CONCLUSION

The study of human ‘subjectivity’ in relation to history aims at invoking some kind of liberatory impulses and gestures, by interrogating and critiquing the oppressive and hegemonic discourses inscribed in the fictional world of Kiran Nagarkar. The exploited and marginalized subjectivities, inhabiting the narrative spaces of the studied novels, exhibit bitter experiences emanating from the dominating and exclusionary structures of caste, class, gender, religion, power, language and location etc. These alienating and debilitating socio-economic structures—lived as brute facts—sustained and supported by the institutions and agencies, brutalize and mutilate the agential capacities of Kiran Nagarkar’s fictional characters. The institutional structures shape the limit of human subjectivities, giving a particular meaning, value, identity and position to them. However, if it is true to say that human beings beliefs, values, motives and desires are formed as a result of their inevitable subjections and subjectifications of various social institutional structures and material conditions, it is equally true to uphold that it is human beings only who engage in fight against the perpetrators to accept alternative identities. This argument stands vindicated from the reading of the writer’s novels.

With regard to the issue of representation of subjectivities, in Nagarkar’s chosen texts, there is no homogeneity discovered; only overlapping. The writer foregrounds a variety of characters as thinking human being of many dimensions anchored in their specificities of history are both at once determining and determined, product and viewer, spectacle and spectators, hailed and hailing at once. The novels read, as it should be obvious by now, have offered a spectrum of possibilities ranging from total subjugation to extreme self-assertions. A constant dialectic is discerned between the characters’ subjectivities and their situations in the society. In the texts dealt with, characters are like living human beings situated in their historic-cultural milieu, exhibiting differences across and along the co-ordinates of class, caste, gender, religion, language, locale, power, and so on.
The writer’s first landmark novel, *Seven Sixes Are Forty Three* (1974), is a series of disjointed narratives, and loosely connected spectacles of human futility, hopeless and helplessness, suffering and pain etc. gripping the lives of people belonging to the lowest strata of their society. Kushank Purandre, a hero and anti-hero simultaneously and also a connector to the episodes, is a victim of his socio-political system and crushing realities. In addition to Kushank, other noticeable characters such as Pratibha, Ajit, Kathavte, Rekha and unnamed dwellers of the Bhangi colony, share a world of scarcity, hardship and sorrow. Their mental lives and experiences are inseparable from their material – economic conditions of deprivation and marginalization. These characters’ subjectivities flow and follow from their material circumstances of deprivation and crunch. Their life prospects are truncated by abject poverty. Mental life ..... origins (Steedman in Ruth Robbins 2005: 140)

Crazed with their subject – position of husband and father. Ajit and Kathavte spare no chance in subjecting their wife (Pratibha) and daughter (Rekha) to physical violence respectively. Their female bodies as sites of subjectivity are subjected to ruthless violence. Pratibha, on account of her dependence on Ajit for shelter and food, cannot cross the boundary of domesticity to reconnect with the outerworld in altered terms and finally to teach a lesson to her husband Ajit, she resorts to an ultimate step of committing suicide. The Dalits (the lowest caste people) immersed in the situation of poverty and starvation, are condemned to live in a stigmatized space enclosure called the “Bhangi Colony”. Finally, Kushank, the spectator and sufferer – present almost in all the episodes of the novel, gets killed by police in firing inside a police station on account of his mistaken religious identity. (The police, presumes Kushank to be a Muslim, though he is not and kills him on account of the charge of desacrlizing the Hindu God, Ganesh).

*Ravan and Eddie* (1995), a narrative of interreligious dialectic involving, the two religious communities – the Hindu and the Catholic Christian critiques communal frenzy resorted to frequently. The subjectivity and identity of the two young male protagonists – Ravan (Hindu) and Eddie (Christian) – is formed in terms of their respective religion’s belief – systems and values. Any deviation from the strictly religious coded practices, lead to a situation of
identity crisis. Eddie’s secret resort to act of the reading a story pertaining to the Mahabharata (The Hindu Text), creates an insufferable situation for his Christian mother, Violet. An RSS activist, Lele Guruji’s act of promoting religious conversion (from Christianity to Hinduism), even to the extent of offering various allurement to the young minds, is satirized and mocked at by the novelist at length.

In addition to religion, the discourses of class and gender also play a vital role in structuring and organizing the narrative of the novel. Like the earlier novel, Ravan and Eddie too foregrounds the class and gender issues. The thick and intense religious faith and practices do not help in alleviating endless sufferings caused by scarcity and poverty. The people of the novel have to face constant problems of ill health, poorly looked-after children, long labouring hours and unhygienic habitations and so on. The two episodes in the novel, “Harange on poverty” and ‘the great water wars’, speak volumes for economic-material crisis and crunch. The extreme penury leads to other problems such as ill-cared children, strong emotional family-bond, frequent pregnancies and constant dislocations. Their extreme poverty-ridden conditions debar them from self-reflexivity. As labourers and workers, they are “not” “heads” but “hands”, not homo cogitans but homo laborans (Engels in Gagnier, 1991: 142). They are normally activated by their somatic subjectivities.

A coalesce of patriarchy, castes, and class has corrupted the psyche of Mr. Sarang – a father of almost dozen children (with many of them unmarried daughters, though of marriageable age) – hits his daughter Tara bleed profusely for seeing and befriending a Dalit boy, Shahji Kadam, secretly.

Cuckold (1997) centres on the relationship between the Maharaja Kumar, (a man of reason and secularism) and his mendicant wife, Mira (a mystic). The history, reason and consciousness of the Maharaja Kumar confront his ‘other’ Mira (addressed as ‘the little Saint’, and ‘the blue eyed’).

Along with performing heterogeneous worldly grates requires and obsessed with seeking sexual gratification with his wedded wife, the little princess (Mirabai). The little saint does not succumb to the Kumar’s sexual overtures, and conscoles Lord Krishna as her husband. Cuckold
by Krishna. He defies all the Rajputana codes and decorum’s of honour and manlyhood to materialize the sexual-pleasure with the Princess but of no avail. Towards the end, there is a reversal and transformation in his consciousness that leads to the ceasation of all rivalry towards Krishna and the Kumar gets merged in the Lord. The secular and historical gets merged into the divine and universal. There was a sense of an incommensurability between the Maharaja Kumar and the saint as long as their subjectivities were in the grip of two different impulses: the national and impersonal on the one hand and superior sense of selfhood, critiques and defies all the worldly hierarchies and divisions. Dedicating herself to a higher cause (seeking spiritual communion with Krishna), the little saint renounces all the proprieties (including seeking material gain, power and position) and man-made customs. She does not mind being ‘a nautch girl’ (10) and publicly mixing up with the lower caste people.

It is religious belief which empowers Mira; both her sense of selfhood and her violation of man-made custom emerge from her conviction of her subjection to God and her dedication to a ‘higher cause’. The series of oppositions offered to hierarchy are both made possible and undone by the fact that as a …subject Meera takes recourse to the highest point-god-within….

She can only claim moral power in the name of God. Her Bhakti is at once a principle of consonance and of discord.

(Sangari 1990: 1468)

God’s Little Soldier (2006) foregrounds a conflict between the two opposite world-views, beliefs, values and practices — religious militancy and chaotic modernity accompanied by individualism, secularism, and rationalism — constitutes the structuring and organizing principle of the novel. Zia, the lead character, raised under the auspices of his fanatic aunt, Zubeida Khala, becomes a hard core religious militant. Despite his consideration of himself as a God’s chosen soldier, he keeps indulging into religious extremism as a Muslim (Zia), as a Christian (Lucens) and as a Hindu (Tejas). Zia’s elder brother, Amanat, an ideologue of modernity and individualism, critiques Zia’s religious militancy and activism. Zia wants to change and run the world in the light of the Holy Scriptures and eliminates anyone coming between him and his religion. Unlike a spiritualist (deeply inward, subjective). Zia is sectarian and wants to impose upon people an obligatory religious codes and creeds. Zia, being a sick-souled wants people to conduct themselves as per his religious doctrines and dogmas. As an authoritarian, Zia cannot
ignore any deviant behavior in the world. Amanat, on the contrary, is very liberal and individualist and critiques Zia’s religious intolerance and militancy. His liberal and individualistic approach to life does not capacitate him to have a long term relationship and higher purpose in his life than seeking a self-gratification. He cannot stay in any fulfilling relationship for a long time, including with his wife, Sagari. Ideologically and principally, Amanat is completely unanchored and stands robbed of any sense of social concern. As a practitioner and an inhabitant of liquid modernity, Amanat sticks to a life-style-culture and unstable social relation. Zia and Amanat emerge as two different subjects owing to their different social formations and exposures; they tend to respond to their world and given social structures differently. Zubeida Khala - by virtue of subjecting Zia’s childhood and adolescent psyche to the Islamic resources, beliefs, values and ideals- is able to convert Zia into a hardened religious extremist. His deep religious entrenchment and indoctrination do not leave Zia fit for living a normal life. To serve and save his faith, he can go to any extent of violence. Influenced and moulded by his mother, Shagufta (a liberal woman who transgresses all the limit of domestic marital relationship), Amanat has no qualm for an outrageous portrayal of Kabir’s sexual overtures with a prostitute ‘Sherni’, in his book, The Arsonist.

The close examination reveals that Kiran Nagarkar’s novels are articulations of myriad socio-historical discourses and practices, affecting and effecting the lives of the people of his society. As it should be obvious, the shifting terrains of his novels enable Kiran Nagarkar to focus on a wide range of anomalies and wrongs incurred at the local, the national and the global level. His novels also attack the socio-linguistically coded wrongs that camouflage hierarchy, discrimination, deprivation and dehumanization. The writer foregrounds various issues and problems pertaining to caste, class, gender, religion, power, violence and so on, hampering people’s real life practices and aggravating their situations. Nagarkar’s novels are expressions of a strong sense of commitment to mobilize people’s attention and sensitivity towards the social tensions and antagonisms gripping the contemporary society. The novelist intends to realize his goal of raging social awakening and consciousness through satirical portrayal and parodic representations across a range of signifying practices.
III

Reflection over the issues of human subjectivity foregrounds the concern that human beings are immersed in their social realities and historical specificities but they are not fully realized in them. Human beings are caught but not trapped in their history. Any divide between such pair of opposite terms as nature/culture, agency/structure, essence/construct, subject/object are not merely artificial but also inadequate to give a comprehensive picture of human condition. Human beings are historical and trans-historical at the same time. One must realize that the human subject is “neither diachronically static nor synchronically one dimensional” (Hall 2004: 129-30) and above all if human beings are subject to history and are enmeshed in history, they are also the agent of history.

End Notes:

1. Though literary and fictional characters are product and construct of their writers’ imagination, yet they underscore the link between human beings and their surrounding world.

2. Louis, a French-theorist, proposed that individuals are transformed into subjects through a mechanism called hailing are interpellation. He explains that interpellation works primarily through language and occurs when we are hailed by a message: ‘All ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects’. (Althusser 1971: 115)

3. The term ‘liquid modernity’ comes from a Polish sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman, who wrote a book entitled the same. It primarily suggests a chaotic and painful condition of late modernity, where a person’s social position is very fluid, unstable and noncommittal.