Social, Cultural, and Political Aspects

Aristotle described man as a social animal, but in the twentieth century man can be quoted as a societal and political animal. Society is commonly defined as a group of interacting people living in a specific geographical area, organized in a co-operative manner and sharing a common culture. A society is a social group, while a culture is a society’s system of common heritage. There can be no society without its culture and no culture without a society. Man is born as a social being; he attains sociality and becomes a cultured man by following certain rules made by the society.

Literature is the mirror that reflects our society. It portrays the image of a society in a certain time and place. Literature is not born of inanition, it has some phenomena, worldviews and reasons that become the background of its present state. India, with its painful experiences and traumas of colonization, is usually mistaken as the land of religions, the country of uncritical faiths and unquestioned practices. Indian writers in English Literature have written about its rich social, culture, and traditional values.

Culture and customs are at the centre of the social order in Indian communities. English fiction in India, from its very beginning has witnessed socio-cultural, economic, and political changes in the destiny of this nation. The development of the English novel in India was slower when compared to poetry and drama. Before the 19th century, the Indian literatures had the romance, the tale, and the fable, but the novel as we understand it now is “the gift of the West”. However, after Independence writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and others have written novels dealing with the ravages of caste system and the miserable plight of untouchables in the Indian society. India is
undergoing incredible cultural transformation and reshaping itself from a homogeneous culture into a hybrid one.

2.1 Socio-cultural aspects

Indian English literature projects the ills of the society with a view to making the society realize its mistake and make amends. Indian English novelists have been showing deep concern about these problems in the past also; in fact, a sustained level of involvement with social issues of caste and gender discrimination has marked the writings. During the last decade of the twentieth century, some brilliant writers in India have written much about social ills. Mulk Raj Anand with his novel *Untouchable* made a protest against the tradition that deprived many people of their rights of legitimate living. Socio-cultural and political changes, social evils like casteism, purdah pratha, child marriage, poverty, exploitation, disparity, cultural-conflict, historical happenings, realism and romantic tales are a common theme in the novels of this period. But social ills like untouchability were a prominent theme. According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary the untouchable is defined as “a member of the lowest-caste Hindu group or a person outside the caste system, contact with whom is traditionally held to defile members of higher castes.” However then came Indian writers who told the story, the way it should be told, and who did not just write about village life but also social ills and exploitation. Art is not necessarily for art’s sake. A novel must have a social purpose. It must place before something from the society's point of view. Indian society is one of the oldest societies. It has its own customs and traditions. Indian English writers are now writing with a new zeal and
confidence, blending social aspects and phenomenal situations in their literary works.

All the four Indian Booker Prize winning novels, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss* and Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger* deal with socio-cultural, economic and political relationships in the new India after Independence. The authors are deeply rooted in native, national culture and highlight the political, social and cultural issues which constitute the very fibre of Indian life in their Booker Prize winning novels.

Rushdie explores the complexity of the relationships in modern India that we now take for granted and raises the issues of racial hybridity, identity, and dislocation. In 1981, *Midnight's Children* brought about a Renaissance in Indian writing in English, which has outdone that of the 1930s. Salman, through his narrator skill, brings his childhood memories back and joins the past with the present. Spanning over three decades and three countries, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, this novel seek to build a bridge between reminiscences and experiences, socio-cultural, magical realism and historical events. Rushdie’s ambitious novel rejects the British colonial versions of India and constructs a new world and a new depiction of Indian citizens and history in an attempt to provide greater truth to Indian images, social views and history.

In *Midnight’s Children*, the story moves in different parts of the Indian Subcontinent- from Kashmir to Agra and then to Bombay, Lahore, Dhaka. Rushdie brings together various histories of origin and cultural differences in the subcontinent. He memorizes the national life of India, its birth, growth and various pitfalls. Saleem, the protagonist highlights the inherent heterogeneity and tendency
for fragmentation. He has “eyes as blue as Kashmiri sky - which were also the eyes as blue as methwold’s and a nose as dramatic as a Kashmiri father’s which was also the nose of grandmother from France.” (MC, 157)

Magical realism provides cultural and social hybridity, depicted through the culture and character diversity within the novel, allows new images of colonial and postcolonial Indian citizens to emerge. As the characters become hybridized socially, the novel depicts societal shifts and historical changes through these character interactions and subsequent character changes. The relationships between the other “midnight’s children,” with whom Saleem is able to convey with his magical force, alter after these kids learn their parent’s religious and traditional opinions. Before this cultural indoctrination, the children communicate with each other openly, able to discuss their different gifts and talents, but after learning their cultural traditions, the relationships between the children disintegrate.

Being thrown or having-fallen into the complex history of post-Independence India, Saleem and his midnight’s children reflect the ‘conflict in socio-cultural heritages’ of India. Indeed, ‘their heads were full of all the usual things, fathers, mothers, money, food, land, possessions, fame, power, God’ (MC, 290). Taking a negative stance against inherited cultural determinants of identity, Saleem structures his story in a certain way to show he can do something about what he has been made of: ‘From ayah to Widow, I’ve been the sort of person to whom things have been done, but Saleem Sinai, perennial victim, persists in seeing himself as protagonist.’ (MC, 330)

Saleem assumes the posture of a loner, whose social ties have been severed and who confines himself to his writing. Even though he is writing his memoir, he shares his authorship, with Padma, who forms with him a community of two lovers.
His communication with the midnight’s children gives him a sense of sharing and bonding. Their dispersion and vast variety of abnormalities or power make him think about a new kind of community. With an out-of-character awareness of European individualism, he wonders whether ‘collectively opposed to singularity’. (MC, 352)

Saleem sees the M.C.C. (Midnight’s children conference), as the potential third principle that is supposed to stand against old ideological principles:

Do not let this happen! Do not permit the endless duality of masses-and-classes, capital-and-labour, them-and-us to come between us! We… must be a third principle, we must be the force which drives between the horns of the dilemma, for only by being other, by being new, can we fulfil the promise of our birth. (MC, 354)

The very failure of M.C.C. draws attention to the ways in which older understandings of both individuality and community contribute to this dissolution. Saleem wants them to be a third thing, but his understanding of community is based on both local communitarian models and the new national ideals with a prominent allegorical leader at the top. Rushdie, through Saleem’s narration, explains the process of Indian colonization by the various European powers, such as the Portuguese and the British, along with Bombay’s central role in the Indian independence movement, to achieve independence from Great Britain. Using Bombay as the novel’s setting, with its religious diversity, social caste differences, and multiplicity, allows the novel to illustrate the struggles of forming a postcolonial identity, due to the various types and number of people present in the city. The city itself is a hybrid, of Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, and Christian; of young and old; of the past and the present moment; within this context, the novel becomes
able to express new versions of Indian history and accurately illustrate Indian postcolonial citizens.

The novel describes the origins of Bombay and illustrates the city’s evolutions and changes. Saleem describes the first settlers of the city:

The fishermen were here first…at the dawn of time, when Bombay was a dumbbell-shaped island tapering, at the center, to a narrow shining strand beyond which could be seen the finest and largest natural harbour in Asia, when Mazagaon and Worli, Matunga and Mahim, Salsette and Colaba were islands, too—in short, before reclamation, before tetrapods and sunken piles turned the Seven Isles into a long peninsula like an outstretched, grasping hand, reaching into the Arabian Sea; in this primeval world before clock towers, the fishermen—who were called Kolis—sailed in Arab dhows, spreading red sails against the setting sun. They caught pomfret and crabs, and made fish-lovers of us all.

There were also coconuts and rice. And, above it all, the benign presiding influence of the goddess Mumbadevi, whose name—Mumbadewi, Mumbabai, Mumbai—may well have become the city’s. (Rushdie, 121-22)

Saleem gives every necessary detail about Bombay. The narrator names the regions and island of Bombay, “Mazagaon, Worli, Matunga, Mahim, Salsette, and Colaba,” and refers to the natural crops of the region, “coconuts and rice.”(121) Rushdie, through these ‘primitive’ images of early Bombay, demonstrates the difficulty in assigning a point of origin for a city, a nation, or the people. The narrator, Saleem continues to describe the colonization of Bombay, and demonstrates how power shifted from the early settlers to the later colonizers. The Portuguese and British illustrated their power by shifting the city’s association with the “benign residing influence of the Goddess Mumbadevi, whose name may well
have become the city’s.” (MC, 121) Instead, “the Portuguese named the place Bom Bhai for its harbour, and not for the goddess of the pomfret folk.” (MC, 122) Renaming the city, from Mumbai to the Portuguese “Bom Bhai” and later to the British “Bombay,” shows the power shifts within the city and the nation. Later the city was renamed as Mumbai in 1996, the city remained “Bombay” until that date.

The novel’s characters, both in social rank and religious beliefs, reflect the diversity present within a Bombay’s own massive population. Saleem comes from a middle-class Muslim family, while his “ayah,” or nanny, Mary Pereira, is a Christian convert, who works for the Saleem’s family. Shiva, a character born, like Saleem, as one of the “midnight’s children” on the night of Indian independence, yet is a Hindu who was raised in extreme poverty. The religious and social diversity of the characters echoes the diversity in Bombay itself, because the mixing and melding of various cultures and traditions within Bombay represents social hybridization. Saleem continuously connects himself to Bombay, seeking to hold on to some inherent idea of “Bombay,” which are removed from him when he becomes associated with other regions. Although Saleem’s family history stems from Kashmir, a mountainous region in the Indian subcontinent, he remains disconnected from Kashmir: “in our house, we were infected with the alienness of Kashmiri blood.” (MC, 121)

Rushdie’s characters represent the diversity of India both in its singularity and plurality besides the postcolonial hybridization. Aadam Aziz, Saleem Sinai’s grandfather is a typical Indian Muslim who becomes Westernized after his medical education in Germany and thereby an atheist. In addition, Saleem himself belongs to the postcolonial character as a half Hindu, half Muslim and towards the end a Christian as he is looked after by ayah Mary Pereira.
Roy sets her novel in a precisely described Indian location—the town of Ayemenem in which she grew up—she writes in English, a language which was brought to India by British colonists during the nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Arundhati Roy has woven Kerala and India into the fabric in *The God of Small Things*. The novel presents a realistic picture of these two places, especially their history and geography, society and culture, economy and politics. Roy grew up in Kerala, in the village located on the outskirts of the town of Kottayam. In *The God of Small Things*, most of the action takes place in a village called “Ayemenem,” set near a river called “Meenachal.” Roy’s fictionalized village and river strongly resemble the real-life Aymanam and Minachil, and her narrative contains numerous references to the actual landscape of south-central Kerala, its people and their common customs, their music and dance, their religions and social organization, and their economic and political activities.

Arundhati Roy has tried her best to present the realistic picture of the dresses, men, and manners of the contemporary Keralite society. *The God of Small Things* depicts the relationship created between women and natures, ascertaining the ways both are oppressed by the patriarchal society. The novel interprets the deterioration of the fictional village of Ayemenem as an apologue for the corruption of the Ipe family. The pollution of the river Meenachal and the rehabilitation of the History house as a tourist harbour are the centric points in authorizing the association between ecological exploitation and gender discrimination.

The patriarchal society breeds cultures that always draw a line of demarcation between male and female. Discrimination against the women in the society has become the part of the culture. *The God of Small Things* describes
men’s imposition on women in the matters of profession, marriage, and motherhood, which cripple her intellectually, emotionally and morally. Roy repeatedly demonstrates that “the personal is political.” Her character’s public lives and private lives are mediated by intersecting social, political, and religious structures that profoundly affect their behaviour within and outside their homes, their relationships to other people, the jobs they perform, and their perceptions of the world.

Desai’s, *The Inheritance of Loss* is a story of bittersweet longing for a world that eludes each of the characters, as a consequence of their class backgrounds and post colonial legacies. They thereby become the inheritors of loss. The sudden imposed responsibility of Sai’s guardianship on Jemubhai takes him back to his memories of 1939, his departure for education at Cambridge (IHL, 61).

In the novel, cultural tension or conflict is not only seen in between the British and the Indian, but in a larger scale between the Indian and the western culture, which is now anchored in the United States. Despite the power shift from Britain to the U.S, it is always the domination of the western culture that set India in a cultural predicament. Just as Kiran Desai writes in her novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, “Certain moves made long ago had produced all of them: Sai, judge, Mutt, cook, and even the mashed-potato car.”

The Judge, who is born in a farmer’s family, climbs up the social ladder and become a judge in the Civil Service through hardworking in a mission school and then at Cambridge University. It seems that in colonial days, the western language and culture were equated with power, and were therefore greatly admired among Indians. In this way, the re-stratification of Indian society by English education
resulted in the establishment of cultural hierarchy—the western culture occupied a predominant position compared to the native culture.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, We can perceive the attempt to resist western domination of the young people such as Biju, Gyan, and Sai, though the resistance is hardly effective. They are a little different from the judge and the cook who accept the existing cultural hierarchy whole-heartedly and make no effort to resist. They try to resist, but they are still trapped by the influence of the West. Blurring of cultural boundaries or Hybridity is clearly visible in *The Inheritance of Loss*, both within Indian society and in the world of the migrants from India. The following two quotes illustrate the way in which characters – in different situations – try to come to grips with the fact that they are part of a larger world. The Kalimpong ladies try to disown the claim of the Nepali rebels in passionate debate:

“Cock and Bull,” she said crudely. “These people aren’t good people. Gorkhas are a mercenary, that’s what they are. Pay them and they are loyal to whatever. There’s no principle involved, Noni. And what is this with the GOrkha? It was always GUhrka. AND then there aren’t even many Gurkhas here – some of course, and some newly retired ones coming in from Hong Kong, but otherwise they are only sherpas, coolies”

“Anglicized spelling. They’re just changing it to -”

“My left toe! Why are they writing in English if they want to have Nepali taught in schools? These people are just louts, and that’s the truth, Noni, you know it, we all know it”. (IHL, 247)

Socio-religious and cultural barrier is maintained by the third world people even in a foreign land. Biju does it by fighting a Pakistani, even in America. They are desperately trying to hold on to old truths because the world is changing, power balances, positions are shifting, and they cannot stop it however hard they try.
Desis against Pakis.

Ah, old war, best war-

“Pigs pigs, sons of pigs, soor ka baccha,” Biju shouted.

“Uloo ka patha, son of an owl, low-down son-of-a-bitch Indian.”

They drew the lines at crucial junctures. They threw cannonball cabbages at each other. (IHL, 23)

Biju is fond of the modernity of the America. The presupposed cultural reality of the west begins to collapse when one day; he discovers that Indian men in New York restaurants orders beef without hesitation. The behaviour is certainly against Hindu observance, but it seems that they do not care at all. He at once feels repulsive towards this disorderly situation: “Holy cow unholy cow. Job no job. One should not give up one’s religion, the principles of one’s parents and their parents before them. No, no matter what. You had to live according to something.” (IHL, 135-36) Biju believes cow as a holy animal and the incident is disturbing experience for him.

Adiga in The White Tiger gives detailed accounts of Indian society – rural as well as urban and its various facets. Laxmangarh, Gaya, Dhanbad, Delhi, and Bangalore are generic; represent the portrait of India and Indian society. The novel portrays ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor, rural and urban. The brutal reality of the economic system allows a small minority to prosper at the expense of the silent majority; political culture of India, voting behaviour. Social milieu, caste and culture conflict, superstition, social taboos, exploitation of the underclass, Zamindari practice, the emergence of Naxalism, unemployment, especially in rural India, master-servant relationship, the nexus between politicians, criminals and police, mockery of the education system and Government’s welfare schemes, poor medical services and corruption in the society play major role further in widening the gap between the rich and poor.
Balram, the protagonist points out that though India has many states, but in reality, India is divided into two: India of Light and India of Darkness. India of light belongs to the rich of India who can create their desired lifestyle, even in the dusty and scorching Indian plains. The rich possess the money, the ultimate source of power, whereas India of darkness is the India of the poor, a fertile, green land, full of rice and wheat fields, ponds filled with lotuses and water lilies but all this fertility enriches the India of light. Residents of the Dark India are blazed by the India of Light, which shines only because of the lights stolen from the Dark India, its inhabitants and its rich resources.

India is two countries into one, India of Light and an India of Darkness. Ocean brings light to my country. Every place on the map of India near the ocean is well off. But the river brings darkness to India. (TWT, 14)

Poverty is supreme in India of darkness because its wealth fills the bank accounts of the ones living in The India of Light. It is the India of the darkness that the novel sympathizes with, presenting a desolate, gloomy and brutally realistic image of it. Dark India is rotten, corrupted and blackened to the core of those who are filthy rich. The rich want their dogs to be treated like human beings and the poor human beings live like dogs. They expect, “their dogs to be pampered, and walked, and petted, and even washed!” Nepali shouted at Balram, “Don’t pull the chain so hard! They’re worth more than you are!” (TWT, 78) indicating dogs are more important than the life of a poor man.

Living conditions for the residents of the darkness are frightening and animal like. Educational facilities are sparse. School, where the protagonist Balram studies, is a nightmare. Big lizards crawl around in the school building, the walls are broken and there is no furniture for the students. Electricity poles are there, but
they are defunct. Dark India has water taps but those are broken and get no supply of water. Adiga jeers at the way government plans for the provision of better facilities of life to the poor masses. Instead of providing them clean drinking water, the government provides these thirsty populaces the mobile phones and cheap call rates.

    Electricity poles: defunct
    Water tap: broken
    Children: too lean and short for their age (TWT, 20)

Children in dark India are like ghosts with oversized heads because of malnutrition. A poor man's life history is engraved in his body. All the whip marks, curves around neck, scars, and cuts on the body of a poor man yell aloud the ravages life has run on him. Rich man’s body is soft, smooth and white because of the air-conditioned living atmosphere he could buy for himself with the help of his riches to stay safe from the scorching heat of the Indian plains and the cruel sun.

Balram realizes all these brutal realities; he observes everything around with a keen eye. Though unable to continue his academic education, he resumes with the worldly education. He listens to the people on tea stalls, the roads, the shops and any place and person from where and whom he could learn something. He did not miss even a single chance to grab the opportunity in his whole life. That is what helped him to become a *The White Tiger*. He leaves everything that he finds slave like or unlike the rich. He observes his master, Ashok, shopping, notices his choice and next time buys those colours and those prints that Ashok bought for himself.

    Blue, chequered polyester shirt, orange polyester trousers… those are the kind of clothes, sir, which would appeal to a servant’s eye.
    (TWT, 22)
Balram swears not to wear those colours and cloths in his life again. Instead, he wears the things that his master likes to wear in order to look like him, which is only a sign of his aspiration to become a master in the coming years. He observes the reasons of widening and an impassable gap between rich and the poor. Ashok bribes the politicians by giving them the hard-earned money of his village people. His wife jeers at Balram for being unable to pronounce Pizza correctly. Balram is forced even to take the blame of murder committed by Ashok’s wife, Pinky. She happens to crush a child under her car while she is drunk. It infuriates Balram even more; this anger rises day by day, gradually taking the form of a storm inside him. Here he realizes the cruelty of the system and façade of justice is torn apart as he notices the falseness of the higher abstract ideals of truth veracity. He describes the response of the police towards the crimes committed to the members of different classes.

A man on bicycle getting killed – the police even do not have to register a case. A man on motor bike getting killed – they would have to register that. A man in a car getting killed – they would have thrown me in the jail. (TWT, 309)

He tries to take his revenge on Ashok in every possible way. He steals petrol from his car and copies his life style. The more his master gets rich, the more it enrages Balram. The gap between rich and poor can be seen in another incidence. Ashok hires a golden haired call girl who looks like Kim Basinger. In an act of imitation, Balram pays all of his pay to sleep with a golden haired girl just to get the feeling of being a master. When the girl comes, it is revealed that her hair are dyed, they are not real. He wonders at the way things happen in life.

That was when it hit me, in the way it never had before – how the rich always get the best things in life, and all that we get is their leftovers. (TWT, 233)
When madam Pinky leaves Ashok and goes back to America, the servant has to play the role of wife as well. Balram takes care of all the needs of Ashok, takes him to dinner. He orders many dishes instead of his knowledge of his inability to eat them all. Ashok marks the distinction by saying that food is “Enough to feed a rich man or a whole family.” (TWT, 238) Adiga presents the true picture of Indian society. Because of rising globalization, Balram watches countless buildings growing around, including shopping malls, call centres and clubs. All of these marvellous glass buildings are constructed by the residents of the Darkness, but they are never allowed to enter. Once, Balram manages to go inside a shopping mall, by wearing a T-shirt like that of Ashok. He regrets the fact that the poor builders are not allowed to peep inside the glass and stone structures that they build with their own hands.

These people were building homes for the rich, but they lived in tents covered with blue tarpaulin sheets and partitioned into lanes by sewage line. (TWT, 260)

Adiga points it is not only the rich who are responsible for the situation, but the poor are equally responsible. The working class itself does not support the proletariat cause, they never help each other rather the servants are always abusing, scorning, and jeering at other servants. It is only the strong that they respect out of fear. Balram looks at a bookstall and sees few books, but the illiterate salesperson rebukes him harshly. Balram responds him in an even harsher way, which sets his tone right. First, he spoke in a “servant to servant” tone, but afterwards it changes into a “man to man” tone. Adiga names it “Rooster Coop” as he opines that the capitalist elite have managed to guard the coop from inside. No servant lets another servant try to escape.
Servants need to abuse other servants. It’s been bred into us; the way Alsatian dogs are bred to attack strangers, we attack anyone who is familiar. (TWT, 130)

The rich and elite grab their wealth only because of proletariat working class, but they are reluctant to spend even a single penny on their servants. Balram happens to lose one coin and Ashok’s elder brother goes mad about this loss, exposing the stinginess of the filthy exploiters who do not allow the poor to have even a small part of the money that belongs to them. Balram succeeds in breaking his shackles by the end of the novel and becomes a part of the master class, using the money that he stole from Ashok. He wonders the way one percent rich ruling and enslaves the ninety nine percent of the population, how they could keep the ninety nine percent unaware of the conspiracies for the maintenance of the rooster coop, how they could accept their inferior status unquestioningly and unhesitatingly?

“How could two such contrasting specimens be produced by the same soil, sunlight, and water?” (TWT, 80)

By the end, when he himself is a part of the same system that he loathed, he avoids doing all those things to his workers that he has not liked when he was a servant. He does not repeat the cycle. He learns the tactics of moving forward in a capitalist society, but he rarely uses them against the working class. Balram uses all the tactics of his master to become a successful businessman. He makes his way by using his money to corrupt the policeman and politicians. He says money can wipe the difference in colour, caste, language and region: “It’s amazing. The moment you show cash, everyone knows your language.” (TWT, 300)

His journey from rags to riches has not been very spic and span, but probably he had no other option to break out of the coop, to get free from the shackles of poverty and class. With this money, he became the businessman of
Bangalore and changed his name from Balram to Ashok. Overall, the image of contemporary India can be seen well in this novel of Adiga. The society influenced him at last and made him a criminal. After becoming the master of the company ‘The White Tiger Drivers’ he does the same thing what his master did offer bribes to officers in order to save his collar. This is what happening in today’s India. The riches are taking advantage of poor and indirectly giving them the chance to become a criminal and our whole system operates this way.

2.2 Socio-Political and Religious Aspects

India is a nation richly imbued with religious sentiment and belief. According to M. Rajeshwar, “Most Indians are at least in theory, religious in outlook” (Rajeshwar, 24). In Indian society one's faith is much more than merely a personal inclination, for, it defines an individual's identity. Every aspect of life in India is associated with caste and religion giving it a cultural identity of India, religion shapes and constructs the distinct identity of the individual.

In Hindu tradition, caste is associated with “creation myth” of humankind, which in the dismemberment of the primeval cosmic man into “four different castes” designates the menial part to servants. (Tickell, 22) Thus, as the low-caste, “in the margins of caste system,” servants exemplify “outcast” or “untouchable” communities whose duties entail performing “dirty, spiritually polluting activities such as leather work, street sweeping, rubbish collection and disposing of the dead.” (23)

In Midnight's Children, Saleem blames the grownups for poisoning the minds of midnight children. India’s elite Muslim, Parsee and Hindu live happily here in Bombay. Rushdie has covered a wide range of political, social aspects in relation to the freedom struggle such as a Jallianwalla Bagh massacre, Hartal called
by Mahatma Gandhi, Partition politics, migration and Communal violence during the colonial and postcolonial period.

The political realities have a strong and direct impact on social and moral ethos of the people of India. Hindu-Muslim conflict during the pre-independence period was an instigated creation by the British Empire and some leaders of both the communities. There are many references in the novel like the role of “Ravana gang” in terrorizing the Muslim businessmen and “peepshow” of Lifafa Das. The “Ravana gang” is “posed as a fanatical anti-Muslim movement” (MC, 92) who “sent men out at dead of night, to paint slogans on the walls of both old and new cities: PARTITION OR ELSE PERDITION! MUSLIMS ARE THE JEWS OF ASIA.” (MC, 93) Factories, shops, godowns owned by Muslims were burned. In the name of Anti-Muslim movement, the “Ravana gang” inflicted torture on the common businessmen and the British Empire was not keen on protecting them. Rushdie is also satirical towards the biased and bigoted Muslims who attacked the innocent and common Hindus without any reason. School going, small children of the Muslim community were encouraged to develop hatred towards Lifafa, the Hindu “peepshow” man. The small Muslim girl shouted at him: you have got a nerve, coming into this Muhalla! I know you: my father knows: everyone knows you’re a Hindu.” (MC, 98) The other schoolboys spontaneously shouted: Hindu! Hindu! Hindu! (MC, 98) The child’s father furiously abused Lifafa by shouting “Mother raper! Violator of our daughters”! Suddenly, even silly Zohra, a distantly related sister of Ahmad Sinai made a loud noise: “Rapist! Arre my God they found the badmaash! There he is!” (MC, 99) Another fellow screams at him: “So, mister: it is you? Mister Hindu, who denies our daughters? Mister idolater, who sleeps with his sister?” (99) Then the communally surcharged Muslim crowd attacked Lifafa
who ran away to save his skin. Rushdie elaborately portrays that colonial social structure was rampant in mob violence, insecurity, communal disharmony, crime, and erosion of human values. The natives of both the communities were neither secure nor protected. Even the Children with power were not immune to the religious and political hatred. Saleem found, ‘children from Maharashtra loathing Gujaratis, and fair-skinned northerners reviling Dravidian ‘blackies’; their religious rivalries; and class entered our councils.”(MC, 353)

Arundhati Roy, in her first and famous novel *The God of Small Things*, has bequeathed the problem of Untouchability and criticised both castes of Hindu Society and male superiority in different walks of Indian life. Roy tries to sensitize this society to the cruelty of some of its traditions by artistically challenging certain common age-old complacently held but dehumanizing social taboos. She also shows how the women and the untouchable are both treated as impersonal and subjugative objects in this social structure: how things are decided for both by the patriarchal ideology of an ancient culture which also cultivates the hierarchal snobbery and violence of the ‘Touchables’ towards the ‘Untouchables’. However, like Mulk Raj Anand in his *Untouchable*, Arundhati Roy’s fresh perspectives on an age-old tradition created waves as rebellion against the social injustice meted out both to the downtrodden and to the women. Ranga Rao comments:

Roy’s book is the only one I can think of among Indian novels in English which can be comprehensively described as a protest novel. It is all about atrocities against minorities, Small Things: children and youth, women and untouchables. (Rao)

*The God of Small Things* throws light upon hierarchical structures of power, and oppression at various levels in patriarchal societies. Roy explores how these differences of caste, class, gender, race, function through social institutions and the
way they affect human interactions and relationships. She presents two innocent children as responders to the tragedy resulting from the rigidity of petrified social mores nurtured by the patriarchal ideology of a caste-based culture that cultivates snobbery and violence to maintain social order. Roy condemns and rejects the tyranny of this tradition. Classifications in Kerala distinguish between adults and children, men and women, married and divorced women, Naxalites and others, Christian Syrians and Hindus, Touchability and Untouchability.

The novel is the story of social relationships and the compulsions of history. It portrays caste system and hierarchy, which is still prevalent in India, and patriarchy, which is another powerful component of Indian society. One of the dominant social-political concerns in Arundhati’s novel is the rigid caste-structure to be seen in India. Women, children, untouchables, and poor are the oppressed a lot in the society.

Roy succeeds in locating her voice against Untouchability and caste system in the novel. Velutha’s grandfather Kelan, along with a number of other untouchables embraced Christianity. Even, the religious conversion fails to give the dispossessed an esteemed able status. Irrespective of religious affiliation the underdogs remain as fallen as ever in the dog-eat-dog-society:

When the British came to Malabar, a number of Paravans… converted to Christianity and joined the Anglican church to escape the scourge of untouchability… it did not take them long to realize that they had jumped from the frying pain into fire they were made to have separate churches, with separate services, and separate priests. After independence they found they were not titled to any Government benefits like job reservation or bank loans at low interest rates, because officially, on paper, they were Christians, and therefore Castless. (GOST, 74)
Roy, points out those unnoticed shades of a social problem of the Dalit and the deserted women, which generally escape the eyes of social scientists. It is also ironical that the church makes a distinction between lower caste and upper caste. The caste taboos were still prevalent and not a part of India’s past story:

Mammachi told… Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom, sway their footprints so that Brahmmins or Syrian Christians would not defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a Paravan’s footprint. In Mammachi’s time Paravans’s like other untouchables, were not allowed to walk on public roads, or allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed. (GOST, 73-74)

Velutha is a highly talented worker. He is a mechanic and a keen craftsman. However, his exceptional talents and skills, his keen understanding and deep sensibility did not get the respect from any one of those who were far less talented. People were awed by him, could not get over the fact of his being a Parvan, an untouchable. Despite being Christians, Mammachi and Baby Kochamma adhere to notions of social hierarchy which derive from the Hindu caste system. Mammachi is quite clear about how to draw lines:

To keep the others happy, and since she knew that nobody else would hire him as a carpenter, Mammachi paid Velutha less than she would a Touchable carpenter but more than she would a Paravan. Mammachi didn’t encourage him to enter the house (except when she needed something mended or installed) She thought he ought to be grateful that he was allowed on the factory premises at all, and allowed to touch the thing that Touchables touched. She said that it was a big step for a Paravan. (GOST, 77)
Velutha is trapped by Comrade Pillai into plotting. In police custody Pillai doesn’t even mention that Velutha is a member of the communist party. In another place, the comrade is seen discussing with Chacko, the matter of Velutha’s dismissal from the job. Pillai did it all because he considers Velutha as his future competitor in the party. Even after the death of Velutha, he did not hold himself in any way personally responsible for what has happened. He dismissed the whole business as the, “Inheritable Consequence of Necessary Politics”. (GOST, 14) Velutha represents the class of the downtrodden used by the politicians and the police as mere pawns in the political game of chess. He refused to help Velutha when he needed him. Velutha stands betrayed by society, by his party, which has been seen by millions like him to be a substitute for religion. Inspector Mathew’s behaviour with Ammu is totally uncivil. After Sophie mole’s burial, when Ammu came to the police to tell the truth Mathew whose, “eyes were sly and greedy… stared at Ammu…He said the police knew all they needed to know and that Kottayam police did not take statements from Vashyas or their illegitimate children.”(GOST, 7-8)

Roy at several places uses the expression Touchable police, in order to remind the readers of its role in oppressing the untouchable as also the fact that its role in sustaining the caste based division of society. Here the lower classes are denied forcefully their basic rights to equality. In their chasing of Velutha, they show much alertness as if they were catching a terrorist:

They were not arresting a man; they were exorcising fear…Touchable police men acted with economy, not frenzy. Efficiency, not anarchy. Responsibility, not hysteria. They didn’t tear out his hair or burn him alive… After epidemic they were
merely inoculating a community against an outbreak. (GOST, 307-309)

Velutha, the untouchable is the worst affected of all. As a person he is dependent on his landlord’s family, the Ayemenem house for his livelihood, and as a person belonging to the lowest caste, the untouchables, and his subjugation is multiple. He is brutally killed, leaving silence and emptiness in Estha and Rahel’s lives, and loneliness in Ammu’s. Baby Kochamma is a woman and hence oppressed by patriarchy but because she belongs to the upper caste and hence responsible for the oppression of untouchables and Ammu and her twins. It is this power struggle that captures one’s attention and needs to be examined. Baby Kochamma goes to great lengths to save the “honour” of their reputed family. She takes the help of the police Inspector Matthews, who is a ‘touchable’ and is ready to help her. His police constables carry the “responsibility for the Touchable future on their thin but able shoulders.” (307) Policemen beat up the unarmed man with sober but steady brutality. Velutha is referred to as The God of Small Things. The Big Things and Small Things being poles apart from each other, The God of small Things is bound to be separate from the God of Big Things. The two will not be allowed to be one. Ironically the small things have no God. If they happen to have one, he becomes the ‘God of Loss’ (312) as Velutha does.

The ‘Small Things’ - Ammu, the twins and Velutha, who get together for mutual warmth and genuine love, and not for any material benefits are cruelly acted upon and destroyed. They leave behind no memory of pain or concern in the minds of the survivors, nothing as posterity, not even their own footprints. Their every mark is wiped away. “Some things come with their own punishments. Like bedrooms with built-in-cupboards… You could spend your whole life in them wandering through dark shelving.” (GOST, 115)
Roy portrays communist party’s procession and Velutha as a communist worker, the section of communists who are muscle power of the party and takes part in demonstrations. “Marching with a Red Flag… with angry veins in his neck.” (GOST, 71) In the Second Chapter, the Marxist labour union present the charter of demands of labours. The main demand was to have a an hour’s lunch-break in between a non-stop eleven and a half hours for the paddy workers. Their second demand was to increase the women labourers’ wages from Rs. 2, 25 to Rs. 3 and men, labourers’ wages to Rs. 4.50 a day. The third demand was they should not be addressed by their caste names indicating them as untouchables. Roy through this incidence shows that the untouchables do not want “They demanded not to be addressed as Achoo Parayan, or Kelan Paravan, or Kuttan Pulayan, but just as Achoo, or Kelan, or Kuttan.” (GOST, 69) The symbolic correspondence between blackness and dirt, between whiteness and purity is reversed in Velutha’s representation.

Roy is the proud possessor of sociological imagination in the true sense of the term. The proof comes from her own words:

If you are a writer you tend to keep those achieving eyes open. Everyday your face is slammed up against the windowpane. Every day you bear witness to the Obscenity. Every day you are reminded that there is no such thing as innocence. And every day you have to think of new ways of saying old and obvious things, things about love and governance about power and powerlessness, about war and peace, about death and beauty. Things that must be said over and over again. (The Cost of Living, 65)

In Kiran Desai’s The Inheritance of Loss, caste and religion plays an important role. Modernity is mocked. One has the experience of Biju, the cook’s
son going against his identity, a vegetarian working for fast foods selling hamburgers:

To Biju he said: "Beef? Are you crazy? We are an all-Hindu establishment. No Pakistanis, no Bangladeshis, those people don’t know how to cook, have you been to those restaurants on Sixth Street? Bilkul bekaar… One week later, Biju was in the kitchen and Gandhi’s favourite tunes were being sung over the sound system (IHL, 139)

Caste and religion play an important part in the society. Desai portrays the differences in various communities. She digs on the way the Muslims pray to Allah, “… drank whiskey every evening what sort of Muslim nation they have? And five times a day bums up to God… so strict were the Koran that its teachings were beyond human capability”. (IHL, 130) In another incidence Gyan, lover of Sai has differences of opinion over the English culture she likes. The Nepali tutor, Gyan’s relationship with Sai breaks up in a series of quarrel begins from Christmas, which indicates his own dilemma in the encounter of two cultures. He has forgotten that Christians like Hindus and Muslims are also Indians. Gyan says:

I am not interested in Christmas!” He shouted “Why do you celebrate Christmas? You’re Hindus and you don’t celebrate Id or Guru Nank’s birthday or even Durga Puja or Dussehra or Tibetan New year. (IHL, 163)

When fighting on Christmas day, Gyan argues that it is completely nonsense for a non-westerner to enjoy such a holiday, while Sai insists that it is only an excuse for a party, which shows her broad-mindedness toward a different culture. Grown up in the convent school, Sai, like her grandfather, speaks English better than Hindu and has a lifestyle more English than Indian. Discussing racism, Desai notes that there is an underlying racism to the comment, “Another Indian
writer” in the west, one never hears the comment, “Another American author”, she asserts. Writing political controversy needs much experience.

In *The White Tiger*, Adiga says India is divided into two parts, India of light (Rich) and India of dark (Poor). The biggest difference between these two India is that of choice. In India of light one at least has the choice to choose for himself, but in dark India one even cannot choose for himself. One cannot decide that what one wants to do with one’s life. The poor are not given the chance and they do not dare to snatch the chance from their exploiters. Balram stands out because he had the guts to steal his chance to go beyond the boundaries set for him as a member of dark, unprivileged India. Many residents of Dark India move to the cities in the hope of a better life. They fail because they do not have the guts to say goodbye to their slave like ways and get rid of their inner demons which bar them from showing any defiance to the rich who restrict their upward way to progress and better opportunities. People who come from darkness can be recognized very easily.

You can tell by their thin bodies, filthy faces, by the animal like way they live under the huge bridges and overpasses, making fires, and washing and taking lice out of their hair while the cars roar past them. (TWT, 119-20)

Capital is the biggest power now and a person can do anything to get more and more powerful. The traditional morality, no longer exists in this scenario. This is a kind of predator- prey relationship developed by the author among the characters. The most benevolent predator- prey relationship was between Balram and his master Mr. Ashok, as both tries to control the life of the other in a savage and beastly manner. In Indian social distinctive classes people are divided crudely into the high and low castes.
Most of the things about the residents of Dark India are unalterable. Their diseases never get cured, because of their inaccessibility to the medical facilities. They have no sense of individuality; they sleep together at nights with legs crossed around each other. They have animal like life style; they fight and quarrel daily without any definite reason, pull each other’s hair, slap each other and after few hours become friends again. They do not own even their own bodies; their bodies are owned by their rich masters. They do not have any control on their lives; their lives are controlled by the rich bourgeoisie who rules over them and makes all the decisions for them. They are born with their destinies. These destinies are generally their castes, “Halwai… That’s my caste - my destiny. Everyone in the darkness, who hears that name, knows all about me at once.” (TWT, 63)

There are many divisions, sub-divisions and fissures in Indian society that Adiga highlights in *The White Tiger*. People are divided on the basis of the liquor they drink. There are English liquor men and Indian liquor men. English liquor is for the rich of India and Indian liquor is for the poor of India. The people who buy English liquor are privileged and carry an air of importance about them; liquor sellers provide their orders quicker than the orders of Indian liquor men. On the other hand, the buyers of Indian liquor are underprivileged; they get their turn late in the row, they have to wait longer than others to get their liquor order from the sellers as they belong to the servant class, the poor.

In this country, we have two kinds of men: Indian liquor men and English liquor men. ‘Indian’ liquor is for village boys like me – toddy, arrack, country hooch. ‘English’ liquor, naturally, is for the rich. Rum, whisky, beer, gin – anything the English left behind. (TWT, 73)

The novel presents categories of the servants too; servant no 1 and servant no 2. Adiga narrates Balram’s experience of buying English liquor for his rich
masters and the deep sense of depravity that arises in the servants for their inability to drink Black Dog as it belonged to their masters, it was a luxury only for the rich.

He tells us:

He just wanted to hold the bottle. He wanted to hold the full, virgin bottle of first class whisky in his hand. He wanted to imagine that he was buying it for himself. (TWT, 75)

The novel suggests that residents of India must be reckoned by the size of their bellies as the size of one's belly is matters. The rich have big bellies and the poor have small bellies. The men with big bellies are:

- The most ferocious, the hungriest and have eaten everyone else up and grown big bellies. That was all that counted now, the size of your belly. It didn’t matter whether you were a woman, or a Muslim, or an untouchable: anyone with a belly could rise up. (TWT, 64)

Others are the people with small bellies who serve to satiate the hunger of the men with big bellies. People are also stratified on the basis of their appetites. The rich have a lust to eat and digest everything in the country. People who eat and the people who are eaten up. Balram is among the ones being eaten up when he was in the village, in his father’s house. His father spent his life like an animal, lean, thin, weak, miserable, ripped to the bones, with thousand scars on his body. He wanted a respectable life for his sons, a life that he could not earn for himself. He repents:

My whole life, I have been treated like a donkey. All I wanted that at least one son of mine - at least one - live like a man. (TWT, 30)

Aravind Adiga in his The White Tiger shows religion as the cause of the slavery in respect of India. Balram uses the Hindu Gods just to get material prosperity and mocks the gods like a true hypocrite. The suspicion towards is evident in the
following line- “Don’t you pray? What are you, a Naxal” (TWT). The protagonist, Balram uses religion to grasp a job suppressing his disrespects and blasphemies to the gods. Adiga also exposes prejudice for caste and religion. Ram persad (name) the servant of Stork disguised his identity because the prejudiced landlord did not like Muslim- he claimed to be a Hindu just to get a job and feed his starving family. On disclosure, he is sacked from his job. Roshan, the grandson of stork calls himself Azharuddin, while playing cricket. Stork reacts quickly, “call yourself Gavaskar. Azharuddin is a Muslim.” (TWT, 70) The marriage of Ashok and Pinky is not appreciated by the society because Pinky is not Hindu. Subsequently, due to caste and cultural differences their relationship is snapped.

Adiga’s novel is a brutally realistic exposition of class struggle between two opposite strata of society, exploitation of the poor by the rich. Class-consciousness is the awareness of the truth of the social conditions. Balram, the protagonist breaks the shackles of class through class-consciousness. His education and awareness make him class conscious and rips the façade of the division of society. He awaits a revolution to turn the system on its head, to make the rich capitalists powerless.

Speak to me of civil war, I told Delhi. I will, she said. Speak to me of blood on streets, I said. I will, she said. And if there is blood on these streets - I asked the city – do you promise that he’ll be the first to go – that man with the fat folds under his neck? (TWT, 221)

Corruption is rampant in the novel, and part of the socio-economic problem that prevents the ordinary Indian like Balram from rising out of poverty. Balram portrays a school teacher who steals the children’s lunch money because he is not paid his government salary, a child who loses his father to TB at a government hospital because the doctor does not bother to turn up, and he participates in little and big acts of dishonesty and cheating.
The Indian society, in fact, exhibits considerable variations between regions, between classes, between rural and urban areas and finally, between different ethnic religion, and caste groups. Culture defines society. The cultural ethos of every society is unique in its form and essentially representing the character of its people, their experiences, and beliefs. Socio-Cultural practices like untouchability, caste, and the Patriarchal moral codes are portrayed with remarkable clarity and precision by the Roy, Desai, and Adiga.

Roy is not only known for her new and original style, but for her thought-provoking attitude regarding social consciousness. Her novel has done what writers like Flaubert, Balzac and Dickens did in the 19th century with their novels and as a result brought social transformation in England and France. Arundhati Roy used marginalisation as a medium to show the miserable lives of women in orthodox Indian society. Through the marginalized characters like Ammu, Mammachi and Rahel, Roy has presented sufferings, pain, physical and sexual violence of women in a male dominated society. She spares no literary device to hit hard at the utter hypocrisy, cruelty, and unscrupulousness of an administrative agency whose work is to protect the citizens from the violence of lawbreakers and the social institutions like Family, Marriage, Religion, and Police authority, which are responsible factor for marginalization of women in the novel. Roy also triggers off the great process of self-examination and imprints upon the mind of the readers the notion, that things need to be changed and that they can be changed and must be changed.

While, Kiran Desai’s novel *The Inheritance of Loss* provides a larger global perspective. She is a cosmopolitan author without single national or cultural identity, but with strong relationships with multiple cultures, among which the Indian and the American culture. Often she also opposes two cultures, still mildly
ironic in the battle of mothers over the status of their respective daughters in Britain and America, or more violently in the fight between Biju and a fellow migrant from Pakistan. Most of the time she merges cultural environments to create a complex and confusing setting for her protagonists, as for instance in portraying the world of Indian immigrants in New York, or picturing Gyan’s need to belong and his internal battle between love and violence.

The novel, *The White Tiger* is a socialist manifesto trying to dismantle the discrimination between the “Big Bellies and the Small Bellies” (64) and evolve an egalitarian society. Adiga bisects the vision of modern India. Balram, the narrator affirms “in this country we have two kinds of men: ‘Indian’ liquor men and ‘English’ liquor men. Indian’ liquor was for village boys like me–toddy, arrack, country hooch. ‘English’ liquor naturally is for the rich. Rum, whiskey, beer, gin anything the English left behind. (TWT, 73) Adiga exposes the rot in the three pillars of modern India Society - democracy, enterprise and justice.

A remarkable aspect of postcolonial writing in English has been the preoccupation with the issues of women and downtrodden, both marginalized social groups in the Third World countries. While Mulk Raj Anand in the pre-independence era made a mark of highlighting the afflictions of weaker sections of society, the contemporary writers such as Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai and Aravind Adiga have established themselves as pioneers of the cause of subaltern through their extensive treatment of subaltern concern in their trend setting literary works which have gained immense popularity across the globe. The third chapter proposes to analyse Anglophilia and effects of Globalization.
Works cited


