CHAPTER-2

POST-COLONIALITY AND DISCOVERY OF SELF
In the chapter POST-COLONIALITY AND DISCOVERY OF SELF the following novels have been chosen for the study. They are Upamanyu Chatterjee’s _English, August – An Indian Story_ (1988) and _The Mammaries of the Welfare State_ (2000), Pankaj Mishra’s _The Romantics_ (2000), Amitav Ghosh’s _The Glass Palace_ (2000) and _The Calcutta Chromosome_ (1997), Salman Rushdie’s _The Moor’s Last Sigh_ (1994), Gita Hariharan’s _The Ghosts of Vasu Master_ (1994), Khushwant Singh’s _The Company of Women_ (1999), Arundhati Roy’s _The God of Small Things_ (1997) and Raj Kamal Jha’s _The Blue Bedspread_ (1999). The chapter first introduces a discussion as what is meant by the word postcoloniality and includes views offered by various critics. The word ‘post-colonial’ is meant to signal that a given literary work goes beyond the parameters of locality, region, and even nation to participate in the global condition that is an aftermath of European colonialism.

Sara Suleri in _The Rhetoric of English India_ claims that “the post-colonial condition is neither territorially bound nor more the property of one people than the other: instead its inevitably retroactive narrative allows for the inclusion both of its colonial past and of the function of criticism at the present time as necessary corollaries to the telling of its stories.” There is something politically valuable about the term ‘post-colonial’. Colonialism, as a socio-political force was continually contradicting the very moment of the inception of modernity. The post-colonial precisely reminds the place of the colony as an aftermath, as part of the construction of Western capital. The colony was never elsewhere – it was as much internal to the construction of Western ideals, Western capital, as anything else. But it was not a collusive insidedness. It was rather a contending, conflicting insidedness.
Now the term 'postcolonial' is obviously problematic in all kinds of ways, particularly to those who think the term ‘post’ means we have passed the effects of colonialism. It is a useful term if it reminds of two things: one, that certain kinds of cultural and economic dependency and dominations, that is neocolonialism, exists. But while neo-colonial suggests that it is the same old colonialism in a new form, postcolonial suggests that there is a much greater agency, whether we like it or not, and in the hybridisation, there is an absorption of many of the hegemonic ideas by the Third World, so that the Third World is not just a positive object upon which a whole kind of umbrella or nuclear cloud of cultural and economic dependency is being imposed. There are sections within postcolonial societies that are themselves implicated in the process. Indeed the products of that kind of fusion under a general political rubric may seem to be dominating. But on the other hand they also have other lives. So, people will use certain kinds of western ideas about secularism through India’s own history and struggles for secularism. The very nature of secularism as an idea will change, will hybridise.

Imperialism was more than economic exploitation and political domination. Colonialism and imperialism are relationships that have had a cultural intellectual and social impact which is even more insidious than the naked fact of political domination. As the term ‘postcolonial’ suggests, the fall out of colonialism is still very much with us. In a postcolonial society, the colonial past is inextricably linked to the present. The themes very often figure in postcolonial discourses are difference, contingency and hybridity. The discursive field which we term ‘postcolonialism’ defies any systematising effort because it is wrought with differences in opinion and differences in approaches. “Discordant notes are to be taken as a distinctive feature of postcolonial discourse”, 2 which in turn can be traced back to a
dislike for anything that essentializes or universalises. This is where its interrelatedness with post-modernism and post-structuralist modes of thinking comes into picture. In fact, the postcolonial discourse is more closely related to these two discursive areas than to the earlier prominent Commonwealth studies because there is a vast difference between the conception of ex-colony as represented in the Commonwealth studies and the glimpse of postcoloniality that we get through the contemporary discourse on colonialism.

"Very often postcolonialism is associated with such discursive terms as the 'margin', the 'periphery’, the 'ex-centric’ and there seems to be an assumption that these terms can be interchanged" to mean assumed relationship and external reality as the words 'Third World', 'developing countries', 'underdeveloped countries' 'East' and the 'orient' have. The term 'postcolonial' is indicative of many different historical contexts. It seems also metaphorical for a certain condition of being at the margin in a society. Postcolonial studies take into account the hierarchies and power structures among the oppressed operating within the boundaries of caste and sex and gender.

Postcolonialism as a thing is not any more an area associated with the British Empire or pertinent only to the English language. The increased awareness about the persisting world economic structures which very often repeat the colonial power structures, has made postcolonialism a matter of interest for academics coming from different parts of the world. In the contemporary world, marked movements across the boundaries in the name of tourism, economic benefits and cheap labour, no country can be free from getting contaminated by colonialistic tendencies. Thus there is a blurring of distinction between what was formerly identified as a colonial country and
what is seen now as a powerful partner in the economic transaction of the world. Once again the presence of connections between the various contexts such as the cultural, the economic, the textual and the political becomes self-evident. The term ‘postcolonial’ does not have strictly spatial connotation. In fact one could be a postcolonial writer or critic when one does not inhabit the post-independence space. It is rather a term, which is more inclusive and politically acceptable.

According to Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge the term ‘postcolonial’ refers to ideological orientations instead of a historical stage.

“.............postcolonialism is an always present tendency in any literature of subjugation marked by a systematic process of cultural dominations through imposition of power.”

Postcolonialism is implicit in the discourses of colonialism themselves. It is an ally of postmodernism. The term ‘postcolonial’ does not deal with mere chronology. Rather it defies linearity of history and takes into account the complex histories of the colonised and accepts the notion of ‘oppositional postcolonialism’ (opposition) as well as ‘complicit postcolonialism’ (complicity) among the colonised.

Mrinalini Sebastian says that “by defying the commonsensical notions of time and space, the term ‘postcolonial’ makes room for various interpretations and acts as a reminder of the fact that colonialism is not a thing of the past and that colonising tendencies are not restricted to certain groups of people.”
Aizaz Ahamad says "the term ‘postcolonial’ gathered force through a system of mutual citations and cross-referencing.” The terms ‘postcolonial’ and ‘postcolonialism’ resurfaced during the 1980s in literary cultural theories and in deconstructive forms of history-writing and these terms were then conjoined with a newly coined term ‘postcoloniality’.

The word ‘postcoloniality’ acquires the meaning of globalisation when America is considered as postcolonial. Many discussions that deal with postcoloniality can give rise to generalisations. The different methodologies used to critique colonialism, imperialism, neocolonialism and late imperialism, all add to the multifaceted existence of the term ‘postcolonial’ and allows for such an expression as ‘postcoloniality’. Postcoloniality is the tendency to include everything and anything.

Ania Loomba and Suvir Kaul state that “the issues of minority politics in the First World will more or less reflect the concerns of the Third World societies and that postcoloniality is more or less the experience of ‘hyphenated’ and fractured, double identities.”

Said does not ignore the emphasis on ‘the local, regional and contingent’, but for him postcolonialism is “most interestingly connected in its general approach to a universal set of concerns all of them having to do with emancipation, revisionist attitudes towards history and culture and a widespread use of recurring theoretical models and styles.” Postcolonialism has two approaches/currents—one privileged on transcultural and other foregrounding culture-specificity.

Ian Adams admits that “postmodernism and postcolonialism converge as well as diverge.” They converge in that “they have become prominent
literary practices in postcolonial cultures and are committed to 'a subversion of authoritative monocultural forms of genre, history and discourse.'”

Postcolonial literatures emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with imperial power and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial center.

One of the characteristics of postcolonialism is interrogating the term ‘nation’. It is a very slippery term because nationality was very important in the initial stages of the programmes of decolonisation. What the postcolonial theory suggests is that nationalism simply takes over the hegemonic role of imperialism. Postcolonial societies go through the nationalist phase—they go through disillusionment – go into a kind of chaotic phase or into the process of transforming the dominant. That’s one of the reasons India is strong because it has that flexibility and vitality to take dominant cultures and forms and transform them. They have been doing that all the period of colonisation. Most of the colonial societies have exhibited ability to transform themselves and the dominant and also the global so that they can move from a colonial phase to a global phase.

The premise of post-coloniality includes divergent concerns—identifying oneself with one’s nation, concern for one’s roots, foregrounding freedom and liberty as removers of all constraints, presentation of nationalism, exploration of new avenues, exhibition of new/eccentric voice, exploration of past and reconciling oneself with the fractured past, feeling of alienation, ennui and angst; preoccupation with sexuality, satirical gaze at contemporary India, pull of the city and its corruption, rediscovering one’s cultural roots and past and coming to terms with the post-colonial status, experience of marginalisation through the voice of minority discourses,
countering the onslaught of western capitalism and MTV culture, presentation of hybrid emotions such as cultural nostalgia and insertion of autobiographies and creating revisionist history of the times, anchorage to western capitals and themes and lionising of linguistic hybrid idiom of 'Hugme Syndrome and presentation of globalisation/ Americanisation as a threat to our traditional ethos, presentation of politico-national travesties of epic dimension, dealing with the theme of exploitation by power dynamics and sexual politics, questioning and rejection of Eurocentric/Western superiority over the East/the otherness, expression of suppressed local cultures and traditions, assertion of self by standing up for one’s rights, interrogating the western canons of knowledge and education and colonialism and foregrounding the aspect of decolonization in all walks of life.

While in the earlier decades, Mulk Raj Anand’s realistic, straightforward narrative fiction with strong characters dealt with modernity that meant social emancipation and progress in terms of technology and material wealth, Upamanyu Chatterjee’s recent urban novel, *English August—An Indian Story* (1988) and *The Last Burden* (1993), with their high modernist style reveal anxiety about the modern Indian identity and deal with the preoccupations—concern for rediscovering one’s cultural roots and past and coming to terms with the post-colonial status, feeling of alienation and ennui, preoccupation with sexuality, pull of the city and its corruption. Before we go into *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* (2000) of Upamanyu Chatterjee better we scan the predicament and self-discovery of the protagonist Agastya as presented in the earlier novel of the eightees. In *English August*, modernity confronts with post-coloniality in the contemporary Indian context. A picarsque burdened by a colonial past, the novel is unable to extricate the "seeking self" from issues of nationality and
modernity. Agastya’s odyssey of self-discovery begins with the world of self-centred sensuality of music, musings, marijuana and masturbation and ends in the world of substance of reality of life through encounters of social and political relations. As C.Sen Gupta observes it is a “journey – pathetic humorous, even ridiculous – a journey from ‘rootlessness’ to maturity, a struggle to come to terms with oneself.”

Agastya, when posted to the mofussil town of Madna as an I.A.S. trainee, his predicament as spelt out in the novel English, August is:

“Anchorlessness – that was to be his chaotic concern in that uncertain year, battling a sense of waste was to be another. Other fodder too, in the farrago of his mind, self-pity in uncongenial clime, the incertitude of his reaction in Madna, his job and his inability to relate to it, other abstractions too, his niche in the world, his future, the elusive mocking nature of happiness, the possibility of its attainment.”(EA-25)

Agastya, more or less, represents the modern youth, who suffer from unheroic and petty dislocation, alienation, dullness, dissatisfaction, boredom, frustration, evasion of duty and quest for personal happiness.

According to A.K.Singh “Agastya’s irreverence emanates from his ‘angst’ against social, political and moral institutions and the dispensers of this contaminated culture.” Moreover national identity for him is not of dichotomous opposition between himself and the colonisers, as it would have been in pre-independent India. His India is diverse and contradictory. Neither is there ‘unity’ within the Indian identity, which was a key sensibility that shaped the spirit of nationalism in pre-independent India.
The satirical quest-hero, Agastya, does not belong to the Gandhian or even the Nehruvian era. These names signify nothing to him. He is a late twentieth century 'yuppie', clad in Jeans and baggy shirts smoking pot while he listens to Ella Fitzgerald and Vivaidly. His roots in the freedom struggle and his nationalism are not strong, but then neither is it relevant to relive them. He is the new generation Indian who has to discover his freedom all over again. Besides, unrelenting satirical gaze at contemporary India prevails and a desire to reconcile with its fractured past is strident in ways that obscures its connection with the freedom struggle, a main source of inspiration by earlier novelists – but not with India’s status as a post-colonial nation.

“In the Madna of post-colonial period the people re-allowed to starve and die of thirst. The officials exploit them physically and financially and expose them to hazards.”14

Further, the post-colonial Indian bureaucracy which is “another complex and unwieldy, bequest of the Raj” behave like crippled issues of colonial culture steeped in corruption, insolence and indifference. Agastya does not relish this kind of state of affairs and as such develops a strong aversion to a much-coveted job.

Agastya stands as symbolic of revenge against the colonial mentality of the administrators, who instead of understanding him and his angst, tries to impose terms on him. Upamanyu Chatterjee (the novelist) himself says thus:
“The whole structure of the Civil service is its administration.... and it has nothing to offer. We are just a bunch of completely ordinary English-speaking Indians------no one is interested in your generation angst.”

According to Meenakshi Rayakar, Agastya, is “the intellectual in a state of anomy.” The word ‘anomy’ is a concept akin to alienation where an individual had lost his traditional moorings and was prone to disorientation or psychic disorder. Meenakshi opines that this “anomy” is common to erstwhile colonies. Whether it is Igboo in Wole Soyinka’s The Interpreters, Ralph Singh in V.S.Naipaul’s The Mimic Men, Obi in Chinua Achebe’s No longer At Ease, or Agastya in Upamanyu Chatterjee’s English, August-An Indian Story, the intellectual continues to be the victim of the educational system which makes him adore Anglia or the white goddess and causes a sense of displacement. What is more important is that the whole class of ‘intellectuals’ is the creation of the colonial situation and has rarely identified itself with the common people. Agastya seeks to belong to the class of elite I.A.S., a proliferating grid of modernity. On the colonial mentality of the educated, she further adds:

“Decolonization of India was not a cultural decolonization. On the contrary it led to neo-colonialism – characterised by proliferation of public schools and a growing affinity for western materialistic culture”.

The resultant outcome is, she says “--- these Agastyas run away from the opportunity of relating to common people- ---. The intellectual’s state of anomy continues.” Agastya finds himself burdened by more than
one past, the colonial which makes him want to be Anglo, the traditional which turned him to traditional Hindu Philosophy of the Bhagavatgita and Gandhi. Some how, since the colonial legacy also means modernity and change, it becomes difficult for the satirical hero to shake it off and embrace tradition totally. He is unable to achieve the untroubled synthesis of nationalism and modernity that his father, Governor of Calcutta, clad in silk kurta dhoti, eating corned beef, and encouraging an English education, has reached. This attitude towards modernity as embodied in an education and western outlook on life is proved inadequate in the modern Indian cultural situation. However, the traditional past, as an active force, drives Agastya to discover himself.

The crux of Agastya's quest lies in striking a balance in his megalopolitan sensibilities and the complex realities of life in the backward town of Madna. At first, Agastya feels the urge to get away from the stifling bureaucratic ambience and power-play to the comfort of a secret life in the rest-house. The book "Marcus Aurelius" afforded some comfort. He identified himself with the wise sad Roman as both of them were concerned with "The exhilarating abstract problems of one immersed wholly in his self" (EA-68). Agastya, seeking solace in this ancient Roman writer, exposes his pseudo-Intellectualism and to escape from the factual realities of life in Madna.

He turns to the words of the Gita where in Lord Krishna tells Arjuna on the problem of restlessness of mind. "It is indeed hard to train, but by constant practice and by freedom from passions, the mind in truth can be trained" (EA-83). These words show Agastya's desire to look for solutions rather than brood on the problems – a positive step in his quest for identity. He felt the need of having mental peace. He realised that action was better
than inaction. He further realises that restlessness is prevalent everywhere crossing the boundaries of Madna and Delhi for he finds that his friends Dhruvo in the Citi Bank and Madan, a Chartered Accountant, were as restless as he had been in Madna. The illusion that Madna was the source of his restlessness is soon dispelled. The sight of people sticking out like tongues from over-crowded buses, brings home to him the contrast between the concrete realities of their predicament and the nebulous nature of his own condition. Back in Madna, with his mind in greater turmoil, he opens to positive influences. He is stirred by the single-minded dedication of John Avery, the Englishman, who had travelled over half of the globe to pursue a dream to pay respects at his grandfather’s grave in a remote place. He is moved by Baba Ramanna’s labour of love, his rehabilitation of lepers, a singular story of immensity of human ambition” (EA-235) and the naxalites’ fiery determination to create social awareness and to put an end to the exploitation of the tribals. Dr. Multhani’s sense of satisfaction and happiness influences Agastya. His identification with the myth of fisher-king, where the fisher-king is able to resolve his problems and divine a meaning in life, is another positive step in the saga of his quest for identity. Consequent on his posting as Block Development Officer to Jompanna, he gives concrete shape to these positive inclinations. The bureaucratic hate and the inefficiency of the entire setup which had so deeply troubled him in Madna neutralized in the obscure tribal village of Chimpathi. His human understanding enables him put sincere efforts in his discharge of duties. Chimpanthi brings him face the soul-rending realities of life where tribal parents were compelled to risk “the lives of their children for half buckets of mud” (EA-259) that passed off for water. He solves the acute water scarcity. Back in Madna, Sathe’s words of wisdom “Whatever you choose to do, you will regret everything or regret nothing. Remember you’re not James Bond, you only live once” (EA-285) strike the decisive chord in Agastya’s mind.
The lure of lotus-eating life, escaping responsibility and action, is banished from his mind. He realises that the crux of his search for identity and the solution of his restlessness lies in coming to terms with the harsh realities of life in the post-colonial India. As David Kerr comments “Sen undergoes a slow awakening from a life of self-centred sensuality into an awareness of human suffering and human responsibility.” Nevertheless, the hope that this new realization will at some time help him to succeed his quest for identity is a reassuring thought. As Milan Kundera observes “It is through action that man steps forth from the repetitive universe............ that he distinguishes himself from others and becomes an individual.” This is what has happened to Agastya. Fulfilment of his quest for identity is definitely not too far away. Despite Agastya’s satirical gaze of modern rural India he finds in it the true resolution of India’s traditional heritage and philosophy and modernity. Para, the tribal woman who boldly comes to Agastya about the village-well but who sits behind the naxalite Rajan,is the modern Bhavani or Durga or Jagadamba as Shankar, Vasant and Agastya of the city call the goddess. Neera, Agastya’s friend, who light-heartedly loses her virginity, again is like Para striving to come out of orthodox gender matrixes laid down by a male hegemonic past. The study of the theme of search for identity and predicament of protagonists of the novels of both 80s and 90s always reinforce the transnational and cosmopolitan scope and the protagonists are invariably presented as cultural travellers moving freely in a frontierless world. They have to forge their identities against the background of this new consciousness coming to terms with the sheer expanse of geographical, cultural, intellectual and psychological – which constitute the complex contemporary reality. The effect of this concern is seen in an exhilarating openness in both the novels of 80s and 90s. While the protagonists of the earlier novels increasingly dissociated themselves from the world around them, their counterparts in the novels of 80s and 90s
conversely moved towards an increasingly association and communication. Agastya realises that dissociation from his milieu cannot provide peace of mind. Meaning in life can only be found through positive action and interaction with others as he realises through his experiences in Madna and Chimpanthi. Human compassion and fellow-feeling are the basic elements that are associated with the protagonists' quest for identity. The crux of a truly cosmopolitan culture revolves on the pivot of human existence, fellow-feeling and binding disparate worlds together. We need to erase the shadow lines in our minds for the creation of cosmopolitan consciousness not minding just geographical or intellectual expansions.

Upamanyu Chaterjee's _The Mammaries of the Welfare State_ (2000) presents the return of Agastya, the Anglo-centric babu. He is still single, sex-starved, more cynical than ever before and turns satirical and witty. With time and age he seems to have picked up another essential babu quality—the ability to bear boredom. Agastya gets metamorphosed into Shri Sen—Collector of Madna from where he later meanders into the dusty department of mundane Ministry tying random knots in the maze of official red-tape as he floats along the higher echelons of the I.A.S.. He is tired and trite now. The camera of his satirical gaze turns to plangent criticism of the system of faceless, cynical bureaucracy that is panting very hard and is milking the mammaries of the welfare state very dry.

Nothing has changed in Madna or the Civil Service. He faces bribery as though he had just got married or promoted or the country had won a crucial one day match. Sen's colleagues strictly pursue the "Suck-above-Kick-below" principle. The welfare state is constantly rigged. The satirical portrayal of the Indian bureaucracy that behaves like the crippled issues of colonial culture steeped in the vices of artificiality, inefficiency, corruption,
indifference, ingratitude, insolence, disobedience, ill-will, selfishness, casteism, nepotism, petty jealousies and hierarchical prejudices as presented in *English, August- An Indian Story* is further and farther foregrounded in *The Mammaries of Welfare State*.

Chatterjee’s insight into the I.A.S. finds an echo in every Indian heart acquainted with the legacy of the Raj:

“District Administration in India is largely a British creation like the Railways and the English language, another complex and unwieldy bequest of the Raj.”

(EA-40)

Even the Indianised method of administration reflects the colonial ethos and pathos inflicted upon the colonised. Frantz Fanon’s words on decolonization seem rather true in respect of Indian Civil Servants as well as political leaders which he mentions in *The Wretched of the Earth*:

“.................decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain ‘species’ of men by another ‘species’ of men” and that “.............it is obviously a programme of complete disorder.”

The Indian decolonization attained by way of Independence seems just a transfer of power from the whites (colonisers) to the Brown sahibs (the colonised Indians). The governing race is English-bred and are like the ‘others’ (the colonisers). “The Colonial world is a Manichaean world” (TW-31) still reflects in the predicament of the whole nation. Exploitation of the native by the native is being carried on by dint of honey-coated hypocritical promises of the leaders. The well-known pragmatic words of the de-colonization “The last shall be first and the first last”(TW-28) have
not got materialised into reality as in the demographic democracy of India the last still remain the last and the lost and the first move fast to be in the first advantageous position. The postcolonial India still reflects the colonial world divided into narrow domestic compartments such as linguism, regionalism, casteism, groupism and favouritism. The ethics of beaucracy has been prostituted. The laziness of masses/civil servants/political leaders is stretched far and wide in the post-colonial matrix. The present-day rulers are “the colonialist bourgeoisie” (TW-34) and “colonial intellectuals” (TW-37) and ‘the commercial elites’ (TW-46) dusted by colonial culture. Acting in the manner of “spoilt children of yesterday’s colonialism” (TW-37) today’s administrators have become organising “the loot of whatever national resources exist”(TW-37). They have adopted the thinking “my brother is my purse, my friend is part of my scheme for getting on”(TW-36). The political demagogue “becomes a kind of yes-man who nods assent on every word coming from the people which he interprets as considered judgement, but in fact, he behaves in this phase “like a common opportunist” (TW-38) and continues maneuvering.

Though most of the Indo-Anglian writers bring into their fiction the existence of the history of the nation – the history of decolonization – the whole socio-political and economic order of the postcolonial nation still seems a hangover of colonial matrix, for decolonization of India was not a cultural decolonization to be truly achieved in the country of the mind and the unification of the intellectuals and the masses representing native ethos. The entire action of the post-colonial political parties reflects that of the colonial which is rather a hypocritical “string of philosophico-political dissertations on the themes of the rights of the peoples to self-determination, the rights of man to freedom from hunger and human dignity”(TW-46). The so called pacifists and loyalists, being a replica of the legacy of the Empire,
remain rather ambiguous and maintain a hiatus between precept and practice. The intellectual speeches drive people dream dreams and dive them into zip-lipped zombies of fantasies. Moreover, the rank and file of the country’s administration is more or less urban — “a class of affranchised slaves — individually free” (TW-47). They usually are in the habit of coming to some sort of compromise such as the poorer Third world countries' rulers abiding by the terms and conditions of the monetary agencies like the World Bank for getting economic aid.

The reconstruction or all-round development of the welfare state in India seems rather a patch-work on the already laid previous patch-work—tossing within the frame work of cut-throat competition between capitalism and socialism and living in an atmosphere of international stress. “Terror, counter-terror, violence-counterviolence”(TW-64) — the post-colonial scenario of communal conflagration prevails everywhere.

“It is true to say that Independence has brought moral compensation to colonized peoples and has established their dignity”(TW-64). But the postcolonial rulers and the ruled are ruled by slowness, laziness, fatalism and neutralism and have failed to build up a welfare state wherein enrichment and affirmation of values are gained and uplifted respectively. “Set in a kind of irresolution, such men persuade themselves fairly easily that everything is going to be decided elsewhere, for everybody, at the same time” (TW-64). Fighting against the demography of poverty and hunger and geography of illiteracy and underdevelopment, people realize that life is an unending struggle of contest, even long after national liberation.

Capitalist exploitation, cartels and monopolies are the enemies of the underdeveloped countries. Upamanyu Chatterjee, in The Mammaries of the Welfare State, having grown grey to the perfect
balance of cynicism and promise makes that caricature of the Welfare state where all economic wealth and political power are held in the hands of a few who regard the nation as a whole with scorn and contempt even though they are benefited a lot and have grabbed enormous. The middle-class avarice clearly reflects in the character of Dharam Chand, a peon at the Minister's residence in *The Mammaries of the Welfare State*:

"He hated himself for feeling grateful to the Welfare State for the free plot, the soft loan, the chance to legitimate his existence, become a property owner--- he had still felt foolish and naked, empty-handed, as though he had wronged both his family and his future. He'd then blamed the state, as a grieving child his parent."  

There has been misuse of power ending in bribery and corruption which makes matters smooth without obstacles. Dinakar Sathe, the Proprietor of the Madna International, a hotel, says. "Government--- mean power; whether legitimate or illegitimate or illicit........."(TM-97). The entire edifice of the government is based on a quite feudal system of favours. "Favour for favour, tit for tat"(TM-267). It is just like a barter in a primitive society. Bureacracy without meritocracy have begun adopting "Suck above, Kick below" policy(TM-66). Raghupati, a senior civil servant and Regional Finance Secretary of the BOOBZ (Budget Organization on Base Zero) exploits power for sex and money. His maxim is "Sex is power is money"(TM-85). His conduct is unbecoming of a civil servant for he always speaks of words that hint at sex. His camp office at the bungalow appears a specimen of colonial tradition. He is so thick-skinned that he even bears the remark of a lady, Tina Munim, who slept with him for a job. "You
know, our country’s not prospering because of people like you only.” (TM-89)

Dr. Kapila, another Civil servant, who is rather honest, feels a lot at the pitiable degradation of civil servants, who even touch the feet of political leaders. The so called leaders who are falsely considered “The soul of the Masses, the beacon of the Downtrodden” (TM-252) proudly say of their psychophantic civil servants:

“If I ask them to eat my shit they’ll gobble it up with salt, pepper, chilli powder and gratitude”(TM-252).

The post-colonial political scenario even reminds us of the colonial rulers for in the Madna, which represents the macro view of India’s predicament, Killer-rapist, Makmal Bagai, could even win as an MLA. On being asked about his criminal history as an hindrance for his political career, he says:

“Not at all. Why? Look at our Parliament. 174 Hon’ble members have criminal records.”(TM-106)

The welfare state, that is run by such criminal-minded politicians “can never adequately protect its citizens”(TM-389) and as Bhoothnath Gaitonde, the leftist parliamentarian, rightly says “It is the state itself, in the shape of its police force or political leaders, that is the aggressor”(TM-389).

The emergence of crises and their superceding or receding political competition, getting welfare in the welfare state seem to be on the law of Matsyanyaya.

“.................the Big Fish gobbling up the little fish and of being gobbled up in turn by even Bigger fish.”(TM-163)
It seems ironical if we assume that there is welfare in the welfare state. Bhoothnath Gaitonde, who rose to public fame as an MLA from Jompanna, says rightly of the welfare state when he was just an advocate’s clerk and argued in the court as follows in connection with the resistance of the vacation of a slum:

"......the welfare state has done nothing for me for free.......which is as it should be..........I’ve paid bribe\ for my ration card, my photo pass and my electricity metre. I’ve been bribed in turn for my vote............. Self-interest is the only commandment.....of the welfare state, the rest is waffle." (TM-14)

Adding much to the imbroglio of many conflicts, the single factor that works in this country is caste. Caste is being used for blackmailing, threatening, harassing and exploitation. Karam Chand, an attender, threatens his office Superintendent that he would complain against him on the ground of caste abuse. Caste/Community is nourished in the web of politics. People began identifying themselves in terms of caste and community. Bhanwar Virbhim, the ex-Chief Minister and his family had widely canvassed about politics and castes and felt responsible for a thousand castes. He says:

“I am the voice of the down-trodden, I am the soul of all the depressed, backward, repressed, suppressed and unrecognised castes..........Caste is the marrow of my bones.......It is integral to our lives and our state; however can you dream of welfare without understanding caste.” (TM-104)
Responding to the recommendations of Dr.Kansal’s commission on caste reservations, Makhmal Bagai says of caste:

“................it is a fundamental principle that the repressed castes must not be denied their right to self-expression in any happening, cultural, political, economic, religious or social - When you suppress their voice, you send the wrong signals both to Heaven......”(TM-381)

Even in the web of bureaucracy, caste works a lot. Dr.Harihara Kapila, a senior civil servant was appointed to head ZBB(Zero Based Budget) and was given free hand because he happened to belong to the sub caste of the Chief Minister. However, he ironically rationalises caste. He says of the efficiency of the administrators as:

“Caste is truly everywhere..............Caste is a much more reliable factor than merit, you know,..............because merit? Every Tom, Dick and Harry has merit, but how many have the right temperament, the right ethos, genes, lineage, morality, attitude, biases, hangups.......in short the right caste for a job?” (TM-238)

Agastya is too pragmatic as to speak on the role of the Kansal commission for the upliftment of the poorest of the poor. He opines that the Kansal commission could have reached out the most squashed of the downtrodden, the starvelings, could have declared its goal to be to locate and uplift the millions who have no clout whatsoever, who are the wretched of the Earth, who’ve never sucked at the mammaries of the welfare state.
In fact, as Agastya points out himself "The welfare state exists – has been created–for them, hasn’t it, for the economically, socially and culturally damned"(TM-310). In Madna, a typical representative of Indian post-colonial confusion and predicament, everything happens. In the block of Jompanna “poverty forced families to sell themselves, literally body and soul, as bonded labourers.......”(TM-167). “Subsidy breeds substandard” (TM-208) is the economic law of the welfare state. It is true that “Development is a tricky business”(TM-93). The ethics and the stakes – stagger the mind. Even the Civil servants are milking away. This reminds us “the lawful Descendant of the child of Empire”(TM-308) is suffering from “class consciousness(TM-308) and is neglecting the welfare of the state.

The protagonist, Agastya Sen, remains a bleating bureaucrat in The Mammaries of the Welfare State. Chatterjee unselfconsciously writes about humor and sex and succeeds in writing wittily on an existence that is both corrupt and dreary. His camera zooms in on the faceless, cynical bureaucracy. As Joint Commissioner of Rehabilitation he cries almost like a misfit in the postcolonial bureaucracy. During his 8-year service he always felt sick of the state of affairs in the rungs of administration, but he has grown wiser. “Now that I am wiser, I know that the government can fuck you up bad if you’re part of – unless you suck, suck, suck”(TM-26). He seems to have grown rather wiser, critical and cynical and gives ironical remarks “The more years one spends in the civil service, the more competent one becomes to remain in it” (TM-27). He reflects “life outside the government appears tense-making, obsequious and fake. In contrast, within the welfare state, he feels that he has at last begun to trip without acid–with his feet six inches above the ground yet with an ear to it walking tall, on a permanent high”(TM-117-18). He, as the District Collector of
Madna, used to escape facing any crisis just by touring the district simply considering the preceding crisis as resolved. In the rank and file of the I.A.S., he could easily find the examples of the acts of lunacy which were considered either funny or pleasantly incomprehensible — madness accepted as law. He cites the instance that the 45-minute long visit of the Prime Minister Bunwar Aflatoon to Madna to visit the hunger-striking Rajani Saroor would cost the government over six crore rupees. This has been reflected as misuse of power and money for populist show off and personal gains. The present statesmen and bureaucrats mess things up. He asked himself whether the Indian Civil Service had actually helped the absolutely poor, the real have-nots, the truly unprivileged, the utterly godforsaken — the supposed primary beneficiaries of the welfare state. His answer had always been 'no'. Middle-class avarice has made men get benefits or loans or privileges or concessions or subsidies not only on their own names but also on the names of their family members, friends or relatives. Every bugger has wolfed down his cut. The mighty-moneyed men alone have gobbled the stuff of the welfare state. This has been due to the ignorance and illiteracy of the masses. Colonial legacy seems to have been the guiding principle of the Indian postcoloniality. Agastya could not differentiate between the police state and the welfare state. There has been the police intervention in every field of administration. The Police in the Aflatoon Bhavan complex eked out money just for their tea and cigarettes by seducing, terrorizing, beating up, sodomizing and blackmailing the closet homosexuals who cruised after dark in the Pasupati Aflatoon Public Gardens. “Only the Rule of law can guarantee the security of life and the welfare of the people” (TM-13).

The bureaucrats indulge in diverse kinds of conduct unbecoming of civil servants. “The system — the work they do, doubtless — is to blame; the strain, the tensions, together with the futility, the absence of direction, the
triple speak, the bottomless greed of our middle classes, certainly produced a lethal blend.” (TM-30-31)

Agastya feels a lot over how the administration runs at the level of grass roots. “Village information system, functions, not on facts and castes but clout.” (TM-257). He feels that the total system of ruling should be changed for giving the people a good life.

“He wanted to ferret out and help the neediest of the needy, the sort who actually died every now and then of hunger, he wished to work out a system, a method by which these millions could be precisely located, to cleave through the mountains of off-white to arrive at the heart of the matter, the essence of the welfare state. Of course, working out that system would require more off-white paper.” (TM-179)

Though Agastya’s professional career was duty followed by long leave and continual sending of “Mother Serious” telegrams and resignation letters, he has grown wiser and mature enough as to prove himself an honest officer to the core while dealing with Gulf Traffic and processing papers of people wishing to go to Persian Gulf in the Department of Labour.

Often he wanted to quit the job. Everytime that he’d drafted a letter of resignation, a Pay Commission had hiked his salary up by a millionth of a fraction. Vexed with innumerable loopholes in the system of governance and politics he had opined either to join the new political party to be launched by his friend Dhrubo before the next general election or to look forward to a career in revolutionary politics after his retirement. However he discovers himself a fully-adjusted cynic to the post-colonial hollowness of
the Welfare State which proves itself ‘a fucker of lower orders’ (TM-171). Finally Agastya substantiates his existence as well as his outrage as follows when he simply complies with the words of his colleague, Dr. Dastidar.

“We are truly lucky that we are so far above the classes whose welfare is our headache......Imagine—had we been like them, we’d have been envying people like us. Ugh. And then again I think, since we ourselves aren’t so hot, our disgust and fear of the great unwashed are the only proof we have that we aren’t like them. It’s time for our revolution, as usual two hundred years behind Europe.”(TM-171)

In the final chapter “Wakeup call”, Dr. Chakki’s quotation of the words of Rajamani Aflatoon, the first founding father of our welfare state in his ‘Complete Works’ suitably reflects the predicament of India and its people.

“Our blemished welfare state exists......for all the millions of the imperfect who’ll never qualify as citizens of the ideal republic. Like people, like government. The quality of the second can only reflect that of the first. After all, its representatives and administrators are drawn from, and raise out of, them, the different section of the masses. In fact to make Plato’s monumental meritocracy work....... his wisemen must first improve the basic stock from which they choose their candidates. In otherwords, even the perfect state could do with a dose or two of the principles of welfare.”(TM-429)
Unless and until one’s fatalistic psychological constitution is reformed one cannot milk “The Mammaries of the Welfare State.”

Next Pankaj Mishra’s first novel *The Romantics* (2000) is studied. The novel traces the emergence of a young man from his cocoon to the outside world. It deals with a life beyond the ken of the sophisticated urban literary buff—the aspirations of countless youth who wish to break out from the narrow, stifling confines of a small town existence. Transition seems to be the central theme 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. The 21-year old Samar’s journey of self-discovery reaches out to touch and feel the world beyond the familiar. Samar is shy, sensitive and an intense narrator of *The Romantics*. After graduating from Allahabad university and aiming, like the majority of students from that institution to join the Civil Service, the time-honoured career to affluence and power, Samar had intended to spend the two years leading up to the examination doing as little as possible besides reading. On arriving in Benares, however, his plans for an ivory-tower existence were soon abandoned, as he became involved, on the one hand, with Miss West and the small group of foreigners over whom she presided, and on the other, with Rajesh, a young brahmin who seemed to enjoy a “God father-like status” among the undergraduates of the Hindu University. Moving between these two different worlds—the campus with its recurrent and violent incidents of students’ unrest and police brutality and “an expatriate corner of Benares”, glamorous, exciting, holding out the promise seemingly of a richer life elsewhere—Samar, already as Miss West puts it, a “fanatical reader”, was in a sense forced to learn to read anew. Though Samar is very familiar with Nietzsche, Mann, Proust, James, Kierkegaard and Pascal, he turns out to be not an altogether skillful reader.
For example, Gustave Flaubert’s *Sentimental Education* only made sense when it was seen through the critical lens of Edmund Wilson, and, even then, the dominant impression Samar took away from the novel focusing on the ambitious, imprecise longings and disillusion of the protagonist Frederic Moreau, who was in fact his own self-image. He could realise a philosophic vision in *The Romantics* “Something of fatalism...a sense of life as drift and futility and illusion and to see it dramatized so compellingly through a wide range of human experience.” It was only after several years and taking a cue from Rajesh that he re-read the novel and became alert to its social and political concerns. His readings of the people in Benares seem rather astute and reliable for he had accepted as worthwhile the common places and banalities of Miss West’s friends: Debbie, who was just “Passing through Benares(TR-16); Sarah, a convert and “a practising Buddhist(TR-12)”; Mark to whom one of the great things about coming to India was “realizing that there is a whole world outside America where people don’t even have the basic things in life”. (TR-15)

Catherine and Samar have had a brief love-affair, as it is the way in real life. It neither disenchants Samar of his romantic notions, for all that he is a great reader of Flaubert’s *L’Education Sentimentale* nor gives him any sense of furthering his own worldly and sexual education. He finds that the life full of the pleasures of untroubled prosperity as infinitely seductive.

Samar and Catherine listen to a Sadhu’s story of renunciation of the worldly pleasures and erasing of the past. Sadhu’s rejection of the past had briefly reawakened in Samar the religious sense of refuge and futility. But Catherine negates that the Sadhu was weird and not normal and that his life was empty, hollow and loveless. On sensing passion in Catherine’s words Samar concludes how badly she wants to be loved. Catherine too wondered
and wanted whether Samar had fallen in love in his life. Catherine’s outspokenness flustered and abashed him. He felt himself shy as to reveal such concept as love. He had lived so far away from human contact of the sort Catherine implied. He knew not any women except his family members. All his life he had been thinking of love not as a natural order of things. In his world, romantic love was looked down as a kind of sensual derangement that briefly affected acculturated or brahmanised youth and left them broken and disillusioned. Love was supposed to follow marriage and not the other way round. Catherine simply laughs away whether he would remain a life-long celibate. Lying in bed by Samar, Catherine recalled her life of unfulfilled loves as most men courted for her beauty alone and not for emotional fulfilment. Most of Catherine’s stories were wasted endeavours irretrievably lost and rendered futile by later events. They suggested a large continuing failure and drift. The sense of a life somehow not working out, a life whose true flowering had yet to come, prevails upon Samar. He got fascinated towards Catherine. This fascination lay elsewhere; it lay in the enormous longing for love Catherine seemed to have, the promise of lasting fulfilment that shaped her life. That the longing seemed to cause a kind of perpetual discontent only added to its appeal. It made for empathy. It made Samar see how much Catherine’s struggle resembled his own.

Dismissing the poetry of Faiz and Iqbal, Samar had failed to understand the nature of Rajesh’s predicament also and that like himself “Rajesh had been struggling to make sense of his life to connect the disparate elements that existed in it, his self-consciousness about his Brahmin identity, the pistols in his room, the talk of illusion and void” (TS: 250).

Obsessed as he was with Catherine, he had ignored the danger signals in their relationship—the role-playing, the unstable temperament, the desperate need in her to be loved. However, at last, Samar feels guilt and
resentment on Catherine's concern for Anand. Their beautiful friendship ends. Samar, being introverted and unsure, fails to face the challenges of his interactions with people. As the title itself suggests confusion and incomprehension, Samar creates a certain construct of his own world and also those of other people's worlds and finds that the constructs he has created for himself clash with other constructs created by other people, which in the first place are also not real. The theme of hiatus between expectation, knowledge and reality is reflected in the novel. Though he is emotionally involved with Catherine, his inexperience and lack of emotional strength, he gets scalded by her rejection. Samar's affair with Catherine has developed a gulf—a breach of trust between Catherine and Anand. Catherine writes to Samar not to get in touch with her by any means and requests him to accept the break with dignity. So, Samar retreats into the uneventful, cloistered life of a primary school teacher in the Buddhist Himalayan town of Dharmasala. During his seven year long exile at Dharmasala he abjures the company of men and women, resumes furious reading, finds a haven in a home of his own and allows the wound of unrequited love for Catherine to heal. Here Samar reflects as thus:

"The World is Maya, illusion: it was one of very first things that my father told me.....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. The world you find yourself in then becomes the supreme reality: the world you have to go on living in, with or without your private griefs". (TR-215)
Whenever he walked the world of violence with "clumsy brutality, the rage, the derelection, the damage" (TR-217), he was reduced to wordless fear – a consolation: "This is not my world, I'll soon be out of it" (TR-217). This philosophic mood of Samar is reproached by his father who aspires to see his son in a prestigious position and not as a simple English teacher. Once he spoke of the need for a design in one's life and of Samskara. "We all have something in us of our forebears; we must act true to their legacy" (TR-195). As a child he could not grasp what it meant. His father, finally, left the choice of career to Samar himself. In Dharamsala Samar wished not to see the world around him. He still secured "raw and insolvent" (TR-229) in his own personality. He is vulnerable to absurdly romantic and incongruous vague longings that are never fulfilled and so he suffers self-pity. He had to train himself to see that self-pity as dead. Mark speaks about the pain as found in the American way of life of pleasure and happiness and he interprets that pain in philosophical terms of greed for wealth in this loveless world and suggests an antidote of love, "that is a different kind of pain no more and no less than what you see here. People are people all over the world, in America or anywhere else, and they really all want one thing and little else. Love, which is really lacking in life as we live it today" (TR-236). Mark has divined the meaning of life, a life of practicality and happiness, rather by "feeling and conveying love" and "expressing our common humanity" (TR-236) through his "work for a rehabilitation Centre for AIDS victims in Berkeley" (TR-236) than resorting to research in medicine and evincing interest in classical music. Rekha, his would-be wife, has given him the courage to face up his real self. At the same time, Mark, pointing to the books and remarking the intellectual knowledge as bull shit, tells him "all those great religions and philosophies are, this thing about solitude and loneliness being good for your spiritual and artistic growth. So you end up starving yourself in every way, waiting
and hoping for their truly awesome spiritual jackpot that never comes and then one day you are down there all alone on Manikarnika Ghat turning to ashes with not a single soul on the fucking planet who feels sorry for you .........."(TR-237). Samar felt a little disoriented and felt that "Mark’s words were meant as much for himself as for me"(TR-238). They forced Samar to reassess his life. Succumbing to the classic Should I-Shouldn’t I dilemma, he finds himself returning to the previous avatar of a cultural wanderer in pursuit of eternal silence in Benaras. Ironically his assessment is towards attainment of equanimity, that is spiritual joy and not that of physical achievement in the mundane world. He reflects thus:

“For years now, I have lived neutrally, on the surface. I had learned to live without the feeling I’d had for all my childhood and early adulthood, the quiet certainty that had existed over and above the fear and pain of those years, that something good and precious was growing within me. I no longer felt that way and now that sense of inner growth had faded, I didn’t have the same self-doubts. I didn’t miss the old intensity of contradictory hopes and fears, the hopeful blind striving I knew in the days I came to live in Benares which I often felt was leading me nowhere. Instead I saw its fading away as a good thing. I thought it meant that I had reached the end of a time of bewilderment.

This placid life I had in Dharmasala was severely judged by many people: my father, my colleagues at the school whose slightly malicious gossip often reached my ears. But it was all I had. I had tried hard to built it up, using
all the means at my disposal, and more optimistic days I could even think that this detached, eventless life wasn’t very far from matching the old Brahmin idea of retreat, from fulfilling those ancestral obligations my father wrote to me about.

I now wonder at my extreme reaction. But Mark’s insecurity and self-aggrandisement wasn’t what I, after years of my private struggles, wanted to be involved with when my own equanimity, the balance I had arrived at in Dharmasala was so fragile, I did not want it be threatened—particularly by something that was an echo from my time in Benares” (TR-239)

It was finally as a recluse that Samar turned and reached Benares for peace in the tradition of the east while his colleague, Rajesh, turned into a criminal contract-killer on the campus of Hindu University. He could not attain the dawn as is the case with millions of youth—the dawn being an anchorage to a stable life in the materialistic world. He seems to coincide with the gloomy sentimentality of the poetry of Faiz and Iqbal. Rajesh identifies himself with the socio-political concerns of the middle-class society as reflected in Wilson’s essay on Flaubert, since he reads the essay and underlines some important lines. Rajesh is of Frederick’s side.

“Fredrick is only the more refined as well as the more incompetent side of the middle-class mediocrity of which the dubious promoter represents the more flashy and active aspect. And so in the case of the other characters, the journalists and the artists, the members of the nobility, Fredrick finds the same shoddiness and lack of
principle which are gradually revealed in himself. Flaubert's novel plants deep in our mind an idea which we never get rid of: The suspicion that our middle class society of manufacturers, businessmen and bankers of people who live on or deal in investments, so far from being redeemed by its culture, have ended by cheapening and invalidating all the departments of culture, political, scientific, artistic and religious, as well as corrupting and weakening the ordinary human relations: love, friendship, and loyalty to cause—till the whole civilization seems to dwindle" (TR248-249).

Rajesh is drawn towards Wilson's denunciation of capitalism that had an old fashioned ring of Marxism. In the hard and mean world he had lived in, first as a child labourer and then as a hired criminal for politicians and businessmen, Rajesh would have come to will the grimy underside of middle-class society. He realised that the society Flaubert and Wilson wrote about was not very different from the one he inhabited in Benares. Rajesh himself reflects thus on Sentimental Education in which like himself, Fredrick and his friends "had either disowned or, in many cases, moved away from their provincial origins in order to realise their dreams of success in the bourgeois world" (TR-250). Samar's knowledge of this realisation is quite different:

"....... and so, in a different way, was I, with all these confused longings I had for a true awakening to the world, for everything I felt lay out of my reach." (TR-250)
Dissatisfaction of unfulfilled aspirations is what pictures the post-colonial disillusion of the youth, who finally become romantics in their own way. Samar reflects as thus:

"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 small, unnoticed tragedies of thwarted hopes and ideals Flaubert wrote in Sentimental Education were all around us. And this awareness- which, given the meagreness of my means and prospects, was also mine but which I tried to evade all through my time in Benares—this awareness had been Rajesh’s private key to the book.............. I had seen only the reflection of a personal neurosis in it; the character of Fredrick seemed to embody perfectly my sense of inadequacy, my severe self-image. Reading the same book but bringing another kind experience to it, Rajesh ....had discovered a social and psychological environment similar to the one he lived in. He shared with Flaubert and Wilson - so far away from us in every way - a true, if bitter awareness of its peculiar human ordeals and futility" (TR 250-251).

Rajesh saw something of life in Sentimental Education and he has exemplified this truth even as he moved into an underground world of mafia dons. Samar reflects thus on the predicament of Rajesh:
".....Rajesh had been struggling to make sense of his life, to connect the disparate elements that existed in it: his self-consciousness about his Brahmin identity, the pistols in his room, the talk of illusion and the void" (TR-251).

The struggle ends in a fiasco and Rajesh irretrievably lands in the mafia world and discovers himself a notorious criminal. Every teenager will understand Samar’s identification with Flaubert’s hero in Sentimental Education, because most youth have gone through at least some part of their student life with a volume of verse or Sartre filled with angst and existential gloom. Samar’s odyssey of self-discovery ends in the mountains, the refuge of all seekers and the chaos of Banaras experience resolves itself into a kind of emotional equilibrium. In his own transformation Samar becomes a medium through which contemporary, urban, cosmopolitan India is interpreted, as much for ‘us’ as for ‘them’.

Rukmini Bhaya Nair notices that “Our institutions—of education, government and of political process were handed down from the colonial nineteenth century as an accursed parting gift.” In the aftermath of colonialism, as Mishra suggests ‘nervous laughter’ and ‘real fear’ still uneasily co-exist, unreconciled........the sub-continent is condemned to live on in a sort of psychically disturbed, endless Twilight of the Raj.”

In the novel The Romantics, there is a deeper strain of longing— that of the Indian literature student’s “own ineffable post-colonial desire of poignancy in the “crude......adolescent fantasies” of Samar. On the title of the novel, Rukmini Bhaya Nair opines as thus: “The true centre of the ‘crude......adolescent fantasies’ that Samar wants so desperately to exorcise are to be found in India’s impossible and impermissible love affair with a
moribund colonial past and a mercenary neo-colonial future. That is why The Romantics is so startlingly perceptive a title.\textsuperscript{26}

Next the novel The Glass Palace\textsuperscript{(2000)} of Amitav Ghosh has been discussed. The novel interrogates the British colonialism. The interrogation of colonialism in Indian literature as an intellectual, cultural or political phenomenon has been rarely attempted. Amitav Ghosh, in The Glass Palace, presents colonization as the agency of human tragedy. The literature on 'Raj' nostalgia, like revisionist history, has tried to exorcise colonialism from our past. The word 'Raj' itself is an euphemism and seeks to suggest the political continuity and tries to mask the alien character of colonialism. The recent rush of this genre, coming under the general rubric of the post-colonial tends to underplay the colonial and to foreground the inter-cultural encounter. It does not reflect the process of decolonization, instead, forms a part of post-facto rationalisation of a phase of history which had denied to the subjected the sources of their creativity. The concept of post-colonial, despite theoretical elaborations, is imprecise and heuristically unsatisfactory. It is at best descriptive and does not indicate a state of social formation or an ideological or cultural condition.

The literary engagement with the colonial experience is, however, a crucial input into the process of decolonization. A necessary prerequisite of decolonization is the generation of social consciousness about the myriad ways in which colonial cultural hegemonisation is realised. Ngugi Wa Thionga, an African novelist, analysed the language politics of African literature and recognised cultural bomb as the biggest weapon of colonialism. He argues that the effect of cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in
themselves. The decolonization of mind involves the recovering of these lost attributes.

Unlike the African and Latin American literatures, the interrogation of colonialism in Indian Literatures has been rather muted, despite the abiding impact of colonialism on the Indian society. It is possible that the Indian mind was so firmly under the influence of colonial ideology and culture that the need to decolonise was not even felt, once the political domination was overcome. Consequently the tragedy wrought by colonialism in individual lives has not been adequately captured by literary imagination. They all formed part of the emerging anti-colonial and national consciousness heralding a process of intellectual and cultural decolonization. In *The Glass Palace* colonialism is a defining factor in the life of the families which they find hard to break loose. Their fortunes epitomise how colonialism traumatised a life of the subjected, both its collaborators as well as its opponents.

*The Glass Palace*, as a post-colonial rendering of the enmeshed histories of Burma, Malaysia and India under the British dominion, provokes the question about the nature of deployment of its historical sources to attain the desirable aesthetic response. Ghosh’s rendering of British Colonialism and its aftermath in these three countries is an interplay of fact and fiction in an illusory place of imagination to create an awareness of the experiential reality of the post-colonial worlds. As the title indicates, the novel opens with the distant roar of the British cannons and the consequent plundering of the fabled hall called “The Glass Palace” situated in the midst of the spacious garden of the fort Mandalay where the Burmese royal family with its entourage lived. The conquest of Burma by the British chiefly aims for its valuable teak. The irony of the situation lies in the fact
that it was the Indian soldiers who conquered Burma on behalf of the British. The story of the British enterprise of depredation spans more than a century in the history of the pre and post-colonial sub-continent and the people get involved in unexpected relationships across countries and cultures, wars are fought, rebellions are quelled, political and ethical issues are debated and fortunes are made and lost. The fictional context intersects with history involving the colonization of Burma, British rule in India, the World War II, the formation of Indian National Army and its desperate fight, post-war Burma under the military rule of General Ne Win, the emergence of revolutionary leader Aang San Suu Kyi and the coming of internet era. Amitav Ghosh’s premise of post-coloniality lies in his very protest against the British imperialism. Ghosh states that the remembrance of the colonial past lies at the heart of The Glass Palace.

In his letter to the Commonwealth Foundation from where in he withdrew the novel from being considered for an award. The letter expresses the author’s feeling that “I would be betraying the spirit of my book if I were to allow it to be incorporated within that particular memorization of the Empire that possesses the rubric of ‘the Commonwealth.’” It is to be remembered that the colonial experience and its memories are loaded with a sense of pain and suffering of the colonized.

Bound in the shared colonial situation, the people of both Burma and India look at each other, relate and mix, and then separate, constructing the images of ‘self’ and the ‘other’. Localised contexts of India and Burma become the sites of self-consciousness, self-enquiry and the process of recovering the lost selfhood. Ghosh seeks an understanding of the past to have a bearing upon the present. The past is remembered not as a dead, remote period, but as flowing on, into the present, post-colonial situations of
multi-ethnic pluralist societies, of boundaries and mutations of nations imposed by the colonial rulers and complex cultural diversities of a persistent political struggle for democratic and egalitarian systems.

Ghosh uses his position as a ‘specular border’-intellectual, as Abdul Jan Mohammed has defined in his essay “Worldliness Without World, Homelessness as Home, “an intellectual who is located on the outside/margin, and seeks to analyse and understand his society from that position.” The colonial experience enabled the colonized Indians and Burmese develop a new sense of selfhood and national identity. Crossing the borders between the two countries historical characters like King Thebaw and his family and purely fictional characters like Raj Kumar, Dolly, Saya John and Uma reflect upon the colonial historical events and their impact upon the colonised people. The monarchy of the Burmese Kingdom came to an abrupt end and Burma became a part of the British Empire in India. Bound together in colonial subjugation India and Burma and their people could never come together. Amitav Ghosh narrates the stories of the people’s reaction to these momentous historical events and changes, and he presents the discontent disapproval of the masses and how they began to see the image of themselves reflected in the other. The servility and surrender of the Indians to the British --- the Burmese felt was a warning to them to prevent them from going to such extents of surrender to the power of the British colonial masters. Many voices inside these nations led to the emergence of a more concrete self-consciousness, which in turn related to the wider movements for national independence and identity. The personal search is woven into the country’s search leading to new images of both.

The changed images of the self are metaphorically presented in the novel through a repetition of the image of “The Glass Palace”. The scene of
Queen Supalayat's pushing the country into a war with the British is located in the chamber of the palace where the ceiling is lined with mirrors in "The Glass Palace." "As she(Queen) approached its centre, an army of Supalayats seemed to materialise around her........" The self-centred ambitiousness of the Queen, reflected in the myriad images in the mirror, reflects a narcissistic strain in her character. Political power is completely out of touch with the masses.

In contrast to this, the photo studio "The Glass Palace" run by Dinu, reflects the image of postcoloniality. Dinu (son of Dolly) has put the pictures he has taken of the public places and of ordinary persons without in any sense trying to impose the image of any one class or group. In his "Glass Palace" the images of ordinary people and their work are reflected, creating a peoples' palace, a democratic open art gallery. The characters, both the historical and the fictional, reflect on the questions that the post-colonial societies are engaged with--the failure of the kings of once strong kingdoms, the role of one subjugated nation in oppressing or enslaving other free nations and the real force behind the management of the British Empire. As the characters struggle to gain a sense of subjectivity to come to terms with the complex inter connections between economic, political and cultural developments in the colonial world, there are significant transformations within them, leading toward changes in the national identities.

Raj Kumar, an important reflector, watches King Thebaw deposed by the British and wonders why the Indian sepoys agreed to become accomplices of the British in conquering other free countries. He asks Saya John about the role of the Indian army. The Indian soldiers had fought for the British in different parts of the world and they were the most 'handy' and 'the most loyal soldiers'. Raj Kumar and Saya John felt contempt and
disgust at the loyalty of the soldiers. It was not merely the money that held them but they were inherently subordinate in their nature. King Thebaw too reflects over the predicament of the colonized. Through his binoculars he watches Indian coolies working on the port in Rangoon and wonders how these people had been compelled to leave their homeland to do menial jobs in Burma. The first phase of the Indian diaspora is seen here. “The British”, he knows, “brought them there, to work in the docks and the mills, to pull rickshaws and empty the latrines. Apparently, they could not find local people to do these jobs and indeed why would the Burmese do that kind of work”(GP-49). The image of Indian servility contrasts with the Burmese people’s sense of greater independence of spirit and material well-being. These reflections become mirror images warning the Burmese never to ‘fall slow’(GP-49).

Capitalism has begun to unsettle the older systems. It has turned Raj Kumar and Saya John into ‘tools’ of exploitation much as the sepoys had been made the instruments of the empire. Raj Kumar becomes completely absorbed in the capitalistic love for money as an end in itself. The ‘rags to riches’ story of Raj Kumar and Saya John has however a tragic turn when Burma’s nationalist movements turned the Indian into the hated ‘outsider’-hated for his greed of exploitation of the material and human resources. Raj Kumar is shocked when he realises he must leave Burma in his “Long March” back to India, which once again raises important questions about the nature of national identity, the reality of border-lines between the countries and the justification of mass migrations. Exiles and migrants who moved from one country to another are displaced and become outcastes within their own country and in the new land.
The Glass Palace looks at both the sides of the picture. In the formation of the Burmese sense of national identity, Indians are turned into 'hated outsiders' as a part of their rejection of the British imposition. Raj Kumar's long stay in Burma, his marrying Dolly, a Burmese, does not give him a Burmese affiliation, for he himself had not cared to acquire such an affiliation. When he comes back to Calcutta, he remains an outsider here too, meeting others like him – reliving in their golden days in Burma.

The colonial history entwines with the personal histories to destroy and recreate new histories and cultures intersecting class, race and religion. As an answer to the colonial subject, the British, the voices of the 'otherness' or the 'ex-centric' reinvent their new identities to question any monolithic idea of cultural imperialism. Languages and cultures mix and the novel incorporates complex instantiations of cultural syncreticism and metamorphosis. Raj Kumar Raha gets transformed from 'Kalaa' to 'babu' (GP-134) and is referred to by the Collector and his wife Uma as 'Mr.Raha' (GP-137). His attempt at civility, by donning well-tailed suits and ties and adapting himself to western cutlery, models the double process of colonialism whereby 'the other' must be transformed into the 'same' (British). But at the same time the 'Other's emulation of the polite' renders Raj Kumar absurd. However, the notion of colonial mimicry as clowning proves futile because Raj Kumar cannot be defined by these acts and has no trouble switching codes. He has the capacity to understand the relationships between sartorial and other semiotic codes and power and appropriated them for his own ends. Cultural hierarchy too overlap and there is a formation of new societies from the merging of the royal with the common. The historical characters, The King and the Queen, are stripped of their prerequisites of pomp and pride. The Princesses marry the commoners despite the desperate attempts made by the Queen to maintain the
the heart of aristocratic superiority. The First Princess steals Dolly's lover and marries him. There are power structures operating within power structures in the novel. So, Dolly has to sacrifice her personal happiness for the First Princess in her loyalty to the royal family and in order to maintain her job and security. The incident of the Princess's pregnancy does not take the royal family by so much surprise as it does the Collector, Bipin Beharey. When he thinks he is scandalised by this affair, the Queen retorts that the ill-treatment of exile given to them is a real greater scandal. She says, "Scandal?!……..The scandal lies in what you have done to us" (GP-149). The Queen speaks out about the discrepancy between the British claims of having a higher civilization run on the basis of 'laws', of justice and fair treatment. She says, "We have heard so many lectures from you and your colleagues, on the subject of the barbarity of the King of Burma and the humanity of the Angrez…….The English alone understood liberty, we were told; they do not put princess and kings to death; they rule through the laws. If that is so, why has King Thebaw never been brought to trial?" (GP-149-50). Bipin Beharey could not deny the truth of the Queen's charges. He feels ashamed at his helplessness, perceives the immoral nature of his role as an official of the colonial rule and feels a sense of humiliation and a sense of loss in his own self and chooses death as the only way-out.

Nationalism is a major concern in the novel imbedded within the narrative saga. Arjun, Uma's nephew, joined the IMA, Dehradun. His priority was rather honour than personal happiness. His colleague Haradayal Singh and he represent the voice of 'otherness' or the 'ex-centric' for they reinvent their identities to question the monolithic idea of cultural imperialism. As in Tagore's classic Indian novel Gora in 1909 about nation and identity, the plot of The Glass Palace too progresses through discussion of ideas. Meaning lies not in individual utterances but in their dialogic
negotiations with emphasis on plurality of viewpoints. The emergence of a questioning within the Indians, especially among the educated middle class, is an important feature of the process towards recovery/discovery of sense of selfhood. Besides Beharey Dey, his wife Uma and her nephew Arjun undergo the struggle for self-hood. They became aware of their mental subjugation to the imperial racist oppressive ideology. Thus The Glass Palace becomes a contesting plane for the ethical debate of ideas and ideologies. The ethical issues which troubled the Indian officers such as Beharey and Arjun in the colonial administration and the army respectively are explored at length to create semiotic resonances in the mind of the reader. The novel brings the colonial past to the bar of judgement and ‘to interrogate it remorselessly’. The inscription at the Military Academy at Dehra Dun had said: “The safety, honour and welfare of your country come first, always and everytime” (GP-330). However, when the Indian officers are made to fight for the colonial masters and not for their own country, they are faced with a moral crisis: “Brothers, ask yourselves what you are fighting for and why you are here; do you really wish to sacrifice your lives for an Empire that has kept your country in slavery for two hundred years?” (GP-391), said the pamphlet signed by one Amreek Singh of the Indian Independence League. Here the moral crisis in a segment of the Indian National Army who got defeated is replaced by a sense of defeatism and cynicism. Arjun tells Dinu, “We rebelled against an Empire that shaped every thing in our lives........we cannot destroy it without destroying ourselves” (GP-518). Arjun discovers his loss of individual identity as he realizes that he has been moulded like a clay-vessel by the hands of the colonial potter to believe in the highly idealistic goal proclaimed by the empire in modernising and administering the unruly colonized in Asia and to become a willing tool for that vast power. A new realization of his self dawns on him from his relationship with Alison, who turns him down
saying that she felt pity for him rather than love. He finds himself caught in a strange moral dilemma on hearing the words of his friends in the Batallion regarding the nationalist duties of the Indians. The battle field becomes a ground of Arjun’s moral conflict and his glimpse of self, an inner core of thinking, feeling and moral responsibilities is realised in this conflict of duties towards his country and to the so-called colonial masters. His painful self-discovery is caught in the complicated history of the Japanese invasion of Burma, their subsequent defeat and the British army’s threat of military action against the ‘deserters’ of the British army. Arjun’s realisation shakes Dinu as he begins to contemplate about the latter’s nihilism:

> Who can judge a person’s patriotism except those in whose name he claims to act—his compatriots? If the people of India chose to regard Arjun as a hero; if Burma saw Aung San as her saviour—was it possible for some one such as him, Dinu, to assume that there was a greater reality, a sweep of history, that could be evoked to refute these beliefs?’ (GP-519)

Arjun’s observation earlier in the text that, “Kishan Singh, in his very individuality, had become more than himself—a village, a country, a history, a mirror” for him ‘to see the refractions of himself’ complicates the post-colonial response even further. As Arjun aims the gun to his trustworthy bat-man Kishan Singh’s head to protect him from further humiliation and moral depravation, and prevent him from becoming a ‘creature like himself, grotesque, misshapen’ (GP-525), the present day Indian reader is at crossroads with his own moral position in the post-colonial context. The moral conflict in the self-lacerating consciousness of Arjun becomes the burden of historical consciousness which he has
accepted as his own for seeking his own identity in the signifying process of history. Here it is worth inviting to quote Nietzsche, "you can explain the past only by what is most powerful in the present." History has a dialogical function in finding the meaning of cultures and civilizations. The first person narrative in the last section of The Glass Palace describes the post-colonial acceptance of the past in an act of infinite tenderness.

Amitav Ghosh in his novel THE CALCUTTA CHROMOSOME (1997) makes a unique experiment by combining various themes and techniques. He amalgamates here Literature, Science, Philosophy, History, Psychology and Sociology. The result is a complex, fascinating and highly imaginative story of quest and discovery that weaves past, present and future into an intricate texture. He presents a rational view of science and the universe. He looks in the direction of magic, conspiracy and silence to overturn the logic of Europe's conquest of the East. Essentially a novel of ideas, it works like a brain-teaser undermining conceptual certainties and reads the world as a mighty conundrum, where questions and problems are given conjectural answers. The colonial world examined in a postcolonial setting turns conventional assumption about itself, about history and science, inside out and upside down. Through its subversive quest The Calcutta Chromosome celebrates the eternal, celebrates the triumph of the spirit over all that bogs it down in the mire. He puts forward the paradox that life finds sustenance through counter-science, through secrecy and silence and rejection of rationality.

Malaria's history of research as depicted in The Calcutta Chromosome parallels imperial history. The research endeavours of Ronald Ross and his contemporaries were motivated by the new interest in malaria that accompanied imperial expansion and the escalating infection of soldiers
and administrators posted to colonized tropics. The relentless, fierce and often nationalistic competition among the European scientists to probe Malaria’s mysteries came to resemble their countries’ perpetual scrambles for territory in the Asian and the African continents. Egos and reputations were at stake, power and influence were to be won, and the mix of brilliance and blundering that guided their haphazard progress is reminiscent of imperial discoveries. Moreover, both medical and territorial conquests produced and reproduced forms of knowledge that in different ways ignored or displaced or inferiorised or distorted native knowledges. John Clement Ball quotes Robert S. Desowiz in his book ‘The Malaria Capors’ (Norton, 1991), saying that “African and Asian people’s ideas about malaria’s connection to mosquitoes had been ridiculed by Europeans long before the link was scientifically ‘discovered’.”

Malaria research was like the larger imperial struggle. And although Ghosh typically does not wear politics on his fictional sleeve, the implication of this novel’s secret history is that mastery over an important area of knowledge is wrenched away from Europeans in the past and granted to the Indians in the past, present and future. Unhoused from the apparatus and methods of European science, malaria is repossessed by the locals – rightful owners since it is they and their ancestors who have most often been possessed by its malign fevers.

The post-colonial novel of the present day is considered the result of the political phenomenon called colonialism – a system of political, economic, psychological and cultural domination of one country over the other which always spawns a pattern of cultural and political marginalization of the colonized country establishing a myth of intellectual,
social, cultural, religious and physical inferiority of the colonized and creating a feeling of disbelief in self-hood.

The language of the colonial master imposed on the native creates a Caliban-like situation. Caliban (Colonized) learns to curse and tell Prospero (the colonial power): “You taught me language and my profit on’t/ Is I know how to curse (The Tempest, I, ii.263).” The victim may not always curse but often discloses the weaknesses of the victimizer thus establishing his identity.

The post-colonial consciousness has emerged in recent years after the diminishing effect of colonization. In fact, “the colonized and the de-colonized are seized by a ‘double consciousness.” 32 Thus most of all the post-colonial writings of the previous decade are “ambivalent about any very stark dualism or native celebration of pre-colonial revival.”33 Madhumati Adhikari views that the post-colonial writer’s ‘double consciousness’ “rejects or accepts the dynamics of power-knowledge nexus controlled by the imperialistic country. The dual perspective, if on the one hand has introduced the quality of hybridity in all world literature, on the other hand, post-colonial literature has marginalised the centre, that is to posit the reducing significance of the western canon.” 34

Certain post-colonial characteristics are found in The Chromosome. The novel, with its fantastic world, presents various thematic and technical experimentations and innovations. Ghosh practises structural ‘synaesthesia’ for he plays with the time, space and the story-line. The parameter of the word “post” in the context of Indo-Anglican literature is considered to be the literature after 1947. But the current implied meaning refers not only to beginning of colonization of India by the British but also to the post-colonial consciousness that began a century before 1857 and continues
distinctly through the present. In fact, as Madhumati Adhikari quotes Bill Ashcraft in “The Empire Writes Back”, the term post-colonial consciousness applies to “all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day.” A colonized society permanently and continuously absorbs a psychology that is concurrently pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial in experience. So, in culture studies, postcolonial does not apply to the time when officially colonialism ended. Cultural hybridity that is reflected in the Indo-Anglian fiction is because of the constant interplay of variations of colonial experience. The meaning of post-colonization has spilled over into the realm of history, patriarchy, all kinds of boundaries, the nuances of self-hood and art. The disillusioned spirit of the colonized is clearly seen in the post-colonial literature. In Amitav Ghosh’s *The Calcutta Chromosome* a nostalgia for the English period is suggested by calling Murugan as Morgan or Ramen Halder as Romen Halder or referring to the Robinson street with its old colonial name and not the new Indian name. Ghosh would have departed from factual if he had failed to portray the reverential attitude of the Indians for the colonizers, a legacy of the coloniality.

Amitav Ghosh, through the line, subverts the superiority of the western scientific investigation and proves that not only were they far behind the scientific progress made by India but here it had been spear-headed by a woman, Mangala. When Ronald Ross was awarded the Nobel Prize for identifying the Malaria Parasite, Murugan (a curious researcher of Malaria) firmly believed that there was an ‘other mind’ behind Ross’ entire operation of research and discovery. Here the ‘other mind’ was Mangala. In *The Calcutta Chromosome* Murugan’s theory was that though Ross was thinking that “he was doing experiment on the malaria parasite” yet, “..........all the time it’s he who is the experiment.” He had uncovered that
there was one Mangala who with her handyman Lutchman/Laxman/Lachan/Laakhan/Lokhon was carrying out the experiment through an indigenous native method of secrecy. If ‘matter’ and ‘science’ were the stronghold of the Occidental world, ‘anti-matter’ and ‘counter-science’ were controlled by the Oriental. It is a suggested conquest by the East (colonized) of the West (colonizer)—a typical post-colonial framework. It also reflects an example of the defeat of the patriarchy and a victory of the matriarchy. Amitav Ghosh has granted Mangala and Lachman, the researchers for ‘immortality’ a great liberty and has decolonized the members of the lowest strata—the sweeper and the scavenger class.

The story of Deepak Kumar’s novel, *Science and the Raj* (1995) is the backdrop Ghosh has chosen for his novel *The Calcutta Chromosome*. Ronald Ross turns up in both books. But in Kumar’s telling Ross grows into a fuller character. Ghosh’s Ross, like all the white men in the novel, is something of a patsy, unconscious that he is being manipulated by the natives he treats with unalloyed paternalism. In *Science and the Raj*, a more sympathetic Ross emerges—a man who had to struggle against the colonial medical establishment and took the trouble to credit his Indian assistant Mohammed Bux with the important discovery that the larvae of the Indian Anopheles do not float head downward like those of the Culex. Kumar charts out the mutual ambivalence with which the colonial scientific establishment and the emergent Indian elite regarded each other. Kumar comes down hard on the way colonial power sought to control the development of science in the East.

“One may talk of ‘transfer’—transfer of knowledge, systems or technologies, but it was a transfer ‘restricted’ or ‘guided’ to achieve certain determined objectives. The
way this transfer was conducted left much to be desired. Teachers and professionals were sent from Europe and it was thought they would provide the magic touch. But in fact they were 'inorganic' intellectuals who reproduced the same breed in India."  

In his view, the organic intellectuals are people like Mangala and Lutchman, the anti-scientists, who head the secret cult of interpersonal transference in The Calcutta Chromosome. The Indian encounter with western science reflects not only the story of colonial authority and racism but also that of interpersonal transference. Ghosh lashes out at western imperialism and shows incidents to show the incompetence and imbecility of the colonial intellectuals vis-a-vis the brilliance of the unlettered colonized Indians. Ross was unable to see "What's under his nose" (CC-66). Mangala was far ahead of Ross and Cunningham as Ramanujam was in Mathematics. Mangala and Laakhan 'programmed' their experiment so subtly that Ross entered the web. "He thinks he's doing experiments on the malarial parasite. And all the time it's he who is the experiment on the malarial parasite." (CC.67)  

In The Order of Discourse, Foucault states, "Discourse is the power which is to be seized."  

This power is traditionally controlled by patriarchy/colonizer. But in The Calcutta Chromosome the 'discourse of silence' is typically female in nature handed over to Mangala. It is stated in the novel:

".................wouldn't you say that the first principle of a functioning counterscience would have to be secrecy? The way I see it, it wouldn't just have to be secretive
about what it did (it could not hope to beat the scientist of that game any way); it also would have to be secretive in the way it did. It would have to use secrecy as a technique for a procedure.” (CC-88)

By the weapon of the cult of secrecy the colonized Mangala controlled the white male colonial scientists and researchers of Malaria-Ross, Farley, Grigson and Cunningham. ‘Those who came in the way like Farley are cursorily destroyed’ (CC-129). By using the potent weapon of silence she scored an intellectual win over her male counterparts. She tried to find a cure for syphilitic paresis through ‘counter-science’ or faith (CC-204). Ronald Ross tried to solve the mystery of malaria through science. Against this, the power of folk-medicine is ratified by Ghosh through the colonized researcher, Mangala. The rustic infiltration into the world of science / knowledge to control ‘the ultimate transcendence of nature’ (CC-90) is an attempt to improve the theory of ‘migration of the soul’. ‘Transposition of personality’ (CC-206) is an extension of Indian concept of the ‘transmigration of the soul’. Here in the novel, the boundaries between the real and the unreal are quickly dissolved and the entire drama is seemingly accepted by the Hindus (Murugan, Sonali, Urmila and Tara), the Muslims (Antar, Saiyad, Murad Hussain alias Phulboni) and the Christians (Mrs.Aratounian and Countess Pongracz). It is suggested by Ghosh that both the colonized and the colonizer have accepted the broad-based theory of ‘transmigration of soul’. The concept easily acceptable to the Hindus is an act of sacrilege for the Christians and yet Ghosh makes it possible because “Post-colonial allegories are concerned with neither redeeming nor annihilating history, but with displacing it as a concept and opening up the past to imaginative revision.” 39
The need of a movement that would lead towards a cultural decolonization has been stressed. A return to the native language as the medium of literature had been advocated. In India, the Indian writers have gone back to their roots seriously and yet they have not totally rejected the language of the colonizer. They have gone for creolization/hybridization of the adopted language freely accommodating in it the native words. One can see the aesthetic use of Hindi and Urdu words resulting in ‘Hugme Syndrome’ in Salman Rushdie’s words. Ghosh too has followed the Indian practice of using native words like “bibi, dhooli, Addad al-Turab, Iskuti”. He has not disturbed the syntactic norms of the English language. What Ghosh has practised in Bill Ashcroft’s words is known “as ‘abrogation’ of the language of the centre and ‘appropriation’ of that language for the expression of post-colonial experience.”40 Ghosh has not only employed an indigen-ous/native theme of the Great Mother Goddess Kali but has also projected the awareness, nuances and ambiguities of the post-colonial consciousness. The two contrasting societies are clearly etched: The society of the colonizer led by Ross and the ‘other’culture conducted by Mangala. The irony of the situation is that the so-called colonial masters are merely puppets in the hands of the powerful woman. The colonizers were in search of temporal truths and the colonized natives were motivated by the higher goal of ‘eternity’. The tussle between the western/colonial and the Eastern/colonized civilization is highlighted and victory is granted to the greatly exploited and oppressed. The equation of power is not limited to political overtones but is carried onto the world of mechanical and intuitive knowledge. Murugan and later Antar, two computer experts are chosen to be the subsequent Laakhans to the succeeding Mangala that is Urmila and Tara. One comes to know during the course of the novel that Tara is being specifically cultivated to pilot this mysterious cult. The continuity of
motivation, action and achievement is never ruptured. The Indian Philosophy of Kalachakra is highlighted and re-established. Primitivism/counter-science always labelled as inferior, rising from some unknown depth of the human mind, strikes back at its tormentor.

Ghosh has deconstructed thematically and technically the traditional western forms. His constant ‘border-crossing’ from fact to fiction, the disruption of the realities of the narrative technique in fiction – plot, development, character, manipulation of time- has been done away with as something ineffectual and superfluous. This experimentation has enriched him with a ‘double vision’ that enables the writer a cross-cultural critical analysis. Like Rushdie, Ghosh has employed ‘Magic Realism’ to invoke the impossibility of the happening without losing the immediacy of its experience.

Allegory, a characteristic form of post-colonial writing, creates, deconstructs, restructures and reaffirms myths. The mythical character of the Ramayana, Laxman and Urmila and Murugan, the much-loved god of South India, are interwoven in the text simultaneously, to reenact the eternal war between satya and asatya. Tara, Urmila and Mangala are introduced into the text to recharge the concept of mythical goddess Kali/Durga. The story-line moves with many undertones. The historical incident of Ross’s discovery is consciously shrouded in mystery. Ghosh, the fiction writer, turns himself into a historian. In fact, his role is not much altered as “both history and literature are interested in power” and “etymologically the two words are the same and only in English have they separated in this way”. The constant blending of fact and fiction has generated a situation where past has lost its antiquity. By crossing over the physical time, Ghosh has invented new allegorical meanings. The collision between the west and the
east has also been projected symbolically through an ideological conflict between tradition and modernity, faith and reason, scientific knowledge and intuitive knowledge. Post-colonial writing mystifies the real and demystifies the mystified. It is not the temptation of exotic expression that compels a writer to follow this intricate path but it becomes a necessity that gives him the magical power to represent the culmination of many dynamic, cultural and social forces. The pluralistic sensibility of postcolonial writing has a significant impact on the writers of the coming century. Ghosh in *The Calcutta Chromosome* as a postcolonial writer, has rearranged the simplistic equation of life, death and immortality to prove that 'word manipulated' artistically can establish theories that are true and yet stranger than fiction.

Theme of multiculturalism is discussed in Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*(1994). Salman Rushdie's fiction is, at times, considered the writing of capitalist neo-colonialism, as it celebrates cultural eclecticism and hybridity, the reification of local cultures and traditions into so many consumerist choices and life-style options. His fiction stands emblematic for the writing of post-colonial literature that reconciles the textual playfulness of a consumerist culture with the historical and political legacy of anti-colonial struggle. The writing allows us to evade the necessity of concrete political and ethical choices. *The Moor's Last Sigh*, a text self-consciously constructed from a multitude of other texts, furthers the eclectic range of the hybrid, post-colonial work.

*The Moor's Last Sigh* describes the story of four generations' complicated political, financial, romantic, sexual and emotional entanglements of a Christian-Jewish family involved in the spice trade in India. Peppered with politics and betrayal, sugared with art and love, well
The Moor's Last Sigh is a grand family chronicle of the passionate love and business affairs. Not only is it a novel about modern India but also a novel that can be read as a deeply-felt elegy for pluralism in India which has been steadily retreating in the face of fundamentalists of various kinds 'righteous' and 'leftieous'. As the narrator observes with regard to the novel The Moor's Last Sigh

"The barbarians were not only at our gates but within our skins...the explosions burst out of our own bodies ....The explosions were our evil....And now we can only weep, at the last, for what were enfeebled, too corrupt, too little, to contemptible to defend".

The narrator is Moraes Zogoiby of Bombay, nicknamed by his mother "The Moor". But the famous sigh to which the title refers was breathed five centuries ago in 1492, when Mahammad-XI, the last Sultan of Andalusia, bade farewell to his kingdom, bringing an end to Arab-Islamic dominance in Iberia. Fourteen ninety two was the year too, when the Jews of Spain were offered the choice of Baptism or expulsion; and when Columbus, financed by the royal conquerors of the Moor, Ferdinand and Isabella, sailed forth to discover a new route to the East.

From Sultan Mohammad, a line of descent, partly historical, partly fabulous leads to Moraes, the narrator, who in 1992 will return from the east to 'discover' Andalusia. In a dynastic prelude occupying the first third of the novel Moraes's genealogy is traced back as far as his great-grand parents, the da Gamas. Franscisco da Gama is a wealthy spice exporter based in Cochin of Kerala State. A progressive and a nationalist, he soon disappears from the action but his wife Epifania, faithful to England, God, Philistinism,
the old ways, survives to trouble succeeding generations and to utter the curse that will blight the life of the unborn Moraes.

Their son, Cameons, after flirting with communism, becomes a Nehru man, dreaming of an independent unitary India which will be “above religion because secular, above class because socialist, above caste because enlightened”. He dies in 1939, though not before he has had a premonition of the violent, conflict-riven India that will in fact emerge.

Cameons’ daughter, Aurora, falls in love with a humble Jewish clerk, Abraham Zogoiby. Neither Jewish nor Christian authorities solemnized their marriage so their son (the narrator) was raised “neither as catholic nor as Jew......a jew-holic-anonymous.” Abandoning the declining Jewish community in Cochin, Abraham transfers the family business to Bombay and settles in a fashionable suburb, where he branches out into more lucrative jobs--supplying girls to city’s brothels, smuggling heroin, speculating in property, trafficking in arms and finally in nuclear weapons. He has become just a little more than a comic-book villain in the hands of Rushdie. The mother, Aurora, a more complex character, occupies the centre stage of the novel. A painter of genius, but distracted mother, she suffers intermittent remorse for not loving her children enough, but prefers fictionally to see them through the lens of her art. Thus, Moraes is worked into a series of her paintings of ‘Mooristan’, a place where “worlds collide, flow in and out of one another, and wash ofy away.....One universe, one dimension, one country, one dream, bumpo’ing into another, or being under, or on top of. Call it palimstine”. In these paintings, with increasing desperation, she tries to paint old, tolerant Moorish Spain over India, overlaying, or palimpsesting, the ugly reality of the present with ‘a romantic myth’ of ‘the plural, hybrid nation’. (Moor-227)
Rushdie interweaves Indian and Spanish histories. Moraes's grandmother Isabella Souza is nicknamed Queen Isabella and even credited with her own form of "reconquista" (Moor-44). The Jewish ancestors of Arabian are said to have come to India as a result of the same Christianization of Spain that led to the expulsion of the Moors and as the legend goes the Indian Zogoibys are descended from Boabdil himself, who after his loss of Granada, purportedly had an interracial romance with a Spanish Jewess.

By incorporating Spain and its history in The Moor's Last Sigh, Rushdie turns to Moorish Spain as a model of multicultural society—"the fabulous multiple culture of ancient al-Andalus" (Moor-398)—a world in which the tolerance of the Muslim rulers for Christian and Jewish citizens led to the flourishing of a highly complex and productive culture. The issue of religious tolerance is emphasised which is reflected in Aurora's paintings.

"Aurora Zogoiby was seeking to paint a golden age. Jews, Christians, Muslims, Parsis, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains crowded into her paint—Boabdil's fancy-dress balls."

(Moor-227)

Indeed Aurora tries to create a super hybrid of Moorish Spain and Mughal India, as the architectural styles of the two cultures fuse in her artistic vision:

"The Alhambra quickly became a not-quite – Alhambra; elements of India's own red forts, the Mughal fortresses in Delhi and Agra, blended Mughal splendors with the Spanish building's Moorish grace." (Moor-226)
In this dream different cultures merge into a larger unity. Moorish Spain appears to have solved the problem that has figuratively and literally torn India apart in the twentieth century. Religious conflicts between Hindus and Muslims led to the division of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan and even within India profound tensions of murderous violence remain between the Hindu majority and the Muslim minority. Rushdie has devoted much of his intellectual energies to chronicling the catastrophic effects of religious fanaticism and intolerance in India in *Midnight's Children*, and Pakistan in *Shame* and throughout Islamic world in *The Satanic Verses*. He mentions the same subject in *The Moor's Last Sigh* telling about the latest incidents on the ongoing sectarian conflicts in India:

“Violence was violence, murder was murder, two wrongs did not make a right........In the days after the destruction of the Babri Masjid ‘justly enraged Muslims’ / ‘fanatical killers’ ......smashed up Hindu temples, and killed Hindus, across India and in Pakistan as well....... They surge among us...... Hindu and Muslim, knife and pistol, killing, burning, looting.” (Moor-365)

Moorish Spain for Rushdie, offers an historical alternative to the dark spectacle of religious violence. The Moorish rule, in one form or another, lasted for eight centuries in Spain and during that period Muslims, Christians and Jews lived together in relative peace and harmony and spurred one another on to ever greater cultural achievements. In such diverse areas as architecture, astronomy, medicine, mathematics, music and literature and philosophy Moorish equalled and surpassed contemporaneous cultural developments across the Pyrenees in Christian Europe. One needs only look to the complex interaction of Islamic and Jewish philosophers in
Moorish Spain to see how fruitful the hybrid nature of the culture proved to be. Some classics of Islamic philosophy come down to us only in Hebrew translations. The rich diversity of culture in Moorish Spain came to an end only when catholic forces succeeded in reconquering the whole of the Iberian Peninsula and expelling Broabdil, the last of the Moorish rulers. The Catholic monarchs aimed to impose a uniformly Christian culture in Spain, a policy that made Muslims and Jews either to convert to Christianity or leave the country. Thus the loss of both Muslims and Jews in Spain lead to the impoverishment of the country making its period of imperial glory in the sixteenth century evanescent and ultimately hollow. Thus the use of Spanish history in The Moor’s Last Sigh places Rushdie in the camp of contemporary ideology of multiculturalism. Imposition of a uniform culture on a nation is condemned and instead cultural hybridity is celebrated. Rushdie’s multi-culturalism seems in perfect harmony with his status as an important post-colonial author in the world of today. Multiculturalism would seem to go hand in hand with anti-imperialism, and indeed in The Moor’s Last Sigh, as elsewhere, Rushdie is highly critical of the British colonial presence in India, precisely because of the ways in which their rule tries to impose an alien culture upon a subject people. Rushdie’s version of Spanish history thus appears to be a kind of post-colonial rewriting, in which the heroes traditionally celebrated by Spanish historians – los reyes catolicos, Ferdinand and Isabella, become Rushdie’s villains, presented as the destroyers of the golden age of multicultural toleration under Moorish rule. Whatever the precise nature of the Moorish regime in Spain, it was not an example of the kind of multiculturalism namely democratic multiculturalism. The great cultural synthesis of Moorish Spain was itself the product of an imperialist venture, the conquest of Christian communities in the Iberian Peninsula by Muslims from North Africa. This fact calls into question the simple equation that one might be tempted to make between
imperialism and monoculturalism on the one-hand or between anti-imperialism and multiculturalism on the other. Rushdie’s Spanish history suggests a linkage between imperialism and multiculturalism and monoculturalism may in turn be linked to the post-colonial nationalist movements. Thus Spanish history turns out to be a part of the larger project of rethinking imperial history in general.

Awareness of the very active role of Islam in world history breaks down the clear-cut polarities people like to draw in theorizing colonialism. In Moorish Spain, a power derived from the East conquered a Western nation and ruled it for many centuries. With his interest in Indian history Rushdie is specially alert to Islamic expansionism, since centuries before the British took control of India, the land was invaded by Muslim conquerors, who founded the Mughal dynasty. The historical background of _The Moor’s Last Sigh_ seems to be generated by Rushdie’s fascination with the parallels between Moorish Spain and Mughal India. In both cases a complex hybrid culture resulted from the encounter between invading Muslim forces and the local populace.

Usually, in the standard paradigm of imperialism, a Western power invades an Eastern/a non-European territory and imposes an alien culture on one that until that point had been pure, unadulterated and perfectly unified. In the case of Rushdie’s India this model is fully misleading for the British on their coming found India with a fabulously complicated history and an extraordinary complex culture. So, the English presence could not incorporate heterogeneity. In Rushdie’s view, India had already been invaded and had acquired vast cultural synthesis by such invaders. Rushdie develops this view of India’s cultural history in _The Satanic Verses_ especially in the ideas of a character, Zeenat Vakil:
She was an art critic whose book on the confining myth of authenticity, that folkloristic straitjacket which she ought to replace by an ethic of historically validated eclecticism, for was not the entire national culture based on the principle of borrowing whatever clothes seemed to fit, Aryan, Mughal British, take-the-best-and-leave-the-rest?—had created a predictable stink." (SV-52)

In building a national culture, India took something valuable from its invaders. Rushdie realises how controversial India’s position, since its position runs afoul, in this case of ‘Hindu Fundamentalism’ (SV-52), but more generally of what he calls ‘the confining myth of authenticity’, an ideology frequently promoted in post-colonial regimes. Going fully decolonized and embracing pure native culture are nothing but a chimera as viewed by Rushdie, for the glory of Indian culture is its complexity, not its purity. Vakil’s history of Indian painting dwells on the ways in which the Mughal invaders enriched the native artistic traditions:

“The pictures also provided eloquent proof of Zeeny Vakil’s thesis about the eclectic, hybridized nature of the Indian artistic tradition. The Mughals had brought artists from every part of India to work on the paintings; individual identity was submerged to create a many-headed, many-brushed overartist who, literally, was Indian painting....In the Hamza-nama you could see the Persian miniature fusing with Kannada and Keralan painting styles, you could see Hindu and Muslim philosophy forming their characteristically late-Mughal synthesis.” (SV-70)
An important link is provided by Zeenat Vakil and the *The Moor’s Last Sigh*. She reappears in the “The Moor”, where, based on her earlier “influential study of the Mughal Hamza-nama cloths”, she becomes the curator of a retrospective of Aurora Zogoiby’s paintings. Aurora’s career as a painter illustrates the difficulty of pursuing the middle course of cultural hybridity in the present world, where aesthetic fashion tries to force artists either to adopt the international style of Western modernism or to remain true to the well-trodden paths of local tradition i.e., choosing between nativism or what Rushdie calls ‘Westoxication’. Inspite of her success, Aurora, at times, finds herself subject to contradictory criticisms:

“Those artists who were truly in thrall to the West, and spent their careers imitating, to dreadful effect the styles of the great figures of the United States and France, now abused her for ‘parochialism’, while those other artists.....who floundered about in the dead sea of the country’s ancient heritage producing twentieth century versions of the old miniature art (and often secretly, making pornographic fakes of Mughal or Kashmiri art on the side) reviled her just as loudly for “Losing touch with her roots.” (*Moor*-178)

The kind of criticism that condemns an artist for refusing to remain confined within the narrow limits of native tradition has troubled Rushdie. *The Moor’s Last Sigh* continues and deepens his interrogation of the postcolonial myth of cultural authenticity, whose chief representative in the novel is a distasteful character named Raman Fielding. His name itself
reflects the underlying Indian cultural hybridity, his first name is Indian but his last name is British. Inspite of his hybrid name, he is an ultra nationalist, fascistic politician compaigning for the restoration of an aboriginal Indian purity:

“He spoke of a golden age ‘before the invasions’ when good Hindu men and women could roam free. ‘Now our freedom, our beloved nation, is buried beneath the things the invaders have built. This true national is what we must reclaim from beneath the layers of alien empires’.........The invaders would have to be repulsed.”(Moor-299)

It is shown by Rushdie how cultural chauvinism leads to religious violence as an aftermath of demolition of the Muslim temple at Ayodhya, but Raman fielding himself is double-minded on the issue of Indian culture, as shown by his reaction when his followers take his message too literally:

“But when they began, in their guffawing way, to belittle the culture of Indian Islam that lay palimpsest – fashion over the face of Mother India, Main-duck rose to his feet and thundered at them until they shrank back in their seats. Then he would sing ghazals and recite urdu poetry-Faiz,Josh, Iqbal-from memory and speak of the glories of Fatehpur Sikri and the moon-lit splendor of the Taj.”(Moor-299)

If the Hindu fundamentalist Raman Fielding can embrace Islamic elements in his view of Indian culture, Rushdie’s vision is even more inclusive. That explains his decision in The Moor’s Last Sigh to tell a story
of India, not from usual perspective of Hindu and Muslim characters, but from the odd angle of Christians and Jews, smallest minorities in the country. Rushdie has his half-Christian, half-Jewish narrator comment on the strangeness of this approach:

"Christians, Portuguese and Jews; Chinese tiles promoting godless views; pushy ladies, Skirts -not-Sarees, Spanish Shenanigans, Moorish crowns......can this really be India?" (Moor-87)

Moraes, the narrator, even while detailing the division between the Hindus and the Muslims, passionately defends his right to tell a story of India centering on Christians and Jews:

"At such a time of upheaval, of the ruinous climax of divide and rule, is this not the most eccentric of slices to extract from all that life – a freak blond hair plucked from a jet-black (and horribly unravelling) plait? No, sahibzadas, Madams-O: No way. Majority, that mighty elephant, and her side kick, Major-Minority, will not crush my tale beneath her feet. Are not my personages Indian, everyone? Well, then; this too is an Indian yarn." (Moor-87)

Rushdie, far from rejecting European influence in India, seems determined in The Moor's Last Sigh to chronicle the contribution seemingly alien cultural forces have made to Indian civilization. Surely to say, Rushdie makes fun of the tendency of some Indians during the colonial era always to 'take the side of their colonial masters against their fellow natives'. For example, Francisco da Gama, the great-grand father of Moraes rebelled
against the colonial exploitation and told his family: “The British must go.”
His wife Epifania claims that the British Raj has been purely beneficent,
something for which all Indians should be thankful:

“What are we but Empire’s children? British have given us everything, isn’t it?—Civilization, law, order, too much. Even your spices that stink up the house they buy out of their generosity, putting clothes on backs and food on children’s plate. Then why speak of such treason?” (Moor-18)

Epifania’s Anglophilia is too far, but Rushdie is equally critical of the characters who feel that Europeans have nothing to contribute to India.
Rushdie seems particularly disturbed by the way that the heightened nationalism produced by Indira Gandhi’s exercise of emergency powers in 1975 led to a new sense of who belongs to India and who does not:

“After the Emergency people started seeing through different eyes. Before the Emergency we were Indians. After it we were Christian Jews.” (Moor-235)

Rushdie seems to lament the extinction of any Jewish role in India:

“They have almost all gone now, the Jews of Cochin. Less than fifty of them remaining, and the young departed to Israel........It is the last generation; arrangements have been made for the synagogue to be taken over by the state of Kerala, which will run it as a museum........This, too, is an extinction to be mourned; not
an extermination, such as occurred elsewhere, but the end, nevertheless, of a story that took two thousands years to tell.” (Moor-119)

The rich Indian cultural synthesis of both the Eastern and Western traditions sorts out Rushdie’s complex understanding of the relation between multiculturalism and imperialism. He shows how the European Christmas tradition takes on a new meaning in an Indian context. Indeed it is, in some ways, brought closer to its original meaning:

“Christmas, that Northern invention, that tale of stockings, of merry fires and reindeers, Latin carols and O Tannenbaum, of ever green trees and Sante Klaas with his little piccanniny ‘helpers’, is restored by tropical heat to something like its origins, for whatever else the Infant Jesus may or may not have been, he was a hot-weather babe; however poor his manger, it wasn’t cold; and if wise men came.........they came, let’s not forget it, from the East.” (Moor-62)

Yet the tropical warmth is absent from the Christian celebrations in the English community in India:

“Over in Fort Cochin, English families have put up Christmas trees with cotton wool on the branches;..... And there are mince pies and glasses of milk waiting for Santa, and some how there will be turkey on the table tomorrow, yes, and two kinds of stuffing, and even brussel sprouts.” (Moor-62)
Artificiality of the recreation of Christmas by the English in India is symbolised by cotton wool that simulates snow in this warm climate. Later, the very English Reverend Oliver D'Aeth realises the falseness of British position in India:

“Here at Fort Cochin the English had striven mightily to construct a mirage of Englishness, where English bungalows clustered around an English green, where there were Rotarians and golfers and tea-dances and cricket and a Masonic Lodge. But D'Aeth could not help seeing through the conjuring trick.....And when he looked out to sea the illusion of England vanished entirely; for the harbour could not be disguised, and no matter how Anglicised the land might be, it was contradicted by the water.” (Moor-95)

Rushdie seems to discriminate different kinds of imperialism or different forms of European influences in India. As a case in particular in this regard, the English do not try to meet the Indians half-way; they insist on creating a little bit of England in Cochin. They are devoted to avoiding any taint of hybridity and maintaining the purity of their English ways. Rushdie contrasts this attitude with that of the Portuguese Catholics in the da Gama household.

“There are no trees here; instead there is a crib-Joseph could be a carpenter from Ernakulam, and Mary a woman from the tea-fields, and the cattle are water-buffalo, and the skin of the Holy family (gasp!) is rather dark...........No body is shinning down a chimney in this house.” (Moor-63)
This Catholic nativity scene, in contrast to the English Protestant Christmas ceremonies, is an example of real cultural hybridity, as no less than the Holy Family itself goes native. The colonial masters most feared going native and they did all to maintain a life that was separated from that of the local population. What Rushdie views that the British erred in so far as they failed to seek out ways of synthesizing the customs and traditions with those of India. Rushdie presents the da Gama family as more adaptable to local customs and in speech ways, perhaps because the Portuguese presence in India was less massive and less powerful than that of the British. Rushdie in effect makes a similar distinction in his view of Spanish history. The Moorish conquest of Spain led to the development of multicultural community, while the Christian reconquest led to its dissolution and destruction. Through various colonial episodes and approaches, Rushdie avoids the presentation of a monolithic view of imperialism. Though the conscious cultural policies of the British may have been ill-conceived, in some ways they unintentionally left a valuable cultural legacy behind in India. Ably appropriating the colonial culture and making it their own, they could boldly overcome colonial dependency. Francisco da Gama presents the paradox of "a nationalist whose favourite poets were all English" (Moor-32), although in the case of his son Aires, Rushide hints that Anglophilia in India may be a form of escapism:

“Aires da Gama had given up his secret fantasy that the Europeans might one day return to the Malabar Coast, and entered a reclusive retirement during which he set aside his lifelong philistinism to begin a complete reading of the canon of English Literature, consoling himself with the best of the old world for the distasteful mutabilities of history.” (Moor-199)
But Rushdie commends the British for the legacy of their English language, which is the lingua franca of India, amidst a politically charged linguistic divisiveness. Aurora Zogoiby’s words reflect as thus:

“It was at this time, when language riots prefigured the division of the state, that she announced that neither Marathi nor Gujarati would be spoken within her walls; the language of her kingdom was English and nothing but ‘All these different lingos cut us off from one another, she explained. ‘Only English brings us together.’” (Moor-179)

As presented earlier in Midnight’s Children, language has the power to divide India and provoke conflict:

“India had been divided anew, into fourteen states and six centrally-administered ‘territories’. But the boundaries of these states were not formed by rivers, or mountains, or any natural features of the terrain, they were, instead, walls of words. Language divided us;......and in the city of Mumbadevi the language marches grew longer and noisier and finally metamorphosed into political parties.” (MC-225)

In such circumstances, it was natural that the Indians were drawn towards English as a unifying cultural force. And again, on other hand language issue proved itself highly controversial in postcolonial situations, for many arguing that to use the colonial tongue is to betray the cultural integrity of newly independent nation. Like many post-colonial writers,
Rushdie has chosen English writing both to reach an international audience and to speak across the native language barriers in his homeland. In *Imaginary Homelands*, he makes a defence:

"I have become convinced that English is an essential language in India, not only because of its technical vocabularies and the international communications which it makes possible but also simply to permit two Indians to talk to each other in a tongue which neither party hates." *(IH -65)*

Rushdie does not write the King’s English. In *Imaginary Homelands*, he firmly states his linguistic goal: “To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free ” *(IH-17)*. His hybrid linguistic form is heavily influenced by syntax, rhythms and even the vocabulary of various Indian tongues. When he writes of “Kababed saints” and “tandooried martyrs” *(IH-26)* his hybrid prose is revealed. Rushdie’s art celebrates cultural hybridity. Early in *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, as if to demonstrate the cultural appropriation is a two way street, and that the metropolitan heritage is now available for a former colonial to plunder. Rushdie simply lifts a passage almost a verbatim from Kipling’s short story *On the City wall* and makes it his own. The way Rushdie in effect writes over Kipling’s text as he incorporates it into his novel is an example of his central image for cultural hybridity in *The Moor’s Last Sigh* – the Palimpsest. The Indian culture is palimpsestic in nature. New cultural forces do not displace or erase the prior ones, but simply write over them, giving out, culture, that is layered. Rushdie’s layered quality of art gets reflected in Aurora’s painting of *The Moor’s Last Sigh* that has been given alternate version by Vasco-Miranda.
And yet the course of Aurora’s artistic career suggests a final twist in Rushdie’s exploration of problematics of multiculturalism; he raises doubts about the value of cultural hybridity itself. That at least seems to be the burden of the transformation of the Moor figure towards the end of Aurora’s life.

“He appeared to lose, in these last pictures, his previous metaphorical role as a unifier of opposites, a standard-bearer of pluralism, ceasing to stand as a symbol... of the new nation, and being transformed, instead, into a semi-allegorical figure of decay. Aurora had apparently decided that the ideas of impurity, cultural admixture and melange which had been, for most of her creative life the closest things she had found to a notion of the Good, were in fact of capable of distortion and contained a potential for darkness as well as for light. This ‘black Moor’ was a new imagining of the idea of the hybrid......Then slowly he grew phantom like himself... and sank into abstraction--reduced to mercenary status where once he had been a king, he rapidly became a composite being as pitiful and anonymous as those amongst whom he moved.”(Moor-303)

Better return to the use of Spain in the novel, especially, to the vision of the present Spain to understand Rushdie’s meaning of ‘the mercenary status’. In search of his mother’s stolen paintings Moraes comes to the present Spain and encounters a strange simulacrum of the Moorish regime, a hollow echo of its genuine multiculturalism:
"I........ found myself in a most un-Spanish thoroughfare, a 'predestrianised' street full of non-Spaniards.....who plainly had no interest in the siesta or any other local customs. This thoroughfare........was flanked by a large number of expensive boutiques-Gucci, Hermes, Aquascutum, Cardin, Paloma Picasso—and also by eating places ranging from Scandinavian meat ball-vendors to a stars—and—stripes—liveried Chicago Rib Shack. ....I heard people speaking English, American, French, German, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, and what might have been either Dutch or Afrikaans’ .........This denatured part of Benengeli had become theirs. There was not a single Spaniard to be seen. ‘Perhaps these expatriates are the new Moors’.I thought..... perhaps, in another street, the locals are planning a reconquest, and it will all finish when, like our precursors, we are often driven into ships at the port of Cadiz.”(Moor-390)

The history of Moorish Spain, it is found by Moraes, repeats itself in Benengeli, but only according to Marx’s famous formula: “The second time as farce”. Paul A.Cantor says, “This formula came out of Hegel who remarked that ‘all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice........the first as a tragedy, the second as farce.” Rushdie was aware of this formula as seen in Midnight’s Children: “Europe repeats itself, in India as a farce” (MC-221). In The Moor’s Last Sigh, Marx’s idea appears in this form: “A tragedy was taking place all right, a national tragedy on a grand scale but those of us who played our parts were........clowns. Clowns! Burlsque buffoons, drafted into history’s theatre on account of the lack of greater men.”(Moor-352)
It is regarded that Benengeli's multiculturalism is the product of multinational capitalism, the latest form of imperialism. Benengeli is full of displaced persons and acquires cosmopolitan character, especially in terms of languages. But Rushdie finds this particular form of cultural hybridity empty. In his view, the commodity culture of capitalism abstracts from the local, from anything that roots a people in their soil, and substitutes instead a world of false universal brand names, epitomized by the fast-food chains that spring up everywhere and belong nowhere. Human beings are denatured by this commercial cosmopolitanism for it ignores all local customs and dissolves their sense of cultural identity that is always anchored in a larger sense of community. It is this process of dissolution that Rushdie has in mind when he speaks of Aurora’s Moor figure as reduced to mercenary status and becoming, a pitiful and anonymous, ‘composite being’. Cultural hybridity can take the form of a genuine and powerful synthesis of antithetical components, but it can also result in a mere pastiche, whose unity is superficial. When cultural artefacts are treated as pure commodities, they are unified only in the sense of being marketed together. In *The Satanic Verses* Rushdie has already expressed his concern that in the contemporary world “We have a here, a society capable only of pastiche: a ‘Flattened World’.” (SV-261)

As for his celebration of cultural hybridity Rushdie has always worried that it can degenerate into empty forms of amalgamation, in which the elements coalesce only because they have been stripped of all serious content and hence no longer come into conflict in any fundamental way. In *The Satanic Verses* Rushdie eloquently evocates multiculturalism, a sweeping vision of all embracing India, encompassing in fact both East and West, lastly transcending all political boundaries, as a wife tries to match
the universal knowledge of her school teacher husband in her own particular domain:

In those days she had admired his pluralistic openness of mind and struggled, in her kitchen, towards a parallel eclecticism, learning to cook the dosas and uttapams of South India as well as the soft meat balls of Kashmir. Gradually her espousal of the cause of gastronomic pluralism grew into a grand passion and while secularist Sufyan swallowed the multiple cultures of the subcontinent- 'and let us not pretend that Western culture is not present; after these centuries how could it not also be part of our heritage? - his wife cooked, and ate in increasing quantities, its food. As she devoured the highly spiced dishes of Hyderabad and the high-faluting yoghurt sauces of Lucknow her body began to alter........and she began to resemble the wide rolling land mass itself, the sub-continent without frontiers, because food passes across any boundary you care to mention.

(SV-245-46)

The above passage reads like a parody of Rushdie's usual paeans to cultural hybridity. Here multiculturalism becomes a matter of one-stop, full-service menu of Indian cuisine, and the inclusiveness of the vision is literalized in the form of the expanding girth of the cook involved. In this case ethnic differences in cuisine can easily be harmonized only because they have been in effect aestheticized, detached from any roots in a distinct way of life. It is to be noticed that this vision of multicultural cuisine works only because the woman's husband is a secularist. If he were a believing
Muslim, she could not cook him pork, and if he were a practising Hindu, she would not be serving him beef. This example of cultural hybridity works only by ignoring the serious dietary commitments religions often demand from their followers, and thus trivializing the whole issue of food.

In *Midnight’s Children*, Rushdie presents the ‘Eastern-Western’ image of cultural hybridity. It is an Indian cow-boy movie called Gai-Wallah with a distinctive Hindu twist:

“It's hero, Dev, who was not slim, rode the range alone......Gai-wallah means cow-fellow and Dev played a sort of one-man vigilante force for the protection of cows............ He stalked the many herds of cattle which were being driven across the range to the slaughter house, vanquished the cattlemen and liberated the sacred beasts.” (MC-51)

But this seemingly successful fusion of East and West turns to have violent consequences:

“The film was made for Hindu audiences; in Delhi it had caused riots. Muslim Leaguers had driven cows past cinemas to the slaughter, and had been mobbed.” (MC51)

The parallel to the ‘Eastern-western’ in *The Moor’s Last Sigh* is:

“Country and Eastern music, a set of twangy songs about ranches and trains and love and cows with an idiosyncratic Indian twist.” (Moor-209)

The fact is that this genre is invented by a character called Cashondeliveri and nicknamed as Jimmy Cash. He reminds that for all
Rushdie's criticism of capitalism he presents with as one of the driving forces behind multiculturalism in the world today, as economic incentives work to dissolve tribal loyalties and bring about a globalization of culture. As Rushdie shows, cultural hybridity can go only so far; when it runs up against religious fundamentalism, the ability to bring about a larger synthesis comes to a screeching and sometimes violent halt. It is to be noted that even Rushdie's hopeful vision of cultural hybridity in the Indian Christmas in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, the religious dimension introduces an element of serious conflict:

“But there are many Christianities in Cochin, Catholic and Syriac, Orthodox and Nestorian, there are midnight masses where incense chokes the lungs.....there are wars between the denominations, R.C. Vs Syriac and every one agrees the Nestorians are no sort of Christians, and all these warring Christmases, too, are being prepared.”(Moor-62-63)

Aesthetic traditions can be harmonised in a way that religious traditions strongly resist. It is first argued that Rushdie offers multiculturalism as the antidote to religious conflict and later it is said that he views religious conflict as marking the inevitable limit to the success of cultural hybridity. It is never claimed that Rushdie offers a simple solution to the profound problems he raises.

Rushdie has drawn criticism from a variety of postcolonial critics who complain that he fails to come up with positive solutions to the problems of Third World Communities. Of Rushdie's novel *Shame* Ahamad writes:
“Rushdie’s inability to include integral regenerative possibilities within the Grotesque world of his imaginative creation represents... a conceptual flaw of a fundamental kind.”

Fowzia Afzal Khan criticizes Rushdie’s “failure, to construct a viable alternative ideology for himself or for postcolonial society in general.”

Paul A. Cantor quotes Timothy Brennan who argues that Rushdie is “too cosmopolitan to be a true spokesman for postcolonial concerns and ends up contrasting him unfavourably with more genuine representatives of the third world such as Roque Dalton and Obi Egbuna... whose collective versions of fullness and complexity are often foreshortened in the personal filter of Rushdie’s fiction.” It seems that Rushdie’s success with Western critics has compromised him in the eyes of many champions of postcolonial literature.

Rushdie wishes to see people overcome their differences in larger cultural syntheses but he remains troubled that the price of doing so may be the aestheticizing of those differences and the effacing of the fundamental beliefs that really give meaning to life. He explicitly develops the tension between a “pluralist philosophy and fundamental verities” (Moor-272) in the story of Uma Saraswathi in *The Moor’s Last Sigh*. Rushdie worries that the very processes that produce multiculturalism may undermine a people’s sense of community dissolving the basic beliefs that traditionally provided a coherence and solidity to their culture.

In *Midnight’s Children*, Rushdie presented the Indian history as complicated enough on its own, but in *The Moor’s Last Sigh* it is juxtaposed with the Spanish history and created an imaginative hybrid world—"a
Mooristan or Palimpstine" (Moor-226) exploring the complexity of the problem of multiculturalism which may be intertwined with imperialism. He not only criticizes imperialism's imposition of a monolithic, alien culture on the subject people but rejects the postcolonial nationalism. In its understandable reaction against colonial rule, it nevertheless repeats the error of its former masters and seeks to reestablish—or, as it claims, to re-establish—a pure native culture that in Rushdie's eyes can never be more than a convenient fiction. Rushdie celebrates the clash of cultures even when produced by an imperialist encounter, as long as it involves a serious engagement of the cultures and results in a genuine fusion of antithetical traditions, styles, and ideologies—an outcome that he believes is in fact to be expected in such situations. Yet Rushdie cautions against a false hybridity of culture, in which the common currency is literally money and the cultural components are unified only by being reduced to a basket of commodities and thus emptied of all genuine content.

In The Moor's Last Sigh, Rushdie has created a fictional world that mirrors the problematics of postcoloniality, a strange kaleidoscopic universe in which the Indian mythological figures like Siva and Parvati rub elbows with characters out of American popular culture like the Lone Ranger and Tonto, a hybrid landscape in which a Spaniard and an Indian can communicate only because they have seen the same Hollywood Westerns. "Our common language was the broken argot of dreadful American films"(Moor-385). Given the hardships of navigating through such uncanny terrain, it is no accident that Rushdie closes The Moor's Last Sigh with a fading vision of the dream of cultural synthesis, with a distant glimpse of what in the end may amount to no more than castles in Spain.
"The Ahambra, Europe’s red fort, sister to Delhi’s and Agra’s — the palace of interlocking forms and secret wisdom, of pleasure courts and water gardens, that monument to a last possibility that nevertheless has gone on standing, long after its conquerors have fallen; like a testament......to that most profound of our needs, to our need for flowing together, for putting an end to frontiers, for the dropping of the boundaries of the self. Yes, I have seen it an oceanic plane, though it has not been given to me to walk in its noble courts. I watch it vanish in the twilight and its fading it brings tears to my eyes.”
(Moor-433)

Next Gita Hariharan’s The Ghosts of Vasu Master(1994) is discussed. The colonizing powers had evolved an educational system and teaching methodology that established the cultural hegemony of the colonizer and devalued systematically our country’s own natural resources in writing and reading. The ‘universal’ (western) model of reading sensibilities is expected from the Indian learners. The teacher as well as the student knows that it is impossible. However all our classroom efforts are directed toward exacting the English sensibilities. This effort is extended even to the experiential plane. We tend to universalise the experiences depicted by English writers as universal human condition. Eurocentric literatures become models of all human interaction. For example, love in Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet, evil in Iago, child labour in Charles Dickens’ Oliver Twist are shown as universalised experiential planes as if one does not find these situations in other literatures or societies. As a result, all our valued philosophy, rich culture and wonderful techniques of writing are marginalised. Our learners, being taught in the class rooms of western thought processes and ideas, have
become half-believers in our socio-cultural thought systems. Basically our mindset should be decolonized.

The English text has come to be complicit with colonisation by the master narratives of Europe’s dominant discourse. Tiffin admits:

“If text was to be the strategy of colonization, it is only natural that the text should also be the site of post-colonial dissent and that post-colonial energies should be directed to the dismantling of the master narratives of Europe through indigenous alternatives.”

Gita Hariharan in her novel The Ghosts of Vasu Master (1994) has employed the oriental narratives—of story-telling and teaching—a post colonial attempt to step out of the structures of dominating knowledge. Through her embedding of her search for alternative in what Buchanan has called ‘Cultures of totality’ (TGVM-145), the novel The Ghosts of Vasu Master seems to be an exploration of the possibility of an indigenous dissent. These ‘cultures of totality’ become available to the protagonist Vasu Master when he owns up to the ghosts of his ‘Tamil speaking subhuman’ past after a life time’s wrestle with colonial education. The first ghost is that of ‘the unexpected opinionated guest’, his father, the ayurvaid whose unquestioned faith in native knowledge systems co-exists with an undisguised fascination for Shakespeare, is a true denizen of this culture of totality. The two women in Vasu Master’s life, his grandmother and his wife Mangala have the password to the occult universe of myth and magic. Partha Chatterjee says: “The women’s unobstructed entry into tradition—lost to Vasu Master—is courtesy, their role as guardians of the sovereign inner realm of spirituality and created by nationalism’s new patriarchy.”
Vasu is prevented from participating in either knowledge system — of healing or story telling—partly because he inherits neither the substance nor the language of Ayurveda. But more so because what is in his culturally secure father a harmony, had bifurcated in Vasu as a sharply defined polarity. Interpreting them as either or binaries, he opts for the liberal humanism of Shakespeare to the archaic traditionalism of slokas and rasayanams. For this reason, the pre-colonial, incorporating change within tradition—Shakespeare within the Vedas—becomes the site for post colonial resistance while colonialism grapples with dualism. Vasu can get reentry into the arcane wisdom of India only by excor-cising his colonial masters and making peace with the ghosts of pre-colonial Indian past. Shakespeare, in the colonialist imagination, was the master text almost made to bear the sole burden of imperialist pretensions to universality and to deny native culture’s claims to human status. Vasu Master says:

“Shakespeare is the poet of HUMANITY, my father would often roar, tweaking my ears if my attention wandered, as I am ashamed to say it did sometimes, especially in the year of Rita-Mona. His hand twisting and turning, his face full of fearful threats, he would scream at me, O, most surely humanity was Shakespeare’s peculiar mission! I would struggle against the thick, rough fingers that held my ear captive. Like a little worm that refuses to grow butterfly’s wings, I would resist entry into the world of humanity. I was quite happy to be a Tamil-speaking sub-human.” (TGVM-20)

Vasu Master’s choice of Shakespeare over the five other tomes comprising his father’s eclectic library spells the triumph of liberal
humanism over the indigenous legacy of Charaka, Shushruta and the Vedas. It also signifies the victory of formal institutionalised schooling over the gurukula. "Modernity posited as a binary choice in opposition to tradition and as synonymous with westernisation, comes from the colonial’s inability to opt for a change that can be defined within tradition."54 On seeing in cultures a balance between ‘personal’ and ‘impersonal’, Tariq Banuri, attacks “the modern western world’s separation and hierarchisation of the two which he terms the postulate of modernity.”55 The assumption that “impersonal relations are inherently superior to personal relations” underlying theories of progress and modernisation has resulted in relegating societies characterised by personalised relations to primitivism. Gita Hariharan examines some areas of colonial culture predicated on the impersonality postulate—schooling and education, medicine and writing—by juxtaposing them with the oriental or non-western or colonised imaginings of the same-----based on the ‘personal’ map. Unnatural privileging of the impersonal causes asymmetry in modern culture and Hariharan seeks to replace this dichotomy with the notion of a tension or a dialectic between the two.

Gita Hariharan establishes a homologous relationship between medicine and teaching while making story-telling pivotal to both thus playing upon the body/mind link in traditional thought. Her interest in knitting together her concern for alternatives in healing and writing of the Orient is reflected in the choice of Mani, who is medically considered abnormal, as Vasu Master’s new pedagogic challenge.

“The knowledge systems underlying the Western medicine and education are what Stephen A.Marglin has termed as episteme in contrast techne to the knowledge of traditional systems.”56 He underlines the role of
formal schooling in the acquisition of episteme (impersonal knowledge). This adds further support to Banuri's notion of impersonal educational theory's separation between the content of education and the personality of the participants in the interest of efficiency. In the same way, the mind-body dualism that marks modern medicine makes it part of epistemic knowledge analytic rather than indecomposable. Both the institutions—medical and educational—respond to Mani's singular ailment with the characteristic assertion of the superiority of the impersonal in the novel The Ghosts of Vasu Master-- the doctor's prescribed nurses, schools for normalcy and sedatives for violence and stimulating injections for placidity. The school has dismissed Mani's condition as a special problem.

"We don't know what's wrong with him and we can't give him special attention they said. It's not our job. Mani disturbs the class. Do you expect us to put him before the rest? We must maintain standards. And discipline." (TGVM-11)

If impersonality postulates that the substance of the knowledge must reside outside the body of the participants, the symbolic function of the text, the blackboard, the brick and mortar structure, examinations, class room in education and X-ray and lab reports in medicine cannot be underestimated. Modern medicine decomposes the patient as a person and gives priority to the laboratory reality of the person in preference to his personal realities. Doctors, who consider disease as purely somatic, fail to diagnose the psychosomatic parameters of Vasu's ailment. In his father, the ayurved's 'relational universe', there is only one form of illness, the psychsomatic.

"My father then was no ordinary healer. His powers were directed at the food that made the body; the body
that made the mind; the mind that made the unique, whole individual, the carrier of the spirit." (TGVM-21)

Banuri views that “the hallmarks of modern colonial episteme—impersonal relations and objective verification—are placed against the web of personal relationships that constitute the essence of knowledge of traditional oriental societies.” As regards the cure of his niece Shakuntala, the Ayurvaids asserts the primacy of the dyadic relationships:

“Does the doctor who prescribed these white yellow and pink pills know anything about you? How can he cure you then?(TGVM-15)

The psychological disorder of depression has been remedied with the inculcation of the will power. That is the ayurvaids has prepared her to die easily.

“She did not have the time or will power to confront the cause. But I prepared her, he said. I saw the way she had to go, and I eased the journey. That is all I can do.”(TGVM-16)

Yet, when confronted with, Vasu Master is “foolish enough to fall back on the usual props of an institutionalised system designed as an instrument of disciplining a subject population.”

Vasu Master is reminded of the alternative based on the personal map only when Mani’s response turns all his PG tricks on their head.

“For some reason, I thought of my first slokam lesson. My teacher had been only my father, whose house I lived
in and whom I saw every day. But the occasion had been tinged with ceremony. I had given him a plate of betel leaves, nuts, and a shining silver coin" (TGVM-12)—a characteristic feature of the oriental societies.

Here "there is a canonical way of transmitting techne, through the personal nexus between parent and child." The ancient oriental gurukala has, as its basis, a direct personal relation between the teacher and the student; the interest of the teacher not being limited to the subject matter, but also in the welfare of the student as a complete person.

"The school was not made of brick and mortar. It was made of something natural, an intimate relationship between teacher and taught in a home of solitude and silence." (TGVM-198-199)

In this teacher-centred system of the oriental where the teacher used to be thought of as indispensable to knowledge "the master's example more than any precept instructs the apprentice, who absorbs unconsciously what he is taught"

"In this living relationship, the pupil imbibed the inward methods of the teacher, the secrets of his mind and the spirit of his life and work, all too subtle to be taught. The pupil belonged to the teacher, not to the institution of stone and mud. Learning was a lifelong task, not a brief sojourn in an exotic artificial place." (TGVM-199)
"The practical nature of the techne reinforces the identity between theory and practice—unlike 'the class room and examination' that 'divide theory and practice.'" 61

Gita Hariharan, in her novel The Ghosts of Vasu Master, shows the convergence of the discipline of medical system Ayurveda and that of teaching striving for the art of living. In the words of Vasu's father 'Ayur' is life and ayurveda is 'The science of life'. Vasu bluntly criticises the colonial system of text books and examinations which have no contact with the life-experiences as found in the east.

"Perhaps no school, no teacher can assume responsibility for the learning that should stretch across the entire lifetime of the pupil. But then how do you weave a web that links and transfigures each line of experience, every point, into one of learning? (TGVM-26)

Vasu Master derives the conclusion akin to that of his father after the investigation into the meaning of pedagogy. To be a teacher, the snake informs the mouse who wanted to be a teacher:

"You have to first become a judge, an ideologue, a priest and a doctor." (TGVM-29)

But the clinching task enjoined upon the pupil by the tutor underlines the centrality of the personal in traditional knowledge systems.

"Now comes the really difficult part. You must grow a womb that nurtures, then delivers."(TGVM-30)
The colonial models of education meant for British lower classes are proved unsuitable to deal with the learned classes of India who have their native deep-rooted systems of learning. There has been a divorce between lived experience and education in the colonies. The colonial curricula were formulated by the impulse to control and dominate the colonised. Oppositions to imperialist cultural hegemony have often come through the dismantling of the canonical texts of imperialism and the building of counter canons. The indigenous legacy of the ancient oriental physicians such as Charaka, Sushruta, Gandhi and Visnu Sarma are counterpoised against the authoritative texts of colonial education, medicine and narrative. But Gita Hariharan’s objective of counter canonisation goes beyond curricular revision. As texts were made synechdochically to represent cultural values and ideas, canon-busting encompasses the entire post-colonial project of interrogating the bases scaffolding the western canon. What is at stake is not the relative value of the text but the criteria for valorisation.

Gauri Viswanathan mentions the “inferiorisation of the narratives of the colonised through the application of ethnocentric criteria, measured against which oriental tales were found wanting in moral values and the language of oriental knowledge systems dismissed as superstition.” Gita Hariharan retrieves the archives of native story-telling, teaching and medicine not so much to discover in them traits which the West uses to legitimise its claims to superiority but to establish them as products of ‘cultures of totality’ outside the imperium.

She has also called attention to the politics of foreclosing oriental literatures to natives on grounds of their perceived immorality. Hariharan’s replication of one such text banned for ‘immorality and impurity’—Visnu Sarma’s Panchatantra—in narrative and pedagogy directly, addresses the
issue of imperialist textual hegemony and explores the possibility of discovering narrative and pedagogic alternatives to dominate hegemonic discourse. Gita Hariharan engages with the status of fable in the west at both levels—“as a tale lacking in moral values and as a tale produced by a ‘childish’ mind.” To counter the first she concentrates on the traditional gnomic function of the fable. To reply to the second she established the Panchatantra as a prose narrative of unparalleled sophistication predating the novel by several centuries. The two aspects of story-telling coalesce in the sense that the aesthetic differences of indigenous narratives accrue from the overt didacticism of art in traditional societies.

Vasu Master, a patient man, accepts the challenge of dealing with the education of imbecile Mani. He discovers that the conventional education as inherited from the colonial masters is inadequate in ‘awakening the intelligence’. It is a pity to note that in the present day India, the school going children, are made just to memorise the matter in their tender brains with cramming of lots of information or knowledge without any practical or laboratory experience.

Knowledge is measured in terms of marks and ranks in this age of rat-race competition and cut-throat civilization. The essence of life is being lost. Gaining knowledge by experiencing real-life situations has become a mirage. In such a system of education, children are deprived of the full blossoming into integrated personalities.

Just like Visnu Sarma who is absolutely confident of discovering ‘a system of education suited to the unlettered princes’ (Sons of King Amar Sakti) – a short cut for attaining mastery over the wide expanse of political and practical wisdom. After groping for two months and twenty four lessons, Vasu Master hits upon the same system during which Mani (the
silent pupil) unfolds to him the uselessness of the colonial legacy of schooling based on class-room, text, note books and caning, and the principle of discipline of don’t’s. Mani’s tearing of text books is symbolic of the demolition of the filters of book, pencil, black-board without which Vasu Master had at last dealt with Standard 6B of P.G.School. As Chandra Rajan points out in her ‘Introduction’ to her translation of the Panchatantra:

"Vishnu Sarma’s objective is not providing formal instruction in polity and allied branches of knowledge and learning, using perhaps traditional methods of which learning by rote of definitions, precepts, illustrations........" 64

but to ‘awaken the intelligence’ (as against awakening the mind in the other systems). Vishnu Sarma’s objective is skimming of the essential from “the deadwood that forms a good part of all academic curricula in all systems of education”65 just as how “the noble bird, the swan, extracts milk from the water it is mixed in”. He teaches his disciples “how to think, not what to think.”66 He chooses to instruct them in the art of living by packing in real life situations and problems in the guise of stories. There is no place for book and rote learning. On the same line Vasu Master instructs Mani through the device of story-telling at which the later spontaneously responds:

“Stories seemed to soothe Mani. It mattered very little what they were about since he showed no sign of understanding them. But when I first filled up the silence between nonsense about animals and forests, his mark of defiant imperviousness slipped and he sat chin-cupped in
both hands elbows on the table, watching my face.”
(TGVM-77)

Once the mind has been trained to think, it can unravel a variety of entangled subjects presented as stories ‘to gain a sense of the world’. Then only one can exercise practical wisdom in both public and private affairs and discovers oneself in terms of one’s intellectual powers. Just as Visnu Sarma provided the unlettered princess guidelines for public and private conduct and equipped them for their future office as kings, Vasu Master prepared Mani for his destiny. He correctly diagnoses Mani’s problem as that of integrating and adopting himself to the reality of the world around him rather than reading and writing. Life and its divergent experiences form the text book. By rejecting not only the usual props of colonial schooling but also the monotony of ‘the ums and ahas at the end of every line (of the slokams)’ that had lulled Vasu Master into ‘a dull stupor’, Hariharan’s is not a simple opposition of the dominant with the ‘other’. It is a search for an ‘other’ to the dominant hegemonic as well as dominant non-hegemonic discourse-to Western schooling as well as ossified eastern tradition.

Vasu Master becomes the mouth-piece of the inherited wisdom of several ancient masters. Hariharan imbues the negative appellation “Vasu Master”- a provincialism popular in local schools – with positive overtones. Having suggested the dominating / dominated paradigm of colonialism, Hariharan reverses the equation by positing ‘mastery’ of knowledge in the body of the dominated which, in turn, invokes the authority of masters of a (non) dominating knowledge. Master as a synonym for guru or swami, however, exists outside the power relations of imperialism. The erasure of name and appellation as in Vasu Master’s consciousness reflecting his identification with the role, provides the impetus for the novel’s enquiry into
the meaning of guruhood. The essence of the master as guru is traced in the guru’s surrender to an anonymous body of knowledge instead of staking claims to individual authority as in the Western episteme.

“All gurus...whether they are teachers or godmen have to renounce their individual names; shed chunks of their personal histories. They become a part of a collective spirit that connects them forever with their disciples. For this reason gurus receive powerful appellations such as Swami and Master.” (TGVM-161)

Vasu Master’s comparison between the colonial ‘Puppet Master’ (a person who seeks to control others) with the teacher/guru who is likened to an umbrella sheltering his pupils, underlines the difference between knowledge as power and its opposite. Vasu Master opts to affirm his allegiance to an anonymous collective legacy sanctified by traditional authority rather than individualistic innovativeness associated with Western knowledge. Vasu’s doctor-father emphasizes the continuity of traditional knowledge systems when he challenges everchanging nature of scientific truth.

“What is science? It is an annual refutal of what you believed the year before? Ayurveda says there is only one science: a store-house of knowledge true for all time; universal and absolute; and without constant need for replenishment.” (TGVM-180)

So his belief that ‘ayurveda will survive the whiteman’s rule’, is free of any boast of personal ‘mastery’. To be a master is, in fact, to disavow all-
claims to 'mastery' for the 'true teacher' never forgot that he did not know all the answers'.

Lastly, in the chapter, the discussion on sexuality as viewed by the recent Indo-Anglian writers is presented taking into consideration the texts such as Khuswant Singh's *The Company of Women* (1999), Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) and Raj Kamal Jha's *The Blue Bedspread* (1999). The Indo-Anglian novelists of the nineties exhibit an eccentric voice in so far as they turned to free play of imagination in respect of sexuality, which almost reflects the western cultural philosophy of sex. The very leaning of Indians turning to Western themes and locations is suggestive of postcoloniality. That means that there has not been complete decolonization for they still stick on to Western concepts. The contemporary times present an unheroic hero with multiple subterranean conflicts and emotions endowed with suppressed libido. Sexuality is considered in terms of freedom from hegemonic sexual politics and love laws of patriarchal societal conditioning. Shobha De frenziedly forages for the erotica in her novels and bestows on femmes fatales a bestial lust that mockingly upsets the apple-cart of traditional conventions. Her heroines are combative socialite women to whom mutual fidelity in marriage is replaced by sexual freedom. She says, "The very fact that sex is no longer the most dreaded and despised three-letter word in India, is enough cause to celebrate."67 In fact sex has become "the bedrock of all relationships."68 The sexual behaviour of De's women almost borders on amoral and abnormal. Their sexual encounters range from unlimited multiple sex to lesbianism, masturbation, sodomy, fellatio, cunnilingus and homosexuality. De's fictional world is described as "Beastly Beautitude."69 Age-old sexual taboos and love laws are broken. Sexless existence is bound to leave a scar on men and women in the fiction of Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, R.K.Jha, Salman Rushdie,
Khuswant Singh and Shashi Deshpande. It leads to restless feeling and disenchantment which culminates in identity crisis – the crisis of growing up and deciding as to what one is and is going to be. Particularly, Shobha De's women insist on to obtain social acceptance for a free expression of their libido. They think, talk and act sex crossing over the phallocentric sexual politics. They project their passions on to the others as a female power play in order to deconstruct male ago. S.P. Swain says, “Pornography in De’s novels becomes a symptom and symbol of the female defiance of a male-regulated female sexuality.” Besides, sexual promiscuity as adopted by the woman-protagonists seems to be a circumstantial necessity for survival in this world of injustices and hegemonies.

Khuswant Singh in his latest novel The Company of Women (1999) presents sex not only in the form of infantile as well as senile fantasies but also as a redeeming factor. For his protagonist, Mohan Kumar “Sex is important. When denied it becomes more important. The body’s needs come above religious taboos and notions of morality.” Sex is his food. He lives for it and dies of it. He suffers from voyeurism and exhibitionism just like a sexual psychopath. For him lust is the foundation of love. Mohan is convinced that occasional adultery does not destroy a marriage. Sex is one of the primary forces in human nature. It does not solely express itself in physical gratification but finds many indirect expressions. Almost everything we do has a sexual characteristic. Sex is a part of our total personality. The idea that sex refers to some animal instinct is a narrow one. Sexual activity removes dreariness and dullness. Premarital sex has become a usual phenomenon like the interest men take in business trends or new automobiles. People often argue that to put off sex until marriage is a middle-class convention.
In The Company Of Women, “Marriage does not guarantee sexual satisfaction” to the lustful sex hero, Mohan Kumar. So, he masters the art of womanising. His sexual encounters with women of all sorts make him a victim of AIDS. Like all men he becomes afraid of death. But what is more so is his fear of an ignoble death and the stigma that is attached to it. He tells his physician, “Doctor, everyone will get to know I have AIDS. I will be treated as a pariah. How will I face the world! What will my children think of me!” (CW-291). Existential crisis begins. He chooses to spare his children from dishonour by ending his life. He does not want them to suffer from the fact that their parent had died of AIDS. Mohan Kumar himself is responsible for his eventful life. However he probes into his crisis and introspects. It is a search for peace and perfection that Mohan fumbles for in his life. He did not have a mother to fit into the role model of an ideal for him. It is the quest for a perfect and an ideal woman in life who never really exists. The Ganges in Haridwar appears to him an ideal woman. He feels that the Ganges is his spiritual mother. The Oedipal basis of Mohan’s emotional development is made clear. Indeed, now that he knows that the Ganga is his mother. In her company his ‘lecherous instincts’(CW-188) are subdued. When his father dies Mohan holds the urn in his arms and waves it so that "Pitachi will catch the aarti one more time with his son" (CW-200). At this moment he feels at peace with himself and the world. The night when Mohan Kumar coughs out blood, only two images come to his mind, the image of his father and the Ganga. He seeks refuge in Ganga and Gayatrimantra. Perhaps this is all that he can possibly do. Thus Mohan Kumar’s odyssey is a journey from the outer mundane sexual world of restlessness and confusion into the inner spiritual world of self-realisation. Rediscovering one’s cultural roots is a feature of postcoloniality. It is again the conquest of the hegemonic western theme of free sex by the
marginalised native ethos that gets materialised in the experiential plane of
the narrative.

For Arundhati Roy, sex ceases to be a private matter. She seems to
have proclivity for the publicization of sexuality. All her references to sex in
the novel The God of Small Things (1997) often degenerate into gentle and
soft vulgarity. They probe the reasons for one’s behaviour, moods and
attitudes. Her sexual descriptions probably reflect Foucault’s words:
“Everything that might concern the interplay of innumerable pleasures,
sensations, and thoughts which through the body and the soul had some
affinity with sex”.73 For her the act of sex is “not a furtive reality that is
difficult to grasp but a great surface network in which the stimulation of
bodies”74 and the intensification of pleasures are a means of self-exploration
and self-actualisation. Confession of sexuality is not only an act of
contravening the law and morality but an imperative feminine need to
transform her sexual desire into discourse, and to analyse the feminine body
“as the site of a complex focus of social meanings.”75 She insinuates sex
and suggests more than what she literally describes. She describes erotic
love between Velutha and Ammu in The God of Small Things:

She unbuttoned her shirt. They stood there. Skin to skin.
Her brownness against his blackness. Her softness
against his hardness. Her nut-brown breasts (that wouldn’t
support a toothbrush) against his smooth ebony chest...
She pulled his head down towards her and kissed his
mouth. A cloudy kiss.....He kissed her back.....She could
feel herself through him. Her skin.....She felt him shudder
against her. His hands were on her haunches........pulling
her hips against his, to let her know how much he wanted her.” (GOST-335)

She describes Ammu’s private parts:

“He kissed her eyes. Her ears. Her breasts. Her belly. Her seven silver stretchmarks from her twins. The line of down that led from her navel to her dark triangle, that told him where she wanted him to go. The inside of her legs, where her skin was softest. The carpenter’s hands lifted her hips and an untouchable tongue touched the innermost part of her. Drank long and deep from the bowl of her.”(GOST-337)

Without sex femininity is not complete, it has no meaning. In this context it won’t be erroneous to say that Arundhati Roy toes the line of post-war women writers. Catherine Mac Kinnon argues: “Socially, femaleness means femininity, which means attractiveness, which means sexual availability on male terms.”

Roy describes sex as a process in which “women come to identify themselves as sexual beings, as beings that exist for men.” They expose themselves to masculine force in a bid to satiate their feminine sexual urges, even at times resorting to oral sex:

Ammu, naked now, crouched over Velutha, her mouth on his......She slid further down, introducing herself to the rest of him. His neck. His nipples. His chocolate stomach. She sipped the last of the river from the hollow of his navel. She pressed the heat of his erection against her eyelids. She tasted him, salty, in her mouth. He sat
up drew her back to him. She felt his belly tighten under her, hard as a board. She felt her wetness slipping on his skin. He took her nipple in his mouth and cradled her other breast in his calloused palm.... she guided him into her." (GOST-336)

The graphic pictorial and poetic descriptions of sexual organs and the mode of coitus become valuable artistically since to Arundhati Roy good sex becomes a matter of aesthetics and not ethics. It is a taste and an experience and not virtue and morality. According to Rosemarie Tong pornography in The God of Small Things is "not so much about sex per se as about male power exerted against females in the context of heterosexual relations." 78

Arundhati Roy has artistically carried off the socially banned sexual expressions into the realm of fun, frolic and romance through her poetic prose. She depicts good sex, "vanilla sex—that is gentle," "touchy feely," side-by-side. In this sense it won't be wrong to call Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things a feminist writing that offers a powerful expression of sexual experience in a social framework.

In Raj Kamal Jha's novel The Blue Bedspread (1991) abuse, incest, pain and violence are voiced authentically expressing the internal sensibility of a culture, that is enervated, exhausted and joyless to the very edge—yielding a positive life affirmation instead of expected cynicism. In the face of domestic violence and tyranny perpetrated by drunken father, the motherless children, younger brother and elder sister, grip each other physically and lie on the bed at night and get solace in incest—love trapped in fear.
"...........my sister and I went with this little secret game. She was fourteen, I was ten...........touched each other in what then we thought were the wrong places. And it was this daily theatre of pleasure and fear, played out on our blue bedspread, that carried us as if on a wave from one night to the next." 79

May be sister and brother get comforted and solaced in each other's existence. Father, having discovered the secret game of incest between son and daughter, develops a barbarous uncivilized sexual emotions—a kind of avenging his son and hence resorts to sexual violence on his son which is considered a primitive act.

Sexual perversity/aberration is presented in its barest reality. In the part "sister", R.K.Jha presents the talk of four working women who chit-chat of their mothers-in-law. The fourth woman says of her mother-in-law’s sexual perversity which is very nasty and unimaginable at the core.

"............far away in my bed room, lying along side my mother-in-law, our bodies wrapped around each other, she between my legs wiping away, with her lips and her tongue, what ever traces lie of the intruder:her son, my husband."(BB-146)

This act of mother-in-law is symbolic of Oedipus complex—mother desiring son. The speaker here fears social ethics and simply laughs it away saying that it is all a girl’s talk. The narrator, at the stage of his adolescence, describes his sexual encounter of caressing or foreplay with his finger, after inserting his finger deep into the vagina of his dear love-girl who too gives the same response.
“I slide my fingers deep, through the warmth, through the wetness. And when they slip in, I write I L-O-V-E Y-O-U on the inner wall inside her, letter by letter”..... She writes too: I L-O-V-E Y-O-U T-O-O on the terrycotton fabric of my trousers......stretched tightly over my hardness.” (BB-189).

Sexuality is looked upon not in terms of true love as envisaged in our sacred books but in terms of lust which is again a Western theme. In the fit of blind passion the adolescent love girl of the narrator resorted to the cruelty of injecting sedative to her mother and made her sleep. Meanwhile they resort to sex undisturbed and silent. There has crept in the minds of lovers the idea of crime just for sex. The description of sexual encounter almost borders on yellow journalism.

“And one evening, we don’t meet outside her college but go straight to her house. I hold her mother while she injects her with something.......Mother kicks, mother screams, I push her hand in her mouth, she bites hard, I stifle my scream it doesn’t matter, it has to be done, the traffic drowns the noise as my Princess takes the scalpel from her leather bag and I turn my face away while she does what has to be done. It’s all over in just under thirty minutes, even the dressing, the cotton guaze drenched in disinfectant, wrapped like a blind fold, Mother fast asleep. ............We tear at each other’s clothes, our love mixes with our crime, dissolves, like an ice cube out of the freezer in the smell of her bed sheet, the musical clock on
her wall, the mercurochrome stains on her fingers......My princess next to me, undisturbed.” (BB-193)

The fulfilled love between the narrator and the dear love girl seems a mirage reflective of the lack of true love in the post-colonial times.

“So will you marry me?” I ask ‘Let’s see, ‘She says. We never met again.” (BB-197)

The narrator’s love was just dreamed off. It was a scene he had squeezed into fiction now, best played out only in his mind. His unfulfilled love had driven him to fulfill incest with his sister which resulted in the birth of the child to which he tells as thus:

“For if she had said yes that night, if we lived in a house with a garden in front, I might never have been in this neighbourhood, I wouldn’t have been here when your mother came on that April night, you wouldn’t have come to this city.” (BB-198)

In the last chapter “Eight words” the narrator confesses to the skies above the Eden Gardens “I am the father of my sister’s child” (BB-226)

R.K.Jha's The Blue Bedspread throws light on the dark, swadeshi throb of Indi-porn. He reveals the flipside of the most enduring of myths, the strong bonds that keep the average Indian middle class family together. Indi-porn is exotic, erotic and ecstatic. The detailed scenes have visceral quality. The novel represents sexually repressed society such as ours. In fact it is not obviously pornographic. On the other hand, it exposes a form of love that is so sublime as to completely destroy one of the partners in the enterprise; as ever it is the woman. If Jewish-American authors purvey sex
and guilty, Anglo-Saxons sex and class conflict, the Indo-Anglian novelists specialise in sex and taboo. Jha selfconsciously seeks out the most shocking of taboos, such as incest, sodomy and certain abnormal libidinal complexes in his delicately textured textile-ridden universe—the Blue Bedspread. Though he appears to be telling us something about the way that families hang together what he is actually saying is what street urchins in Mumbai know when they use the B-word at every human who crosses their path.

Jeevan Kumar says the novel casts everything into the realm of the arbitrary: “the story it unfolds, the fictional world it seems to construct and the truth that the narrator laboriously attempts to reveal. In the fictional world of the novel, reality gets transmuted through the gaps in the narrative and the shifts to which it is subjected as the narrator constructs and reconstructs the world he creates. At the core of the novel, there is the unreliability of the narrative voice and the instability of the written word and that it poses a question if a narrative could present reality or truth in an authoritative way.”

The novel, beginning in an eerily original situation, wherein, the narrator is writing something late at night for the one day old baby. The truth about this man and the child would be revealed as the act of writing moves on to completion. However during the process of writing what is written gets dissembled. The fictional world constructed by the narrator is destabilised by contradictions, plurality and mise-en-abyme. What emerges through the narrative is a nebulous limbo of the fictional world where revelation and falsification merge beyond recognition. It becomes an amorphous world of illusions and indeterminacies as envisaged by Romen Ingarden: “In the case of fictional worlds it is always as if a beam of light
were illuminating a part of region, the reminder of which disappears in an indeterminate cloud but is still there in its indeterminacy.⁸¹

Plurality permeates the narrative. The novel is a multitude of stories and the narrator is eager to “get over with these stories” (BB-2). The presence of single narrator and the limitations of points of view ensuing from such a situation are deftly overcome by Jha by providing the narrator with multivalent voices which grant him unlimited freedom of narration.

Sudden shift of focus is given on the child. Before narrating the child’s present immediate past and giving hints concerning its identity, the narrator gives a picture of its future in an imaginative leap as he feels that the child will once be puzzled by its own self. It will face the question “Who am I?” (BB-3) a query the narrator would like to evade in his own case. Right from the beginning, in a mood of self-denial, the narrator refuses to tell his name and even hints about his appearance. Again, after narrating how he came to know of his sister’s death, how he takes the child home just for a night, the narrative moves on to the future: “Before we make up from first trip to the past, let us go to the future, to a day, many years from now” (BB-15). Time-shifts reflect between different notions of reality and truth. However, the child’s self is embedded in the stories he is going to write for they are the answer to her future question regarding her identity. Thus, the child’s self, the building blocks of which are the stories that could be read and interpreted in multifarious ways, is pluralistic or fluid just like the self of the narrator himself. During the act of writing, the selves of the child and the narrator evolve and the position of the narrator and the child, their place in the social order, is constituted.

“Truth is presented or revealed through the silent act of writing” (BB-4). Due to the unrealibility of the narrative truth mutates, thus
subverting itself and the narrative. The plurality of the narrative and the truth revealed merge into the structure of the novel. The stories narrated have no finality of time and space: "At a different time, may be at a different place, I would have told you other stories" (BB-47). Flitting back and forth, the narrative moves in zig-zag manner turning to "seemingly predictable paths and then swerve sharply sideways" (BB-4). Told and retold stories are displaced from the realm of the real and flung into that of the arbitrary. The novel reveals the story in bits and pieces here and there and remains silent over certain details, thus forming a mise-en-abyme of the whole narrative. Later the narrator says that he could take the child to his study and put it "on the stack of pages that have been written" (BB-90). He has actually presented the child—its story—on the above said stack of pages, thus creating another mise-en-abyme.

Truth lies in between his various stories. "And remember, my child, your truth lies some where in between" (BB-6). That is truth/reality is outside the narrative. The narrator is trying to construct the 'truth' regarding the child and himself, not merely disclosing it. "Truth is made rather than found" (BB-5). His attempt to divulge truth emanates from the act of construction similar to the building up of truth. Identity remains hidden. A man appears in his sister's recurring dream. His identity remains hidden just like that of the narrator. The man in the dream paints her picture but she can't see his face. This painter seems to identify with the narrator himself for his narrative presents a portrait of his sister in words. The narrator's identity is tugged on to his sister; he is presented through the novel with reference to her, just as the painter is known by his painting. Moreover, the painter is shifting her from the world of reality to the world of art while the narrator from the world of reality to the world of fiction. Thus the dream functions as another mise-en-abyme which mirrors the act of writing.
The title "The Blue Bedspread" hints at the cosmos, the unfathomable. "The bed spread with its sky, clouds and stars provides an illusion in the light of the table lamp" (BB-55). Incest is presented—defamiliarised—as the "Theatre of pleasure and fear, played out on our blue bedspread---" (BB-56-57). The narrator experiences the brutality of homosexuality by his father and this darkens the sky and the bed lamp is not switched on that night. Darkness and fear make the brother and sister cling to each other, sinking further into the abyss of incest. The act of homosexuality, which the narrator reports his father to have committed, is made to lose its finality. It may be just this way or that way. Jha attempts to "unsettle the reader's sense of reality" (BB-7) by problematisation of reality—a strategy of postmodernist fiction. This episode of homosexuality which seems to be crucial, is later brought into the ambit of plurality, thus making the narration of this event unreliable:

"That night happened more than twenty five years ago, I have embellished father's heavy breathing, my muffled screams, with adjectives in my mind. I have made father's trousers black at one time, blue at another, changed that rainy evening to a hot summer morning". (BB-62)

This event's certainty is further blurred when the narrator tells that on certain rain-swept nights he imagines his father standing outside, whom he would like to ask to step inside: "I want to tell him that what happened happened and it's been selfish of me to keep using him as an excuse for failures of my making. Or as a subject of my prose" (BB-63). The reader begins to doubt whether the homosexual act committed by the narrator's father was a fabulation, an attempt to alleviate the gravity of the narrator's
incest. Referring to this, the narrator says that the movements he and his sister spent together on the blue bedspread "were key to our survival and yet better left untouched and unsaid" (BB-63). Anyhow nothing could be certain in the fluid world of The Blue Bed-Spread; everything might or might not have happened. The narrative - constructed events turn out to be unreal; constructed reality is undermined in such a way that it becomes a chimera. This reminds of Thomas Pinchon’s stunningly impossible binary, "of course it happened. Of course, it did not happen." 82

R.K.Jha, with the tool of imagination, distorts reality. He pleads for the need to adapt and twist reality while narrating the story of a happy family movement. "But because this happened on a September night long ago and because this is December and in a couple of hours it will be day, we will have to twist a few things to get it right" (BB-66). So, the novelist is twisting reality thus subverting reality itself. He is writing, but the setting he creates through words is fabricated. In fact he is destroying the fabulous world of art itself.

Reality undergoes mutation on and on in the fluid world of the novel, for Jha in the chapter "Murder Mystery", gives two different versions of his sister’s returning home which problematise reality, when the narrator retells the story she told her husband – where the picture of a suspicious husband slowly becomes clear. Her husband doubts if she had premarital sex and tries to frighten her by furtively making footprints of a child on the bathroom floor – which she thinks to be of the ghost of the dead child of her tuition master—to elicit memories of the time she spent alone with the master; to know how far their intimacy had gone. It is then said that she runs away from her husband when she discovers his ruse to drive her into memories through fear: "But it does not happen that way, he will not be able
to wipe her slate clean. He will try hard, he will dot the bathroom floor every night but one night she will discover and run away. Your mother, my sister" (BB-218).

Finally he decides to keep the child as his own ward for he accepts the child as part of the blue bedspread he creates. He has been trying to shroud the child’s truth in an aura of enigma—the truth that it is his own daughter. R.K.Jha presents an elaborate fantasy in the last story of “Eight words” wherein he seems to imagine—though he presents it as an objective act in third person—himself amidst the vast crowds of the Eden Gardens telling the truth in eight words: “Iam the father of my sister’s child”. This story forms the final mise-en-abyme—the truth being presented as well as hidden in fragments interspersed in the whole narrative. In the process of continuous revelation which also includes falsification, R.K.Jha presents a kind of reality that is not absolute but fluid. And the reality constructed in the fictional world of the narrative acquires a polysemous quality. The written word casts a shadow of indeterminacy over the narrative. Hence the fictional world of The Blue Bed-Spread turns out not to be free from the inherent arbitrariness and indeterminacy that mark the written word.

In this chapter “Postcoloniality and Discovery of Self” the novelists endeavour to express diverse cultural experiences of the people. In postcolonial literatures people are bound by their reminiscences of the past and by sacrifices made by great men. In the present, they are bound by the common will to give a shape to and put into effect their future programmes. Gayatri Spivak observes in “Marginality in the Teaching Machine”: “Postcoloniality is a mode of existence whose importance and fragility would be destroyed by techniques of specialist knowledge as they work with strategies of power.”83 Critic such as Homi Bhabha observes, “The
postcolonial perspective.....forces a recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of these often opposed political spheres." Indian culture is a composite heritage and its multidimensional character helps to bind the people. With the advent of independence, the Indians began to value their culture and Indianness and there emerged the concept of a national identity. The need of the hour was to maintain one's identity rather than submit to the British hegemony. Independence brought with it displacement and disillusionment. The postcolonial writers had to reinterpret and re-write various issues from a postcolonial perspective. Colonialism had given security—one inhabited a fixed world. Post-colonial world was new world—not firm, the ground seemed to be moving. Writing from the perspective of the fragments of the marginalised and the racially discriminated people, the Indian writers from the 1960s onwards began to question the arbitrariness of socio-political practices and began writing about the post-colonial experiences of migration and identity crisis.

Post-colonial India continues to be poverty-stricken, stratified and inequalitarian. The Indo-Anglian novelists, feeling alienated from the national culture, try to present a picture of India which still suffers from the colonial-hangovers which are rather emphasized in Upamanyu Chatterjee's _English, August_ and _The Mammaries of the Welfare State_. Rushdie maintains that "a new novel is emerging --- a post-colonial novel, a decentered, transnational, interlingual, cross-cultural novel—and that in this new world order or disorder, we find a better explanation of the contemporary novel's health." His version of post-colonial novel crosses frontiers of knowledge as well as topographical boundaries. His definition of the post-colonial novel precludes fiction produced around the globe that is not decentered, not transnational, not interlingual, not cross-cultural. He
not only affiliates himself with other writers of the far rim but he defines the fiction of the those locations in terms of his own style – a style that has all the characteristics of an amorphous magic realism. Edward Said launched the entire field of post-colonial studies by insisting that the western culture could not be understood outside its links with imperialism and that the knowledge far from being politically neutral, was tainted by power and interests. Amitav Ghosh’s *The Calcutta Chromosome* and *The Glass Palace* reflect the above said words.

Nationalising literature is an attempt to create an identity. As writers of English, the Indians were always defining themselves with the background of whole Europe and America thus exhibiting the Neo-colonialism / post-coloniality in the recent texts of 80s and 90s.

The liberation from colonial rule does not necessary need the end of colonialism, particularly from its ideological and cultural hegemony. The burden of colonial baggage -- cultural, social, economic--weigh heavily on post-colonial society despite its trials of discarding it. As a consequence the Indians lived in an unreal existence, unable to renounce the past and ill-equipped to face the present of the post-colonial reality.
NOTES


3. Ibid., p. 25


5. Sebastian, Mrinalini, p. 62


10. Ibid., p. 79.

12. Chatterjee, Upamanyu. *English, August: An Indian Story* (Delhi: Rupa & Co., 1989) p.25. All subsequent references to this edition will be noted by the abbreviation EA.


17. Ibid., p.111

18. Ibid., p.111


21. Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*, Penguin Books Limited, Harmondsworth, Middle Sex, England p.27. All subsequent references or quotations of this text will be shown by the abbreviation TW.

All subsequent references or quotations to this edition will be marked by the abbreviation TM.

   All subsequent quotations from this edition will be marked by the abbreviation TR.


25. Ibid., p.5

26. Ibid., p.5


   All subsequent references or quotations to this edition will be shown by the abbreviation GP.


35. Ibid., p.178.
   All subsequent textual citations from this edition will be marked by the abbreviation CC.
42. Ibid., p.12.
   All subsequent quotations of the text are marked by the abbreviation Moor.
46. Rushdie, Salman. Imaginary Homelands, p.65
Subsequent quotations of this text are shown by the abbreviation IH.


All subsequent quotations of this edition are marked with the abbreviation TGVM.


57. Banuri, Tariq. p.78.


60. Ibid., p. 236

61. Ibid., p. 233

62. Viswanathan, Gauri. p. 62


65. Ibid., p. xxxii

66. Ibid, p. xxxvii


   All subsequent quotations of this text are marked with the abbreviation CW.


74. Ibid., p. 105.


77. Ibid., p. 531.


79. Jha, Raj Kamal. The Blue Bedspread. Picador India, London, 1999, p. 56-57. All subsequent references of this text are marked with the abbreviation BB.


