This chapter attempts to sum up the observations, inferences and conclusions, which are based on the analysis of the selected novels, made in the earlier chapters of the study. The thesis aims at exploring and analyzing the selected seven novels written by three Bengali born Indian novelists in English from the perspectives of ‘culture’ and ‘transnationality’. As the title of the research work is ‘Culture and Transnationality: A study in the selected novels of Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni,’ it is obviously clear that the concepts ‘culture’ and ‘transnationality’ are very important parts of the study. The researcher has analyzed and examined and also established the relevance of culture and transnationality in the selected seven novels written by contemporary novelists: Amitav Ghosh: his three novels: The Circle of Reason, In an Antique Land and The Shadow Lines, two novels written by Vikram Seth: A Suitable Boy, and An Equal Music, and two novels written by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni: The Mistress of Spices and Queen of Dreams.

The introductory chapter makes a detailed survey of the contemporary Indian novel in English. Novel as a literary form came in India in the later part of the nineteenth century. During this period new writers started writing in the regional languages, gradually it led to the growth of Indian fiction. It was in Bengal that literary renaissance first manifested, but later on its traces could be seen in other parts of India as well. The social climate in Bengal during this period was powerfully conditioned by the rise of western ideas and culture, the growth of press and the change of religious, moral values brought about by the social reformers and the rationalistic view of life set the stage for the emergence of novel, a new literary form in India. During the Gandhian period, Indian novel in English got its real form and shape. The novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan explored the cause of nationalism and patriotic feelings. After independence there was great change in the social, political, economic, religious and cultural fields. However the novelists were influenced by American and European models, as they intended to make an appeal to the heterogeneous community, people of diverse ethnic, religious and cultural background. East-West confrontation, and search for self identity appear to be prominent and recurrent theme of the past modern Indian novel in English.
The publication of Salman Rushdie’s novel, *Midnight’s Children* in 1980, has strongly encouraged and influenced the novelists of new generation like Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry and many more. Breaking the linguistic barriers thwarting the efforts of earlier novelists, these writers with contemporary outlook and experimentation in form and structure have changed the whole scenario of Indian novel in English completely and brought a new form of internationalism, transnationalism to their literary works. The contemporary novel in English has post-colonial background. Post-colonialism marks the end of colonialism by giving the indigenous people the necessary authority and political, social and cultural freedom to take their place and gain independence by overcoming political and cultural imperialism. The post-colonial theory investigates what happens when two cultures clash and one rules the other where plurality in culture is seen.

This chapter has also focused on post-colonialism as a background to the new novel. It has also discussed in detail about the definition and meaning of post-colonialism, which includes Indian diaspora, hybridity, subalternity, expatriate writing and Indian women novelists in English. The selected seven novels for this study observed and analyzed in this situation and conditions only. The introductory chapter also presents the concept ‘culture’, defined by the social anthropologists as well as other experts like Edward B. Tailor, T. S. Eliot, Matthew Arnold, William Raymonds and others. According to them culture plays very significant role in shaping the personality of man, in making him civilized. It was during the eighteenth century that the idea of culture emerged as a main concern in the literary works of various writers as a reaction to and as a part of sudden and great changes occurred in the society. The industrial revolution and the consequent mechanization of social life also influenced the young novelists of the period. Threatened by the machine, these writers therefore, appealed to culture as a redeeming agency that could save society from its degeneration. The chapter also focuses on the meaning, definition and development of the term ‘transnationality’ as a concept, theory and experience, nourished as an important literature in social science. In practice the concept refers to increasing transborder relations of individuals, groups, firms and the mobilization beyond the state boundaries. It seems to be an apt term to describe the general conditions of the contemporary era. To conclude the introductory chapter that makes a detailed survey
of Indian novel in English, its beginning, growth and the present transnational nature has been presented here along with the detailed explanation of the terms, culture and transnationality.

The second chapter explores works of the Sahitya Academy Award winner Amitav Ghosh. Ghosh loves on dwell to those little explored spaces where cultures intersect and identities emerged, class collide and languages equipped with his gift for lucid prose and power to relate. This chapter also attempts to investigate Amitav Ghosh as a novelist who very effectively and vividly depicts not only social and political but also cultural activities at the national as well as international level of the past and present period. The fictional corpus of Amitav Ghosh is a curious blend of scholarship, history, philosophy and philosophy with literature. His literary work also focuses on the socio-cultural confrontation which appears to be very dominant movement that opposes the hegemony. Amitav Ghosh is popularly known as cultural traveller as he visited Egypt as a research student in social anthropology, where he studied and observed social, religious, economic and cultural life of the villagers. He also spent early days of his life by travelling with his parents as his father’s foreign services took him to different places. In other words Amitav Ghosh grew up in the places like Calcutta, Dhaka and Baghdad.

*The Circle of Reason*, his first novel is observed in this study, focuses on the changing nature of contemporary national as well as transnational society. Amitav Ghosh has been able to move freely in his writing between anthropology, history and fiction. It has been observed that the novel basically concerns with picaresque adventures of the protagonist of the novel, Nachiket Bose, Alu, a weaver from a small village near Calcutta, Lalpukur, leaves home to travel across the Indian ocean to the oil town al-Ghazira in the Persian gulf along with other people. As far as the source material of the novel is concerned, it is based on katha-upnishada, myths and Bhagavadgita, as structurally the novel is divided into three sections named after three gunas: Satva, which is described as a light of consciousness, the author calls it reason, the second section Rajas, passion it begins with Alu’s arrival in al-Ghazira and third Tamas, death, in which the persons like Zindi, Alu and Kulfi are presented in the small town el-Qued.
It has also been observed that the novel is an allegory about the destruction of traditional village life by the modernizing influx of western culture and the subsequent displacement of non-European people by imperialism. The first section of the novel opens with the arrival of eight year old boy, Nachiketa Bose in Balaram and Torudebi’s life in Lalpukur, who later on was nicknamed as Alu, as his head was very big than the normal boy of his age. Lalpukur is a border town belonged to Noakhali in Bengal close to Burma. Balaram, 36 years old man is interested in science, reason and rationality. In this border town, number of religious, cultural celebrations and activities take place. As Balaram believes in science, Pasteur and reason, the other people have faith in God and Goddesses as there are statues of ma Durga, ma Kali and ma Saraswati in the village. The people celebrate various festivals and ceremonies. It has been observed that as Balaram and Gopal and other scientists discussed about the world loom civilization, the cotton trade was very ancient, they built their first houses and cities. As Amitav Ghosh says that the Indian cloth was found in the graves of the pharaos. Indian soil is strewn with cloth from China. The whole of the ancient world hummed with the cloth trade. The silk root from China, running through central Asia and Persia to the ports of the Meditarian and from there to the markets of Africa and Europe, bound continents together for more centuries that we can count. The transnationality in cotton trade is explained in its similarity about the word ‘cotton’, in Sanskrit it was called Karpasia and in Persian Kirpas, in Greek it was Carbasos, in Latin Carbasus and in Hebrew Kirpas. The author further says that weaving is hope because it has no country, no continent. Weaving is reason which makes the world mad and human.

It is observed that on the one hand the scientists in the village discuss about the foundation of The School of Reason, on the other hand the singers sing and dance to express their love for Lord Krishna in various ragas, their bhajan and songs end with ecstatic chant: “Hare Rama hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare.” Thus in Lalpupkur, the scientific as well as spiritual, religious activities go hand in hand.

As the first chapter of the novel The Circle of Reason ‘Going West’ reveals Alu, Rakesh, Zindi, Kulfì, Chunni devi and others plan to go to al-Ghazira for work. Al –Ghazira was merchant’s paradise where Parsians, Iraquis, Zanzibari, Arabs, Omanis and Indians flattened up on it and grew rich and malik. People belonging to
different religion and culture live in the boarding house. The immigrants celebrate Durga Puja, and other cultural activities in the Gulf countries. Number of events take place which are based on Manu Smriti. It has been researched that the metaphor generates the circles in the novel which itself comes full circle. Beginning with Alu’s home coming, as he comes to his uncle’s home after his parents death, the novel ends as Alu is about to return home. The concluding sentence of the novel does not suggest end but beginning – ‘Hope is the beginning.’

The second novel of Amitav Ghosh, entitled, *In an Antique Land* is observed very closely, focusing on the story of two Indians in Egypt, Amitav Ghosh himself, the student anthropologist and writer and Bomma. The novel is narrated in the third person narration, divided into six sections: Prologue, Lataifa, Nashaway, Mangalore, Going back and Epilogue. The novel is an archaeology of a great merchantile civilization, from about the tenth century to sixteenth century. The title of the novel, *In an Antique Land* denotes ancient Egypt and its rich culture. It also refers to Shelley’s sonnet ‘Ozymandias’ which talks about futility of earthly achievement and perishability of name and fame.

The antique land in its time is not constituted by the past alone, it overlaps with the present and future. There are three travellers in the novel: Ben Yiju, his slave Bomma and Amitav, young doctoral student. All the three civilizations of twelfth century, Middle East Egypt and Mangalore, both past and present are lovingly recreated from the inside. The cross-cultural encounters of the twelfth century reveal a culture which is not rigidly compartmentalized; the Jews from Africa and Egypt, the muslims in Arabia and the Indian traders are involved in the spirit of co-operation. The first two sections of the novel, writer presents the history of Egyptian social, cultural, religious life of the rural people. Amitav visits Lataifa where he studies the life of rural Egypt.

It has been observed that there are some similarities as well as dissimilarities in the rural life in India and Egypt. The similarities for instance are, the Indians welcome their guests with respect and warm and offer food and shelter, in the same way Amitav, a student is wel-comed by Abu Ali warmly, who offered him not only shelter but also food. Another similarity between these two countries is that majority of
population live in village, do their agricultural activities with the help of cattles, they live in mud-brick houses and their main crops are wheat and rice. The dissimilarities between these two communities are: the Indians live according to their religious guidelines as they have their festivals, ceremonies, rites, rituals and traditions, whereas the Egyptians follow their religious guidelines, celebrate their festivals, rites and rituals.

The native people of Lataifa asked many questions to Amitav about Indian social, religious, political and cultural as well as agricultural life. The questions for example are: who is the rais in India? Isn’t it Indira Gandhi? Are you a Muslim? Are you a communist? They also asked questions about worshiping of cow, purifying land by cow-dung, the burning of dead bodies and about holy books. They also love Hindi films and songs, especially of Raj Kapoor’s Sangam. In fact, the political relationship between these two countries was very close as Mahatma Gandhi visited Egypt to consult Sa’ad Zaghloul Pasha, the leader of the nationalist movement, later on Nehru and Nasser had forged a class alliance. The Egyptians still remember India’s support during the Suez crises of 1956 when Egypt had been subjected to an unprovoked attack by the Britishers and the French people.

The spread of trades and business is resulted from the visit of Egyptian tradesmen to many countries. After Ben Yiju, a Meraccan merchant Ibn-Battuta and other merchants from Yemen, China, Sumatra, Ceylon, the Maldives and Iran visited Mangalore for business purpose. The portuguese sailors Duarte Barbosa and other merchants also visited the city. They have their houses, servants and lived very luxurious life.

The Shadow Lines (1988) is the finest novel for which Amitav Ghosh gained international critical acclaim and also received the Sahitya Academy Award, India’s highest national recognition for a writer in 1989. Though the novel has post-independence and post-partition background it deals with the relationship between Hindu community and Muslim community in Dhaka and Calcutta. The encounters between these cultural, religious, rituals and customs are the main concern in the novel. The novel also concerns with the cultural confrontation between the Indian traditional life represented by Tha’mma, Mayadevi, the great grand mother and the
educated young generation represented by Haresh, Tridib, Jatin, May Price, Ila and Nick. The novelist explores relationship between the Price family of England and the family of Dutta Chaudhari from Calcutta. Thus the cultural encounter takes place in the countries like India, England and Bangladesh which resulted in transnationality. The clashes between two communities take place even three years Indian independence. After the partition the Hindus had to migrate from Bangladesh into India, as well as the Muslims had to move from India to Bangladesh consequently the people from both the communities had to leave their ancestral big houses and property in their first country. The man-made border lines between two countries become shadowy. People could not go to their original houses without passport and visa. Jethamoshai, lived in Dhaka, Tha’mma wants to bring him back in India, so Tha’mma and Tridib travelled to Dhaka, Tha’mma could not see the border lines between two countries, which become shadowy. The Price family also travelled from England to India and the members of Chaudhari family to England, this cultural encounter, thus, represents transnationality.

In the third chapter, the researcher brings to notice that Vikram Seth as a man and an author. Here two of his novels, A Suitable Boy and An Equal Music have been thoroughly examined and revealed a distinct culture and transnationality. Vikram Seth is popularly known as a citizen of the world as he travelled to China, as a research student who studied the social, political and cultural life of the people. This chapter projects on the biographical information, literary works and various influences on Vikram Seth. By the success of his poetic work and the Sahitya Academy Award winning novel in verse, The Golden Gate (1986). The novelist uses the third person omniscient narration in standard English that is peppered when the occasion demands it with untranslated Hindi, Urdu or Bengali words. The influences of western novelists itself indicate that the transnational elements are reflected in the novel. It has also been observed that the majority of young characters are influenced by western civilization and culture, as the Britishers lived in India for a long period, they left their way of life, their influences on the social, political and cultural life of the educated as well as uneducated Indians. The young characters in the novel, returning from Oxford and Cambridge seek employment in the prestigious firms. These westernized youngsters are, therefore called baboons. Haresh Khanna, Arun Mehra and others
complete their education in England. The women in the novel and even Indian kitchen also are westernized as they require two cooks, Indian as well as Western.

The author has represented a mini India in the village, Brahmpur, a capital of imaginary state Purva-Pradesh, where people belonging to Hindu, Muslim live together. They have their separate area in Brahmpur, they also have their separate wells, temples, mosques and many other things. The story of the novel moves around four families; The Kapoors, The Mehras, The Chatterjis and The Khans representing their social groups. The Hindus and the Muslims participate in each others festivals and domestic ceremonies like marriage. The Hindus celebrate their religious and cultural activities like the performance of Ram Leela, Ram-Bharat visit, Karwa Chauth, Kartik Pornima, where as the Muslims also celebrate Id, Mohrrum and read the Quran along with their regular nammaz.

It is important to note that A Suitable Boy opens with the celebration of wedding ceremony, which is the central event in the novel. Number of religious activities take place in the Hindu marriage system including rites, rituals and customs. Right from the haludi programme to the garlanding by the bride and bridegroom. The novelist has tackled various issues faced by the post-independence Indian society including Hindu-Muslim strife, Abolition of the Zamindary system, land reforms, social reforms by removing traditional system of Sati, Child marriage and the empowerment of Muslim women. The novel was published at the time when Indian politics was beset by communal conflict caused by Ram Janmbhoomi campain, so the novel focuses on Babri Masjit dispute and the temple controversy in Ayodhya. In fact, Vikram Seth presents the divisions based on class, caste and religion as well as the external western influences resulting from colonial encounter that produced such a deep rift in Indian society, Brahmpur, Indian-nation state in 1950, traditional and modernity, as the western universities have influenced the university in Brahmpur.

An Equal Music, the second novel, written by Vikram Seth deals with the poetic love story of two musicians, written in first person narrative from the perspective of lonely and sensitive artist. The protagonist of the novel, Michael Holmes is a violinist based in London. The novel opens with his unsuccessful love affairs with Virginie, a young French girl.
As the novel takes place in Europe, therefore, the European characters play very significant role in locating the novel at the transnational level. The European artists do their practice, perform their signing and dancing on different places to represent their culture. These artists are the real preservers of their culture. Michael and Julia perform together following moral restrictions. The life of the singers and musicians is divided into two parts; their homeland and the land they visited. The scenes of the novel take place alternatively both in Venice and Veinna.

The fourth chapter of the study explores Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni as a well known poet, short story writer, a teacher and a novelist. Chitra Divakaruni uses the magic realism, which is a technique mostly used advent grade writers, where entered texts, breaks through rigorous realism in fantastical forms. Analyzing her novel, The Mistress of Spices the researcher explains that, the South Asian Women’s are caught into two cultures in America. The protagonist of the novel, Tilotama possesses magic power and runs a ethnic grocery store of spices. Her profession is magically real, with the help of it, spiritual and magico-religious rituals she intuits and procures medicines for the ailments of her fellow South Asians. Tilo tests her willpower and strength, learns survival tactics and negotiates her identity and loyalties while shuttling between cultures, histories and traditions. Her character projects the encounter between the American mythology of individualism, an established feminist tradition and the eastern practice of female obedience and invisibility.

In this autobiographical novel, unlike Chitra Divakaruni, Tilo also comes from India to America. The novel opens with her introduction as she says, ‘I am mistress of spices... but the spices are my love.’ She acquires the training of magic power on island, through Shampati’s fire she is transformed as the mistress with some restrictions, as her life is not for herself, but it is for the welfare of the others. In her ethnic spice store, the spices can speak with her. In short, Tilo’s ethnic spice store is basically influenced by Indian Culture in Oakland, California is an excellent example of transnationality.

All the immigrants visit Tilo’s store not only to have things for daily useful food and spice items but also for a solid solution on their domestic and personal problems and issues. The name Tilo has Indian religious background as it is also
name of the most beautiful apsara of Rain God, Indra's court. Tilo is there only for
dance and not for love to anybody. Unfortunately Tilo tempts to break the rule for
mistress as her closeness with Raven compels her to do so. She repeats this mistake,
consequently she looses her magic powers and becomes a normal woman. Raven
suggests new name for her, Maya, which has also religious significance.

In her second novel, *Queen of Dreams*, Chitra Divakaruni spins a fresh,
enchanting story of transformation that is as lyrical as in its dramatic as Rakhi’s
mother says that she dreams the dreams of other people, so that she can help them to
live their lives happily. The protagonist of the novel, Rakhi, a young artist, lives with
her divorced mother in Berkeley, California. The life of Rakhi is divided between the
lure of her mother’s past in India and assimilation in modern America, as she is
struggling for her existence in the world of transition. Rakhi’s mother is a dream
teller, born with ability to share her family and interpret the dreams of other to foresee
and guide them through their fates. Rakhi also learns this magical power, the art of
reading dreams of the people and suggest solutions on the bad dreams of the
immigrants. Caught under the burden of painful past of her mother’s life, a painful
secret, her solace comes in the discovery, after her mother’s death of her dream
journals, which being to open to long closed door to her past. The life of Chitra
Divakaruni is shaken by new horrors. In her wake of 9/11 she and her friends must
deal with dark new complexities about their acculturation haunted by nightmares
beyond her imagination, she described it as a tragic event. After 9/11 all the
immigrants were considered as terrorists. In order to save from American police, these
people are to carry American flag with them. The Sikh folk suffered more from it.

The minor characters in the novel like Sony, Belle, Balwant, elder Jahnavi and
others also play very significant role representing Indian culture. Rakhi also dreams
the dream of Sage Narad, who turns into a monkey, king Ravan’s dream of defeat and
death. The dream of Tunga-dhwaj-transformation of a king into a beggar. Rakhi is
also a good painter, her painting about India is totally imaginary, as she never visited
India. The native Americans are interested in Hindi film, they come to Rakhi’s Korma
House International for Hindi film, Sholey and to listen its songs. In this way, the
Indian paintings, the Indian Hindi film and its songs, and the pictures of Indian food
items, sweets, snakes reflect Indian culture in America is an example of transnationality.

Thus, after analyzing and examining all the seven selected novels written by three contemporary Bengali born novelists, it could be concluded that the cultural elements and transnational aspects are reflected at large extent in these novels. Research methodology employed in this work is exploratory, interpretative and analytical in nature. The primary and the secondary data has also been used in this study. The research work is confined to the close analysis of these seven novels, to reveal cultural aspects and transnational elements reflected in the novels.

The title of the research work concentrates on ‘culture’ and ‘transnationality’, and its implementation in the selected novels written by the contemporary Indian novelists in English. The study of these two concepts is the most recent and new challenging area of research for the upcoming researchers, because the modern world is threatened by the industrial revolution and mechanization, the contemporary writers have turned to culture and its study at the transnational level in order to save the contemporary society from its degeneration. The research work, therefore will be proved as a major source material and provides scope for further research in the field of cultural studies.

**Suggestions for further research:**

This study tentatively concludes by suggesting that the representation of these contemporary Indian novelists in English provides a comprehensive understanding of the uses of ‘culture’ in the selected seven novels. The study of ‘culture’ also helps to analyze modern man’s social life secure and safe from the new threat of sudden change in the form and structure of the society in order to save the contemporary man and his society from its decay. The present thesis is an attempt to open up a debate on certain vital areas of ‘culture’ as it is increasing being located in multiple social and intellectual locations.