Preface

The proposed work *Envisioning Indian Cities in Indian English Literature through selected works of Ahmed Ali, Zeenuth Futehally, Anita Desai and Jeet Thayil* is an endeavour to present envisioning of Indian Cities in Indian English Literature. From the myths and legends that fashioned the identity of cities states to the diversity of literary performance in contemporary cities around the world, literature and the characters of involved cities have remained inseparably entwined. The team of scholars offers a comprehensive, accessible survey of the literary city, exploring the myriad cities that authors create and the genres in which allegorical cities appear. Early periods in literature consider the literary legacies of historical and symbolic cities from antiquity to the early modern period, while subsequent periods consider the importance of literature to the relationship between urban landscape and memory. It has been very interesting to know the changes in the city and behavioral changes of the characters in accordance with the time. It also gives insight of how different people react differently to the same situation in the same period.

*Twilight in Delhi (1940)* by Ahmed Ali gives the picture of the early twentieth century where the decline of the Indo-Muslim culture started. It was taking its last breaths, the culture which ruled over the sub-continents for centuries. In this novel memory is seen both as a source of personal identity and as a burden preventing to attain happiness. Each character is involved in a struggle to remember but more importantly in a struggle to forget certain aspects of their past. He has beautifully lyrical, lovingly etched portrait of a time showing the slow decay of a culture and a way of life.

*Zohra (1951)* by Zeenuth Futehally is based on Hyderabad, the City of Nawabs. It’s the story of Gandhian era; the story lags the time frame of first half of the twentieth century. Like ripples of water hit by a pebble, the social life of Muslim women in India emanated
outwards from the center at a speed dictated by the Islamic ideology of purdah and its attendant concepts of 'izzer (honor) and sharm (dishonor) on one hand, and embracing Western education and its concomitants on the other.

Voices in the City (1965) by Anita Desai is based on the life of the middle class intellectuals of Calcutta. The time chosen for the novel emphasized on Calcutta of the early 1960s. In many ways the story reflects a vivid picture of India's social transition - a phase in which the older elements are not altogether dead, and the emergent ones not fully evolved. The novel describes the bitter effects of the urban living on an Indian family.

Narcopolis (2012) by Jeet Thayil is based on Bombay now known as Mumbai, a city that never sleeps. Much of it can write itself if connected by the dots of history: a city made of islands reclaimed by the British, a polyglot culture where all of India's languages, faiths and castes mingle, where the prevailing currency is money and its dreams are told, nay, sung, in those schmaltzy, kitschy Bollywood movies, and which lives on an edge, periodically blown up when terrorists set explosives, but returning to life the next day, resilient and resigned. The hallucinatory dream of a novel captures the Bombay of the 1970s in all its compelling squalor. Stretching across three decades and portraying a city in collision with itself.