CHAPTER -III

Anurag Mathur’s
Making the Minister Smile,
Inscrutable Americans
and
The Country is Going to the Dogs
3.0. Comic Portrayal of Power Hungry Politicians in Anurag Mathur’s
Making the Minister Smile

3.1. Introduction

Anurag Mathur is one of the towering literary figures in the post modern Indian English fiction. As a significant writer Mathur’s novels are expressions of most intimate conscious of life and society, which forms the impressive core of literature. Mathur’s fictional world includes Inscrutable Americans (1991), Making the Minister Smile (1996), The Department of Denials (2004) and The Country is Going to the Dogs (2014).

Urmila Rao observes in The Hindu on Anurag Mathur’s writings, “His writing effort is a disciplined regime of one to four in the morning unravels the novelist[…] And a significant part of the walking hours goes in the conscious effort of keeping track of the world, be aware of the happenings in politics, culture, society”(www.thehindu.com). Indeed Mathur’s writings are sharp satires with comic expressions to rectify the vices and follies of the society and individuals. Mathur’s fictions are the guardian of ideals with corrective measures.

In support of comic situation in our daily life, our Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi addressing the 47th anniversary of Tamil Magazine Thuglak, considered humour as the ‘best healer’ and said the power of smile and laughter is more powerful than abuse or any other weapon. “Humour builds bridges instead of breaking them… And this is exactly what we require today. Building bridges, bridges between people, bridges between communities, bridges between societies.” Narendra Modi

Making the Minister Smile published in 1996 is a novel of Mathur which is a critique on the Indian way of life with serious reading. The whole story is about all a person has to do to make a minister smile. The novel looks at the Indian poverty,
politics and its eccentricities from an outsider’s point of view. This novel presents an accurate Indian political scene and the relation of business men with others, as appearing to a common man in India. The presentation of satire and humour got mixed up with a serious topic. The present novel takes off from where the previous novel, *The Inscrutable American* trailed. The earlier one was noteworthy for its delicate humour and distinctive style of Hinglish or as to say that English that most of Indians speak. The present one is about a football player from America, Chris Stark and his exploration in India. Stark’s family has business partnership with the company of Ram Avtar Kapoor in India and the young American is here to get the first hand know-how about the labour problems crippling KapCo, Kapoor’s company.

*Making the Minister Smile* is a novel about the adventures of an American among the inscrutable Indians. Chris Stark, an American arrives in India for commercial purpose. Chris, father owned ‘Stark Plastics’, a plastic company, comes to east for the collaboration with KapCo in India. However in India Chris faces exceptional situations caused from industrial disputes and political machinations with other oddities. Labour problem brings a great obstacle in front of Chris. The minister in the name of Mani Shankar Aiyar is indifferent and callous to the real problem. Chris turns to be a victim who confronts power hungry politician and finds himself astounded in globalizing India.

The fiction is an excellent portrayal of the underbelly of the Indian political system and the notion that Crish experiences as an observer participant. Kapoor tries hard to persuade the workers but becomes unproductive. Kapoor’s principle of three ‘Butter them, Bribe them or Bash them’ have proved to be ineffective. Frustrated Kapoor meets Sevak Chand, the minister in charge of the department concerned. The strike starts and the hard work of the management to shatter are worthless. Prabal Kumar leads the strike. Astonishingly the police, stationed there do nothing as Kumar’s men bash up the loyal workers who try to enter the factory. The secretary informs that unless Kapoor make the minister smile there was not much hope to bring change.
From then Kapoor tries to find a way to make the minister smile and it makes very funny reading. *Making the Minister smile* is about the adventures of an average American among the inscrutable Indians. An American football player comes to the mystic East, that is India, Delhi to further business links between his plastic manufacturing company in a small town of America and the KapCo Company of Delhi. While in India the protagonist Chris Stark becomes enmeshed in industrial disputes, political intrigues, wired intelligence webs and an unfortunate love affair besides various other oddities. The owners of Indian Delhi based company called KapCo, the well connected Kapoors of Punjabi Bagh, bribe, bash and butter all those who can bring ministerial favors to squash a rampaging union leader; the minister is satisfyingly vulpine, complete with hooded eyes and Nehruvian references, who only smiles. And then there is a devil himself travelling under the name of Mani Shankar Aiyar, who lurks behind buses but then revealed to be a Pakistani agent. Crish Stark, steak and apple-pie-soccer player, finds himself astounded by globalizing India far into anything confronted with the estate of unknowing on whose brink New India stands.

This book starts with a comic note but drifts to a something a serious labour problem. The time was glorious winter afternoon in New Delhi. Green grass, blooming flowers, gentle sunshine and Mr. Sundaran speaking English before Christopher shortly named as Crish who is perhaps gets surprise at the reaction of Sundaran. A good humour runs here. “Ouch, winced Chris. He wondered what had disturbed Mr. Sunder so deeply. Perhaps a potato had been found to be rotten. Or a tomato to be pulpy. Or perhaps even horrors, the meat to be a day old.”(01) Humour is the most effective literary weapon to please the audience. The skill fits the writing of Anurag Mathur here. The reader’s nerves got relaxed when Chris faced inscrutable Indian in India with feelings of awe and mystery. Chris faced an Indian’s continuous cough and spitting blood into the dustbin and thinks that the guy got tuberculosis. Chris hesitated to breathe and surprises at the consequence of coming to India. “When Chris reached him the man coughed gratingly, gargled loudly and spat a thick wad of blood into a bin. Chris recoiled. ‘Shit’ he thought, ‘the boy got tuberculosis.’ He tried not to breathe.
Jesus, fifteen minutes in India and I am going to be infected with TB, he thought holding himself rigid.” (04)

Christopher Morley (1890-1957) in The Power of Sympathy (1923) quotes on humour that, “Humour is perhaps a sense of intellectual perspective: an awareness that something’s are really important, others not; and that the two kinds are most oddly jumbled in everyday affairs.” Again Chris gets bewilderment at the strange behavior of the luggage which got missing when was with Ajai and compares America to India. All the life in America he had idea that bags were just bags. They lay there, you fill them up with things and then you carried them about whenever you went. If you put them somewhere they stayed put. They are peaceful in inanimate companions. But in India, they miraculously came to life, taking on the magic, mystery and personality of frisky elves. (06) KapCo had an intense labor problem which is to be taken seriously. Mathur has used his skill with apt care and attention of the common man’s problems in our society. It’s is hard to concentrate on personal demand when you are trying to adjust to a cow contentedly chewing the cud in the middle of an intensely crowded street. He had found nobody else paying the slightest attention to the animal and began to feel that perhaps he was a little peculiar in noticing the sight” (07). Chris again gets astonishment at the diversity of Indian society particularly traffic. Chris recalls a Lebanese friend telling him that there was an ice field around Americans. But in India Chris feels that the sunshine perhaps has melted that ice. Pollution is a great problem in India and overcrowded population facilitates this problem to a great extent. Mathur presents the real condition in the fiction. “The dust and the fumes had annoyed him the most. But seeing the commercial frenzy on the sidewalks; he had decided that the priorities were first to do business and later to look into the problems caused by pollution” (09). The union leaders were asking for unreasonable demands. Political corruption was a major theme in the novel. Chris enters Ajai Vir’s room. Another comic incident comes to add to the situation finding a tall blackboard with B.B.B written on it in chalk. Ajai Vir erases it every morning and writes it again so that he remembers for the rest of the day. Chris is perplexed at the meaning of it. Interestingly Ajai explains it that butter them, bribe them or bash them. “Butter them. Bribe them or Bash them.
Perfect, applauded Chris, ‘The Havard Business School couldn’t teach you better” (11).

The head of KapCo’s security, Capt.A.S.Singh joins the company after retiring from army is in uneasiness at the chanting mob through the grilled window of office adjacent to the office gate. Capt.Singh informs Lal verma, manager of the factory of the problem. Mr.Verma gets the hot line telephone and wants to talk to the Kapoor sahib directly. But Mr. Sunder on other side convinced him to pass the message as Kapoor sahib was in prayer. He doesn’t like Mr. Verma really. However Mr. Sundere changed dramatically when he got a bad news about the strike by the workers and didn’t like to be a carrier of bad news at all. Suddenly he changed his stand. “I’ll get him on the phone right way” said Mr. Sunder who had long ago learned it was wiser not to be the carrier of bad news”(18).

One of the funniest comments like ‘All men may be animals, but all women are animal lovers’ comes from Anurag Mathur. The first and the wittiest modern writer that we have today deserve a lot of attraction. Mathur’s graceful style with politically correct argument has earned him a worldwide reputation and acclaim in the world. In a short time he has captured a wide range of place in the heart of the readers. The author’s razor-sharp sense of humour makes us conscious about simple but important issues which have always been unnoticed as trivial or quite unimportant. Mathur’s simple reference to bags disappearing in India but staying put in America is quite amusing and creates a sense of laughter. It not only entertains but also brings us the hard truths of our Indian society. Indian politicians are typical in the sense of making promise to the people. They don’t care of the general public .Their false promises and hypocrisies come to the fore interestingly. Usually they strive to sustain their vote bank policy instead of looking the issues carefully. Chris comes to India as a result of his family’s Corporation’s collaboration an Indian company. But in India he becomes entangled with industrial disputes and it got worse when there is political meddling. Jaychandran, an eminent critic observes that the solution to the entire Gordian knot of problems in the
novel is making the minister smile. The novel presents an accurate Indian political scene as it appears to a common man in India. Some of critics appear at times that Mathur makes an unfair comparison between India and United States of America. But it is true that Mathur definitely makes an effort to convey the message to the readers. In fact Mathur satirizes the future politicians of this country with a note of caution with firm convictions about the politicians; trade unions and Indian work culture are unique in the sense of satire with a pinch of humour.

Mathur gives a picture of Indian’s rich people are careless in arranging dinners in various occasions. Chris refuses the offer of attending dinner by Sharmaji and gets surprise at the attitude of rich Indians. Chris wondered, “How anyone could believe that India was full of starving people.” (34)

There was violence because of labour problems and strike. When Ram Avtar mentioned violence, the minister dragged Gandhiji and said, “Let us eschew violence” (68). Naturally like other Indian politicians he continued that “The law will take its own course” (69).

The story revolves round the disagreement surrounding the company and its workers union. The workers, the union leaders and the management endeavor to reach at the harmonious solution rather they fail to resolve the factory problem. The author succeeds in maintaining his sardonic sense of humour. For instance the way Chris is shocked when he meets Kalpana Singh who shatters the image of perfect Indian girl he had in mind, one who symbolizes chastity and innocence is hilarious. Taken as a whole, Making the Minister is full of amusement, wit and surprises with a subtle touch of satire. It takes a close look at the corruption which is rampant in the Indian political circles and establishments. Mathur’s sarcastic sense of humour is much entertaining.
In the midst of problems among the workers police was silent on the violence. When Ram Avtar, Ajai and Khris asked Sharmaji about the incident he said clearly that “The minister didn’t mention about protecting the workers. He mentioned as per Nehru’s wishes, about protecting the factory” (Mathur 65). The Minister Sevak Chand was a typical leader who gives a ministerial remark when Ram Avtar introduced Chris. Sevak Chand took the reference of then PM’s words, “Foreign collaborations are most welcome and will bring prosperity to both parties and our great countries” (66). At the news of the massacre appeared, and Prabal Kumar became the head of the leading trade unions most of the political parties start to compete to invite him and get associated with. Prabal on the other hand said, “I have no ambitions becoming a political leader. I am only interested in serving the toiling worker whose labour creates wealth for the proprietor and the country, but who is himself denied a fair share of the fruits of his toil”(74). In course of events the problems still continues. Ajai decided to finish Prabal with the help of politicians and gundas. Ajai told Chris, “we need not a politician but a thug” (166).

At last Ram Avtar Kapoor takes the way to find the minister smile. In a press conference Verma welcomed everyone and announced, “We had given all the deep thoughts to all the demand and based upon what we feel is fair and just both to workers and KapCo and according to the wage structure that is prevalent all over India, we have come to a decision”(210).

3.2. The Comic Vision in Anurag Mathur’s *Inscrutable Americans*

The connection between literature and life is vital and intimate. It creates the way to express their thoughts and ideas while the subject matter and treatment must be such as of general interest and the expression must be emotive that gives pleasure and satisfaction to the readers. Humour and satire are the two distinct elements of literature and are considered staple of it. They are the key ingredients of life or a good read. Without humour literature is tasteless curry with no spice. People of all ages and
cultures respond to humour. A few writers in the galaxy of Indian writings are there who have left their footprints in this way to create a light moments for the burdened hearts. One such bright example is Anurag Mathur’s *Inscrutable Americans*. The fiction is an incredible account of a small town boy caught in the attractive, mysterious, inexplicable whirl of the great United States of America where sex, alcoholism and women are very common. The present paper aims to explore the humorous elements with pun intended in many situations.

The history of Indian English novel is incomplete without the contribution of Anurag Mathur. He was born in New Delhi and educated at Sindia School (Gwalior), St Stephens College (Delhi) and University of Tulsa (Oklahoma). He spent three years in USA and has been successful in creating a number of literary masterpieces. Mathur’s literary works include *Inscrutable Americans* (1991), *Making the Minister Smile* (1996), *The Departments of the Denials* (2004) and recently published *The Country is Going to the Dogs* (2014) have impacted the readers with its hilarious elements with use of satire. Mathur’s *Inscrutable Americans* is an all time best seller since its debut in 1991 and for the long eleven years notwithstanding media hype and success stories surrounding other books.

Humour is the genre that if executed well brings a sense of relief even to the tired minds. Mathur’s present novel is a charming and hilarious story about Gopal, a simple chap is the heart of the story. As a young man from the small town of India, Jajau and a son of a hair oil businessman in Madhya Pradesh arrives in America to study chemical engineering in a university in Eversville for graduation that forms the crux of the story. The fiction is a comical take on the lives of Americans. As Gopal reaches New York he is received by Sunil and Sushant and his comic discovery of America starts. The author contrasts the cultural differences with references based on humour and satire. Gopal comes to America with pre-conceived notion. Gopal’s English is hilarious and the simple character’s ignorance and innocence and point blank honesty are attractive and at the same time the readers are taken aback by how minute
details from day to day life of Americans amaze him. Gopal’s reactions to the climate the people, malls etc. have been described through the words of the mouth Gopal’s take on sex and the ways of Americans in general are amusing and entertaining. Gopal is seen as a person who is torn between his urges and the values inculcated in him by his parents. The author has clearly brought out the differences between the two cultures via humour and simplicity.

Despite all the ‘Dos and Don’ts’ that his family imposes upon him Gopal is tempted by the culture there and tries to get under the guidance of Randy who takes pledge to make him experience all the pleasures of American living. The letters, Gopal writes back to his younger brothers in India takes the readers to a laughter ride. The book like a young Indian man’s dream of what Americans are like with a university student level twist on global geo politics. There he battles the usual issues faced by an Indian living like racism. Sexual discomforts, food etc.

The novel starts with the letter by Gopal to his younger brother describing his experiences in the American heartland. The hometown Jajau is known as the ‘Paris of Madhya Pradesh’ but didn’t get much exposure to the rest developed parts of the world. Barely having any contact with girls, much less intimate with one. The story takes place through his eyes, his thoughts and views of life. Gopal’s very first letter gets the readers start laughing at his English and its structure of sentences. The letter is written in Indian English being extremely humorous and entertaining. “Beloved Younger Brother,

“Greetings to Respectful parents’. I am hoping all is well with health and wealth. I am fine at my end. Hoping your end is fine too. With God’s grace and parent’s Blessings I am arriving safely in America and finding good apartment near university…” (1). In the globalised world Gopal lags behind to others and has doubts on the cooks and their caste that whether they are Brahmins or not. “I am strictly
A good sense of humour runs through the readers when Gopal the protagonist is bewildered out of his simplicity. He gets surprised about the people of America. “I am not knowing where to start. Most surprising thing about America is that it is full of Americans, Americans big and white…” (01). Another hilarious situation comes through Gopals obnoxious notion on English understanding ability of the air-hostess. Gopal thinks him superior to them which are indeed contrary to the reality. “I think perhaps she is not understanding proper English” (10). Mathur’s description of the New York City will flash right in front of the reader’s eyes. Through this letter Mathur again attempts to create light moments when Gopal gets excitement over the lights in New York and feels that as if God has created a carpet of lights over the town. At the time of landing from the airplane the air-hostess offered him a cane of coca-cola with a smile. The innocent chap doesn’t understand it. This short glance of behavior with smile changes his previous notion of Americans. “I think they are knowing everything about everybody who is coming to America” (11).

Simplicity through the protagonists prevails most of time and creates laughter. Gopal’s first friendship with Joe, a Negro gentle man makes him feel very close and infers him to be treated properly by his parents, if he comes to Jajau. Gopal faces an immigration officer when conceives as the American having information of the visitors before. Gopal instructs his brother to lock all doors and windows. Interestingly Gopal conceives them as CIA agents having information even about their donkey. “But brother, now I am worrying. Supposing this is CIA keeping watch or else how they can know about our donkey.” (12) Once again simplicity and honesty prevails in the character of Gopal who doesn’t want to cheat his motherland. American beauty has impressed him and looks desperately a beautiful lady on the way with Sushant and Sunil. Gopal was unable to understand the mystery of the basket that was hung in front of the restaurant though I am not knowing if the cooks are Brahmins” (01).
of every houses and thought it to be connected with the religion but resolved not to ask anybody apprehending to be proved as silly and foolish.

The protagonist discovers a part of New York on the way to the airport from where a certain amount of confusion starts right from the American girls, new gadgets and the naked billboards. Again Gopal gets puzzled over the vegetarian cats and continues with the telephone and colour TV with various channels. Gopal meets Randy who welcomes at the airport and introduces to the American society and the way of living. Randy helps him to his destination. Gopal feels sleepy and at the same time, thinks about his homeland. The novelist here tries to present another hilarious situation as the innocent chap is concerned about the name Randy and compares to randy’s meaning in India and feels that he got a friend at last but to him only girls are Randy; maybe Randy is one of those boy types. “He said he is randy. I know from penthouse letters about that, but there are only girls are randy. May be he is one of those boys types. I must be careful.” Next morning, Gopal is sleepily awake, looks around through gummy eyes and struggled up wondering where he was. He is worried about what lay ahead and compares most of Americans as monsters. “Monsters with American faces materialized in front of him waiting to perform unimaginable cruelties.”

Another comic reference comes out from the friendship of Randy and Gopal. Randy comments on a girl, Mary Lou. Gopal asks about the girl. Randy lightly compares her to the Linda Lovelace of the campus. Interestingly Gopal remarks him as the Harry Reems. By the way they reached at the Administration building. A short and a red haired man, Dean Smith infers him to be Gopal. When he asks him his name and said that Randy must be looking after. When he asked that abut the discussion at that very moment Gopal immediately mentioned the name of Linda Lovelace. With beautiful skill of humour Mathur has tried to create light moments for the readers. “You must be Gopal”; “I am Dean Smith. I hope Randy’s been looking after you. What was he telling you about just now?”; “Linda Lovelace Sir” (37). Randy gurgled. Dean Smith gave him an old fashioned look as they went up the stairs.
Smith was bit caring to Gopal and instructs Randy to show Gopal library, bookstore, help him to meet teachers and show him the classrooms. Being a simple chap Gopal conceives him as very friendly. Contrary to the notion, Randy makes him cautious about the future possibility of getting low grades. A sense of difference makes the situation hilarious. On the other hand Randy asks him to wait for the result and says that he is different as to his appearance. “He is friendly” Gopal told Randy as they went down the staircase. “Yeah but not always. Wait till you get bad grades once you would think you would murder his mother, the way he is carries on”(39). Gopal gets bewildered over the sharing of same bathrooms both by boys and girls. Again he is obsessed with white beauty and feels the difference between the west and east. He is stunned over the American mall and huge doubled storied building. Gopal’s repeated letter to his brother is full of entertaining and hilarious. The language he uses is very attractive and eye catching. He describes his new experience there about America and her people. “Beloved youngest one, “how much I am missing one and all I simply cannot say. My head is eating circles” (54). Gopal writes about the lack of Brahmins in America and also mentions that America is full of divorcees and assures his brother avoiding them. Again he noticed a girl greeting him. But baffled and confused Gopal is bit reluctant to greet him same way. Rather he was not expecting such greeting from any girl. The novelist tries utmost care to ease and relax the reedar’s minds. “Hi,” said the startled voice. “Gopal was equally shocked, but recovered on seeing the girl with the kind face .He dug his hands into his overcoat and beamed awkwardly at her.” “I am friend of Randy, he explained in a rush in case she was planning to throw him out”(69). Gopal gets a chance to dance with a girl Ann but finds uneasy to match with others. In spite of his lose interest in it Gopal gets closer to the girl and thinks do describe his friends in India about the closeness with beautiful girl. “Gopal could scarcely believe it. What a good time he was having. What a story to tell his friends when he got home…And he would tell them about this lovely girl….and how she had grabbed the leg—he would show them the spot, a pity he could brand her fingerprints as a proof then taken him by the hand and dragged him into a dark room to dance” (75).
Gopal writes in the next letter about aloofness towards the American way of life and asks his brother not tell about every odd there lest she would bother. Gopal is surprised to see washing machine there.”Also brother, you are not telling mother, but they are machines here that are cleaning clothes and drying in jiffy. I am knowing about all things and handling with mastery. My clothes are washing whitest and finger leckin good”(80). Cotrary to his writing Gopal is exposed to the American way of life. While we move into the next course of events we see Gopal’s preferences and thought process changes as he exposed more and more. Gopal goes with Randy to real bar and asks for cigarette.

Mathur again presents a comic situation in portraying the simplicity in Gopal when Gopal writes letter to his brother that he is going to buy TV from Safeway. Gopal mentions that they are known earlier and just like his friends and can ask discount and questions that how can they be friends if they are not giving discount?“Any way what to do but at least my new TV is coming yesterday, which I am buying from Safeway .I wish I am knowing earlier that they are my friends right down the street so that I can ask for discount otherwise how they are my friends?”(78)In course of events Gopal comes in contact with beautiful ladies at the bar. When she asks about her dance and asks to buy some drink honey his head moves vigorously and thinks to be ready to buy the empire state building if she asks for. “Oh yes Gopal’s head moved vigorously. As a matter of fact he was going to buy the empire state building for her if she asked for it” (94).

All the letters Gopal writes to younger brother is complain about the language and the inability to understand resulting in awkward situations. “Any way I am learning many important things about Americans. Biggest thing is language. It is earlier making many problems for me, because like everyone I am thinking Americans are speaking English, it is American .I am facing so many embarrassing on this reason.”(189)Mathur satirizes at the American student’s lack of interest in utilizing the opportunity available there through beautiful characterization of Gopal. In another occasion Gopal meets Sue
while returning from library. He is highly impressed by the emotion shown by her, but his heart breaks when he discovers Sue with another man. Disappointed Gopal now spends time by drinking and vomiting. Gopal again discovers the white supremacy over the blacks as he comes to know the actual poverty among them.

Gopal is subjected to the traditional method of education where everything got drilled into his mind by the rote system of learning where questioning was heresy by the teachers. With perfect skill of satire the novelist tries to induce satire here. Gopal’s thought process revolves round in America leading to blooming out and learning the art of logical thinking, deductive reasoning and most important of all encompassing thirst for knowledge. Respect for teachers was really high now seems old bigoted people. Through the character of Gopal the author forays into the Indian psyche of malice and jealousy which are unnoticed in American society. There are several instances where Gopal’s gentle innocence leads him to pretty hilarious conclusion. When he is asked to watch his ass “watch your ass” that leads Gopal quickly assumes that the man was referring to his two donkeys that his family had bought before his departure from India. The comic description really is heart touching. Gopal wonders how they know of the two donkeys, and believes that it is the part of the bigger conspiracy of the CIA collecting all the data that they can have idea about everyone coming to America. Again Gopal sees himself as a cultural ambassador and the way he sets intention is quite amusing and thinks that because of India’s superior culture they must set an example so that the American must improve their behavior leading to bilateral relationship. Gopal’s character has a rustic undertone while others are characterized by the American ways of thinking as far as food, women and dating are concerned. The novel is a story of comic satire on the stereotypes and prejudices of Indian migrants in their adopted land. Gopal interacts with Tom. Gopal says all are same and stresses that Indians are like this. Here Mathur satirizes at the American insularity and ignorance of other culture.

Gopal’s day to day activity in the alien culture and social surrounding seems ludicrous who faces with pretty issues, encounters some shocking people and his
bewilderment towards the diverse culture. Again the funny Indian references make it more attractive. In spite of criticism the novel grasps its position well. The novel may not be for hardcore literature lovers but it is good for the persons who have penchant for comedy.

At last Gopal’s one year of spending in America comes to an end and Gopal departs from America taking with him memories of alien culture. The best moment of the novel comes when Gopal comes in contact with a lady in the plane and starts discussing with her and his adventures with women in a diverse and powerful country in America. Gopal also mentions the uninteresting future in India and an unknown wife and feels engrossed by her and they suddenly start kissing each other while talking. At last his dream comes to be true and is fulfilled which is fulfilled at least above 30,000 feet above the ocean. Gopal feels that he is satisfied and has become a man.

After all the novel is a cute, charming, hilarious and poignant novel that heels the burdened minds of the readers and a sensitive portrayal of the tribulations of the first time in America from India and how the protagonist tries to retain self esteem and identity there. The letters are full of laughter which adds smiles to a great number of faces. Gopal the village boy’s innocence has been portrayed quite convincingly and the obsession with Jajau’s Hair Oil Factory is much funny and comic. The author captures the immigrant experiences of culture clash in a different way that attract huge number of students. This novel brings out the striking features of the diverse cultures with doses of laughter. Gopal’s attempts to understand the American culture with the help of his mentor is quite amusing and funny. The comic vision in the novel is well articulated. It’s quite funny and worth reading and brings a sense of relief to the readers. Comic relief, the chief ingredient of a good read is presented through the novelist’s beautiful skill. The author manages to maintain the flow of the story admirably. The book is pleasure to read. A pinch of communism and racism add flavor to the comic elements making it cuter, sweet and light read. It is a non-stop ride in hilarity.
3.3. A Satirist as the Guardian of Ideals in Anurag Mathur’s *The Country is Going to the Dogs*

Anurag Mathur’s fictions are deliberately fun intended. As far as humour quotient is concerned Anurag Mathur tries to make the most of the situations in his fifth novel *The Country is going to the Dogs*. The novel is light hearted in its tone and seeks to attain its objective to create laughter among the readers from its very outset. Published in 2014 the novel attracts a huge number of students and seems a humorous novel with a great deal of satire. It’s a critique on the Indian mindset of modernism and conservatism. Mathur has experienced three years in the United States which helps him to write on a theme of cultural conflict between two societies. According to Mathur it is the class conflict between our conservative traditional upbringing and the new India. Mathur’s novels are joke oriented and the humour is subtly integrated.

The story revolves round Mr. Radhey Radhey who is also known as RR. As the protagonist RR takes up the assignment to find Miss Fifoo, the so called sex siren of the sin city Delhi. She has gone missing. RR, seventy four year old is a retired government accountant and lives just across the street of the All Saints Women College. He has retired as a senior officer in the accounts department of the government of India and has started a small accounting practice in one room soot of the three room place which was bought after his retirement. The readers are introduced Radhey Radhey as the protagonist who is having doubled standard thinking and his incessant moral policing. RR feels disgusted with woman wearing tight clothes making sex appeals to others but at the same time tries to reflect the wide spread mentality of the Indian men. Despite being critical, RR casts his eyes on the girls and he was always pleased to see them. The novelist uses a perfect example of satire here.
Such tight, tight jeans” he criticized. So tight that if he looked hard enough, he could see the outline of the underwear. Nor that I would ever look so hard.” He assured himself.”And such tight –T shirts .Goodness me, they may as well not even wear them .But in my days …ah in my days women knew how to dress, how to walk, how to talk, But now it was all sex, sex and nothing else (01).

Unlike other bureaucrats RR has not made much money from his practice, since a lifetime in government service had made him incapable of pushing for work. The novelist has satirized the Indian bureaucrats in fact. Usually most of them are corrupt and practice wrong way to congregate money RR gets assignment from the principal Mrs. Malhotra to find out the missing girl, Miss Fifoo, famous film star and one of the most famous old students of the college. The writer beautifully describes the two sides of RR’s life. RR is ready to assist Mrs. Malhotra to find out the missing girl. After retirement most of the officers remain away from the busy life but RR just differs to them.

Again the author has attempted to present day reality through various situations. When RR is offered help to take the assistance of any one he wants; RR immediately takes the name of beautiful Tia which creates a ludicrous situation in the course of the novel. Instead, Mrs. Malhotra rejects his intention of being relaxed by the presence of this beautiful girl. Rather she asks him to take help from Goburdhunji, the proprietor and editor of The Daily Reporter. Mr. Goburdhunji is presented as a character of major figure of power of the city influencing the fall and rise of the government. The role of the media is aptly presented. RR is of dual mentality and thinks of Tia, the most beautiful girl and a chance of interacting with her. RR is in search of the opportunity of talking with them if situation permits. “Besides, in the process he would interact with people from the college, especially with Tina. And if not her ,then at least with the students, whose freshness and gaiety and enthusiasm so enlivened his slow and boring life and enriched his rapidly declining years”(07).
RR asks Goburdhun about the employees and reply in a disgusting manner. The present state of the course of the novel aptly expresses the plight of the ill mentality of the employees. Most of them are opportunists. At this very moment RR is desperate and shows his feelings that create a comic situation in the novel. Being the forerunner of Chetan Bhagat, Mathur tries hard to make light moments for the readers. “The nation has gone to the dogs.” he concurred. It’s all crimes and crowds and scams. And you people have no respect for their elders. I mean, look at the way the girls dress. Sometimes I feel like catching hold of them and dressing them myself” (Mathur 09).

Humour is a funny thing. It can crack you up unexpectedly or it can make the entire movie hall full of laughter. But in fact they are short in supply. The present novel tries to minimize the gap to some extent. RR is an innocent in the wilderness acquaints himself in the sexual underbelly of Delhi while uncovering the mystery of the missing girl.

Some of the characters RR comes across during his investigation are quite interesting. For instance the veteran crime reporter Anwar helps him at every point. The story revolves round where RR found himself in the car heading towards the police head quarters being taken by Anwar, the crime reporter of ‘The Daily Reporter.’ Shelley Sahib known as poetic pimp creates many light moments for the readers and continues his supremacy and impact in the sexual underworld that makes RR to comment in a comic and satiric way. He asserts that the country is going to the dogs as everyone is drowning in sex. “Anwar smirked. They are dime a dozen have them. Every city, every town, every district sometimes even villages have them. Its sex, sex and sex, the whole country is drowning in sex” (Mathur 23). Through typical citation of different poems from English literature makes the novel more humorou. Shelly remains pleased at the outrageous flattery of him. Anwar makes his great telling that he is the great example of democratic way of functioning. “Shelly Bhai. You are well known for your democratic way of functioning. You have even won an award for running a flat organization. You are fine example globally. The world knows and admires you” (27).
The next few days RR’s mind keeps repeating in disbelief when RR comes to know about ‘wife swapping’ in the land of Mahatma Gandhi. Interestingly he had double mentality and his mind was in ferment to have ideas that what really goes at such places. Comical and confused attitude towards sex and its various manifestations are prevalent in the fiction through the character RR. “What went on such places….RR’s mind was in ferment. How did it work? Could anyone come with their wives, or it was a group of friends? If it was a group of friends how could he attend? I certainly have no friends I could invite along for a wife-swapping party. I have led a decent, middle class, conservative life; he talked aloud to calm himself down” (29).

Unlikely people from the present generation, RR hesitates to become a part of the sinister activity like wife swapping and concludes to be the bottom part of this. “This is clearly something sinister that the younger generation is up to, something quite unknown to my age group, and I have to get to the bottom of this” (30). Again the novelist also satires at the doubled standards of Mr.RR when he mentions that RR gets himself ready for the wife swapping party in spite of his unwillingness. None the less, he got himself a new set of clothes, shoes and underwear. Not because he was planning anything unIndian but because, he reasoned, one must put ones best foot forward at all times. Once again Mathur hits at his best skill of satirizing the protagonist and his mentality. RR is surprised at the intention of wife swapping party and especially a girl like Tina and her boldness to become a participant. But at the same time he is soft towards her prettiness. “And what was this Tina girl like? He pondered with even more excitement .What kind of woman would agree to go with a total stranger to be exchanged there with a greater stranger? She must be very bold. But what is she like, as a person / I simply must find out .Not that I plan to see her again .No, no. But is she friendly? Is she at least pretty? (32)

Interestingly RR noted the beauty and elegance of such beautiful girl Tina. RR compares his baldness with the acute beauty and is glad that at least he has bought a new pair of clothes and has used profuse quantity of aftershave cologne that he rarely
uses otherwise. “RR noted her beauty, her elegance, her obvious sophistication and acutely felt the baldness of his head, with its covering of thin long strands that he had slicked down with Brycreem. He was glad that he had bought an entirely new set of clothes and had used profuse quantities of cologne that he rarely used otherwise”(32). RR finds it difficult to digest the worst situation to have such a pity and unacceptable tradition of wife swapping in the capital city of India and deeply regrets over such nefarious activities and surprises at the permission by the central government of India only ten kilometers of the parliament, the most sacred and august house. “I must alert the government, was his last thought as he fell into a deep sleep. Our nation has gone to the dogs” (Mathur 41).

Another comic situation is created when RR is frustrated over the failure of the present bureaucrats to stop nefarious activities in the society in a hilarious way he advises Anwar to invite retired people to run this country. “They have messed up the corporate sector and now they want to mess up the govt. also. This country has no future. They should bring back the retired people to run the country” (Mathur 44).

The process of looking for the clues to find the actress, RR again comes to meet the situation that the young people are so ardent to have lost time even in front of others. Although RR finds hard to digest, still remembers his past having the same. RR recalls past about kissing and hugging with a neighbor’s wife which is in fact satirized by the novelist. Again images of Laxmi forced him spend sleepless nights and tossed and turned remembering the shape of her legs, the curve of her bottom. “He couldn’t sleep that night. Images of Laxmi that was her name overpowered his senses. He tossed and turned as he remembered the shape of her legs, the curve of her bottom” (63).

However The Country is Going to the Dogs follows the exploits RR, a 74 year old through various stages to find out Miss Fifoo. A self declared Gandhian provides a funny firsthand account that is thrown out of his comfort zone. RR is forced to rub his
shoulder with gangsters and eunuchs. Mathur brings out the hypocrisy of RR interestingly and effectively. There are times when the readers rise at him with sympathy but there are times when they scream at him for being complete hypocrite. There are rapid series of events in the novel. Mathur introduces a number of very interesting characters ranging from head strong independent homosexual activists to poetic Pimp. RR belongs to the older age group who has really a hesitant approach towards sex. As a society we are very oversexed. Such a peculiar character creates laugh. According to Mathur RR is a very confused character that is very much attracted by this new gesture of sexuality and yet very reluctant to accept the change that occurs in the society.

**Conclusion**

Anurag Mathur has bagged wide acclamation throughout the world creating a separate place in the Indian English literature as a novelist. Mathur’s novels are full of laughter, with social satire. The fictions of Mathur are expression of sardonic sense of humour. Apart from this Mathur’s novels unfold the issues of power hungry politicians and bureaucrats in India. Through various characters coming from different stratum Mathur aims to rectify the society, individuals and public authority in true sense. Most of his novels are charming, hilarious and poignant with sensitive portrayals of characters. Mathur’s comic visions in his fictional narratives give relief to the readers. Mathur’s novels are full of diverse culture with doses of laughter.
REFERENCE


Web Sources


https://books.google.co.in. Accessed 17 April 2017

https://en.m.wikipedia.org>wiki>Anur...Accessed 18 Apr 2017


www.tcsion.com>oxford>archives>m... Accessed 20 Apr 2017