the postmodern age is witnessing a dismantling and disintegration of cultural and historical mores of human relationships, family and marriage; and this has resulted in multitudinous problems. Thus, the existential impact on different aspects of life, the environment and society as well as the subjective world of individuals is become increasingly important. Existential neurosis is evident in the plight of the person who views life as essentially meaningless. Loneliness, isolation and alienation are the postmodern man's problems today.

The strong yet invisible bonds of family are now giving way to other ways of life. Marriage is no longer viewed as a secure base for human life. In many of the postmodern Indian English novels, the characters view marriage as an unbearable condition of bondage. In Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, the protagonist has a strong aversion for the marital bond. When one is a witness to the luxurious and

comfortable life styles of the affluent, one is naturally reminded of the squalor and discomfort of his own home and family environment, if one happens to belong to the working class. Balram works as a car driver and drives a sleek Honda City. His masters have a splendid home and they live in great luxury. Balram has witnessed the sad plight of his own hardworking father, he is now a witness to the similar living conditions of his brother, and so when Balram is pressurized to get married, he revolts against the idea, which upsets his family. Marriage, children and the family, have undergone a transformation, in the sense that they are no longer viewed as forms of security and emotional warmth, rather they are treated as unnecessary burdens. Balram is angry at the idea of having to get married:

I couldn't stop thinking of Kishan's body. They were eating him alive in there! They would do the same thing to him that they did to father-scoop him out from the inside and leave him weak and helpless until he got tuberculosis and died on the floor of a government hospital waiting for some doctor to see him, spitting about on this wall and that. (86)

The novel exposes the modern India with shifting values and no morals. In the era of globalization, everything became commodity where the bond of relationship reached in the position of commodity and everything is for sale. The family relationship is based upon the materialistic prosperity because the western culture injected the poison of decadence in Indian culture. Balram tries to become westernized like his masters, who are the inhabitants of metropolitan culture. When Balram returns to the village, he is shown obsessed with his masters and his job shows fascination towards them and he habitually ignores his family. The description of the journey to the ancestral village in *Darkness* is shown as when Balram says while arriving at his home-town: We drove along a river, and then the tar road came to an end and I took

them along a bumpy track, and then through a small marketplace with three more or less identical shops, selling more or less identical items of kerosene, incense, and rice. Everyone stared at us. Some children began running alongside the car. Mr. Ashok waved at them, and tried to get Pinky Madam to do the same. The village to which the car is returning is not only the employer's village but also Halwai's who is returning to the place where he was born and grew up and has only recently left. Yet does it appear to be the account of a man who is returning home. It is observed that Balram recognizes no landmark and person neither he has emotion nor relationship to the land or the people. The fundamental facts of religion which include beliefs, sacredness, moralities, honesty and values have been taught to humanity with inception of civilization. Human race can become rational, progressive, mechanical, atheist, corrupted and degenerated but it cannot repudiate established values of our civilization. Balram also fights his existence, showing that he is aware of his unconscious self and realizing a possibility to make his social status dynamic. He first must realize that he can vanish, for he has no real name or birth date, no official records with the government, no consequence to anyone if his master is no longer alive. Instead of killing himself like Woolf, Balram kills his master. The white tiger at the zoo again connects with Balram's unconscious self: "It turned its face to my face. The tiger's eyes met my eyes, like my master's eyes have met mine so often in the mirror of the car. All at once, the tiger vanished" (237).

Generational divide is the one that India desperately needs to bridge. The older generation grew up in a time of scarcity and prized a suffocating social conformity where everyone lived separate but equal lives. The young are almost a race apart with a liberal attitude that is inimical to the Indian hierarchies of caste and creed.

India needs a cultural revolution to change the mindsets and old norms of living. As young characters are seen living their lives of their own choice. For youth, success and monetary gain is everything to life and to achieve this purpose, they go up to any extent. Young characters struggle with a world that challenges them to break free of their parents' expectations whether they become successful in making their career and money or just meet with failures. The surmounting pressure to succeed is one of the reasons that is making India's youth a vibrant, fast growing and fast changing economy and society. The young generation has its dreams sparkled with the glitters of hope as well as bruised with the tales of inabilities of achievement and helplessness against the system. Even though the youth force is said to be able to dislocate mountains and block the flow of rivers, it faces its own problems when it fights the age old red tape and a corrupt infra-structure. The victories and defeats of the youth are observed in Bhagat's stories. The extraordinary achievements of the twenty first century, the maintenance of progress in the face of increasing competition-these things have only been gained and can only be held by great mental effort. The demands made on the efficiency of the individual in the struggle for existence have greatly increased and it is only by putting out all his mental powers that he can meet them. Hence irrespective of position and age the explosion of expectations has engulfed almost all. Govind, Ish, Omi, Ali all reel under the occupational stress which keeps mounting day by day. At the same time, the individual's needs and his demands for the enjoyment of life have increased in all classes. The female character Vidya is stressed out since she expects more from life. Everyone feels pain because everyone has a dark side to their life. This dark side is the compromises made by individuals to achieve more at any cost which bears

heavily on their conscious. Individuals brought up in traditional culture suddenly are forced to live in an atmosphere of totally changed values due to westernization brought by globalization. Hence the wrecking conflict. Irreligion, discontent and covetousness have grown up in wide social spheres as is illustrated in the novel *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*. The immense extension of communications which has connected people from every nook and corner are misused to spread discontent from one part of the country to the other. The fire of discontent engulfs within seconds millions of people, making it impossible for law enforcing agencies to do anything to bring relief. The incident of Godhra riots is proof enough of how technology is misused by miscreants. All around is hurry and agitation. City life is constantly becoming more sophisticated and more restless. The exhausted nerves seek recuperation in increased stimulation and in highly spiced pleasures, only to become more exhausted than before.

The Three Mistakes of My Life is largely about the Indian youth brigade and their sentimental relationships. Their thoughts, their actions and attitudes are what largely get reflected through the novel. The novel has dollops of various elements that give human relationships strength. There is mutual emotion, there is die-hard friendship, there is romance, there is humor, there is ecstasy and so is agony in relationships. Destinies of three friends are predetermined and yet the three of them are unable to avoid traps of love and betrayal of life. They yearn and dream for a future to be one but they become the figures of revulsion in later years. This not only sets the perspective for the intimate and ultimately tragic relationship they build with each other, but also provide an interpretation of the human society. The novel depicts three friends and their part in rescuing the life of an innocent Muslim boy,

Ali. Ishan, one among the three friends, aims to become a cricketer. Ishan's father paints him as a loafer to his neighbors. He says: He and his loafer friends hanging around the house all day long (5). Here, the novelist points the mistaken sense of the elders about the youngsters. Ishan's interest in cricket makes him a loafer in the eyes of his father. Seldom, parent-child relationship seems tangled, i.e. sans understanding. Mutual expectations become contrary. Despising of parents seems a major trait of metropolitan culture where social and psychological challenges are faced in close relationships. Children want their parents to cooperate them the way they want in every aspect of their life, whereas parents consider their off-springs as unwise to take appropriate decisions. These opposite thoughts make their relation fragile. But, minute observation says that the relationship evils begin with the term 'disobedient to parents'. The novel speaks here of the present times in which people have no respect for those who properly possess seniority, whether literal parents, social or professional leaders, or any other legitimate holders of office or authority. People feel no obligation to respect or obey anyone, recognizing only their own self-determination. The same flavor of freedom gets reflected through Govind who opt the career of his own choice with an entrepreneurial spirit. Apart from Govind, Omi's character paints the picture of those Indian youth who often get seduced by trivial temptations but then at the end of the day, they continue to possess a heart of gold and flings to action without worrying about their own lives, without remaining in the territory of selfishness. Later, according to his will, Ishan drifts into the life of an ordinary cricket coach, as he wanted to be. He sees a great potential in the Muslim boy Ali and he decides to support him because as a lover of cricket he did not like Ali's talent to go waste. He does not like a repetition of misfortune. Suppressed

desires of Ishan to become a famous cricket player make him magnanimous in helping the boy. Somewhere in his psyche, the boy becomes a prop, a substitute for his lost self and he again hopes to re-live his own unfulfilled childhood dream. Through Ishan, novel allows the readers to understand the social and psychological challenges, i.e. struggle and obstacle faced by a sports person and enables the reader to see the real person behind the mask of superstar. The patriotic as well as fraternity sentiments echoed in the novel when Ishan said that Ali deserves kudos especially as the country was going through a bad phase. The secular and broadmindedness of Indian youth gets reflected through Ishan's character. Social problems are also shown as the cause of tangled relationships among Hindus and Muslims. As described in the novel, Hindu-Muslim riot or political issues like the politicization of religion are the burning themes discussed in the novel and the research as well. These problems are seen through the eyes of Govind, Ishan and Omi in the novel as the novel is based on the real events of the sectarian riot that took place in Gujarat in 2002, known as Godhra riots. Communal hatred gives birth to differences between the relationship of Hindus and Muslims. Even then, Ishan and Omi prove that Hindu-Muslim relations are not considered as bad as people assume. Although Omi is found to endorse his Mama's religious and political sentiments, when it came to the life of an innocent adolescent, he erased all trivial issues off his mind and went on to make the supreme sacrifice as a human being. Relation of care and affection is found in Omi for Ali, no matter what caste or religion they belong. Here, relation of humanity is seen in Ali and Omi.

Moreover, except relationship of friendship and humanity the other most sensitive value of marital fidelity has just a passing reference with regard to Govind

Patel's father who had left his mom and him over ten years ago, and then to a great shock, he was found to have a second wife across the town. Fidelity thus has resulted in estrangement of relationship unlike in Narayan's novels it is just a cause of marital stress. Marital Infidelity is just a matter of casualty. Marital fidelity is one of the most famous and precious Indian values. The husband and wife relationship in a Hindu family is more or less one-sided, for it is the man who dominates the family scene and his wife will be instrumental in keeping the family harmonious and united disregarding how worthless and cruel he may be. But as a matter of fact, even in such a patriarchal set up, women had a pivotal role to play in the Indian household and was worshipped for her sacrificing nature. This sensitive value of marital fidelity has taken a 360 degree turn now. In the novel, fractured marital relationship is shown between Govind's father and mother. Nowadays marital relationships have become worse as couples can be seen living separately after marriage or have extra marital affairs. The novel reveals that broken relationships have become a major trend of metropolitan culture and pinpoints on the fast changing attitudes of the modern Indian couple as well as the nexus between practice and attitude in popular culture. The novel focuses on separation and also dissatisfaction in having sex that can be seen within Indian marriages today. These are all social and psychological challenges faced by almost of the people seen today.

The novel reflects an image of India's youth since it is about them and echoes their emotions and concerns in various relationships. It projects their thoughts on politics, religion and cricket. Above all, it salutes the never-say-die spirit of mankind and that's what leaves an indelible mark. The novel triggers reconciliation and the dormant friendship between Ishan and Govind, rekindle the love between

Govind and Vidya and above all makes Govind love his own life once again and instill in him the desire to stay alive. Obsession with Western Culture is also observed in the novel. The lasses of this generation want to be free from the tangles of their parents and are obsessed with western culture. This kind of attachment degrades their temperament among the elders who are rooted in old values. The youngsters living in metro cities have craze for modernism like Vidya who aspires to be a PR and wants to be free and live her life king-size. Her room itself portrays her passion for western culture. "Her [Vidya] room was filled with postures of west life, Backstreet boy." (49) She takes everything light and easy in life. She says "life's best gifts are free" (182). Vidya considers herself as an individual whose ambitions should not be restricted on the norms of tradition. Intimate relationship of friendship between Govind and Ish became complicated because of Govind's affair with his sister. Ishan begins to hate Govind for his betrayal in friendship. Ishan considers Govind as a cheater as he commits sin and takes advantage of his sister's innocence. Ishan's trust ends with Govind's friendship. As far as relationship of Govind and Vidya is concerned, they share bond of infatuation, a natural human instinct. A woman looks for the man physically fit and economically sound. Govind has been the college topper. He has obtained cent percent marks in mathematics. He earns a lot in the subject by tuition. He has his own business. Govind's mother runs her bakery. Thus, he has both money and physique. He is not woman freak. This quality attracts Vidya, the sister of his close friend and business partner. He has a dream to become a big man. He wishes his business would spread everywhere. He has focused his mind and heart both on his target. He, therefore, is the right choice of vitality woman. Vidya is entrusted with the assignment to entice the hard-to-win man.

Govind warns her against the seductive moves. He says: I don't have time for emotions. I am your teacher, your brother trusts me as a friend (183). Vidya turns deaf ear towards his warning. She does not care for their friendship. She targets on him as her quarry. She is resolute to gain over him late or soon. Govind feels unsafe with her. This recalls what Tanner feels with Ana in *Man and Superman*: I never feel safe with you; there is a devilish charm or no; not a charm, a suitable interest - just so; you know it: and you triumph in it. Openly and shamefully in it (Epistle, 82). Govind finds: a wild beast (46) in Vidya. It lies in the woman's natural instinct to turn wild when the prey is so near her grip and she is unable to catch it. Govind's conservative attitude creates hurdles on her way to approach him easily. Then she adopts noble attitude. She assumes natural decency to bait the tough prey. In this context, Milan comments: She assumes modesty, bashfulness and submissiveness to look life like and natural so that she could alloy her tactics and arouse faith in her prey. A woman's modesty is the centre of sexual attraction and with which they hunt for their prey. Vidya sheds tears complaining that she feels alone in her home. She is lonely among her parents and brother. A person finds alone among the crowd when there is none to fill the void of the mind. Every age has its seclusion. A child fills the gap with a child. Similarly, when a person crosses an age, he or she needs the emotional support of the same age. Vidya experiences a void within. She seeks for the same-age man who could tune with her and refill the gap. Govind is nearly of her age. He is worth her life partner in all aspects. She cannot forsake this man for trivialities of the society. A friend is a tentative traveler in the journey of life. He or she cannot stay for long. Vidya knows Ishan cannot accompany Govind all through life. She attempts to make this fact clear to Govind. She suggests the man to go for

'back up friend' in need. Moreover, she is ready to serve him as a backup friend. She knows it is easy to turn into the lifetime friend from this stage. Vidya wins the man for the very good friend and for closer degrees of friendship. Govind finds himself trapped in her charms. He proclaims thus: I am trapped in a cage-nonsense (130).

In the pursuit of procreation, Vidya is the chaser and Govind is the chased. Govind clarifies: I didn't hit on her. She hit upon me (172). Vidya chased him wherever he went. She haunted his sensibility thousand miles away in Sydney even though she was at home in her country. He saw many beauties lying nude on the beach. However, none helped him to stop the ideal chase of Vidya. Now he believes there is something in the woman, which attracts him remotely. This confirms that she has hunted him and he is the hunted. Bhagat's women take initiative at every step in the courtship. They steer forth the courtship until it converts into the commitment of living-togetherness. The men make all attempts to avoid the snoop of the women's charms. When they fail to exercise vitality of the counterparts, they become passive in the game. They neither expel nor receive the stimulus. Things happen to them naturally. Govind is passive participant in the amorous pursuit. He continues to teach Vidya even if she sucks his soul. She wants to dissuade him from his aim and enthrall him forever. Apart from, he likes her bravery and vitality. Shaw comments in *Man and Superman*: ...vitality and bravery are the greatest qualities of a woman can have and mother, her solemn initiation into womanhood (284). A Shavian man likes to observe these virtues in the marked woman. These virtues of Vidya highly impress him. Although he has taught many young girls, he has not seen such frankness and boldness in anyone. In some regard, Govind is bestowed with the Shavian virtues. Even though Govind scolds Vidya to use slang words, he loves to

listen to these when she uses in a seductive manner. He loves her pragmatic attitude towards life. He likes to watch her restlessness to set free from the socio-cultural fetters. An instance signs Vidya as the vitality woman, wherein she drags Govind in the stash under the water tank. Here she serves him with sweets and plays music for him. Then she prepares him for final stage of vitality. He strongly opposes it.

As Shashi Deshpande says that, “Women especially, have always had to be more careful, to stay within the lines drawn for them by social rules, by their own conditioning a kind of self-censorship, something that women impose on themselves without knowing they are doing so.” (Writing from the Margin, *The Enemy Within*, 238). In the process of individualism, every person like Vidya undergoes a quest for spiritual and worldly affirmation which invariably results in an active conflict with the existing social forms and myths of dominant patriarchal culture, as they endeavor to reform and review themselves. They perpetuate patriarchy through their own actions by refusing to change themselves. The realization in women of their capacity to go beyond the confines allotted to them by the society and the indifferent response of the patriarchal set up to their extraordinary abilities makes women “doubly-mapped bodies.” It is also the conflict between the ‘self’ and the ‘society’.

Sex is no longer a taboo in the modern Indian society. In keeping with the trend of the post modern era, Chetan Bhagat’s novel has a bold and rather unconventional description of love and sex. The novel is about the social and cultural challenges faced by every person. Being, an inhabitant of metropolitan culture, Bhagat becomes the voice of young generation and writes about India’s metropolitan culture and each aspect of human relationships and problems related to them. The

traditional Indian society is in a state of metamorphosis. The old practices and customs have not given way to new and hence creates conflict in the thoughts of young generation and elders which cause tangled human relationships. The novel deals with the factual scenario of strugglers and the survivors dwelling in metro city Ahmedabad. Nobody can deny that urban India and the upper middle class have a somewhat more relaxed attitude towards sexuality. Indeed the Millennial Generation even in India certainly is leap years ahead of the present retarded way of looking at sex. The decreasing moral consideration in young generation comes to the fore. And yet the vast majority remains puritanical and repressed, ensuring sexuality retains its dark, dangerous edge rather than freeing it to reach a level of liberating self-expression; a level where one is allowed to get over it and focus on other things in life, rather than allowing sex to prey on one's mind to a fanatical level. The novel is inspirational in the sense that modern novels tried to educate the people, inspires them and tried to be with them. The title itself, i.e. *The Three Mistakes of My Life* makes it very clear that it is about the mistakes of a person's journey toward success; the mistakes taught him new lessons and he will move forward by learning from those mistakes. But, at the same time, emotions and psychological expressions are found getting blurred day by day. This is a true perspective of metropolitan culture in which there is no place for emotions and human feelings.

The view that treats the two cultures essentially different stands challenged. The constructed nature of the cultural stereotypes is highlighted in contemporary Indian-English fiction that marks a major shift in the understanding about different cultures. In spite of the cultural interaction taking place more frequently and at a mass level the people who have to leave their home and settle abroad experience a different

kind of dilemma. They may not be considered inferior in political terms yet their acceptance in an alien culture in a natural way remains a far cry. The contemporary fiction writers concentrate on the minute and subtle aspects of human behavior that makes the diasporic people experience a sense of alienation and being kept at a distance. Different writers have tried to bring out multiple shades of this experience.

Jiang begins her story by breaking the custom of Chinese to keep family secrets safe. She is a responsible daughter who helps her father at their shoe-mart by opening the store in the morning, deciding the designs to order, checking the quality of work sent in by the shoe makers and ruthlessly sending back pieces that do not meet her stringent standards. She is a disciplined, work minded lady who is distracted by Mohit Das, a customer and a manager at young age at National and Grind Lays Bank. He proposes her to join for coffee and dessert at Firpo's. He is attracted by her sharpness at work, fierce business acumen, canny bargaining and her ability to match customers with the product best suited to them. After a few months of clandestine meetings and stolen kisses in restaurants and movie theatres and the dusty carrels in the backs of university libraries, Jiang takes Mohit Das to her father. He says: Can fish love birds (73). He gives a reluctant permission to keep seeing each other and if they still felt the same way, he says that he would reconsider the matter. On the other hand, Mohit's family is devastated by the prospects of their only son, carrier of the generations-proud Das name, marrying chee nay heathen. Mohit's father informs his son clearly that he would never give permission for such a pervasion to occur in his family. He says: Have an affair, if you're so besotted. Get her out of your system. Then we'll look for a proper match for you – a woman. I won't be ashamed to introduce to Calcutta as my daughter-in-law (73). Mohit assures

Jiang of his love and never goes to buckle under his father's pressure. He proposes to her that they would elope to Darjeeling or Goa and asks her to pack her valuables. However, Jiang hesitates to leave her parental home imagining her father's face when he discovers her walkout. She also visualizes her life with Mohit in a hill town, or in a seaside cottage and worries one day each of them might blame the other for what that life cost them. Mohit pleads her to get out of Calcutta as he learns that Chinese are being sent to internment camps. He is also afraid of his family being targeted as sympathizers (Indo-China war-1962). His last words to her are: Forgive me, he said. I love you, can't fight a whole country. Then he hung up (76). Even, at a place, she says: When I was a child, I lived inside a secret. Later on Jiang's father gets her married to Mr. Chan, a middle-aged stocky stranger without even asking her opinion. Gradually she realizes Chan's kindness and says: One night I kissed him. I thought. He is so kind to me, I must give him something what else did I have to give? So even though I did not love him, we made love. I thought. It could be worse. It is possible to live without love with a gentleman. (85) After four years when Chan falls sick at the verge of death she shouts: Don't die, don't die, I shouted, I love you (85). At the end of the story narration, she confesses that she really loved him. The novel gives a picturesque description of the honesty of self revelation in Jiang's narration of her pre-marital love affair and marital adjustment with her husband. She shows how racial discrimination prevails in the matter of marriage. Heart touching human relationship is shown in Jiang and Mohit's love story; and then Jiang's marital love-realization with her husband Chan.

Similarly, Malathi a young lady in Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni's novel *One Amazing Thing* has seen the plight of her two sisters who are married and mentally vows not to enter into the state of wedlock:

But Malathi who had noted how her two sisters were ordered around by their husbands, had no intention of following in their foolish footsteps. She had set her heart on something different. When she had saved enough money she was going back-though not to her home town of Coimbatore- to open a beauty shop. (15)

Cohabitation or live-in-relationships are fast becoming popular in the metropolitan culture. Young people who are desirous of relationships but who do not want encumbrances often live together as a couple without being legally wedded to each other.

Malathi, the second narrator unfolds the story of relationship between Ravi and Nirmala. Ravi is the son of Mrs. Balan, a hair stylist of Lola's parlor where Malathi joins as a beautician. Nirmala is the servant maid with whom Ravi exchanges kisses and gets caught by his mother red handedly. Ravi threatens his mother that he would return to America if she fires Nirmala from her job. Thus Mrs. Balan is forced to allow Nirmala to remain. When Mr. Balan enquires Ravi secretly if he wants to settle Nirmala in a flat where he could visit her without disrupting the peace of the household, Ravi replies that he has no such intention of taking advantage of her. Divakaruni's impression is that the rigid class boundaries are the bane of Indian society and should be broken down. Malathi narrates how she gets a job in the Indian Consulate. While working at Lola's parlor, one day Mrs. Balan loses all her hair because of Malathi's mistake in conditioning the hair. At this incident Lola frightens

Malathi by saying that Mrs. Balan can hire a gunda and attack Malathi with acid. After this Lola recommends Malathi to her nephew for a job at the Indian Consulate. Thus Malathi enters Mangalam's office. She shares a tiny apartment with three other women who had been hired by the Consulate and brought over from India around the same time. Malathi's plan is to open a beauty shop after saving enough money. She had noted how her two sisters were ordered by their husbands. Mangalam, according to Malathi's room-mates was the best looking man with his swash buckling moustache, designer sunglasses and surprisingly disarming smile, he looked much younger than his age. No one could blame Malathi for visiting Mangalam's office a little more often than was necessary. She accepted a spoonful of the silvered betel nuts once in a while. She patiently listened to him when he told how lonely he was. She allowed his fingers to close over hers when she handed him a form. It was her habit to doodle on scraps of paper writing Malathi Mangala. Sometimes Mr. Mangalam pulled her into his arms and kissed her and she had to admit that the action was not totally unexpected though it surprised her. Though Malathi had never been kissed before, she knew what to do from the romantic movies. She lowered shy eyes and leaned into his chest, letting her lips brush his jaw even as a worrisome thought pricked her by dallying with a married man. Mangalam also unfolds his amazing past and gives reasons why he flirts with women. He is born in a poor South Indian town who considers himself seriously as the savior of his family. He meets Naina, the only daughter of a high-level government official at a posh Imperial Hotel in a dinner. Mangalam expresses his love in course of a few days expecting that she would never be able to persuade her father to accept him. Surprisingly, Naina insists her father that she will never marry anyone except Mangalam. Naina's father accepts

for the marriage hoping that Mangalam would keep Naina happy. Later on Naina becomes a dominating wife and does not respect Mangalam's parents visiting them. Highly hurt by his wife's arrogance, Mangalam associates with a department accountant in his office. He finds Latika highly touching and discriminates from Naina and feels: If Naina was a flash disco light, Latika was the moon in a misty sky. Behind her glasses, her eyes appeared understanding and I felt that she was the meaning of struggle. The handkerchief she gave me was frayed at the edges, and I was impressed that she hadn't minded sharing it with me even though I would see this (158). Mangalam and Lathika dream of their future together which would include his parents and her brother. After the approval of his job transfer, he asks Naina for a divorce based on incompatibility with the assistance of her father, Naina, a cruel woman does not wish Mangalam to be happy with another woman which stings like a poison ivy. She fights to keep him tied to her for the entire life and in the battle her father is her ally. Mangalam takes a strong decision to degrade Naina's prestige and so he flirts with the near and dear friends of Naina. Though he is sent to America he cannot stop flirting with women. He turns towards Malathi and says: I think we might die here perhaps in the next few hours, if more of the building comes down or the air deteriorates. Further... I don't want to die without telling you that I'm sorry for my behavior. (165) Again, this story relates to another instance of a fusion of sweet and sour human expressions.

Tariq, an Indian Muslim by his features, fair skinned, with dark glasses, a scowl and a beard. He reveals his amazing love story with Farah. The narrator tells the beginning of their relation as follows: Farah. She had entered Tariq's life innocuously, the way a letter opener slides under the flap of an envelope cutting

through things that had been glued shut, spilling secret contents. Her name was like a yearning poet's sigh. (30) She is the daughter of Ammi's (Tariq's mother) best friend from childhood. Farah had come to America two years back on a prestigious study – abroad scholarship from her University in Delhi. In spite of her brilliance, Farah had not made it to America. Her widowed mother, blissfully ignorant of what occurred with some regularity on the campuses of her hometown, had been terrified that American dorm life, ruled as it was by the unholy trinity of alcohol, drugs and sex would ruin her daughter. Only after a protracted and tearful conversation with Ammi had Farah's mother given Farah permission to come. The conditions on which she was sent were; Farah would live with Ammi for her entire stay; she would visit the mosque twice a week; she would mingle only with other Indian Muslims; and she would be escorted everywhere she went by a member of the Hussain family. This shows restrictions on Farah, being a female. Boyishly thin and too tall to be considered pretty by Indian standards, she was smart and secretive, with the disconcerting habit of fixing her keen, Kohl – lined eyes on Tariq giving an impression that she did not believe what he said. Tariq could not figure her out though she was polite, disapproval seemed to emanate from her unlike other girls who had visited them from India. She wasn't interested in the latest music, movies or magazines. Brand name clothing and make-up didn't excite her. He tried to see what made America such a place. But she had asked if they could go to the Museum of Modern Art. She examined with excruciating interest, canvasses filled with incomprehensible splash of color or people who were naked, and ugly besides. One day when Farah enters with a glass of barley water when he was recovering from flu, she happens to touch his two-day grown beard on the cause of checking temperature.

She complements ‘looks good!’(31). He stopped shaving after that and the beard had become a code between them. Even after one and a half year, she had returned to India. In India, she was waiting for him to visit her as, “he had only to close his eyes to feel her cool, approving fingers on his jawbone.” Thus, one more relation of love and infatuation is seen in Farah and Tariq, both have all humanly desires in relationship.

In *One Amazing Thing*, Uma, one of the leading characters is shown in a live-in-relationship with her boyfriend. The Indian way of life has never been that of the excluded middles, which simply means that Indians do not confine themselves to the either/or philosophy, yet Uma’s act of living with her boy friend without the sanctity of marriage is a clear violation of the Indian tradition and culture.

Society defines an individual in certain ways. Cultural identities can be a set of inherited cultural identities and these are often imposed and thrust upon the individual, which results in a stereotypic identity. In order to attain a certain degree of comfort in living in the midst of people with other cultural features, individuals often manipulate their own cultural resources and play with certain aspects of the foreign culture in order to establish territory. This situation is a temporary one. On the other hand, a healthy cultural exchange allows good interpersonal communication and at the same time it engenders a certain degree of sensitivity towards the issues and concerns of others. Good communication is an essential pillar of social life and the negotiating of cultural resources is the very basis of good communication.

Cultural resources make up an individual’s identity, and often allow the individual to use the features of his/her culture in the manner of skillfully playing a

hand of cards in the game of life. Cultural identity is thus a fluid concept which can be dexterously handled and changed to suit one's needs. There is considerable manipulation in the handling of culture in social life. Considering the fact that individuals have multiple identities, they are able to negotiate social communication more efficiently by allowing some parts of their culture to recede to the background, while at the same time, artfully allowing other aspects of their culture to rise to the foreground, as and when the need arises.

In a vast multicultural space like the United States, it is not unnatural to view the moral codes as strange or even distasteful at times. In such a situation, one often strengthens one's cultural identity by drawing on moral values and social codes in one's own society and upholds them as the basis of one's culture. This helps the individual to feel reassured and secure. Although Uma's parents are in a position to understand and respect Uma's decision to be in a live-in-relationship with her boyfriend Ramon, they draw the line where they feel it is necessary. Inviting him to family get-togethers would be an intrusion into their comfort zone and so they tactfully refrain from doing it. On her part, Uma is able to appreciate and respect their decision:

She also realized that her boyfriend, Ramon, whom her parents had treated affably once they got over the shock of learning that he and Uma were living together (her father had even given him an Indian nickname, Ramu) had not been included in the invitation. (7)

This mutual understanding between Uma and her parents is not merely a generational matter; it is as much a matter of wisely knowing how much to let go and how much to hold back.

However, there is no doubt that fidelity to one's spouse, restraint on one's lower passions etc, which the Indian culture has always prided on, seem to have taken a backseat. In the novel, *One Amazing Thing*, Malathi is a young lady working in a visa office in the United States. Her boss is an Indian called Mangalam. Malathi and Mr. Mangalam are not exactly involved with each other in an extra-marital situation, but the two are intensely aware of each other. They are also aware that there is an attraction to each other, although neither of them has voiced it. Mr. Mangalam is a married man with a sophisticated wife waiting at home. Yet he is not averse to make passionate overtures to Malathi:

When he rose to his feet, disconcerted by how badly his hands were shaking, his hands had fallen on his prize possession- no not the photo, which lay on the carpet smiling with sly triumph, but the sandalwood Ganapathi that his mother had given him- to *remove all obstacles from your path*- when he had left home for college. The desk in its journey across the room had dislodged the deity and crushed it against the wall. He had felt a dreadful hollowness, as though someone had scooped out his insides. He too had been brought up with a belief in Karma. (19)

Idols of various Gods are ranked high in matters of worship. Each God in the Hindu pantheon is treated as a powerful energy centre, and each God is the bestower of some desired aspect of human life. Arte facts of culture often possess high cultural value. A powerful example of this is the symbol or idol of Ganesha, the Indian God traditionally viewed as the remover of all obstacles: *Vighneshwara*.

Indian culture does not point accusing fingers at those who transgress its bounds, yet certain values and ideas are so strongly ingrained in the individual, that they rise up to the fore in an individual's thoughts. Belief in Karma is deeply etched

in the minds of even the most emancipated of Indians. Guilt at having transgressed is a difficult emotion to deal with. Both Mr. Mangalam and Malathi are guilt ridden:

The same guilty elation had made her scalp tingle as he pressed his lips against her mouth. If he had groped or grabbed, she would have pushed him away. But he was gentle; he murmured respectfully as he nuzzled her ear (oh how deliciously his moustache tickled her cheek!) Though Malathi had never been kissed before, thanks to the romantic movies she'd grown up on, she lowered shy eyes and leaned into his chest, letting her lips brush his jaw even as a worrisome thought pricked her; by dallying with a married man, she was piling up bad karma. (17)

Postmodern life in the huge metropolises does not allow an individual to feel contentment and ease. In the selected novels, the characters often appear to have dissociated from their original purpose in life, and despite the security of a home, wife and children, feel a deep sense of loneliness and emptiness which drives them to form meaningless attachment with members of the opposite sex. Such an attitude smacks of boredom, where sex is treated as a mere activity to fill in time. Relationships are meant to enrich and nourish life, but in the selected novels, the lives of the characters are drab and colourless. Once again culture and tradition are thrown to the winds as the characters one after the other enter into extra-marital relationships.

The otherwise sane and sober Acharya in Manu Joseph's novel *Serious Men* has a wife called Lavanya who tends to him with wifely concern yet Acharya indulges in a steamy sexual affair with his intellectual colleague Oparna. It is as if he has a compulsive need to somehow stir some excitement into his boring and monotonous existence, and this sexual escapade offers him a way to do so:

He went to the bathroom to stare at his naked body. It was in a way, from an angle, if you looked carefully, a beautiful face. Twinkling eyes, affluent skin, succulent royal lips, not much hair on the head of course, but a lot of face. He had a cold bath and furtively shampooed his crotch. He went back to the bedroom with light steps and gingerly opened the cupboard. He wanted to leave before Lavanya woke up. He did not want to see her that morning. (147)

Similarly, in Tarun J. Tejpal's novel *The Story of My Assassins*, the protagonist leads a hectic life as a journalist. He is bored of his life with his wife whom he refers to as Dolly-folly, and indulges in sexual escapades with other women:

I had discovered, over time that the workable cycle was about sixteen weeks. Two weeks of wooing, four weeks of passion and ten slow and painful weeks of disengagements. By the time, it ended, there was poison everywhere, with every fine feeling in tatters, when the last lingering tendon was finally snipped, with one of us saying something barbaric that could have easily gone unsaid, there was a euphoria not dissimilar to that of the weeks of passion. (84)

Viewed through the lens of the postmodern Indian English novel, Indian society and culture appear to have changed drastically. The image of the woman in the postmodern Indian English novel is a far cry from the traditional picture of women in Indian culture, who kept their heads covered, and gaze lowered, while talking to strangers. In Manu Joseph's novel *Serious Men*, Ayyan Mani is a thirty nine year old man who has spent some time as a sales person in Eureka Forbes. He was familiar at the office with typists and secretaries, and laughed and joked with them:

They would let him squeeze their breasts on the Worli sea face. Then misled by decency, they would ask for marriage. And weep through the pause. Traditionally on the Worli sea face, infatuation fondled and love cried. He was terrified of that love. When they began to brush his hand away from

their impoverished chests and talk about where it was all leading and whispered to him the simplicity of marriage, he left them in the knowledge that they could cash in their virginity somewhere else. (30)

Yet, the images of women as they appear in postmodern Indian English novel are devoid of the usual graces and charms that are generally attributed to women. The images range from bored housewives, ripe for an extra-marital affair or even a casual sexual dalliance with salesmen and other such strangers, to secretaries and office staff involved in sexual escapades with their bosses. Not only women in the office, but also the bored housewives whom Ayyan Mani called on, in order to sell vacuum cleaners, put up a show of complete immodesty:

Hungry housewives, whose saris sometimes slipped off their blouses, as they innocently enquired, in how many colours the vacuum cleaners came, whose night gowns rose in the tempest of a table fan, or who answered the door in a wet towel that they flung away upon the incandescent sight of Eureka Forbes salesman. (83)

A more progressive view of society appears when Ayyan notices that the men folk have begun to share the household chores:

He also saw the men scoop the shit of their babies, and once he even saw a man in an apron take the dishes from the dining table to the kitchen sink. They were the new men. In time their numbers increased and he saw them anywhere now, standing defeated next to their women. Ayyan often told the peons of the institute: "These days men live like men only in the homes of the poor." (83)

Nothing escapes the sharp gaze of the postmodern Indian English novelist, neither the secret satisfaction of the bored housewife who has been released from her marriage vows, after the death of her husband, nor the sly games housewives play in order to relieve themselves occasionally from boredom. In *Serious Men*, Lavanya,

the wife of Arvind Acharya muses on the emotional health of some of her widowed friends. The postmodern Indian English novelists are more truthful in depicting the lives of the modern Indian housewives:

Especially the widowhood of her friends and cousins. These women began to grow healthier after the departure of their men. Their lugubrious eyes filled with life and their skin began to glow. (67)

The image of women in postmodern Indian English novel is very different from the image of women portrayed in the earlier period. The meekness and docility of the Indian woman has given way to a confident, well read, sophisticated woman who knows how to hold her own. One such example occurs in Tejpal's novel *The Story of My Assassins*:

She was talking politics, sociology, anthropology, history, economics, ecology, all in a magnificent jumble that exhausted and fascinated me. She was dismembering the new liberal economics that was opening up India to the world, cursing the scourge of globalization, abusing patriarchal politics demanding low caste mobilization, declaring the death of the idea of India at the hands of a surging Hindu right. (15)

Postmodern Indian English novelists are becoming more and more aware of the pressures which are inherent in life in the metropolitan cities. The rapidly increasing number of practical problems related to day today living in the lives of the teeming millions who dwell in the huge metropolises of India are now the focus of the postmodern novelists. The fractured relationship of the fragmented individual is a direct offshoot of the alienation that is fast becoming evident in metropolitan society. Isolation, loneliness and despair are stark realities in the postmodern metropolitan world.

Caste hierarchy is an important aspect of Indian culture. Although at a superficial level feelings of caste and religious otherness has been eliminated from Indian society, there are deep under currents of casteism still prevailing in the minds of people. Life in the huge metropolises of India is not free of the differences and prejudices which exist between people of different castes. Manu Joseph's novel *The Serious Men* highlights such prejudices:

Ayyan Mani was furious. The war of the Brahmins had ended so fast. And ended in the banal way in which medieval no-talent writers finished their moral fables- the great triumphing over the petty. The loss of anticipation deepened the grimness of his routine and he was filled with the fatigue of an unbearable boredom. When Oparna stood by his desk and asked to see Acharya, he did not even look at her. He just made a call and sent her in. (114)

Postmodernism has a specific perspective of looking at the social institutions of India. A caste may be termed as a specific ethnic group which shares some common characteristic features, which differentiate them from the members of other castes. Although caste system in India has undergone tremendous changes, the hierarchical order remains unchanged. There has been a lot of assimilation and adjustment in the system which allows people to co-exist with one another in healthy ways. There is now a lot of resilience in the caste system in India today. Yet certain habits and attitudes are associated with certain castes, even though its members might have given up those habits, or become adaptive in other ways. Joseph in *Serious Men* narrates:

Ayyan looked on impassively. He had heard all these arguments before and knew what their conclusion would be. The Brahmins would say graciously, 'Past mistakes must be corrected; opportunities must be created; and then they would say, 'But merit cannot be compromised'. He imagined Nambodri

cleaning a common toilet in the chawls and telling his son while he was at it, 'Son, merit cannot be compromised.' Brutal laughter echoed inside his head, showing in his face as nothing more than a faint turch. (59)

Similarly in Chetan Bhagat's novel *The Three Mistakes of My Life*, caste concerns are evident:

'Would you like to come and visit our party sometime?' Omi suddenly stood up. 'Do you know who you are talking to? I am Pandit Shastri's son. You have seen the Swami temple in Belrampur or not? His voice was loud. Ish pulled Omi's elbow to make him sit down. (67)

Since postmodernism believes in celebrating differences, there is greater fragmentation even among the castes themselves. Within a particular caste, there are people who enjoy an advantageous position, and there are individuals who are decidedly disadvantaged. Among the lower castes of society, some of the members avail of all the benefits that are available to them and equip themselves with all the resources of education and technology. In this way, they are able to rise above the other members of their caste, financially and socially. As Joseph in *Serious Men* says:

'Education is very expensive, Mr. Mani', she said making a sorrowful face and leaning back on her chair. 'Christians get discounts. As a financially backward Christian, you will be eligible for many benefits you know that. I am just saying this as a concerned educator. I am not even implying that you should accept Jesus for the monetary rewards that will certainly come your way if you do that.' (96)

Yet the postmodern Indian English novelists are aware of the need for a more balanced approach towards matters related to caste and religion. Enlightened individuals take a just view of the situation and even try to placate members of the lower castes by adopting a humble attitude. As Joseph *Serious Men* states:

‘Its foolish to think that we all come from a privileged background. I come from a humble family’. Nambodri was saying softly, with an air of mellow introspection. (Ayyan could mouth the words he was about to hear, and he would have got most of them right.) ‘I had to walk five miles to school. I remember one day, we were hungry because my father was caught in a storm and he could not come home for three days. I survived all that and managed to reach the cream of Indian science, not because I am a Brahmin, but because I worked very hard. (60)

Similar to prejudices related to religion too. In the *Serious Men*, Manu Joseph comments on the fact that Acharya’s wife Lavanya had remained unmarried for a long time because she was a tall young woman and her parents had serious doubts about their ability to find a young man of their caste (the Brahmin community) to watch their daughter’s height. They were worried about her marital prospects:

The entire family of Lavanya would rather consume Senthil Rat Poison than marry her off to a white man or to the ‘coffee’ as Anglo-Indians were then called. But the elders not worried so much. Somehow, they found a twenty two year old boy from a very good family who too had the deformity of height. He had graduated from the Indian Institute of Technology, but was still studying something inscrutable in the Annamalai University in Madras. (67)

As a Brahmin, Arvind does not fall victim to the same adversities that Ayyan has endured as a Dalit. Yet despite these differences, they come from the same ethnic background: “[Ayyan] always spoke in Tamil to the director because he knew it annoyed him. It linked them intimately in their common past, though their fates were vastly different” (38). In an English speaking environment, Ayyan’s choice to speaking to the director in Tamil dismantles the barrier that separates them and shows that regionally they are the same. This is important because it shows Arvind

trying to escape his identity, while Ayyan is willing to confront it. Ayyan's choice to speak Tamil illuminates the way Joseph's satirical realism works, showing that it is not only about Ayyan's willingness to confront his identity but also about changing our perception of power relations. As we have seen, by means of his son Ayyan uses the close relationship between knowledge and power to cheat his way to success. Likewise, here as well, he is successful because he plays with the double-meaning of Tamil: while on one hand it is assumed, by the upper class, that because he is in the lower class Tamil is what he is comfortable speaking, at the same time he uses Tamil to emphasize his shared history with Arvind. In both cases, he uses society's assumptions to achieve authority.

Religious prejudices are evident in Chetan Bhagat's *The Three Mistakes of My Life*. In fact, the post 2005 novels chosen for the study reveal that despite the rapid modernization and advancement petty issues concerning caste, creed and religion raise their ugly heads from time to time:

Parekh Ji continued: 'I don't even want to go into who this country belongs to because the poor Hindu is accustomed to being ruled by someone else- 700 years by Muslims, 250 years by the British. We are independent now, but the Hindu does not assert himself. But what makes me sad is that we are not even treated as equals. They call themselves secular, but they give preference to Muslims? We fight for equal treatment and are called communal? The most brutal terrorists are Muslim, but they say we are hardliners. More Hindu kids sleep hungry every night than Muslim, but they say Muslims are downtrodden. (43)

Some people find it more difficult than others to cope with living in a foreign environment. When they find themselves in a strange environment, they often

become defensive about their own cultural patterns and seek to exaggerate certain specific aspects of their own cultural identity. For long, the powerful western cultural influence had been viewed as a threat to the various cultures in the developing countries, and when such people travel to the western world and settle there, they unconsciously develop a need to counter the powerful foreign cultural influence. Thus most people may be said to draw more heavily on their inner cultural resources; when they feel threatened by strange social and cultural norms.

It is a socially accepted fact that when two people are involved in any kind of communication, they are knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally exchanging certain messages. In other words, they are sending out and receiving messages about their individual cultural identity. This is more in evidence among people of different cultural groups. A sense of belonging is achieved when one learns and uses features of particular discourses. Living in a foreign land often results in a deep need for cultural assertion. In any given situation, individual's belonging to a particular cultural group often try to project themselves in keeping with certain cultural stereotypes expected by members of other cultures and interestingly by members of one's own cultural group. In Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni's novel *One Amazing Thing*, Farah, a young Muslim girl who travels to the United States to study there, clings firmly to her personal communal convictions:

On the way back she had been more exuberant than he had ever seen her, going on and on about how innovative modern Indian art was too, with Muslim artists like Raza and Hussain in the forefront she had made him feel stupid because he had never heard of these so called artists, not even the one with the same last name as her. In retaliation he had listed for her all the things he had hated about India from his duty visits there. She was angry; he could tell that from the way her nostrils flared quickly once. (31)

Most people who have for long lived and followed a certain cultural pattern wish to project an image. At such times, they draw heavily on a set of things which might be termed cultural resources. Food, dress, language, customs, music, etiquette, ethnic arts, literature and even ideology may be classed as cultural resources. These are various aspects of culture and they could include several other things. These are by no means a set of universals rather each individual may use different resources in different settings.

Tariq wishes to be associated and identified with a certain type of western personality- worldly, educated, suave and self assured. However, at another level, it is far more complex than this. The human society is a society which is complex and multi-faceted and in order for people to feel authentic in their individual identities, this complexity has to be clearly visible. By particularly accepting some cultural aspects of the foreign community, and by shedding in part some of one's own cultural features, an individual like Tariq is able to successfully show the layers and depths of a complex society in which identity is multi-faceted and shifting. There is a driving need in him to be considered westernized, although he recognizes that his foreign friends, neighbours and colleagues construct him and his family in the light of their particular religious culture. This is because his community is seen as essentially different from the western community. There is a significant *we-they* attitude, which can also be termed as *us* and *them*. Thus if Tariq and his family is to gain acceptance within the new cultural community, they must become like *us*, and leave behind some of the attributes of *them*. There is no doubt that cultural features and attributes can flow peacefully and easily between societies, yet there is a certain degree of anxiety involved in this cultural exchange. There is a great complexity involved in

people's cultural identity in terms of how they wish to represent themselves and how they wish to be seen by others.

Tariq and his family had come to the United States and Tariq had made many good friends among the western community. Often the individual who migrates to a foreign country finds himself pulled in two opposing directions. They face a gnawing problem which remains largely unresolved. No matter how friendly and sincere the western friends may be, they see the Indian individual in a particular way which reveals that they do not think of the Indian as a part of their society, unless the Indian individual attains a certain degree of westernization. It is a no-win situation for the cultured Indian, who does not feel authentic if he/she has to give up certain traditional ways of dress and habit, in order to merge into the foreign community, yet he/she does not wish to stand out like a sore thumb in the midst of the foreign circle. This is a problematic situation for the individual who as a result either meekly decides to shed certain aspects of his/her cultural background, or defiantly decides to flaunt his cultural features, even if he/she does not really wish to carry the cultural baggage any more, as a quote in *One Amazing Thing* states:

When Ammi was advised by friends to stop wearing the hijab, he sat her down on the sofa and took her hands in his. He told her she must do what she believed in, not what made the people around her feel better. And most of all, she must not act out of fear. It did not work. She folded the heads-carves and put them away in a drawer. Still, sometimes he would catch her waiting him adjust his black cap in the mirror before he set off for Friday prayers. Pride would battle with astonishment in her face. At unexpected moments, he would be struck by a similar astonishment. (28)

One of the chief blocks to the sense of belonging is the process of construction and reduction that human beings are subjected to. The tendency to reduce others is

deeply rooted in the human psyche. In the process of construction and reduction, there is often the possibility of misconstruing others to suit one's own perceptions and preconceived notions of the cultural identities of others. This results in strong feelings of otherness in the construction and reduction of people who are perceived as others. The other is seen in terms of being foreign. This can refer to people of other cultures within a national culture as well as to people of other nationalities.

Ethnicity, casteism and religious bigotry often result in labeling certain groups of people as *others*. The behavioral traits which belong to the native culture of the indigenous community can be termed as belonging to *that* culture, and it is viewed by the foreign western community as a neatly packaged, stereotyped identity. There is thus a deep seated fundamentalism and essentialism in people's attitudes and patterns of socialization. This is at the root of otherization and gives rise to a particular predicament which is inherent in multicultural communication. Thus, there arises the problem of being stereotyped and otherized on the basis of preconceived notions and images of the indigenous communities. In such a case, the members of the foreign community too are faced with a peculiar predicament wherein they find that they lack the knowledge of what kind of group the Indian individual belongs to in order to be able to place her securely. As a study about *Cultural Identity* studies:

Cultural identity is inevitably exclusive. You are something because you are not something else. You are Canadian because you are not American, you are a conservative because you are not a socialist, you are a teenager because you are not an adult and so forth. (156)

As far as family context is concerned, it is seen that as life becomes more and more demanding in the metropolises, vital aspects of family and the rearing of

children undergo a transformation which is quite damaging. The pace of life being hectic and the travel from home to workspace and then back home being so delaying and tiresome, there are frequent episodes of marital disharmony witnessed among the characters of the postmodern novels chosen for the study. Discord and disharmony between the spouses is fast becoming a menace in metropolitan spaces. With more and more time being spent outside the house, the opportunities of experiencing the togetherness of a warm and healthy relationship with one's spouse becomes more and more distant. Similarly, with one spouse being away from home for uncertain periods of time, the other spouse becomes harried and irritable and the ensuing behavior only serves to drive the other partner to another less demanding relationship.

The protagonist of Tarun J. Tejpal's *The Story of My Assassins* is sick and tired of his wife's demands. She constantly keeps up her nagging:

The last one- the Malyali girl who gave me tree names and wet palms- had ended on sulk number three, in week number nine. The truth is I had no time to argue with others; I had too many arguments going with myself. I was happier recalling her lustrous dark skin, the watermelon red slash at its lovely core, than entering a spiral of you didn't call, why didn't you call where are you, with whom are you, do you feel, what do you feel, you don't care, why can't you come, why can't we go, why can't you say something, what are you saying, you only want that you don't want anything, where is this going, this is going nowhere, I thought you were strong, you are making me weak, I am not weak, you don't want to change, you've changed, you make me sick, you are sick, you don't really love me, I really love you, how can anyone love you, actually you hate me, actually you hate yourself, actually I hate you. (84)

Quite fed up of this never ending battle of frustrated expectations, he seeks the comfort of other women and is disillusioned to find that none of them can offer him any sense of real satisfaction:

Sometimes the process was less corrosive, when she too understood, like cops and doctors do, that the world is what it is, ephemeral, uneven, to be squarely dealt with, and not to be conjured out of weak romantic novels. But few seemed to possess the gift of leaving the room while the laughter was still in the air and the spirits high. For the most, everyone seemed to be committed to creating a heap of debris before walking away from it (85).

The novel presents quest for morality in today's divided India i.e. rich and poor. Struggling to finance the magazine he edits, the protagonist is seen suffering from compassion fatigue. In the police station to file a report, he casts a jaded eye on those around him: "I didn't want to know about the villages they came from, the schools they went to, their family problems, their struggling parents, their working woes, their caste, their religion, their dialect, their opinions on politics, their nationhood, the economy, Gandhi, Nehru, corruption, crime, cricket, Hindu, Muslim, nothing."

Thus it can be safely said that life in the metropolises of India in the postmodern context has a corrosive effect on marital and familial relationships. It proves to be a threat to the secure union of two adult minds and bodies which is a necessary condition for the healthy upbringing of children. As far as children are concerned, they too feel a sense of disconnectedness with their parents. The result is very various kinds of psychological issues, attachment behaviours and so on. Ayyan Mani's ten year old son Adi displays forms of attachment behavior in a bid to feel popular and accepted. Attachment behavior is a form of behavior in which an individual seeks physical proximity with others, in order to feel secure. It is generally recognized that in mammals an attachment system is activated in response to distress. Even though children may not exhibit external behaviours which are indicative of stress, they often engage in a class of behaviours which have deep psychological

overtone. In a sense, one of the estranging factors of the metropolitan culture is the lag between experience and communication. Ayyan's son Adi is a precocious young boy who is watchful and alert, and who has grown up, long before his time.

With the state of affairs being such even in the Indian metropolises, it is a matter of little wonder that parents of children travelling abroad to settle there and study feel a deep sense of insecurity and angst. In Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni's novel *One Amazing Thing*, Farha, a young lady goes to the United States to study. Her parents are willing to send her, but only if she is willing to comply with the conditions set by them for her:

These were the conditions: Farah would live with Ammi for her entire stay; she would visit the mosque twice a week; she would mingle with other Indian Muslims; and she would be escorted everywhere she went by a member of the Husein family. Since Abba was busy with his janitorial business, which was growing so fast that he recently had to hire several new employees, and Ammi's day was filled with mysterious female activities, this member most often turned out to be the reluctant Tariq. (30)

There are some other minor aspects of culture which are more mundane, and which have changed considerably in metropolitan life. The evening tea during which the members of a family exchange bits of interesting gossip or talk of matters of current interest in rural and even smaller urban settings has slowly given way to an entirely different way of unwinding and relaxing oneself in the company of the other members of the family:

As I was massaging, the two sons pulled up chairs and sat down by their father to talk. Ram Persad would bring out a bottle full of a golden liquid, and pour it into three glasses, and deep ice-cubes in their glasses, and hand one glass to each of them. The sons would wait for the father to take the first sip and say, 'Ah!-- Whisky. How would we survive this country without it.' (70-71)

Among the other minor aspects of culture which have been impacted in metropolitan life, are matters related to food and dress, which are showing more and more multicultural trends. Traditional foodstuffs from Southern India have travelled up North and have even crossed the national boundaries to be bought and sold abroad. Thus Malathi is able to get her favourite foodstuffs in the United States. Similarly, Uma's parents are able to watch Bharatnatyam dances, even while living in the United States. Even the Italian Pizza has acquired a delicious Indian flavor and name. As a quote in Chetan Bhagat's novel *The Three Mistakes of My Life* explains the above statement:

We moved to the massive food counter. A Gujarati feast, consisted of every vegetarian snack known to man. There was no alcohol, but there was juice of every fruit imaginable. At parties like this, you regret you have only one stomach. I took a Jain pizza and looked around the massive living room. (40)

Thus, many problems can be examined by this chapter's study on erosion of cultural values in metropolitan culture in the light of selected post 2005 Indian English novels. While some aspects of the cultural transformation are not to be considered problematic, there are some other aspects which may be termed challenging. The problem of space is a compelling problem in metropolitan cities. it is a problem which poses a direct threat to the extended family system which provides the comfort and emotional warmth to children and the elderly, which is so necessary for their emotional well being. Much of the promiscuity attachment behavior and neurosis reflected in the various characters in the postmodern novels chosen for the study are direct results of the living conditions afforded by these huge metropolises.

The novel exposes the modern India with shifting values and no morals. In the era of globalization, everything became commodity where the bond of relationship reached in the position of commodity and everything is for sale. The family relationship is based upon the materialistic prosperity because the western culture injected the poison of decadence in Indian culture. Balram tries to become westernized like his masters, who are the inhabitants of metropolitan culture. When Balram returns to the village, he is shown obsessed with his masters and his job shows fascination towards them and he habitually ignores his family. The description of the journey to the ancestral village in *Darkness* is shown as when Balram says while arriving at his home-town: We drove along a river, and then the tar road came to an end and I took them along a bumpy track, and then through a small marketplace with three more or less identical shops, selling more or less identical items of kerosene, incense, and rice. Everyone stared at us. Some children began running alongside the car. Mr. Ashok waved at them, and tried to get Pinky Madam to do the same. The village to which the car is returning is not only the employer's village but also Halwai's who is returning to the place where he was born and grew up and has only recently left. Yet does it appear to be the account of a man who is returning home. It is observed that Balram recognizes no landmark and person neither he has emotion nor relationship to the land or the people.

Thus, from the detailed analysis of the selected novels, it becomes very clear that the characters portrayed here are living a life devoid of cultural values as they seem to be more interested in carrying their materialistic pursuits and to achieve their goals without thinking of the means and this leads to the erosion of cultural values.



Works Cited

Holliday, Adrian. Martin Hyde and John Kullman. *Intercultural Communication*.

London: Routledge, 2005. Pg 19.

---. *Intercultural Communication*. London: Routledge, 2005. Pg156.

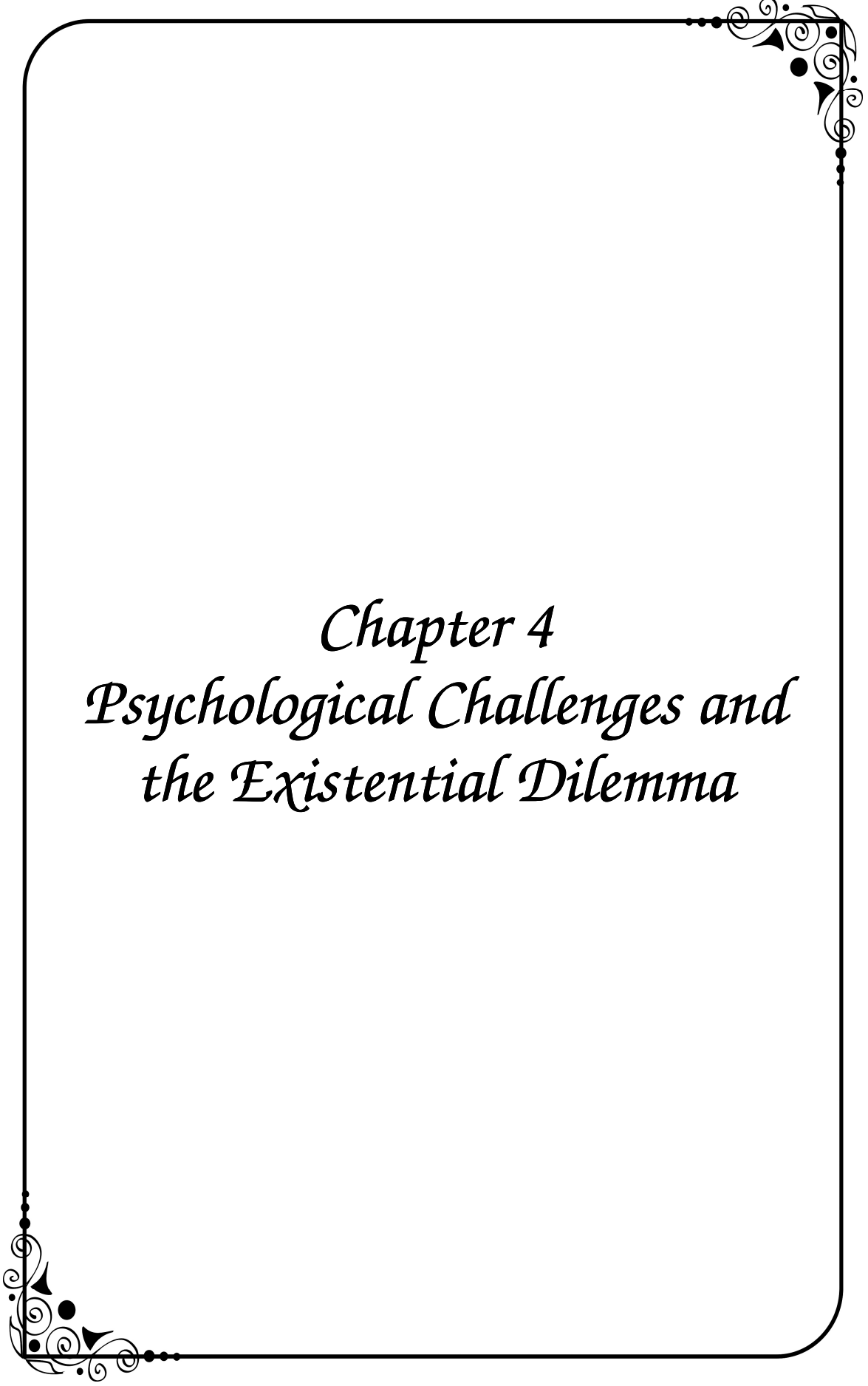
“Reflections of Varieties of Culture Speak” *European Journal of Cultural Studies*

2:3 p 397. (1999)

Fay, B. *Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science: A Multicultural Approach*.

Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996. P 57.





Chapter 4
Psychological Challenges and
the Existential Dilemma

CHAPTER 4

Psychological Challenges and the Existential Dilemma

Psychological Challenges and the Existential Dilemma are interconnected with each other. When psyche of an individual suffer, he feels meaninglessness in his life. He finds himself surrounded with anguishes and monotony. This mental plight makes him face a dilemma to survive with no choices. He gets frustrated by various failures which often come in his life, he struggles to cope up with many challenging situations and finally get through by making a way either ethically or by wrong means. He succeeds in making out a meaning from his meaningless life. This way, before reaching the goal, multiple challenges make his life a roller coaster ride. From the psychological aspect, the individual in question becomes an existential being. All the selected novels deal with the theme of psychological challenges and existential dilemma. In this chapter, five selected novels are brought into light in resemblance to the culture of metropolis in which people go through psychological conflicts and hence find themselves haunted by existential dilemma. No choices are seen left whether to opt for the ethical side and vice-versa. Thus, in order to find meaning in life, individuals are shown seeking to escape from isolation and despair. Characters in the novels are the reflection of real life people who keep on struggling in order to make their identities well known in this meaningless life. Human sufferings, pains and agonies are highlighted in the light of literary theory of post modernism and existentialism.

Existentialism is an approach which places the individual at the centre of attention. In fact, it is a philosophy about the individual and his choices in life. An

individual has to make his journey from a biological being to an existential being with dilemma. He/she has to resist the forceful pull of conformity to accepted norms and transcend them, in order to recognize his unique individuality. This chapter proposes to look at the postmodern Indian English novels chosen for the study, from the existential point of view, and bring out the features of existential philosophy as they appear in these five selected novels of post 2005. Existentialism thus, is a philosophy that has an individual as its focal point. Existentialism is in reality an ideology of individual existence, the freedom to make choices and to define the individual's identity. The existentialist believes that the universe is meaningless and therefore life in itself is meaningless, it is an absurd state of affairs; and therefore it is left to the individual to make free choices in life and take rational decisions in an otherwise irrational universe. There can neither be a valid purpose, nor a reasonable explanation at the core of human existence. There is neither an omnipotent God nor any other transcendent power to structure and sustain the universe, and so it is left to the individual to counter this absurd state of nothingness by accepting and embracing some sort of existence, to which s(he) alone can give meaning.

However, the idea of existential freedom is accompanied by the idea of personal responsibility for and by the individual, for if he is responsible for his choices, he is also responsible for the consequences of his choices. When the onus of responsibility falls on the individual, there is a running accompaniment to life in the form of angst. Existentialism is thus radically opposed to Determinism, and the existentialist rejects conformity and adherence of any sort. Life is viewed as a series of suffering, ending in the inevitability of death and so the idea of existence is both absurd and meaningless. This system of thought originated in the nineteenth century

with the principal ideas being contributed by philosophers like Soren Kierkegaard Friedrich Neitzsche, Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus etc.

Conformity to universal standards is anathema to the existentialist, since s(he) recognizes no objective standards. It is left to the individual to decide what may be considered moral or immoral. The existential individual must act on personal convictions in order to arrive at his unique idea of truth. The position of the detached, objective onlooker is an inferior position and what is infinitely superior is the position of being involved in a situation, which however complex, allows the individual to gaze directly into his own soul. Life does not provide meanings and so it is up to the individual to infuse meaning into his/her life. It is the individual, human actions and the personal convictions and interpretations which ultimately give meaning to life. Responsibility is an important aspect of the existential philosophy. The moral sense of responsibility is an important matter for almost all existentialists.

Thus, existentialism is closely related to phenomenology, which is a deliberate setting aside of preconceptions and dogmas of various sorts, in order to make meaning of an individual's subjective experience. The individual's subjective experience of *self* is at the care of existential philosophy. The existential angst in individuals is often reflected in a specific set of behavioral patterns and complexes. The *existing person* who undergoes all kinds of experiences which are a part and parcel of human life strives to position him/herself in an appropriate place within his/her existential choices.

Truth can be factual or moral; and the pursuit of truth is at the core of human endeavour. A scientific truth can be comprehended even by an immoral person like

protagonist, Balram Halwai of *The White Tiger*, and so it does not require an individual to cultivate himself in the moral direction. However, it requires certain capacities of the mind and intellect to grasp scientific truths. On the other hand, moral truths require a disciplining of the personality and a proper ordering of attitudes and behaviours. The acquisition or comprehension of a moral truth is not limited to merely having clarity of an argument or any other form of mental clarity. Existentialism adopts a more personal notion of truth, and since it focuses on the freedom of the individual to live an authentic life, its central concern is to enhance rather than suppress the concepts of individual freedom and individual sense of responsibility. Existentialism is thus a philosophy of the human condition and the existentialists adhered to a deeper and more self serving meaning of truth, a truth that they could live. The novelist aims at depicting the horrible impact of the metropolitan culture on the sensitive minds.

An underlying feeling of anguish characterizes the existentialists. To the existentialist individual, the meaningfulness of life depends on how he himself chooses to order and arrange his life experiences. The focus of the existentialist individual is to make meaning out of a chaotic array of social and economic pressures, and to fix his own identity and approach, in the matter of surviving amidst such pressures. Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* is a brilliant portraiture of an unequal class-war between the masters who are rolling in wealth and the protagonist who is struggling and penniless. Little wonder then, that he feels that crime alone can offer success. The humble and loyal servants portrayed in the novels of pre-independent India, have now given way to loud and boisterous servants who have no compunctions about resorting to violent outbursts of rage against their masters. Such is the attitude and

behavior of the protagonist Balram Halwai in the novel, *The White Tiger*. Balram Halwai displays all the predominant features of an existentialist. He is the white tiger in the human jungle, and like the white tiger, he is a loner, who sets out on bloody prowls. Here, he talks about the daring thoughts and deeds of servants who not only think, but also plan to make their life meaningful by unethical sources:

Now I have to tell you about this magazine, Murder Weekly, since our prime minister certainly won't tell you anything about it. Its sold in every newsstand in the city, alongside the cheap novels, and it is very popular reading among all the servants of the city-whether, they be cooks, children's maids, or gardeners. Drivers are no different. Every week when this magazine comes out, with a cover image of a woman covering from her would-be murderer, some driver has bought the magazine and is passing it around to the other drivers. (125)

The physical space of the car surrounding the chauffeurs echoes the cage mentality, acting even as a more extreme wall that does not allow for the transference of sound. Freedom of thought, profession, money, and time are never accessed by these millions. Their time is filled up by tasks within society's definition of them. The narrator asserts that if a servant were to try to break from the coop, by stealing or disobeying someone from the higher social class, he must be "prepared to see his family destroyed - hunted beaten and burned alive by the masters" (150). Therefore, servants force their yearnings for freedom and independence to their unconscious minds and cease to be anything of consequence. However, they lack the ability to become a powerful form of nothingness within their defined roles in society. It takes an anomaly, or a rare "White Tiger" that the narrator is eventually able to morph into, to break from this meaningless, and paradoxically defined, position in society. Although he faces the possibility of prison, his existence in the confines of a basement

room and master's car are already not far off. White tigers are rare and "only a dozen or so have been found in the wild.

Everybody craves for his identity, his existence, in this world. Balram has done same act. He attempted to get life of human being but his attempts with the moral are in vain. Who born on this earth, he asks the question to the creator "Who am I"? Some becomes ascetic in search of this, life begins and ends, nothing remains in our hand because we are mere pawns in the hands of destiny. But things are not true with the Balram, he is not ascetic, but he pursued this question in the novel. Although he is the person who born among low class, but like hero of the Post modern fruit he challenged his destiny.

In the novel's initial pages, Balram begins to tell the Chinese Premier the story of his life in which one is introduced to the poverty of rural Bihar, and the evil of the feudal landlords. Presentation of ordinary people in his description of the migrant Bihari workers returning to their villages after their hard labor in the cities can be seen from the novel conveys stark indignation and anger and presents the cruel thoughts of Balram:

A month before the rains, the men came back from Dhanbad and Delhi and Calcutta, leaner, darker, angrier, but with money in their pockets. The women were waiting for them. They hid behind the door, and as soon as the men walked in, they pounced, like wild cats on a slab of flesh. They were fighting and wailing and shrieking. My uncles would resist, and managed to keep some of their money, but my father got peeled and skinned every time. I survived in the city, but I couldn't survive the women in my home as the women would feed him after they fed the buffalo. (5)

As some of the school boys come around and poke fun at him, Balram states twice "I said nothing" (32). He is coming closer to an awareness that he is not satisfied with his position in society and that an internal change, rather than voiced response to the boys, is necessary to leave. He is frustrated throughout the novel with his "half-baked" education with "half-formed ideas" (8) when seeks knowledge and later "feel[s] a kind of electricity buzzing up" when he is "standing around books" (175). Existential dilemma is seen here.

Balram, the protagonist is a typical voice of underclass metaphorically described as "Rooster coop" (173) and struggling to set free from age-old slavery and exploitation. His anger, protest, indulgence in criminal acts, prostitution, drinking, chasing, grabbing all the opportunities, means fair or foul endorse deep-rooted frustration and its reaction against the "haves". Bloody acts, opportunism, entrepreneurial success of Balram, emergence of Socialists in India alarm that the voice of the underclass cannot be ignored for long. The novel is centered on Balram Halwai, a son of a rickshaw puller, destined to make sweets becomes Ashok Sharma. His transformation from Munna—Balram Halwai—White Tiger—Ashok Sharma is the blue print for the rise of underclass. Balram is the strong voice of underclass in which marginal farmers, landless laborers, jobless youths, poor, auto and taxi drivers, servants, prostitutes, beggars and unprivileged figure. The underclass is the result of our polity, bureaucratic set-up, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, caste and culture conflict, superstitions, social taboos, dowry practice, economic disparity, Zamindari system, corrupt education system, poor health services, police and judicial working. These forces collectively operate to perpetuate the underclass. This underclass constitutes Dark India facing psychological conflicts.

His later disdainful spitting upon his village from between the walls of the symbolized *Black Fort* clearly conveys him as an angry, savvy, wounded man robbed of things he rightfully deserved because of family duty and social inequality, thus he had convincing reasons spitting upon his home village. Balram and his reactions seem to be the resemblance with an entire group of helpless denizens of villages blighted by “Darkness”. Marginalized cultural groups living in remote and distant areas from the urban centers where social and cultural priorities are shown struggling and craving to establish themselves in metropolitan culture. Novel is shown taking an exhilarating ride through the darkest alleys of modern India. It presents a tale about Balram Halwai over the course of seven nights, narrating his voyage from “Darkness to light”, (1) from rags to riches, transforming from a village tea shop boy into a Bangalore entrepreneur. Balram tells his story to an empty room as he stares at an ostentatious chandelier. As a great entrepreneur, he wants to keep in touch with “His Excellency Wen Jiabao”, the Chinese Premier who is poised to visit Bangalore with a view to understand entrepreneurship in India. Commencing from Bangalore, Adiga widens his vision and sketches the picture from metropolitan culture. The volatile and captivating narrator provides the Chinese premier stating “that India is two countries in one: an India of Light, and an India of Darkness. The ocean brings light to my country. Every place on the map of India near the ocean is well-off. But the river brings darkness to India - the black river” (14). Balram, who is also referred to as “Munna”, “White Tiger”, “Coal”, “Country-Mouse”, “village idiot”, “driver of cars”, “connoisseur of sculpture”, “working-class hero”, and “original listener”, recalls his past from the existential perspective.

It is seen that the past beliefs and values get converted into the new values. The concept of morality or ethics has also found a drastic change in the replacement from loyalty, celibacy and spiritual to self-interest, adultery and material values respectively. The old beliefs in the past are replaced by the beliefs in the present and the hope for a great future in people's lives. The individual like Balram establishes a completely changed identity at the cost of early cultural identity. In this journey of mal-transformation i.e. changing an individual's role from goodness to brutality, many ethics from the existing set up seem modified and changed fully to the adverse. The contemporary metro era brought out altogether a completely diverse phase in modernized India with all new cultural set up. In the settlement of an individual and the society, the attitudes towards establishing the new ideals seem overtaken at the cost of past culture which was regarded the best humanitarian sans violence. Adiga has focused the Indian society through the discrimination of "Big Bellies and the small Bellies" (64). It is also about urbanized India with its pangs of urbanization. India is shown as an emerging and shining country in the field of transport and communication, science and technology, medical services, industries, tourism etc: "The things are changing in India now. This place is going to be like America in ten years" (89). But the fate of the country is in the hand of the ignorant, bastard masochistic politicians who always defunct the society by operating the power structure. The medical services as depicted in the novel are the symbol of utter social anarchy. The educational system is controlled by the —crowd of thugs and idiots and Adiga named it Jungle.

Several complex emotions and life situations are associated with the existential concern, prominent among which are loneliness, suffering, angst, loss, the

meaninglessness of life, futility, apathy, alienation, shame, addiction, rage, purposelessness, violence and addictions of various kinds. The emptiness and meaninglessness of life is camouflaged in a set of behaviours which is designed to conceal the inner emptiness. Several forms of diversion are adopted to counter the essential feeling of boredom. As *The White Tiger* states at a place:

The street was full of coloured doors and coloured windows, and in each door and each window, a woman was looking out at me with a big smile. Ribbons of red paper and silver foil glittered between the roof tops of the street; tea was being boiled in stalls by the sides of the road. Four men rushed at once at us. The old driver explained that they should keep away, since it was my first time. Let him enjoy the sights first. That's the best part of this game isn't it? the looking! (57)

Feeling of loneliness in Balram's psyche is seen at the fore. Despite of having an intense urge to get settled in a metropolis to become rich and successful, an inclination towards one's home town or native place also remains intact in one's heart. This feeling of isolation is a psychological challenge to face. Balram Halwai thinks of his rural home now and then in a nostalgic way. Sometimes he feels a strong urge to be able to visit his native place:

Putting my foot on the wall, I looked down on the village from there. My little Laxmangarh. I saw the temple tower, the market, the glistening line of sewage, the landlords' mansions - and my own house, with that dark little cloud outside- the water buffalo. It looked like the most beautiful sight on earth. (42)

The existentialist's purpose in life is to disengage himself in the quest of his own identity. In a society which expects its members to conform to preset norms, this indeed is no mean achievement. Balram Halwai wishes to carve out his own

destiny and he does it in his own unique way, without giving much thought to the moral side of life and the ethics involved in his actions.

To sum up- in the old days, there were one thousand castes and destinies in India. These days, there are just two castes: Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies. And only two destinies: eat – or get eaten up. (64)

The lack and deprivation, loneliness and alienation, subjugation and subordination, the resignation and silence, the resilience and neglect mark the lives of downtrodden even, when they resist and rise up, they feel bounded and defeated by their subject positions. They have no representatives or spokesperson in the society they live in and so helplessly suffer and get marginal place or no place at all in the history and culture of which they are the essential part as human beings. Balram Halwai is from the Darkness, born where India's downtrodden and unlucky are destined to rot. Balram manages to escape his village and move to Delhi after being hired as a driver for a rich landlord. Telling his story in retrospect, the novel is a piecemeal correspondence from Balram to the premier of China, who is expected to visit India and whom Balram believes could learn a lesson or two about India's entrepreneurial underbelly. Adiga's existential and crude prose animates the battle between India's wealthy and poor as Balram suffers degrading treatment at the hands of his employers (or, more appropriately, masters). His personal fortunes and luck improve dramatically after he kills his boss and decamps for Bangalore. Balram allows himself to be defiled by his bosses, and spews coarse invective and eventually profits from moral ambiguity and outright criminality. In this way, these novels encapsulate the pain, humiliation, and poverty of this community, which has lived at the bottom of India's social pyramid for millenia. The novel poses a quest for dignity

and the recognition of their human worth, rather than to India's own success in eradicating the evils of the caste system, for its inequalities and iniquities persist.

The boredom and dilemma of rich person's life is also portrayed. In this stage of mind, he is always beset with dilemma. For survival, he has to make choices, either ethically right or not. The hollowness behind the elegant lives of the residents of elite class is brought to light. The socialite people like Mr. Ashok and Pinky madam living in big apartments and colonies, roaming in Honda City or Marcedez Benz or eating continental dishes in Five Star Restaurants with pomp and show have lost the simplicity and easy going attitudes towards life. Mr. Ashok, the Delhite's following comment proves the fact: I am sick of the food, I eat, Balram. I 'm sick of the life I lead. We rich people, we have lost our way, Balram. I want to be a simple man like you Balram. (238) Mr. Ashok is examined with an existential dilemma. He has no other option except living a hopeless and isolated life.

The emotion, sentiment, religion faith, love, devotion, in nutshell human values have lost their vital role from the life of human being and reason, practicality, professionalism have taken their place even then the values of prevailing religious important, caste system cannot be entirely ignored. Mr. Ashok married a girl who is from the outside of his caste, religion community and even country when she left Mr. Ashok and went to hers country. Mr. Ashok repents and emphasizes on the values of religions and castes that exists in Indian society. "Of course, in your caste you don't... Let me tell you, Balram. Men drink because they are sick towards life. I thought caste and religion didn't matter any longer in today's world. My father said, "No, don't marry her, she is of another caste."(186) It is well known fact that god is

earnestly remembered in crisis, disappointment, sorrow and suffering. Mr. Ashok is disappointed due to the divorce of his wife he is thinking of life and death “Sometime I wonder, Balram. I wonder what the point of living is. I really wonder.” (186)

The existentialist does not recognize a model path to walk on as the well trodden pathway is not for him/her. Rather, the existentialist stops to ponder over the avenues and possibilities open and available to him, and having gained clarity on the choice that he wishes to make, he then considers the possible outcomes of his choice. Once the choice is made, the existentialist leaves no stone unturned to somehow make it the correct choice, by following his instincts and doing whatever is needed to gain the desired outcome.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century witnessed the appearance of a shared belief among European philosophers, of the absurdity and meaninglessness of existence; and the resultant confusion and disorientation among individuals. Soren Kierkegaard is generally hailed as the first existential philosopher. Kierkegaard put forward the view that each individual gave his/her own unique meaning to life and experience and therefore neither society, nor religion, nor any other human agency could define or contour the meaning of life. It was solely the domain of the individual. Jean Paul Sartre opined that existence precedes experience and the meaning of the experience. Various behavioural patterns are created in society, which may not only appear to be opposed to the normal or accepted code; but may also appear to be abstract and even disconnected from what may be called concrete and real human experience. Since, Existentialism contests the idea of a stable and fixed meaning of reality. As a result, the fixed ideas of values and morals treated as pre-given by

society also stand contested. Indian English literature in the postmodern age is quite often a depiction of the existential angst among individuals. This aspect is sharply reflected in postmodern Indian English writing. Postmodern Indian English novels portray the inner landscape of the individual, struggling against all odds, and coming up with own unique meaning of life and his own particular attitude towards it.

Kierkegaard enunciated the method of oblique communication. He enumerates three stages in the process of a person becoming an individual, in the existential sense. The three stages are the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious. Of the three stages outlined by Kierkegaard, the aesthetic stage is the stage where the individual is unconcerned either about the past or the future and is wholly focused on the present. He does not have regrets about his actions in the past, and he does not harbor worries about the future. He is in a sense calculative and manipulative, keeping his eye sharply fixed on the opportunities available to him in the present. His chief concern is the means by which he can enhance the present and make it more promising than it might have been. The individual is thus an opportunist, having Machiavellian qualities, at this stage. The gratification of the physical senses is one of the aspects of the aesthetic stage. Existentialism can be successfully applied to specific characters in the postmodern Indian English novels in order to obtain a clearer understanding of their problematic situation. The ideas of right and wrong do not bother Balram, the protagonist of *The White Tiger*. They simply do not enter his scheme of life. Every thought and every action of Balram is aimed at the present. There is neither room for the past, nor worry about the future. There is neither any regret for any past action, nor any ethical consideration of the future. The existentialist idea of responsibility and commitment, are nowhere to be seen in Balram's actions. Regret and even

repentance, discipline and the recognition of moral duties, responsibility and commitment properly characterize the second stage, defined by Kierkegaard as the ethical stage.

In Kierkegaard's view, the development of an individual in the existentialist sense is complete, only after all the three stages are experienced. The individual in the aesthetic stage has to progress to the ethical stage, and from there he has to move on to the religious state. Sadly, Balram spends the larger part of his life, (as it occurs in the novel) in the aesthetic stage. The absorption with the present is so complete that the protagonist is unable to progress to the ethical stage. The aesthetic stage is bound to be beset with angst for him, even though he appears to be a loud braggart. Balram hovers around the borders of the ethical stage, but is unable to sustain himself there for long. He continues living life precariously:

I thought what a miserable life he had, having to hide his religion, his name, just to get a job as a driver- and he is a good driver, no question of it, a far better one than I will ever be. Part of me wanted to get up and apologize to him right there and say, 'You go and be a driver in Delhi. You never did anything to hurt me. Forgive me brother'. (110)

Later in life, when Balram has seen it all, and reached the fulfillment of his material desires, he reveals an ethical side of his shady personality. The quest for identity is an eternal hunger in Balram Halwai. As a postmodern character, he challenges his destiny, and like several other postmodern characters in Indian English fiction, he is determined to gather the ripe fruit of postmodern metropolitan culture and transcend his low birth. He puts a question to the creator:

Who am I?

And this question continues to reverberate through the pages of the novel and to haunt the reader's mind. The tiny village of Laxmangarh is located in the heart of Bihar. The journey of Balram from Laxmangarh to the metropolitan city is both arduous and interesting. In the jungle of life and the company of beasts, Balram is the white tiger. He has proved his worth and established his identity by opting for a course, which allowed him to escape the sad fate of his ailing father, who died of tuberculosis in a government hospital.

After three or four years in real estate, I think I might sell everything, take the money and start a school- an English language school- for poor children in Bangalore. A school where you won't be allowed to corrupt anyone's head with prayers and stories about God or Gandhi- nothing but the facts of life for these kids. A school full of white tigers, unleashed on Bangalore! We'd have this city at our knees I tell you. I could become the boss of Bangalore. I'd fix that assistant commissioner of police at once. I'd put him on a bicycle and have Asif knock him over with the Qualis. (319)

Here, a question of self identity is raised in mind which can be understood by following statement of *Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*:

Self identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography. Identity here still presumes continuity across time and space: but self-identity is such continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent. This includes the cognitive component of personhood. To be a person is not just to have a concept of a person (as applied both to the self and others). What a 'person' is understood to be certainly varies across cultures, although there are elements of such a notion that are common to all cultures. (54)

Balam recognizes the intrinsic value of human life, and by doing so he enters the ethical stage. When his own driver Asif hits a boy on a bicycle, resulting in the boy's death, Balam tackles the police by greasing their palms generously, and then he visits the dead boy's family, expressing his desire to make amends. The existentialist's ethical code is his marked feature and Balam says:

But I had to do something different; don't you see? I can't live the way the wild Boar and the Buffalo and the Raven lived, and probably *still* live, back in Laxmangarh. I am in the light now. (313)

While it is true that freedom is of paramount importance to the existentialist, it is equally true that the existentialists place a lot of value on ethical codes. The propelling drive of the existentialist is his personal freedom, while at the same time, keeping an eye on his sense of responsibility. He is thus in a position to put a distance between himself and his experience, by reflecting deeply on his actions, and the degree to which such actions have contributed to his growth and expansion. Soren Kierkegaard expressed his views in *Subjective Reflection* when he said:

When subjectivity is truth, subjectivity's definition must include an expression for an opposition to objectivity, a reminder of the fork in the road, and this expression must also convey the tension of, inwardness [the self's relation to itself.] Here is such a definition of truth: the objective uncertainty, held fast in an appropriation process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth, the highest truth available for an existing person. Here too, it is a matter of a change in the direction one is taking in one's life, the fork in the road.

Some personal convictions are too strong to be denied, rather, they demand complete adherence. History is a witness to the fact that several great writers and thinkers have been forced by those in authority, to pay a heavy price for desiring to

live their personal truths and stand by their convictions. The most striking illustration is that of Socrates, who was forced to drink hemlock, and thus put an end to his own life, as the Greeks feared that he might be corrupting the minds of the youth and the Athenian court would have none of it. Dante, Galileo and Bunyan were imprisoned for having the courage to maintain a set of personal convictions. Thus personal convictions possess the power of making an individual uncompromising to the extreme. Life for the existentialist, is precariously balanced between the past which is a lived reality, and the future, which is a yet to be lived uncertainty. In the words of Albert Camus:

Hostile to the past, impatient of the present, and cheated of the future, we were much like those whom men's justice, or hatred, forces to live behind prison bars. (73)

Characters are shown in search of meaningful life. Feeling of loneliness and dilemma is ingrained in Balram's psyche. The novel justifies every kind of trick to succeed in life.

The existential feeling of absurd and mechanical life is observed in Chetan Bhagat's *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* in which protagonist Govind Patel is shown as a businessman of Ahmedabad. The beginning of the novel expresses about protagonist's anxiety and existential dilemma, as he makes an attempt to kill himself. The story starts with a prologue in which Govind Patel sends a suicidal email to the author. And the author rushes to see him in a hospital in Ahmedabad (from Singapore!). In the maker of contemporary urban reality, Chetan Bhagat touches the emotional as well as psychological chord of young generation. The emotionally agitated young people float with existential dilemma in the novel. Their failure and frustration are

not unknown to anyone. Their sentiments of: “To be or not to be” (30) or “Now more than ever seems it rich to die to cease upon mid night with no pain” (31) are the sentiments that come to the mind of each and every one, especially the young people, every now and then during the emotional turmoil. That’s why suicide seems to be a mere way to escape from the challenging dilemma of existence. Govind tells the story of his hopelessness from the existential perspective. The story starts in the year 2000. Govind is a bright student living in the growing metropolis of Ahmedabad. He has two friends Ishaan and Omi who do not know what to do about their life. Here, it appears that Ish and Omi are thrown in this world without their will. They are living in this world with no reason. Their existence is of no meaning. Ish is a former district level cricketer and Omi is the son of the priest of the Swamibhakti temple. They are obsessed with cricket and so Govind does what he thinks best, he opens a cricket shop in the Swamibhakti temple. The rent was cheap and there was guarantee of customers as the temple was a busy area. The business takes off very well. They have a promising future and they take a super talented cricketer Ali under their wings. To earn extra money Govind also tutors in maths. He is also eventually coaxed in to teaching Ish's 17 year old sister. Govind is shown as an aspiring man, who leaves no stone unturned in making his life meaningful. As time passes by something more develops between them. From Ahmedabad the story has a detour to Australia. They get Ali to bat against the Australians and he is a smash hit. After a week they return to India as things do not work out. Meanwhile the business does not go well. Govind has grand plans and even manages to save enough but destiny wanted something else. The triple blow that hits the three friends is a massive earthquake, 9/11 and the 2002 Godhra train attacks. The last of the three led to

communal violence in Ahmedabad and the three friends found themselves in the thick of things during the communal riots. Govind's story culminates with the danger that the three friends and their protégé, Ali find themselves in just because Ali is a Muslim. The story has been written in relation with three real life incidents which cause havoc in their life. Their lives, especially of Govind's surrounds with all the psychological challenging feelings of despair, hopelessness, anxieties and meaninglessness. Losing money due to bad decisions, falling in love and unexpected circumstances become cause for Govind's meaningless life. The novel gives a very vivid description of how a person keeps on facing the challenges in order to succeed. As Govind's words describes his mental plight with despair: "The Navrangpura Mall's neon signs, once placed at the top of the six floor building, now licked the ground." (67)

City life is constantly becoming more sophisticated and more restless, and as a result individuals are seen suffered with existential dilemma. The exhausted nerves seek recuperation in increased stimulation and in highly spiced pleasures, only to become more exhausted than before. Making Sex are all signs of restlessness. The materialistic attitude of the new generation is evident in the novels of Chetan Bhagat. Unprecedented luxury has spread to strata of population who were formerly quite untouched by it. It is engaged in exposing the labyrinth of the human mind and indicating the ways to psychological fulfillment. The novel seems to be straightforward in approach to life and understands the voice of people's soul living in metropolitan culture. The novel appears as an attempt to discover the meaning of life. It tries to devise ways and means for eliminating the discrepancy between the individual's pursuit and his fulfillment. Even characters are shown misfit in the world in which they have to live and face the meaninglessness of life. Though they are not religious

or saintly, they are humble enough to learn lessons taught to them by life's problem. While experiencing the normal claims of love and hatred, doubts and dilemmas, they try to face challenges of their meaningless life by outstripping the narrow confines of their distraught selves.

The fellow feeling of co-operation towards fellow brethren is seen amongst the characters. Since most of the characters are youths, the peer relationships are stronger. *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* gives sufficient proof that caste creates barriers, for the social values differ from caste to caste and are fairly restricted to caste fellows, and fellow feelings never cross the boundary. Ish considers Ali as a promising cricket player for Indian National team. However, Omi who under the patronage of his mama objects to his plans. The miserable attempt to kill Ali by Omi's mama is a heinous scene of human revengeful thinking. "Eye for an eye. I'll slaughter him right here. Then I will cry for my son." (89) The acceptance of the fatalistic attitude of the Hindus by the young generation is well illustrated by Govind, who is an agonist. He embodies the rebellious spirit of the youth to probe the age old traditional practices. However, the turn of circumstances seems to make him a fatalistic out of depression from the natural and man-made disaster of earthquake and the riot. Caste and religion related barriers also throw a wrong impact on a person's psyche. An important motive in the novel is the conflict between emotion and logic. These psychological conflicts keep on roaming around in characters' minds. In the very beginning itself the central character makes it very clear that he doesn't like emotional dramas; even the hugs of his mother. Later he criticizes his friends for bringing sympathy in business. In his conversation the Aussie player criticizes the Indians for being too much emotional.

The quest for meaning and understanding is both universal and individual. Everyone searches for the reasons we are alive, the meaning of life, but everyone is motivated by unique circumstances in seeking our individual justification for living. In *One Amazing Thing*, Divakaruni portrays the universal and individual qualities of the search for meaning in life, as well as the search's timelessness. One has been looking for the meaning of life for centuries, and as long as humankind endures, the seeking will go on. Perhaps it is not the finding of meaning that people need to survive, but the seeking of it. The novel seems to resemble Salman Rushdie's words in his book *Identity and Homeland*:

.... Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times that we fall between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is in part the business of finding new angles at which to enter reality, then once again our distance, our long geographical perspective, may provide us with such angles....One of the things I liked and still like, about India is that it is based on a non-sectarian philosophy. I was not raised in a narrowly Muslim environment; I do not consider Hindu culture to be alien from me or more important than the Islamic heritage. I believe this has something to do with the nature of Bombay, a metropolis in which the multiplicity of commingled faiths and cultures curiously creates a remarkably secular ambiance. Saleem Sinai makes use eclectically, of whatever elements from whatever sources he chooses. It may have been easier for his author to do this from outside modern India than inside it. (15-16)

Though the background is one of natural disaster, *One Amazing Thing* is a novel of psychological analysis rather than a novel of physical rescue. It primarily examines whether a community can be built and whether a true communication is possible among a group of strangers who are disaster survivors, who have nothing in

common except a desire to go to India. They faced various social and psychological challenges. They are different in terms of age, race and religion. They are Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian and agnostic. Their ages range from 70 to 13. And yet, they are able to connect in unexpected ways as they embark on their emotional journey. They connect mutually during the tragedy. The novel throws further light on their relationship and starts from characters and a central conflict. The group of nine strangers struggling for survival when an earthquake traps nine very individual people who happen to be in the same place at the same time, the way that their lives intersect and connected comes vividly to life. Prejudices, fears and bullying are all touched on in the situation where people who would not normally be involved in each others' lives, come to depend upon one another. These strangers keep their minds off their troubles, and start communication with each other. A unique journey of human relationship between these strangers is seen in *One Amazing Thing*.

Beyond examining the presence of psychological and existential dilemma, it becomes crucial to explore how characters maneuver their lives and identity struggles. It is clear that as migrants cross borders, they also cross emotional and behavioral boundaries... One's life and roles change, with them identities change as well. According to an explorative study of challenging psychological issues of Indians in diaspora, it becomes evident that while Indian-Americans are challenged in extreme ways they are simultaneously confronting increases in self-awareness and a deeper sense of identity. Therefore, they are also often able to successfully redefine themselves and forge a new identity out of self-reliance and inner strength. Although such experiences are stressful, they also provide opportunities for creating a 'new' identity. The novel's characters' dreams and disappointments are paramount. While

moving from one character to another, one comes across a spectrum of raw feeling, i.e. panic, pain, antagonism, anguish and selfishness all are the aspects of existentialism. The novel reveals intimate details and sensual reactions vividly. Trapped strangers are shown offering up tales of loss and love; and betrayal and redemption to illuminate the gathering darkness. Some characters are clearly more successful than others in resolving their fractured identity issues and developing a new identification. The characters seem troubled or shattered by their past, vibrate with life whenever they begin to speak. This chapter of the thesis evaluates the way in which multiple characters experience and negotiate meaninglessness, which is the part of their life's absurdness and mechanicalness. By establishing a pattern of existential dilemma, it becomes apparent that there are repeated experiences and struggles and messages of hope presented in multiple examples of literature. That writing shares individual stories and creates conversation is a powerful force in the endeavor to understand the psychological challenge of immigrant experience. In regard to the above discussed statement, one of the leading postcolonial theorists is Homi Bhabha, and his book *The Location of Culture* is a great influence on the field of study. Acknowledging that cultural identity is a basis for contemporary narratives, Bhabha identifies they are written "in the midst of the everyday" producing unique literature: "From the margins of modernity, at the insurmountable extremes of storytelling, we encounter the question of cultural difference as the perplexity of living and writing" (161). Thus, this part of the chapter of thesis explores psychological challenges and existential dilemma in the highlight of *One Amazing Thing* with immigrants' point of view.

Uma, a young girl of East Indian heritage is shown questioning how she feels about love as she endures the long, protracted wait for a visa to India. As her mother

too seems curious to call her daughter to India: Don't forget, you will need a new visa, you haven't been to India in ages... We will go to Agra and see the Taj Mahal together... We miss you. Why don't you come to visit? We will send you a ticket. She is the last one to narrate her version of amazing thing of her life. The novel opens with Uma, mulling over a question whether her boyfriend Ramon loves her more than what she loves him. The question troubles her for several weeks before she comes to Visa office. She is on her way to India because of her parents' folly. They came to the U.S twenty years back as young professionals. They loved their jobs, celebrated weekends. Her mother decides to take early retirement and her father quits his position as a senior administrator for a computer company and accepts a consultant's job in India. They rent a house in Kolkata. Uma's parents extend an invitation to Uma to spend six weeks in India. It is a shock to them to learn that Uma and Ramon are living together and Uma realizes that Ramon has not been included in the invitation. Here, existential dilemma is felt in Uma's mother's psyche. Towards the end of the novel, Uma analyses her father's relationship with her mother. She notices her mother crying on phone whenever she talked. All of a sudden on one day her father makes her a phone call and says that he is planning to divorce from his wife: Your mother and I no longer have anything in common except you (196). He also declares: All my life I've done what other people expected of me... whatever time I have left, I'd like to live it the way I want. Do you have any questions? (197). Uma tries to find out reasons of his decision. She thinks that they lived a quiet non controversial life as husband and wife and puzzles to know what has crumbled overnight. She doubts if there is another woman in her father's life, if so what would be the fate of her mother if she comes to know about it. Uma was unhappy regarding

the sour relationship of her parents and what she saw around her: couples losing interest in each other, living in wooden togetherness or even breakup. She said nothing, waiting in a stew of anxiety and anticipation. After some days Uma's father makes her a phone call and says that he no longer plans to divorce his wife. Uma feels that she has betrayed her mother because she was careful in withholding the issue of divorce. This incident of her parents' relationship is an amazing thing in her life. Thus Uma says: I didn't realize – until this earthquake, until today – that my withholding was a worse kind of betrayal, a betrayal of the self (206).

Mrs. Pritchett takes her turn to express her dissatisfaction of her marital life. She starts by saying that her husband did not love her the way she needed him to. Though he was a good husband who provided her everything, he often made her feel bored by saying about his achievements, new companies, clients, financial disasters and so on. Mrs. Pritchett tells that they enjoyed many things together like living in an expensive house, sharing meals, going to dinners, theatres, restaurants, movies and holiday touring to Europe, Canada and New Zealand. After seeing the couple in the cafe, a great dissatisfaction washes her because the old couple share and care for each other in discussing the menu and cut up their desserts for sharing. Mrs. Pritchett compares her life with that of theirs and says that she wants a new life because the present life is too painful. In her words: There was nothing like that tenderness in my life. And without it, what use were the things I'd built my days around? My garden, my home, my activities, and friendships, even the time Mr. Pritchett and I spent together- they were all so many zeroes. With the 'one' of love in front of them, they could have been worth millions but as on now, I was bankrupt and it was too late to start over (170). Here, Mrs. Pritchett reveals her mental agony as she finds

herself incomplete in marital pleasures. She has got everything from her husband except physical love.

Now Cameron takes his turn and reveals his love story. He remembers his girl friend Imani whom he meets her in a party, singing a song. He is attracted by her art of singing with passion. The song with lyrics “My man... He doesn’t love me?” Sadness in this song presents existential dilemma of Cameron who is depressed of his girlfriend Imani’s memory. Cameron felt that he had not heard it before. The notes went into him like a guinea worm, emerging whenever it wanted to. They shared their life by going to movies and listening to music. They develop physical relationship and as a result Imani becomes pregnant. One day he learns that he is offered an admission to a prestigious college with a sports scholarship. Instead of complementing, she calls him an Oreo before his co-workers to hear and snigger. He understands that she wants to ruin the moment of his greatest achievement. While informing that she was pregnant he could see the feeling of triumph in her as he has to stay back and take the responsibility of her and the baby. He recommends her an abortion and prepares to pay for it. At the mention of the abortion, she starts crying and becomes very quiet, she asks: you want to kill our baby? It so important for you to get away from you people? (183) Imani leaves him by cursing. Love relationship with grudges is observed when a man has gone through all the worldly pleasures with his beloved but is not ready to take responsibility of a baby who comes surprisingly. He thinks of saying sorry but he feels that would reopen the coffin of their relationship. Over the next weeks he waits with concern and strange disappointment but he learns that Imani had an abortion. Cameron knew he cannot go looking for Imani to ask forgiveness. He hopes her to get married and his reappearance would

cause more harm than good. He decides to adopt a child and become a full time parent. He selects a girl child from orphanage and sponsors her after naming her as Seva. Feeling of remorse and guilt-conscience change a person from inside. It is observed that Cameron develops humanity in his persona, after realizing all the wrong committed by him.

The characters are two visa officers Malathi and Mangalam on the verge of an adulterous affair; A Chinese grandmother Jiang in her last years with a gifted teenage grand-daughter Lily unfolds her secret past; A graduate student haunted by a question about love; Cameron African American, an ex-soldier suffering from guilt; Uma, a young graduate student is an Indian American girl bewildered by her parents' decision to return to Kolkata after twenty years; Tariq, a young Muslim man about 25 years is angry with the new America; An upper-class Caucasian couple whose relationship is disintegrating. All these people's stories of romance, marriage, family, political upheaval, and self-discovery unfold against the urgency of their life and death circumstances. The stories told by them to each other are based on sentiments and relationships.

Psychological challenge of identity issues is also observed by Trinh Minh-ha as he considers issues of identity within postcolonial literature in her article *Not You/Like You: Postcolonial Women and the Interlocking Questions of Identity and Difference*. In encompassing both the self and other simultaneously, the postcolonial woman is in a unique search for identity. Minh-ha asserts: "The search for an identity is... usually a search for that lost, pure, true, real, genuine, original, authentic self, often situated within a process of elimination of all that is considered other,

superfluous, fake, corrupted, or Westernized” (Minh-ha 415). The women who are telling their stories whether it be in film or novels or other mediums are speaking from a cultural perspective, writes Minh-ha: “An insider can speak with authority about her own culture, and she’s referred to as the source of authority in this manner” (417). Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *One Amazing Thing* is a powerful example of the kind of narrative that deserves inspection on an individualized level regarding identity formation, specifically in terms of the presence of existential dilemma. Although identity is a commonly explored theme in general, it is through existentialism that struggles are often identified and trauma is illustrated. Complex, psychological challenges and sour experiences of persons living in metropolitan culture is foreshadowed. By performing a thorough analysis of the novel, I illustrate that existential dilemma of the characters, and their stories overall becomes a psychological challenge for them. To keep up their flagging spirits and for want of anything else to do, the group starts sharing stories. Each person tells a story from their life – through which we learn about the hopes and fears, the dreams and disappointments, the plans and mistakes that fill each of our lives. Each story gives us a peek into the lives of the protagonists and makes us understand the reasons behind why, what and who they are in this life sans meaning. Of all the stories, I found Jiang’s and Mrs. Pritchett’s to be most moving; the former for being a victim of unfortunate circumstances and the latter for seeming like she had it all – only to discover belatedly that she didn’t in fact. Malathi’s story was rather predictable, while Tariq’s was quite expected in today’s Islamophobic world. All are shown with a quest which haunts their minds regarding identity. Their minds remain indulged about how to give it a meaning, the life which seems to be devoid of completion and happiness.

It shows the gamut of emotions and reactions of the characters. All of them carry at least a tinge of poignancy. The novel is a journey of human relationships which teaches the disaster management and mutual understanding. The novel is emotionally charged that digs deep into the soul of the reader and creates a way to manage almost any situation. These moments are like real life situations and this makes the journey of all human lives universal irrespective of the cultural differences. All characters share same mental agonies and pangs in their love stories, thus mutual bonding become strong in them while listening to each other. A visit on tour of human relationships is seen realistically, the same way everyone face social and psychological challenges in his life.

In a way, Divakaruni is seen tackling the psychology and the interpenetration of the individual and the collective. In other words, the ethical dimensions are quite overtly examined in the novel: how a personal fate, karma, affects the events on the scale of a major earthquake, which will lead to a necessary shift in perception and to a major transformation of all those involved in the process. Here again, a cyclical view of time suggests periods of apparent calm that are followed by life-changing destructions. The perception that we always progress in circles or rather in spirals, under the influence of more or less balanced forces, takes us back to the Eastern experience of human existence. Thus, the writer is creating a new paradigm of a network, of horizontal connections, of the necessary interaction and mutual respect, with no vertical, hierarchical laws, but rather with a process at the core level, of interdependence that is based on the recognition of other people's equally important suffering and inner secrets. In this novel, though, she allows for the nine equally important narrators to meet and combine their energies: they all agree to tell a story

that they would not have revealed under any other circumstances. “Karma’s wheel is intricate” says Mr. Mangalam when his married life is not good with her wife. “What do you mean karma’s wheel?” the accountant’s wife demands. This way the karmic energy of the novel revolves around. The characters’ self-awareness and candor seem believable. They become a group of modern-day people using their own lives to stave off whatever fate is to befall them. As the destiny has made a person know what animates his or her life. Circumstances are not shown very easy in *One Amazing Thing*. By showing the inner strength and the resourcefulness of her characters, the novel implies that we humans continue to sustain with such efforts and pains, through conflicts, meanness, humiliation, overpowering, while we certainly lack understanding about the laws that govern our lives without our knowledge, or a major possibility to influence their nature. This novel positions its readers even more completely in a world that is old and new, magical and real at the same time. This is how the novel helps us to fathom the nature of human existence, assisting us to overcome the fear of death, together with all the fears that have been generated by the latter. The writer also puts forth, for our deepest cogitation, the desires we allow to rise in ourselves, in an attempt to overcome our own fears as we fight against other human beings with force and power. At the same time, she also insists that a woman’s perspective on these issues is very important at this time and in this particular global space, when we need to reshape and envision our personal and collective future. *One Amazing Thing’s* stories are heartbreaking and all of them paint a picture of the characters who question themselves about why they are in such a condition to become the one who they didn’t want to be. Amazing is not always a positive word but it describes something that might have changed a life.

Ayyan Mani, the protagonist of Manu Joseph's novel *Serious Men* is a member of the dalit community, but his close association with Arvind Acharya, who is a Brahmin, made him aspire for a fuller lifestyle and a life of social and financial opportunities. He easily recognizes that it is all a matter of destiny that there are hundreds of people who have raced ahead in life, whereas he has not been able to succeed in life as well as he wished, though he had the ability to do so:

Thirty minutes later, when Ayyan put the receiver down, he wondered if there was a way he could tell Oja Mani how absurd were the occupations of these men and women who so easily frightened her. An old man wanted to search the atmosphere for microbes that were coming down from space. A young woman would soon study two bottles of air. This was what people did. This was their job. In the real world that lay outside the institute, it was even more weird. (80)

Ayyan Mani was disgusted by the pretensions of the majestic men who went past him in sleek cars, busy on the backseat, with their laptops. He was sure that they were only trying to work out ways to lure people into buying whatever goods they happened to be manufacturing, or trying to get people to invest their money in the stock market. In Ayyan's opinion, it was all a hoax. The so called big people did nothing which he himself could not do, or for that matter, which Oja could not do. His mind raced on, following the same train of thoughts and Ayyan made up his mind that he would do whatever it took to secure his son's future. He was determined to somehow find a way that would allow his son to rub shoulders with the *big* people. Boredom, loneliness, alienation, and an inner emptiness characterize the life of existentialists. Existence merely means being in this world, since human beings are simply thrown into this world with no real purpose. Such an absurd condition can

only engender anxiety, and so the existentialists use rationality to counter their innate existential anxiety, since the idea of being in the world is frightening in itself. The same feelings and expressions of absurdness are seen in the characters of the novel.

Promiscuity, another aspect of existentialism is an addiction is a culturally defined concept, but it involves not only frequent but also to a large extent, indiscreet and even indiscriminate sexual behavior. The sexual drive in human beings is closely associated with libidinal energy and sex itself has a different value and meaning for men and a relatively different value and meaning for women. The renowned psychologist Sigmund Freud was of the opinion that human beings live in a sexually repressed society. Society, religion, ethics and morality often define concepts like right and wrong and dictate the form of behavior which may be considered acceptable or unacceptable in social terms. As a quote in *Serious Men* states:

She did not reply. He lifted her by her arms and kissed her, or bit her (he would not remember). They fell on the floor in a heap and they kissed and licked and wrestled. He tore her top and dismantled her jeans. She fought, not sure yet, if she was resisting or assisting when he took away all her clothes, she stopped fighting. She turned away from him in a sting of shame, her face on the floor, an elbow shielding it from this wild man, proud breasts reaching for a place to rest, her bronze back rising and falling like the roll of a sand dune in the twilight, her long firm legs lying languid. (164)

Monogamy and promiscuity are strictly defined by society, yet they remain choices for the individuals of metropolitan society. The sexual drive has been acknowledged as a power which can engage or absorb the entire human personality. Sexual preferences in individuals are not always indicative of abnormality, but they are often associated with the experience of existential anxiety. Rather than judging

promiscuity moralistically, it would be more appropriate to recognize that the desire to receive love, the capacity to form close and intimate connections and even attachments with others is a primal human need. It is indeed a fundamental aspect of mental health and gives meaning to human life. Feelings of emptiness and inherent joylessness are often a driving force in promiscuity. This kind of an existence results in a vicious cycle of endless sexual activity. Following statement of *Serious Men* explains:

Every night he stood on the narrow balcony, nine floors above the ground, lost in the intoxication of Oparna, his reveries mistaken by his wife as his incurable affliction with the pursuit of truth. Lavanya did get confused when he once laughed in his sleep. Occasionally, she even found him looking at himself intently in the mirror. And yesterday morning, once again, he had taken vegetable stock from the freezer thinking it was ice. He had done that before but this time he gulped down the juice and did not notice that anything was amiss. (142-43)

Characters in the novel are shown living in delusion. This juxtaposed world is full of people who want to live in delusion. Acharya and Lavanya live in the delusion of their daughter Shruthi's presence in the form of 7.45 am alarm. They don't want to disable it. She married an engineer, and lives in California now. Indians prefer everything American except being left alone in their old age. Ayyan and Oja live in the delusion of myth that their son is a genius. Temporarily Oparna and Acharya lived in love paranoia that their affair may be revealed at any time. In fact, Oparna was only as old as Shruthi. Second World War and the Post-Colonial pressures have filled the human minds with despair. It seems that there is no such thing called innate goodness. The gloominess appears in the narration when Lavanya leaves Acharya with tears in her eyes (mourning the death of her cousin Anju's death)

in the airport terminal. A young couple took it as she is crying due to the romantic distress of separation. “They gave the seniors an exaggerated look of approval. ‘So cute, the girl said’ (157)”

This woman’s Oja’s life, Ayyan told himself, is not ordinary any more. For that moment alone, he knows it was all worth it. Did she ever imagine when she was growing up as a waiter’s daughter, when she walked into a humid one-room home as a new bride, or discovered one evening that her son could not hear well in one ear, that she would see a day like this (196). In this moment, he sees his wife, the woman whose moments of happiness occur only in front of the television, finally find joy.

Jana’s assault created a communal riot in the Institute. All the peons went on strike. The Institute was completely damaged by the rioters. Though Ayyan has said that there is no more play, he couldn’t cease. His plots are his unfulfilled aspirations in reality. At least temporarily he wants to achieve fake success to create the myth that he is bigger than his neighbors. The stress of the contemporary life makes the individuals to accomplish their aspiration by going beyond the ethical means. It is not that they are unaware of the danger, but it becomes inevitable. The title *Serious Men* clearly states that the men who are supposed to be serious in their aspiration are very trivially running after their mortal pleasures. It denotes the opposite of what it is. Unless men resolve themselves to strictly adhere to the social practice with ethical codes, peacefulness will sway somewhere in the clouds, not reachable. A postmodern escapist fails to survive mentally. Despair, Paranoia and Delusion fill their world. All these juxtapositions show the upcoming change in the Indian Human attitude and there is a radical shift in the handling of theme from personal to

social in Indian novel in English. Manu Joseph has daringly fictionalized the Indian Communal clash, which is threatening as far as the social and psychological life is concerned. The novel takes place in Worli Seaface, Mumbai - a large residential area. Within Worli, there are the British Development Department (BDD) chawls, 10 which are one-room apartments for the community's middle and lower middle class residents. The location is significant because it shows the presence of the lower middle class in a class divided city. These people are identified as Dalits. Ayyan states, "In this place that was spurned eight decades ago by the homeless and which was once a prison, now lived over eighty thousand people who heaved and sighed with the burdens of new unions and the relief of death" (6). Joseph's description of the BDD chawls presents the failures of the nationalist project. The BDD chawls throughout history have not been a place for socio-economical mobility. Thus even though Joseph presents the progress of modernization and industrialization in Mumbai, he also shows the failure of the nation to deliver on its promises. The fact that the Dalits live in the chawls exemplifies how the nation has failed them. The nationalist movement was a chance for Dalits to be considered into the mainstream of society and given a chance for upward mobility; however, their continued habitation of chawls merely shows how they are still marginalized. Likewise, although the chawls are supposed to be an affordable environment for the poor to live in, its lack of space intrudes on privacy and natural human desires. This is shown through the sexual relationship between Ayyan and his wife Oja. In their one-room apartment, they are forced to sleep altogether on the floor. This becomes a problem when Ayyan and his wife want to engage in sexual relations: "Ayyan ran his hand over [Oja's] waist. She opened her eyes without confusion or protest. She lifted her head

to check on Adi. The couple moved with skill. They could caress and even tumble and roll a bit without making a sound” (13). Joseph shows the struggles of the Dalit family. He shows that fulfilling their sexual desires has to be done in silence for fear that their son will wake up. The humiliation they have to endure to satisfy their needs forces them, eventually, to give up intercourse altogether. Ayyan states, “For the sake of our son, he said, ‘we must stop seeking our own pleasures’” (14). Joseph reveals the relationship between socio-economical status and privacy, so that Ayyan’s status in society, which was dictated to him due to his caste, limits his sexual relationship with his wife. In this way, Joseph is able to further express the failures of the nation for the protection of the Dalit community and the novel shows how politics enters the home. However it is important to remember that Ayyan still has some agency. This is shown through his renunciation of his sexual desire for the betterment of his family. Society has restricted Oja and Ayyan from sexual fulfillment; however, the decision to desist was ultimately Ayyan’s own. This differs from Anand, who presents a dramatization of the effects of the caste system in which the Dalit characters are merely a backdrop to his main nationalist message. By contrast Joseph uses Ayyan to present the issues and the tensions within India’s lower class, but allows him to make the final decision over his own life. At the same time, it is important to point out that even while representing his Dalit protagonist in complex ways, Joseph compromises the individuality of the Dalit woman in the process. Oja, Ayyan’s wife, is an active participant in the novel; however, she is depicted as the stereotypical housewife. She cooks, cleans and when she is not busy doing that, she takes time for herself to watch her Tamil soap operas. As the narrator states, “From seven to nine every evening, she was hypnotized by the melancholic

Tamil soaps. During this time she encouraged everybody to disappear” (9). Although in part the Tamil soaps represent an assertion of her own power, this power is still in the space of the home. Outside the home, Oja has no voice of her own. It is interesting because those moments when she chooses to be quiet are the only times that we listen to her. Thus when Ayyan and Oja attend a function at their son’s school, Ayyan does not allow Oja to wear the clothing that she is comfortable with but chooses clothing that makes her seem above their socio-economic level. In this way, it is clear that Ayyan wants to project a certain lifestyle through Oja’s image: He walked to her side to get a better look. She was surprised at how seriously he was taking this. He pointed to the only sari that did not shine. It was a blue cotton sari with small white squares. “There will be a lot of rich people” he said, “and rich women laugh at women who wear shiny clothes in the day” (187-188). Here, Ayyan feels it is important for him to present himself and family as cohorts of the Brahmin and upper caste families. However, by dictating what Oja should wear to the school, he is stripping away her ability to express herself. Thus unlike Ayyan, who manages to reject stereotypes through his religious conversion and his clothing, Oja has been restricted to the household and has no identity outside of it. Thus despite Joseph’s concern with redefining Dalit identity and avoiding the stereotypes of a novel like *Untouchable*, he ends up only illuminating the male voice, to the exclusion of all others. Ayyan’s control over Oja’s clothes is similar to the restriction that women endured during the nationalist movement, when *khadi* became representative of an independent India, and a symbol for freedom and purity –the essence of Indianness. *Khadi* united elite Indians with rural villagers, and worked across religions and class. At the same time, as discussed by Emma Tarlo, *khadi* silenced the diversity within

India –particularly feminine identities. Many women, like Gandhi’s wife Kasturba, were reluctant to wear *khadi* because of its lack of expression. Tarlo states that *khadi* posed a threat “to their aesthetic senses and indeed to their sense of identity as women” (Tarlo 110). Once again, woman’s identity is sacrificed in order to portray a larger political ideal. Another way Oja’s agency is restricted is in the fact that she has no knowledge of the ‘game’ that Ayyan and Adi are playing. She believes, along with everyone else, that her son is truly a genius. Ayyan does this intentionally because he wants the best for his family. At the Grand Finale, Ayyan tells Adi some of the questions that will be asked during the game. Even though Adi is not a contestant in the competition, Ayyan instructs him to shout out the answers from the audience, hoping that this will direct the attention to the ‘boy-genius’ and help promulgate the news of Adi’s success. This is one of the ways in which Ayyan is able to convince people – including his wife – that Adi is truly a genius. Thus even though Ayyan lies to everyone, his intentions are understandable: This woman’s life, Ayyan told himself, is not ordinary any more. For that moment alone, he knows it was all worth it. Did she ever imagine when she was growing up as a waiter’s daughter, when she walked into a humid one-room home as a new bride, or discovered one evening that her son could not hear well in one ear, that she would see a day like this (196). In this moment, he sees his wife, the woman whose moments of happiness occur only in front of the television, finally find joy. Joseph represents this scene in such a way that we understand why Ayyan participates in corruption. Without celebrating immorality, he is invested in the ways society forces one to choose corruption because there are no other options. However, as presented here, Ayyan’s commitment to the betterment for his family comes at the cost of Oja’s individuality.

Psychological Challenges are shown in the form of absurd and mechanical life in Tarun J. Tejpal's *The Story of My Assassins*. It shows the gamut of emotions and reactions of the characters. All of them carry at least a tinge of poignancy. The novel is a journey of human relationships which teaches the disaster management and mutual understanding. The novel is emotionally charged that digs deep into the soul of the reader and creates a way to manage almost any situation. These moments are like real life situations and this makes the journey of all human lives universal irrespective of the cultural differences. All characters share same mental agonies and pangs in their love stories, thus mutual bonding become strong in them while listening to each other. A visit on tour of human relationships is seen realistically, the same way everyone face social and psychological challenges in his life.

The Story of My Assassins is about a nameless individual, who is a journalist and people have been paid to murder him. The novel opens in the national capital Delhi, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, with a young journalist (the protagonist-narrator) receiving the shocking news that the police have foiled an attempt on his life. Overnight, this man who was being targeted by the government for exposing its corruption becomes a national hero and is provided round the clock security cover. Little does he know that he is a pawn in a much larger political game. As S. Prasannarajan says, "Suddenly, protected by the state, he becomes part of a larger story with national consequences. He is the victim, the target, and his fate inseparable from the geopolitical destiny of his country". The battle lines are drawn. On the one hand is his relationship with mistress, Sara, a firebrand activist who fights the Machiavellian political machinery and on the other is Sub-inspector Hathi Ram, in-charge of the narrator's security, representative of a docile police force that

blindly obeys those in power. There is no clue as to who tried to kill the narrator or why. He and the cops guarding him are hostages in a game of power among the rulers. The scene shifts to the Patiala House Court, where the five assassins, the men who are alleged to have tried to kill the narrator, are produced. The narrator has never seen them. His mistress Sara is certain that they are being framed as part of a deep political ploy. She allies with their defense lawyer, but, under political pressure, he soon abandons the hopelessly complicated case. Turbulence is what surrounds the protagonist of the novel. Whether it is a reported threat from unknown assassins or the rather unhappy conjugal life with a pretty wife, the leading character is not allowed peace of mind.

Here, what has been observed is a severe loss of interest in marital relationship. One can be seen finding pleasure or satisfaction in extra-marital affair. Loyalty towards life-partner seems to have vanished in modernized culture. So is protagonist seen seeking solace in the extra-marital relationship with a young activist named Sara. The narrator is married but he doesn't think much of his wife and generally refers to her as "Dolly/Folly" and he is in the middle of a very intense affair when this begins. Sex with his beloved, Sara, is shown aggressive, confrontational and passionate. But things get complicated when Sara shows her idealist attitude as she "wants to fix the world." Due to this circumstance, their relationship becomes sour and tangled and takes up the cause of her lover's assassins. She arguably says: The killers were the real victims. The protagonist is seduced into empathy for his assassins by his mistress, who, in between having steamy sex with him, sets out to prove them innocent. The narrator is egged on by his mistress, but doesn't take a very active interest in his assassins. Sara doesn't impart regarding her lover's protection. In fact, she takes the

matter lightly and sums up: Listen, you are a stupid schoolboy. They know it. They deal with fools like you every day. They know you are thrilled at having become so grand. Killers after you, policemen guarding you and judges are studying your case. It's your ultimate wet dream, isn't it? Well, they are making it wetter for you, much grander- an International conspiracy. Pakist commissioning assassins, fancy officers in multi-storey buildings decoding complicated plots. You are finally starring in your own pulp novel. You are dying to believe them. So just do. The verdict by Sara shows her indifference for her lover as she takes him as merely an object of entertainment. She doesn't care for his life at all. She has no concern regarding the news of assassination. This way their weak and illegal relationship comes to an end.

Further, private existential dilemmas are seen in the novel as the narrator, vexed with intrigues and counter-intrigues, finds himself hemmed between a public life where definitions of right and wrong have been reversed and his own meaningless private life. His outwardly blissful family life is almost shown dysfunctional, with a blindly religious, domineering mother, a reticent father who buries himself in papers, and a pretty wife who can provide him no companionship. He feels like he is having no response or interest by his parents and wife as they all remain indulged in their own tasks. His mother keeps herself busy in religious deeds, his father is seen engrossed in studious things and his wife is shown a little foolish and incapable to understand her husband's psychology in giving him the desired company. He gets neutral response from his family members. Thus, he has become a part of elite society that does not believe in relationships or sentiments. A non-conformist and occasional philanderer, he seeks to escape the frenzied, shallow life. He finds solace in Guruji, his spiritual guide and Sara, his young lover. Sara, the fiery intellectual

strongly opposes the fascist state. The narrator's stance is more passive, allowing things to take their own course. His Sufi Guru has a mature vision and advises that one should continue the fight against evil, for there is a reckoning beyond rules and laws, and salvation lies not in the final goal, but in the path taken to reach it. He observes: Just as the temple stands between man and god, in India the government stands between man and justice (383). He views the entire political set-up as a necessary evil, with its own cycle of birth, death and rebirth, wherein both rulers and ruled are destiny's puppets. He seems to have lost faith in humans but not in humanity. For instance, the narrator voices the disillusionment of the post-modern human ruled by the beast of big money: There was no big picture... Maybe Gandhi was the last man to have it... There were no grand connections. There were only endless small pieces, and all you could do was to somehow manage on your own. And everyone was struggling to do just that, uncaring of the other... the careening, colliding small pieces - were plummeting the word down the chute (472). Yet, his Guru advises contentment, restraint and faith in ultimate justice: ...We will be distinguished...not by the final destination, but the...choices we made; the paths we took. That is the miracle of free will. That is the miracle of men. The opportunity is not moksha, the opportunity is life... (487) Despite everything, humanity is still alive and a ruthless hired killer like Hathoda Tyagi can refuse to kill the narrator simply because his wife is kind to stray dogs.

The character-sketch of Kabir projects the communal divides in the country. His father's unfulfilled dreams symbolize the desperate struggle of the minorities for a better future:

The father wanted his son to be a child of the new India. Modern, rational, tutored in secular ways, a wearer of pants, a speaker of English..." (232)

Kabir is a classic example of the perverted psychology of a suppressed minority community that has failed to find its own identity in the national mainstream. As his grandmother says,

"We are not Hindu or Muslim, men or women-we are just small people who can stay safe by making ourselves invisible."(215)

The assassins consist of characters living an absurd and mechanical life such as a village weakling who learned early to wield a knife in self-defense, a gentle Muslim boy who learns to find sanctuary in the prison house, a boy from a family of snake charmers, an abandoned hill boy and a hothead who falls in with the wrong crowd. The feisty mistress Sara, the self preserving elitist; Kafka-quoting Jai, the protagonist's business partner, the well meaning policeman; Hathi Ram, the protagonist's spiritual counselor; Guruji whose oblique wisdom is at the same time confusing and enlightening; the typically wily, but drunk on 'money-sex-power' Delhi power-broker, Kapoor Sahab; and indeed the selfish, almost nihilistic protagonist himself are all spot on characters around whom whole story of metropolitan culture of Delhi revolves.

Novel has quotes of Geeta extensively which seems as an interesting ploy. If looked at author's point of view, people as a society like to absolve almost everything they do, justify any kind of life. Quotes justify people's life and deeds. The first person chapters concerning the protagonist suffer from the sad fate seems as painful as if he is trying too hard to express himself. A story of a charmless man, the

protagonist who is nothing more than a loser is justified by Geeta's quotes. The man in question appears to be scary because he represents many among the inhabitants of modernized age; inhabitants who are removed from the realities of this country, happy to live a purposeless life. Protagonist is shown filled with despair to the extent he can't breathe. The novel dispassionately looks at the society one is living in and shows a mirror to one's apathy. It is continually disheartening, depressing and gloomy picture of metropolitan culture which is filled of misery and hopelessness of the nameless protagonist and a journalist. When he is informed by the police of a foiled plot to assassinate him, five suspects are rounded up, jailed and put on trial. But the journalist's firebrand 'social-reformer' mistress, Sara smells a government conspiracy and thinks that the suspects are victims themselves, victims of their own pathetic and degrading circumstances as well as that of the corrupt collusion between selfish politicians in power and the entire state machinery, which is twisted and turned for profit by the self-conserving political class. She decides, with the help of a couple of smitten lawyers, to investigate the matter herself. The action then serializes to the back stories of the five suspected assassins before closing in on the truth about the attempted assassination.

As one is taken through the lives of the five assassins, one meets the countrymen that one usually meets in real life. People who, like many millions of Indians, are born on the fringes, and silently die there. People who suffer the worst forms of degradation, poverty and state apathy. People who therefore either lose the will to live altogether or murder, kill, rape and steal for the most flimsy and insubstantial causes. The five assassins who have absolutely no hope, from the moment they are born to the moment they succumb to their wretched circumstances.

The five assassins, Chaku, Kabir M, Chini, Kaliya and Hathoda Tyagi are all such people, each a victim of the everyday violence and horror of an Indian that exists outside the realm of urban sensibilities. Unlike Balram Halwai, these are no ‘White Tigers’, and in that respect *The Story of My Assassins* presents a real scenario of metropolitan culture. At a place, Chaku’s father hopes that his son’s birth will somehow uplift him from penury, but at another place, he concludes his son as, “in the end it is always just one more mouth to feed.” This way, the early years of Kaliya and Chini are shown as the boys who grow up on the platforms of Delhi and even manage to make death a subject of much mirth.

To conclude, as seen in the metropolitan culture, there is considerable fragmentation of identities and several unifying principles and established values are beginning to pose a challenge to the questions of ethics and morals. Authentic existence entails the need for an individual to be true to him/herself. Only the freedom of choice can accomplish this. Since the idea of choice can mean different things to different people, there can hardly be one measuring standard of morals and ethics which can be applied to all human beings.



Works Cited

Camus, Albert. *The Plague*. New York: Vintage, 1991. 73.

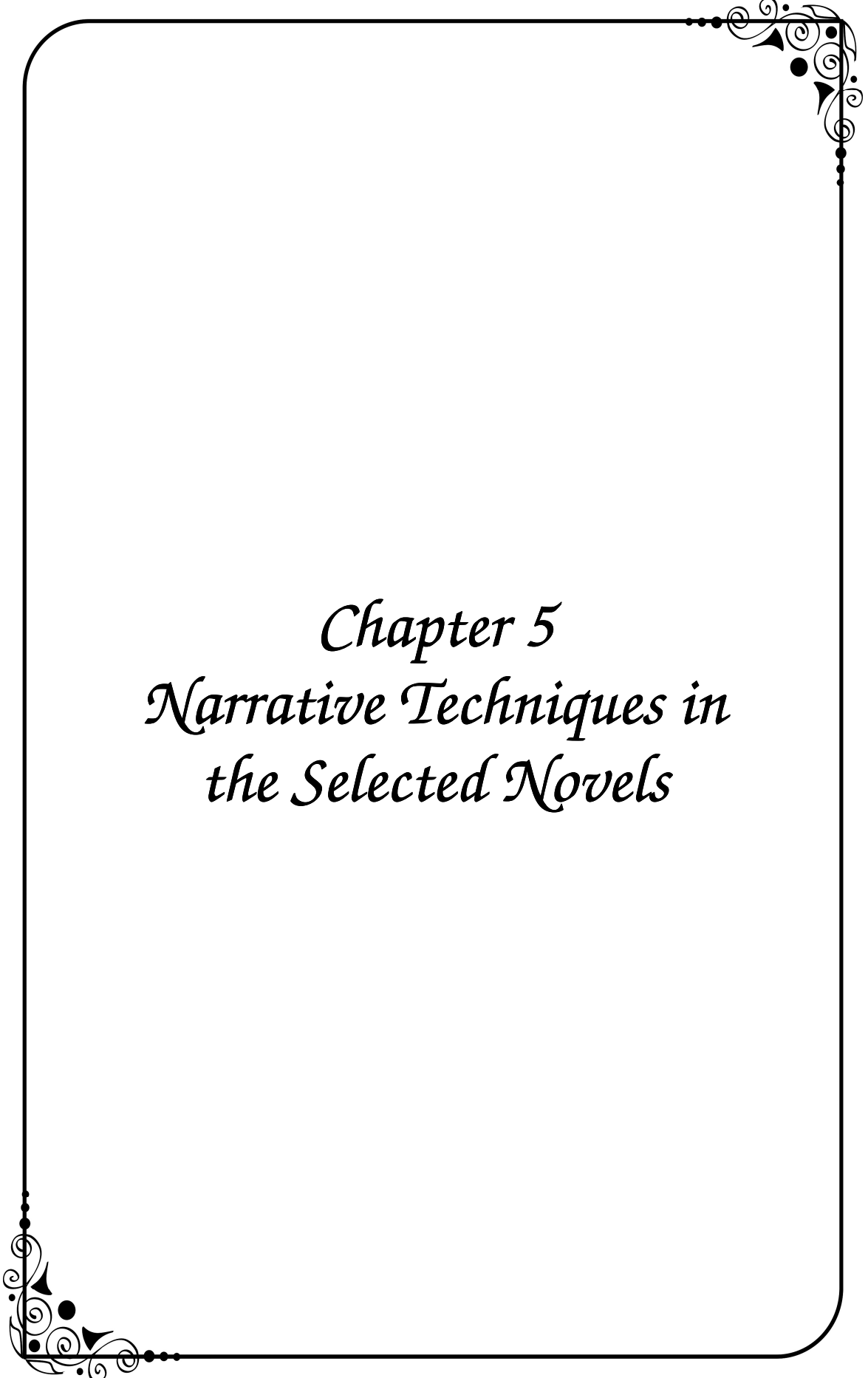
Giddens, A. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*.
Cambridge: Polity, 1991. P 54.

Minh-ha, Trinh. *Not You/Like You: Postcolonial Women and the Interlocking
Questions of Identity and Difference*.

Rushdie, Salman. *Identity and Homeland*.

Sartre Jean Paul, (ed) Wade Baskin, Secaucus. "The Humanism of Existentialism"
Essays in Existentialism. N.J: Citadel Press, 1965.





Chapter 5
Narrative Techniques in
the Selected Novels

CHAPTER 5

Narrative Techniques in the Selected Novels

Narrative techniques involve key concepts such as style, metaphor and focus, in other words, the entire design of the narrative. Narrative technique is a critical tool, which helps in unraveling the varied layers of the narrative. It is an exciting area of enquiry and keeps the reader actively involved in the story. It belongs to the field of linguistics and analyses the linguistic aspects of the text. It is the science, which when properly applied to the text, enables a more comprehensive understanding of the entirety of the narrative. The object of applying narrative technique is to analyze all forms of narratives with respect to the common features, the divergent elements, and the combinations of features employed by the narrator to skillfully connect them all into a fabric which the reader, or spectator recognizes as a narrative. The architectonic and structural quality of the narrative technique in postmodern Indian English novel has undergone a metamorphosis, and it has made the novel more sophisticated in structure and unity.

In the Indian context, narrative technique is an important tool to analyze the models on which a lot of Indian English writing appear to be modeled. A close analysis of ancient Indian literature brings to the mind, structural models of various kinds. Narrative technique is vastly an aesthetic enterprise. It is binding vine of the narrative. A narrator detains the past, holds present and prepares the reader for future. Traditionally, narrative techniques are explained through point of view in novel. There are three points of view to present a narrative: first person point of view when the narrator is one of the characters: he participates in the action and also comments

on the events, third person point of view when the narrator narrates the story in an objective manner and omniscient point of view where the narrator is God like and can also make his presence felt with authorial intrusions. Narrative technique distinguishes between story and discourse. Story is the sequence of events and discourse employs an order in presenting these events. The implied author, an unwavering, unswerving individual differs from the narrator.

A narrator has plethora of options to narrate events. He can base his narrative on temporality and causality or he can narrate through focalization. Focalization changes the course of narrative as the reader receives images of character through the impression of the narrator. Focalization employs three dimensional strategies: the voice of one who narrates, one who sees and his understanding of events. In the emerging narrative techniques a discernible reader can easily notice the double consciousness of the narrator.

Above discussed narrative techniques can be applied respectively in the selected novels as follows: The employment of main character as a narrator makes the narrative quibble. In Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* the narrator's impression of the world is seen around him, his prejudice, his simmering feeling of violence juxtapose with that of the character himself. His keen observation of world belonging to the rich only is the sum total of Balram's sufferings in life. The novel deals with the binaries of Indian culture: Light Vs Darkness, Big bellies Vs small bellies. Adiga shows that the only way left for the underdog is violence. His novel is a pointer to future of India. He developed the narrative in the form of seven letters written by Balram to Mr. Wen Jiabao in Beijing. The latter is coming to visit India

and Balram takes up his duty to introduce him to the new India. The narrative progresses in the first person and Balram is shown in action through his own eyes. The narrative involves analepsis and Balram is there to tell the secret of his being a successful entrepreneur.

Reminiscing about the past, the narrator of *The White Tiger*, Balram Halwai tells the readers in the opening chapter of the novel, how he got his name 'White Tiger.' While he was still at school, an Inspector of schools made a visit to the school where Balram was a student, and asked him a few questions to test his knowledge. Impressed by the answers which the intelligent young boy gave, the Inspector put a question to him about the rarest of animals and this is how the young Balram Halwai acquired his name:

The Inspector pointed his cane straight at me. 'You young man, are an intelligent, honest, vivacious fellow in this crowd of thugs and idiots. In any jungle, what is the rarest of animals- the creation that comes along only once in a generation?' I thought about it and said: 'The White Tiger', 'That's what you are in this jungle.' (35)

He is *The White Tiger*. He is given this title by an inspector who comes to visit his school. White tiger stands for different features of Balram: intelligent, honest, vivacious fellow, the best among the rust. The promise of a successful youth hinted by the inspector sows the seed of Balram's better future. But that proves to be fictitious. He calls his story 'The Autobiography of a Half-Baked Indian'. (10)

The narrative commences with the analysis of a pamphlet pasted by the police in search of Balram, the culprit. Three dimensions of narrator's self appear: a denizen of darkness, a shrewd entrepreneur and a criminal. He makes amendments

in the pamphlet as he wants it to be precisely addressed to himself. His idea of self superiority can be glanced. The shift from singular to plural in the first person is so quick that the reader stands with the narrator. Here, the plural sound denotes the subordinate class in society, their troubles, weaknesses and deprivations as the narrator says, “A rich man’s body is like a premium cotton pillow, white and soft and blank. Ours are different. My father’s spine was a knotted rope... the story of a poor man is written on his body, in a sharp pen” (26-27). Though the technique of using letter forms had not been new in English Literature yet the treatment given to this technique makes it interesting. The narrative unravels itself further with the each letter written by Balram. The technique creates a number of doubts in the mind of the reader as the narrative advances. Firstly, the image of a criminal Balram is formed then it takes one back to his roots, portraying his struggle with depravity and his wish to leave the place of his birth. Flashback technique is used as an answer to the questions coming to the mind of reader regarding behaviour of Balram. The narrative progresses with traces of the past in mind and in some manner, it maintains the uncanny feeling of the avowed murder. The reader scrutinizes behaviour of each rich character mentioned by the narrator to guess the victim.

The psychological makeup of Balram is made explicit through the method of plunging deeply into his motives and desires. There is cringing of this peripheral character to come to the centre. Adiga has applied the methodology of confession for Balram. The narrative takes the form of meta-narrative. Balram’s story is a story about migrant workers, including and explaining other stories within the totalizing scheme. This is highly post modernist technique where the reader is caught in the eclecticism employed by the author. The feeling of suspense keeps on mounting till

the final moment of periphery when the victim is none other than his own beloved master Ashok. It comes as a thrash to one's idea of probability or necessity. The novel contains seven letters which were written separately, each in one night. The story is not narrated chronologically. The protagonist takes every freedom to move from one event to another without placing that event within a chain of action.

Comparing human mind to the entrails inside a car, Adiga suggests a mechanical approach to life according to which there is no conscious choice of an individual, because an individual is completely controlled by circumstances. The revelation in the beginning of the novel that the protagonist murdered his master is one such trick, the readers are eager to know how that murder was committed and in which condition. The narrator rouses the reader's anxiety as he goes on narrating apparently insignificant but interesting events, alluring the readers to be entangled in the story of murder. In fact, Adiga did not try a conventional novel with a tight plot and well drawn characters. Rather he chose to come close to the postmodernist narrative technique. The novel is filled with such witty remarks full of satire, wit, panache and black humor, with which Adiga portrays a real picture of all the dark sides of the metropolitan culture. In an apparently simple style the narrator explores his past his anger, suffering, humiliation and detachment and along with it the contemporary history of the land and the people.

Two of the participants in this transaction are represented by other agents within the narrative transaction. The real author and the real reader are represented very often, by the implied author and the implied reader. The real author as well as the real reader has fluctuating personality bases, essential true to life personalities on

the text. In comparison however, the implied author and the implied reader adopt a certain attitudinal presence which is limited to the text in question. *The White Tiger* has a real author as well as an implied author. The implied author consistently keeps up his self image of a depraved corrupt and power hungry individual and he does not allow the mask to drop. The real author is a distinct entity and the reader does not try to relate to him in anyway while engaging himself within the text. He conjures up an image of the implied author, based on his reading of the text, and he conjures up the image piece by piece as he continues the reading experience. While the implied author and the implied reader are important elements, the narrator and the narrate are optional.

Fictional narratives generally vary narrative voices and levels. A narrator who narrates at least a part of his own story is a homodiegetic narrator, while a narrator who does not participate in the story and remains outside it, is the heterodiegetic narrator. Postmodern Indian English novels employ both kinds of narrators, though the balance seems to be tipped in favour of homodiegetic narrators, as the study of the selected novels, seems to imply.

The novel gives the detailed accounts of the Indian society—rural as well as urban and its various facets using Laxamangarh, Gaya, Dhanbad, Delhi and Bangalore as places which are generic, represent the portrait of modern India.

The White Tiger is almost an epistolary novel, and the device of Improvisation is evident even in the way the novel is textured. Aravind Adiga has adopted a unique style of chapterisation. Six letters are written by the homodiegetic narrator Balram Halwai to the Chinese Premier in the course of six nights and two mornings.

The postmodern Indian English novels are structured differently from the novels of the earlier periods. Northrop Frye, the renowned literary critic has discussed the use of animal imagery in his famous work *An Anatomy of Criticism*. Frye is of the opinion that animals in the genre related to comedy are like sheep, docile and pastoral, while in the genre of tragedy, they are hunters and predators. An example of this is the wolf. Frye says that the animal world is portrayed in terms of monsters or beasts of prey. The wolf, the traditional enemy of the sheep; the tiger, the vulture, the cold, earth bound serpent and the dragon are all common. In Frye's view, there is a natural circle, within which there is a cyclical movement. This natural circle is the cosmos or the order of nature, and its placement is between heaven (above) and hell (beneath). The natural circle may be assumed as having a top half and a bottom half. The top half represents innocence; and is identified with romance; while the lower half represents realism and experience and is identified with the tragic movement encompassing hamartia and catastrophe. The conventional honours accorded to the sheep in the animal world provide us with the central archetype of pastoral imagery, as well as with such metaphors as "pastor" and "flock" in religion. The metaphor of the king as the shepherd of his people goes back to ancient Egypt. Perhaps the use of this particular convention is due to the fact that being stupid, affectionate, gregarious and easily stampeded the societies formed by sheep are most like human ones. Animal imagery is a striking feature of the postmodern Indian English novel. The novelists use various animals as symbols of various characteristics of the beast world as reflected in the human personality. This narrative device allows the novelist to

leave hermeneutic gaps in the delineation of their characters, while at the same time it allows the reader to exert his imagination to the fullest.

Earl J. Wilcox in *Fundamentals of Fiction* opines:

Imagery in its basic sense is a product of literary language. Simply defined, imagery is the impression or impressions we receive when one or more of our senses are stimulated by language.

Postmodern Indian English novels use animal imagery generously. This device is helpful in bringing out the subtle association between the human and the animal world. The animal world is used to symbolize the fact that man in his ruthless pursuit of his personal goals, loses all sense of balance and propriety and often becomes unlawful, blood thirsty and insatiable. The human world then becomes a kin to a jungle, where no law can prevail. The animal imagery in the novel continues. The rich landlords are variously referred to as Storks, Buffaloes, Wild Boars and Ravens; the greediest being the Buffaloes:

See, this country, in its days of greatness, when it was the richest nation on earth, was like a zoo. A clean, well kept, orderly zoo. Everyone in his place, everyone happy. Goldsmiths here, cowherds here. Landlords there. The man called a Halwai made sweets. The man called a cowherd tended cows. The untouchable cleaned fences. Landlords were kind to their serfs. Women covered their heads with a veil and turned their eyes to the ground when talking to strange men. And their thanks to all those politicians in Delhi, on the fifteenth of August, 1947, - the day the British left- the ages had been let open; and the animals had attacked and ripped each other apart and jungle law replaced zoo law. Those that were the most ferocious, the hungriest, had eaten everyone else up, and grown big bellies. (63-64)

Another instance of Imagery is used in *The White Tiger*, as the narrator is shown proud of the fact that he has made it to success at last and broken out of the “coop”.

In *The White Tiger*, there is a back and forth movement in time which is a studied deviation from the western concept of Aesthetics. The first chapter is titled ‘The First Night’ and the action of the novel begins, when Balram Halwai writes his first letter to Mr. Jibaho, the Chinese Premier. The first chapter is positioned in the present, but the second chapter which is titled ‘The Second Night’ harks back to the past, and describes in a graphic manner, Balram’s earlier life in Delhi as a driver. The tone of the novel is set with the narrator description of himself in a poster put up by the police. Balram’s journey from Laxmangarh to the huge metropolis he now lives in is replete with greed, crime and murder. The third letter is written on the fourth morning. The letters continue to be written in this manner.

In the contemporary Indian novels in English including Arvind Adiga’s *The White Tiger*, an antagonist presents the story to the reader. There is a shift from protagonist’s point of view to that of Antagonist as in *Serious Men* too Ayyan Mani is the antagonist of this novel.

Chetan Bhagat imparts the beastly instinct in man in the novel *The Three Mistakes of My Life* which is expressed in the form of violent thoughts, violent speech and violent actions. The language is generously peppered with obscene words and statements, yet they do not appear offensive, rather they suit the postmodern tendency of people using expletives frequently, and giving vent to their frustration by making statements which would startle the sensibilities of sober and sedate readers. As Govind says in *The Three Mistakes of My Life*:

Ish, don't fucking stand in front of the TV, I said. But Ish wasn't standing, only jumping. 'Fuck your statistics man, fuck the probability'. Ish shouted in jubilation. I don't like it when people insult Mathematics but I gave Ish the benefit of doubt. (129)

Postmodern Indian English novels are subtly coloured by memories of the days of colonization. The novelists use language and imagery which is strongly reminiscent. There is a reference in *The Three Mistakes of My Life*. In a conversation with a young woman called Vidya, the narrator lets out his ire:

I banged my fist on the table. 'Then do it. Don't give me this wish- I-was-a-boy, and I'm- trapped' –in-a-cage nonsense. Ok, so you are in a cage, but you have a nice big oiled brain that is not pea sized like a bird's. So use it to find the key out'. Medical college is one key, nut not for me, she said. 'In that case, break the cage' I said. (103)

Novel discusses the earth quake in Bhuj, terrorist attack of America, and Gujarat riots from the point of Govind and shows that how individual memories can intervene in the grand narration of history.

The titles of the selected novels chosen for the study; *The Story of My Assassins* by Tarun J. Tejpal and *The Three Mistakes of My Life* by Chetan Bhagat are direct and clear as the reader knows exactly what he can expect, and the novelists cater fully to the expectations of the readers. Previous one is the story of a journalist's assassination in literal meaning and second one is the story about depiction of the three mistakes confessed by the protagonist.

Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni is a writer of postmodern Indian English fiction who is indebted to her grandfather for the gift of storytelling, which she displays with flair in most of the fictional writings. She harks back to the cultural heritage of

Indian literature and borrows from the model of the beast fables, which are so clearly visible in the *Panchatantra*. Beast fables employ a form of storytelling in which animals tell stories which are rich lessons in human transactions; and from which the reader can gain a wiser perspective about life. Her novel *One Amazing Thing* is set in a city in the United States, where there is a generous mix of cultures. Set in the post 9/11 period, the novel brings together an amalgam of nine characters from different cultural backgrounds who are trapped in the basement of a visa office. Since all the nine characters relate one amazing thing from their life stories, each of the nine is a protagonist and each is the narrator of his/her own tale. Each tale triggers in the listeners, a memory of some aspect of their own lives, and so the tale which follows is in some strange incomprehensible way, linked to the earlier tale as stories and communities are thus bound together in a symbiotic relationship. By making the listeners perceive how their present flows from a common past, stories can draw people together. The tales provide catharsis- a minute of grace as they pray for rescue.

The postmodern Indian English novelists write in a manner which is suited to the current temporal-spatial reality, yet their style of writing is often reminiscent of one or the other models suggested by Indian theorists of narrative techniques and so is the case in *One Amazing Thing*.

Though the background is one of natural disaster, *One Amazing Thing* is a novel of psychological analysis rather than a novel of physical rescue. It primarily examines whether a community can be built and whether a true communication is possible among a group of strangers who are disaster survivors, who have nothing in common except a desire to go to India.

The novel throws further light on their relationship and starts from characters and a central conflict. The group of nine strangers struggling for survival when an earthquake traps nine very individual people who happen to be in the same place at the same time, the way that their lives intersect and connected comes vividly to life. Prejudices, fears and bullying are all touched on in the situation where people who would not normally be involved in each others' lives, come to depend upon one another. These strangers keep their minds off their troubles, and start communication with each other. A unique journey of human relationship between these strangers is seen in *One Amazing Thing*. It intrigued to find how different people reacted very differently to disaster and that's what the kernel of novel is formed. The novel explores what individuals do in a situation of disaster and how they react differently. Following a devastating earthquake in an unidentified city of the U.S. nine heterogeneous groups of people find themselves in an underground room in the basement of an Indian Consulate. Though the building collapses around them, no rescue operations seem to be taking place. With very little food, rising flood water, dwindling oxygen, and no electricity or phone service, the victims fend off panic by taking turns at sharing the central stories of their lives. In the beginning arguments crop up and hardly trust one another, then their stories began and plot moved further. The way the novel progresses in which the nine characters do not know whether they will survive or perish is also the tale of human bonding, survival and hope. The focus of all these people first jolts to collective struggle to survive and they wait to be rescued. The novel is a touching patchwork of nine short stories within the context of a large story. Nine stories are told in a major story i.e. the novel *One Amazing Thing*. The stories are pathetic but all of them serve as a basis of mutual understanding and

develops good relationship among all the characters. They create a place from which the different people with their various prejudices and perspectives brought together by circumstances beyond the control, begins to accept one another. All the stories are told only under one roof. No change in place when all the characters narrated their stories.

Narratives are like pictures of everyday life, even fictitiously. Therefore, it becomes essential to explore the existing Indian English writing community in order to make observations about experiences, challenges, and perspectives of Indian-American immigrants. In addition this reminds us that if we are able, as literary critics, to examine narratives more effectively based on individual experiences within them.

The Indian epics have doubtlessly exerted a vast influence on Indian writers who have perhaps heard the tales of ancient Indian wisdom from early childhood years. The rendition of the tale may be more in keeping with the postmodern tradition. Yet the Indian English novelists are able to write in a style which appeals to readers, writers and theorists in the western world. Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni positions herself somewhere between the East and the West as far as her theme and style of narration are concerned. Like Chaucer in *The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni tells her story from a superior or elevated position, keeping herself outside the story. Yet she is the person who knows the entire story, and she knows all that is transpiring with her characters. She is also aware of what is going on in their minds, and she is careful not to identify herself with any single character more than she does with the other characters. However, she appoints Uma for a specific purpose; that of initiating the story telling sequence.

The story of *One Amazing Thing* deals with a set of characters living in two cultures, and therefore they are precariously positioned between their native cultural heritage and the new found culture of the land they have migrated to. Caught in the basement of an American visa office, when an earthquake hits, the characters are faced with a frightening reality. The writer, Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni expertly blends the real with the unreal and creates a magical world within the pages of her novel. The hybrid identities of the characters are brought into full play in the novel, and the real and the fanciful complement each other beautifully. The character called Uma is placed centrally as the leading voice, representative of the voice of today's generation, exploring one's inner arena of the mind and trying to break free from the ideologies that divide the world into different units and segments.

India has always been a rich store house of the oral tradition of storytelling. The characters in *One Amazing Thing*, each tell one tale of an amazing thing that has been a part of their life experience. Each character tells one unique story, which is in metaphorical terms a contributory piece in the larger story of human survival and existential dilemma. The narrative device of storytelling in a cyclic fashion; presents a heterogeneous picture of characters from various cultures in the mainstream American culture. The blend of vernacular words in English words and phrases, lends a distinctness of style to the Indian English novels of the postmodern era. Further the scheme of chapterisation and the titles of the chapters are an added source of interest.

The title *One Amazing Thing* can be interpreted in various ways. While it reveals the deep, hidden secrets of the story tellers, it reveals the amazing power of storytelling. The stories told by each of the nine story tellers transcend the barriers of

race, caste, nation, etc and bind all of them in the entirely human experience of surviving against odds. The title is reiterated in the words of Uma, one of the characters in the novel: Everyone has a story of at least one amazing thing that has happened to them. (3)

Manu Joseph's novel *Serious Men* is an example of a heterodiegetic narrative. This form of narration allows the writer to stand apart from the characters which make up his story. He is the disinterested overseer who looks at his characters in a detached manner. The novel *Serious Men* has a narrative voice, but the narrator is an implied one. As Chatman explains in his book *Story and Discourse*:

Unlike the narrator, the implied author can tell us nothing. He, or better, it has no voice, no direct means of communicating. It instructs us silently, through the design of the whole, with all the voices by all the means it has chosen to let us learn. (148)

Serious Men reflects a contemporary India that is rooted in individuality and upward mobility. Thus, through his complex presentation of Ayyan, Manu Joseph presents a new direction in the narrative techniques in Indian novel in English. He uses satire and realism as vehicles to express the long-term effects of the caste system but does not allow the novel to completely define Dalit identity. He shows through *Serious Men* that there is not one way to define an identity. It becomes hard to classify all Dalits as 'Ayyans'; yet at the same time, he offers another perspective on the typical depiction of the Dalit community. Joseph shows that an identity cannot be contained by the structure of a novel because Dalit identity comes in many different forms and interpretations. Joseph's satirical realism allows the individual to have 11 Caste-based reservations are not only for Scheduled Castes but also Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) agency to criticize his

environment and make change within it. Satire is a literary form that incorporates humor and irony to denounce natural human response whether it is moral or immoral. Joseph uses satire to expose political discrimination within the nation state and to express the problems associated with the caste system.

Joseph shows that satirical realism can simultaneously reveal the issues in society without compromising the identity of the lower class in India. Joseph illustrates the corruption and dehumanization that continue to exist in India; however, he chooses not to write in a form that is harshly critical, dark or one that evokes pity. Instead, he reveals the ridiculousness within the reality of Indian society. He shows the plurality of India through its corruption and injustices and this new form of satirical realism allows literature to be more than a social commentary but a mirror that reflects the identities and personhood of the individuals it represents. For instance, we are first introduced to the novel with the following line: “Ayyan Mani’s thick black hair was combed sideways and parted by a careless broken line, like the borders the British used to draw between two hostile neighbors” (3). Already, in the first line of the novel, Joseph uses irony to change our perspective of his characters. Ayyan’s hair seems to reveal something about Ayyan, but also, in its direct referencing of Partition, serves as a parody for the failures of the nation-state. Joseph shows through satire what happens once the individual and politics are combined – allowing Ayyan to have an identity separate from political issues.

Theory and Research are indeed serious subjects and the two protagonists of the novel, Ayyan Mani and Arvind Acharya, the dalit and the Brahmin respectively, stand for the deprived and the privileged; Ayyan is have-not while Acharya stands for the haves of society. Casteism in India is indeed a serious issue, and the novelist

weaves an intricate story of romance, humour and practical life. Manu Joseph has written about serious matters in a light hearted and humourous vein. There are some distinct meeting points between Arvind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger* and Manu Joseph's novel *Serious Men*. The protagonist of *The White Tiger*, Balram Halwai bears a resemblance to the protagonist of *Serious Men*, Ayyan Mani. Both the characters belong to the down trodden and underprivileged sections of society. Both are in the service of men who belong to the privileged sections of society. Both are opportunists who try to climb the social ladder and gain access to wealth and position, and in doing so, they lay bare the hypocrisies which plague Indian society.

Joseph uses satire as a commentary on Indian society; however, instead of projecting his own ideals, as an author and a narrator, he uses the individual as an agent and a catalyst to reveal issues of the Indian nation-state. *Serious Men* can be defined as satirical realism because it uses elements of humor and irony, yet it does not lose the story of the individual. This is shown in the structure of the novel. Throughout the novel, Ayyan attempts to create an image of his son, Adi, as a boy genius – particularly a Dalit genius. Joseph describes his efforts as a game between his son and himself, therefore revealing its playful nature. Ayyan tells his son to ask questions during class in order to seem an inquisitive student. He tells him to ask: “What is gravity made of, miss? Or ‘why are leaves green?’” (114). In this way, although Adi interrupts the teacher's lectures, he only appears as a student trying to further his education. To the reader, Adi's incessant questions are comical because it is part of a game. Adi is not aware of the effects of his action; however, he enjoys the attention that he receives in class: “He looked forward to disrupting every class” (114). Ayyan continues to play this game with his son because he wants to provide

the best for Adi. Ayyan is not in the position, as a secretary, to provide the finest opportunities in life for his son. The peon that works with Ayyan states, “You are such a clever man, Mani, if you had the fathers that these men had, you would have had a room of your own today with your own secretary” (24). The peon’s comment reveals how caste restricts a person’s socioeconomic mobility. Joseph creates Ayyan, a character who is willing to do anything to secure a quality future for his child, one that far exceeds his own. It is difficult to characterize Ayyan as an amicable character. Instead he is better depicted as a person who blurs the binaries of right and wrong in order to achieve socio-economic equality. For this reason, Joseph removes Ayyan from a strictly antagonistic position and builds him as a man with doubts:

That’s what frightens him. Despite his own disgust at the cruelty of the myth he was creating around his son, Ayyan feared that he might not be able to stop. He was falling into the intoxication of the game...the thrill of erecting the story of a boy genius and the tales that drew his small family in a cozy huddle in their one-room home –he did not want to lose all that. Because that was all they had. So, what must a man do? (116)

Ayyan’s fear is universal. He is questioning his choices and analyzing the risk that is involved to achieve upward mobility. This moment of self-doubt makes Ayyan relatable to Joseph’s readers because the reader understands that his reason for lying is to give his family a chance. Ayyan is a satirical character; however, that does not restrict him from being relatable and personable. In this sense, Ayyan is similar to Balram, another satirical character in Indian English fiction as the novelist used irony, hyperbolic characteristics, and raw realism to create a satire that presents a dystopic reality. However, in doing so, he sometimes deprived the character in form of autonomy. Both nationalist and satirical narratives have the potential to deny

their characters' independence. They become examples of a larger political message. By contrast, *Serious Men* creates a space for both realism and satire to co-exist without compromising the characters' agency and identity. Joseph's realism uplifts the dystopic reality of the nation-state because it focuses on the victories of the Dalit in modern India. His example of realism combined with his witty irony shows a new direction in Indian writing. At the same time, it is important to point out that even while representing his Dalit protagonist in complex ways, Joseph compromises the individuality of the Dalit woman in the process. Oja, Ayyan's wife, is an active participant in the novel; however, she is depicted as the stereotypical housewife. She cooks, cleans and when she is not busy doing that, she takes time for herself to watch her Tamil soap operas. As the narrator states, "From seven to nine every evening, she was hypnotized by the melancholic Tamil soaps. During this time she encouraged everybody to disappear" (9).

Throughout the novel the extremities of characters have been juxtaposed, their thoughts and attitudes. For instance, when Ayyan Mani thinks of his wife, when she first walked into his house with a newly married bridal fear, she was so beautiful: "on the first night, when he sat beside her on the conjugal mattress that was filled with funeral roses left by neighbors and friends". And frequently he gets in to the mind – voice (stream of conscious technique) to escape from the humdrum of reality. Then he builds small plots around his ten year old son Adi to create a myth, which finally overtakes him.

Serious Men here stands for two men who are shown literally serious in the novel. Arvind Acharya and Ayyan Mani, one is hero and other is anti-hero. Title of

the novel is placed on both of these men, hence justified as the story revolves around both of these serious men, protagonist and antagonist. Readers need not to demystify the meaning of the title, as it is clear to their minds.

Narratives invite the readers to participate in the act of storytelling, not as passive listeners, but as active spectators or auditors. The reader is at liberty to expect the story to move in a certain direction, once the story is set in motion. The writer however is not expected to compromise on his creative storytelling by catering to the possible whims of the readers, yet there is enough play within the act of storytelling to allow the writer as well as the reader to engage in creative imagination. When a writer tries to cater to the reader's expectations as far as the possible outcome of the story is concerned, he resorts to a device called *Stylization*. If however, the writer decides to turn the story in a direction not expected by the reader, he resorts to a narrative device called *Improvisation*.

Tarun Tejpal's novel *The Story of My Assassins* takes the reader into the unexplored depths of corruption in Indian public life into which the members of elite Indian society rarely probe, except occasionally in an intellectual manner. The novel involves first person narration. The narrator is an editor of a news magazine and is aghast to learn of a plot hatched by a set of unknown people, to assassinate him. The narrator barely escapes and in the vast hall of the Patiala court house, he is brought face to face with the five men who had plotted against his life. Four of them are nondescript individuals, but one of them is intimidating and uncompromising. Tejpal's journalistic flair is apparent in the way he encapsulates the conditions of law courts in India:

Within five minutes of entering the stately iron gates of the Patiala house courts, 'I'd become aware that I was entering a zone of experience that would forever change the way I looked at the wonder that was India. Before the day was out, I would know that no middle class Indian from any old St. Mary John school with trilling nuns and caning fathers, who twittered in the queen's English and held forth on freedom and democracy, had any real idea of this country, if he had not wandered through the frozen glaciers of its legal system. If he had not befriended a frisky penguin and been shown some chilling x rays of the grand body of Indian law and order and justice. (73)

The Story of My Assassins involves first person narration, and is an example of homodiegetic narration:

The morning I heard I had been shot I was sitting in my office on the second floor looking out the big glass window at the yellow ringlets of a laburnum tree that had gone in a few days from blindingly golden to faded cream, as if washed in rough detergent. (3)

Animal imagery is apparent in Tarun J. Tejpal's novel *The Story of My Assassins*. A character named Hathiram whose father had served as a soldier in the British Indian army in Burma had advised his son to be gentle like an elephant, and yet incapable of being pushed around. The narrator's speech is replete with animal imagery while referring to Hathiram:

In the force these days you had to be a baturupiya, a quick change artiste, a master of impersonation, capable of putting on a face for every occasion. A mouse in front of seniors, an elephant in front of juniors, a wolf with suspects, a tiger before convicts, a lamb around politicians, a fox with men of money. So he was not always Hathiram, sometimes he was Choocha Ram or Lomdi Ram or Sher Ram or Bakri Ram. In the force these days, who you were depended on who was sitting in front of you. (20)

In *The Story of My Assassins* by Tarun J. Tejpal, the narrator has a colleague called Sara with whom he is sexually involved. Sara has no qualms about being involved with a married man, and in fact she vulgarly taunts him about his pathetic masculinity. Instance of such obscene and beastly human instinct is:

Arre take your little lulli away somewhere else! I have seen scores like you! Longer than you. Thicker than you! Take your little matchstick away and light a fire in dolly-folly! What's needed here is a flaming torch. (46)

The chapters are interestingly titled in Tarun J. Tejpal's novel *The Story of My Assassins*. One of the chapters is titled Mr. Lincoln meets Frock Raja; and yet another chapter is titled 'Penguins and Killers'. The lawyers in their black and white attire are referred to humourously as penguins. Humour is also shown as a part of the novel at many places.

The postmodern Indian English writers write in an uninhibited style and display no self consciousness at all. Often their sentences break off abruptly, which are suggestive and invite the readers to conclude the meaning. The innovative experimentation in narrative technique used by the postmodern novelists writing English fiction which have been chosen for the study displays all the narrative skills which are at their disposal. At no point in their storytelling is the structure of the plot, adversely affected by the innovative experimentation that they indulge in. However, there is a common thread which is evident in the manner of storytelling in all the novels chosen for the study. Together, they provide a vibrant framework for the narrative art of India.



Works Cited

Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*

Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978.

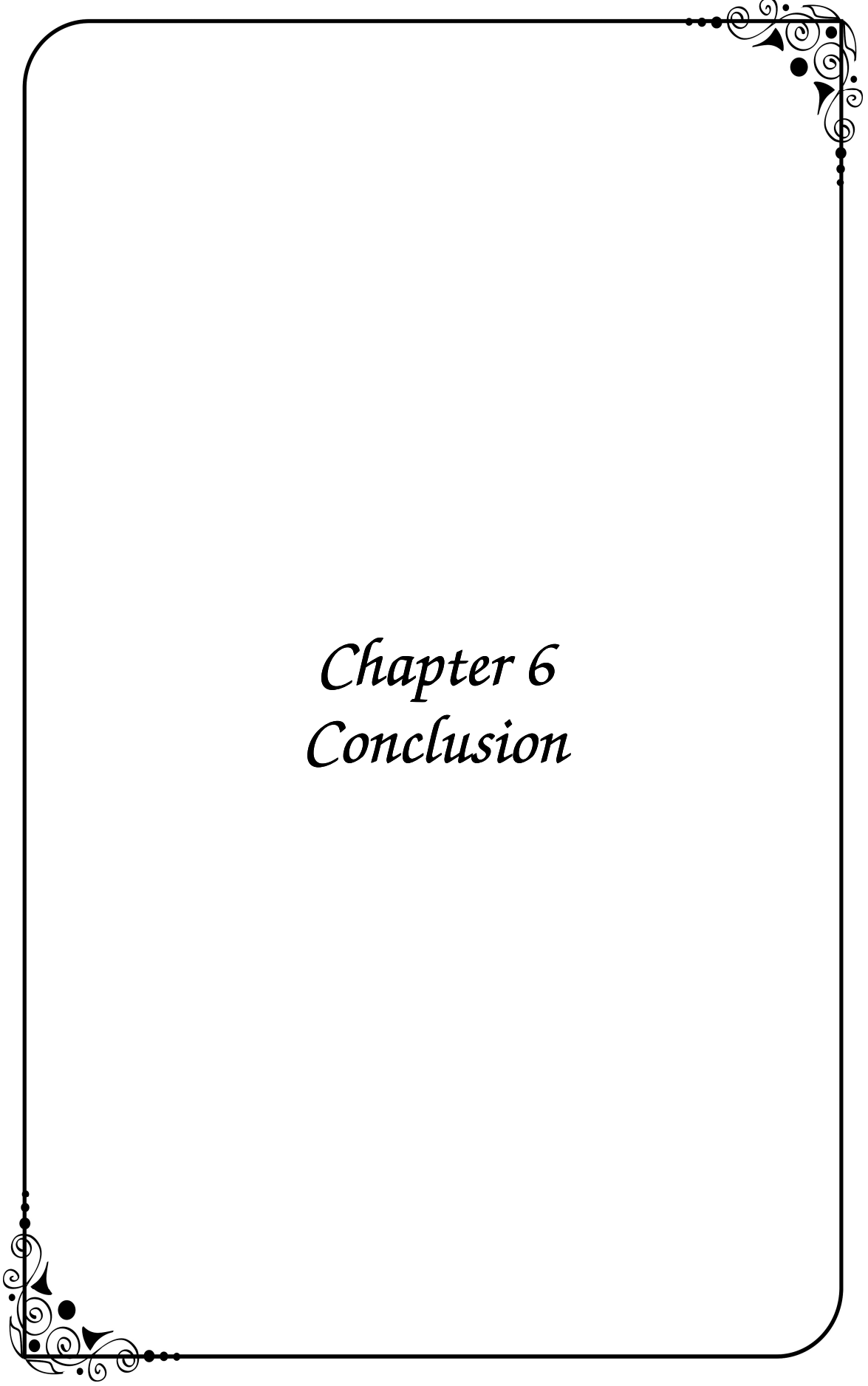
Panikar, K. Ayyappa. (ed) *Contemporary Indian Fiction in English*. Trivandrum:

University of Kerela, 1987.

Wilcox, Earl J. and David L Rankin. *Fundamentals of Fiction*. Maryland: University

Press of America, 1993.





Chapter 6
Conclusion

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

It is very explicit from the detailed discussion in the previous chapters which deal with metropolitan culture and the major challenges that the postmodern novels mostly reflect the contemporary society in all its aspects. Indian novels are a replica of reality which depicts myriad shades of culture. Taking this point in mind, an attempt has been made in this study to highlight the darker aspects of metropolitan culture and the major challenges an individual has to face in his day to day life. The five selected post 2005 novels, namely Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, Chetan Bhagat's *The Three Mistakes of My Life*, Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni's *One Amazing Thing*, Manu Joseph's *Serious Men* and Tarun J. Tejpal's *The Story of My Assassins* examine that high flying modern urban culture is destroying Indian culture and its traditions. Money and selfishness has replaced human affection. Materialistic success of urban world has wiped out all human values. Selected novels for the research are like reflection of urban culture where all human relationships can be examined losing their values. Along with these dark aspects of the metropolitan culture, novels are also reflecting many changes, transitions and transformations in various fields of life. Through the medium of characters, these novels show about how people want to get out of their rustic and horrendous standard of living, exploitation and struggle for basic amenities like food, shelter and cloth. While, facing cut-throat competition an individual can be seen going through psychological conflicts. Existential dilemma encourages one to find meaning in life either from ethical or unethical sources. Even, people living in metropolitan culture don't hesitate to commit crime in order

to make their dreams come true. Their undeserving aspirations make them tread on illegal path and as a result violence and corruption prevails in modern society. The novelists' comprehension of man's relationship with culture in accordance with changing patterns is prevalent in post 2005 Indian English novels. These novels are concerned with metropolitan culture as the focal point. The facts that implicitly presented in the selected novels are based on the phenomena of ethnic and psychological challenges faced by people in a community. Challenging issues focuses on the socio-psychological and cultural problems with regard to ups and downs in human relationships, family interactions, love, sexuality, and so on. The frictions and frustrations along with the intense desire to live one's life independently give rise to an emotional detachment from the traditional norms of family. As we have seen, the selected novels dwell on the inter-personal relationship and the emotional turmoil between people. The novels are true-to-life as picked up from the very social, human and personal milieu. The postmodern individual of metropolitan India as shown in the support of the novels places great value on his personal freedom and the enhancement of his own life. He does not wish to sacrifice his personal freedom to any higher authority, whether divine or man-made. He wishes to remain unfettered in his choices. The women in the postmodern Indian English novels too appear to be emancipated, liberal and unfettered. They no longer seem to be victims in an oppressive culture. When a member of the society of have-nots witnesses the luxurious lifestyles of the affluent, he is often driven by a compulsive need to make it big in the world of wealth, politics and power. This driving need has resulted in a feeling of angst among the characters portrayed in the novels. As the pace of life becomes faster and faster, the anxiety levels in them see a

corresponding increase. They are no longer satisfied with a peaceful, humdrum life rather they wish to join the race of materialistic advancement, which they see in the bigwigs of society.

As it is very clear that the postmodern novels selected in this research work have taken into consideration the conditions of life, the surrounding environment and the pull of material success in shaping the human personality and character. Although the shadow side of the human personality has been brought out with all its failures and declines, the novelists celebrate the human spirit which rises to the occasion, despite all odds. Each character in the selected novels grossly misperceives the existing life conditions and violates norms. Yet, each is doing that which seems to be the best course open to him in his particular case. It is quite another matter that in his desire to enhance his personal freedom, an individual often makes choices which makes society uncomfortable. The novels appear to be acutely touched and moved by the dilemma depicts of the modern man in the industrialized and urbanized modern society. It is observed that the main focus in contemporary Indian English novels have shifted to metropolitan culture rather to rural culture. The dilemma of modern man in the industrialized and urbanized modern metro Indian society has lured the novelists. The metropolitan culture gallery seems to be a living soul of the whole new fiction world. The modern man is lost between the two worlds of Matthew Arnold- "one dead" and the other "powerless to be born"- the world of orthodox rural India and the other world of advanced crowded and mechanized urban India. Thus, the novels seem to be a revealing mirror of the multifaceted conditions prevailing in the metropolitan culture. The fabric of these novels has the various interwoven threads of caste system, the traditional concepts of familial

bonds and their slow disintegration, the most sensitive issue of man-woman relationship highlighting the condition of women in traditional society and their recent awakening in the wake of feminist movement, the concept of love and marriage in society and the clash between the Indian and the Western culture, the disillusionment and dilemma of the modern man in this urbanized world and his resultant alienation. These postmodern Indian English novelists are aware of the accompanying angst in such lifestyles as it is clear from the selected novels. The desire to live as comfortably as one's masters, the desire to get even with the social class to which an individual aspires, the shortcuts to success adopted by such individuals, are all a part of the busy metropolitan life in postmodern India.

The present study observes that psychological conflict like existential dilemma is an ongoing feeling of the characters in the selected novels. Whatever stands in the way of the individual's achievement of the desired outcome is quickly set aside, and replaced by a form of behavior which is more self-serving. It is easy to look at human behavior with fault-finding eyes, and take an uncompromising stand against such behaviour, but the postmodern novelists take a more generous view of human nature, and wisely point to the dark forces of capitalism, materialism and industrialization which often lead an otherwise good human being into the quagmire of criminality. The postmodern Indian English novelists desire to bring about a change of heart in the rich and the poor alike. They recognize the rootlessness, apathy, disillusionment and frustration rampant in individuals, yet they do not fail to see the social forces at work behind them. Selected novels prove the above-discussed aspects of metropolitan culture and major challenges in regard to postmodernism.

There is a considerable deterioration seen in moral values of people in metropolitan society. Extra-marital affairs, live in relationships, multiple relationships, one night stands, sexual involvements between bosses and subordinate employees, these appear to dominate the moral scene in the metropolitan culture of India. As seen in the novels chosen for the study portray men and women who are permissive in their attitudes and outlook towards life. Such permissiveness is not always with a view to climbing the social ladder. Often it is merely for the satisfaction of the pleasure principal which drives them to form meaningless relationships in life. Discotheques, clubs, coffee houses and pubs are places of social gathering. The lower sections of society derive the first thrill of metropolitan life by visiting cheap pubs, the local markets, the drinking houses and the visits to the red light areas of the city. Life in a metropolis is shown very different for the affluent and very different for the poorer sections. This accurate picture of metropolitan culture with erosion of cultural values has been brought to the fore in the research.

It is also examined in the study that if one truly speaks of unity in diversity, one has to listen to the voices coming from the peripheries, the subcultures and then come up with something which can satisfy the needs of a diverse set of people. Metropolitan life is plural, garrulous, rambling, lacking a fixed centre, and the selected novels resemble the same theme. These novels mainly hold their gaze steadily on the metropolises in India. It holds on tenaciously to the inhabitants of the metropolises, their attitudes to life, the challenges they are faced with, and their ways of dealing with the challenges. The depiction of life in the metropolises catapults the selected novels from its rural home to the privileged class of English speaking readers within India and abroad. They celebrate the hybridity and plurality, which is fast becoming

an integral part of the metropolitan human experience. The question of identity, in the novels, takes on a new meaning. The concept of identity as something fixed and stable is questioned and challenged in the novels chosen for the study. Identities appear to be multiple, fluid and even constructed, rather than fixed or stable. Thus, the realistic modern urbanized society has sought the thoughtful attention of the novelists too, who have presented the culture of metropolises realistically. The negative effects of the industrialization and globalization in the metropolitan society as seen in the novels lead to the end of family institution and increasing divorces. Immigration of rural poor folks to urban area brings in its train many problems like increasing population, the scarcity of all natural resources, unemployment, poverty, slums, illegal acquisition by landlords, the dislodging of farmers, growing corruption, corrupt leaders and the soaring ambition of the greedy capitalists, terrorism, and the threat to the national security. Apart from these challenging issues, the disintegration of families, households and communities usher in radical transformations in cultural codes and traditional thinking patterns. While the modernists are nostalgic about the past and lament what they have lost, the postmodernists exult over what they have gained through these new patterns of society. Selected novels prove the above discussed aspects of metropolitan culture and the major challenges.

Besides, close reading of the metropolitan culture in the selected novels for the study reveals that the novelists have made some vital observations about the functioning of the government and the resulting conditions in the country. The sad plight of democracy, and the cunningness and manipulation of power hungry politicians have not missed the eyes of the discerning postmodern Indian English novelists. Atrocities by the police and their brutal behavior towards the suffering

masses compound the problems of postmodern India. Aravind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger* and Tarun J. Tejpal's novel *The Story of My Assassins* paints a dismal picture of a grossly corrupt and soulless bureaucracy. Lack of accountability on the part of the government as well as the citizens, becomes one of the primary causes of the misery and helplessness of common humanity. The teeming millions of the Indian population express their disdain for the government and its policies, by adopting behaviours which are outrageous and unlawful. The failure of the judicial system and the delay in prosecuting those who are guilty, are brilliantly portrayed in Tarun J. Tejpal's novel *The Story of My Assassins*. Tejpal also disapproves the suppression of the freedom which should rightfully be given to the press.

The White Tiger deals with the social structure and relationships taken for granted, process of ethical change or the lack of it, and various ills affecting the metropolitan society. The study examines the novel with the perspectives of metropolitan culture and the major challenges. Protagonist, Balram's journey from darkness of village life to the light of entrepreneurial success in metro city is utterly amoral and brutal. The novel has its share of anger at the injustices of the new, globalised India. The novel is a social commentary and a study of injustice and power in the form of class struggle in India; it depicts the anti-hero Balram representing the downtrodden sections of the Indian society juxtaposed against the rich. It focuses on the wider relations in society- political, economical and legal. This novel is totally a mirror of modernized Indian society to us. It tells us that India is not shining and despite its claims of a booming economy, it is still "near-heart of darkness", which it has been since time immemorial. Balram is the conscience of the lower class their anger, frustration protest and revenge and readiness to adopt a new

moral code of conduct to succeed in life. Murder of Ashok by Balram is the reaction of deep-rooted frustration of lower class experiencing the polarities between the upper class and the lower class. This is what exactly happens in the metropolitan culture. How an inhabitant and his society behave in metropolises becomes the scenario of so-called new modern culture. The novel is an unflattering portrait of present day India as a society of servitude and corruption. Poverty of rural Bihar and the evil of the feudal landlords are shown mythically as an attempt to temper the society with the vision of justice against the brutal injustice. The story is a realistic scenario of changing society and striking at the false notion of a modern transformed India. India has canvassed much of its socio-economic progress to the world, but the dark side of the story is unfolded laying bare all the trappings of gimmick and falsity at the dawn of the twenty first century in its actual socio-political context in which the story affects the prime character the way he is a product of the soil and turns out to be a white tiger. Aravind explains his views on major challenges like ignorance about the deeper causes of poverty and suffering in India. He analyses of “corrupt politicians” and “lack of healthcare services” as the “root causes” of India’s problems. He is eager to berate “socialist politicians and bureaucrats” and enthusiastic about foreign investments but appears completely innocent of any traces of understanding either of the political economy of globalization or of the brutality of the impact of neo-liberal reforms on India’s poor. He wants social change, that’s why he highlights the injustices of contemporary society. The desperate poverty juxtaposed against great wealth can be seen genuinely. This caricature primarily focuses on the filthiness, barbarity, and sub-standard quality of economic, social, emotional, and intellectual lives of the poor. The inability to see the poor as capable

of beauty or dignity first and foremost dehumanizes them and makes them victims to be targeted for intervention rather than agents themselves of drastic change.

The 3 Mistakes of My Life is examined as a novel of the dark passion with aspiring characters living in a metropolitan city, Ahmedabad. The study acquaints us with three ambitious people, namely, Govind, Ishan and Omi who are similar to every young one living in metropolis. The deep study of novel finds that metropolitan culture and the major challenges are the pillars on which story of these three main characters rotate. These characters have an intense desire to succeed in their aims. To fulfill their dreams they do all sorts of efforts, face cultural, psychological challenges and meet with different difficulties. Myriad shades of challenging troubles in their life can be seen. Coping up with these challenges become the main part of their story. These characters are the representatives of real life strugglers who can be seen living in search of their identities in metropolitan culture. Meaninglessness in life haunts the mind of the characters and they try to search meaning in their life. Ishan strongly believes in the virtues of humanity and loves the people of all community equally. He saves the life of a Muslim boy, Ali because he thinks the boy is nation's pride, a promising future of Indian cricket team. Govind declines the job offer from Indian Armed Forces because he cannot let anyone tame his free will and starts his own business in partnership with his friends. Omi is a Brahmin boy whose father is a temple priest. He is traditionally bound to do the rituals of the temple while he is not at all interested in their hollowness. This does not mean that he is agnostic or atheist but he worships the supreme power in other form perhaps self. He enjoys the dainties of life, takes wine, watches movies and hankers after beautiful girls. He is shown as a contemporary modern man who

follows his own way of life. He supports Ali against the communal grudge of his Mama. He saves Ali's life at the cost of his own life. Vidya finds herself in the cage of extra parental concerns. Her parents want her to make career in the medical line but she plants her interest in the pursuit of Public Relations Program. She carries out her will, gets a degree in PRP and wins over parental obsession. When Mama asks Omi and Ishan to persuade the temple visitors to vote for his communist party and sedate them against the favor of the government to the Muslim community. Omi persuades but Ishan dissuades the proposal. This shakes the humanitarian spirits of Ishan and he nullifies Mama's sedative proposal and gets ready to vacate his shop. He evokes the youth to keep religion far away from politics if they are truly religious. He persuades both Hindus and Muslims to follow the reconciliatory behavior like that of the male chimpanzees who fight violently with each other – for food, females, whatever. However, after the fight, they go through a strange ritual. The novel depicts about how three friends are caught in a tangle to earn some money and fame, and how they sort it out. Govind, a brilliant student of mathematics has an aptitude and penchant for business and it's his three mistakes of life that are presented along with various challenges. In other words, the study presents the freedom seeking life styles of the characters in the novel. Govind is a true Gujarati, interested in coming up on his own in life through business. Ishaan or Ish- a failure in studies but a great cricketer (obviously great in the local school team), has a passion in playing, teaching and watching cricket. Omi comes from a family of priests with no inclination of becoming a priest and just moves along with his two friends. The journey of these simple people in life, how their lives get affected by the worst disasters in Gujarat's history is portrayed. Here, we see how dreams crash

into pieces by unexpected events and as a result individuals try to cope up with these major challenges. Vidya, Ishaan's sister, a teenager with her eyes on Govind, pretends to be a typical homely Indian girl, but in reality she is not guilt conscious at all after her involvement with Govind. The love angle of Vidya and Govind also creates a psychological challenge between two minds, and become a socio-cultural challenge when the affair becomes public and relation between two close friends comes to an end. Perfect glimpse of metropolitan culture is seen when they make love before getting married just to satisfy their human desires. Physical needs and their seductive activities make them indulge in pre marital affair which are commonly seen in culture of metropolises. And to top it all novel is placed in the era when Ahmadabad suffered with a nightmare of an earthquake and riots. The book traces the lives of these characters and their trials and tribulations. Thus, the story involves some of the major real happenings of early 2000 like the Gujarat earthquake, India- Australia test series, the 9/11 WTC attack and the Godhra train mishap in the form of disastrous challenges. The new generation has very clear views about earning money. The striking feature of the protagonists is that each one is entangled in a web of challenges and to realize their goals, they have to face religious, politics, natural calamities, unacceptable love, their own mistakes, overcome the frustration of under academic performance, the stabbing pains of executive psychosis, the monster of corruption, and struggle to find meaning in an unfair society. The ethical scenario is alarming with the crumbling of the value system and utter confusion due to lack of clarification of values in context to the new challenges. The astounding communication technology which today encircles the globe seldom uses its tremendous potential to spread global values and foster a

more caring compassionate consciousness. The ethnic and psychological challenges as well as aspects of metropolitan culture are brought into light in the detailed study.

There is a constant interplay of nostalgia and reality in *One Amazing Thing* as the scene is set in the metropolis of US. At a deeper level, the novel shows a conflict between tradition and modernity. The trials, tribulations and the struggle to maintain the modern values and to carve out a new identity in a stifling environment of the characters is examined. The characters seek to synthesize traditions with the modern values and to an extent they reconcile themselves to the rigidity of traditions. Living in the modern times, having the traditional roots but sharing a feeling to be free from the patriarchal strains is observed in the novel through the mouth of female characters. Though, the novelist is now settled in the US, it is the feeling of belonging and rootedness to India and interest in woman's freedom that binds her with a new morality. She is away from her land of birth, realizes the fragility of her identity which she portrays through her characters. They make new adjustments in their new surroundings and reinvent themselves. Their physical distance from their home and their encounters with new ways of life confer upon them a kind of double vision which enables them to look both objectively and nostalgically at their own culture and the alien culture into which they seek to integrate. An intense intellectual engagement with the ethnic and psychological challenging realities of the people's contemporary world is noticed here. As such the novel fulfils the whole aim of life which is to develop a specific ideological stance to the political underpinnings of one's immediate society. The characters come to terms with their self or persona in their own specific ways. In the novel, not only does the protagonist remain at the centre but even the story is told from her perspective. In a broader

perspective, *One Amazing* evokes ideas of homeland, immigrants' personal feelings towards rootlessness and their problems of adjustments. Some of the problems that they deal with are suppression, frustration, anger, identity crisis, resistance, humiliation and moral dilemmas. The portrayal of nostalgia for the native culture is beautifully contrasted with Indian Diaspora's temptation towards the glamorized Western world. The study explores that *One Amazing Thing* is a smattering of short stories within the context of a larger story. The novel alternates between nine different characters, expected a distinction of voices, who are men and women of all ages and backgrounds. When an earthquake rips through the afternoon lull, trapping the nine characters together, their focus first jolts to their collective struggle to survive. There's little food and the office begins to flood. A bunch of people got stuck in a basement during California earthquake and their stories are the stuff of precarious survival. The characters pour their heart in the story because it is never before spoken grief, loss, disappointment, regret, a moment of victory and a moment of enlightenment. The story is as strong as the beams and the rods that kept the collapsed building together and are still preventing it from pan-caking on this motley crew. Their communal fears and trials are easily observed when they start telling the personal events happened to them. As, the psychological and emotional stress seems nearly too much for them to bear, the young graduate student, Uma suggests that each tell a personal tale, "one amazing thing" from their lives, which they have never told anyone before, and as their surprising stories of romance, marriage, family, political upheaval, and self-discovery unfold against the urgency of their life or death circumstances, the novel proves the transcendent power of stories and the meaningfulness of human expression itself. *One Amazing Thing* tells characters'

tales of heartbreak and revelation which are nuanced and riveting. Nine characters are not only captives of a disaster but also pilgrims of the spirit, seeking one amazing thing affirming the life and its pain which is tolerated by these survivors. The survivors are able to bridge cultural boundaries with compassion when they are struggling to save their lives from Haiti earthquake. The universal and individual qualities are seen in search of the meaning in life, as well as the search's timelessness. Just like Chaucer's characters are pilgrims to a holy site, the visa applicants are also pilgrims on their way to India in search of existence. The individuals' stories are profound in their revelations about mankind and their search for the significance of humanity. Thus, these back stories of the nine survivors spin as inventive windows into unfamiliar territory for the western reader, such as the Sino-Indian war of 1962 (which sends Jiang, a Chinese Indian woman, into an arranged marriage that lets her escape to America) or India's social strata (Malathi, a would-be bride in Coimbatore, defies her parents and the caste system by taking a job in the beauty salon where she is sent to be made up for a photo meant to attract potential suitors). The novel teaches that our need for survival creates a way to manage almost any situation. Thus, the novel takes the leading theme of metropolitan culture and major challenges along with the identity issues faced by the migrating community. The characters are seen living with new patterns of metropolis as they make love, they betray, they try to succeed in their ventures, and they feel existential dilemma. Psychological and cultural challenges are faced by all the characters shown in the novel. Search for identity, feeling of isolation and absurdness is seen in relationships and bonds tied among these nine multicultural characters as well as in the characters whose stories are heard by us.

One of the recurring aspects of metropolitan culture explored in *Serious Men* by Manu Joseph is the selfishness and infidelity in nature of marital love. He tells the story of two couples of vastly different backgrounds into whose conjugal lives the arrival of third parties threaten havoc. For the lower class hero of the book, Ayyan Mani, it is his cherished son Adi who signposts the damping of his wife's ardor; this is when Ayyan recognizes the paucity of the life he has given Oja. For his boss Arvind Acharya, an ancient pachyderm of a physicist who once almost won the Nobel Prize and now heads the Institute of Theory and Research, it is meeting the young, voluptuous astro-biologist Oparna Goshmaulik that throws into sharp relief his decade long union with his patient, loving wife Lavanya. As the title indicates, it is not so much a story of the couples as it is of the two men, Ayyan and Acharya. And as the novel progresses, both these serious men embark on elaborate deceptions. Ayyan Mani, who defines his lower class identity through anti-Brahmanism, needs to prove to his wife that there is life beyond BDD, the tenement slum in which they live. So he teaches Adi, a lonely boy with a hearing disability, to blurt out words like 'Fibonacci' in class, and ask questions about Relativity as his peers learn about fractions. Through periodic, inspired, prods by Ayyan, the myth of the lower class boy's genius spreads, and Ayyan and his wife's stature in their community grows. Newspaper and TV reporters arrive in their slum, and his wife Oja once again begins to believe her husband is a man of worth.

Another trait of metropolitan culture observed in the study is slum culture, a major part of the metropolitan culture. House being a major problem, slums have become an endemic feature of the metropolitan cities. The process of urbanization due to constant migration from the neighboring countryside has led to an enormous

growth of population and other related problem of unhygienic living conditions, crises of the means of transportation etc. The novelist has also emphasized upon the typical apathy of the metro city dwellers. As we see, in rural areas or villages, huts can be seen; whereas metro cities comprise of slum areas. People living below the poverty line used to live in tenements commonly known as chawls. Just like Ayyan Mani, who live with his wife and a son, Adi. Ayyan Mani, is shown as a fascinating character, a poor Dalit with tremendous powers of observation and ready intelligence. His overwhelming desire, apart from creating a better life for his son than he had, is to be mistaken for a member of the middle class. So he drops his son to school in taxis he can barely afford, practices phrases in English, carefully reads everything he can get his hands on. Here, we find yet another theme of lower class struggle for success, when he aspires to attain higher status just like, Ayyan Mani leaves no stone unturned to prove himself no less than anybody because of his complex and the frustrations of being born in the lower class. Even in institute or in his neighbourhood, he does all the efforts to show him a man with great skills. He has the aspiration of becoming superior for his son too. He plans and dreams of many things for him. Ayyan Mani, the antagonist, perceives that the Brahmins had nowhere to go now but to suffer in silence or to flee to non-vegetarian lands. *Serious Men* touches upon the intimate experience of human interactions and the identity struggles with existential dilemma embedded within it. Joseph is constantly pushing his readers to see beyond the obvious in order to have a better conception of India. Ayyan Mani is shown as the antagonist of this novel. He is a highly cynical and deprived man of the lower class community in twenty first Century India. Manu Joseph's scrutinizing eyes points out that in India everywhere still there is caste system.

The Story of My Assassins is a tour-de-force through the heart of contemporary India. Its depiction of the degeneration in metropolitan culture castigates the policies of the BJP-led NDA coalition government that led to the surge of Hindu religious extremism, indiscriminate privatization and massive economic disparities between 2000 and 2005. The tales of the five assassins are used to document the horrifying situation in Northern India, especially Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh - poverty and ignorance, lawlessness and upper-caste tyranny, unemployment, police atrocities, caste and religious conflicts, class-wars, illicit arms trade, smuggling, drug-trafficking, exploitation and trafficking of women and children and so on. The failure of administration provides an ideal breeding ground for crime. Tejpal presents a new kind of subaltern - the criminals (the downtrodden forced to resort to crime) and analyses their lives, psyche, motives and roles. These gangsters either run parallel governments or form alliances with political parties. Tejpal sides with the criminals who are the products of injustice and end up as pawns of politicians. He lambasts the criminal justice system for its blatant violation of human rights. Finally, the criminal, represented by Hathoda Tyagi, is hailed as a champion of the subaltern, whereas the politician - the voice of the state, symbolized by Bajpai, stands condemned. The novelist suggests that the corrupt system is so widespread and strong that even those who oppose state fascism cannot escape being part of it. To conclude, *The Story of My Assassins* stands apart from many contemporary novels on the areas of darkness in modern India. Tejpal depicts a metro city of India where life is brutal, dispensable, where power is measured by violence and fear, where there is no right or wrong. The study explores that novel is an argument with power, a counter-narrative from someone who has been chosen by the State to sustain a lie. The novel is shown with

the leading theme of metropolitan culture and all its dark aspects. The culture of metropolis is unveiled where assassins are the part of a normal routine life and thus shown as a very ordinary scenario of urban culture.

The present study *Metropolitan Culture and the Major Challenges in Select Post 2005 Indian English Novels* seems to be of immense value for contemporary era as it is an attempt to open a new dimension of metropolitan culture with all its challenges. It has realistically tried to explore various details regarding the globalised age, especially dark areas of metropolitan culture are laid bare. The study has a great significance with a view that it makes an attempt to probe the draw-backs of contemporary era's drive towards modernity, amongst which the corrosion of religious, familial and moral values are highlighted. It critically examines the main globalised issues of metropolitan culture like crime, corruption in politics, manipulated government and religious issues. Decreased cultural and traditional values, social changes and absurd mechanical life with psychological expressions of alienation, despair, frustration, feeling of revenge etc are some major dark aspects of urban culture which the study brings into light. Existential Dilemma is also brought to the fore in the study. The work also portrays East-West relationship with immigration and expatriation being the main aspects which float in globalised society. This work also gives a prominent place to the realistic theory of multiculturalism in metropolis. It critically examines changing cultural values which have given rise to new trends, thus paving way for unity in diversity. The work goes through the various issues of globalization and its impact on metropolitan culture. All the novels included in this study are a critique of contemporary society which is seen suffering from various maladies, ills and inadequacies. They are written with a deep purpose in mind and

with a positive approach to bring about change in peoples' way of thinking. They are raising their voice in order to bring a social and cultural reform in society which is continuously going in a wrong direction. These darker aspects of culture and society have brought about an immense deterioration in society. No morals, ethics and humanity are seen in the hearts and minds of people. Selfish thoughts and vested interests drive them to corruption and brutality. And as a result malignity prevails in the whole society. The novelists by means of their novels want to eradicate this scenario which is continuously creating havoc in the modernized society. Based on sound philosophy, insight and view having desire of betterment, the study has a purpose of humanitarian welfare with principles of art of surviving positively and successfully in a challenging globalized world. If, the minds of young ones who dream to become the developers of a new globalized world bring positive humanitarian changes, then present study can be a major contribution.





Bibliography

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES:

(All the textual references are from these books.)

Adiga, Aravind. *The White Tiger*. New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2008.

Bannerjee Divakaruni, Chitra. *One Amazing Thing*. London: Penguin Books, 2010.

Bhagat, Chetan. *The 3 Mistakes of My Life: A Story about Business, Cricket and Religion*. New Delhi: Rupa, 2006.

Joseph, Manu. *Serious Men*. New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2010.

Tejpal, Tarun. *The Story of My Assassins*. New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2010.

SECONDARY SOURCES:

Adiga, Aravind. *To Have and Have Not*. 2010.

---. *The White Tiger*. New Delhi: Harper Collins p, 2008. Print 2 Narre, Veena. "India as reflected in Aravind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger*". *Rock Pebbles Magazine*. 13.1 (2009): 55-58.print.

Aijaz, Ahmad. *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*. Meerut: Shalabh Prakashan, 1992.

Alexander, J.C. and Seidman, S (eds). *Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Ali, Monika. Essay in *The Atlantic : Borders Crossing*.

Anderson, B. *Imagined Communities*. London:Verso, 1983.

Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesata Press, 1996.

Arnold, Matthew. *Culture and Anarchy*. Cambridge University Press, 1966.

Baker, E. Richard, "Sartre and Camus: Nausea and Existential Humour". *Journal of Language and Literature*. Vol 1, Issue 1 2007.

- Barker, C. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. London: Sage, 2000.
- . *Making Sense of Cultural Studies: Central Problems and Critical Debates*. London: Sage, 2002.
- Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.
- Baldwin, Elaine (ed). *Introducing Cultural Studies*. London: Prentice Hall, 1999.
- Banfield, Ann. *Unspeakable Sentences: Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction*. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982.
- Basham, A.L. (ed). *A Cultural History of India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Postmodern Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Banerjee, Debjani. *Home and U.S.: Re-defining Identity in the South Asian Diaspora through the Writings of Chitra Banerjee Devakurni and Meena Alexander*. Diasporic Imagination Asian-America Writing. Vol-2. Fiction: Novels and Short Stories ed. Somadatta Mandal. (Prestige Books 2000),10
- Beck, U. *What is Globalization?* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.
- Bennett, Andrew. *The Author*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- Bhabha, H. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Bhaduri, A and Deepak Nayyar. *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Liberalization*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1996.
- Bhargava, Rajeev. "The Multicultural Framework" in K. Deb (ed) *Mapping Multiculturalism*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
- Bharucha, Nilufer, E and Vikas Sarang Eds. *Indian English Fiction 1980-1990: An Assessment*. New Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1994.
- Bharucha, Nilufer, E and Vrinda Nabar Eds. *Mapping Cultural Spaces: Post Colonial Indian Literature in English*. New Delhi: Vision Books, 1998.

- Bhatnagar, Manmohan (ed). *Indian Writings in English*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2000.
- Bhattacharya, Harihar. "Multiculturalism in Contemporary India" in *International Journal on Multicultural Societies*. Vol. 5, No. 2. 2003.
- Bheemaiah, J. *Class and Caste in Literature*. New Delhi: Prestige, 2005.
- Blackwell, F. *India: A Global Studies Handbook*. California: ABC Inc, 2004.
- Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983.
- Brad, Frenette. "The Afterward; Postings from the Literary world," Q and A. (Toronto, Green Theatre), June 10, 2009.
- Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. New York: Vintage, 1985.
- Burkitt, J. *Social Selves*. London: Sage, 1991.
- Camus, Albert. *The Plague*. New York: Vintage, 1991. 73.
- Chakraborty, Bidyur (ed). *Communal Identity in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Chambers, Ross. *Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power of Fiction*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Chaney, D. *Cultural Change and Everyday Life*. Basingstroke: Palgrave, 2002.
- . *Lifestyles*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Chaskar, Ashok. *Multiculturalism in Indian Fiction in English*. Delhi: Atlantic Publisher, 2010.
- Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978.
- Chaturvedi, Ashok. K. "Major Trends in Post Independence Indian English Novel". *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*. Vol 3. 2012.

- Chaudhary, Amit. 2008. "Huge Baggy Monster: Mimetic Theories of the Indian Novel after Rushdie". *Clearing a Space: Reflections on India, Literature and Culture*. Ranikhet: Black Kite Publisher, p 115.
- Christian Welzel & Inglehart, Ronald . *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Claire, Kramash. *Language and Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Cobley, Paul. *Narrative: The New Critical Idiom*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Cohan, Steven and Linda M. Shires. *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 1988.
- Cohen, A.P. *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. London: Routledge: 1985.
- Cohn, Dorrit. *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.
- . "Discordant Narration." *Style*. 34.2: 2000.
- Crystal, D. *The Language of the Internet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Culler, Jonathan D. "Omniscience". *Narrative*. 12.1: 2004.
- Currie, Gregory. *The Nature of Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Dahiwale, S.M. (ed) *Understanding Indian Society: The Non Brahmanic Perspective*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2005.
- Dannenberg, Hilary P. *Coincidence and Counterfactuality: Plotting Time and Space in Narrative Fiction*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008.
- Das, Sisir Kumar. *Modern Criticism and Theory*.
- Dass, Veena Noble and R.K. Dhawan. Ed. *Fiction of the Nineties*. New Delhi: Prestige, 1994.

- Darby, David. "Form and Context: An Essay in the History of Narratology". *Poetics Today*. 22.4: 2001.
- Deb, Kushal. *Mapping Multiculturalism*. New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2002.
- Dhawan, R.K. *Multiculturalism: Canada and India*. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 2005.
- Dore, Ganapathy, Geetha. *The Post Colonial Indian Novel in English*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011.
- E Dawson, Varughese. *Reading New India: Post-Millennial Indian Fiction in English*. Genre: Literary Studies Bloomsbury: London & New York. 2013 Paperback | Hardcover | Kindle.
- Edgar A and Sedgwick P. *Key Concepts in Cultural Theory*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Eliot, T.S. *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*. London: Faber, 1962.
- Fairclough, N. *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992.
- Fay, B. *Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science: A Multicultural Approach*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996. P 57.
- Featherstone, M. *Undoing Culture: Globalization, Postmodernism and Identity*. London: Sage, 1995.
- Friedman J. *Culture, Identity and Global Process*. London: Sage, 1994.
- Gabriel, Y and Lang, T. *The Unmanageable Consumer: Contemporary Consumptive and Its Fragmentation*. London: Sage, 1995.
- Garg, P.K. *Crossroads of Culture*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1972.
- Geertz, C. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- Giddens, A. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity, 1991. P 54.
- Giles, J. and Middleton, T. *Studying Culture: A Practical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999.

- Gokak, V.K. *India and World Culture*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1972.
- Goldberg, D.T. *Multiculturalism*. USA: Blackwell, 1994.
- Golomb, Jacob. *In Search of Authenticity: Existentialism from Kierkegaard to Camus*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Greenwood, J.D. *Realism, Identity and Emotion*. London: Sage, 1994.
- Gupta, Partha Sarathi. "Indian English Fiction- The Fruit Inevitable: A Review". *Indian Fiction in English: Mapping the Contemporary Literary Landscape*. Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities (ISSN 0975-2935) Vol V1, No 3, 2014)
- Harvey, Laudin (ed). *Victims of Culture*. Columbus: Charles E Merrill Publishing Co, 1973.
- Heid, D. (ed) *A Globalizing World*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Heinz, Riedger. "Violations of Mimetic Epistemology in First Person Narrative Fiction." *Narrative* 16.3: 2008.
- Heywood, Political Ideologies, 4th edition, Palgrave Mc Milan. 2007: 313.
- Herman, David. (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Hume, Kathryn. "Narrative Speed". *Narrative* 13: 2005.
- Hussain, S. *The National Culture of India*. New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1978.
- Iyengar, Srinivasa, K.R. *Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1994.
- Jain, Jasbir. *Narrative of the Village: Centre of the Periphery* ed. Rawat Publications: Jaipur, 2006.
- James, Fredric. *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. London: Duke University Press, 1990.

- Kafalenos, Emma. *Narrative Casualties*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006.
- Kaur, Gurveen. "Notes Towards Understanding Culture; and Some Issues Within It" in *Educare: A Forum for Education Concerns*. Vol.7, No. 2, 2003.
- Keats, Daphne. (ed) *Culture and Child*. Chichester: John Willey and Sons Ltd, 1997.
- Keats, Paul. (ed) *Multiculturalism Reconsidered*. U.K.: Blackwell, 2002.
- Keen, Suzanne. *Narrative Form*. Baingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Khair, Tabish. *Babu Fictions: Alienation in Contemporary Indian English Novels*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Khan, R. (ed) *Composite Culture of India and National Integration*. Ahmedabad: Allied Publishers, 1987.
- Khare, R.S. *Cultural Diversity and Social Discontent*. New Delhi: Sage, 1997.
- King, Anthony D. (ed) *Culture, Globalization and the World System*. London: Macmillan, 1991.
- Komalesha, H.S. *Issues of Identity in Indian English Fiction: A Close Reading of Canonical Indian English Novels*. Germany: Peter Lang Publication Inc. 2008.
- Kornblum, W and Julium, J. *Social Problems*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc, 1974.
- Kressing, R.M. "Theories of Culture Revisited in Borofsky R". (ed) *Assessing Cultural Anthropology*. New York: Mc Graw Hill, 1994.
- Kulbhushan, Kushal, N.K. Neb. (eds) *Reflections on Contemporary Indian English Fiction*. Jalandhar: Nirman Publications, 2011.
- Kumar, Amitava. (2008). "Viewpoint." *The Hindu. Literary Review*. November 2. Pp.-1-2.
- Kymlicka, Will. *Multicultural Citizenship*. New York: Clarendon Press, 1995.
- . (ed) *Multiculturalism in Asia*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

- Lavina's SAJA interview with Chitra Divakaruni Banerjee 10th May 2010. Web. 22 September 2011.
- Lawrence, D.H., 1972, *Morality and the Novel*, in David Lodge, ed. *20th Century Literature Criticism*, London: Longman.
- Love, Harold. *Attributing Authorship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Lothe, Jakob. *Narrative in Fiction and Film: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Lyotard, Jean Francois. *The Post Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Lystard, J.P. *The Postmodern Condition*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.
- Mahajan, Gurpreet. *The Multicultural Path-Issues of Diversity and Discrimination in Democracy*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002.
- Margolin, Uri. "Telling in the Plural: From Grammar to Ideology." *Poetics Today* 21.3: 2000.
- Mark, J.S. *Culture*. New Delhi: Viva Books, 2002.
- Marx, Karl and F. Engels. 2008. *On Religion*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications
- Mashale, D. Ashok. "The Post Colonial Perspectives in Indian English Novels." *Indian Stream Research Journal*, Vol 1 Issue 1, 2011.
- Matthews, G and Deary, I.J. *Personality Traits*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Mattin, David. "The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga", 11 May 2008. 12 Nov. 2008. – [fighter-by-Aravind-adiga-823472>](#)
- McCarthy, E.D. *Knowledge as Culture*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Mc Guigan, J. *Cultural Methodologies*. London: Sage, 1997.
- McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1992.

- Meister, Jan Christoph. ed *Narratology Beyond Literary Criticism: Mediality, Disciplinarity*. Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter, 2005.
- Michael, V. *The Multicultural Imagination*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Milner, Andrew. *Literature, Culture and Society*. London: VCL Press, 1996.
- Mohanty, Sachidananda. *Literature and Culture*. New Delhi: Prestige Book, 2001.
- Morals in Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger*, Some Reflections: *Indian Streams Research Journal* (April; 2012)
- Mukherjee, Meenakshi. *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- . *The Perishable Empire: Essays on Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi: OUP, 2000.
- . "Narrating a Nation." *Indian Literature*. (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, July-Aug 1992) 138.
- Nahal, Chaman. *The New Literatures in English*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1995.
- Naik, M.K. ed. *Perspectives on Indian Fiction in English*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1989.
- . *A History of Indian English Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1992.
- . *Indian English Fiction*. New Delhi: Pancraft International, 2009.
- Naik, M.K. and Shyamala A. Narayan. *Indian English Literature 1980-2000: A Critical Study*. New Delhi: Pencraft, 2001.
- Naipaul. V.S. 2008. *An Area of Darkness*. Penguin Publication. 111.
- Nanavati, U.M. and P.C. Kar. *Rethinking Indian English Literature*. New Delhi: Pencraft, 2000.
- Narasimhaiah, C.D. *Commonwealth Literature: Heirloom of Multiple Heritage*. New Delhi: Pencraft, 1995.
- . ed. *Makers of Indian English Literature*. New Delhi: Pencraft, 2000.

- Newton, Adam. *Narrative Ethics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Okin, S. *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Panikar, K. Ayyappa. (ed) *Contemporary Indian Fiction in English*. Trivandrum: University of Kerela, 1987.
- Parekh, Bikhu. *Rethinking Multiculturalism*. New York: Palgrave, 2000.
- Parkinson, B. *Ideas and Realities of Emotion*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Pathak, R.S. ed *Indian Fiction in English: Problems and Promises*. New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 1990.
- Patil, R. Vidya. "The Indian English Fiction Beginning to Modern" *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*. Vol 3, Issue 4. 2012.
- Prasad, A.N.(ed) *Critical Responses to Indian Fiction in English*. Bareilly: Prakash Book, 2001.
- Prasad, S.S. *The Insulted and the Injured*. Patna: Janaki Prakashan, 1997.
- Reed Way, Dasen Brock. *Intelligibility and Meaningfulness in Multicultural Literature in English*. JSTOR: PMLA, vol. 102, No. 1 [Jan, 1987], p 10-19
- Rev. of *The White Tiger*. Guardian.co.uk. n.p. Web.11Nov'11.
- . *The Hindu*. 02 Nov. 2008.n.p. Web.9 Jan'12.
- Robertson, R. *Globalization*. London: Sage, 1992.
- Rosinski, Philippe. *Coaching Across Cultures*. London: N.B. Publishing, 2003.
- Saha, Amit Shankar. "Exile, Literature and the Diasporic Indian Writer" *Rupkatha Journal*. Vol. 1, No. 2, 2009.
- Said, E. *Orientalism*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.
- . *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1993.
- Sanderson, Gavin. "Existentialism, Globalization and the Cultural Other" *International Education Journal*. Vol. 4, No. 4, 2004.

- Sapir, E. *Selected Writings in Language, Culture and Personality*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1947.
- Sartre Jean Paul, (ed) Wade Baskin, Secaucus. "The Humanism of Existentialism" *Essays in Existentialism*. N.J: Citadel Press, 1965.
- Saxena, Shobhan. (2008). "Fact not Fiction." Sunday Times of India, October 19, p.9.
- Schuurman, Frans J. ed *Globalization and Development Studies*. New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 2001.
- Scollon, R and Wong Scollon, S. *Intercultural Communication*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.
- Semino, Elena and Michael M. Short. *Corpus Stylistics: Speech, Writing and Thought Presentation in a Corpus of English Writing*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Sen, Amartya. *Identity and Violence*. 2006.
- Sharma, S.K. ed *Multiculturalism and Ethnicity in Global Context*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1994.
- Shehzad, Nadeem. *Macaulay's (Cyber) Children: The Cultural Politics of Outsourcing in India*. *Cultural Sociology* 3.1 (2009): 102-22.
- Shukla, Anu Sheobhushan. *Post Colonialism and Fiction in English*. India: Swarup and Sons, 2004.
- Shukla, Sheo Bhushan and Anu. Eds. *Indian English Novel in the Nineties*. Indian Association for Studies in Contemporary Literature. IASCL, Sarup and Sons. New Delhi, 2002.
- Singh, B.P. *India's Culture*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Sklair, L. *Sociology of the Global System*. Brighton: People's Press, 1991.
- Smith, M.J. *Culture: Reinventing the Social Sciences*. London: Sage Open University, 1998.
- Stevens, R. ed *Understanding the Self*. London: Sage Open University, 1996.

- Storey, J. ed *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*. London: Prentice Hall, 1998.
- Strongman, K.T. *The Psychology of Emotion*. Chichester: Wiley, 1998.
- Suleri, Sara. *The Rhetoric of English India*. London and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Suri, Sanjay. "Aravind Adiga's The White Tiger". *Outlook*. 27th Nov 7 2008: 23-25. Print.
- Taylor, Charles. *Multiculturalism*. USA: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Thwaites, T, Davis I and Mules W. *Tools for Cultural Studies: An Introduction*. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994.
- Tomlinson, J. *Globalization and Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999.
- Touraine, Alain. *Critique of Modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.
- Trotman, C. James. "Introduction". In *C. James Trotman Multiculturalism, Roots and Realities*. Indiana UP P. 1X, ISBN, 2002.
- Verma, K.D. "The Metaphors of Untouchable and Coolie in Mulk Raj Anand's Novels, 'Untouchable' and 'Coolie' and his sense of Social Justice". *Asiatic*, Vol 2, 2008.
- Vidyarthi, L.P. *Conflict, Tension and Cultural Trends in India*. Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1969.
- Wagner, R. *The Inventions of Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Wallerstein, I. *The End of the World As We Know It*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- Ward, Gleen. *Postmodernism*. London: Teach Yourself Books, 1997.
- Waters, Malcolm. *Globalization*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Watson, C.W. *Multiculturalism*. New Delhi: Viva Books, 2002.
- . *Multiculturalism*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000.

- Webber, Jonathan. *The Existentialism of Jean Paul Satre*. London: Routledge, 2008.
- Weirzbicka, A. *Cross Cultural Pragmatics: The Semantics of Human Interaction*. New York: Mouston de Gruytes, 1991.
- Wiemann, Dirk. *Genres of Modernity: Contemporary Indian Novels in English*. Amsterdam; New York: Rodepi, 2008.
- Wilcox, Earl J. and David L Rankin. *Fundamentals of Fiction*. Maryland: University Press of America, 1993.
- Willet, Cynthia. (ed) *Theorizing Multiculturalism*. USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998.
- Williams, H.M. Indo Anglian Literature 1800-1970. (Orient Longman, 1976: 90).
- Wolf, Werner and Walter Bernhart. eds *Description in Literature and Other Media*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007.5.0
- Woodward, K. *Identity and Difference*. London: Sage Open University, 1997.
- Yaegar, Patricia. (ed) *The Geography of Identity*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996.

ELECTRONIC SOURCES:

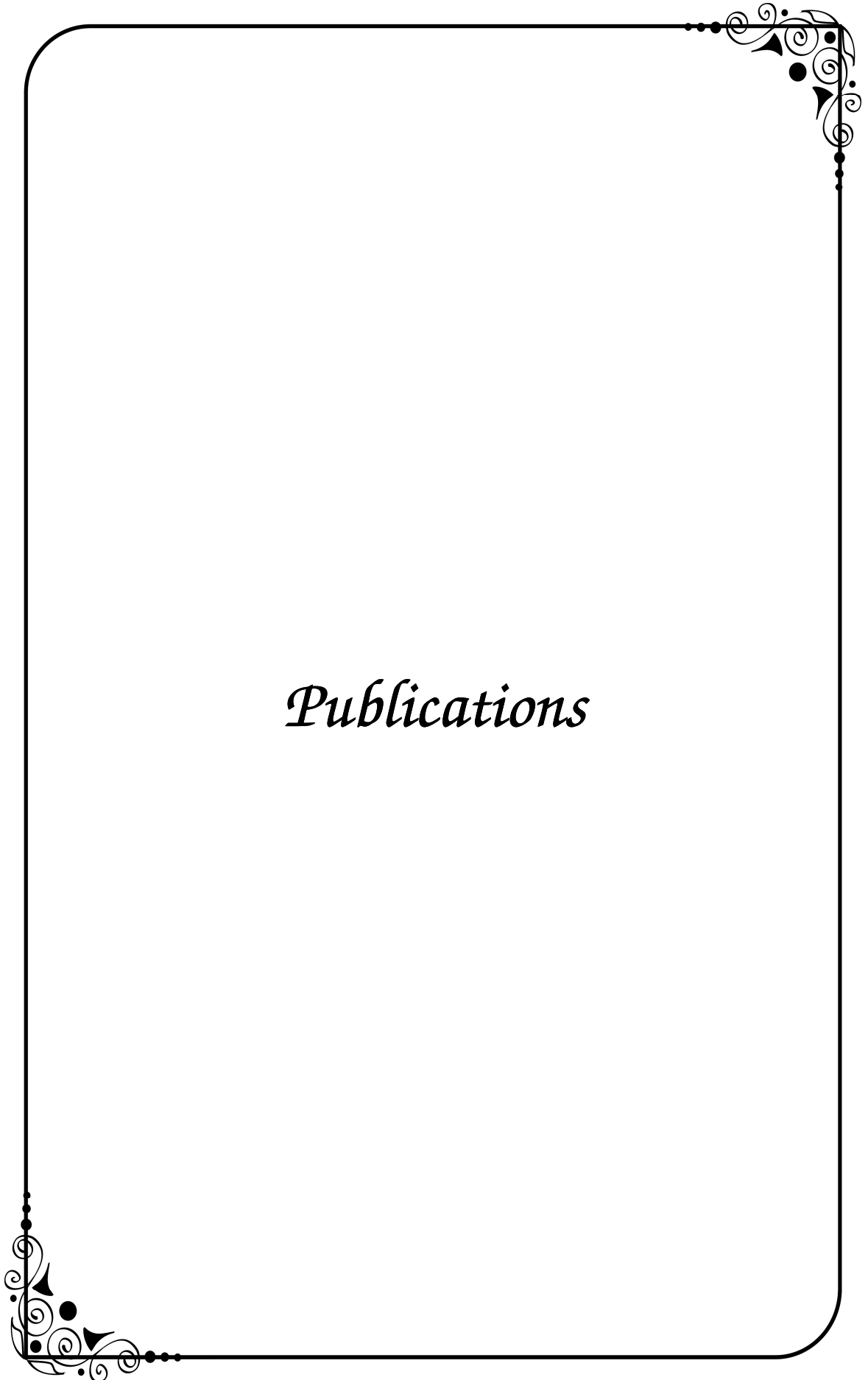
- Dictionary. Reference.com.<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/multiculturalism>. Retrieved 2010-12-10.
- Kapur, Akash. (2008) "Review". New York Times, November7. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/09/books/review/Kapur-t.html>.
- Krishna, Nakul. "Getting and Spending" Book review of The White Tiger 2 May 2008. 14 Nov. 2008. <http://www.newstatesman.com/books/2008/03/india-adiga-while-china>
- Marcus, Richard. "Book Review: The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga", 2 May 2008. 14 Nov. 2008. <http://blogcritics.org/archives/2008/05/02/120029.php>

Mishra, Ravi Kumar. *Representation of Modern Culture and Modern Trend in Chetan Bhagat Fiction*. Research Scholar- An International Refereed e-Journal of Literary Explorations. <http://researchscholar.co.in/downloads/46-dr.-Ravi-Kumar-Mishra.pdf>

Thomas, Lee. "The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga", 27 April 2008. 12 Nov. 2008. <<http://www.stgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/04/27/-RVNOVUMEP.DTL>>

Walters, Kerry. (2008). "Caught in the rooster coop". May 27. http://www.amazon.com/review/R1PV1V11CZXUE9/ref=cm_cr_pr_viewpnt#





Publications

Filial Bonds in Metropolitan Backgrounds: A Study of Bhisham Sahani's *The Boss Came to Dinner*

Abstract

Metropolitan life is fast becoming the current reality in India. Life in an Indian metropolis is hectic; and does not allow familial and cultural aspects to be wholesome and congenial. Relational bonds weaken, and an attitude of unconcern fills the minds of the residents in these huge urban spaces. The desire for success blinds an individual to his/her responsibilities. Bhisham Sahani's short story *The Boss came to Dinner* clearly reflects the changed familial conditions in postmodern India.

Keywords: Family, The Elderly Members, Filial Ingratitude.

Introduction

Relationships are taking a backseat in urban spaces in postmodern India. The elderly members in a family often feel helpless, involved and unwanted within the family set up.

The aim of the study is to examine the treatment given to the elderly members in a family and to determine the nature of filial bonds in postmodern India.

Hypothesis

It is suggested that perhaps the fast pace of life and the obsessive drive for success creates gaps in the attitudes of children towards their parents and other elderly dependents.

Review of Literature

A lot of sociological work has been conducted on this subject yet there is a noticeable gap. Literature is the mirror of life and so this paper proposes to touch the sensitive area of filial bonds and their deterioration in postmodern India.

Metropolitan life has more or less become a rich source for modern and postmodern Indian English writers who are interested in looking into the human condition, with a view to highlighting various aspects of Indian life and culture, which appear to have undergone a huge transformation.

Nothing misses the Argus-eyed Indian short story writers, who keenly focus their gaze on the travails of common humanity. The family system in India has witnessed a sea change and strong and secure bonds of kinship now appear to be things of the past.

Bhisham Sahani's short story *The Boss Came to Dinner* is a brilliant portrayal of the way in which life in metropolitan cities becomes so compelling and fast, that in order to keep pace with it, an individual often overrides the strongest of human bonds.

Anthropologists and sociologists have waxed eloquent on the secure foundations of the Indian family system and a large portion of ancient and modern literature has been devoted to this subject. The family is the first natural surroundings in which life begins, takes root and attains fruition. It is against the secure backdrop of the family that an individual seeks to evolve into his ultimate nature.

The one vital relationship which is so essential for all human beings is the parent-child relationship. The ideals associated with this relationship are many; and parents are naturally expected to live up to the ideals. The parent enjoys the enviable position of the provider and sustainer of the family, and children can always look up to the parent to provide the necessary degree of warmth and acceptance which is so vital for the child's proper growth and development.

Bhisham Sahani's short story *The Boss Came to Dinner* portrays the stark realities of filial bonds in the context of metropolitan life. The mother has always been eulogized in the highest words in almost every culture:

Vijayata Pareek
Research Scholar,
Deptt. of English,
University of Kota,
Kota, Rajasthan

Women are mothers and wives first. They are the custodians of family honour. They are the matri shakti, therefore they must be honoured and protected. (Desai and Thakkar, 184)

Bhisham Sahani's *The Boss Came to Dinner* is the story of Mr. Shamnath and his family who live a busy life in an Indian metropolis. Mr. Shamnath invites his boss home for dinner, and both he and his wife begin to excitedly plan the details of the arrangements they would make in order to ensure that his visit to their home is a huge success. The implicit idea in all this is to somehow please the boss to an extent where a promotion would be forthcoming. By about five o' clock in the evening, most of the arrangements had been made and the couple was all set to receive the boss and his wife. The Shamnath couple faces an unexpected problem, when they suddenly remember that Mr. Shamnath's old mother who lives with them would stand out like a sore thumb in the midst of the company. However, they quickly decide that she would have to be locked up in her room, so as not to embarrass the guests by her undignified presence. What is clearly discernible in the dialogue between Mr. Shamnath and his wife is that it is they themselves who will feel embarrassed to acknowledge the old mother because of her provincial background. The old and helpless mother is sternly warned not to fall asleep as she was likely to snore if she feels asleep, and that would cause unbearable humiliation to the Shamnath couple:

And mother, I will receive the guests in the drawing room; till then you stay in the verandah, you will quietly slip into the drawing room through the bathroom. (292-93)

For an instant mother looked at her son, then she said faintly:

"All right son". "One thing more mother. Do not go to sleep early, as you do. Your snores carry far". "I can't help it son", she said ashamed. "I have difficulty in breathing since my last illness". (292-93)

Shamnath is totally oblivious to the fact that his mother is old and infirm, and is in dire need of affection from him. He has one driving need; the desire to please the boss and to achieve the goal of bagging a promotion. As the story progresses, the reader realizes that Shamnath will bully and badger his mother into accepting all his unreasonable demands, and the helpless old mother has to give in to his demands at every step. Little does he realize the agitation and helplessness of his mother, on the contrary he himself remains anxious. Shamnath confides to his wife:

Shamnath turned to his wife and said in English, "Mother is a problem! There is no end to her oddities. If something goes wrong and the boss is offended, you know what will happen". (293)

In the Indian cultural ethos, the image of the mother stands out in full distinction. The land of one's birth is the motherland, and the rivers which make the flow of life possible are all regarded as mothers, yet Shamnath totally disregards the fact that his mother needs to be treated with due respect. However, his

guilt ridden mind recognizes the endless sacrifices his mother had made to make his education possible. The Indian mother is an eternal symbol of sacrifice and suffering. She takes on her children's weight of guilt and allows them to flow through life with ease and ability. Shamnath's control over his mother is so complete that he dictates to her the clothes that she should wear for the occasion. He even carelessly commands that she should wear bangles. The hapless mother anxiously replies:

I have no bangles, son, you know that. I had to sell all my jewellery for your education".

All right, all right! Why do you make a song about it mother?" he said. "Why carry on about it? Just say that you don't have any. Why bring in the question of my education? The jewellery was sold to good purpose wasn't it? I'm not a loafer am I? I'll pay you back double what you spent on me". (294)

There is considerable psychological distress in parents whose children do not accord them the love and respect due to them in their old age. Often the affected parent has to dwell in a position of logical reasoning in order to arrive at a positive decision. Such a parent often feels intimidated by the emotional disorder reflected in the behavior of the offspring. Mr. Shamnath is materialistic and success oriented, and his over-indulgent mother unconsciously fosters such behavior. It is easy to see how constantly the mother must have indulged her son's life:

"So you are going to get a lift in the office son." "Its not so easy mother. You don't understand. If only I could please the boss... there are others too, all wanting to get promoted. Its all a rat-race mother. But I'll have a better chance." "In that case, I'll make one for him, I'll...I'll somehow manage it son." (299)

In a land that reveres the old, the elderly parents are often left in the cold by their children and their families. It is not uncommon in the metropolises of India that uncaring family members take away the limited riches of the old parents and then proceed to treat them as unwanted burdens. However, this kind of abusive behavior is not confined to the metropolises alone, though the living conditions in the metropolises accentuate such behaviours. As Shaw opines:

The most critical test of this relationship comes when parents become old and disabled. As long as both parents are alive, the problem is not acute because they support one another. But it becomes acute when one parent passes away. (Shaw, 5)

In metropolitan cities, the shortage of space and the resultant lack of privacy is one of the primary reasons for callous behavior of children towards aged parents. Society is no longer parent oriented and the rising trend is that more and more elderly people prefer to move out of their homes to places that cater to their needs.

Her frail body looked even more small against Shamnath's heavy frame. Tears came to her eyes. Wiping them she said, "Son send me to Hardwar. I've been asking you for a long time."

P: ISSN NO.: 2394-0344

E: ISSN NO.: 2455-0817

Shamnath's face darkened. He let go of her. "What did you say mother?" Again the same thing?" He was getting angrier. "So you want to discredit me before others so that the son cannot give shelter even to his own mother?" (298)

Conclusion

Greed and the desire for self-advancement are inherent parts of an individual's psyche, the seeds of which can be detected in early childhood. Indulgent parents, blinded by affection for their children often overlook such tendencies in their children, catering enthusiastically to every whim. In the process, they unwittingly invite their own doom. As life becomes more and more complex in the huge metropolitan

Remarking

Vol-II * Issue-VII* December- 2015

cities, parents get edged out of the priorities of an individual. The short story *The Boss Came to Dinner* is a subtle though brilliant portrayal of the plight of the helpless and elderly parents.

References

1. Sahani, Bisham (2003), "The Boss Came to Dinner" *Indian Short Stories: 1900-2000* ed E.V. Ramakrishnan Sahitya Akademi New Delhi.
2. Desai, Neera and Usha Thakkar (2005), *Women in Indian Society*, National Book Trust of India, New Delhi Pg No 184.
3. Shah, A.M. (2003), ed *The Family in India: Critical Essays*, Orient Longman, New Delhi Pg No 5.

Narrative Style in Vasanthi's Short Story Murder

Abstract

Narratology is the science of narration. Postmodern Indian English short stories are vibrant and colourful and exhibit the art of the story teller. Each short story in the Indian literary tradition is finely crafted work of art, carefully ordered and richly detailed. Narration is a complex work of art and has a traditional base which follows certain norms. The narrator, the narratee and the narration correspond to the messenger, the receiver of the message and the message itself. The narrator/writer employs certain techniques in narrating his tale.

Keywords: Narration, Techniques, Styles, Tools.

Introduction

Stories are shared memories. They are spread across a variety of cultures, yet there is a common thread running through them all.

Aim

The aim of the study is to examine the tools which are employed by the writers in order to create a narratological structure for the rendition of the short story.

Hypothesis

It is suggested that perhaps stories, whether in the oral or the written medium, almost always follow a certain pattern or structure, and although structures may vary, the basic tools remain the same.

Review of Literature

A lot of research has been directed towards the study of short stories in Indian English, yet there is a noticeable gap. The missing piece is the study of the narratological tools employed by postmodern Indian English short story writers.

Murder is a short story written by Vasanti, a Southern Indian short story writer. The story is about *Thatha* meaning grandfather. Thatha heads a large family of sons, daughters, daughters-in-law and grand children. He exercises firm control over all the members of the family. He has a young granddaughter named Chellam, who wishes to break free from the feudalistic control of her grandfather. The myth of the family patriarch is maintained in the story, but the younger generation no longer wishes to feel fettered.

The title of the short story is very revealing and deeply symbolical. It is a story about the murder of an individual's freedom and the entire concept of freedom has been critically viewed in the short story.

Narratives are messages conveyed by a narrator to a narratee. Every culture has a rich store of narratives; and although the narratives themselves may or may not be original, the style of rendering them makes them novel and appealing.

A narrative is a representation of a possible world in a linguistic and/or visual medium, at whose centre there are one or several protagonists of an anthropomorphic nature who are existentially anchored in a temporal and spatial sense and who (mostly) perform goal-directed actions (action and plot structure). (6)

Helmut focuses on the mechanics of writing a short story, in which the short story writers use various narrative devices. Helmut distinguishes four narrative modes relating to the way a short story begins. They are report, speech, description and comment:

In our own age, speech stands high in the esteem of most readers. Description is thought boring except in small doses. Comment of a particular kind, namely moralistic generalizing, is almost taboo, even where embedded in speech; and even report is preferred in the dress of, or at least heavily interlarded with speech. (8)

These modes perform certain narrative functions and they are very relevant to modern and postmodern Indian English fiction.

Vijayata Pareek
Research Scholar,
Deptt. of English,
University of Kota,
Kota, Rajasthan

Often the action in a short story becomes brief and condensed since modern and postmodern Indian English fiction writers render the entire action through conversation, as a result of which *speech* becomes the predominant mode of narration.

Similarly, the mode of description is not confined to describing a situation by itself, it often conveys a sense of action. The short story *Murder* begins with a description of the old patriarch *Thatha* (grandfather). He rules the family with an iron hand.

Narratives follow certain accepted styles of narration, which in reality allow the reader to participate in the story telling, even though the reader is a silent spectator of the action in the short story. Stylization and Improvisation are tools which a story writer uses. Satisfying the curiosity of the reader is a case of stylization, but it restricts the imagination of the reader. On the other hand, the device of improvisation allows the reader's mind to imagine other possibilities within the story. However, when the story moves forward or concludes in a direction which the reader had not expected, it involves the device of Improvisation. Both these devices come into play within the short story *Murder*.

Indian English short stories involve other stylistic devices too:

Indian narrators by and large, with few exceptions, try to coax the reader to wind his way into the core of a text. A text may be a hard nut to crack like a coconut, but the interior may be soft and sweet. This is the *nalikerapakam* or the coconut model. (5)

Within the plot of the story, the reader can detect several layers, which mirror the layered reality of human life. The story ends with the death of *Somaiyya Thatha*, and there is a subtle hint that perhaps he was murdered by one of the members of his family, however it is merely a suggestion. Within the story of his death is the story of the death of another female character in the story *Kamalakka*. Deeply embedded in the story of her death is the story of the death of *Chellathayi*, yet another female character. The model of the story within the story is a popular feature in many Indian narratives, both ancient and modern.

Narrators may be homodiegetic (first person narration) or heterodiegetic (third person narration). *Murder* is an example of heterodiegetic narration.

Conclusion

It is thus right conclude that Indian English short stories in the modern and postmodern traditions follow various styles and employ several stylistic devices in order to capture the interest of the readers. These stylistic devices form the structure of the short story and reveal the narratological skill of the writers. Those devices help in creating a rich effect on the reader's mind.

References

1. Fludernik, Monika (2015), An Introduction to Narratology Routledge 2015, London
2. Helmut, Helmut, The Narrative Modes, D.S. Brewer 1982, Cambridge
3. Paniker, K. Ayyappa, Indian narratology, IGNC and Sterling Publishers 2005, New Delhi.



GOVT. VITTHALNATH SADASHIV PATHAK ACHARYA SANSKRIT COLLEGE, KOTA

Rawatbhata Road, Kota-324021 (Rajasthan)

NATIONAL SEMINAR

(Sponsored by UGC)

on

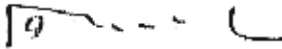
Communication purposes of English language teaching in Indian perspective

21-23 September-2012



Certified that Vijayta Pareek
from Maa Bharti P.G. College, Kota
participated in the above programme held at Govt. V.S.P.A. Sanskrit College, Kota
He / She also presented a paper / chaired a session on Communications Challenges Vis-a-Vis
Classroom Situations.




Dr. V. D. Joshi
Principal


(Dr.) Rashmi Agrawal
Convener



Prof. S.C. Rajora
Director Research

University of Kota

कोटा विश्वविद्यालय

MBS Road, Kota - 324 005
एम.बी.एस. रोड़, कोटा - 324 005
Phone : 0744-2471037

TO WHOM-SO-EVER-IT-MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that Mr./Ms. Vijayata Pareek

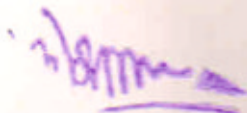
S/o/D/o Mr. Sh. Dinesh Pareek has completed his/her **Ph.D.** Course Work 2011-12 in **English** following the norms of UGC [UGC (Minimum Standard and Procedure for award of M.Phil./Ph.D.) Regulations 2009] conducted by University of Kota, Kota (Raj.) satisfactorily, the marks obtained are as under :

Roll No. : ENG-7

NAME OF PAPER	MAX. MARKS	MARKS OBTAINED
PAPER-I: Research Methodology & Computer Application	100	68
PAPER-II: Review of Literature & Research Technique	GRADE : <u>Good</u>	
RESULT :	Pass	

It is also certified that Mr./Ms. Vijayata Pareek was assigned the task of Paper II in Ph.D. programme, w.e.f 15.02.2011 under the supervision of Dr Anita Kothari

Date : 04/12/2013


DIRECTOR RESEARCH