# Chapter Three: Pankaj Mishra and His World

## 3.1. Introduction: Pankaj Mishra, Biography and His Works

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## 3.2. Intra/Extra–textual Features of *The Romantics* and *Butter Chicken in Ludhiana: Travels in Small Town India*

### 3.2.1. *The Romantics*

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### 3.2.2. *Butter Chicken in Ludhiana: Travels in Small Town India*

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“This is the truest function of a national literature: it holds up a mirror in whose unfamiliar reflections a nation slowly learns to recognize itself. The writer, exercising his talent and imagination, discovers new subjects, or deepens old discoveries; and he himself grows in the process.”

(Pankaj Mishra).

3.1. Introduction: Pankaj Mishra, Biography and His Works

3.1.1. Biography

Writer, novelist, essayist, lecturer, literary critic, journalist, and reporter Pankaj Mishra was born in 1969 in North India. Raised in a small town named Jhansi, his childhood and adolescence were spent in the Northern Indian province of Uttar Pradesh. As a child, he felt distaste for formal schooling because it kept him away from what he loved most: reading. Later he graduated with a bachelor degree in commerce from Allahabad University before earning his Master of Arts degree in English literature at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. After submitting an article on Edmund Wilson to The New York Review of Books, Mishra was discovered by the renowned editor Barbara Epstein. He wrote his first novel when he was only seventeen years old, and two further novels followed, although none have been published. Mishra is himself a Hindu of Indian origin and he speaks Hindi, Urdu and English. After his Bachelor degree, and before joining Harper Collins India as a chief editor, Mishra lived in a village, 14 km north of Simla but in recent years he mostly schedules his time among London, Delhi and Simla. He travels around the world writing on a wide range of topics, including religious violence, globalization, Bollywood, the Dalai Lama, and the “Talibanization” of South Asia.

In 1992, he moved to Mashobra, an isolated Himalayan village, where he began to contribute literary essays and reviews to The Indian Review of Books, The India Magazine, and the newspaper The Pioneer.

His first book was Butter Chicken in Ludhiana: Travels in Small Town India (1995), a travelogue that describes the gradual yet profound social and cultural changes taking place in rural Indian towns in the new context of globalization. Hailed as India’s travel writing sensation, this book vividly brings to life 19 small towns of India, describing them not in exotic or quaint terms, but rather in the frightening new context of modernization and globalization.
His novel *The Romantics* (1999), an ironic tale of people longing for fulfillment in cultures other than their own, was published in eleven European languages and won the *Los Angeles Times* Art Seidenbaum award for first fiction. The central setting of this international breakthrough is the holy city of Benares and the main protagonist is a young Indian Brahmin intellectual named Samar, who stumbles upon a group of Western dropouts. The ensuing friendship provides Samar with a fresh, more serious look at life, and he begins an erratic journey in search of himself.

His next book *An End to Suffering: The Buddha in the World* (2004) mixes memoir, history, and philosophy while attempting to explore the Buddha’s relevance to contemporary times. Mishra himself states: “I would like to express much more than is possible in a novel. I grew up where Buddha walked the earth, 2,500 years ago. For me, this region represents history; possibly the only one with which I feel a bond.” However, *An End to Suffering* is both a personal account of Mishra’s contemporary experience of Buddhism and also his historical analysis of Buddha’s place in the 6th Century B.C. world. As the book’s narration shifts from India to Pakistan, Afghanistan, America and Europe, the reader comes to know more about a deeply personal yet ultimately universal story told by the writer; the story of the search for identity. Further, through his travels, Pankaj Mishra attempts to expose the origins of the Buddha, Siddhartha’s own pilgrimages, and India’s transition from colonial outpost to an independent nation.

*Temptations of the West: How to be Modern in India, Pakistan and Beyond* (2006), describes Mishra’s travels through Kashmir, Bollywood, Afghanistan, Tibet, Nepal, and other parts of South and Central Asia. According to Mishra, these countries seem different from each other but share “the same dilemma: how do people with traditions extending back several millennia modernize themselves?” Here he also writes about the changes under pressure of Western modernity, and about the paradoxes of globalization. Mishra insists that the interconnected narratives of his book are not supposed to offer any solutions to their great problems; “Rather they seek to make the reader enter actual experiences: of individuals – Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists trying to find a way in the modern world – and of the traveler, as, confronted with a bewildering complexity, he moves from ignorance and prejudice to
a measure of self-awareness and knowledge.” This book was reviewed by *The Economist* (1 July – 7 July 2006 issue).

It is worthy to mention that in 2005, Mishra published an anthology of writing on India, entitled *India in Mind* (Vintage Books). Edited and introduced by Pankaj Mishra, this book includes a stunning collection of the diverse and vivid reactions that the subcontinent of India has evoked in many great writers like V. S. Naipaul, Octavio Paz, Paul Theroux, Mark twain, etc. *India in Mind* contains twenty five pieces which range from fiction and non-fiction to poetry. These excerpts reveal as much about the authors and their times as, with intuition and intelligence, about this vast country and its people. Mishra’s other writings have been anthologized in *The Picador Book of Journeys* (2000), *The Vintage Book of Modern Indian Literature* (2004), and *Away: The Indian Writer as Expatriate* (Penguin), among other titles. He has introduced new editions of Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (Modern Library), E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* (Penguin Classics), and J. G. Farrell’s *The Siege of Krishnapur* (NYRB Classics). He has also introduced two volumes of V. S. Naipaul’s essays: *The Writer and the World* and *Literary Occasions*. Working as an editor for *Harper Collins*, he is credited with having discovered Arundhati Roy’s exceptional novel *The God of Small Things*. In her acknowledgement page Arundhati Roy praises Pankaj Mishra for “flagging it [her novel] off on its journey into the world.” Mishra is no longer a publisher but has continued to encourage and champion new writers. As a matter of international recognition he has caught the attention of widely known editors in the West such as John Epstein of Random House, Nicholas Pearson of Fourth Estate and Peter Straus of Picador. Gillon Aitken is Pankaj Mishra’s literary agent in England.


He was a visiting professor at Wellesley College in 2001, 2004, and 2006. In 2004-2005 he received a fellowship at the Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center for
Writers and Scholars, New York Public Library. Pankaj Mishra was the Visiting Fellow for 2007-2008 at the Department of English, University College London, UK, where he gave two lectures in the English Department, one in the autumn term and one in the spring term, and he also conducted a seminar with postgraduate students. His topic was globalization and literature.

Mishra’s polemics regarding Hinduism as a religion and the modern history of nationalist movements among Hindu people in India such as the BJP have generated some disquiet among some Hindu circles within India. His book Temptations of the West: How to be Modern in India, Pakistan, Tibet and Beyond was reviewed by The Economist (1 July – 7 July 2006 issue) and provides an example of the analysis and commentary that have made Mishra controversial in India. His remarks against Hindus have earned him accusations of being an anti-Hindu, and of “pandering to white pro-Muslim audiences in the West”, though he is himself a Hindu of Indian origin.

Following his estimable résumé, one may find out that Pankaj Mishra is a versatile, precocious, and distinguished scholar as a review of the list of his different activities proves it:

3.1.2. Books

Butter Chicken in Ludhiana: Travels in Small Town India (Viking Penguin, 1995).

The Romantics (Picador, 1999).

Kim, by Rudyard Kipling; introduced by Pankaj Mishra (Random House Modern Library, 2004).


An End to Suffering: the Buddha in the World (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004).


India in Mind, edited and introduced by Pankaj Mishra (Vintage Departures Original, 2005).
Temptations of the West: How to Be Modern in India, Pakistan, Tibet, and Beyond (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006).

3.1.3. Selected Articles


KASHMIR, a three-part series (2000):


### 3.1.4. Reviews


“It’s sex, Jim, but not as we know it,” a review of the Kamasutra, trans. by Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar, The New Statesman, June 3, 2002.

3.1.5. Appearances


Conference on Rethinking Modernity, Rutgers University, Nov. 1, 2007. A talk called “Becoming Modern: the Fate of a Compulsion in Asia.”

The Man Hong Kong International Literary Festival, Hong Kong, Mar. 14, 2007: “Tempted by the West,” a talk.

The Hong Kong Literary Festival, Hong Kong, Mar. 13, 2006: “The Demise of Globalism: Perspectives from East and West” – John Ralston Saul, essayist and philosopher, meets with writer Pankaj Mishra, to discuss the problems of globalization, the crisis of modernization, political corruption, and poverty.


3.1.6. Notes and References


2 See the introduction about Pankaj Mishra in Lettre Ulysses Award homepage at <http://www.lettre-ulysses-award.org/jury04/bio_mishra.html>. [23 April 2007].

3 Pankaj Mishra, Foreword, Temptations of The West: How to be Modern in India, Pakistan and Beyond, New Delhi: Picador India, 2006. p.v.

4 Ibid., p.vi.


“The East-West encounter has defined this country more than anything else in the past 150 years. You can’t escape it – it is part of who we are. The problem is we like to pretend it isn’t true, which creates a split in us. As the world globalizes further, that split is becoming more pronounced. The problem is one of identity and self, and the limited means people in a developing country have for emerging out of those smaller identities. It is often overwhelming. In a complex and strange way, partly due to the past, Indians are being made and unmade in ways we aren’t even aware of.”¹ (Pankaj Mishra).

3.2. Intra/Extra–textual Features of The Romantics and Butter Chicken in Ludhiana: Travels in Small Town India

3.2.1. The Romantics

Talking about intra-textual features of the text under study, the researcher will directly refer to some formal elements to find out what the novel is all about. These elements include Setting, Plot, Narrator, Point of view, Theme, and Characterization. Moreover, to increase our understanding of the story’s art, the researcher will preferably discuss at suitable intervals structure, style, tone, and language employed in the text.²

3.2.1.1. General Overview

The structure of Pankaj Mishra’s debut novel The Romantics, published first in 1999 by Picador publication, is quite simple. It resembles that of an essay where you can find an introduction, the main body and a conclusion. Accordingly, the novel consists of three main sections: first and second sections are divided into 8 chapters each, and the third section includes 5 chapters. The first section is of 99 pages, second section is of 110 pages and the third section is of 64 pages. All chapters are numbered separately within each section and not consecutively for the whole book. The novel totally amounts to 277 pages (in Picador edition of 2001).

Interestingly enough, some reviewers have classified the novel as a Bildungsroman³ since it “traces the emergence of a young man from his cocoon to the world outside,”⁴ while others believe it is “a manifest throwback to the Roman a Clefs⁵ of the 19th century.”⁶ And since here in the novel there are some traces of
figures and scenes back to what we had seen in 1995 in Mishra’s own travelogue *Butter Chicken in Ludhiana: Travels in Small Town India* then some reviewers identify *The Romantics* as an autobiographical one; a novel based on the author’s life experience. Some resemblances between the narrator and Pankaj Mishra himself even affirm this further. This similarity is not just confined to these two works; indeed in an essay Mishra wrote for *The New York Review of Books* entitled “Edmund Wilson in Benares,” you can find an autobiographical story of a young Indian man reading Flaubert and Wilson in Benares, trying to gain a better understanding of Western culture, while in constant interaction with the people of his own country as well. Consequently even another label is applicable here such as *regional novel* since this is a novel faithful to a particular geographic region and its people, including behavior, customs, speech, and history. And yet much to accredit the writer, some commentators label *The Romantics* as “a modern-day collage of *Siddhartha* and *A Passage to India*” whose “poignant tale suggests a counter-colonial narrative maneuver in which the tools of former masters are used to explore the ethnic self.”7

Set in India in the late 1980s and 1990s, the main focus of *The Romantics* is on the adventures of a young provincial Brahmin intellectual protagonist called Samar who arrives in the holy city of Benares and on the banks of the river Ganges to seek his fortune, and to read “big books” by Turgenev, Schopenhauer, Proust and Edmund Wilson. Here he chances upon an ironically-named Miss West and a group of bohemian Westerners whose foreign ways attract and mystify him. Also he meets Rajesh, a student at the Benares Hindu University who has humble origins but weird political activities. It is through charting his own course in the midst of ancient and modern cultural currents that Samar falls in love with an unavailable French woman, Catherine.

While depicting a romantic view of the changing landscape of the Indian holy city of Benares in the late 1980s and 1990s, where one can see the emerging prosperity of the new middle class India, Pankaj Mishra explores different themes of love, grief, loss, self-doubt and emotional stillness, conflict between bookish ideas and desolate reality, class and caste problems, the meeting of East and West, culture clashes, transition and the changes en route for a modern India. Subtlety, delicacy and of course wordiness and too much details are among the features by far attributed to
the writer’s prose style. In his prose one can straightforwardly follow the line of the story without facing serious obstacles, though verbosity and a sort of meandering plot remain to play troublesome. Writer’s language is direct, undemanding and lucid, due to uncomplicated diction he employs all through the book. His narration is smooth, coherent, thought through and yet absorbing. His characters range from Samar and Miss West to Anand and Rajesh to show cases of dynamic and static attributions. He tells the whole story from first person point of view and depends totally on his narrator.

3.2.1.2. Intra-textual Features
3.2.1.2.1. Setting

Considering the prevalent definition of *time* and *place* for the setting of a story, then their implications are not so much difficult. Novel’s time is late 1980’s to 1990’s and the place is as vast as the subcontinent of India:

The novel captures the vastness of India. Whether he is describing the cool clarity of the Himalayas in the north, or the heat and light of the south at Pondicherry, or Benares with its funeral pyres along the Ganges, Mishra conveys the essence of each place-its similarities to all of India as well as its differences.⁸

But from a different point of view and as an emphasis on the importance of cultural, social and environmental contexts for a novel which in turn are among the main concerns of Pankaj Mishra throughout most of his works, and furthermore, for an elaboration on the term setting we might venture to set the base definition used here as that of Judith Roof:

Though we rarely think about it, setting is all around us. As in life, setting in fiction consists of the physical, environmental, social, historical and cultural contexts described in a story as the scene of its action. Although in discussions of fiction setting sometimes seems less
important than character or plot, it has tremendous power. It can evoke atmosphere, mood, and circumstances. [...] Setting can provide both motivation and explanations for characters’ actions and demonstrate the effects of characters’ choices.9

Even only after a first reading of this regional novel, we may agree that the writer skillfully uses description together with narration to establish a splendid setting in the reader’s mind. But undoubtedly in applying this latest definition to the novel the same readers, who appreciated the novel most, will also find something more than mere time and place to be highlighted. This is also what the protagonist of The Romantics is claiming after passing through introductory lines upon his arrival in Benares. As a mere preliminary step, of course, we are shortly informed about the place and time at the very beginning of the novel. Samar says: “When I first came to Benares in the severe winter of 1989 I stayed in a crumbling riverside house.”10 But then some lines after he pinpoints:

In Benares, I wanted to read, and do as little as possible besides that. The city, its antiquity, its special pleasures, held little attraction for me.11

Whether Samar succeeds in achieving this goal or not is not much of concern here (in fact the course of events shows that this isn’t an easy commitment for our narrator to be achieved). However, what’s more important is the revelation of Samar’s mood in this new circumstance. It is in this new atmosphere that he decides to detach from the historical affluence of a city like Benares; a choice which noticeably detaches Samar from rich backgrounds of Benares butironically connects him with the setting (since everything and everyone needed for the initiation leading to his aims really exist here in Benares). As Jeremy Wetmore puts it “the fact that the setting of the book has strong ties to an Eastern religion (Hinduism) is an obvious Eastern philosophy symbol”12 and quite cleverly implied in the novel the bibliophile narrator is not eager to read any book about this ancient Eastern philosophy. On the surface, it is a combination of past memories from his first visit to this city, his experiences from Allahabad University, and his lust for “many long hours of wisdom and knowledge”
that are supposed to arrange his new mood, but in a deeper sense everything is closely interwoven to the new setting. It is this setting that prepares him for his new interactions with the outer world and the people in it; being exposed to different attitudes and insights compels Samar to respond and these responses whether excited and chaotic or solemn and calm gives the readers a better understanding of his character and thus the whole novel.

By common consent, most reviewers by and large express the different stance of the writer in his novel; this different position is, of course, in comparison with his travelogue. Quite structurally it is the setting which gives this prompt to the critic:

The setting of the novel is largely in places that foreigners congregate to, places of exile, retreat and death: Benares (Varanasi), Pondicherry and Auroville, and the Tibetan center in exile of Dharamshala.\textsuperscript{13}

Provoking various social cultural effects, these settings play a double role for different audiences; for the Indian reader, there may not be the same appeal:

The locales also appear hand picked for their spiritual aura and appeal to the West. The father turns to Pondy, the son retreats to Dharmashala. When Samar thinks of Benares, it has associations of the last rites performed for his mother, “the priest…waving incense sticks over the rose petals bobbing on the ash-smeared water”. The priest in Kalpi seeks to live in Himalayas as a refuge from the futility of life. To the Indian reader, it is all stating the obvious.\textsuperscript{14}

Setting of the novel is closely interwoven with the action, characterization and plot of the story. In the first section of the novel, including the first eight chapters, we can find the rising action, in which complication creates some sort of conflict (inner, moral and emotional) for the protagonist. Throughout these eight chapters, we come to know that the narrator, Samar, resides in a small room in a crumbling riverside house, where American and European students come for sitar lessons by Panditji, his
landlord. It is noteworthy that he shares the view of the river Ganges and a great part of the holy city Benares with Miss West. Later on, at the Benares Hindu University he meets Rajesh. He makes daily visits to the library, too.

Looking at “the new middle-class prosperity of India [which] has at last come to Benares,” Samar expresses his true feelings to emphasize more on the setting as a part of the container for the new changes, renewals:

The world constantly renews itself, and when you look at it that way, regret and nostalgia seem equally futile. The past does live on, in people as well as cities. I have only to look back on that winter in Benares to realize how hard it is to let go of it.

So a bit further in the novel, he clearly asserts the great impact of the real setting on his thought and decisions:

In Allahabad I had been on my own. I found my own byways and cloisters in the city. But in Benares, to which I came seeking little more than an extension of the idle, bookish life I had in Allahabad, I had found myself in a different world. I knew more people, and their presence in my life filled me with new emotions and alerted me to old inadequacies.

There are many instances where setting prepares the ground for the protagonist of the novel to gain a better understanding of his surroundings and the people inside: It is on the banks of the Ganges River and after meeting the boatman Ramchand that Samar becomes conscious of a great piece of fact about living in India; that although he shares the same language and country with Ramchand yet it is impossible to have a wide range of open conversation with him since there are “countless inhibitions of caste and class” on their way of any more communication. It is amidst his regular visits to Catherine and Anand’s place that he understands the incongruity in their relationship; it is in Mark’s house that narrator once again
reminds the reader about Miss West’s attempt to create a social life for him; it is
accompanying Miss West and in the places arranged to accompany her that Samar,
the “tireless autodidact,”19 is introduced to more Western classical music and much
more enlightened arguments with Americans and Europeans. It is in the middle of
such parties that he could hear discussions about Kundera and Marquez; it is the
setting in his tiny dark room in Benares that reminds him of true realities of life; he
supposes or dreams that everything should have changed because he feels to be in
love! Nothing in reality has changed, although he is feeling different about Catherine:
“It was as though I had expected them to have changed position during my absence;
that they hadn’t was proof of the loneliness and boredom I increasingly felt when in
that room.”20

In the second part of the novel, with again eight chapters, we see the climax of
the story at Mussoorie and then Kalpi, the small village in Himalayas where Samar
experiences more love relations with Catherine. However this new setting is very
different for the narrator:

The same thought had come to me; had in fact, been with
me from the time the bus left Mussoorie. It came out of
the happiness I always felt among the Himalayas, a kind of
private exhilaration that made the tensions of the previous
days dissipate fast, made them seem part of another, not
quite real or significant life.21

After that there happens a turning point in the course of the story at which the
rising action reverses to become the falling action. This is mainly after returning back
to Benares that we read about Samar’s different mood (mainly caused by the new
situation as Catherine wants Samar not to open their secret love affair to Anand); even
their secret meeting in a scene which might sound delightful for the protagonist is
recited in a strange unexcited tone and style as if he is a reporter doing his duty only:

She would come into the café, beads of perspiration on her
forehead, an embroidered bag hanging from her shoulder,
and give me a quick furtive kiss on the cheek as the owner,
sitting under a profusely garlanded framed photo of his father or grandfather, absent-mindedly swatted the flies whining around the gleaming glass cases, and the underworked waiters, grim-stained towels draped over their shoulders, looked out blankly at the bright empty street outside.\textsuperscript{22}

From chapter seven in the second section, the setting shifts to Pondicherry, where Samar meets his sick father and then step by step he is detached from the center of those daily routines done in Benares. Brokenheartedly, due to the last words received from Catherine telling him to forget about her and their love, the protagonist starts traveling around the country as mentioned in the last section of the novel. But this is not a good remedy for his ailment, thus; after many wanderings he arrives at Dharamshala, a small township of mostly Tibetans, where he stays for seven years as a school teacher, but he remains unsuccessful “to train [himself] to see that past as dead.”\textsuperscript{23} Later he visits Miss West once again in Benares to hear the missing parts of the story from her.

3.2.1.2.2. Plot

Having in mind that the whole story starts in a flashback mode to the year 1989, then technically the plot of the novel could be read on two bases: proleptic (looking forward) and sometimes analeptic (looking backward). Mostly we follow the events in the usual manner as they happen so they are considered proleptic, but every now and then the course of the story turns back to previous events (within that main format which is a flashback in itself) in order to enable us appreciate the significance of what is happening. For instance in pages 21-22, the narrator takes us back to explain about a character named Vijay at Allahabad University. This will show us his reference to Rajesh later. Again in page 73, Samar talks about Allahabad University, in order to make a sort of comparison with his present situation at Benares. Then for the most part in pages 8, or 66-70 and some other places he gives us descriptions of his past personal life before coming to Benares. This is mainly to put more emphasis on his family roots and to trace a social, cultural, and historical background and
specifically to prepare a proper ground to talk about ups and downs in his father’s life and in his own, too.

As the novel commences, we come to know that after graduating from Allahabad University, Samar arrives at the holy city of Benares in 1989 to lose himself in books and solitude. He comes across Mr. Panditji who sees Samar as a “fellow Brahmin who had fallen on hard times and he offered to help.” As a tenant inhabiting a room with an “Indian rent” of 150 rupees in Mr. Panditji’s crumbling riverside house, Samar comes in contact with his neighbor, the middle-aged Englishwoman, Miss West, who arranges a party, which is the first such experience in the past nineteen years of age for Samar. She introduces him to a number of Westerners, among them the lovely French woman Catherine and her Indian boyfriend Anand, who plays sitar:

In Benares she had fallen in love with Anand, whom she had met at one of Miss West’s musical soirées. They lived together in a nearby riverside house. At the end of winter Catherine planned to take Anand back with her to Paris, where he would attempt to make a living out of performances and studio recordings while Catherine finished her philosophy degree.

There he also meets Mark, Debbie, and Sarah. The day after the party remains in Samar’s mind as he sees the other side of Miss West’s character who is sobbing in great distress. Later on he recognizes the source of all those imbalances and anguish: Christopher, that tall man present in many pictures among “the collage of photographs Miss West had stuck on one damp-scarred wall of her room.” However, besides being “a party-organizer”, Miss West acts in an important role; since she has noticed Samar’s different reactions toward Catherine then she brings about a great dilemma in his mind:

Instead she said, Poor girl. How badly she needs to be loved. She’s obsessed with Anand. She thinks of him as the next Ravi Shankar. But I wonder how long that will last. I
don’t think he can give her the stability she needs. He’s too dependent on her.27

Such hints together with more meetings with Catherine, and passive status of Anand cause Samar to be attracted more to Catherine:

I was always struck by her great alertness to the world around her, which made her discover style and beauty in the most unexpected places. It made me want to see the city through her eyes, and always pretending to more knowledge than I possessed, I often adopted her opinions about something I knew nothing of.28

His regular visits to Benares Hindu University and a feeling of strangeness bring Samar to meet Rajesh, who seems to be an ambitious political leader among Brahmin students in the campus. Rajesh keeps a pistol in his room at the hostel and reads “poems by Faiz, the Pakistani exile, the poet of heartbreak and loss.”29 He also gives prolonged contradictory speeches through which he criticizes Indira and Rajiv Gandhi and Pandit Nehru. Whatever he is, his “Godfather-like status”30 gives Samar a sense of security. However it is shortly after their first meeting that there happens a great student riot in the campus, during which a cop gets shot and many students beaten. Some days later Samar meets Rajesh again in the library. He shows interest in Samar’s readings of Edmund Wilson and asks for “a summary of Trotsky’s ideas.” These demands confuse him more about Rajesh and his ideology.

Just as Samar’s intellectual prospects widen with his visits to the Benaras Hindu University and his acquaintance with the works of great writers, his social circle also expands. But unconfident and reclusive, he is not equipped with the resources to face the challenges that such new interaction brings. The plan for a trip to Mussoorie is proposed by Miss West in the beginning of the second section of the novel. Though she promises to join Samar and Catherine after some stop-over in Delhi, this never happens and much stranger they head for their trip even without Anand:
I knew from Miss West that Catherine had asked her not to invite him [Anand] to Mussoorie. Catherine had wanted to do this trip without him; it was meant to be a change from her usual life in Benares, a life recently grown more tense with the growing anxieties about her and Anand’s future in Paris.  

So they have a very good time after arriving at Mussoorie. There Catherine speaks of Anand and her dissatisfactions with him and accepts Samar’s advice to be more detached from Anand, in order to correct him. And Samar talks about activities in the university while Catherine unfolds some accounts of Miss West’s secret love affair with Christopher. Gradually, they feel closer and build up more intimate instances. Next, they go to Kalpi and stay in a bungalow and meet a Sadhu in a temple. It is after a long discussion about the monk in that temple and human relations and the hot topic of love that he gets more emotionally involved with Catherine. Chapter three in section two of the novel starts with love-making scenes by Samar and Catherine:

It is hard for me to describe the physical aspect of what happened next. It was made memorable only by my incompetence in everything that followed upon Catherine’s first disencumbering kiss: the first nervous explorations, the fumbling with buttons and hooks, the awkward impasses and shameful lonely climaxes.

On the way back to home, feeling frail and feeble Catherine makes many moments of melancholy silences and cries. But astonishingly upon their arrival at home and visiting Anand, Catherine shifts to her old role of a “strong-willed purposeful” person. Though Samar receives a letter from Pondicherry telling about his sick father, he is too much preoccupied with Catherine and their love affair; thus he is not going to see his father. (At least one critic has related this reaction from Samar to a similar story about the death of Mahatma Gandhi’s father, when bringing about the idea of guilt). However, going back to library again and spending hours by rummaging through memories from Kalpi, Samar loses concentration and can’t find a
remedy even in his old habit of book-reading. He accepts an invitation from Rajesh to visit his hometown just to avoid more “empty evenings on the ghats.”35 They head for that village which is forty miles west of Benares. This trip gives Samar an opportunity to know Rajesh better; to feel the “cruelties of rural India”36 again:

It was unsettling: the half-naked screaming children outside and the bareness of the room. I hadn’t been prepared for this; the poverty these surroundings spoke of wasn’t immediately apparent in Rajesh’s life in Benares. I could have guessed previously that he wasn’t well off, but one could have said the same of almost all students at the university.37

Another message about his father’s sickness is waiting for Samar at Benares when he comes back. Consequently and after much inner conflicts he decides to go and visit his father in Pondicherry. Catherine comes to railway station to say goodbye to him and they have a romantic farewell in an ambiance of sadness, separation and uncertainties about their future. “She asks Samar to promise: ‘You must promise me that you will never regret anything. No matter how painful it is for you…”38 and he does so. Before departing Catherine delivers a cream-coloured envelope to Samar. When Samar arrives at Pondicherry he finds out that his father is quite well after a minor stroke and now lives with his “constant companion” Deepa in a more stable circumstance. In the letter given at the time of departure, Catherine tries to make great compliments about Samar and their new relationship, and promises to write very soon. Samar goes high on emotion whenever he reads the letter again. Life goes on but with no reply to his letter to Catherine for a long time and after all daydreaming about past moments gradually Samar becomes a bit restless and worried. Samar feels obliged to announce his plan for his future career to his father, so he talks about getting admission for a PhD at Delhi. Surprisingly his father agrees with this idea and adds that it may be better for him to get some teaching experiences in the mean time. And soon Deepa makes arrangements for him through some friends at a Tibetan primary school in Dharamshala. The whole idea is attractive for Samar because of the proximity to the Himalayas. But before starting his new job in mid-July there are many days of bewilderment and waiting. Even companionship with Priya, Deepa’s
niece, who is three years younger than Samar can’t distract him from his main preoccupation with Catherine. The whole dreamy world for Samar collapses when he receives a letter from Catherine; she breaks up:

[…] What was the meaning of this affair in the total economy of our lives, apart from giving me a sense of mischievous adventure and providing instant gratification to both of us? It was a perversion of human emotions, of our humanity. I now see that perversion within myself and feel ashamed.  

Trying to escape from all familiar scenes and themes in his surrounding, Samar starts a round-the-country trip to appease his sorrows and ailments caused by Catherine’s rejection of him. So he travels “everywhere and nowhere” for several weeks with no purposeful mind. And as it might be guessed with his inexperience and lack of emotional strength the pain is much aggravated and not relieved. However arriving at the Buddhist Himalayan town of Dharamshala, he retreats into the uneventful, secluded life of a primary school teacher. He works in this town for seven years with no serious emotional or even social involvements. “Strangeness and dread” are his new feelings toward others. He even loses that great enthusiasm for reading literature and instead resorts to “books on wildlife and the environment,” or even to science and astronomy. Samar spends seven years at Dharamshala amusing himself with school job as a routine and his own solitude until one day that he bumps into Mark in a bookshop. Mark informs him about the latest news of Benares and the people Samar knows. It is some time after and upon receiving a letter from Miss West that Samar leaves for Benares during winter season. Though his return gives him the “sensation of re-entering a dream,” there are certain realities of Mr. Panditji and his wife’s death, and Arjun and his wife Sita that now live in the same house. There is no trace of all those pictures on the wall in Miss West’s place. She talks about Anand and Catherine while they go for a boat ride. She tells that as she guessed Anand couldn’t find a job in Paris and he returns back to India and continues a devastated life. And Catherine plans to marry a stockbroker after changing many boyfriends. Before departing, Miss West tells Samar to come and visit her in England.
3.2.1.2.3. Narration, Narrator and Point of view

There are certain qualities of the narrative techniques used in the novel. These techniques of narration are well employed in Pankaj Mishra’s debut novel. Sometimes and not often, the narration allows the characters’ actions and thoughts to speak for themselves. This happens at some part of the story (for instance, whenever we are going to share Samar’s inner conflicts) and particularly at the ending lines of the novel. Most modern writers use this device so that readers can reach their own conclusions. Moreover we might refer to the fact that usually “plots move towards an ending or closure. Perhaps the difference between fiction and everyday living is that the former is capable of a neat conclusion. Readers experience the satisfaction of closure.”

It is true that some readers of The Romantics may become disappointed at the end of the novel when deprived of an appropriate conclusion from the narrator’s side but at least they share another aim of the writer: to experience the striving spirits of a protagonist like Samar in a life-like setting where everyday people and genuine concrete subjects and themes are dealt with. Though Samar feels “sad and full of mourning for the past, for that pure time of desires and dreams” he experiences for the first time in his life by coming to Benares, as the last lines of the novel proffer, readers are to decide about the end of the story for themselves: whether Samar is a defeated lover forever or he can recover soon and build up for an unwavering future, whether he gets some advice from what Miss West was telling Anand about how to return back to normal life or not, whether Samar would be able to love again and let be loved again and all these future propositions show that there are different versions possible for the novel ending. Of course one point is clear about Samar’s mentality in the final episode of the novel; that he keeps his promise to Catherine and doesn’t regret!

At another level, as many literary critics distinguish between the “I” of a first person narrator and the author of the text, then, the narrator of a text is not automatically the author of the story. In other words, narrator or the voice of the person telling the story, should not to be confused with the author’s voice. Rather, undoubtedly the narrator is a creation of an author, a formal element of a story that works in a dynamic relation with fiction’s other elements. Yet, as far as the narrator of The Romantics is concerned there is a grave difference. Samar is much like the writer
himself as both of them are born in 1969, study at Allahabad University and travel a lot all the way through India. Accordingly it’s not surprising that James Hopkin reverses the places of Samar and Pankaj Mishra and considers the act of writing as a good remedy for the writer to patch the gap up. Believing that writing is adjusted to answer questions and dilemmas for Samar (or indeed Mishra):

Although writing is clearly Samar’s defence strategy, his fawning sentences here run the risk of alienating the reader. The author should have intervened by tempering Samar’s account with a little more action, perhaps concentrating on the pragmatics of political activism or the complexities of cross-cultural affairs. That Mishra allows the narrator a free rein suggests that there’s not much to distinguish him from his hero.46

Typically, first-person narrators can play either a major or a minor role in the story they are telling and here the narrator of the novel, Samar is part of the story, and what a great part he is! Indeed all the sense of the scene of novel’s telling and all that is told goes to Samar and his life story. Formally the choice of such a narrator goes back to the fact that this type of narrator is generally well adjusted for the exploration of the mind: only Samar himself can illuminate his thought processes and flickers of emotion. Pankaj Mishra himself explains the origination of such a robust narrator quite explicitly through an interview:

I can’t write anything until an idea possesses me completely. In the case of The Romantics, defining the narrator’s identity and his tone set me off. The plan—a small-scale intense drama featuring a cosmopolitan cast of characters—was with me in a different form. […] But The Romantics is truer to my experience: the narrator with small-town background and bookish knowledge who approaches the world very tentatively, through hesitations, indecisions, blind alleys and reevaluations.47
So stunningly defined above, we can infer that what Mishra has tried to present is done through his narrator’s pose as Samar is an elite choice that relates to how the story works formally, thematically and aesthetically. As clearly stated by Mishra himself this too genteel voice is exactly what he plans to be used by his narrator. The overall tone of the narrator and writer overlap; just through a stylistic pattern it creates more aesthetic layers of meaning. This tone varies in different shades of the indistinguishable color in each sections of the novel. In the first section we observe an earnest, curious, baffled, inquisitive tone. Intimate, happy, passionate, romantic, affectionate and playful are the adjectives which best describe the tone of the writer in the second section of the book, keeping in mind that the last scene in this section dissolves to Catherine’s denouncing and rejecting Samar and then it fades out to the new scenes of Samar’s wavering travels in section three. Since then “the story rises and falls on waves of detachment and muted suffering,” as Paul Sharrad says. Hence indifference, hesitation, melancholy, reevaluation, and seclusion reign the atmosphere of the third section. Writer’s specific attitude about his narrator, Samar, convinces us to accept that his special passivity in the social network around him is the best reaction, no matter if this passivity overwhelms the whole idea of Samar’s appeal for defeat, isolation, perception and his sense of abandonment.

Seemingly Pankaj Mishra himself knows well and just so cunningly reminds us that “first person narration is close to how each of us experiences life: all is seen from a single and particular perspective. This type of narration allows us to recognize that what is seen and felt is what we might have seen or felt.” Samar is the first person narrator with a limited knowledge. The author skillfully restricts the narrator to the single perspective of a character. The way people, places, and events appear to this character, be it the protagonist here, is the way they appear to the reader. The reader is restricted to the perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of this single character. He cannot know other characters’ minds; he can only perceive what other characters are thinking and feeling by relying on external signs— their dialogues or behaviors. Quite interestingly through this narrator, the writer reminds the readers some of the uncertainties they usually experience in daily life. As an example of this limitedness of the narrator we might refer to the scenes after the party arranged by Miss West in the early stages of the novel. There, Samar is curious to find the source of “sniffling sound as though produced by suppressed sobs” when he finds Miss West in a
miserable mood, murmuring “‘It’s all a waste, isn’t it? Such fucking waste.’” Just like any other reader, this naïve narrator can’t associate a meaning to these unsettling remarks from such a gentlewoman at that time until the final episode of the story. It is after some interactions and obtaining knowledge via a similar procedure similar even for the readers that Samar comes to a better interpretation of the same accounts repeated by Miss West at the end of the novel. Samar is thinking to himself:

I used to think then that her solitude committed her to puzzling out the characters and lives of people she knew. It came to me now that her curiosity was dictated all along by her own complicated life, by the setbacks and disappointments she suffered in it.\(^{52}\)

These lines among other examples from the third section of the novel prove how Pankaj Mishra selects first person point of view to give the readers a better stance in tracing a character’s growth. This process should definitely lead to what he mainly concentrates on: his hero’s identity. Of course, one should not forget that this limitedness for Samar as a narrator does not lead to a sort of stagnation. It is noteworthy that his stance as a first person narrator is not fixed all the time. In other words at least in some cases it doesn’t keep the same distance from the events of the story; it zooms in and out, like a camera lens. An example of this happens while he is depicting pictures of student riots at Allahabad or Benares University at different stages of the novel.

What’s more, as another aspect of the narration, first-person narrators are considered as necessarily **subjective**; that is we expect their telling to be prejudiced and biased. One noteworthy example of this subjectivity is found in Samar’s attitudes towards Rajesh. There are many things about Rajesh still a mystery to Samar even getting to the end of the story. Samar tries to arrive at a greater knowledge after each meeting or conversation but even following his visit to Rajesh’ village Samar can’t give the readers a clear-cut picture about Rajesh; thus whatever we get through his eyes about Rajesh are somehow biased since even the narrator himself confesses to his difficulty dealing with this character: “Such a considered response made me wonder if I had ever really known him.”\(^{53}\) Near the end and while Samar wants to
“decipher” Rajesh’s remarks about Flaubert and Edmund Wilson we can again suspect the narrator with shades of subjectivity:

But only a handful of these students [including Rajesh] were able to get anywhere near realizing their dreams of joining the Civil Service. Most of them saw their ambitions dwindle away over the years in successive disappointments, and they knew not only failure but also the degradation of living in a world where self-deception, falsehood, sycophancy and bribery were the rule.”

The same half-formed ideas about Rajesh or the uncertain motives in Samar’s career brings us to the point that first person narrators however may have different levels of reliability and Samar is no exception here since he has his own biases, motivations and interests. As a naïve limited narrator who is typically characterized by youthful innocence, Samar can be unreliable for his inexperience, and a lack of self-knowledge, too. Mainly his perception of events is subjective; he tries to find answers for questions but in the juxtaposition of his book-based knowledge of the world and what in reality happens in his immediate surrounding (India) and farther places (West), this proves to be a tough job. His judgments are not considered confident and fixed since he is in transitional status: from youth to maturity. And quite unfortunately we shall leave him in the early stages of his life. Of course, Samar’s greatest chance is with the writer; he reveals an interpretation of events that is the same with the author’s own interpretation of those events. Thus his accounts are sometimes careful, generous, and motivated by psychological difficulties with other characters or events. As a nineteen-year-old boy he writes:

But there were my own needs. I had no friends: growing up alone, I had developed no skills for intimacy, or even ordinary camaraderie; friendships seemed to require from me a degree of self-abnegation I could not achieve. However a large part of the loneliness I had increasingly come to feel had been offset by my obsessive reading, the regard I had for the life of the mind. With each book, I
entered into what I felt to be an exalted bond with its writer, to whom I gave all the care and attentiveness I could not bring to human relationships.55

In general, understanding the point of view used in a work of art has been critical to understanding literature (due to its formal, aesthetic and thematic involvements); who tells the story and how it is told has clearly been a critical issue for Panakj Mishra to decide on, as well. He chooses the most obvious point of view which is first person or “I” and hopes to generate more sympathy for Samar from the readers by conveying the incidents and people he encounters, as well as giving the reader insight into him as he reveals his thoughts, feelings, and intentions. This perspective from which the story is told serves as the instrument to communicate the feelings and motives of Samar, and also the meaning, tone and feel of the story. Samar is a protagonist who can only reveal personal thoughts and feelings and what he sees or is told by other characters. He has a vantage point from which the narrative is passed from author to the reader but he can’t tell us thoughts of other characters for he cannot read other characters’ minds, and he generally provides a source for any information he may convey about events he does not or could not witness. This is the main reason why he can’t tell us directly his father’s or Miss West’s thoughts unless they express themselves; or for the same reason, in the final lines of second section, we shall read the exact letter sent by Catherine to be informed about her new mindset.

3.2.1.2.4. Themes

If we want to discover what a writer says about regional history, society, cultural differences, love, human nature, and beyond then it is a good choice to read The Romantics. Pankaj Mishra’s themes are mostly familiar. Sometimes they remind a certain amount of universality such as meeting of the East and West, and at another time they resonate in a lower key to be in tune with smaller local expectations in the region like student riots in the campus.

Pankaj Mishra deals with a variety of subjects in his novel: human relationships, human flaws, responsibility, self-doubt and emotional stillness, challenge and success, innocence and experience, guilt, the development and image of
a hero, freedom, individuality, life and death, religion and faith, choices and possibilities, friendship, family and family pressure, social influence, self-discovery, class and caste, love, romance, carpe diem motif, happiness, loneliness, sadness, hope, fate, determinism, bohemianism, passivity and inaction, poverty, greed, violence, unfulfilled dreams, dependence and detachment, dissatisfaction with the conventions of one’s society, insecurity, fickleness of life, cultural differences, barriers,… .

As a general rule, themes are considered as substantial ideas that organize the story—that tie together characters, setting, plot, narrator and point of view and are implemented and implied within the layers of the surface storyline; *The Romantics* follows the same consensus. In other words, the themes implied in the novel are the outcome of their direct or indirect associations with other formal elements in the story. Quite naturally, the novel has some governing themes: Akash Kapur, once writes “in many ways this novel is as much about India’s encounter with itself as it is about the meeting of East and West.” Michiko Kakutani perceives this East-West encounter from a different perspective:

Like Flaubert, he [Mishra] seems to possess a simultaneous fascination with and wariness of romanticism, and he uses that ambivalence to explore the ways in which people from different backgrounds glamorize foreign cultures, be it Americans romanticizing the mysteries of India or Indians romanticizing the freedoms of the West.

Discussing another major theme, Kausalya Santhanam points out that “transition is the essence of the novel. The transition of a youth from a sheltered life to a cosmopolitan experience, from innocence to awakening and knowledge, from emotional passivity to the pain of hurt and rejection.” Undoubtedly, this theme of change and transition has some close association with the type of story we are reading; as a *coming-of-age* story, Mishra’s young protagonist is initiated into adulthood through knowledge and experience, his understanding comes after the dropping of biases, a destruction of a phony sense of security, or in some way the loss of his innocence.
Determinism (the dominance of the controlling power of surrounding and heredity in characters’ fate) is also another recurring theme in the book. As far as the surroundings and environment is concerned, this dominance is traceable when we see that many characters are bound to certain destinies only because they live in a shabby hostel, in a small town, in a big crowded city, in a historical place, in a secluded remote village or even in a modern city like Paris. (Even for Anand the ideas shaped around the locus of Paris makes the most part of his miseries apparent.) Heredity factor as a controller is mostly obvious in the life of Samar’s father, or in the way of Catherine’s retroaction when she finally forgets about all her bohemian thoughts and manages to marry a stockbroker and raise a family, as perhaps in total conformity with her parents’ wishes!

Also there are several related themes which could be extracted as readers explore passages of the work. Some themes in this novel refer to political concepts such as corruption, freedom or oppression. And some themes are about interpersonal issues such as friendship, betrayal, and loyalty. Among those common thread or repeated ideas that are incorporated throughout this literary work, we might elaborate here on some more important ones which can be inferred from the story:

- In an effort to change your life system don’t underestimate the power of fate!
  Or you can’t evade realities of your life forever! Or correlating the ideal and the real is more difficult than it seems!
This is wonderfully illuminated in Miss West’s life as she has tried to build a different world on the basis of her ideal love affair but at last comes to face the bitter reality and decides to go back to London.

- Mere love doesn’t bring security and peace! Or Instant joys won’t last long!
  Or society and environment make greatest modifications on your innermost feelings!
All four characters Samar, Catherine, Anand and Miss West are the embodiments of such themes.
• All human beings are in the same boat! Or man is in constant interaction with his own nature and his culture, society and environment! This theme is mostly evident in the life of Samar’s father. He wants some sort of freedom all through his life but as his final episode in the story shows he is not conducting his life very differently from other members of the society. In fact he behaves according to a code of physical or spiritual need that is practiced by many people in the same community.

• Man’s innermost feelings and attitudes are in essence really personal and private! They may not be disclosed to dearest friends even over years. Rajesh and his mysterious career is a good example of this theme in the novel. Even at the end of the story and through his direct letter to Samar some aspects of his real life remain under the clouds of vagueness and suspicion. Moreover, it is through the same letter that we find out even Rajesh can’t understand Samar’s true feelings and motivations for selecting a secluded life. This theme finds more remarkable interpretive grounds if we consider Rajesh as a character foil to Samar himself.

3.2.1.2.5. Characters

In principle, one of the most important tools available to the writer in a novel is its characters. It is the characters and their developments that show how creative a writer is. In this regard, Pankaj Mishra is successful in characterization; as an inspired writer he produces various touchable characters in the novel, whom we feel we have met before. In fact, when readers are drawn into the lives of Samar, Catherine, Miss West, Rajesh, and Anand they can understand them better and consequently make a fair judgment on the thoughts, feelings, motivations and attitudes associated with these characters. Of course this doesn’t mean that every reader would accept or appreciate the type of characters or their attitudes presented here, since at least in case of Samar there has been much controversy over his failing reactions toward his personal or social dilemmas; a code of behavior that renders him as an unconvincing character. Nonetheless, in this engagement, Pankaj Mishra proves to be qualified enough. He uses two major methods of presenting characters: showing and telling, though not with the same balance in quantity (Kimberly Chun believes that “Mishra
also gives the reader the impression that he tells more than he shows”⁵⁹). In telling, he intervenes, through the narrator, to describe and sometimes evaluate the characters for the reader. This is mostly done about the character of Samar’s father. Showing allows the writer to present a character talking and acting, as it is the language of the character that reveals him or her best. In this way, he lets the reader infer what kind of characters Miss West, Catherine or Samar are.

Talking about Samar, we can assert that this structural type of character has been developed well in the novel. We know that the personality of such a first-person narrator protagonist like Samar develops either directly through his comments about himself (which are not too much) or indirectly in the way he narrates events. At least, one good point in Samar’s characterization is the fact that though he is an intellectual of sorts, reading Turgenev and Schopenhauer, the reader is never in serious trouble to decipher or decode grand philosophical ideas in the novel’s prose. Accordingly we can perceive what the writer has done all proficiently on Samar’s traits to enable us to classify him as a round, open, dynamic character who has started a journey of progress and growth and you may find much details about him in the novel since this is his life story. Yet on the other hand, we should not overlook that protagonists often solicit sympathy from the readers but in this case some readers may not sympathize with Samar on certain grounds: one reason as Shoma Chaudhury proclaims is the fact that “we never experience his [Samar’s] exalted vision. And so we cannot experience his ache.”⁶⁰ The next reason as another commentator traces readers’ frustration with Samar’s character is in the writer’s choice of setting and atmosphere:

At the beginning of a ‘new age’, Mishra’s novel travels back a century in morality as well as mood. The virtues of his hero are an endearing bibliophilia, a wide-eyed propensity for love and friendship, a touching shyness and a modest desire to learn. Moreover, all of Samar’s activities are cloaked in weltschmerz and ennui. ‘Weary’ is a keyword, and the fictional mode is prototypically confessional....⁶¹
Among the other attractive characters, we can mention Rajesh, who is a stereotypical, allegorical, closed, flat, and static character, as he presents the familiar type of a disobedient student with charismatic personality and a “Godfather-like status” in the campus with radical political ideas and a secret but predictable career of a “contract killer” in his future. Rajesh comes from humble origins and shows a strong personality through his intellectual speeches for other students in the campus or his interest in the poetry of Faiz and Iqbal or even conveys some sense of superiority to ordinary people by carrying and hiding that pistol in his hostel room. Though his poetic, rebellious, and mysterious nature attracts attentions easily, Rajesh’s main function in the story remains somewhere else. As Rahul Gairola points out “Rajesh is a literary foil to Samar’s socially inept self.” Thus as a secondary character who contrasts with Samar’s character; Rajesh’s behavior and values are in disparity with those of Samar in order to highlight the distinctive temperament of the protagonist. Samar is naïve and unfledged in his encounters with the world while Rajesh shows much more sophistication in this endeavor:

I [Samar] saw him [Rajesh] pointing to the empty expanses of sand and scrubland across the river. ‘That,’ he was saying, bringing out each Sanskrit and Hindi syllable precisely, ‘is sunyata, the void. And this’ – he pointed at the teeming conglomeration of temples and houses towards the north of the city – ‘is maya, illusion. Do you know what our task is?’ The student shook his head. Rajesh continued, ‘Our task is to live somewhere in between.’

This unique philosophy of life uttered by Rajesh is once again stressed upon by Samar from a different angle when he wants to tell us about the degree of difficulty in dealing with the real world:

THE WORLD IS MAYA, illusion: it was one of the very first things my father told me. But it is a meaningless idea to a child, and the peculiar ordeals of adulthood take you even further away from true comprehension. New deprivations and desires continually open up within you,
you keep learning new ways of experiencing pain and happiness, and the idea of illusion, never quite grasped, fades.  \[66\]

Most literally named character, Miss Diana West, the middle-aged English woman “who is living in India in order to see her married lover without causing him scandal”\[67\], plays an important role in the action of the story. This open, round, dynamic character has a structural significance in the future of our Brahmin protagonist. Samar is attracted to her “odd manners and discomfiting vacillation from English primness to Bohemian excess;”\[68\] thus, he shows eagerness and is drawn into her exotic circle of expatriates: Mark, Sarah, Debbie, Anand, and of course Catherine. In fact, it is after attending musical soirées arranged by Miss West that Samar gets closer to the peculiarities around himself. As a young bookish Brahmin, Samar had been taught to evade “romantic love” or any other “sensual derangements” so he had never experienced being in a party or even having a girlfriend. Miss West’s arrangements push him to cross these barriers; friendship with this lady initiates a performance of discovery and change for Samar. Moreover, readers would not overlook her deft arrangement of a trip to Mussoorie, where she is supposed to join Samar and Catherine but never does so. In fact, we may be a bit suspicious about the lines that claim it is Catherine who asks Miss West not to invite Anand for this trip. From the first moment of Samar’s acquaintance with Catherine in the party to every other meeting, Miss West catches him in his special attention given to Catherine among others; thus it is not so strange if she sees Samar as a better alternative for Catherine and plans to join these two. This specific position for Miss West is more justified when we remember that as a European woman she sees Catherine-Anand relationship as futile and knows about the ideals of Catherine, besides she is more experienced in love cycles!

Miss West’s relationship with Catherine (and Anand in the next place) is distinct in one word, that is, “protégés”. Samar recounts this very early in page sixteen of the novel when he wants to describe Miss West’s viewpoints about different people in Benares. This standpoint is further asserted by Samar himself: “After this, her [Catherine’s] soft French accent was all the more unexpected; it made her seem oddly childlike, more human, more manageable.”\[69\] Catherine is the daughter of a banker in
Paris and she comes to “Benares to get as far away as possible from her oppressively ‘bourgeois’ parents.”\textsuperscript{70} Feeling bored with something or somebody or feeling insecurity in some people or even some concepts and then trying to find stability, strength and safe haven in some other people or conceptions; this is a characteristic always with Catherine. Sometimes she points out some unique ideas such as rejecting a biased ranking of writers or referring to her own elite choices: “Personally, I like Kundera. He says serious things about contemporary life.”\textsuperscript{71} But even these remain as stylish sophisticated gestures for readers:

Catherine is consistently unattractive for the reader. She remains a weak narcissist, weeping and sulking in corners in between spells of brittle gaiety.\textsuperscript{72}

In comparison with others, this flat closed character tries to be flamboyant, gorgeous and captivating but fails. She has few features with no psychological depth or detail and remains a flimsy Western dilettante who lives like a Bohemian but thinks like a bourgeois.\textsuperscript{73} The only promising point about her is that she shows an inappreciable ray of change at the end: after breaking up with Anand and changing different boyfriends in Paris, she finally decides to be contented with one and plans to marry a stockbroker. Still some idea that has no guarantee!

There are various elements considered as indispensable requirements for the high achievement of a novel; however, it is said that if the characters in a novel change and grow, then this novel shows signs of success. In other words, the characters’ range of capacity to change, their moment of awakening, their facing up to temptations and making choices are what we most appreciate in novels. From a critical viewpoint, we can say that \textit{The Romantics} is a successful novel, for at least two characters give this testimony. Both Samar and Miss West show these attributes of change and growth in the novel, so to speak. For Miss West all we understand from what Mark says is the point that her relationship with Christopher does not “work out” so at the end, she says goodbye to Samar and India as well to go back to England. Of course, this doesn’t mean to be her moment of awakening since she finally repeats the same familiar phrase, “‘it’s all such a waste. Such a bloody waste,”\textsuperscript{74} which was once
uttered by her early in the story and the day after the party; just to signify to the reader that as an veteran lover she knows the end from the beginning.

On the other hand, that moment of awakening is as vast as seven years for the novice Samar. But there is something much valuable in this huge time span to measure:

WHEN YOU ARE in your twenties, seven years can seem like a long time – especially if you live a secluded life, if you know neither ambition nor love nor any other preoccupations of that age.75

In a long and demanding course of change and growth, Samar tries to confront temptations and make choices; so he never goes back to the life his father always tries to sketch for him, or he doesn’t fall in love at once any more (even if it is a nice girl like Priya!). Instead, he shows signs of maturity. Though in the finale Samar feels “sad and full of mourning for the past, for that pure time of desires and dreams”76 he had while in Benares, this time he behaves differently with much prestige and esteem. The difference comes with quite a sharp contrast with Anand’s fate when failed in his career. As Miss West recounts it, Anand lives in a complete despair and depression after his failure in getting the previously imagined job and being rejected by Catherine and returning to India from Paris. Even worse after four years he is still desperately hopeful “still pinning for Catherine, hoping for some sort of miracle, writing long letters to her and getting shorter and shorter notes in return.”77 But Samar only receives the finishing news about all those wandering people in a calm relaxed mood to illustrate in the most effective manner the accomplishments of his life journey from innocence to experience.

In most great novels, special importance is attached to the way they close. And accordingly the last words of a character deserve special status. In this way the last words become a revelation of character. Here Mishra does employ the same impact but with a different style. Seemingly, and on the surface we do not come to a highly splendid distinct scene at the end but indeed the metaphorical rainy scene amidst the chaos in the hotel show how Samar feels purified and free from any guilt or burden:
“Water ran down my back; my socks were wet; my feet cold. But I was feeling quite calm.”

3.2.1.3. Extra-textual Features

Considering extra-textual characteristics of the novel in this section, the researcher will explain about the feedbacks and reactions about The Romantics. These include the literary significance and reception of the text, and its influence and popularity. To attain this, two sets of datum will be presented here: one is the information about different editions, translations or any other probable reproductions of the book and the second is the number, importance and quality of reviews referring to the novel. It should be mentioned that since there has been very little literary criticism in printed format on Pankaj Mishra and his novel, as a result much of the information presented here is by and large found and documented through web-surfing.

The Romantics has been published since 1999 in different formats of hardcover (normal and large print) and paperback in different publications such as Picador (UK), India Ink (India) and Anchor (USA), Thorndike Press (USA), Random House (USA), Knopf Publishing Group (Canada) and Pan Macmillan (UK). Its pages range from 260 to 288 and in a publication like Picador it has got more than ten editions. Also we know that the novel has been translated into other languages including eleven European ones, and Hebrew as well. At least through online surfing it becomes clear that no film has been made on this novel yet and there is no adapted screenplay about it either.

The Romantics has aroused different reactions among domestic and international critics and reviewers. On one occasion this novel wins the Los Angeles Times Art Seidenbaum award for first fiction or becomes short-listed for English fiction at The Crossword Book Award in 2000 and at another time Pankaj Mishra’s literary agent in England, Gillon Aitken boasts on the great literary powers of the writer of The Romantics to say that “the novel is written with great elegance and feeling, and with an understated emotional insight reminiscent of Henry James although his [Mishra’s] prose style, in its simplicity and directness, is not at all to be
compared with the convolutions of Henry James. This is a first novel of great delicacy and stylistic accomplishment.\footnote{79} On the other hand, a commentator such as Siddharth Singh reprimands Panakj Mishra because of “oversimplifying his characters” or some “topographical inaccuracies throughout the novel” and “the inaccurate depiction of India.”\footnote{80}

The following table provides us with some more accurate information about reviews done on *The Romantics*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>REVIEWER</th>
<th>DATE</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Washington Post</td>
<td>Marie Arana</td>
<td>5.3.2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>TLS</td>
<td>Shirley Chew</td>
<td>4.2.2000</td>
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<td>The NY Times Book Rev.</td>
<td>Akash Kapur</td>
<td>27.2.2000</td>
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<td>The NY Times</td>
<td>Michiko Kakutani</td>
<td>21.3.2000</td>
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<td>The Nation</td>
<td>Amitava Kumar</td>
<td>24.4.2000</td>
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<td>The Outlook Magazine</td>
<td>Shoma Chaudhury</td>
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<td>The Outlook Magazine</td>
<td>Shoma Chaudhury</td>
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<td>The Hindu</td>
<td>Kausalya Santhanam</td>
<td>6.2.2000</td>
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<td>Biblio: A Rev. of Books</td>
<td>Rukmini Bhaya Nair</td>
<td>Jan-Feb 2000</td>
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<td>New Statesman</td>
<td>James Hopkin</td>
<td>14.2.2000</td>
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<td>The Independent</td>
<td>Aamer Hussein</td>
<td>24.1.2000</td>
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<td>Literatures of Asia: Online</td>
<td>Jeremy Wetmore</td>
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<td>World Literature Today.com</td>
<td>Sharrad Paul</td>
<td>22.6.2000</td>
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<td>Asian Week.com</td>
<td>Kimberly Chun</td>
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<td>Bookreporter.com</td>
<td>Jana Siciliano</td>
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<td>Persimmon.mag</td>
<td>Andrea Kempf</td>
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<td>Freitag 15</td>
<td>Joachim Feldmann</td>
<td>06.04.2001</td>
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<td>South Asian Women’s Forum</td>
<td>Siddharth Singh</td>
<td>12.6.2000</td>
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<td>Manfrommatunga.com</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30.4.2000</td>
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<td>The Complete Review</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10.5.2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Age*</td>
<td>Annie Greet</td>
<td>17.7.2000</td>
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<td>Daily Telegraph*</td>
<td>David Robson</td>
<td>22.2.2000</td>
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<td>The Economist*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18.3.2000</td>
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<td>The Hindustan Times*</td>
<td>Shubra Gupta</td>
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<td>The NY Rev. of Books*</td>
<td>John Bayley</td>
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To cite some examples, we might refer to Annie Greet who says: “But while the novel has disappointments, it is redeemed to some extent by passages that genuinely move, such as his meditation on the life and release through death of his mother. And the novel gradually improves, once Mishra stops straining to prove his protagonist’s ignorance.”

Or David Robson hails it in this way: “The Romantics is a first novel of astonishing maturity. It has virtually none of the rawness of apprentice-work and a great deal of that calm authority which one associates with writers in their prime. I read it in a sitting, utterly absorbed in its characters, entranced by its lush prose, saddened, but never depressed, by its core of melancholy.”

Generally, a majority of available reviews have appreciated The Romantics as an interesting debut of a brilliant talented young writer who has untapped potentials for his fiction. Of course, such appreciation shows a range of variety, as some reviewers believe that Mishra’s novel is a “skilful enjoyable but ultimately academic exercise,” while others announce it as a “supernova in the wan firmament of recent fiction.” Critics mostly praise the writer’s straight, clean, unhampered prose which is also intelligent, accomplished and aspiring of a literary status.

Presenting a fact-based heavy-handed meandering plot with simplistic characters, Mishra has also been chided for excessiveness in style, verbosity and characters. Lack of emotion is another great snag for the novel according to some critics. Kausalya Santhanam believes that “when Samar goes into exile for seven long years, the reader is baffled. There is nothing in the portrayal of his emotions or his flat and fleeting sexual encounter to show that this is the Grand passion or justify the agony of the Great Rebuffal.” Not showing enough from inside of Samar and the

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<th>Publication</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Observer*</td>
<td>Stephanie Merritt</td>
<td>13.2.2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday Telegraph*</td>
<td>Sukhdev Sandhu</td>
<td>5.2.2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Sunday Times*</td>
<td>Anthony Quinn</td>
<td>13.2.2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Die Zeit*</td>
<td>Gabriele Venzky</td>
<td>13.1.2001</td>
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* It was not possible for the researcher to track down the last nine reviews in full form since their online links were no longer in use for various reasons (belonging to the past archives with no available backups in their relevant homepages being one). However only a short extract of such reviews are accessible whether through online surfing or as the book blurb.
places he lives in and employing a dry thematic elucidation and explanation is considered to be another shortcoming for the book. Yet a greater common criticism on the book is found with the idea of Indian motifs pandering to Western readers. This refers to the point that many reviewers have rebuked Pankaj Mishra for giving the Western readers all that they are already used to hearing about India i.e. dirt, poverty, decay, Sadhus, politics at the university. In this way, Siddharth Singh asks, “Why is it that Samar, who is obviously not completely impoverished, chooses the worst localities to live in?”86 Or another Indian reviewer, in the website manfrommatunga.com, ends his critique with this query: “Do poverty, filth and decay have to be our only export?”87

Among a bulk of reviews, Rukmini Bhaya Nair most skillfully applies Flaubert’s advice on writing a biography to produce a literary criticism on Pankaj Mishra’s novel as if to “take a revenge on him.”88 Accordingly, her view about this novel is highlighted through three major points. For the first point she mentions that “Mishra’s novel is not just the prototypical modest book with much to be modest about. The intriguing thing about this novel is that it is a manifest throwback to the roman a clefs of the 19th century. At the beginning of a ‘new age’, Mishra’s novel travels back a century in morality as well as mood.”89 Secondly, she points out that “the book echoes, maybe even panders profitably to, Europe’s nostalgia for its triumphal past. […] Yet there is a deeper strain of longing in The Romantics. This is the Indian Literature student’s own ineffable, post-colonial desire – a desire most poignantly reflected in the books he continues to rely on. […] Imagine this: Pankaj Mishra is writing for a contemporary, global audience. His hero is born in 1969 and reared on Enid Blyton and Tintin; but the literary masters he offers this hyper, hep audience right up-front are Flaubert, Turgenev, Schopenhauer and Edmund Wilson! Forget his boring story-line, the borrowed characters. It is the implications of this anachronistic reading list Mishra serves up which fascinate.”90 Finally she indicates that “literary journalism has many of the characteristics displayed in Mishra’s work. By offering readers what Mishra describes as “a passport to the larger world” via the lingua franca of English this mode of writing taps right into those historic reserves of intellectual longing that constitute the real subject of The Romantics. In this sense, the literary journalist is a semi-official, accredited, a mediator between cultures, rather in
the manner of a colonial Richard Burton or Hester Stanhope or a V.S. Naipaul or Paul Theroux today."\(^9^1\)
3.2.1.4. Notes and References:


3 According to page 193 of A Glossary of Literary Terms by M. H. Abrams (seventh edition, Massachusetts: Heinle & Heinle, 2006), Bildungsroman and Erziehungsroman are German terms signifying “novel of formation” or “novel of education.” The subject of these novels is the development of the protagonist’s mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied experiences—and often through a spiritual crisis—into maturity, which usually involves recognition of one’s identity and role in the world. The mode was begun by K. P. Moritz’s Anton Reiser (1785-90) and Goethe’s Wilhelm Meisters Apprenticeship (1795-96); it includes Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre (1847), George Eliot’s The Mill on the Floss (1860), Charles Dickens’ Great Expectations (1861), Somerset Maugham’s Of Human Bondage (1915), and Thomas Mann’s The Magic Mountain (1924). An important subtype of the Bildungsroman is the Künstlerroman (“artist-novel”), which represents the growth of a novelist or other artist from childhood into the stage of maturity that signalizes the recognition of the protagonist’s artistic destiny and mastery of an artistic craft. In Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development (1993), Susan Fraiman analyzes novels about “growing up female”; she proposes that they put to question the “enabling fiction” that the Bildungsroman is a “progressive development” toward “masterful selfhood.”


5 According to page 275 of A Glossary of Literary Terms by M. H. Abrams (seventh edition, Massachusetts: Heinle & Heinle, 2006), Roman à clef (French for “novel with a key”) is a work of prose fiction in which the author expects the knowing reader to identify, despite their altered names, actual people of the time. The mode was begun in seventeenth-century France with novels such as Madeleine de Scudéry’s Le Grand Cyrus (1649-53). An English example is Thomas Love Peacock’s Nightmare Abbey (1818), whose characters are entertaining caricatures of such contemporary literary figures as Coleridge, Byron, and Shelley. A later instance is Aldous Huxley’s Point Counter Point (1928), in which we find, under fictional names, well-known English people of the 1920s such as the novelist D. H. Lawrence, the critic Middleton Murry, and the right-wing political extremist Oswald Mosely.


9 Judith Roof, op. cit., p.68.


11 Ibid., p.6.


16 Ibid., p.3.

17 Ibid., p.75.

18 Ibid., p.38.

19 Ibid., p.17.

20 Ibid., p.64.

21 Ibid., p.123.

22 Ibid., pp.150-51.

23 Ibid., p.230.

24 Ibid., pp.3-4.

25 Ibid., p.17.

26 Ibid., p.35.

27 Ibid., p.39.

28 Ibid., p.77.
29 Ibid., p.25.

30 Ibid., p.32.

31 Ibid., p.104.

32 Ibid., p.135.

33 Ibid., p.147.


36 Ibid., p.170.

37 Ibid., p.169.

38 Ibid., p.184.


40 Ibid., p.215.

41 Ibid., p.229.

42 Ibid., p.224.

43 Ibid., p.259.


Ibid., p.34.

Ibid., pp.269-70.

Ibid., p.247.

Ibid., p.250.

Ibid., p.63.


Kausalya Santhanam, op. cit.


Ibid., p.244.


Ibid., p.215.


70 Ibid.

71 Ibid., p.57.

72 Shoma Chaudhury, op. cit.

73 This could be seen in sharp contrast with Samar’s quote from Flaubert in page 45 of the novel which suggests how one should live like a bourgeois but think like a bohemian.


75 Ibid., p.229.

76 Ibid., p.276.

77 Ibid., p.273.

78 Ibid., p.277.


84 Marie Arana, op.cit.

Siddharth Singh, op. cit.


In page six of her review on Mishra, Rukmini Bhaya Nair refers to an epigraph quoted by another contemporary novelist, Julian Barnes, at the beginning of his novel *Flaubert’s Parrot*: “When you write the biography of a friend” opined Flaubert in a letter of 1872, “you must do it as if are taking revenge on him.”


Ibid., p.5.

Ibid., p.6.
3.2.2. Butter Chicken in Ludhiana: Travels in Small Town India

As it was mentioned in methodology section, in dealing with texts under study the researcher will conduct the survey in two related areas of approach: intra-textual and extra-textual; here the intra-textual features of the text under study such as: Genre, Itinerary and Setting, Narration and Narrator, and Characterization are of main concern.

3.2.2.1. General Overview

Pankaj Mishra’s debut book, Butter Chicken in Ludhiana: Travels in Small Town India published first in 1995 consists of nineteen chapters together with a prologue and a finalizing afterword which totally amounts to 286 pages (in Picador edition of 2006). The main focus is on small towns and no distinct places are taken into consideration in these towns unless they relate to the main objective of the book, i.e. depicting social, cultural, and economic transformations of a nation during the epoch of modernity and globalization.

In addition to the above-mentioned intention, there was another imperative for the writer which is best described with Pankaj Mishra’s afterword. Startlingly everything started from that “unexpected letter from a publisher in Delhi” as the new afterword of the 2006 revised edition of Butter Chicken in Ludhiana clarifies. Pankaj Mishra welcomed that proposal from Penguin India to write a travel book after some inner conflict, because he had already thought of his career in a different way.

In the first glimpse, these ultimate pages of the travelogue may seem too much reactional from a writer who has received readers’ responses after the first appearance of his work in 1995. But to see it more optimistically, here the author illustrates the whole process of the origination of his book quite outspokenly to help readers complete their pre-critical or critical judgments. By the way, the correct choice made by that publisher is attested further here when we come across some qualifications of Pankaj Mishra. We are reminded that an aspiring young newspaper contributor who
had spent most of his life in such small towns of India could be one of the best choices available.

There are some other elaborations when the author valiantly declares his own shortcomings as a young inexperienced journalist who has ambitions to be a novelist in the future but now has to “give a mature perspective and impose shape on the material [he] had gathered”\(^1\) for a travelogue. Thus to do what most young writers had done before in selecting an older writer’s style, Mishra adopts Thorstein Veblen’s mode to make a “tone of mordant irony, channeling through humor and mockery the unease [Mishra] had known during [his] travels.”\(^2\)

It might be worthy to mention that by gaining new grounds in the strenuously-achieved status of sharing the experience of writing among many other spirited famous Indian writers, now Pankaj Mishra reviews the risky evaluations of this “sardonic young insider”\(^3\) with much confidence after over ten years. Even he shows a sort of experiential knowledge combined with ample frankness when he says:

But I always felt slightly embarrassed by the book. For, as I continued to write, I began to find my voice, and to see the need for intellectual and existential self-reckoning in much of what I wrote. *Butter chicken* reminded me too much of my younger, callow, unresolved self, which had assumed positions of intellectual and moral authority without quite earning the always provisional right to them.\(^4\)

And being well informed about the political history of other parts of the world as well as his own country he gives the earnest readers of the travelogue a justification as well as a sense of analogy when he rationalizes about his chosen style and tone:

But I realize *Butter Chicken* responded to a very significant event in India’s recent history –the moment that the middle class began to expand and rise and reveal themselves just as culturally ambitious and politically conservative as those classes that have emerged in modern Europe and America.
Much of the book’s dominant tone of defensive irony and humour is explained by the new and unsettlingly ambiguous nature of the phenomenon it tried to describe.\(^5\)

Of course, this was not the first time for the writer of the travelogue to validate his work. In an interview dated back to 2000, the writer himself straightforwardly distinguished this book from his next works; telling the readers how they find a very different tone here:

I was writing in that clever, metropolitan voice that’s become the trademark of Indian writing in English – the *Butter Chicken in Ludhiana* voice.\(^6\)

And quite adequately this different voice is marvelously domineering throughout the travelogue via a “defensive tone of irony and humor”\(^7\) which sometimes culminates in mere pessimistic creed over fact-files of middle class life in India or then immediately balances to equilibrium:

[...] –the world which was the other side of places like Muzaffarnagar, and which at times made one wonder if much of urban India wasn’t simply a horrible mistake. The squalor, however, was part of the new prosperity; the two things went together in India.\(^8\)

It is then through a series of relatively short articles that the author or, better to say, the first person narrator describes the profound changes taking place in rural Indian towns during 1990s. Throughout these articles we become acquainted with different characters or rather types in different settings via narrator’s sharp eyes. The presence of this first person narrator is easily felt from the second paragraph in the introductory prologue, where one might face with the first traces of stylish satirical standpoints by the writer from the very beginning of the book.

The prologue plays its preliminary role well in giving us a general view about the whole thing we are supposed to encounter during the coming journeys. As it turns
out from the narrator’s explanation in the last page of the prologue, there was a semi-itinerary but not everything clear-cut:

My own plan, as it developed over the months following my visit to Muzaffarnagar, was to travel through at least twenty towns and cities across India, so as to get a fairly representative cross-sample, with no fixed agenda except what was created for me in specific circumstances. …Swiftly, I drew up a list of places I thought I should visit. Gradually, however, over the next few weeks, and after much mulling and many alterations, I arrived at a suitable itinerary.  

Though, according to what some critics may believe, sometimes there is a small sense of the excitement of being on the road, of not knowing who or what one is going to stumble upon next, as so clearly was stated, the setting of the travelogue is small towns scattered all around India, even if the number of these towns may not seem enough for sampling in such a large subcontinent.

3.2.2.2. Intra-textual Features

3.2.2.2.1. Genre

As it is mentioned in the subtitle of the book and as far as genre is concerned here, *Butter Chicken in Ludhiana: Travels in Small Town India* seems to be categorized by a set of related buzzwords such as *travel literature, travel novel, travelogue, itinerary* or even *outdoor and adventure literature*. Indeed, this adaptation is simply done according to encyclopedic definition which says travel literature is “travel writing considered to have value as literature. Travel literature typically records the people, events, sights and feelings of an author who is touring a foreign place [or different regions within the same country] for the pleasure of travel. An individual work is sometimes called a travelogue or itinerary.” Simultaneously, since many traces of general explorations and some instances about nature and environment are found in the book, then terms like adventure and outdoor literature may not look so far fetched here.
Based on the writers’ personal predilection or intention and the nature of the places to be explored different kinds of travelogues could be found. Sometimes travel writing makes a living for its writer. The American writer Paul Theroux (b. 1941) is one of these. At another point some devotees of nature combine science and natural history to make travel writing more fascinating. Here works done by Ivan T. Sanderson (1911–1973) may be of good choice.12 As another example we might refer to amalgamation of travel and essay writing such as in V. S. Naipaul’s *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977). Also travel literature happens when an author, famous in another field, travels and writes about his own experiences during a trip. John Steinbeck (1902–1968) has done in this way among many others.13 And the mythical journey in Homer’s *Odyssey* (c. 8th cent. BCE) and the allegorical journeys of Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (1321) are considered as examples of another type, i.e. fictional travelogue.

And thence all the above mentioned labels and examples, in turn, give way to one of the main divisions of writing: **non-fiction** and then its subdivision, i.e. **literary non-fiction**, where on one hand, one can get a true (or sometimes false) account of a subject which is presented as fact and on the other hand, one might encounter literary elements and figures of speech. It might be thought that many literary devices used within fiction production seem inappropriate or useless in non-fiction, because what we need here is simplicity, clarity and directness, but besides the great supply of information about small towns of India over a decade ago *Butter Chicken in Ludhiana* employs a number of those literary elements skillfully to prove the power of its writer, without overshadowing the information within the work and without dropping the main objective: depicting an India in transition. In fact, during an interview published on March 2007, Pankaj Mishra himself highlights the discrepancy well enough:

Yet, for the past six years I’ve only written nonfiction, and I’ve felt confined by having to construct a narrative based on facts and not having the freedom to provide a different perspective. As a novelist, your impulse is toward multiplicity: multiple voices, multiple perceptions, multiple nuances—the ambiguity in human communication.14
It is true that Pankaj Mishra’s travelogue is essentially built upon facts, but whereas he deals with popular culture to show the folkways, mind-sets, and customs of ordinary everyday people he can’t avoid the occurrence of that “multiple voice, perception or nuance”\textsuperscript{15} in his writing, since he has lived among and been one of the same people. This is to say that there are many points, in which travel literature converges with essay writing, where a trip becomes the occasion for extended observations on a nation and throughout those essay type chapters you find many fine instances of literariness. Thus, it is through a lucid, absorbing, and engaging narrative style that he primarily makes his detached observations on the transformations that Indian people and towns have undergone and then at any feasible place makes his own personal comments via a different language that at times reminds you of his first career wish, i.e. to be a novelist.

However, whether this travelogue is inspected with a Prototypical or a Criterial Approach\textsuperscript{16}, still a hybridity of non-fiction and literary elements are easily observed: intermingled throughout the text one finds essay form, explanation/exposition format, standard rhetorical patterns, focus on ideas and facts(not necessarily literary language), and researched facts – which show its non-fiction quality – and then at the same time story/narration format, place/scene/setting structure, characterization, author’s personal engagement emphasized through his robust wit and humor, literary voice/feel and an artistic instinctual polished language, as typical of Pankaj Mishra as one may notice, all remind the reader of a literary manipulation.

3.2.2.2. Itinerary and Setting

One of the most outstanding features apropos this travelogue is the itinerary as well as the setting chosen by the writer. Being an ‘insider’ and having an Indian perspective, Pankaj Mishra sets up his itinerary on small towns and not the usual tourist resorts; a decision which seems a little bit queer when one thinks about the large Indian subcontinent with all its attractions to exert a pull on a traveler’s desire. More interestingly even if he visits a famous tourist destination he awaits a different situation:
Towards the end of October, I went to Simla and found it cleansed of tourists, and restored to its permanent residents.\(^{17}\)

However, compared with some other travelogues ever written about India it is this choice which makes the key difference. Accordingly, the writer does not follow the conventional plot for his book since he is thinking about some stuff totally different from what is usually found in guidebooks. That difference for the most part comes from the fact that Pankaj Mishra has tried to show the effects of economic liberalization and cultural social modernization on a newer scale: small towns as the smaller cells of a grand community like India. Hence we can formulate the outcomes of these trips when each small picture is put beside one another; the way a jigsaw puzzle is done. Then it is only with the big picture in view that one can accomplish a better understanding of the themes and motifs of the book.

In order to map out the travelogue, we find out that writer’s journey starts from Simla at North, goes on to Jaipur at East, continues to Kanyakumari at far South and ends in Jehanabad at West! There are also some other towns in between.

The prologue gives the reader a preliminary provision to familiarize him with the whole setting: ordinary people doing their routine jobs as usual. The opening scene places the reader inside ISBT at Delhi to feel closely the woeful wretchedness of living in a metropolitan city. Here many people share the grotesque burden of traveling from capital city to a nearby town, mainly due to poor transportation services. Then we are taken to Muzaffarnagar, where for the first time the idea of traveling around the small towns and cities of India flashed through writer’s mind.

The first three chapters are about towns in the North: Simla, Mandi, and Ambala. Winter is arriving in the locale and the narrator stays one night at YMCA before starting for Mandi, five hours to the north of Simla. During the evening, he encounters different people; American couple, Finnish missionaries, British couples and two Italian girls. Yet at Simla, he explains the whole panorama of old buildings through absolute wit and humor:
Bemusingly eclectic, a mishmash of styles from Gothic to Tudor to Swiss-chateau, they prompted the severe classicist Edwin Lutyens to say: ‘If one was told the monkeys had built it all, one could only say, “What wonderful monkeys – they must be shot in case they do it again!”’ Human beings presumably, and not monkeys, had built the new buildings of Himachal University. The design offered some clues: monkeys would not have let drab geometry ride roughshod over convenience and harmony the way it does in these bleak, climatically inappropriate godowns; they would not have wanted to spend the long damp winters of Simla within their cement walls.18

Aside from hours of rather slowly moving settings inside a bus or a train and quite plausible for a traveler, various indoor outdoor settings ranging from cheap guest houses to “the plush guestroom” at Mr. Sharma’s house or streets in Mandi during electoral campaigning take on writer’s time and attention during his stay in northern towns.

Following a short break in Delhi, our traveler heads for Rajasthan after receiving an invitation from two friends to join them on a ten-day tour. Jaipur turns out to be full of disappointments for the writer who wants to rejoice with some past memories of his childhood visit in the town. Stopping by the City Palace, built in the early eighteenth century, Mishra and his friend find out that it has been “flagrantly defaced by its present undertakers.”19 Pushkar, as the next station, also has the least indication of a “colorful sweet-smelling squalor of a pilgrim town.”20 Looking around the town, he takes a walk through bazaar and visits some multi-cuisine restaurants, some well-stocked second-hand bookstores, German bakery, and a hold-over sweetshop. Next morning in Ajmer and briefly visiting Chisti dargah, Mishra heads for Ghanerao, “an old frontier outpost of the kingdom of Mewar and now a village, no bigger than a medium-sized mohalla in a small town.”21 Residing at a haveli-hotel exaggeratedly called ‘Ghanerao Royal Castle’, he visits Kumbhalgarh Fort at nearby Badal Mahal. Ranakpur is the next stopover on their route, where they pay a visit to Adinatha temple; a pilgrim place most revered by Jains. While trying to relax for
some time, Mishra stays at Shikarbadi hotel, a few kilometers out of Udaipur; a city which turns out not to have an inner life of its own for him. Then, he visits some tourist places there: the City Palace, Jagdish temple, Saheliyon-ki-bari, Lake Pichola, Lake Palace Hotel, and converses with a young man from Ghazipur while stopping at a nearby tea-shack.

Rejoining his friends, Mishra leaves Udaipur and arrives at Bundi, where he is amazed by its geographical location as well as some speed-breakers on the paths:

Bundi lies on the base of a hollow concavity formed by two steep hillsides. A sprawling fort looms high over the town; below it, majestically isolated, is the high-walled City Palace. The houses are whitewashed with a sky blue tinge in the Rajasthani manner. The streets in new quarter are broad but, approaching a crowded intersection, abruptly narrow. On them, at unexpected intervals, are speed-breakers the size of hillocks.22

After coping with accommodation problems in Bundi (due to presence of Judge Sahib in the town), our travelers stay in Circuit House at last. Surprisingly, Mishra and his friends left Udaipur in that unbearable noise and clamor at the time of forthcoming New Year’s Eve festivities in order to find a quieter place like Bundi; and then it is the sluggishness and lethargy all through nights at Bundi that makes displeasure again.

Chapter eight starts with reviewing some memories of a university friend, Rajendra. Then, we shall follow the writer to Hapur, not very far from Delhi, since:

[...] I had long wanted to go to Hapur; it was one of the places that automatically chose itself when I embarked on my present travels. It could seem a strange choice: Hapur, a town grown rich on agricultural profits, was known only for its high crime-rate. But then even stranger was the life
of the friend from whom I had first heard about Hapur, and whose memory now encouraged me to go there.²³

Upon arrival, our writer checks into a hotel close to the bus stand at Hapur. While eating breakfast at a shop in a narrow lane behind the hotel, he ponders over the eventful yet murky way of life in such a place. This notion gets even gloomier:

Its proximity to the national capital does nothing for Hapur. After breakfast I walked through its streets, and was confronted by exactly the same sights one would find in any town, big or small, in North India: broken roads which, choked with vehicular traffic and stationary thela-stalls, have no space for pedestrians…²⁴

During his stay in Hapur and in the middle of an earsplitting clamorous wedding ceremony, the narrator contacts Mr. Singh to get some news about his friend Rajendra. When Mr. Singh tells him that Rajendra is doing farming in Hapur, Mishra changes his mind and decides not to see him since “[Mishra] was part of a life [Rajendra] had put behind him for good.”²⁵ Then back in Delhi the next day he catches the evening train to the South.

With the exception of few last parts, whole chapter nine roams inside the train. The landscapes before Bhopal and Nagpur (Vidarbha) are eye-catching. Since the train from Nagpur to Hyderabad is ‘indefinitely late,’ the writer decides to take the flight instead, which, not surprising in India, is also late. He then takes another train from Hyderabad to Bangalore.

For the next setting, Mishra visits some recently opened shopping malls in Bangalore accompanied by an old friend from Allahabad named Sanjai. It is believed that these malls are modeled on those in Western world, but they are far from screening economic success, yet. However, one can find many pubs, new restaurants, five-star hotels, health clubs, designer boutiques, and many other modern resorts to keep the metropolitan excitement alive. A few days later the writer gets on a bus for Tiruppur early in the morning. There are also some noticeable findings on the way:
Unlike Bombay or Calcutta whose suburbs extend infinitely, and form separate cities in themselves, Bangalore quickly recedes. Instead of heavily populated settlements, there were factories on either side, each of them with walled enclosures and well-maintained gardens. There were few people outside at this early hour.  

Mishra had heard about Tiruppur first from a professor-friend in Delhi, who described it as “a boom-town, the site of some truly remarkable transformations in the last ten years or so.” Being the center of the hosiery business along with neighboring Coimbatore, Tiruppur has one of the highest per capita incomes in India. Trichur, as the next nearby town engraves fabulous designs in the writer’s mind, while during his short stay he meets a medical representative and shares blissful moments with him discussing some literary figures in a tiny coffee-shack.

The next setting arrangement in chapter eleven of the travelogue is the departure for Kottayam, in Kerala, while in the meantime the writer eats a ‘hurried meal’ at Woodlands in Cochin. After checking into a hotel on the busy KK Road, he walks out to see some by and large deserted shops and boutiques. Then our traveler manages to make a meeting with Mrs. Mary Roy first in her office at Corpus Christi School, then during her shopping in the downtown bazaar and finally back again to the school. Kovalam Beach and Searock hotel are the next places he visits here.

Kanyakumari, where India or better say urban India begins, is the next destination for the writer. According to the writer, it is the so-called urbanization which has deteriorated the whole picture of the town. Thus, having a chat with a Bengali family and four young businessmen (in fact shopkeepers) while walking from Kanpur during different occasions, the writer tries to relieve the joylessness of the place before leaving Kanyakumari for Bangalore by train. Getting encouragement by Dr. U.R. Anantha Murthy who was teaching at JNU, Shimoga has placed itself on Mishra’s itinerary. Here the writer meets Mr. Bhatt from Gopal Gowda movement. A few miles out of Shimoga, our narrator visits Kuvempu University and its English department.
From chapter fourteen, the journey continues westward and this time Benares is the landing place. Mishra is accompanied by some “assortment of harried-looking North Indians”\(^{28}\) in the train compartment from Madras to Benares. He, then, arrives there early in the morning to pass some unpleasant hours in the waiting room at the railway station. After meeting Ramu, a Wisconsin University coordinator, the writer is introduced to Sarah, a young tourist who tells him about the harassment of women in Benares. Later, Rahul, an old acquaintance, gives some handy accounts on the cultural social status of the people and the city, while in the mean time the writer visits the Benares Hindu University. Swiftly shifting to Calcutta and then heading northward for Murshidabad in an Ambassador car, the writer gives us some descriptions about the intervening roadside buildings, markets and towns on the way. And since there is no hotel in Murshidabad he stays at Behrampore Tourist Lodge. For Mishra Murshidabad, at the time of travel, has no sign of that old sovereignty once it held, being the capital of Mughal-ruled Bengal when Calcutta was still a small riverside settlement:

The place never recovered; it shrank in both people and possibilities. Contemporary guidebooks call it a ‘small town’; and so it is. Narrow filthy lanes meander alongside the river; houses huddle together in a dense medieval mass; the bazaars are congested affairs of dingy shops and thelas selling garish trinkets. A general shabbiness pervades everything.\(^{29}\)

This is even confirmed by Salim, a caretaker at a palace-cum-museum, who offers good information about the people and the town while talking to the writer on the roof of the palace.

In chapter seventeen, Mishra arrives in the next town on his itinerary, Malda. Located at one hundred and thirty kilometers distance to the north of Murshidabad, “Malda has everything Murshidabad doesn’t”\(^{30}\): factories, multi-storied hotels, big cinema-houses and also lots of noise and garbage. He stays at hotel Meghdoot, where in its restaurant he can eavesdrop on one furtive couple in love or on four Haryanvi businessmen from the room next to him.
Coming back to Calcutta, the writer takes a train to Gaya in Bihar. He reaches there very early in the morning and nearly falls into an open manhole while searching for a “decent hotel.” After visiting Uday Prakash Singh, who is in charge of taking various exams for Central and Provincial Civil Services, Mishra talks to him and his two guests and then joins them to watch a blue film at the local cinema.

Jehanabad is the last destination on the writer’s itinerary. Thus he takes the early passenger train from Gaya to Jehanabad. Arriving there he heads for the office of IPF (Indian People’s Front), where he meets Rajesh and Raghbir Azad and gets some further information about peasant movement in recent years. After listening to Raghbir Azad’s prolonged explanations, the writer eats thali in one of those shops at railway station together with Rajesh and then gets on the train to go back.

As it was mentioned before, some critics have blamed Pankaj Mishra since they think that “Butter Chicken in Ludhiana is somewhat lacking in focus and direction – Mishra’s travels are surprisingly aimless.” But in fact this is not true, because there are some evident examples that show the writer has preplanning for at least certain destinations. One example is in chapter eight when the writer is visiting the town near the national capital, Hapur:

I was looking for a cloth-shop; it was where I was to meet my contact in Hapur, a Mr. Singh. It took a long time to find it. I didn’t have the full address; it was hidden in a narrow bylane, one of many open-fronted shops in a row.

Another example is in chapter ten, when the writer wants to confirm a date with his contact person at Tiruppur:

I had left Delhi armed with a few names and addresses of people I could, I was told, meet in Tiruppur. But when I phoned them from Bangalore to seek appointments – for these were busy people – most of them turned out to be unavailable on the day I was to visit Tiruppur.
Or in chapter thirteen, when Pankaj Mishra wants to explain how Shimoga placed itself on his map:

It was Dr. U. R. Anantha Murthy, author of Samskara and leading Kannada writer, who had encouraged me to go to Shimoga. I had met him at JNU where he was teaching a course on the Indian Novel for a semester.34

3.2.2.2.3. Narration/Narrator

Most reasonably for a travelogue, presence of the writer is felt all the time as we are supposed to see places, people and events through his eyes; an assured layout for a piece of non-fiction. In the meantime, the writer is fully aware of the fact that it is no longer the event, but the way the event is told and what it adds, that determines the worth of a travel book. Accordingly, he manipulates his narration in two important levels to make him a more reliable narrator. For one level, he narrates with a different mode through which you find more than mere first-person narration point of view. As it is usually known with first person narrations, we normally expect the narrator only to present his own thoughts in the product, while in third person narrations where the convention is that the narrator is omniscient it is common to get thoughts of more than one character portrayed in the same story. Having this in view, Pankaj Mishra remains the sole narrator of the travelogue but whenever applicable he lets the other present characters or better say types and figures share the action and help him in the job; a feature which makes his travelogue more documentary or true to life:

‘Hey, where you from?’ he asked. The English was as startling as the cap, but he had probably seen me writing in my notebook. I said, ‘I am from Delhi.’ He said, I from Delhi also.’ That explained the Malcolm X cap. They had become popular after Spike Lee film. I had seen quite a few in Delhi, sported by people as unlikely to know about Malcolm X as this boy.35
In this way different dialogues inside the train or bus and some other instances give us a hint to think that the mentioned level is in close connection with another governing mode.

So the second level is something even more fascinating than the previous one. Narrating at the same time from a vantage point and from inside different societies he visits is what the writer has done as to make another outstanding feature in the book. All through the book, there are many instances to show that he is a conscious “insider” writer; from very miniature details in lower layers of social life to greater political history or recent conflicts within social, cultural and financial realms there exist many examples about this role of the writer; somehow you feel he is a very clued-up local tour guide to introduce all places and events to you:

Shimoga had witnessed in the mid-fifties one of the first peasant agitations anywhere in post-independence India. Using Gandhian methods of satyagraha, the peasants had lain claim to the big estates of local landlords, the land they had tilled since time immemorial without any rights of ownership. The movement, organized by Gopal Gowda of the Socialist Party, had quickly brought people other than peasants in its fold. Students, workers, lawyers, even some landlords, had joined in. For a brief while, Shimoga had been the centre of national attention.36

And still we do not forget that his aim is something beyond creating amusement for the travelogue readers since he clearly rebukes such a purpose:

Travel books on India are a cottage industry for thumb-sucking writer-wannabes in the West: plainly, there’s no better place than the former colonies in which to achieve literary manhood. Unfortunately for them, the blunt xenophobia and facile contempt of Paul Theroux has been shunted into obsolescence; the imperatives of political correctness don't permit anything beyond the amusement-
tinged condescension which is these writers’ primary narratorial stance.\textsuperscript{37}

Later on, however, Pankaj Mishra moderates that severe posture when he intermingles more with American and European societies or cultures during his trips and longer stays.\textsuperscript{38} However along with narrating from first and low layers of the societies he is searching through, Pankaj Mishra sometime takes the position of that so-called foreigner\textsuperscript{39} in order to be able to criticize more freely the current or even previous situation:

The fault doesn’t lie with the author. Detachment fails him as it must fail anyone who knows as much as he does about his subject. Detachment is hardly possible for even the casual visitor. The facts are too gross, the catalogue of atrocities too long. This, the land of Buddha and Mahavira, is where there is a caste of rat-eaters (facing starvation now due to the unavailability of field-mice), where medical colleges sell degrees and doctors pull out transfusion tubes from the veins of their patients when they go on strike, where private caste armies regularly massacre Harijans in droves, where murderers and rapists become legislators through large-scale ‘booth-capturing’, where rich landowners own private planes and Rolls Royces, where a landless labourer owns nothing more than a scarf and has forgotten his own name.\textsuperscript{40}

All this is about Bihar, or the so-called ‘Fourth World’ in chapter eighteen of the book. It is through such an absorbing, lucid, and shocking narrative style that the writer makes his personal engagement more apparent in the travelogue; a feature which adds more for the literary side of the book, since throughout his story-like narration the writer shows up himself from time to time and helps the reader to see something beyond what might have been mere postcard scenes and shallow judgments if portrayed by some other or foreigner travelogue writers.
Of course, this particular type of writer’s personal engagement in the text goes back to Pankaj Mishra’s specific idea about tone which should also be taken into consideration here. Once commenting on Barbara Epstein at the *New York Review of Books* as “a huge influence” on himself, he recounts:

Civility of tone, reasonableness of tone, was her preoccupation. They make possible a kind of dialogue with the reader. You aren’t just talking down to the reader from a position of privilege and authority, rather from a place of uncertainty—not knowing everything, knowing things partially, which many writers conceal with an all-knowing tone.⁴¹

And it is exactly that rationality of tone together with sensitivity of the writer that makes the travelogue to be more acceptable for the reader. Hence, Pankaj Mishra employs the same technique of “making a dialogue possible with the reader”⁴² by engaging other voices in his recitations about his journeys; thanks to his abundant book-readings and careful observations – and though sometimes showing to be full of previous background information about the places and people we are going to visit and meet, you never feel vanity out of narrator’s voice. Every scene is explained through a simple, lucid and frank language with no intricate connotation. Even if there is any connotation it mostly goes back to the characters themselves and the situation itself, and not the style or tone of the writer. In fact, he sometimes communicates with the reader through that sense of a naïve reporter or journalist who attends everywhere from wedding ceremonies (marriage of Mr. Singh’s niece at Hapur in chapter eight) to political parties (Indian People’s Front in chapter nineteen) to inquire more and more; a sense which entices the reader all along the way.

The literary side of the essay-format chapters of the book sparkles as another aspect of the writer’s personal engagement within his narrative style. As Chandrahas Choudhury states “But for all that it is a serious work, *Butter Chicken in Ludhiana* is a very funny book: Mishra can be both appalled and amused by what he sees and hears, and the characteristic confusion and comedy of Indian life leaps off these pages. By contrast the writer’s prose today has a more detached, austere tone.”⁴³ In fact,
Mishra’s style of narration is commonly satiric, ironic or tongue in cheek and at times full of fun and playful. He uses a descriptive language throughout the travelogue together with this piercing teasing voice to remind us that he has not accustomed to all those themes of poverty, lack of welfare and infrastructures, social and political turbulences and disorders even if some other analyzers classify them as redundant and cliché when talking about the great subcontinent. As Lindy Miller discusses it “satire is more of an aim than a mode of writing,” and this is exactly what our travelogue writer have in mind here in his book. At many points he tries to remind the reader – whether Indian or non-Indian about human follies. Those laughable scenes exist in order to accomplish his aim of reminding, correcting and finally redirecting whatever is not on the right path of progress in the road of modernization.

Accordingly, there are many nice examples for the satiric aim and witty language Pankaj Mishra employs. Of course, writer’s witty and humoristic appearances in his travelogue are mostly found on two levels. Either they directly present the characters’ funny and humorous presence during his trips or on the second level, the events and happenings in themselves give you that sense. For his first type of witty statements he even takes advantage of people’s direct actions and language. For instance chapter five introduces Mr Tomar, a haveli owner at Ghanerao, whom Pankaj Mishra recounts his every action and utterance playfully – even his repeated diction with an excessive emphasis on his words:

Mr Tomar moved from table to table. I intermittently heard him speaking to the German couple. He pointed at the framed photos on the walls, and spoke about James Tod’s autograph; about his ancestors; about how impossible it was to maintain the haveli with his limited resources; about the tragic compromise he had to make in converting part of his haveli into a hotel; about his determination to not open his haveli to all and sundry. In between, he said at least three or four times: ‘You see, for us, it’s a small world.’

For the second type of the writer’s sarcastic approaches there are many examples. They are even started from the very first paragraph of the book when we
are introduced into Delhi’s Inter State Bus Terminal (ISBT), where the writer is waiting for the bus to Muzaffarnagar:

‘VERY SENIOR OFFICER and very honest,’ Mr. Chugh was saying, now for the fourth time, ‘but his wife won’t let him be. She wants him to make money. She’s mad, I tell you, and she’ll drive my brother mad.’

And while trying to see the “coherent picture” out of “meaningless scattered details” in Muzaffarnagar with a tone of exaggeration and sarcasm:

It wasn’t for lack of money that such appalling civic conditions were allowed to prevail. If anything, the blame lay with the sudden plentitude of money: far from fostering any notions of civic responsibility, it had encouraged in its beneficiaries only a kind of aggressive individualism. The colony didn’t matter as long as you could obtain, through bribing, or your predatory prowess, illegal water, power, and telephone connections for your house.

Or when Pankaj Mishra comments on the assembly elections for Himachal Pradesh, with a ridiculous tone:

Electoral advertisements had taken up every inch of available space, obscuring road signs, milestones, and were even daubed waveringly on cows and sheep.

Also on his way to Ambala in chapter three, when the writer encounters a party of parliamentarians from Kazakhstan and recites the Indian part ironically:

Kazakh: ‘Yes. Let’s work for the development of both India and Kazakhstan.’
Indian: ‘Sir, we in India have great respect for your country. We think it’s very democratic, we think it is more democratic than America.’

Fascinatingly enough, these sarcastic descriptions deal with various subjects in Indian lifestyle including one of the most problematic ones, that is noise, which is assessed differently here in India, even if somewhere else for its cause you may go back to modern urban life only:

The most uniform and conspicuous feature of the towns and cities you travel through in North India, and also the most serious menace to civilized life in them, is noise. It accompanies you everywhere – in your hotel room, in the lobby, in the elevator, in the streets, in temples, mosques, gurdwaras, shops, restaurants, parks – chipping away at your nerves to the point where you feel breakdown to be imminent. It isn’t just the ceaseless traffic, the pointless blaring of horns, the steady background roar that one finds in big cities. It is much worse: the electronics boom in India has made cassette players available to anyone with even moderate spending power.

Not always these funny remarks remain on the ironic or satirical level. Even it is in one of those trips and among character types with really diverse ideas that the reader finds himself facing a sort of hidden or even implicit meaning which make him ponder more upon:

‘I am very religious, I go to temple very regularly and I think human rights is fine. But when it comes to the unity and integrity of the country, human rights are no consideration. I don’t care. The country is more important than human rights,’ he declared.
Those contradictory critical statements above are made by an Army Captain who suggests Pankaj Mishra to bribe the conductor on the train to solve his ticket problem and who has harsh military views on Kashmir controversy.

Sometimes, the writer’s ironic temper moves even toward comic actions. For instance while Pankaj Mishra gets on the delayed flight to Hyderabad from Nagpur, and shows too much curiosity while peering over another passenger’s shoulders in order to read his book in hand that he closes the book and offers it to Pankaj Mishra to glance through. Yet the real humorous tone lies in other people’s actions or ideas. This is what Pankaj Mishra always refers to in his travelogue. While he is talking to Venkatesh Rao, a sanitary ware retailer in chapter ten, we find out that Indians aren’t comfortable with Western-style toilets; a fact which may come true even with many other people around the world but still important for the writer enough to loiter for some lines upon:

He knew many rich people in Coimbatore who had them installed in their newly built houses, and then wanted Indian replacements. But the advances in toilet technology were all being made in the west. He told me about some of the new kinds of time-saving, effort-minimizing toilet bowls being developed: they came equipped with water faucets that hosed you at the touch of a button, warm-air dryers that dried you, and sophisticated sensors that knew when you had finished and flushed automatically.54

The writer’s sarcastic ironic tone also powerfully finds place when he talks about scruffy guest houses or hotels and eateries or cafés scattered all around India. Of course as “a penniless student whose plane fare had been paid for by his parents,”55 Pankaj Mishra never stays at a five-star place to do his contract for writing the travelogue, besides the fact that even the money raised for this purpose by the publication seems to cover only a small part of his expenses. But then he gives us a real picture of such cheap hotels and restaurants in an ironic way, as if regretting why such cheap clean places like B&B with adequate food are doable in other countries
and not in India yet. Even when we visit a different place we shouldn’t expect too much:

I arrived there [Trichur] late in the evening, and went straightaway to the hotel Elite International that had been recommended to me. The lobby was modern, with thick carpets, sofa chairs, a gleaming elevator in the corner, and the overpowering smell, familiar from countless other hotel lobbies, of floor-wax. But the rooms above belonged to another era, with their cheap foldable aluminium chairs, a formica-top dressing table, wooden cots with tall mosquito-net rods – all of which could have constituted part of the dowry proudly displayed in a wedding in Meerut in the early sixties.  

Moreover, together with the image of poor condition of those cheap hotels and restaurants, the writer takes the opportunity to mention different ideas like apparent discrimination, racism and corruption in the Indian society and some evaluations done by foreign people. Here we may refer to the case of hotel Searock at Kovalam Beach in Kottayam as a good example. This hotel seems to be a suitable place but it doesn’t let in Indians. Of course, this is not announced officially but done practically; as the writer was disappointed to get a room on a previous visit with a friend some time before and this time he tries again:

There was something else going on, and a British couple I met on a train had confirmed my suspicions. The Searock, they said, didn’t admit Indians. They had come to know this from a French couple on the beach, who were also staying at the Searock and who fully approved of its policy of barring Indians. The British couple, to their credit, had been horrified by such blatant racism. They had left the Searock the same day and moved into another hotel.
However, the writer succeeds in getting in that hotel after some challenges but later on he is obliged to flee due to “the sounds of heavy pounding coming through the thin walls from the adjacent room.” The stern man in the reception sees Pankaj Mishra off as he says, “I told you in the beginning. Take your advance back, and find another hotel. This is not the right hotel for you.” Nevertheless, the way the British couple react is something noteworthy; a fact that is praised by the writer himself.

Back again to food problem and only to mention a good sample of how Pankaj Mishra approaches restaurants and eating places with minute descriptions about the food, we may cite an example from chapter fourteen when he enters a cafeteria in Benares:

I ordered toast, cutlets and coffee from a crusty sleep-denied waiter. The cutlets, when they came half an hour later, were soggy, as if reheated from yesterday, the coffee was weak, and the bread, untoasted and hard. But the butter looked as if it actually weighed the ten grams promised on the menu, and I was grateful for it, more grateful than I would have been at any other time. I even thanked the waiter for it. Absurd, even silly, it may have seemed in retrospect, but when all seemed lost and hopeless – as it did that long night at Benares railway station – one learned to appreciate small things like that.

Yet beside these thorough and detailed eating-related problems, another important fact about the book is that the readers may always remember the book for something else too: its delicious name, which refers to one of the famous Indian dishes. Indeed Butter Chicken in Ludhiana shows much genius on the side of the writer for his selection of the title. Of course, this does not mean that he is the only writer who has entitled his travelogue differently; rather it signifies the writer’s awareness of the codes of the game.

Among important techniques used by the writer in his book that we might relate is local color. In fact the writer makes his work more authentic when he avails
himself of a full range of various tools in order to make the book more interesting as well as real:
a) Indian food and other edibles are abundantly referred to all throughout the book mostly under their Indian names. Some examples are: *mathri*, *daalmoth* and *achar* in page five; *prasad* in page fifty eight; *halwai*, *imarti* and *rabdi* in page sixty four and *sambar vada* in page one hundred and forty three.

b) Lots of abbreviated forms are used in the text. This is what currently you may find in mass media all over India. Some samples: ISBT (Inter State Bus Terminal) in page one; YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association) in page two; IIT (Indian Institute of Technology) in page one hundred thirty eight and MCC (Maoist Communist Centre) in page two hundred fifty seven.

c) In addition to various pictures of Indian life in general, there are some explanations about Indian customs such as a wedding ceremony through pages one hundred and sixteen to one hundred and twenty two. Also we can find some references to special ways for conducting elections in page twelve.

d) Utilizing Hindi language, together with their English equivalents, is what profusely found as a good example of local color in the book. Of course this is what really happening everyday in India; speaking both languages alongside. So to speak, the real reason might be something else for the writer but, at least, it is clear that some sentences convey their senses better in this witty sardonic Hindi that Pankaj Mishra makes use of, besides the fact that this book is aimed for Indians themselves, as well. Sometimes Hindi statements get vulgar and offensive:

‘*Jaangh dekh bandariya ki, behenchod*, Look at that monkey’s thighs, sisterfucker.’

‘*Pure makhkhan hai bhonsdiwali*, Pure butter, that cunt.’

And at another point they become a more sophisticated means:
‘Ab to suna hai ki kitaab-vitaab likhnemein bhi bahut paisa hai, I have heard there’s a lot of money to be made in writing books.’

e) Every moment of living in India is somehow tied to films and movies – in one word Bollywood and its super stars rule everywhere. Rightly enough, commenting on film industry and movies and talking about different Indian and non-Indian TV shows and their stars is another current trend which the writer indispensably stresses upon at intervals. There are many instances for this tendency of the writer:

_Darr_ was the biggest hit this season; its songs and posters followed me all through my travels; I had heard a fair bit about it. Apparently, it wasn’t your usual typical Bombay movie. There was a twist to it. It had the first full portrayal in Hindi films of the obsessive, homicidal lover: the ‘other’, the vengeful maniac.

Even some of writer’s commentaries become so much professional when he adds “…most [Bombay] films were expensive gambles, hit-or-miss affairs. The gap between filmgoers and film-makers was wide.” And “_Darr_ was no exception. Made in the same mechanical, unstudied manner of other films, it had nevertheless managed to sway its audience.”

In addition to such remarks about films and cinema, you get much talk about MTV, STAR PLUS and ZEE TV channels and shows like _The Bold and the Beautiful_ and cultural effects of TV specially satellite one. Pankaj Mishra uses his wit again when he tries to describe the mindset of girls in an upper-middle-class family:

Pankaj Mishra’s personal engagement in this issue grows more serious when he can’t tolerate the “aesthetic crime” faced with in the City Palace at Jaipur. While visiting this early eighteenth century building, Mishra and his accompanying friend see that “inside an even more exclusive courtyard, facing the palace where the present Maharaja lived, on top of the eighteenth century pavilion of exquisite beauty, there was a gigantic satellite dish antenna.” Of course, they complain about this offensive and vile action to a higher authority inside the palace but become disappointed and leave there hopelessly.

Talking about TV, one finds an innovative facet of this technology within the book. It is very interesting to know that while reading this travelogue, the reader doesn't usually encounter exact remarks about time or date (no matter it is which day of the week, in which month or which year) and if one is interested enough to find out, for example, that the October in the start of the trip on page one belongs to which year, amusingly he may check the afterword and do some calculation himself. Thus in this way, whatever contemporary time-based information is presented through the travelogue it is mostly through TV set and not a clock, watch or calendar. And this in turn gives a great responsibility to TV shows or soap operas and their different superstars.

3.2.2.4. Characterization

In his acknowledgements page the writer expresses that “the names and circumstances of a few people in this book have been altered. The reason would, hopefully, be obvious in the text.” Even if we do not encounter such a clear explanation, the subtitle and content of the book suffice to get a simple inference that due to its genre, then we have individuals or types instead of characters; a fact which compels the writer to be careful about people’s privacy. However throughout the book we come across more than fifty names of individuals directly and yet some characters are introduced indirectly with titles such as “a fairly serious-minded devotee of Osho” (page 139), the scuba-diver boy (pages 169-72) or the director of the City Palace (pages 55-7) and some other examples.
These types are performing a double role for the writer in the travelogue. In one way, they act as the individual members of a society on which he studies or from which later on he narrates; and in the other way these people become a pretext for the writer to express views or commentaries on social, cultural and economic life in India. This character depiction in turn happens in three modes: whether in the writer’s direct conversation with the people around, or secondly through the whole situation created by setting and the careful observation done by the writer to take note and narrate. And sometimes there happens a third mode where we see a combination of the writer conversing with the character in focus and also the arrangements of setting, which in their own turn make a catalyst for the writer to express some ideas on the point, even minor. As an example of the latter mode and among major characters or types in first chapters, we can mention Mr. Banerji, who first complains about the terrible condition of the bus on the way to Manali and then makes a big issue over hearing an obscene music on the bus. Mr. Banerji introduces himself to another Bengali as an engineer from Burdwan. He seems to be in constant struggle with all prevalent mores of the surrounding society due to his corrective ideology. Pages nine to seventeen are mostly dedicated to this Mr. Banerji and his quarrels which bring no victory for him at last, but give the writer a proper ground to appear, at least:

However unsuccessful Mr. Banerji’s present struggle against obscenity was, he would have been gratified to know that it was in line with his party’s position on the issue. Travelling through Bengal months later, long after ‘Choli ke Peechhe’ had been supplanted on the charts, I came across a news-story in a local paper. It reported the extreme anger within Left Front government over an official function of sorts in Cooch Behar where senior police officers were alleged to have danced in full public view to the notorious song. ‘Vulgar’, ‘obscene’, ‘degraded culture’ were some of the terms used to characterize their behaviour. Strict action was being contemplated.69

Among various individuals appearing in the book are Rajesh Trehan from Mandi who owns a hotel in Manali and a piece of land in Sundernagar and does some
real estate job, Mahesh and Rajkumar who own a guest house in Pushkar and Mr. Tomar who is a haveli owner in Ghanerao in Rajasthan. Going beyond their common feature that they are all hoteliers in the first glimpse, we find some differences in their motivations and career. Pankaj Mishra meets Mr. Trehan during an election campaign. He is a politician and a businessman, at the same time, who has “big plans for himself,” according to the writer. He sits among younger politicians who show “feverish energy and foxy alertness.” The main reason he starts conversing with our writer is that he supposes Pankaj Mishra to be a journalist with his gesture of taking notes and becomes hopeful about further publicity in this way. Apparently, Mr. Trehan confirms approval and support for those politicians in BJP, but in fact he is more interested in his own business. At first, he shows great ambition about making a tourist resort in the area to help improve the poor economy of the area as “other people would follow him. Mandi, teeming with tourist resorts, would be transformed. The people would change. They were much too simple and naive, too lazy and unambitious at present; they lacked initiative; they lacked drive.” Later on, he reveals a truer version of what he has in mind:

He was a businessman, and businessmen needed politicians. In the past, they financed them, and then asked for favours in return. It was an unequal relationship: the politician didn’t always fulfil his part of the contract. Now, there was nothing to stop businessmen from becoming politicians themselves. They, after all, had the money, the resources.

On the other hand, there are those talented people like Mahesh and Rajkumar who can find their way through difficulties but seemingly getting detached from their own society. Both from Ajmer, they have studied in the same school; Mahesh stops studying further but Rajkumar continues to take “a second-class degree from a third-class university” and then fails to get a job with government since “to get into government service you needed powerful godfathers, and failing that, money to bribe your way through.” However after many ups and downs they come to be partners in constructing and running a guest house in Pushkar. But there is something shocking about their guest house: no Indian is allowed here. When asked why, Rajkumar says
“the Indian tourists were all pilgrims who had filthy habits and thought of hotels as dharamshalas where they could do anything they pleased.” Vexed with this conduct, the writer can’t avoid his own comments:

I was struck by the way Rajkumar used the word ‘Indian’. It made him appear a visiting commentator on social habits from a foreign country. […] It was inconceivable that before he built his hotel he knew the ways of western-style toilets, that he did not himself seek bargain prices when he traveled out of Pushkar. His foreign guests had ‘modernized’ him, and in the process had made him a man curiously at odds with his immediate environment, a man out of step with his own culture.

Then we come to Mr. Tomar, a middle-aged man with many contradictions and challenges for our writer. These incongruities and inconsistencies have only one exception. It is when Mr. Tomar wants to explain repeatedly with the same diction and tone that how it is difficult to run a hotel like his with limited sources and how honored he is as many famous people have been to his place before; all those vain boastful descriptions ending in “You see, for us, it’s a small world.” As Pankaj Mishra perceives, in other instances he is “beyond simple contradiction,” whether in speech or in action, since “feudal pride made him want to protect his haveli from being swamped by tourists; financial exigencies made him want to attract more tourists to his haveli. Both desires were equally legitimate.” Some further commentary by the writer shows how he observes Mr. Tomar’s appearances from a psychological perspective as well:

I was struck by that look. It wasn’t of the person we had met earlier in the day, and then later at dinner: naively boastful, socially ambitious, ready to please, a simple man, in short. He had retreated from that self and into what could only be a difficult solitude. People that gregarious are hard to imagine alone, or credit with a complex inner life, so complete is their dependence on other people. But that look
on Mr Tomar’s face now hinted at other things: at self-awareness; the knowledge of his diminished worth, his daily abasement in front of sundry day trippers, things, which in these circumstances, could not but be a source of pain.81

Among the figures who play an impressive role in giving an overall view of this fast-changing society is a Rajkot boy whom Pankaj Mishra visits inside Adinatha temple at Ranakpur. As a teenaged boy who is more taken by Sanjay Dutt and aspiring to have a body like him, he fails to give a persuading response when asked by the writer if he had ever visited Mahatma Gandhi’s home in Rajkot. Another quandary comes to the boy when the writer asks about Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) stickers on the buses he is coming by and his Jain or Hindu origins. Finally in a passive response the Rajkot boy tells that Hindus and Jains are one because they have one common enemy: “the Mohammedans.”82 It is at this point that, once again, Pankaj Mishra intervenes with one of his most direct and dire annotations on the Indian life:

But it wasn’t just teenage posturing. He was echoing a sentiment more popular and widespread than one thought. He had probably heard it uttered by someone in his family or, in his circle of friends […] he actually believed it possible to kill a hundred million Muslims. He was well on his way to becoming one of the new ‘liberated’ people you increasingly met in the most inapposite of contexts. You met them at your homes, they were friends of the family […] you realized with a shock that you had never really known them. They were people who had transcended both good and evil because they never knew them, and who had translated the notion of laissez faire into both economic and social terms – banal, middle-class producers-consumers who wore Hawaiian shirts and stonewashed jeans, regularly visited temples, abhorred meat, and concealed murder in their hearts.83
This is a good example of what was mentioned earlier in this part about characters; that double role assigned for to be played by the types or figures in the travelogue. As it is clear the direct conversation with this Rajkot boy gives a proper pretext to the writer to present his own comments on the current social situation.

Munna Yadav is but another person whom the writer meets during his trip to Udaipur. He is from a village near Ghazipur, Eastern UP. A farming crowded family and a school with rancorous teachers is what Munna leaves behind in his village when he comes to find better means of livelihood first in Jalandhar being with his sister and her husband and then in Shakarpur at Delhi. But working at a tea shop which belongs to people from his caste and village does not satisfy him so he leaves Delhi in order to find a job in a factory in Ahmedabad where someone from his village works there too and can help him. Strangely enough, Pankaj Mishra chides Munna in his mind for “in both Jalandhar and Delhi, he had found people from his region; he had stuck close to them, and had lived a small-scale, circumscribed life not much different from the one he had known in Ghazipur.” So apparently this lets the writer down to take note of what might have otherwise been a real interaction of a rural man with the urban life. Yet indeed the whole occasion gives him another opportunity to interpose all effectively:

What a life he had led! And what a story it was, so quintessentially of modern India. From that small village in Ghazipur district, people had fanned out in all directions. Slowly but steadily, they had established themselves in their presently secure positions in life. Success in their new ways had not made them discard their village ways. Their caste and clan loyalties were intact; and, it was the awareness of them, the knowledge that in those frighteningly strange cities there still were tiny oases of familiarity, that made it possible for others to leave. It was what had given Munna the courage to strike out on his own. Jalandhar, Delhi, and now Ahmedabad: his world had expanded fast enough to unman anyone; and to me he had at first appeared lost and adrift in it. But I was wrong. In
the new world he had entered, he was more protected than most people. They had fallen out of the invisible network of old loyalties and patronage; he was still within it. And, as long as he remained there, he was safe.  

And after a while we might want to put a scale of value for all these sundry types and individuals within the book. As it is obvious all individuals mentioned above highly represent human qualities: aggressiveness, monopoly, hypocrisy, seclusion, snobbery, anger, discrimination, and cooperation, philanthropy, diligence, humility and compatibility. In other words they depict all those human traits which are naturally found in every society. It is true that one may not favor Mr. Trehan’s dubious behavior towards his own people or the Rajkot boy’s illusional belligerent notion about his countrymen but there is at least a remedy for that; there is a balance to this extremity: we see Mahesh and Rajkumar or Munna in juxtaposition to those uncouth rough characters.

And yet there exist many other miscellaneous figures in the book. Even some of these figures and scenes are suggestive of those appearing in the writer’s novel *The Romantics*. However to mention some we may refer to Rajendra an acquaintance of Pankaj Mishra from Allahabad university who wants to overcome his “incompleteness as a person” and finds reading a good solution. But despite the fact that he has read “attentively, looking for instructions, [and] hints for self-improvement” and though “he was the only person I [Mishra] knew who had actually read Dasgupta’s five-volume study of Indian philosophy,” yet he is entangled in “an indelible stigma in his mind”: homosexuality. While looking for Rajendra in his trip to Hapur, it is not a surprise for Mishra to hear that he is doing farming there, since:

It had been a brave endeavour, Rajendra’s passage from his feudal, low-caste background to the ultra-modern world of Osho. The courage wasn’t immediately obvious, and then not to everyone; only those who knew the tremendous effort involved in absorbing contrary norms could see it.
Surprisingly yet and after thinking hard, the writer decides not to meet Rajendra as “I [Mishra] was part of a life he had put behind him for good.”

We also see Mr. Sharma, a businessman from Ambala who welcomes our writer at his home as “after all, if Brahmins don’t help each other what is going to happen to us…” and interrupts Mishra’s every possible statement with his all inclusive comments on politics specially the ideas about “scheduled and backward caste” in Indian life and among Brahmins. Mr. Sharma’s verbose list of political people extends to some cricket players and film stars, too. But most interesting of all is the fact that after some time Pankaj Mishra finds the reason for being quizzed by Mrs. Sharma about himself his immediate and extended family, and the reason for that profuse hospitality in the family: “According to what Mr. Khanna said, from the moment he [Mr. Sharma] came to know about me [Mishra], he had seen in me a prospective husband for his daughter, kavita.”

Still there are other attention-grabbing people. It is in chapter nine where we come to know some of them together on a train to the South: Mr. Rastogi, who is a journalist from a major paper at Delhi. Another companion is Mr. Goenka who is a Marwari businessman based in Madras who details on the same old story: corruption in India; but more noticeable is Mrs. Shukla, an army wife who teaches English at a primary school and who is escorting her daughter addressed differently as Rita, Sunrita and Ritz to Bombay “where, she felt, a career in fashion modeling waited her.” Describing Mr. Goenka with qualities like “to the tradition-bound” or “old-fashioned tyrant” our writer makes it clear among different people who disagree most with such “an appalling indecency.”

It is George, a medical representative from Cochin with his favorite authors Borges and Calvino that shares enjoyable moments with Pankaj Mishra: “I watched them [other people in the coffee-shack], listened to George. This was what perhaps I had long wanted to do – discuss Thomas Mann on a rainy morning in Kerala over genuine South Indian coffee and I was happier than at any other time on my travels so far.”
The writer also meets Mrs. Mary Roy, mother of the great novelist Arundhati Roy, and describes her struggles against the Syrian Christian Church over inheritance rights for women. It is through Mrs. Mary Roy’s remarks that we come to know that “her desire to separate herself from Kottayam and its backwardness” originates differently from what one may think of:

And it mostly seemed as if by repeatedly emphasizing the stultifying aspect of her surroundings, she was trying to throw into even sharper focus her own struggles for an independent modern identity.99

3.2.2.3. Extra-textual Features

Considering extra-textual characteristics of the travelogue in this section, the researcher will explain about the context in which the book is located and feedbacks and reactions about Butter Chicken in Ludhiana: Travels in Small Town India. These include the significance and reception of the text, and its influence and popularity as a successful writing experience. To attain this, two sets of datum will be presented here: one is the information about different editions, translations or any other probable reproductions of the book and the second is the number, importance and quality of reviews referring to the text. It should be mentioned that since there has been very little literary criticism in printed format on Pankaj Mishra and his travelogue, as a result much of the information reproduced here is mostly found and documented through web-surfing.

Butter Chicken in Ludhiana: Travels in Small Town India has been published since 1995 in various formats of paperback or soft-cover in different publications such as Penguin Group Australia, Penguin Books India, Pan Macmillan, and Picador. Its pages range from 276 to 320 in these editions. No translation has been reported on this title and through online surfing it becomes clear that no film has been made on this book and that there is no adapted screenplay about it either. However according to Amazon.com at least 12 citations have been reported for this title including Passport Photos, Bombay-London-NewYork by Amitava Kumar; Dissenters and Mavericks: Writings About India in English, 1765-2000 by Margery Sabin; The
The bulk of reviews and comments on *Butter Chicken in Ludhiana* are not as numerous as those found on the other works written by Mishra. However among reviews done on this book the commentary written by Chandrahas Choudhury is one of the most thorough ones. He refers to the book as a “classic of Indian non-fiction” and gives an account of the book’s structure and characterization. Quoting from Amitava Kumar who says “no other book [like *Butter Chicken in Ludhiana*] defines as clearly, and with such troubled irony, our last decade of change,” Choudhury adds that “to Mishra, while middle-class Indians show a great desire to embrace the modern, all too often their modernity is only something tacked on to their old lives, such as their participation in consumer culture. It is an ambiguous revolution which has mostly to do with wants and aspirations and very little to do with thought or ideas, and there is often something grasping and pathetic, if not frankly disturbing, about it. The relevance of this argument has not diminished in the decade since *Butter Chicken* was published.”

Another pertinent review is made by Padmaja Challakere who believes that “in this book, Mishra does not just point to the ascendant forces of this new capitalism [growing and coming into view in India], or to the small-town orientation toward fast-food restaurants and MTV, or to loss of local culture in small town India. Rather he renders these visible contrary currents and this new ambivalence through concrete evocations of people and their social voice.”

And finally another orderly commentary on this text is provided in The Complete Review homepage online. While recommending the book to the readers as a “good overview of modern India, quite well written and amusing” the reviewer finalizes to mention that *Butter Chicken in Ludhiana* is somewhat lacking in focus and direction – Mishra’s travels are surprisingly aimless. Some choices are odd, such as when he visits Calcutta and states that it is “a city I happen to like, but the subject is an exhausted one, and best left to foreign travel writers and film makers to exercise
their sensibilities on."(page 217). About Benares much of the material is the testimony of others (particularly the topic of sexual harassment of women), not ideally woven in. But overall the book gives a good impression of a fast-changing society, offering many vantage points and vistas."105
3.2.2.4. Notes and References


2 Ibid., p.271.

3 Pankaj Mishra, op. cit., p.272.

4 Ibid., p.272.

5 Ibid.


8 Ibid., p.xviii.

9 Ibid., p.xix.

10 See the reference for note 31.


12 Ivan Terence Sanderson (1911-1973) was a naturalist and writer born in Edinburgh, Scotland, who later became a naturalized citizen of the United States. Sanderson is remembered for his nature writing and his interest in cryptozoology and paranormal events. Sanderson published three classics of nature writing: *Animal Treasure* (a report of an expedition to the jungles of then-British West Africa); *Caribbean Treasure* (an account of an expedition to Trinidad, Haiti, and Dutch Guyana (now Suriname), begun in late 1936 and ending in late 1938); and *Living Treasure* (an account of an expedition to Jamaica, the British Honduras (now Belize) and the Yucatan).

13 John Steinbeck (1902-1968) was one of the best-known and most widely read American writers of the 20th century. One of his last published works was *Travels with Charley*, a travelogue of a road trip he took in 1960 to rediscover America.


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Jim Meyer explains these two term as: *The Criterial Approach*: The usual approach in defining a word in English is to provide a list of criteria which must be met. For example, a bird might be defined as an animal which has feathers, which has wings, and which lays eggs. If an animal meets all of these criteria, it is a bird; if it does not (for example, a bat neither has feathers nor lays eggs), it is not a bird. Other characteristics of some birds – that they fly, for example, or that they sing – are not relevant in the definition, since they are not criteria which are met by all birds. This approach has also been called the checklist approach; if all the items on the list are checked off, the word applies. It is characterized by “clear, inflexible boundaries” and by categories which are “internally defined, i.e., defined on the basis of the properties of the members” (Hohulin 1987:4). *The Prototype Approach*: A different approach to the meaning of words, generally called the prototype approach, focuses not on a list of criteria which must be met by each example, but on an established prototype, a particularly good example of the word, to which other examples of the word bear some resemblance. This approach is generally credited to the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, although he did not use the word ‘prototype’. In the classic passage on this topic, Wittgenstein addressed the word ‘game’ and argued that, instead of a list of criteria, we find a family resemblance. […] Most definitions of literature have been criterial definitions, definitions based on a list of criteria which all literary works must meet. However, more current theories of meaning take the view that definitions are based on prototypes: there is broad agreement about good examples that meet all of the prototypical characteristics, and other examples are related to the prototypes by family resemblance. For literary works, prototypical characteristics include careful use of language, being written in a literary genre (poetry, prose fiction, or drama), being read aesthetically, and containing many weak implicatures.


18 Ibid., pp.11-12.

19 Ibid., p.56.

20 Ibid., p.58.

21 Ibid., p.70.

22 Ibid., p.92.

23 Ibid., p.104.

24 Ibid., p.112.
In order to share Mishra’s experience, the discussion is presented here:

**BLVR (Sarah Fay):** Years ago, you coined the term modern spiritual tourists to describe Americans and Europeans who jet off to India, as you say, to raise their kundalini while checking their Hotmail accounts. In the articles you’ve written recently, you seem to have grown more tolerant.

**Pankaj Mishra:** In India, such people are too easily mocked because they are so highly visible, especially if they start wearing dreadlocks and tie-dyed clothes and start hanging out with the seedier elements of society. I think I was most hard on them before I visited the West. Coming to America and Western Europe, I began to see what they were trying to escape: the hyperorganized, hypermodern society where the pressure to have a professional career and dress in a certain way is intense. The ’60s was the last time when large groups of people in the West searched for alternative modes of being. In a society like India’s, which is still not fully modern or totally organized, and has a great deal of tolerance for otherness in general, they find the cultural license to try other things, to be whatever they want to be. I see this most recently with the large number of Israelis flocking to India, which is an extraordinary
phänomenon. In India, Buddhism, Hinduism, drugs, sex is for them a way of escaping what is essentially an extremely harsh life as a conscripted young man or woman in Israel. I find it’s hard not to be sympathetic to them, however outlandish their behavior might be—they can be very aggressive with the locals.

39 Even at a point Pankaj Mishra refers to that specific vision and insight given to him very frankly: “To look at India through the eyes of these Western travelers wasn’t strange, because the school and education system was almost entirely shaped by the long British colonial presence. I remember reading Nicholas Nickleby as a child. Perhaps that’s why the West has never been separate from my conception of myself as a writer. (For the complete text see Pankaj Mishra, “Reasonableness of Tone,” Interview with Sarah Fay, The Believer, [March, 2007]. http://www.believermag.com/issues/200703/?read=interview_mishra.> [7 Oct. 2008]).

40 Pankaj Mishra, Butter Chicken in Ludhiana: Travels in Small Town India, p. 243.


42 Ibid.


44 Some critics have reproached Mishra for following the old style and pattern of describing scenes of poverty or other difficulties of living in a populated country like India. As one example Bhavin Jankharia says: “Do poverty, filth and decay have to be our only export?” (As quoted in Bhavin Jankharia, Rev. of The Romantics by Pankaj Mishra, Man From the Matunga.com, <http://www.manfrommatunga.com/romantics.htm>. [22 Nov. 2008]).

45 Lindy Miller, Mastering Practical Criticism, Palgrave, 2001.p.261. Lindy Miller believes that satire has five elements: sarcasm, exaggeration, excessive emphasis on certain characteristics, ridicule and irony.

46 Pankaj Mishra, Butter Chicken in Ludhiana: Travels in Small Town India, p. 75.


48 Ibid., p. xiv.

49 Ibid., p. xv.

50 Ibid., p. 12.
51 Ibid., p.32.
52 Ibid., p.115.
53 Ibid., pp.183-4.
54 Ibid., p.146.
55 Ibid., p.159.
56 Ibid., p.15.
57 Ibid., p.166.
58 Ibid., p.168.
59 Ibid., p.169.
60 Ibid., p.205.
61 Ibid., p.xii.
62 Ibid., p.40.
63 Ibid., p.238.
64 Ibid., p.239.
65 Ibid., p.39.
66 Ibid., p.54.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., p.269
69 Ibid. pp.16-17
70 Ibid., p.27.
71 Ibid., p.24.
72 Ibid., p.27.
73 Ibid., p.28.
74 Ibid., p.63.
75 Ibid., p.62.
76 Ibid., p.66.
77 Ibid., p.66.
78 Ibid., pp.72-5.
79 Ibid., p.79.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid., p.76.
82 Ibid., p.82.
83 Ibid., p.83.
84 Ibid., p.90.
85 Ibid., p.91.
86 Ibid., p.105.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid., p.107.
90 Ibid., p.123.
91 Ibid., p.123.
92 Ibid., p.36.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid., p.49.
95 Ibid., pp.131-2.
96 Ibid., p.133.
97 Ibid., p.155.
98 Ibid., p.164.
99 Ibid., p.165.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Ibid.