CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

English studies all over the world, as with Indian writing in English, have undergone a seachange in the postcolonial era. Indian writing in English is flourishing more and more and is likely to do so in the future. Since all the once-colonized countries have more or less the same experience, suffering becomes their common building thread. They all suffered at the hands of the colonizers and that, cruelly. However, even after the colonizers have left, India continues to remain unliberated wherever illiteracy and superstitions are rampant; and although social evils like Sati have visibly been reduced, yet others remain keeping particular sections of society in a subaltern position. The scope of this thesis is to focus on the treatment of social evils casteism, gender biased patriarchal outlook, labour issues, child abuse and many other domestic, social, political and racial victimization in the postcolonial era in select works of Arundhati Roy, Bhabani Bhattacharya, David Davidar, Meena Alexander and Rohinton Mistry.

Like postmodern, the term postcolonial refers to that which comes after the colonial rule and a reaction against colonization. The history of the nineteenth century and a few decades of the early twentieth century can be conveniently summed up by the word, “Colonialism”. The decolonization which closely followed the Second World War is reflected in the rapid evolution of literature in the erstwhile colonies and the Third World as an expression of new local realities. As Sarla Palkar aptly observes in her Where Are We Going From Here?
The colonial discourse had cast English literature in the role of a Promethean hero who had undertaken the mission of spreading light and sweetness to all the dark corners of the earth, carrying thereby the message of (Western) civilization to the people still living in a state of degeneration or ignorance. The postcolonial discourse now regards English literature as a sort of hypocritical villain or as an agent of the Western imperialism who under the pretext of civilizing the colonized people suppressed, and to great extent, destroyed the native traditions and cultures. (160)

The word colonialism, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, comes from the Roman ‘Colonia’ which means ‘farm’ or ‘settlement’ and refers to Romans who settled in other lands but still retained their citizenship. So colonialism is the conquest and control of all other people’s land and goods which is a widespread feature in human history. As colonialism promoted capitalism, Marx emphasized that under capitalism money and commodities replace human relations and human beings. So colonialism exploits, dehumanizes, objectifies and degrades. Cesaire explains thus: “Colonization = thingification” in his Discourse on Colonialism. (21)

“Black Skin, White Masks,” by Fanon, defines colonized people as not simply those whose labour has been appropriated but those in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality” (quoted in Loomba 26). Loomba further observes in her book that “colonized intellectuals consistently raised the question of their cultures, both as the sites of colonial oppression and as vital tools for their own resistance” (20). She continues to comment on hegemony thus:
Hegemony is power achieved through a combination of coercion and consent. Playing upon Machiavelli’s suggestion that power can be achieved through both force and fraud, Gramsci argued that the ruling classes achieve domination not by force or coercion alone, but also by creating subjects who ‘willingly’ submit to being ruled. (30)

Colonialism is a politicized critical tool to legitimize exploitation over the inhabitants with the plea of being a civilizing mechanism. The exploiter exploits in the attire of the crusader. The devil appeared with the original terror hungering for the natural resources and became parasitic sucking the very life blood. The devil exploited the local inhabitants sometimes in the appearance of the civilizing guide and sometimes in the merciless exploiter. The discourse of resistance makes the inhabitants aware of the exploitation and becomes the final step that leads to postcolonialism.

The most discussed term ‘postcolonial’ generally refers to writing about nations, peoples and cultures who were colonized by European powers. Postcolonial theory is an attempt to uncover the colonial ideologies implicit in European texts about the ‘other’. It talks about strategies of resistance or a counter discourse in native texts against colonialism. These strategies are the representations of the native. Postcolonial theory looks at feminization, marginalization and dehumanization of the native, the psychological effects of colonialism on both the colonizer and the colonized.

Homi Bhaba defines postcolonialism as, “that form of social criticism that bears witness to those unequal and uneven processes of representation by which the historical experience of the once-colonized Third World comes to be framed in the West” (148).
Postcolonial theory may be said to have originated in the mid twentieth century
texts of Frantz Fanon, Aime Cesaire and Albert Memmi. Though studies of imperialism
have been undertaken much earlier, it is with Fanon that studies in the psychological
effects of colonialism really develop. It is with Edward Said’s phenomenally influential
Orientalism (1978) and Bill Ashcroft’s The Empire Writes Back (1989) that postcolonial
theory becomes an institutional ‘enterprize’. Today, the field is all encompassing—film,
culture studies, language, religion, educational systems and curricula, displacement, feminism,
nativism, environmentalism and more recently, globalization.

According to Parmod K. Nayar, the assumptions and general methods of
postcolonial reading can be summarized as follows: The term postcolonial specifically
refers to the decolonized states. Therefore, it suggests chronology. It also refers to a
specific reading or analytical practice. The link between representation, epistemology
and political practices became the subject of analysis in postcolonial studies. Ashcroft
and others characterize writing that emerge from the once colonized nations as postcolonial.
According to them, the silencing and marginalization of the postcolonial voice by the
imperial centre is one of the major characteristics of postcolonial writing. The abrogation
of the imperial centre within the text and the active appropriation of the language and
culture of the centre are also the other major characteristics of the postcolonial writing.
Postcolonial studies of 1980s and 90s questioned the nationalist resistance to colonialism.
The postcolonial arguments began to focus on how the nationalist project in colonial
times and the decolonized nation-state extended certain fundamental oppressive structure
in class, gender and (in India) caste. Under the rubric of postcolonial studies, an attempt
has been made to retrieve histories that have been silenced or erased by both colonial
and nationalistic powers. This is the subaltern studies project in India, which seeks to write the history of the subaltern as against the history of the upper classes or castes. Postcolonialism seeks to move beyond the universal into local and singular concerns. It emphasises on differences and particularities. Postcolonialism seeks to understand how oppression, resistance and adaptation have occurred during the colonial rule. Thus, it analyses specific strategies of power, domination, hegemony and oppression utilized by the colonizer in the colony. Postcolonialism seeks to understand how the colonized reacted to or resisted this structure of domination (165-168).

Some of the postcolonial thinkers are Frantz Fanon, Aime Cesaire, Albert Memmi, O. Mannoni, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Aijaz Ahmad and Homi Bhabha. According to Fanon,

“Colonialism drives the colonized to madness by rejecting any individual claims of the native. The native is annihilated, ‘objectified’ and is made into something less than human, a nothingness . . . the native’s psyche was repeatedly represented, savaged and ‘treated’ as inferior . . . the native is invariably mentioned in zoological terms—”the yellow man’s reptilian motion”, the stink of the native quarter, of foulness. . . the settler paints the native as a sort of quintessence of evil, insensible to ethics, a negation of values. (8)

This was also accompanied by the description of the native to a dehumanized object: the black man loses his identity. The universal category of “Man” now actually means “White man”. In fact, the settler “ends his work of breaking in the native when the latter admits loudly and intelligibly the supremacy of the white man’s values” (106).
Fanon suggests that the black man is the other for the white man. The white man is the master and represents an object that is to be feared and desired. This is the power structure of the discourse of colour: the whiteness is complete, blackness is forever incomplete.

According to Memmi, the colonialist stresses those things which keep him separate. The colonized is always degraded and, thus, the colonizer finds justification for rejecting his subjects. The colonized is always projected as lazy, one with no sense of economy, jealous, fanatical, a weakling who requires protection. He is always considered in a negative light. He is depersonalized. The living conditions imposed upon the colonized do not grant them liberty. The colonized is forced to accept being colonized. By being kept away from power, the colonized loses all capacity for control. He is no longer the subject of history, but only an object. He does not understand freedom any more.

There are only two options for the colonized: assimilation or petrifaction. Since assimilation is denied to him, he cannot plan his future, he must restrict himself to the present. He even loses his memory. The material traces of his past are slowly erased. He is forced to turn to the colonizer’s institutions for help. For instance, he is forced to celebrate the colonizer’s holidays and festivals: his own are erased from the calendar. His biggest asset, his mother tongue, now has no value. He must accept the language of the colonizer. He forsakes his own language, but is saved from illiteracy, paradoxically and tragically by adopting the colonizer’s tongue. Memmi argues that the only solution to the problem of the colonized is a complete end to colonization—not a revolt but a revolution. Cesaire claims that colonialism not only exploits but dehumanizes and objectifies the colonized subject. He explains this by a stark “equation: Colonisation = ‘thingification’” (21).
One of the most distinguished thinkers of the twenty first century, Gayatri Spivak has written on democracy, development and gender, literary and cultural studies. According to her, precolonial past cannot be recovered, because all past has been worked over and irremediably changed by colonialism. It is also, therefore, impossible to recover the ‘authentic’ voice of the subaltern. Spivak’s well known and controversial argument is that the subaltern cannot speak for him/herself because the very structure of colonialism prevents the speaking. For the colonized woman, this is even more difficult because the double bind of colonialism and patriarch represses her completely, and she simply cannot represent herself. The native woman is doubly marginalized by virtue of her relative economic oppression and gender subordination. Spivak includes the “home worker” in her more recent studies of the gendered subaltern. The international division of labour cannot be ignored for her.

Postcolonialism is an intellectual direction that has existed since around the middle of the 20th century. It developed from and mainly refers to the time after colonialism. The postcolonial direction was created as colonial countries became independent. Aspects of postcolonialism can be found in literature, politics, approach to culture and identity of both the countries that were colonized and the former colonial powers. However, postcolonialism can take the colonial time as well as the time after colonialism into consideration.

In the process of the development of postcolonialism, particular importance must be given to the term ‘decolonisation’. It means an intellectual process that persistently transfers the independence of former-colonial countries into people’s minds. The basic
idea of this process is the deconstruction of old-fashioned perceptions and attitudes of power and oppression that were adopted during the time of colonialism.

A major aspect of Postcolonialism is the rather violent like unbuffered contact or clash of cultures as an inevitable result of former colonial-times; the relationship of the colonial power to the (formerly) colonized country, its population and culture and vice versa seems extremely ambiguous and contradictory. This contradiction of two clashing cultures and the wide scale of problems resulting from it must be regarded as a major theme in postcolonialism: For centuries the colonial suppressor often had been forcing his civilized values on the natives. But when the native population finally gained independence, the colonial relicts were still omnipresent, deeply integrated in the natives’ mind and were supposed to be removed. So decolourisation is a process of change, destruction and, primarily an attempt to regain the lost power.

Postcolonialism also deals with conflicts of identity and cultural belonging. When colonial powers colonized the foreign states, it destroyed native tradition and culture; furthermore, they continuously replaced them with their own tradition and culture. This often led to conflicts when countries became independent and suddenly faced the challenge of developing a new nationwide identity and self-confidence. Since the natives had lived under the power of colonial rulers, they had adopted their western tradition and culture, which they found difficult to get rid of. So decolonization is a difficult process, but it can be done by the power of language, even more than by the use of military violence. Language is the intellectual means by which postcolonial communication and reflection takes place. This is important as most colonial powers try to integrate their language, the major aspect of their civilized culture in foreign societies. For instance, a lot of Indian books that can
be attached to the era of postcolonialism, are written in English. This cross-border exchange of thoughts from both parties of the postcolonial conflict is supported by the use of a shared language. It would be appropriate to say the postcolonialism is a detailed discussion about colonial thinking at the end of the colonial era. Its consequences can be seen in areas that are social, cultural and economical. In such a context, the experiences of suppression, resistance, gender bias and migration can be examined.

The ultimate goal of postcolonialism is combating the residual effects of colonialism on cultures. It is not simply concerned with salvaging past worlds, but learning how the world can move beyond this period together, towards a place of mutual respect. Postcolonial thinkers recognize that many of the assumptions which underlie the ‘logic’ of colonialism are still active forces today. Exposing and deconstructing the racist, imperialist nature of these assumptions will remove their power of persuasion and coercion. Recognizing that they are not simply airy substances but have widespread material consequences for the nature and scale of global inequality.

The literature of the erstwhile colonized countries came to be known as ‘Third World Literature’. Later it was termed as ‘Commonwealth Literature’. Now it is known in a more refined form, ‘Postcolonial Literature’ or ‘Postcolonial Studies’. Though the sun of colonialism has set, it has heated the air. As a result, postcolonialism talks about the issues related to the colonized societies, national identity, reclamation and rearticulation of the cultural identities by the colonized writers, exploitation of the colonized knowledge to the maximum for the interest of the colonizer. Postcolonialism provides a platform for the subaltern to make their voices heard. It also goes in hand with Gender studies, Transgender studies, Cultural studies and Gay, Lesbian and Bi-sexual studies.
“Colonialism is dead but out of its ashes the ghost has appeared and now hovers round the edifice of postcolonialism,” (56) states Sudhir K. Arora in his “Postcolonialism, Issues and Applications.” Similarly, G. Rai defines postcolonialism as “an enterprise which seeks emancipation from all types of subjugation defined in terms of gender, race and class. It does not introduce a new world which is free from the ills of colonialism; it rather suggests both continuity and change” (1-2).

Historically, ‘postcolonialism’ refers to that juncture where the colonizers de-colonized the colonized and left the colonized inhabitants free to rule and determine for themselves in every field—social, political, cultural and religious. In a narrow sense postcolonialism becomes a tool of cultural politics and literature in the hands of the authors and politicians who belong to the countries that were previously in the hold of colonizers. Though colonialism is over, it has its after effects in postcolonial countries notwithstanding their vigorous political sovereignty.

Mishra and Hodges define Postcolonialism as “an always present tendency in any literature of subjugation marked by a systematic process of cultural domination through the imposition of imperial structures of power” (52). Hence, postcolonialism studies the after effects of response and resistance to the legacy of colonialism in the field of philosophy and literature and presents the identity of the colonized and its culture representing the unrepresented and voicing the unvoiced or voiceless which was not there in colonialism.

Postcolonial writings are mainly expositions of marginalization, gender issues, casteism, labour issues and child abuse. The notion of women empowerment is a key and constitutes part of the field of postcolonialism. At the level of theory, the postcolonial feminist critics have raised a number of conceptual, methodological and political problems
involved in the study of representations of gender. Empowering the women of the Third World postcolonial societies involves the necessity of decolonizing the mind at many levels. K.H. Peterson and Anna Ruth Ford have used the phrase ‘double colonization’ to refer to the ways in which women have simultaneously experienced the oppression of colonialism and patriarchy. Women’s position is specific in history and culture and the gender bias existing in both the indigenous and the colonial Western culture often simultaneously oppress women during colonialism and after.

From the beginning of the colonial period till its end and beyond, female bodies symbolize the conquered land. Colonialism eroded many matrilineal or woman friendly cultures and practices or intensified women’s subordination in colonized lands. As village agriculture declined, and male labour migrated to urban centres, women became increasingly dependent economically upon men’s incomes. Colonial law restructured customs by taking the texts and practices of the elites as the basis on which changes should be made. For example, in India, the colonial administration consulted only Pandits (Hindu Priests) resident at the courts in order to decide the status of widow immolation.

In this process, a scriptural sanction and a religious tradition were constructed for a practice which had been uneven. Pandits became the spokespersons for a vast and heterogeneous population. Thus, the authority and dominance of the upper classes was legitimized by colonial intervention.

Colonialism intensified patriarchy, and so native men became more tyrannical at home. They seized upon the home and the woman as emblems of their culture and nationality. The example of widow immolation will again serve to illustrate this idea. Following the 1813 legislation banning of widow immolation, most commentators agree that there was
a sharp increase in the number of ‘satis’. If the defence of sati is a form of ‘native resistance’, one must recognize that the native in question are men and that the form of this ‘resistance’ is deeply oppressive of women. Thus, colonialism emphasized religion and custom as the basis for personal law in colonized countries. Although men on both sides of the colonial divide engage in bitter strife, they also often collaborated when it came to the domination of women.

In an editorial comment in *The Storm Bell of 1898*, Josephine Butler commented that Indian women were “Indeed ... helpless, voiceless, hopeless. Their helplessness appeals to the heart, in somewhat the same way in which the helplessness and suffering of a dumb animal does, under the knife of a vivisect or ... They have not even the smallest power of resistance” (Butler 144). Caste, gender and sexuality are not just additive to one another in the colonial arena; they work together and develop in each others crucible. Colonized women were not simply objectified but they were labour (sexual as well as economical) fed in the colonial machine. Such exploitation is both a colonial legacy and the outcome of specific ‘postcolonial’ developments.

The experiences of colonization and the challenge a postcolonial world have produced an explosion of new writings in English. Such writers use the term ‘postcolonial’ to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day, because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process that begins with the establishment of the colonies. The experience of the colonized, for long occupying a marginalized position, comes to occupy a central position from which all experience is viewed as uncentred, pluralistic and multifarious.
Literature cannot remain unaffected by the society and politics because political awareness forms an integral part of the artists’ consciousness as a human being. Hence, socio-political issues are presented in art through the medium of living men and women writers like David Davidar, Arundhati Roy, Meena Alexander, Robinton Mistry and Bhabani Bhattacharya who in turn portray such living men and women characters in their novels.

David Davidar was born in Kerala into a military family, in 1959. He is a graduate of Madras University. In his mid-twenties, he moved to Bombay to pursue journalism before changing over to publishing. He completed a course in publishing at Radcliffe Harvard.

David is best known as head of Penguin India who turned around its publishing programme from a mere six titles in 1987 to 157 titles annually. In 2004, he relocated to Penguin Canada and in 2010, Davidar returned to India.

*The House of Blue Mangoes* is Davidar’s debut novel, a voluminous work chronicling multiple generations set in deep southern India. The novel has been translated into sixteen languages and was a New York Times Notable Book and a Book Sense Pick. His second novel, *The Solitude of Emperors*, was published in 2007 and was a finalist for the Commonwealth Writer’s prize.

The first time David Davidar tried to write a novel, he demonstrated the shrewd judgement he would later exercise as the creator of the Penguin India imprint. He was in his twenties, experiencing angst in the big city. Davidar wisely refrained from ever publishing the book, sparing himself the kind of embarrassment that haunts all writers who went with the first draft instead of dumping it in the dustbin. Davidar observes, “Once I’d
written my coming of age novel, I no longer had any desire to write a book. When I was in my early thirties, I started writing again, I think you have to be a certain age; you can only write certain books at certain times. (*The Hindu, Magazine*, Sunday, January 13, 2002, p. 1)

Chevathar village, an idyllic setting on the Coramandel Coast, is where the history of modern India ebbs and flows in *The House of Blue Mangoes*. The novel begins in the last year of the nineteenth century, with Solomon Dorai, the headman, trying to hold together the fraying ends of village life at a time of social and political unrest.

However, there is no such thing as a blue mango, no Chevalthar Neelams ripen on the trees. A sprawling family settlement called Doraipuram, founded as India fought its way to Independence never existed. It is a search in vain for members of the Andavar, Vedhar and Marudhar castes. Aaron Dorai was not convicted of the murder of Robert William D’Escourt Ashe. Nowhere in South India does the Chevathar River flow into the Indian Ocean, and the districts of Pulimed and Kilanad do not exist anywhere except on paper. It is like saying that Malgudi is unreal, that Ayemenem never existed, that Macondo was never an actual dot on the map. With *The House of Blue Mangoes*, Davidar has done what few authors and fewer debut novelists can hope to–has created a world entire, a fictional universe both compelling and complete.

From 1899 through to 1947, the novel reflects history the way it happened to ordinary people. For Solomon Dorai, the towering headman of Chevathar, the weight of change threatens the age-old balance of the caste system. His strengths will protect him, but will also carry the seeds of his doom along with them as Chevathar moves inexorably into a bloody dance of violence. His younger son Aaron embraces the freedom movement–
the ‘big idea’ of the age. For the eldest, Daniel, successful inventor of Dr. Dorai’s Moon White Thylam, Gandhi and the salt marches are off to a side, as he attempts to put his own big idea, the creation of a family settlement, into a place.

For Daniel’s son Kannan, history will sandbag him out of a pleasantly drifting existence as he grapples with the question of race and confronts his own colonization. For the women in the novel, history is the backdrop against which their lives will be played out; for the Englishmen, history will either close a nostalgic chapter or bring to a welcome and the torment of being unwanted guests in a far country.

This is an epic of the personal, a celebration of the ordinary, and an excavation of the suppressed histories of the past. The twists and turns the freedom movement took in the south were as different from its course in the North as the course of Davidar’s fictional Chevathar is from the Jamuna. Davidar makes everyone a silent witness to this aspect of the past in what is almost a counterpoint to Paul Scott’s Raj Quartet. The novel covers the period 1899-1947, a momentous period that witnessed the fall of the British Raj, the turmoil of caste wars, the rise of Gandhi, and of Independence.

That the articulation of the silenced and the devoiced constitutes the core of the whole narrative in Arundhati Roy’s novel, The God of Small Things, is made clear right at the outset by the title of the novel itself which keeps resurfacing throughout the text. Arundhati Roy was born in 1959 in Shillong, India. She studied architecture in Delhi, where she now lives, and has worked as a film designer, actor, and screenplay writer in India. Roy was given the 1997 Booker Prize for her only novel, The God of Small Things, which was published in 1998 by Harper Perennial and has been translated into dozens of languages world wide. She has also written two non-fiction books The Cost
of Living and Power Politics. In April 2003, South End Press released Roy’s non-fiction book War Talk which includes her essay “Come September”, a critical examination of the effects of U.S. led corporate globalization, the “War on terrorism” and the history of U.S. intervention in Chile, in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and in Iraq.

Roy is featured in a new BBC television documentary, “Dam / age”, which chronicles her work in support of the struggle against big dams in India and the contempt on court case that led to a prolonged legal case against her and eventually a one-day jail sentence in spring 2002.

In her debut novel, the laws of India’s caste system are broken by the characters Ammu and Velutha, an Untouchable or a Paravan. Velutha works at the Paradise Pickles and Preserves Factory owned by Ammu’s family. Yet, because he is an untouchable, the other workers resent him and he is paid less money for his work. Velutha’s presence is unsettling to many who believe he acts above his station. When Velutha has an affair with Ammu, he breaks an ancient taboo and incurs the wrath of Ammu’s family and the Kerala police. He breaks the rigid social rules and is punished. Roy describes the policemen’s violent actions as being done out of fear, “....Civilization’s fear of nature, men’s fear of women, power’s fear of powerlessness” (308). The division between the Touchable and Untouchables is so ingrained in Kerala society that Velutha is seen as a non human.

In a way, the bulk of postcolonial New English literature has been generally preoccupied since the last few decades with the marginalized and the underdog. In India the focus naturally falls on women and backward classes who represent the case of the underdog in this still largely tradition-abiding society, among whom, the ‘untouchable’ optimizes the worst form of marginalization.
Thus, Roy tries to sensitize this society to the cruelty of some of its traditions and dehumanizing taboos. She shows how women and untouchables are treated as impersonal and subjugated objects in this social structure; how things are decided for both by the patriarchal ideology of an ancient culture which also cultivates the pervasive snobbery and violence of the ‘Touchables’ towards the ‘Untouchables’.

Meena Alexander is one of the recent South Asian American immigrant writers. In the words of Ketu H. Katrak, she is “a poet and one of the finest thickness of Asian American aesthetic” (206).

She has lived in many countries like India, Sudan, England, France and the United States. She has also visited many more countries in the course of her professional work. She has, therefore, crossed many borders, both geographical and ideological. Wherever she went, she witnessed violence in different forms and degrees of intensity; she also read about violent incidents, both natural and man-made. She writes about personal, domestic, national and international violent events in her poems, fiction, non-fiction and memoirs. It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that almost all events of violence in the world, particularly those which are man-made, in the last fifty years find a place in her work; sometimes the same event appears several times. Alexander’s work, taken as a whole, seems to be a record of and at the same time a commentary on man’s inhumanity to man (or woman).

In her childhood, she had heard of young unwed mothers in her native state of Kerala jumping into wells to avoid social scandal and to protect the so called family honour. She writes in her memoir, *Faultlines*, “the image of women jumping into wells
was constantly with me during my childhood” (106). This image continues to haunt her. Such deaths are euphemistically called dowry deaths.

In Sudan, where she had her school and college education, a civil war raged for several years. This was another violent image etched on her mind at an impressionable age. In Hyderabad, where she taught for a few years, three upsetting incidents occurred. The first was the gang rape of a woman by the police in the police station. This triggered violent demonstrations and imposition of curfew in the city for a few days to quell the riot and restore order. This event is described at length in Alexander’s first novel, Nampally Road. Rameeza’s story spread through Hyderabad like smoke from the burning police station. A young woman had come in from the mountains with her husband. They had gone to see the celebrated Isakkatha at Sagar Talkies. It was late at night. Walking back to the home of relatives, along the deserted road in Gowligude, they fell prey to a horde of drunken policemen. Rameeza was gang raped. Her husband had his brains beaten out. His body was recovered from a well behind the police station. Swollen, eyes puffed out, it was identified by his brother, a lorry driver in Hyderabad.

The novel is a portrait of India after twenty-five years of Independence. The incidents narrated happen in a state which is definitely not a backward state. Meena concentrates on Hyderabad and in particular, a road, called Nampally Road. The double voices are viewed by Ramu and Mira, colleagues in a local college, Sona Nivas.

The novelist is extremely critical when she sees institutions veering away from these ideals. She has very clearly shown the deterioration in the personal and political structure and the steady ignorance of the individual and his requirements. She depicts the political life in the country from the immediate post independence era, when political
titans were at the helm of affairs, to the present scenario, when Lilliputians have come to the fore, using power for their personal, vested interests.

Postcolonial Parsi writing in English is ethnocentric, culture-specific and community oriented. The Parsis are the single largest group of minority discourse practitioners among Indian English writers. It depicts all the concerns of the modern day Parsi who experiences the anxieties, feelings of insecurity and alienation, characteristic of minority communities. Rohinton Mistry, the postcolonial Parsi writer is sensitive to his community’s hopes and fears, aspirations and frustrations, struggles for survival and identity crisis. Declining population, late marriages, low birth rate, high rate of divorce, attitudes to the girl child, craze for urbanization, alienation etc. are features referred to as ‘ethnic atrophy syndrome’ and find expression in the post independence Parsi writing in English, especially in Mistry’s fictions.

Mistry was born in Bombay in 1952 and migrated to Canada in 1975. He is a fabulous story teller offering readers interesting accounts of Parsi culture against the backdrop of Bombay, a city of India in microcosm. He was awarded Governor General’s Award for his fiction *Such a Long Journey*. He is often compared to Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Balzac.

The Arab conquest of Iran in eighth century AD forced Parsees to flee from their place. They arrived at Sanjan (Gujarat) and appealed for refuge to King Jadhav Rana. The conditions laid down by the King, as a precaution against any future attempt by the refugees at proselytizing, forced them to adopt the Gujarati language, their women to wear sari and their men to surrender their weapons. They were also ordered to venerate the cow and strictly forbidden to proselytize. These conditions and restrictions created
feelings of alienation in the Parsis. Having already lost their homeland, they were forced to live a rather secluded life in India.

Eviction from Iran resulted in their loss of home and that led to face disgrace during Indira Gandhi’s Internal Emergency. The sense of betrayal at being marginalized despite their valuable contribution to nation building is brought out in Mistry’s *Such a Long Journey*. Their migration to India, a violent transplantation in an alien soil, aggravated their sense of alienation, insecurity and identity crisis.

Mistry’s *A Fine Balance* and *Such a Long Journey* are the two novels taken for study as Postcolonial writing. *A Fine Balance* was published in April 1997. It is set in the mid 70s in India. In ’75, Indira Gandhi declared a state of Emergency and suspended civil liberties. This forms the backdrop of the novel.

The novel is the story of how four characters – Dina Dalal, Om, Ishvar and Maneck Kohlah come together to live in the madness of Bombay. Their narrative describes their backgrounds with their loads of woes and miseries. Here, Mistry is able to present the tragic beauty of the city of Bombay and venture out into the rural horrors of India’s oppressive caste system.

The book exposes the changes in Indian society from independence in 1947 to the Emergency called by Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Mistry is generally critical of Gandhi in the book. Interestingly however, Gandhi is never referred to by name by any of the characters, and is instead called simply “the Prime Minister”. The characters, from diverse backgrounds, are all brought together by economic forces changing India.
Ishvar and Omprakash’s family are part of the Chamaar caste, who traditionally cured leather and were considered untouchable. In an attempt to break away from the restrictive caste system, Ishvar’s father apprentices his sons to a tailor, and they become tailors. As a result of their skills passed on to Ishvar’s brother’s son, they move to Mumbai to get work, by then unavailable in the town near their village because a pre-made clothing shop had opened.

Maneck, from a small mountain village in northern India, moves to the city to acquire a college diploma “as a back up” in case his father’s business is no longer able to compete after the building of a highway near their village. Dina, from a traditionally wealthy family, maintains tenuous independence from her brother by living in the flat of her deceased husband. Dina distances herself from the political ferment of the period. But in the end it does affect all of them drastically.

All the four, displaced from their original place, reveal their past. Despite struggles and inconveniences, they manage to maintain a fine balance but for the political interruption in the form of Internal Emergency. Emergency brings down their lives; tailors become beggars, Maneck returns to his place only to witness communal violence and saddened by a newspaper article stating three girls hang themselves because their parents could not afford dowries for them to get married, and they do not want to shame their family by being unmarried their whole lives. To add fuel to the fire, the only son of the family is found dead by the railroad tracks. Maneck commits suicide by letting him be run over by a train. Dina Dalal, towards the end, is forced once again to live with her brother Nusswan, to her utter dismay and embarrassment.
The heart of the novel *Such a Long Journey* is Mistry’s recreation of the life and times of Gustad Noble, an aging Parsi. Gustad, his wife Dilnavaz, their two sons Sohrab and Darins and daughter Roshan live in the Parsi residential colony of Khodadad Building in Bombay. Guastad’s uncle is an alcoholic and he squanders the wealth of his father, who is Gustad’s grandfather. Gustad is a teller in a bank. As an ordinary man, he has to face many trials in life. But he has his own dreams about the future. He also has plans for his eldest son, Sohrab. But one by one the aspirations crumble down like a pack of cards. The family gets more and more involved in suffering, as Darin, the second son, falls in love with Mr. Rabadi’s daughter and Roshan keeps ill health.

Fortunately, Gustad has some good and apprehensive friends like Major Jimmy Bilinoria and Dishawji, the latter being his colleague. All on a sudden, Jimmy disappears and no one knows his whereabouts. After sometime, Gustad gets a letter as well as a parcel from Jimmy. On opening the parcel, Gustad is astonished to find ten lakh rupees which has to be deposited in the bank in the name of a non-existent woman, Mira Obili. After sometime, Jimmy passes away and soon after, the other friend Dishwaji also dies. As years roll by, Gustad has to modify his dreams and he learns to live with great endurance. He almost becomes a stoic not to be crushed by the forces of destiny. This is the long journey of Gustad who seeks higher and nobler values in life which is the absolute essential of life.

“Refusing to have any truck with the followers of ‘art for art’s sake’, Bhabani Bhattacharya posited his faith in the Arnoldian dictum of literature as ‘a criticism of life’ and has constantly been striving to emphasize the social purpose of fiction which acts as a vehicle of compassion” (209), posits G.S. Balarama Gupta. Bhattacharya focuses his
attention on the major historical crisis shaking and shaping the destiny of nation, and transmutes them into vivid throbbing fictional patterns designed to express his conviction in man’s innate goodness in spite of trials and suffering.

Bhabani was born on 10th November, 1906, in Bhagalpur, Bihar. At an early age of twelve, he wrote his first article in a Bengali Magazine, ‘MOUCHAK’. He is an outstanding Indian writer in English of the present times. His books have appeared in twenty-six languages, sixteen of which are European. He also has won Sahitya Akademi Award in 1967 for *Shadow from Ladakh*.

All his writings have a social purpose because his outlook is always constructive and very much purposeful. He has written five novels: *He Who Rides a Tiger, So Many Hungers, Music for Mohini, A Goddess Named Gold* and *Shadow from Ladakh*.

In *He Who Rides a Tiger*, Bhabani attacks the Indian caste system in which an untouchable masquerades successfully as a Brahmin priest. This novel was written around 1954, the time when India was making sincere attempts at creating a new social order and came out with a new outlook on life. The novel is based on an ancient saying, “He who rides a tiger cannot dismount.”

Kalo, a humble rural blacksmith, takes his revenge on a rigid caste-ridden society and makes a living for himself and his daughter by faking a miracle that begins as a fraud and ends as a legend when the fraud is detected, as other low caste people him as their brother for making the outraged panic.

*So Many Hungers* was published a couple of month after India’s independence. Hunger for food and freedom are the twin themes of the novel. The story is woven
around the happenings in the lives of Rahoul and Kajoli and their families: The bridge between the two families—Rahoul’s in Calcutta city and Kajoli’s in the Baruni Village is Devesh Basu, addressed with reverence as ‘Devata’, the grandfather of Rahoul and also the godfather of Kajoli.

The novel begins with a radio announcement of the outbreak of war. The younger son of Samarendra, Kunal, joins the Army. The elder one, Rahoul, continues to be influenced by his grandfather, participates in the national movement and is eventually arrested. Kajol’s father, elder brother and Devata are also imprisoned. Rendered homeless and reduced to unspeakable poverty, they migrate to Calcutta. Along their way, they experience untold miseries and in Calcutta their fate is no better. Kajoli barely escapes becoming a prostitute and her mother’s attempt at suicide is providentially averted. The novel ends on a happy note that political freedom is within reach, which in all possibility implies better days for Kajoli and millions of others like her.

The central theme of *Music for Mohini* is not only a clash of tradition and modernity but also of the urban and rural cultures, the superstitions beliefs of the rural folk as against the values of modernism in the city dwellers. The novel talks of a modern city girl who is forced by means of an arranged marriage into a repressive, traditional way of life. The focus is on two major women characters, Mohini and Rooplekha. Mohini is city-bred and village-wed whereas Rooplekha is village-bred and city-wed. However, both feel uprooted after their marriage.

Mohini is brought up in an urban atmosphere by her professor father. He likes to mould his daughter in a modern way. Dowry and horoscope play a major role in Mohini’s arranged marriage. It all appears commercialized to her. Her marriage to Jayadev brings
a dramatic transformation. She is caught between the traditionalism of her mother-in-law and the idealism of her husband. Slowly she adapts herself to the new environment. Finally, there is harmony in the music of Mohini’s life.

Having been introduced to all the above mentioned five writers and their works, the meaning of Postcolonialism can be extended to include subaltern concerns, the clash of unequal cultures and the control of one group, whether of gender, race, class or caste, over the other. These writers have attempted to recover indigenous identities from its domination by colonial, cultural and economic factors. So Postcolonialism becomes an effort to rewrite a cultural history from the point of the marginalized so that the subaltern will speak and be heard and that their stories will be well documented. Thus, colonialism gets subsumed into Postcolonialism.

All the above mentioned novels reflect a total view of socio-cultural implications of contemporary society. All the stories are the bare realities of Postcolonial India. In the following chapters, a discussion on caste violence, gender violence and children facing violence, based on these writings, would help any individual or a group who work for social change to make the system more just, humane and sensitive.

Chapter II makes an intensive study of victimization and victimizers in situations arising from caste issues. All the authors under study introduce characters that reflect on the sad effects of caste discrimination, a social evil that continues to the present day. Will man ever learn to look beyond colour and man-made caste is the question revised in this chapter.
Chapter III focuses on gender issues. In fact, all over the world, women are marginalized. The Dalit woman is twice marginalized because of her caste, which also shows how the two issues are often intertwined and need to be addressed together.

Chapter IV deals with other forms of victims, and those considered as subalterns in Indian society such as children, police atrocities, the Anglo-Indian phenomena and labour issues.

Chapter V gives a detailed account of the findings and possible solutions for such social evils.