Introduction

This thesis seeks to study diverse dimensions of discourse of justice in Arundhati Roy and Pankaj Mishra’s non-fictional writings. Being one of the most important ideas and ideals in any society, notion of justice is the fundamental indicator of lived and felt quality of life in a society. Viewed in context of various political systems such as military rule, communist regime, theocracy, tribal society, monarchy and democracy, the last one embodies true spirit of justice to the greatest extent as it enshrines equality, freedom and deliberation as its basic principles. It can thus be said that the idea of justice intrinsically contains conditions and principles of democracy. If we go through the world history, we may find that rather than striving to achieve any ideal state of affairs in which perfect justice is achieved, societies have gradually been learning to recognize myriad forms of injustices so that more just societies could be established. A continual discourse about removable injustices by society either through civil measures or through political commitment is an essential ingredient of true democracy and just society.

Keeping in mind the discourse of justice, Arundhati Roy and Pankaj Mishra are significantly relevant as their work critically examines as well as contributes to the ideas of justice and democracy. It can be arguably claimed that the non-fictional corpus of these writers can be studied as a noteworthy contribution to the discourse of justice. Interestingly, the non-fictional writings of both these writers have more socio-political slant than literary. The challenges posed by the more explicitly political works by literary writers also raise the question of role of litterateurs in a society. These two issues concerning literary canon/genre and role of writers have been important points of consideration in the present thesis.

The theoretical conception of a just society seems a utopian ideal in view of reality-based societies which contain a host of removable injustices. It is far too difficult to imagine a perfectly just world, but easier to recognize injustices in the world of day-to-day reality.
Despite seemingly neat divisions of nations into various stages of development viz. developed, developing and underdeveloped; or first, second and third world, the perfectly just world is too far-fetched an ideal. As per one estimate, nearly 170 million people have suffered casualties in 250 armed conflicts across the world since the Second World War (Shelton vii). But at the same time, available historical empirical studies show that rate of homicide, for instance, has gone down to its one fiftieth in eight hundred years and violence in general is reducing in human societies (Pinker, “Understanding”). The reasons of this substantial reduction in violence, and yet a still heavy presence of it, could be many: change in political structures of society from empires and kingdoms to democracies; rise of ideologies of nationalism and fundamentalism; rise of modern implements of warfare; rise in scientific knowledge including that of medicine; spread of education; rise in consciousness about human rights; and incentives of living in peaceful/conflict-free society. Most of these reasons are underpinned by a discourse concerning more just and humane world which can help people live a peaceful and fulfilling life wherein older forms of deprivation can be removed. Literature partakes in this discourse and helps understanding and awareness vis-à-vis redressing those deprivations.

The leitmotif of justice has been perennially there in the stream of literature. It is hard not to emphasize the role of Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata in Indian social-cultural and political ethos. The connotation of Ram-rajya, utopian and perfectly just state ruled by prince Ram, still rings plausible to many people in the sub-continent. Likewise, the Mahabharata too pivots around war for dharma, which can be arguably viewed as justice. Gurcharan Das observes about dharma thus:

Duty, goodness, justice, law and custom all have something to do with it, but they all fall short. Dharma refers to ‘balance’—both moral balance and cosmic balance. It is

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1 Shelton’s data must be for the time before 2005 when the book was published.
2 The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (8th ed., on CD-ROM) defines dharma as “(in Indian religion) truth or law that affects whole universe.”
the order and balance within each human being which is also reflected in the order of the cosmos. Dharma derives from the Sanskrit root dhr, meaning to ‘sustain’. It is the moral law that sustains society, the individual and the world. (xlili)

What sustains society, therefore, is a sense of justice, however imperfect, that prevails because any system of government—including that by despots and tyrants who “seem to have dug their graves precisely at the moment when they neglected to justify their political action within the context of prevailing social beliefs, provoking feelings of injustice” (Scherer 2)—is inconceivable without some norms of justice. In fact, justice has been called “first” of the social virtues by many writers and philosophers (Ryan, Norton 455; Rawls, Theory 3).

Literature on the other hand may be called a common receptacle where most of the human knowledge and experience percolate. It is neither arbitrary nor incidental that a lot of literature has an undeniable and profound connection with the idea of justice.

A strong desire for justice is the moving force behind William Langland’s *Piers Plowman* which eventually led to use the Piers as one of the “organizational slogans of the rebels of 1381,” in Peasants’ Revolt (Chism 68). Harriet Beecher Stowe’s * Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Jonathan Swift’s pamphlet, *A Modest Proposal*, John Milton’s tract, *Areopagitica* on freedom of press readily come to mind where justice is an underlying quest. In India, the same can be said about Bhakti movement, Sufi poetry (Gopal 179), or to exemplify further, *Nildarpan*, a play on plight of indigo plantation workers by Dinabandhu Mitra (Gopal 1893).

There have been countless works of literature that have engendered, animated or quickened the sense of justice in societies, and likewise many litterateurs have also been viewing literature as expression/aspiration of more just a world. A look at the politically charged works of majority of Nobel laureates of literature is a sign of recognition of the vitality of relationship between literature and justice. Literature, when viewed as a repository

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3 The information is under Note 2 on the page.
of “wide and humane knowledge,” or as “imaginative, creative, artistic, or aesthetically oriented writing,” does participate in the discourses of values of their societies (Harris, “Literature” 193). Out of these values, justice tends to remain pivotal. In ancient societies when hierarchies were an accepted norm justice was a crucial issue, though virtues like prudence, courage and honour were considered prior to justice. In fact, prudence and temperance come before justice in classical cardinal virtues (Simpson 210). Even when slavery was legally sanctioned and categories of lower or higher humans according to social status were operative, the idea of justice had visible currency.

With the rise of individualism, liberty, egalitarianism, and science, the older hierarchies were challenged on the very basis of their being just or unjust. Justice has assumed a more central role in life due to several factors including rising level of education which remoulds and recasts older perceptions. It is studied extensively in humanities and social sciences, but more in latter. Being one of the standard virtues of society, enquiries about justice seek answers to important ethical and legal questions about specific and general societal conditions through multi-/ inter-disciplinary perspectives.

Normative principles of justice are sought in law, philosophy, economics and political science whereas empirical understanding of justice is attempted in social psychology, sociology and economics. Literature bridges this broad bifurcation via asking broad philosophical questions about justice as well as by telling individual stories about its failure. This work does not aspire to employ normative and empirical approaches to justice; nevertheless, insights sans jargon from both have been used to study non-fictional works of Arundhati Roy and Pankaj Mishra. The thesis also steadfastly tries to remain within the bounds of literature by means of situating itself in non-fictional works of these writers.

Definitions of ‘Discourse’
The word ‘discourse’ has been used in the title of the thesis in a particular sense so that its intended implications are not misconstrued. Etymologically, the term ‘discourse’ has been derived from the word *course* which has its roots in “Latin *cursus*, a derivative of the verb *currere*” which means *run* and thus its “earliest meaning in English was ‘onward movement in a particular direction’” (Ayto). According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (8th ed.), *discursus*, the Latin term for ‘discourse,’ literally signifies running to and fro. During mediaeval times, it acquired the sense of ‘argument.’ ‘Discourse’ also implies “a long and serious treatment or discussion of a subject in speech or writing” (“Discourse”). The term gradually gained “much wider meanings” and “implications” (Cuddon, “Discourse”). One of the most comprehensive lists of definitions is provided by Wendell V. Harris in *Dictionary of Concepts in Literary Criticism & Theory* where ten different meanings of this word have been discussed. Harris defines therein discourse also in the sense of “interaction between language and reality that produces experience or the world-as-understood” (66). In explication of this definition, Harris quotes Knoblauch and Brannon to state that discourse “enacts the world,” which means that the world existing out-there changes when human “language and human sense reports” interact with it (68).

This definition broadens the ambit of discourse which partakes of reality in a constitutive manner to shape the world as we make sense out of it. The definition may be illustrated by an example: Vinod Mehta, the founder-editor of the Indian weekly *Outlook* says in an interview that Arundhati Roy’s essay “Walking with the Comrades” has changed the way Maoist problem is seen by the “Indian State” (Mehta). The pronouncement of the then Prime Minister of India vis-à-vis Maoists as single largest internal security threat was thus reviewed. The problem then began to be perceived as that of exclusion and marginalization of tribal people in the central India from viewpoint of basic education and healthcare
facilities. It is in this sense that literary work(s) interact, interpret and alter the world as viewed and understood, and thus open the possibility be interpreted as discourse.

**Key Terms to Understand Justice**

The discipline of philosophy includes works of countless moral and political philosophers, mostly from the west. Justice here has been viewed as fairness, entitlement, equality, and as impartiality (Cullen 17). The other principles of justice include justice as protection and respect of individual rights alongside concept of justice based on needs or merit. Many of these concepts overlap and it is generally a set of criteria rather than a single one that provides the best possible sense of justice. In this way, justice is a dynamic and active idea rather than one which can be pinned down in concrete terms. It may be noted that the discipline of philosophy informs most of other disciplines because philosophical arguments underlie the basic postulates and assumptions that are further expounded upon to enact theories in different disciplines.

The natural world abounds in presence of both equal and unequal characteristics among human beings (Biddiss 280). Human beings compared to other species that share the natural world, are endowed with roughly equal physical and mental qualities; yet these qualities are so wide ranging that clear enough differences are visible in physical and mental capacities of different groups or societies. Within a single, outwardly homogenous society too, these differences are quite vivid. Such differences as embodied in skin colors, shapes, sizes, attitudes, cultural norms, religious affiliations, customs, gender, historical developments, and geographic locales are examples that lend intra-species equality a wide spectrum of diversity. This diversity problematizes the notion of equality but despite that, the arguments for equality are strong.

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4 Pascal says so when he writes that: “Justice and truth are two points so subtle that our instruments are too imprecise to locate them exactly” (20).
The first argument in favour of equality among human beings is due to their equal “physical [and] . . . mental characteristics like rationality or the capacity for morality” (Reeve, “Equality” 173). Despite a lot of differences human beings share a great degree of equality as a species, and viewed as a whole similarities overweigh differences. For instance, presence of sophisticated languages, music and dance in all human societies is an impressive indicator of their equal cognitive capacities and inclinations. The second argument about equality stems from the condition of “shared humanity” which allows for a conception of equality directed towards “equal satisfaction of certain basic common rights and needs” (Biddiss). The third argument is based on the fact that inequalities are so many that to think of a social system based on taking into account all differences is impossible. It is bound to frustrate any rational attempt to do so because no two humans are absolutely equal.

These arguments which may seem to overlook inequality, actually hint at reducing inequalities that are arbitrary from moral perspective. For instance, inequality based on class, race, caste, place or gender is to be gradually diminished to a level where it neither benefits nor harms a person to an unreasonable extent. When species and temporal boundaries are transcended, the arguments about equality extends to environmentalism (various species sharing and sustaining the natural world5) and inter-generational justice: whether present rate of exploitation of natural resources is likely to deprive future generations of many natural goods (Torcello; Keller; Kassner; Bernstein).

Initial human societies were hunter-gatherer as their main challenges would be to cope with and survive in an indifferent or hostile natural world. With the invention of agriculture, societies gradually started changing and upon advent of scientific and technological progress, change became rather unprecedented. These advancements in

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5 “The data irrefutably establish humans as the dominant driver of environmental change, which is something that should worry us all” (Jacquet). Jennifer Jacquet said this in response to an Edge.org question in 2013—“What Should We Worry About?” A similar concern is shared by Martin Rees, a former President of The Royal Society and many others on the same platform. The word anthropocentrism is also an indicator of this idea.
technology enabled human beings to harness natural world for their benefit. Science was able to grow because people were enquiring in new areas of knowledge and contesting older, traditional ways of thinking and knowing. Wherever freedom to enquire, explore, discuss and communicate was curtailed, science would not flourish much. This precondition of a free enquiring individual lies behind the scientific revolution as it also foregrounded individuals and their individuality.

Scientific revolution has been both amoral and contingent. Amoral as it is difficult to ascertain that individual scientists were working from moral/immoral motivations or for such ends. More often scientific discoveries, except when serendipitous, have been results of a curiosity to understand causes of observed phenomenon or of efforts to solve day-to-day human problems; and contingent, because none of it necessarily needed to have happened. For instance, Newton may or may not have discovered the laws of motion and falling apple might have gone unnoticed as it was before him. Though this scientific revolution has led and is still leading to solve many of human problems but it brings its own consequences, like global warming or nuclear armament, which are far more serious, and even apocalyptic than earlier problems of penury and helplessness in a hostile or indifferent world.

Freedom here is not advocated *per se* for freedom to enquire alone. Freedom is also a necessary social value because it allows locating moral responsibility of actions by individual and collective agents. If people are not free to act, it becomes impossible to hold them responsible for their actions. As a result of this, and whole social structure with its mechanism of reward and punishment, becomes untenable and thus seems bound to collapse. The ideas of individual freedom and equality are fairly recent in human history. For instance, an *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article on domestic violence reveals that as late as in the beginning of nineteenth century “most legal systems implicitly accepted wife-beating as a husband's right, part of his entitlement to control over the resources and services of his wife”
It is not difficult to sample social norms in several parts of the world today where these principles of freedom or equality are balked at, thwarted or jeered. Two basic commonalities of hierarchy and justice seem to have existed in all societies. A long history of hierarchical social structure such as divine right of kings, privileges of priestly class, and abject status of women/children has been there but it is unlikely that a society must have existed without some norms of justice. One of the oldest works of literature is Sumerian found on clay tablets and is a poem *The Descent of Inanna* from around 2000 B.C.E. The poem not only mentions justice but has a designate “God of Justice” named Utu (Davis 38). Thus we may assume that notions of hierarchy and justice have ever been intrinsic to all societies even though the content of commonalities therein may vary greatly.

The hierarchies perhaps emanated from minor differences consolidated and sharpened by sustained impact of division of work and responsibilities. Small group research under sociological studies of stratification helps us to understand the phenomena as to “how a status system, albeit on a small scale, emerges in the course of interaction between the members of a group” (Arts and van der Veen 153). This suggests how a “status system” gives birth to hierarchical social structures. Other obvious reasons are vested interests and power politics that nurture hierarchies. Further, people tend to retain privileges once acquired and this is perhaps the main cause of conflict between different political ideologies in understanding, defining, and implementing justice.

A sense of justice, howsoever primitive, may be attributed to human capacity to perceive relationship between cause and effect. This relationship generally seeks balance and proportionality. Scherer puts it thus: “If I hit my brother hard I expect strong blows in return, if I give many of my sweets to him I expect him to give me many of his marbles” (6). Therefore, when individuals interact with others in a society, they imbibe not only prevalent norms of hierarchy and stratification but also “exchange/equity expectations” (7). A girl child
who sees her mother eating last in the family gradually learns the rules of patriarchy. She might have experienced discrimination vis-à-vis a brother, nevertheless, she may question if questioning has not already resulted in unpleasant situations. Moreover, she may further seek equality of opportunity if it has not been repressed earlier. As such, thus may go on until a balance of aspirations and possibilities is reached. This balance is complex and unstable and can be breached from outside of the systems or from within. To continue with the same example: the girl child may be provided extra state care or encouragement or she may get solidarity from some more powerful member of the family towards more equitable and just conditions in the family.

It can thus be observed that old hierarchies are crumbling and newer ones are coming into being. The sense of proportion/balance stays almost in auto-adjusting mode with prevalent hierarchies in a given society. So when a member of perceived lower status interacts with the one from higher one, the prevalent norms of hierarchy inform the expectations of both parties. For example, in Indian caste structure, if a so called low-caste person “kills a man, steals or appropriate land, he should be executed” whereas a Brahmin, a deemed upper-caste, is merely to be “blindfolded” for the same crimes (Olivelle 71). Such stark differences despite being provocative and revolting to the rational view have existed for centuries owing to adjusting of expectations of majority of people. This adjusting can be seen as underlying cause of the acceptance of social practices of slavery and casteism even by the prominent thinkers of respective societies like Aristotle or Gandhi.

Thus freedom and equality may be viewed as philosophical principles, not in utopian sense but in a reasonable, plural, and indispensible sense—the former as a social necessity in fixing moral responsibilities as well as an elbow room to flourish, and the latter as basic term for human worth and aspiration. Coupled with these two is the reciprocity principle which allows cause and effect alongside proportionality to materialize in social sphere. These three
enable us to understand other key terms concerning idea of justice is related viz. impartiality, entitlements, and fairness. Here, it may be pointed out that basic principles of freedom and equality entail a large subject matter of philosophy wherein questions pertaining to their quality/extent assessment are explored and partially answered.

Impartiality principle of justice is linked with the equality principle. If all persons are of equal moral worth, it becomes imperative that they are treated without any partiality. The strongest implication of this principle can be observed in legal and judicial terms. The white female figure of justice with equal balances in hand and a black blindfold on eyes is symbolic way to convey judicial impartiality. It is assumed that institutions which dispense justice or frame policies must not be modelled on self-interest but on principle of impartiality. That the way they function must bear utmost scrutiny, which may help achieve total impartiality.

In fact, impartiality principle of justice also problematizes preferential treatment of people and groups by state institutions. The justification for such a treatment is generally provided through historical reasoning and in consonance with equality of opportunity principle. Particular groups recognized to be underdeveloped, owing to multiple factors, are provided with such partial encouragement to bring them at par with average of the society so that they can avail opportunities at par with rest of the society. Power politics play significant role in getting and maintaining this kind of recognition that enable partial or preferential treatment in allocation of seats, jobs and resources.

Fairness principle of justice is self-evident and the term itself is quite close to the word justice in its implications, nevertheless, it is more closely associated with John Rawls’ work. He propounds his theory in terms of justice as fairness. It includes liberty as highest social good and available equally to all. Inequalities are allowed as long as they benefit to the greatest extent those who are least privileged in the society and that the social and institutional “conditions of fair equality of opportunity” exist for all (Rawls, *Theory* 72). It is
clear that principles of freedom and equality are part of fairness principle but one added aspect to this is care for the least advantaged in the society.

Many of the political philosophers, whose work concerns justice, fall under the social contract tradition. The names like Plato, Thomas Hobbes, Jean Jacques Rousseau and John Rawls are associated with it and its insights still have relevance. It is a hypothetical set of terms and conditions under which “a pre-political or pre-social” people might come to agreement, after being in a state of nature, to frame social arrangements to improve from state of nature (Reeve, “Social” 493). Natural state of man is also conceptualized differently by different philosophers. Hobbes considered people selfish and in need of strict rule from above whereas Rousseau considered them essentially innocent corrupted by modern civilization—such are the starkly different basic assumptions about human nature.

Amartya Sen’s approach in *The Idea of Justice* (2009) parts ways with, and is a response to all previous work on justice in political philosophy. This approach does not assume that it is possible or even desirable to able to come to a conception of a perfectly just society and institution. This is not to say that it is not desirable for institutions of a society to work in as just a manner as possible; it merely seeks to put the utopian reach for a perfectly just society to be a futile or needless attempt. In the preface to the book, Sen writes that “what moves us, reasonably enough, is not the realization that world falls short of being completely just – which few of us expect – but that there are clearly remediable injustices around us which we want to eliminate” (vii).

It is at this juncture that non-fictional work of Arundhati Roy and Pankaj Mishra, as argued in this thesis, contributes to the discourse of justice because it can be seen working towards the “identification of redressable injustices” (Sen, *Idea* vii). These writers’ work entails, what Sen calls, “diagnosis of injustice,” and is “often enough . . . the starting point of critical discussion” (vi-vii) that may lead to a more just world, though ever an imperfect one.
A Brief History of Idea of Justice

Plato’s *Republic* is one of the earliest and the most influential books that discusses justice to a remarkable extent. In this book Socrates invites various people to question and answer about what they understand about justice. He argues against ideas that propound that “justice is nothing else than the advantage of the stronger” (qtd. in Johnston 41) or that it is merely a cloak to veil self-interest.

Socrates divided the just city into three main divisions, almost akin to a non-hereditary caste system. The philosopher-rulers are the people who rule with wisdom and in interest of the city; warriors and soldiers are spirited fellows who help to secure the city from invaders and external aggressors and thus live by the codes of courage and honour; and then there are people like workers, artisans and merchants who are producers and involved in commercial and money making processes which provide for the mundane needs and basic necessities of the city. The respective virtues of wisdom, courage, moderation for the three classes are cemented by justice and together all these broadly provide codes of living according to the class to which one belongs. Justice is the last virtue which allows for pursuance of their class virtue.

A similar tripartite division of soul is seen in each individual, notwithstanding the scope of inner conflicts in absence of a reigning virtue, by the name of the rational, spirited and part that caters to the necessary and unnecessary appetites of the individuals: “The rational part should, rightfully, moderate the appetites and impulses of others and rule over the whole” (49). Justice is then the well-ordered city and an analogous well-ordered soul of the individual which recalls Socrates’ remarks about universe being called “cosmos or order, not disorder or misrule” (Nelson 368).

In Plato’s *Republic* “poetry is carefully censored” because it appeals to emotions rather than reason, which, according to Plato, is reigning virtue of the just and harmonious
state and individual. The young future philosopher-rulers and auxiliaries, collectively called guardians, under the influence of such poetry “instead of learning to control their lives rationally . . . will become subject to their passions” (33).

Aristotle classified six constitutions (monarchy, aristocracy and polity as good ones and tyranny, oligarchy and democracy as corresponding deviations) and rated them from best to worse. He conceived people as social beings, and therefore family is formed on the basis of male-female relationship to procreate, and then group of families making a village and villages joining to form a city. Some humans, according to Aristotle, are devoid of sufficient faculty of reason and are thus fit to be slaves only whereas others (professionals such as artisans and labourers) remain without leisure either to develop intellect or actively contribute to political decision-making processes. Women, though they are not devoid of reason, are more likely to be at the behest of their emotions (Hobbs 25-28).

Aristotle expanded the notion of justice by dividing it into complete and partial types. The former is a virtue of people who in their relations and exchanges promote happiness and well-being of the whole community and the latter distributive and corrective in nature. It is beyond the scope of this work to go into nuanced details of Aristotelian theory of justice but brief takeaway would be the infusion of pragmatic, non-idealistic and context-specific sense of justice wherein proportionality and reciprocity in transactions between citizens of a political community play a pivotal role. The list of non-citizens (slaves, women, children and foreigners), assumed naturalness and necessity of practices like slavery and infanticide are evidence of irrational, ancient and barbaric moorings of Aristotelian conception of justice.

After Aristotle’s death in 322 BC, and next major political philosopher who wrote about politics and justice was Cicero (106-43 BC), who did not consider human beings such that they can be naturally classified into master or slave. He thought about them as born with similar capabilities of reason, nevertheless, he held later education/environment responsible
for marked difference in their development. Cicero also brought the discussion of injustice into the discourse of justice and underscored “ways in which greed, and the lust for power lead to injustice” (Ryan, *Justice* 10). Despite a strong claim on laying the foundations of many disciplines, Greek world was still a violent and very inhospitable place⁶. Writing about a later period, H G Wells wrote in his *A Short History of the World*:

> The soul of man under that Latin and Greek empire of the first two centuries of the Christian era was a worried and frustrated soul. Compulsion and cruelty reigned; there were pride and display but little honour; little serenity or steadfast happiness. The unfortunate were despised and wretched; the fortunate were insecure and feverishly eager for gratifications. . . . Life went on in that key. (ch. XXXVI)

After 313 CE, when Roman emperor Constantine accepted Christianity as state religion, equality of all human beings before God started to reflect in the political thought too. St. Augustine (354-430) wrote *The City of God* to defend Christianity from the alleged cause of fall of Rome (410 CE) after it abolished pagan worship and allegiance with Christianity. Augustine did a historical analysis of Roman Empire and reached a conclusion that earthly people are incapable of peace and love-based political setup, which was possible only in afterlife, in City of God, wherein select few will be allowed to enter who had true faith in and love for God.

While St. Augustine brought in the element of *realpolitik* (human beings as they are rather than how they ought to be) in his thought, he kept the religious ideal along with the secular one. His conception of fallen man was redeemed by the possibility of faith and grace. Machiavelli (1469-1527) jettisoned religious and Platonic ideals, and claimed that justice is sufficient only to be seen and that it is imperative for rulers to be ruthlessly practical and expedient in political matters. Despite an adjectival use of his name to mark cunning and

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⁶ The same may be said for the rest of the world too, but in a context-qualified way.
artifice, Machiavelli advocated everything to “sustain government, and to acquire glory, honour and riches for the rulers and their people” (Wood 323).

The verbal illustration of H G Wells above may corroborate the famous quote by Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) wherein he pictured the lives of people as “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short” (84), even though many centuries elapsed between Hobbes and time described by Wells. The state of nature is without political power/authority, wherein people live a miserable life where there is “war of every one against every one” (84) leading them to arrive at a reasonable contract, that all forfeit some part of their natural right for a sovereign who then rules by enacting laws to create a social world free from daily strife and war.

Hobbes considered men equal in “faculties of body, and mind” (82). He says that in case of physical attributes even the weakest can slay the strongest by secret planning or with help of others. In mental attributes too Hobbes considered people having even more equality in prudence as all acquire experiences of diverse sort and benefit from them. He also observes that the equality causes “equality of hope in attaining our ends” (83). When the resources are scarce this equality causes distrust, ‘diffidence’ à la Hobbes, which in turn paves way for a continual condition of war of each against the other. In a situation like this, nothing is unjust as people use language from their subjective perspectives where one man’s wisdom is another’s cowardice, or one man’s justice is another’s cruelty. This led Hobbes to the premise that these harsh, unrelenting conditions would make all to agree and want an “absolute and arbitrary” sovereign (470). The elaborate arguments for a strong ruler also speak of seventeenth century England where political events like civil war led to further weakening of monarchy and the rise of parliamentary democracy.

Basic assumptions and premises are mostly the cause of extended superstructure of thought systems and in Hobbes the essential nature of man, as conceived by Aristotle as a social being is turned upside down as man is at liberty to act as per his wishes to preserve
himself. But because all are entitled to this liberty, it is only necessary that all agree to be ruled by an absolute sovereign to relieve themselves from the continual state of conflict and strife in order to survive and prosper. The sovereign has the power to erect laws which are commands rather than ethical codes and the terms like justice are devoid of any independent moral meaning except what is attributed to them by the sovereign. Because human beings will attribute meanings to words which reflect their self-interest rather than any other objective criteria, Hobbes claims truth and falsity as “attributes of speech, not of things” (McLean and McMillan, “Hobbes” 245).

John Locke (1632-1704) considered that the state of nature is not as severe or warlike as conceived by Hobbes. It is a condition of complete freedom wherein people follow law of nature. For Locke, the faculty of reason allows human beings to discover laws of nature and in the process they find that all are “equal and independent” and “no one ought to harm another in his Life, Health, Liberty and Possessions” (qtd. in Yolton 278).

Locke’s contribution in political theory includes a theory of property as his sense of justice is intrinsically related to property rights. ‘Property’ here is an extended word that includes persons and their possessions. Earth belongs to all and those who labour to get fruits out of it are entitled to those fruits as long as they are not wasteful and enough is left for others. For Locke justice is “chief law of nature and bond of society” because it “gives every Man a Title to the products of his honest Industry” and “where there is no Property, there is no Injustice” (qtd. in Yolton 106-07). This idea of individual property rights remains alive and tangled with the idea of justice and its current conceptions. Based on this Lockeian idea, even a stratospheric inequality is justified.

Eighteenth century Europe proved a fecund place for ideas that eventually changed the terrain of justice. After Hobbes and Locke, a series of enlightenment philosophers and theorists, some of them men of literature, enhanced the understanding of social world and
man’s place in it. David Hume, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, Cesare Beccaria, and Jeremy Bentham all added to and clarified one dimension of social thought or the other impinging on evolving discourse on justice.

For Hume (1711-76), justice is an artificial virtue which means it does not have roots in nature but in social experience. The sense of justice which is the “source of our obligations” is artificial because “there are no natural motives to supply it” and generally “men do not have any such passion as the love of mankind” (Ayer 109-10). These ideas about sense of justice seem to spring from the Hobbesian conception of human nature in rather primitive state and Locke’s theory of property and contracts. For Hume, justice is valuable “wholly due to social utility” (Raphael 90) and there seems to be no element of human nature which can be called justice-loving. The sense of justice “arises from the combination of . . . a dominant selfishness alongside confined generosity” and “a relative scarcity of goods to satisfy human desires” (99-100). He exemplified his point by saying that idea of justice cannot exist where there is abundance of resources.

Rousseau (1712-78) challenged the Hobbesian conception of man and found him endowed with “the innate principle of justice” (Wolker 110). He considered the society as a factor responsible for corruption of man and thought that morality arose because of “denaturation of man in society” where there are pronounced inequalities between people and no such scale of inequality could have been part of nature (12). The advent of idea of private property was also viewed by him as bringing out worst of human nature in which the “pursuit of honour and public esteem” has turned into “an ignoble and dispiriting kind of competition” and consequently human beings have been living “more anxious and miserable lives than all other creatures” (12). Rousseau attempted to merge larger sense of “justice and utility,” the latter being narrow self-interest, by means of an inevitable social contract in which every citizen is made to be part of the reigning sovereign legislative power (Nelson 233). The
fruition of justice occurs when public good, which Rousseau called general will that is the “will of the body politic as a whole,” is aligned with private will of individuals and provides for “its laws and its standard of justice” (Wokler 86).

Adam Smith (1723-90) also contributed valuably towards the idea of justice though he is rightly associated with economic thought. He insists that “the sense of justice is implanted in human beings” (Johnston 128) from birth, which contrasts with Hume who thought that it is learned through experience. Smith too saw that the “difference between the most dissimilar characters, between a philosopher and a common street porter, for example, seems to arise not so much from nature, as from habit, custom, and education” (qtd. in Johnston 123). Smith stressed moral equality of people and not their socio-political equality. Fleischacker considers Smith “the most egalitarian thinkers in the eighteenth century” in some respects like how people are equal in arriving at moral judgments (496). Smith’s views on virtues of poor workers or his strongly anti-racist, anti-colonialism views also place him among the most egalitarian of thinkers but he also allows for older “hierarchical, honour based values dominant in his time” (496).

Smith considered self-interestedness of individuals as a socially useful trait and his famous statement is worth quoting: “It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest” (qtd. in Chandler 127). Apart from the evident trait of self-interest, Smith also views human beings as naturally disposed to think of others in benevolent and altruistic terms. Smith famously claimed the role of “invisible hand” in helping common good of societies by the aggregated outcome of unintended and unknowing pursuit of self-interest by individuals in a commercial society (215). One of the interpretations of this recognition of mechanism of market has led many to consider Smith as the original hierophant of laissez-faire economic principles in which governments have virtually no role to play except to enforce law by letting the
processes of market transactions and relations work smoothly. But it is a narrow interpretation of Smith’s understanding of human behaviour confining it to their self-interest alone overlooking modicum of mutual sympathy that obtains in human beings: “How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it” (A. Smith 11).

Smith considered justice in terms of maintenance of rights or security from injury. He writes that most important implication of justice “consists in abstaining from harm to other people in person, estate, or reputation” (Raphael 115). Smith also brought the peculiarly imaginative and reflective device of “impartial spectator” to the moral philosophy alongside the role of sympathy, generosity and public spirit in human world (Johnston 117; Sen, Idea 124). Amartya Sen stresses the pioneering efforts of Smith to place human beings in global situations in contrast to relatively parochial considerations of whole social contractarian school of political philosophy where the impartiality is sought from within a society and is a kind of a closed impartiality (“Contemporary” 589). In real world the outsider and distant spectator can bring a necessary detachment of judgment. Sen quotes Smith arguing thus:

We can never survey our own sentiments and motives, we can never form any judgment concerning them; unless we remove ourselves, as it were, from our own natural station, and endeavour to view them as at a certain distance from us. But we can do this in no other way than by endeavouring to view them with the eyes of other people, or as other people are likely to view them. (589)

In fact, the hold of customs and practices of particular societies on their inhabitants is very strong and thus a measure of distance from these societies in the exercise of becoming an impartial spectator can have far reaching impact on the conception of justice in various regions, nations and societies. Sen argues for the relevance of this device of distancing in
dealing with contemporary issues like “the stoning of adulterous women in the Taliban’s Afghanistan, selective abortion of female foetuses in China, Korea and parts of India, and plentiful use of capital punishment in China . . . [and] in the United States” (591).

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) gave the philosophy of utilitarianism wherein the role of any government should be the greatest happiness for the greatest number. As per his assumptions life of human beings is lived according to two all encompassing principles: seeking of pleasure and avoidance of pain. People may have whatever objective in their conscious or unconscious mind; their actions eventually are caused by either for enhancement of pleasure or avoidance of pain. If one can empirically calculate the utility derived from the outcome of a particular act, individual or collective; then it is very easy to determine whether the act increases overall happiness or pain of a people, and to decide whether it is right to do it or not. Bentham also thought it necessary to have a stable social space where scope of randomness in relation between cause and effect is as low as possible and people know the expectation paradigms. Though the element of arithmetic cannot be entirely eliminated from Bentham’s theory but it is taken by his critics to the literal extreme of an image in which the quanta of happiness and pain are weighed. Bentham was perhaps persuaded by the fact of discovery of laws of motion of heavenly bodies. In his own way, like that of Hume who was also in awe of Newtonian discoveries, he tried to formulate accurate human social laws. There are many problems with utilitarianism that seeks to decide actions on the basis of Benthamite “felicific calculus” (Crisp 22). Some of these are: size of population to be considered; very diverse perceptions of people about pain and pleasure where lack of expected pleasure or “states of very low pleasure” may be counted as pain; sacrifice of individual or groups that hold unpopular judgment; lack of moral dimension; lack of a sense of history; and finally a “bogus precision” (Allison, “Utilitarianism”).
One of the major criticisms of Bentham’s utilitarianism is with regard to its endorsement for punishing in excess of the crime if it seems to enhance the overall happiness of a prejudiced majority\(^7\). D. D. Raphael argues that “[c]onflicts between utility and justice are among the most striking of moral dilemmas, and that is why the concept of justice has been ‘one of the strongest obstacles’ to the acceptance of theory of utilitarianism” (137). Later utilitarians along with scholars of utilitarianism, tried to resolve this conflict. John Stuart Mill’s (1806-73) theory of justice is culled from his writings by Barry S. Clark and John E. Elliott. They argue in a way to counter traditional understanding of this important utilitarian philosopher that he could not “construct a unified social theory.” They say thus:

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\ldots \text{since precise knowledge of how best to increase utility is lacking, [Mill] constructs a complex balance of subjective and objective criteria, each serving to restrain the potential damages and enable the potential benefits of the other. In a sense, justice acts as a guardian, preventing short-term subjective interests from undermining the long-term advantages of social institutions and opposing institutional changes that would interfere with legitimate subjective interests. (475)}
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Though Mill leaves “criteria of justice somewhat vague” (477), yet he contributed to the strength of focus on individual in utilitarianism which involves, as Raphael informs, “the idea of a personal right” which was rather obviated in Bentham’s version of it (133). He also tried to “bring an understanding of social and historical context to a science of society modelled on the social sciences” (Buck 603) by opining on most of the important contemporary issues like “voting rights, welfare rights, property rights, taxation, government's role in economic life, and the question of capitalism versus socialism” (Clark and Elliott 478).

Henry Sidgwick (1838-1900) tried to further strengthen the utilitarianism by dealing with its critique. He differentiated between conservative and ideal justice—the former

\(^7\) This is related with Arundhati Roy’s arguments against capital punishment to Afzal Guru discussed later.
catering to existing social structure and the latter towards reform. He also viewed
“reconciliation between these two” as the “chief problem of political justice” (Book III, ch. V, section 3). In description of ideal justice, Sidgwick claims that “pursuit of ideal justice is impossible” (Raphael 146). Therefore, according to him, it is imperative and practicable to look for overall utility of actions because “morality has been unconsciously utilitarian” (141). Despite a seemingly inadequate philosophy which fails to reconcile with concepts of justice, utilitarianism, as per Allison, holds a unique status in the discourse of political justice:

The most important defence of utilitarianism is that there is no alternative to it as a public philosophy- in a secular and pluralist age. . . . [It] makes an important moral demand of those who make policy: they must always consider the ‘bottom line’ of their decisions, who is gaining and who is losing and whether the net aggregate of well-being might not be better served by an alternative. (“Utilitarianism” 554)

Cesare Beccaria (1738-94) was an Italian criminologist who focused on a theoretical framework of legal aspects of crimes and was the first modern philosopher who advocated against the death penalty. Punitive justice, according to Beccaria, should be such that it outweighs the gain from a crime for the criminal, but not in excess so as to become perverse and tyrannical. He was also for an equal treatment of all people before the law irrespective of their social standing. He argued that the “effectiveness of criminal justice depends largely on the certainty of punishment rather than on its severity” (F. Allen).

Edmund Burke (1729-97) is seen as the principal upholder of conservative thought in political philosophy. Burke debunked French Revolution because to overthrow a society on abstract principles, would create chaos and anarchy. Conservatives upheld values of tradition as these alongside associated customs evolved over time and therefore it would not be pragmatic to discard them in favour of some abstract, untested social system. Though Burke, ironically a Whig politician, was associated with major political issues of his time—role of
East India Company in India, American colonies, Ireland, and king’s powers in England—and he often invoked ‘justice’ in those contested issues whatever side he takes, it is difficult to apprehend any cohesive theory on justice by him. One of the reasons for this might be that Burke “believed in obfuscation of principles” because “principles . . . might prove dangerous and counterproductive if made too explicit” (Allison, “Burke” 56).

Later conservatives, called neoconservatives, arose as an intellectual group in America in 1970s bound by a “dislike for communism,” a notably marked but “qualified endorsement for free markets” and “a disdain for the counterculture of the 1960s, especially its political radicalism and its animus against authority, custom, and tradition” (Ball and Dagger). Irving Kristol (1920-2009), one of the prominent founder neoconservatives tried to put a brief on justice. As per Kristol justice in a capitalist society is based on “equality before the law and equality of political rights” and “equality of economic opportunity, reasonably understood to mean the absence of official barriers to economic opportunity” (325-326). People in such an open market society will invariably get rewards “in terms of their contribution to the economy” and thus “economic justice under capitalism . . . is based on their productive input” (327). Kristol dismisses the possibility of a just society and asks to be “somewhat stoical about this . . . basic precondition of social life” because it is not possible to “rid the world of its evils.” Evils like war, poverty, discrimination, and envy once ousted by some means, “will come in through another window in some unseen form.” Capitalist society merely gives a “greater abundance of material goods and a great deal of freedom to cope with the problems of the human condition on your own” (330).

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) discarded the possibility of a coherent and sustained discourse about justice based on happiness principle as utilitarian philosophy did. For him, basic postulate about human beings is their freedom. If human beings are not considered free, they cannot be held responsible for their deeds. Another necessary postulate for Kant is that
human beings are rational. If there is no rational basis for human action, it implies a breakdown of cause-effect relationship. In case of such a breakdown anything is possible and nothing is needed to be justified through its causes. Any act may be preceded, or succeeded by an infinite number of acts and there is hardly any tangible connection that can be understood to lie between cause and effect. So for Kant it is possible to talk of justice or morality only if the postulates of freedom and rationality are in place.

Human beings for Kant are also equal and this equality is absolute in contrast to how it has been considered until now. This absolute equality is derived from Kant’s theory of knowledge in which duality of *homo phenomenon* and *homo noumena* is propounded. The former signifies human beings with their physical and psychological attributes and the latter human beings shorn of all such physical attributes. It is a division “very much like the dualism between body and soul that has played a central role in Christian thinking” (Johnston 149). Correspondingly *phenomenal knowledge* is knowledge through senses, observation and experience and *noumenal knowledge* is inaccessible. For the latter kind Kant gives examples of “freedom of the will, immortality of the soul, and the existence of the God” (148) because knowledge about these cannot be derived from empirical data. For Kant, *homo noumena* of all human beings is absolutely equal. And for justice, freedom of will is an essential postulate. It is a postulate because its existence can neither be proved nor disproved. Kantian theory of justice, thus, is derived from fact of perceiving *homo noumena* as free. It is stated in form of a categorical imperative—categorical because it is applicable to all human beings as a category when they are taken to be free and rational, and imperative because it is a normative command—as he states in its various formulations. One such formulation is this: “Act only according to that maxim whereby at the same time you can will that it should become a universal law” (qtd. in Johnston 150).
The scope of this formulation seems to include inner world of human intentions, objectives, inclinations, and outer world of action. For Kant, that part of categorical imperative dealing with inner world provides “ethical laws” and the rest dealing with action provides “juridical laws” (153). Justice therefore, is political in nature as actions of human beings as members of a community are regulated.

Further, Kant’s theory of justice is based on principles of right: “Any action is right if it can coexist with everyone’s freedom in accordance with a universal law, or if on its maxim the freedom of choice of each can coexist with everyone’s freedom in accordance with a universal law” (qtd. in Johnston 154). Rights, on the other hand, are further divided into private and public rights—the former dealing with “property, transactions, and contracts” and the latter with “the civil condition, that is, the state” (155). Private rights cannot exist without civil condition and a coercive state which can enforce universal principles of right. In effect a state exists to oversee, and educate morally too, that “a just society is one whose members reciprocally respect each other’s rights by refraining from violations of them” (156).

An aspect of Kant’s theory of justice, which is relevant to this thesis, is coercive powers of state. As Johnston put it, Kant “maintains that resistance of any kind to the legislative authority of a state, under any circumstance, is absolutely contrary to justice” and “the subjects of a state owe absolute obedience to its sovereign. His reasoning is that there can be no justice without a state, and that any rebellion, sedition, or resistance to a state constitutes a threat to its very existence, and hence a threat to justice” (161). Johnston attributes this attitude of resistance to Kant because he wrote after French Revolution had shaken the society and had not yet regained a semblance of normalcy. Wolfgang Kersting provides a more nuanced defence of Kant’s ideas on resistance to a state with coercive powers. He says that Kant did not mean to reject resistance to state but only to those states which may be called “rightful states” (360).
freedom and rights and uses terror or violence against its subjects can hardly be called a rightful state. Kersting also claims that not all forms of resistance are prohibited by Kant and a theory of “civil disobedience” can be “appended without the least difficulty to Kant’s philosophy of right” (361).

Before the nineteenth century, the discourse of justice was carried on through the suggestiveness of incremental reform. Throughout sixteenth to eighteenth century, rise of humanism, scientific knowledge and individualism was accompanied with a rising sense of man’s control over social world, which prior to this development was thought as a natural world governed by nature and/or god. Pre-eminent thinkers during these centuries were beginning to see that social world was amenable to human interventions and that it was possible to dismantle older systems of thought and institutions to replace them with newer ones devised by collective human efforts. French revolution of 1789 brought the possibility of radical departures from the feudalistic and medieval remnants of history. The term socialism and accompanying idea came into being in which a collective imagination could actually play a key role in envisaging more just a world.

A still cleaner break from the past came with Karl Marx (1818-83), who viewed human history as that of injustices and struggles between various classes. But his work did not focus on just distribution of social wealth as much as a just control over means that produced wealth. Justice, for Marx, essentially concerns productive forces of society. With scientific revolution—in which Smith’s recognition of the division of labour enabled efficiency and specializations, coupled with advancement in technology of metals, navigation, fuels, locomotion, clothes, printing, and engines—social world changed irrevocably thereby deepening man’s belief in his ability to mould it along with its institution.

Before Marx, G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831) viewed history as that of rising consciousness of the universal mind. To Hegel, individuals were alienated because they fail
to see their and other individuals’ minds as particular manifestation of the universal mind, or “spiritual side of the universe,” (Singer 17) and instead saw others as “something foreign, hostile, and external to themselves, whereas they are in fact all part of the same great whole” (18). The universal mind is arguably akin to religious conception of god. The history of mankind, for Hegel, is one of realization of self-consciousness and freedom of mind or spirit of the man. Unless this sense of unity between particular and universal mind is realized, potential freedom of people and therefore their bid to fashion social world according to their needs and desires cannot be realized. To the more radical and younger people, Hegel’s philosophy, particularly in his *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807), was “mystifyingly presented and incomplete” and had certain religious overtones (22). If the universal mind—as conceived by Hegel and other idealist school of philosophers in the religious terms of “the Spirit, Mind, God, the Absolute, the infinite, and so on”—is replaced by “human self-consciousness,” it eschews religious connotations of the idealist school and comes down to material or practical realities of the world. Resultantly, history becomes the one of human self-consciousness rather than any supposed union with God or the universal mind (24). This also means that the refutation of religious and philosophical discourses is also a necessary precondition to emancipate human beings because unless the history is brought to bear on the material world rather than the ideal world, human history is bound to remain mystified and incomplete. More the human beings invested in the religious conceptions of Hegelian universal mind and associated virtues of wisdom and benevolence to it, more inadequate they conceived themselves and more alienated they felt from the supposed ultimate reality.

Marx began as a Hegelian, which enabled him to see a world driven by consciousness wherein thought precedes existence, but later on Marx reversed this order, on the lines of Feuerbach, thereby believing that existence precedes thought. Once existence in its material form is the starting point, much of the religion and its apotheosis in God stand negated
because god itself turns out to be a creation of human beings. Through this new way of viewing history, Marx proceeds to critique contemporary industrial society where capitalists bear most of the brunt of his criticism as they earn profit by employing wage labourers who are paid less than they deserve. It is important to note that the word ‘deserve’ gives rise to the word ‘desert,’ which can be defined as “[d]eserved benefits and harms.” So is important to see that “how one proposes to distribute benefits and harms, and how one aims to correct past distribution will strongly influence one’s view of justice, and that, in turn, will influence what position one occupies on the political continuum extending between Left and Right” (Kekes).

The principle of desert encompasses idea of reciprocity in social and economic relations wherein people get in proportion to what they contribute to social goods (resources) and bads (penalties/burdens). But according to Marx, such a principle is not deployed in capitalistic societies because source of their profit comes from labour of poorer members of society. Such a society will eventually disintegrate because it is unjust and the history will finally end in a communist society where ultimate freedom of human beings will be achieved. Most of the work of Marx is an extended explication of why and how that disintegration and transformation will occur and is not directly related to justice, nevertheless, it clearly relies on an undercurrent of justice or lack of the same. Apart from the socialist dimension of the principle of desert in which “competent and unbiased authorities allocate rewards according to some collectively defined conception of desert,” there is a liberal dimension to it in which “individuals are as free as possible to enter into transactions with others” (Johnston 181).

Another prominent idea of social justice in the nineteenth century which was later on taken up by Marx, was the idea of need. In his last major work namely *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1891) Marx spelled out the principle of justice thus: “from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs” (qtd. in Singer 84). This principle could be realized in only a communist society. Marx was, to some, quite antagonistic to the idea of justice
because he associated it with the bourgeoisie idea of rights which essentially meant the right to private property, and consequent inequalities as sanctioned by laws of a state. Therefore his idea of justice includes state also as an impediment to human freedom and social justice and he worked largely towards a theory of society in which state is obliterated. In his end of history hypothesis in a communist society, freedom is major achievement where a man can “hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, breed cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner . . . without ever becoming a hunter, a fisherman, a herdsman, or a critic” (qtd. in Singer 80).

According to David Johnston, the principle of need was the “main alternative to the principle of desert for the title of ideal standard of social justice in the nineteenth century” (181). The principle of need also draws its main argument from the equality hypothesis. If all people are roughly equal in capacities and talents, or of absolutely equal worth in Kantian terms, then there is no reason to deny equal satisfaction of their needs to all. For Marx, “in a sufficiently humane society, human beings would treat each other in accordance with the principle of need, without being forced to do so by a coercive state” (185). After Marx, Peter Kropotkin also vouched for the need principle:

The means of production being the collective work of humanity, the product should be the collective work of the race. Individual appropriation is neither just nor serviceable. All belongs to all. All things for all men, since all men have need of them, since all men have worked in the measure of their strength to produce them, and since it is not possible to evaluate every one’s part in the production of the world’s wealth. (19)

Both desert and need based principles have several drawbacks as they are inadequate to provide a comprehensive theory of justice but both have elements which carry persuasive force to keep them from discarding. Desert-based formulation of justice has the contribution and reciprocity principles at its core. Among three “objections” and “difficulties,” with this principle the first is that in a market society where most of wealth is caused by division of
labour, it is not possible to find criteria to assess the contribution of different kinds of labour because the final social product/wealth is accrued by collective labour (Johnston 188). Like a product manufacturing involves many stages managed by many workers, each one of them contributes, and final sum is not through adding individual contributions but complimentarily adding of whole because the one who contributes most is dependent on the supposedly lesser contributors. Second objection concerns changing evaluation in cultural norms towards contributions. For example, in past, song, dance and theatre activity in India was considered socially inferior activity and only certain so-called lower caste people were supposed to pursue these activities. However, with advent of cinema and availability of leisure, scenario has changed and now it is one of the most elite, competitive and remunerative fields. So with change of understanding of objectives or attributes of an activity, value of contribution can undergo drastic changes. Thus contributions of individuals are shaped by institutions and value systems in place. A third problem with principle of desert is presence of people in society who cannot contribute due to reasons beyond their control—people who are sick, old or have physical and mental disabilities. A theory of justice on the basis of principle of desert will essentially look “inhumane” from this third problem’s angle and overall has to contend with “powerful objection[s]” (Johnston 188-91).

The objections are also conspicuous if the fundamental principle for a theory of justice is based on one of needs. For many thinkers, principle of needs is not an aspect of justice at all but of charity and benevolence and thus unenforceable from law. An obvious problem lies in deciding which needs are to be considered definitive for a benchmark and how to distribute responsibilities towards additional work in case aggregate social product is inadequate to fulfil the need for whole society. Similarly the problem of how to distribute

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8 The arguments against merit criteria can extend: for instance a child who is born in conditions where school education is negligible or insufficient cannot be blamed for being uneducated or less educated. One can add contemporary scenario in which only affluent people can afford to send their wards for special coaching and tuition centres which prepare students for highly coveted seats in premier institutes and jobs.
surplus of social product in case of richer societies is also faced. If surplus product is to be
equally distributed in whole society, it requires a lot of sacrifice from people who contributed
more. This means that people need to forgo principle of reciprocity in respect of their
contributions towards total social product. It can be viewed as a loss to more hardworking
people from the viewpoint of justice. Hence, from above discussion, it is clear that “it may be
a mistake to apply a single principle of justice to all subjects” (194).

Twentieth century has been a very violent century wherein two world wars changed
course of history of many a nations and their inhabitants. It was also marked by the change in
forms and degrees of power relations among continents, nations and peoples. Women began
to get education and voting rights. The British Empire gradually lost its colonies and so did
other imperial powers. America rose from a distant and disinterested onlooker to a major and
most influential player in geopolitics. Rise and fall of authoritarian leaders like Hitler, Stalin
and Mao offered a glimpse of horrors of unbridled power in the hands of individuals. While
Africa and Asia gradually and falteringly started their reconstruction in a postcolonial world,
western world went through a protracted cold war. The war ended with disintegration of the
USSR but brought profound changes in Eastern Europe and Arab world. These changes
brought into play small and large currents of globalization of markets, products, technologies,
ideas, capital, and labour. It remained no more possible to talk of nations and continents in
generalizing metanarrativist terms without committing serious errors.

In the era of such momentous changes, discourses of justice played out more in
political and social changes and less in theoretical realm. Utilitarianism began in eighteenth
century, but John Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice* (1971) still responded to it after nearly two
centuries. Despite garnering a wide acclaim, the book failed to provide a theory because its
assumptions were too restrictive and bound to the polity of white Anglo-Saxon world and a
predisposition to liberalist credentials of participant public. Critics found many issues with it
and Rawls himself remained unsatisfied with the outcome of his efforts and continued sharpening his theory all his life.

Robert Nozick (1939-2002) brought out his theory of justice as entitlement in response to Rawls’ justice as fairness. Nozick’s first book *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974) is a “radical, rights-based philosophy which supports a minimum state, eschewing income redistribution, confined to the task of providing security of person and property” and later on he too “did register disagreement with the theory set out in his first book” (White). Nozick raises several pertinent questions, but abstains from answering them. The key question concerns about historical deviations from the principles of justice in acquisition and transfer: “How far back must one go in wiping clean the historical slate of injustices? What may victims of injustices permissibly do in order to rectify the injustices being done to them, including the many injustices done by persons acting through their government? I do not know of a thorough or a theoretically sophisticated treatment of such issues” (Nozick 152).

According to Nozick’s theory, welfare state is an unjust state because it tries to redistribute social resources. Therefore, the state should be diminished to a minimal night-watchman level, as it were, to protect people’s possessions. This theory runs in vague indeterminacy when historical wrongs are cited wherein people acquired properties through power of swords or based on more power-based deceptive arguments of divine right, or when kings granted lands and titles in unreasonable/whimsical manner. A relevant question in this regard in Indian context concerns role of state in mineral rich tribal lands where local owners remain incapable/unwilling to extract those minerals.

David Miller views justice in terms of three basic principles of rights, deserts, and needs. Justice according to him thus is “a distribution of benefits and burdens as called for by rights, or by deserts, or by needs” (Raphael 184). Rights-based conception is conservative conception of justice that allows protection of rights, including that of property. Other two
have reformative and ideal leanings which can alter even the rights if such a need arises.

Miller also brings out the relationship between norms of justice and social structure. Three kinds of social structures — primitive, hierarchical, and market society — relate differently with concepts of justice. As per Miller, in primitive societies there is a “network of reciprocity” (190) between members and generosity towards needy. Both rights and needs are meted out through mutual generosity and an exercise of transactions through less strict than contemporary sense of property and other rights. Merits/desert-based concept of justice, is affected through social recognition and honour rather than “material benefits” (190). In a hierarchical society, such as feudal societies of Western Europe, which is selected by Miller as an example, people observe “reciprocal obligations between inferiors and superiors” (191). Justice is largely an “observance of the law” along with a “relief of need.” Rights are protected through law and needy are helped through tenets of Christianity and not through norms of justice. Hierarchical societies, of which a caste society is the “purest type,” have hardly any concept of desert which came into full operation only in a market society (191). Market society thus holds concepts of justice based on rights and deserts but principle of need remains a contested claim for justice norms.

John Rawls (1921-2002), an American political philosopher, views his theory of justice in term of fairness and thus wants to provide an alternative to utilitarianism. In this theory a liberal society is the basic assumption wherein people form social institutions that can be called just, if they are assumed reasonable to the extent that when they are left free and are allowed to pursue their self-interest, they seek to reach a kind of social contract. A well known device for this conception of justice based institutions is the “original position” under “veil of ignorance” (Rawls 15). It is a thought stratagem in which participating individuals are led to a state of mind (without depriving them of their rationality or self-interest) in which they are all ignorant of their particular attributes and preferences like gender, place of birth,
parentage, class, belief-affiliations, talents, history or other socio-cultural identities. In this state of ignorance if they are asked to devise social institutions, it is assumed that they will most likely construct social institutions which will dispense justice to all. This likely outcome is based on the assumption of human rationality because a person will keep likelihood in mind that it may turn out that he/she may be having any of the attributes. The institutes thus conceived cannot ignore aspirations of least advantageous people or groups. Rawls lays out two principles of justice for a “well-ordered society” (8):

a. Each person has an equal right to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties which is compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for all.

b. Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions. First, they must be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they must be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society. (Sen, Idea 59)

It is notable that Rawls’ principles of justice are inclusive of all of the previously discussed principles of justice, i.e., freedom, entitlement and impartiality, but not in toto.

Primacy of liberty or freedom is safeguarded by Rawls by giving it the top precedence among two principles. That is, liberty is to be the first value to be made equal for all and later to be extended to opportunities and other social goods. These principles allow for freedom and opportunities but also include an assessment of conditions of least advantaged people in society. In this sense, a larger moral sense of fairness is part of these principles because it restricts virulent self-interests by constantly reminding its members of people in least advantageous circumstances. Fair equality of opportunity indicates a condition of impartiality and scope for entitlements modified to take care of similar opportunities for all. Rawl’s theory takes care that underdogs of the society are not to be uncared for and inequalities are allowed in such a way that they are of maximum advantage to the least privileged.
Amartya Sen’s *The Idea of Justice* came in 2009 and it is a fresh but critical look on discourse of justice thus far. It is highly but gently critical of contract tradition (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, and Rawls) that focused more on devising perfectly just society and its institutions. Sen writes that it is unlikely that people will gradually or eventually come to habit of living according to the principles of thus conceptualized institutions and societies. In a very nuanced and methodical manner Sen argues that even if it is possible to devise theory for such ideal and just institutions in a society it is unlikely that such a theoretical construction can convince all. It is rather the perception of injustice which moves people, and it should be further scrutinized and critically examined, Sen suggests. In fact “identification of redressable injustice” is the “central point” of theory of justice according to Sen and it is also many times the “starting point of critical discussions” (*Idea* vii-viii).

The indispensible role of reason is highlighted by Sen, though he did emphasize the importance of emotions, which may lead to erroneous thinking and actions, unless they have undergone sufficient critical scrutiny. The fact that human beings can all think and act reasonably (given that a tendency to adhere to unexamined beliefs is to be continuously challenged), is a much needed trait to achieve ethical objectivity, which in turn is important to understand justice. Objectivity, in general as well in ethical beliefs, is “linked . . . to the ability to survive challenges from informed scrutiny coming from diverse quarters” (45). Sen also invokes the impartial spectator here because this distancing device has a potential of viewing a situation with such scrutiny from diverse quarters.

Thus, justice according to Sen is highly context-sensitive and pluralistic. He gives an interesting example to illustrate this pluralistic conception of justice. A flute is to be given to any one of the three children. Anne can play flute well, Bob is so poor that he has no toy to play with and Carla has worked hard for months to make that flute. Sen writes that if we are not aware of the rest of the two’s claims, any one’s might seem a very strong reason to be
given that flute. Once it is known that three children’s claims are facts—that Anne can play it well, Bob is poorer than two and has no other toy, and Carla made the flute through her labour—it becomes amply clear that competing claims do not allow to proceed to one final just way to give away that flute to one of the children (12-15).

So as per Sen, despite the necessity of application of reason, it is not always possible to arrive at a single resolution in a decision making process. The discussions on the egregious presence and possible ways to remedy the forms of injustices like “iniquities of hunger, poverty, illiteracy, torture, racism, female subjugation, arbitrary incarceration or medical exclusion” (96) requires comparative approach rather than contract or transcendental approach where a single best outcome is sought. This leads to the understanding of democratic processes as constituting forms of reasoning in which a host of multiple, distant and near spectators participate. It may thus be called the public reasoning, with open impartiality in contrast to closed, leading to resolutions of issues of grave importance and enabling people to live lives with full realization of their capabilities.

Amartya Sen’s book on justice begins with a quote from Great Expectations by Charles Dickens. Pip says that in the world of children nothing is “so finely perceived and finely felt, as injustice” (Idea vii). That even children perceive injustice and unfairness indicates a precocious human capacity to detect injustices. But it does not reveal the opposite: they often fail to perceive themselves perpetrating injustice, or may even do so consciously using defective or private reasoning. Political and social institutes are meant to persuade people to be sensitive towards justice and a primary function of constitutions, judiciary, bureaucracy, education, and media ought to be in persuading people in that way. Public reasoning actually depends on discourses threading all these institutional structures. Literary writers unwittingly partake in those discourses irrespective of their politics. Arundhati Roy and Pankaj Mishra do so consciously and this thesis argues that their work offers tremendous
possibilities to be interpreted as a discourse and as an endeavour to achieving more just a society.

**Arundhati Roy: Life and Work**

Arundhati Roy was born on 24 November, 1961 in Shillong in north-eastern state of now Meghalaya in India to a Bengali Hindu father and Syrian Christian mother from southern state of Kerala. Her parents separated, in 1963, when she was about two years old. Her mother Mary Roy came to Ooty where Mary Roy’s father had a cottage and then two years later she went to Kerala. Arundhati Roy’s childhood is spent in a village named Aymanam. Her mother ran a school in which she, along with her brother, read when it was started. The school was run in a make-shift way as it was a Rotary club premise in the night and doubled as a school in the day. Arundhati Roy left home for secondary studies in the “Lawrence boarding school at Lovedale in Tamilnadu” when she was sixteen (Tickell 13). She then enrolled as an architecture student in the premier School of Planning and Architecture in New Delhi. After turning eighteen she declared independence from home which meant she had to henceforth meet her own expenses. This was one of the reasons that she lived in a squatter’s colony in a tin-roofed hut. Here she lived with her boyfriend, Gerald da Cunha, whom she married and later went away with to Goa. She lived there for only seven months and came back to Delhi. She annulled her four years old first marriage in which she entered when she was a student of architecture. Back is Delhi she took a job with National Institute of Urban Affairs and lived in a *barsati*, a shack, near Nizamuddin. She used to rent a bicycle for two rupees a day for commuting and one day while she was doing so was spotted by Pradip Krishen who offered her a role as a tribal girl in the film *Massey Saab*. Soon after she got a scholarship to Italy for eight months from where she wrote letters to Krishen and these letters precipitated a confidence to become a writer. The association between the two lasted. Roy and Krishen, married by now, made two more films, *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones* and
Electric Moon; an aborted tele-serial Bargad and for all these Roy wrote script while Krishen
looked at other aspects of film-making.

She first wrote a largely unknown, and hard to find book on Soviet Union in
Afghanistan entitled Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan: Causes, Consequences and India's
Response. After that she wrote seathingly critical review essay on Bandit Queen, a film by
Shekhar Kapur wherein she defended the dignity of the famous bandit Phoolan Devi who has
been wronged by the filmmakers, as per Roy, on the pretext of telling the truth of bandit’s
Taking advantage of her fame, she repeatedly wrote and spoke on several contentious
political issues, and is still doing so. Her essays after the only novel she wrote from July 1998
up to June 2002 are published collectively in the book titled The Algebra of Infinite Justice.
With a foreword by John Berger, the collection contains her early essays on nuclear
armament of Indian subcontinent, big dams, privatization of power, role of experts and
writers, American war in Afganistan post-9/11 and Gujrat pogroms in 2002. Second volume
of her fourteen non-fiction pieces written from June 2002 to November 2004 is titled An
Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire (2005). As its blurb informs, it is a collection of articles,
and, lectures, talks, broadcast, speeches and public addresses in which “she draws the
thread of empire through seemingly unconnected arenas, uncovering the links between
America’s war on terror, the growing threat of corporate power, the response of nation states
to resistance movements, the role of NGOs, caste and communal politics in India, and the
perverse machinery of an increasingly corporatized mass media.”

Fourteen interviews conducted between January 2001 and March 2008 constitute the
content of Roy’s next book, The Shape of the Beast (2008). Ranging from personal to
political, local to international, these interviews cover and clarify what is already done in her
previous work and take on fresh questions. Her next book Listening to Grasshoppers: Field
Notes on Democracy was published in 2009. It contains eleven pieces reinforcing issues already touched upon in earlier books. Some pieces are topical (such as hanging of Afzal Guru, George W. Bush’s visit to India, Supreme Court verdict on Delhi ‘unauthorized’ shops and slums), others deal with bigger questions concerning role of institutions, people and ideologies in democratic set-ups.

Broken Republic was published in 2011 and contains her latest three essays including the famous one on “Walking with the Comrades.” Even though, this essay is about a remote and inaccessible tribal hinterland, it was read across many parts of the world. When asked a question about the essay in an interview in The Paris Review, She said, “… when I went into the forest, my idea was that nobody really knew what was going on in there. These places were choked off; there was a siege on reporting. But what was real and what was not? I wanted to go in and deepen the story, to make it more human.” (“Arundhati”). Aimed at English reading public the book draws a big picture of ideas of development, progress, justice, democracy, violence, etc. through the tribal people’s tribulations and surviving strategies. The last essay titled “Capitalism: A Ghost Story” deals with the neo-capitalistic web of military-industry-political complex and, she argues how its tentacles are spreading across the world and are comparable with imperialistic excesses of the colonial times.

In 2014 Roy also wrote a book length introduction entitled “The Doctor and the Saint” to a 1936 classic, Annihilation of Caste by B. R. Ambedkar. With this Roy reinvigorated the discussions and debates on caste and its ramifications in India. She also wrote a long essay “My Seditious Heart” in May 2016 on occasion of nationalism debates aroused by apprehension of a few students by Indian government on charges of sedition. The essay provides a glimpse into history and currency of reactionary forces in India. With John Cusack, Roy also co-authored a small book Things That Can and Cannot Be Said in 2016 based on their meeting with two major whistleblowers about the USA government and its
auxiliary institutions such as CIA. Once again the book reveals how power and justice remain largely antagonistic values and how it is sometimes dangerous to stand with justice.

Roy has won many prizes and accolades for her work. Her screenplay for the English film *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones* won the National Film Award for Best Screenplay in 1989. The Booker Prize win of 1997 was followed in 2002 by Lannan Foundation Prize for Cultural Freedom. She was also in a list of 50 Most Beautiful People in the World published by *People* magazine in 1998. In 2004 she won the City of Sydney Peace Prize. In the same year she shared the Orwell Award by National Council of Teachers of English with investigative journalist, Seymour Hersh of America, which “recognizes writers who have made outstanding contributions to the critical analysis of public discourse” and “honesty and clarity in public language” (“George”). In 2006, she was awarded Sahitya Akademi award for *Algebra of Infinite Justice* but she refused it owing to her political differences with state policies, which she has questioned in the same book. She received Norman Mailer Prize for Distinguished Writing in 2011. In 2015 she was awarded the Ambedkar Sudar award. She has been on the lists of world’s foremost thinkers and public intellectuals by various magazines and surveys conducted by *Prospect* and *Time* magazines and *Foreign Policy* journal. Apart from her non-fictional writings, Arundhati Roy’s ideas are available through her talks, lectures, discussions and interviews on internet. All of this primary material has been availed of in this thesis.

**Pankaj Mishra: Life and Work**

Pankaj Mishra was born in 1969 in town of Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh. His work of last two decades has put him in elite circle of international commentators and thinkers who are asked about some of the most difficult questions of our times pertaining to foreign policies of nations as powerful as the US, cultural and sociological trends in Indian subcontinent, China and elsewhere, relations between East and West, etc. Despite the range of his genre-
transcending work, Mishra is essentially a person belonging to literature in English. After obtaining a Bachelor of Commerce degree from Allahabad University, he did his masters in English from Jawaharlal Nehru University, which he terms as “pointless” from the viewpoint of what he wanted to be (Mishra, “Basic”). He then went on to settle in a rural Himalayan village called Mashobra near Shimla for few years where he read a book a day. Viewed thus, Mishra is largely a self-taught person, that too in literatures in English from across continents. A logical consequence of this voracious reading was a drift from core literature (fiction and story-telling) to political and social thought. A brief overview of his work discussed below corroborates this.

Mishra started with literary reviews for Indian newspapers during his early twenties, which eventually got him an invitation to write his first full-length book, *Butter Chicken in Ludhiana*. Published in 1995, this is a travel book recounting Mishra’s journeys across small towns of India. The next book was *The Romantics*, a novel published in 1999—Mishra’s only work of fiction till date. This novel won the *Los Angeles Times* Art Seidenbaum Award for debut fiction and was well received in critical circles. Henceforth, Mishra’s growth as a writer was marked by his concern for world at large and Asian societies in particular. His literary-journalistic writings remarkably reflect his evolution through regular contributions to book-reviews, op-ed columns, reputed papers and magazines like *New York Review of Books*, *Times Literary Supplement*, *New Statesman*, *Guardian*, *New York Times*, *Outlook*, etc.

His next book, *An End to Suffering* (2004), was subtitled as *The Buddha in the World* blending and bending genres as it presented a unique admixture of history, philosophy, travel journal and autobiography. Here Mishra journeys around and muses about Buddha and his roots. This book was hailed and appreciated by critics. It has a fascinating take on how even spirituality informs politics and vice-versa. It also augurs how politics was going to become most crucial for Mishra eventually.
Mishra also edited an anthology of writings on India in 2005 titled *India in Mind*. It contains twenty five authors, mostly European or American introduced individually by Mishra alongside selections from their work which reflects the India they saw, experienced and/or judged. The selections are from books representing different genres by as different writers as Robyn Davidson, Allen Ginsberg, Rudyad Kipling, Claude Levi-Strauss, V.S. Naipaul, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Octavio Paz, etc. Some well-known and others lesser-known, the writers in this anthology expand the scope of Indology as it also reflects Mishra’s wide range of readings and his abiding interest in India along with diverse responses that it evokes. *Temptations of the West: How to be Modern in India, Pakistan and Beyond* came in 2006 clearly stating Mishra’s engagement with countries of Indian subcontinent and their troubled journeys to modernity. The canvas of this book covers five countries namely India, Pakistan, Afganistan, Nepal and Tibet. Part exploration and commentary and part a query and an answer to the process of how to become ‘modern’ in these countries, the book is an account of Mishra’s travels and readings in these politically troubled nations. In its foreword, Mishra writes that “Western ideologies, whether of colonialism, or of communism and globalization, have confronted the countries I visited . . . with the same challenge: modernize or perish. But the wrenching process of remaking life and society. . . frequently collapses in violence, affecting not just South Asia, but also. . . the West” (i).

In 2012, Mishra published *From the Ruins of Empire*, a research based argument on how intellectuals of the East (or the non-West) grappled with colonial excesses in 19th and 20th centuries and how the latter’s legacies have still been playing out in these parts of the world. It also argues that for majority of the people of world, central historical events of 20th century were not the World Wars (hot and cold) and fall of communism, but gradual unyoking of colonized societies across the world. The book has been amply appreciated; so
much so that Mishra is being compared to Edward Said. In some of his insights, he is more accessible, if not profounder than Said. For example, when he writes thus:

Asian beneficiaries of globalization project an image of a confident and self-aware people moving as one towards material fulfilment and international prominence. But India displays even more garishly than China the odd discontinuities induced by economic globalization: how by fostering rapid growth in some sectors of the economy it raises expectations everywhere, but by distributing its benefits narrowly, it expands the number of disenchanted and the frustrated, often making them vulnerable to populist and ethnocratic politicians. At the same time the biggest beneficiaries of globalization find shelter in such aggressive ideologies as Hindu nationalism. (308)

Mishra has joined Bloomberg group, a major media conglomerate, where his opinion pieces on sundry political issues appear frequently and regularly. These pieces are small but important in the sense that they project a judicious and sometimes prescient view of the political developments across the world. For example, Mishra notes how lack of leadership and vision in Asian countries like Japan and India tilt their political bosses to use ploys of nationalism because “[n]ationalism remains, despite decades of economic and cultural globalization, the default escape mode for politicians in trouble; and . . . populist amplifications of it can quickly destroy the geopolitical equilibrium achieved by deeply interdependent economies” (“Asian”). Wrapping current events of broad region like that of Asia, into the larger frame of humanistic discourse based on his philosophy of “quiet but firm” (“Barbara”) support to the powerless (thus strength to ideas of justice and democracy by reducing biases), Mishra challenges the commonplace takes on current events. Range of this kind of literary journalism holds a unique place in Mishra’s work and therefore, its select parts have been examined in the thesis.
Mishra’s last published book so far is *A Great Clamour: Encounters with China and Its Neighbours* and is a collection of essays that cover vast Asian continent. Here again he is able to sift a lot of material based on his readings, travels and encounters with people in to narratives centered on common people and how their lives fare in currents of history and politics. His forthcoming book *Age of Anger: A History of the Present* continues in the tradition of literary non-fiction. Gauging from the essays Mishra has written prior to the book publication, it can be said that he calls for an unorthodox vision and vocabulary to understand the contemporary age which is marked by hyper-inequalities in economic and social conditions across the world and rising potential for terror and counter-terror. He also finds that high-gear and great inequalities of capitalism have rendered the hoary ideological divisions of left, right and centre as useless and annulled the idea of democracy (“Welcome”; “How Rousseau”; “Anti-Elite”; “Divided”).

Pankaj Mishra has been nominated for and won several awards. His novel *The Romantics* won the Los Angeles Times’ Art Seidenbaum award for First Fiction in 2000. His book on Buddha *An End to Suffering* was selected in Books of the Year by *Evening Standard* and *Guardian*. His book *From the Ruins of Empire* won Crossword Book Award in India in 2013. It also won Leipzig Book Prize for European Understanding in 2014, a singular achievement because his was the first non-Western book to have won this German award. In the same year, Mishra won Windham-Campbell Literature Prize established at Yale University, which includes a citation and cash prize of $150,000, and is one of the biggest amounts given in literary prizes.

**Review of Literature on the Works of Arundhati Roy and Pankaj Mishra**

Work on Arundhati Roy is of two kinds. First is the academic research like the present one here wherein mostly her novel, and at times her essays are studied from different

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9 See Mishra’s interview titled “Where’s the Rage?” with Kamila Shamsie in *Guernica* magazine.
perspectives. They count in hundreds and are growing. Some academic research connecting Roy’s activism with her praxis of writing has also been done. Second comprises short essays and papers that appear either in edited books, journals, news magazines or newspapers. The work which concerns only *The God of Small Things* is irrelevant here even though it can be said with some conviction that the quick, and mostly inferior work (pricy, self-published or published through some obscure publisher) is indicative of scramble for book sales on notable works that may become essential for literature review by researchers and thus require to be purchased for institutional libraries.

Murari Prasad has edited a book of essays by various writers titled *Arundhati Roy: Critical Perspectives*. Published by Pencraft International of New Delhi in 2011, it contains a small foreword by Bill Ashcroft and 10 essays/articles and an interview with Roy by N. Ram. Most of the pieces in this book have been published elsewhere. Some of the commonplace criticism is tersely presented by Amitava Kumar who asserts that “most Indian writers in English are simply reporters to the west” in “bad prose” and are “rank individualists” who “sell their souls to fame and become its servitors.” Roy is an exception that made Kumar see her as “perhaps most important writer in India familiar to the west since Rabindranath Tagore” who has widened the discourse on the issues which she chose to speak about beyond the usual reach of erudite op-eds (qtd. in Prasad 28-30). Aijaz Ahmad, an academic of leftist leanings wrote a review essay for *Frontline* in August 1997, which is reprinted in this book. Titled “Reading Arundhati Roy Politically,” Ahmad lavishes praise in a backhanded way by pointing flaws in *The God of Small Things* on various counts: that it is “overwritten”; “panders to the prevailing anti-communist sentiment which damages it both ideologically and formally”; and that it faults in “the way it depicts and resolves issues of caste and sexuality” because, Ahmad says, “the novel does stake its transgressive and radical claim precisely on issues of caste and bodily love” (qtd. in Prasad 32-35). Though the criticism pertains to the
novel, Ahmad’s critique seems dated because Roy’s later work not only clearly declared her sympathies with the oppressed, or the masses—if that is meant by communist sentiment by Ahmad; she also affronts what the neat pigeonholing critics like to presume, or hastily arrive at about writers and their works. It illustrates Roy’s refusal to look through the entrenched ideologies despite her criticism by avowed leftists alongside the rightists and nationalists.

Another essay in this collection is by Bishnupriya Ghosh on “Tallying Bodies: The Moral Math of Arundhati Roy’s Non-Fiction.” This essay claims to have covered most of Roy’s non-fictional corpus, but the way it has been done is peculiarly obfuscating:

If the writer’s over-exposed star body hides the bodies of many, the body of the activist is somewhat differently positioned in relation to troubled world that Roy seeks to render visible. Instead of concealing or obliterating a social world that gives it form, the activist’s body indexes a populace, usually a politically mobilized population demanding recognition and, ideally, redress. (qtd. in Prasad 131)

Perhaps owing to the title, Ghosh used words such as ‘body’/‘bodies’ repeatedly in her rather tedious effort and unwittingly entered into ideological confrontation with Roy’s work. Whereas Roy’s work tends to stretch as well as cross the usual limits of discourse by simplifying the complex phenomenon, Ghosh’s critical gaze at best tends to approximate it and at worst reduces its scope via needless verbosity. Ghosh’s summation: “when we pay close attention to Roy as rhetorician, then only can we understand her capacities as mathematician, and the biting thrust of the moral math that many would rather not feel. We apprehend the body count in our bodies or at least in those pressing close around us” (148), simply states that Roy’s “moral math” (read sense of justice) is infectious and may transform the reader who cannot help empathizing with the ignored or marginalized.

The editor, Murari Prasad, has contributed an essay, apart from an introduction to the book, on “Articulating the Marginal” and it analyzes the novel and The Algebra of Infinite
Justice. This makes the book only marginally relevant, and dated too, although it was published as late as 2011. In fact, the initial shortest piece by Amitava Kumar and Roy’s interview by N Ram are perhaps the only relevant pieces, both reprinted from elsewhere. Apart from this, the book is marred by carelessness clearly discernible in small biographical notes of the contributors wherein “to be published in 2006” appeared more than once, even though the book came out in 2011, giving plenty of time to detect and amend such errors. Globalizing Dissent, edited by Ranjan Ghosh and Antonia Navarro-Tejero which contains eleven essays on, and an interview with, Roy under the series called Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought 2009 seems more important. That Routledge published this book under the category namely “Social and Political Thought,” is itself telling. Most of the first section of this book is about viewing Roy’s novel from various academic and edifying angles (“The God of Small Things as Derridean Ghost Story,” “Liminality in The God of Small Things,” “Magic of Contained Space in The God of Small Things,” etc.). The second section deals with sundry topics like committed writer/writing, juxtaposing Noam Chomsky and Arundhati Roy and study of their analytic style, globalization, environmental feminism, limits of dissent in case of Narmada Dam, etc. It ends with an interview with Roy, who while answering to a question on dissent highlighted the importance of “dissent [that] has to be localized.” This problematizes the title of the book as it underscores the importance of localizing dissent, as a counter to globalizing it and thus letting it “morphed into NGO-ization of dissent” (Ghosh and Navarro-Tejero 201).

Most of the articles and research projects that have been written on Arundhati Roy revolve around her debut novel; fewer concern her later writings that are non-fictional and profoundly political. Another interesting facet of the critical work done on Roy is that it is scattered all over the internet ranging from casual comments by readers to serious and engaging reviews. However, for the purpose of this thesis, due care has been taken to include
prominent and visible critical voices only. The key objections to Roy’s political writings have been from Ramchandran Guha, B.G. Verghese and Gail Omvedt. Guha, for instance, responded to Roy’s espousal for Narmada Bachao Andolan by writing an article wherein he criticized her for being “unoriginal,” and her “literary craftsmanship” as “self-indulgent and hyperbolic” (Guha). Senior journalist, B.G. Verghese also responded to Roy’s essay on “The Greater Common Good” by praising the article for its “charming” poetic prose but criticizing on account of facts that “spread disinformation” (“Poetic”). He also treated another major essay, after a long gap of more than ten years, on “Walking With the Comrades” by Roy similarly and found it as an argument supported by “misguided ideologues” like herself rather than those who want democracy and constitution to prevail (Verghese, “Daylight”). Roy views cost of big dams in human and ecological terms and analogized it with cost of nuclear bombs and writes thus: “Big Dams are to a Nation’s ‘Development’ what Nuclear Bombs are to its Military Arsenal. They’re both weapons of mass destruction. They’re both weapons Governments use to control their own people” (Roy, Algebra 136). Besides writing an open letter to Roy, Gail Omvedt also contributed an article entitled “Dams and Bombs” to The Hindu expressing disagreements and raising questions on various issues including: NBA as a movement led by “urban elites” and their relationship with rural poor they represent or organize; need for development for irrigation and piecemeal improvement of flaws in big dams and seeking better alternatives rather than a summary rejection of big dams; and development as a key way to dismantle old oppressive caste and class hierarchies (Omvedt).

Roy’s, and her supporters’ response to such arguments has been analyzed herein to ascertain as to whether debates on these issues are pointless ego-clashes, or the content therein engage with broader issues concerning justice and democracy. This will help in situating Roy’s work between unqualified appreciation and unmitigated criticism that she draws with each act of her writing based on careful research and knowledge of ground reality.
Critical work on Mishra is scarcer than on Roy, which could be taken as an opportunity to critique the former’s work from the viewpoint of social and political ideas of justice and democracy. Margery Sabin wrote a book titled *Dissenters and Mavericks: Writings About India in English, 1765-2000* in which last chapter is solely on Pankaj Mishra and whom she chooses as one of the dissenters and mavericks of the Indian writing in English. Drawing from Mishra’s early work including his novel and literary journalism, Sabin posits the potential of Mishra as a writer with distinctive stature where he “stands out among postcolonial critics for the wide range of literary reference he seeks for his judgments” (175). Sabin further writes in the same pages thus:

Mishra has been marking out a different, more contentious conception of postcolonial cosmopolitanism. The ‘diversity’ of India, in his writing, involves mutually suspicious divisions in often violent conflict with each other. The new global culture is shown to have produced new kinds of tensions and repellent combinations, such as those he remarks between prosperous Indian communities in America and extreme nationalist groups in the homeland. Mishra has been reaching for a kind of cosmopolitanism calculated to shake up Indian, and then also American, complacency by importing into Indian discourse standards and critical values acquired through wide reading in European as well as South Asian history and literature. (190)

Since 2002, when Sabin wrote this probably first academic essay on him, Mishra has not only expanded on the standards Sabin has alluded to but has also enriched discourses, among which one on justice seems his singular focus. He has also registered his indelible mark in literary historiography by contributing his critical essay on R. K. Narayan in the latest history of Indian literature in English edited by Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (Mishra, “R. K. Narayan”).
Thus, from the above survey of criticism available on Roy and Mishra, it becomes
evident that their non-fictional corpus has not been analysed from the viewpoint of discourse
of justice with a comparative slant. This thesis thus, is a contribution to Roy and Mishra
scholarship from the viewpoint of discourse of justice as it emerges as the locus and mainstay
of their non-fictional universe with all its layered and complex implications. It has been
divided into four chapters preceded by an introduction and followed by a conclusion.
The first chapter “Literature and Idea of Justice” is divided in two major sections wherein
selected essays of Roy and Mishra have been studied from the perspective of justice. Roy’s
essay on nuclear weapons questions notion of development; detailed manifestations of which
in Narmada valley have been dealt by Roy in another. The essays on terrorism/ counter-
terrorism, corporate globalization and how these broad-based and international phenomenon
fare vis-à-vis idea of justice, has also been examined in a detailed fashion. Second section
takes up essays by Pankaj Mishra which provide enough textual evidence to be studied from
the viewpoint of justice. Part of his work clarifies how phenomenon such as European
imperialism in Asia and Africa has permanently altered the shape of the history and how
terrain of justice is too altered by that has been also studied in detail.

The second chapter “Literature, Democratic Practices and Delivery of Justice”
extends the arguments about justice to include democracy and how the latter is justice
incarnate in societal arrangements. Its first part takes up Roy’s essays on role of caste,
religion and media in India and how these concern the spirit of democracy. Her essays on
Adivasis have also been studied in a subsection to delineate how a democracy treats these
people. Second part of this chapter takes up those of Mishra’s essays that portray how in
countries like Nepal, Tibet and China the notion of democratic spirit has been conspicuously
deficient.
“Canon, Genre and Political Writer” is the third chapter wherein it has been argued that Roy and Mishra’s non-fictional corpus has been unduly marginalized in the annals of literary history and canons. After raising normative objections to this bias, extensive evidence has been presented to claim that it is on account of the marginalised status of essay in literary genres and also owing to overt political content therein that the genre has been relegated to an inferior position. The need of the hour is to resituate the essay in literary canon so that its much deserved status could be restored.

The last chapter “Towards Defining the Role of a Writer in Society” helps delineate the role of writers in a society. It has been argued here that writers who perpetuate already ingrained biases and prejudices of a society fail to do justice to the roles they have assigned to themselves. This chapter covers pertinent essay/interviews of Roy and most of Mishra’s longish review essays which illuminate role of writers in a globalizing world. All four chapters end with a summative and comparative section each at the end vis-à-vis Roy and Mishra’s essays delineated therein. The conclusion of the thesis sums up insights and observations made in the foregoing chapters thereby emphasizing how discourse of justice is germane to the understanding of Roy and Mishra’s non-fictional writings.