

The Nation-state and the Indian English Novel in the Aftermath of Economic Liberalization in India

POONAM SHARMA

Abstract: In *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Robert J C Young discusses a continuing economic hegemony of former colonisers in the third world. He argues that decolonization in this situation is merely a shift in Gramscian civil and political societies since the system of autonomous nation-states is in fact “the means through which international capital exercises imperialist control.”¹ After the dissolution of the Soviet Union when late capitalism successfully propagated its economic models, a redefining of the term ‘nation-state’ has been in process. The relevance of ‘Postcolonialism’ as a theoretical movement is also questioned since nation-states are increasingly dictated by multinational corporations.²

‘Nation’ was formulated with a Gandhian ideology in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand, R K Narayan, Raja Rao, G V Desani, Kamala Markandaya, and ended up becoming a painful memory in the novels of post-partition period such as, Khushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan*, Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* or Amitav Ghosh’s *Shadow Lines*. The present paper looks at the modalities through which the nation-state has evolved in contemporary fiction and the dynamic of its representation. With a specific focus on three novels published in the last three decades, the current chapter will focus on three ways in which the Indian nation-state is depicted in Indian English novels after 1990s. These include the portrayal of neo-liberal state and governance in contemporary fiction, the treatment of human bodies as citizens in these novels, and the modes in which sectionalism is portrayed.

Keywords: Nation-state, Postcolonialism, Neo-liberalism, Globalization, Communalism.

At the midnight of 14 August 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru’s speech “Tryst with Destiny” marked the eve of Indian independence and charted out a future for post-colonial India. The speech not only emphasized the idea of Indian nationhood but also provided a political framework for Indian literary studies. Several scholars including Alex Tickell, Sunil Khilnani, Jon Mee and M. K. Naik have explored the influence of Nehru’s speech on Indian literature, particularly on Indian English novels. Salman Rushdie even included Nehru’s speech in his *Vintage Book of Indian Writing 1947–1997* to mark the role of English language in Indian literary prose (Rushdie xiii). Indian English novels in independent India such as *The Midnight’s Children* (1981), continued to look at this threshold moment to define Indian nation and its history.

More than half a century later, Alex Tickell finds a corresponding moment of importance for contemporary Indian writers in Dr Manmohan Singh’s budget speech of 1991 (Tickell 38). As India faced the external debt crisis at the turn of the twentieth century, Indian economy was remodelled to suit the era of neo-liberalism.¹ The Congress government

that came to power in June 1991 had to opt for an arrangement with the IMF and an adjustment loan with the World Bank. Manmohan Singh, who was the then Finance Minister of the country, introduced this new economic policy and transformed the Indian economic history. Rana Dasgupta in his analysis of Singh's budget speech finds significant parallels between his speech and Nehru's "Tryst with Destiny" (Dasgupta 58). With similar oratory skills, Singh presented his economic policy as an extension of Nehru's vision for Indian freedom and future (59). This paper analyses the effect of this momentous change on Indian English novels. It intends to examine if neo-liberalism and globalization have influenced the portrayal of the Indian nation-state in the Indian English novels as strongly as Indian independence and partition did in the last century.

The Indian nation-state emerged with Indian independence in 1947 and was influenced by the European concepts of sovereignty and national history. Priyamvada Gopal in *The Indian English Novel* has elaborated on how the European scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries emphasised on a written form of history to define the nation, and as a reaction, Indian scholars began to imagine and record India as a nation in prose history (Gopal 12).² Scholars such as Ranajit Guha have explained that the novel and the act of writing Indian history were born together in colonial India (Guha 55).³ In a similar argument, Gopal has also called the novel in India as an essentially "post-colonial genre" because it focussed on the history of the nation in late nineteenth century and continued to reflect on nation and nationalism even in independent India (Gopal 14).

'Nation' was formulated with a Gandhian ideology in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand, R K Narayan, Raja Rao, G V Desani, Kamala Markandaya, and ended up becoming a painful memory in the novels of post-partition period such as, Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* or Amitav Ghosh's *Shadow Lines*. The current paper looks at the modalities through which the nation-state has evolved in contemporary fiction and the dynamics of its representation.

The paper looks at three novels by contemporary Indian authors, Arundhati Roy and Arvind Adiga. The novels to be studied here include *The God of Small Things* (1997) and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) by Arundhati Roy, and *The White Tiger* (2008) by Arvind Adiga. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is the story of a transgender, Anjum, who is joined by several other socially outcast characters in her public and private struggles against the Indian nation-state. *The White Tiger*, Adiga's debut novel, is the story of a poor driver Balram who goes on to become a businessman by murdering his employer, Mr Ashok. Roy's debut novel, *The God of Small Things* narrates the story of a village in Kerala and the life of twin siblings Rahel and Estha. The twins are separated in their childhood due to the caste/class politics in their community and meet after two decades to seek some answers and discover how the dawn of globalization in India has transformed their village.

The focus of this paper is on three different ways in which the Indian nation-state is depicted in Indian English novels after 1990s. These include the portrayal of neo-liberal state and governance in contemporary fiction, the treatment of human bodies as citizens in these novels, and the modes in which sectionalism is portrayed. The paper explores whether the nature of the state has transformed in the face of neo-liberalism. Also, is the sectarian politics in India related to its economic failures? What is the nature of contemporary democratic government and how does it control or commoditize the human body in these novels?

The Neo-liberal State and Governance in Contemporary Fiction

“If I were making a country, I’d get the sewage pipes first, then the democracy, then I’d go about giving pamphlets and statues of Gandhi to other people, but what do I know? I’m just a murderer!”⁴

In his essay, “Patriotism and Its Futures” Arjun Appadurai mentions the terms “postnation” and “postnational” to describe globalization. He calls it “the process of moving to a global order in which the nation-state has become obsolete and other formations for allegiance and identity have taken its place” (Appadurai 169).⁵ But in light of what Appadurai and others like Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri highlight about the current structure of a nation, one realises that the discourse on ‘state’ and governance is largely absent from these arguments as if the nation is an apolitical entity. The question here is whether nation-states have become local agents of corporate interests and as a consequence have lost their sovereignty or whether state apparatuses subjugate their own citizens to enable the economic interests of transnational corporations? This section explores the portrayal of this corporatized nation-statehood in the Indian English novel.

Though Anjum’s story is introduced with partition in *The Ministry*, the plot unfolds during the last decade of the twentieth century. Unlike *The God*, *The Ministry* is not the story of a single family caught up in the caste-class politics. Rather, it is a chronicle of the post-independence India from the perspectives of several marginalised sections in the country. Authors like Michiko Kakutani have stated that the novel is “less focussed on the personal and private than on the vast, violent, circling, driving, ridiculous, insane, unfeasible, public turmoil of a nation” (Kakutani). The Kashmir issue is a legacy of partition that continues to haunt post-colonial India. It does not merely define contemporary relations between India and Pakistan but is also symptomatic of the relation between the Indian state and its citizens. The failures of the Indian state are highlighted in chapters narrating the state programmed violence in Kashmir. It is only amplified when people from myriad regions of Indian territory, for instance people from Naxalbari regions in central India and the people tormented in Gujarat massacres of 2002, assemble in the national capital to protest. Ironically, Major Amrik Singh uses anti-Sikh riots of 1984 to receive an asylum in the USA presenting himself as a victim, while horrific oppression against Kashmiris under his watch goes unrecorded by the government. This problematises subalternity and its credibility as a foundational unit of identity politics.

National discourses are also presented as unreliable since they are constantly reworked and moulded to serve changing state regimes and their respective propaganda machineries. Kulsum Bi’s attachment with the light and sound show at the Red fort in Old Delhi is based on the fact that it used to narrate the story of the glorious Mughal empire, while concomitantly alluding to the pervasive role of transgenders in court politics. But with the advent of ‘Gujarat ka lalla’ as the Indian Prime Minister, the show is revised, and the Islamic references are eliminated from it:

Soon centuries of Muslim rule would be stripped of poetry, music and architecture and collapsed into the sound of the clash of swords and a bloodcurdling war cry that lasted only a little longer than the husky giggle that Ustad Kulsoom Bi had hung her hopes on. The remaining time would be taken up by the story of Hindu glory. As always, history would be a revelation of the future as much as it was a study of the past. (Roy 407)

India’s representative democracy is constantly put into question in Adiga’s *The White Tiger* too. Mr Ashok displays a middleclass ignorance when he explains to his wife Pinky

that a large portion of Indian population is uneducated and hence, parliamentary democracy in such a country is a foolish idea, “*That’s the whole tragedy of this country*” (Adiga 10). Though hurt by what Ashok had said, Balram believes it to be true and justified, and calls his life’s story as “*The Autobiography of a Half-Baked Indian*” - an alternative title for the novel. The story of his upbringing is the story of how a “half-baked fellow is produced” (11). As he reads aloud his search poster put up by the police, he goes on to elaborate on his details. To every single detail provided by the police in his introduction, he writes an entire narrative behind it for the Chinese President. This narrative, like the narrative of Amrik Singh’s state purported violence against Kashmiris in *The Ministry*, never finds a mention in state records.

As in the epigraph of this section, making a comparison with China, Balram satirically states,

I gather you yellow-skinned men, despite your triumphs in sewage, drinking water, and Olympic gold medals, still don’t have democracy. Some politician on the radio was saying that that’s why we Indians are going to beat you: we may not have sewage, drinking water, and Olympic gold medals, but we *do* have democracy. (96)

With the use of satire, several organs of Indian representative democracy are portrayed as failed projects in the novel. Government hospitals and schools are all decaying with corruption and inefficiency. All in the name of a government hospital, Balram would see three different foundation stones for a hospital, “laid by three different politicians before three different elections” (47). But Adiga is also able to explain the other side of the story where the schoolteacher who had stolen the government money meant for children’s mid-day meal did so because he had not been paid his salary in six months.

Even elections in the rural India are portrayed as a mere farcical caricature of the democratic process. In a tongue in cheek manner, Balram explains how people barely get to vote in his side of the country, “like eunuchs discussing the Kama Sutra, the voters discuss the elections in Laxmangarh” (98). Balram’s father is in a complete state of shock and awe to think of “people in the other India who get to vote for themselves- isn’t that something?” (100). The only man who goes to vote in Laxmangarh, despite the warning, is killed by goons and the police.

Centred on the historical monument, Jantar Mantar, the third chapter in *The Ministry* is also a glance at the unfulfilled promises of Indian democracy. The historical structure was offered as a protest site to people by the Delhi police in exchange of the parliament street.⁶ In the novel, the site becomes rallying point of all those who fight and wish to be heard against the repressive regime of Indian state: “communists, secessionists, revolutionaries, dreamers, idlers, crackheads, crackpots, all manner of freelancers, and wise men” (Roy 101). Within this crowd, Dr Azad Bharatiya (literally, the Free Indian who appears to be a caricature of Arundhati Roy herself as a hopeless political activist) who had entered “the eleventh year, third month and seventeenth day of his hunger strike” is introduced as someone who gives a call for true liberal democracy (125). Dr Bharatiya sums up all the issues Roy has consistently raised in her polemical writings over the past two decades against the Indian state. He stands as the representative of all those who find it difficult to protest continuously at Jantar Mantar.

One aspect of living as an Indian is unanimously shared in *The God*, *The Ministry* and *The White Tiger*. It is to be haunted by the domination of America on the Indian economy. Dr Bharatiya is a spokesperson against this dominance. While even the dogs of American President reside in the five-star hotel of Delhi, he is forced to stand on road protesting

against capitalism. He lives in a continuous fear of being electronically surveyed and murdered by American government. Ironically, the cars that are employed to hit and kill him on the road, Bharatiya never misses to mention, are of Indian companies and driven by American agents. From T.V. channels to mining companies, everything is funded by the American government. Even the Union Carbide Gas victims from Bhopal assemble at Jantar Mantar in protest, “poisoned so many years ago. But nobody cares. Those (American) dogs just sit there on that Meridian Hotel windowsill and watch us die” (130).

Indigenous and local entrepreneurs are also left vulnerable by the government to the forces of global market. Mammachi’s ‘Paradise Pickles and Preserves’ in *The God* is ambiguously banned by the Food Products Organization (FPO mark became mandatory since 2006 following the Food Safety and Standards Act) because “as per their books”, Mammachi’s products were neither jam nor jelly: “too thin for jelly and too thick for jam. An ambiguous, unclassifiable consistency, they said” (Roy 30). Hakim Abdul Majid’s Rooh Afza (‘Elixir of the Soul’) suffers a similar fate in *The Ministry*. Though it had survived wars and even partition, it “was, like most things in the world, trumped” by an American multinational beverage corporation, “Coca-Cola” (Roy 13).

In a similar fashion, Balram in *The White Tiger* encounters Indian poverty always around American advertisements and buildings. While roaming on the streets of Jangpura, Delhi, at night he sees a “dead tired” rickshaw-puller going to sleep on roadside, next to his rickshaw. At the back of his rickshaw is an advertising sticker of a gym instructor asking, “IS EXCESS WEIGHT A PROBLEM FOR YOU?...the mascot of the gym- an American with enormous white muscles- smiled at me from above the slogan. The rickshaw-pullers snoring filled the air” (Adiga 220). The looming image of global forces of capitalism continue to overpower and subjugate the marginalised in these novels highlighting the inefficiency of Indian state to protect them from transnational corporations.

Segregation and the sealing of human body in contemporary novels

The story of a poor man’s life is written on his body, in a sharp pen.⁷

In the last few decades, several debates on globalisation have explored the politics of segregating the body of a domestic or migrant or foreign worker, and ascribing servility to it (Ehrenreich 85-103) (Harvey 19-27). Similar to racism, capitalism politicises the human body with insider-outsider markers. As indicated by Deleuze and Guattari, global capital “tends toward a threshold of decoding that will destroy the socius in order to make it a body without organs” (Deleuze Guattari 33). It turns work into an apparatus that “codes flows, invests organs, and marks bodies” by “tattooing, excising, incising, carving, scarifying, mutilating, encircling, and initiating” (144). This stands in contrast to the primitive form of economy that was linked with the local and based on the relations between people. In contrast, global capital reduces all people and their relations into labour machines.

This dichotomy between the older form of globalisation and the neo-capitalised one is explored through human bodies in contemporary novels, as also argued by critics like Robbie Goh.⁸ The difference between the bodies of the people residing in the ‘darkness’ and those residing in the ‘lightness’ are stark and highlighted throughout *The White Tiger*.

From the very beginning of the novel, India is geographically divided into darkness and light and so is the human body. Looking at his colleague’s diseased lips which is also from darkness, Balram is able to understand it as “the skin disease (vitiligo), which afflicts

so many poor people in our country. I don't know why you get it, but once you do, your skin changes colour from brown to pink" (Adiga 123). Ironically, the poor man leaving his true appearance is turned into a lookalike of an American, "sometimes a fellow's whole body has changed color, and as you walk past, you think, *An American!* You stop to gape; you want to go near and touch. Then you realize its just one of us, with that horrible condition"(123).

First, we get to look at the dark India where children are "too lean and short for their age, and with oversized heads from which vivid eyes shine, like the guilty conscience of the government of India" (20). Human body in the village is also constantly animalised. Balram's father believes that he has been treated like a donkey all his life and now, "All I want is that one son of mine- at least one- should live like a man" (30). The struggle between man and animals for resources and identity is so intense that real animals are healthier than poor villagers. Balram explains how their water buffalo was the healthiest in the family and this was true for every household of the village. As a child Balram is unable to understand his father's dream for him, "what it meant to live like a man was a mystery. I thought it meant being like Vijay, the bus conductor" (30). Even though Vijay belonged to a lower caste family, he is able to secure class mobility through corrupt and calculative means. His body is always finely clad in a uniform unlike the half-naked bodies of Balram's family members.

The difference between the rich man and the poor man's body is made obvious in the beginning of the novel itself. Balram explains that rich man's body is a "premium cotton pillow", but his own kinds are different. His father's,

spine was knotted rope, the kind that women use in villages to pull water from wells; the clavicle curved around his neck in high relief, like a dog's collar; cuts and nicks and scars, like little whip marks in his flesh, ran down his chest and waist, reaching down below his hipbones and his buttocks. (27)

But Balram here is the bridge between these two forms of bodies. He is able to not only differentiate between the two but also gets to choose between them since he dreads the fate of his father and then his brother,

I couldn't stop thinking of Kishan's body. They were eating him alive in there! They would do the same thing to him that they did to Father-scoop him out from the inside and leave him weak and helpless, until he got tuberculosis and died on the floor of a government hospital (86)

Balram is a misfit in the India of darkness by the virtue of his body. Despite his pleadings, he is "too thin" to be taken as a factory worker in Bangalore. The human body is reified in contemporary capitalist system and this commodification of a poor man's body is most vividly expressed in the said scene. The contractor asks everyone to take off their shirts since he needs to "'see a man's nipples before I give him a job!' He looked at my chest; he squeezed the nipples- slapped my butt- glared into my eyes - and then poked the stick against my thigh: 'Too thin! Fuck off!'" (55).

When the plot begins, Balram's body is in the darkness, but it metamorphoses into the body, as well as name, of Mr Ashok by the end. Even in his finishing act of this transformation, he touches Ashok's neck before killing him. He recalls his father's body,

the junction of the neck and the chest, the place where all the tendons and veins stick out in high relief, was my favourite spot. When I touched this spot, the pit of my father's neck, I controlled him- I could make him stop breathing with the pressure of a finger. (285)

Balram kills Ashok from the same spot that he mentions in reference to his father. In the struggle between the globalised bodies, both primitive and capitalised, the capitalised economy wins over the primitive one by eliminating every contact between Balram and his family in the darkness. He casts off all human contacts of kinship and locality. This individuation of the human body is not only a transformation of identity but a metamorphosis of one form of capital production into another: changing local ties of human bonding into the world of formal outsourcing. Balram is thus not the servile body but the man-eater, the symbol of India's rising economy.

Just as Balram leaves no traces of his former identity, Velutha, a paravan carpenter from *The God of Small Things*, "left no ripples in the water. No footprints on the shore" (Roy 289). As explained by S B Kaufmann, Paravans form a Tamil caste group among the Roman Catholics in South India. Paravans used to be important brokers and mariners in colonial India.⁹ Their economic downfall has been as untraceable as Velutha's murder by the Ayemenem police. Velutha's untouchability is a form of primitive machinery. The upper-caste policemen could torture Velutha since "any implication that if nothing else, at least biologically he was a fellow creature- had been severed long ago" (Roy 309). The very first mention of Velutha in the novel is in terms of his shining "bared body" (6). Rahel's earliest memories of Velutha are of recognizing him from his behind because of his familiar back that had a "light brown birthmark shaped like a pointed dry leaf" (73). His bodily descriptions are symbolic of his indigenous paravan identity born and connected with nature in contrast to the artificial make up and expensive saree-clad body of Baby Kochamma. The paravan body is discriminated on the basis of its olfactory characteristics too. Baby Kochamma is disgusted to imagine Ammu making love to Velutha since, "How could she stand the smell? Haven't you noticed, they have a particular smell, these Paravans?" (78). Velutha's body, however, has been shaped by his hard work as a paravan carpenter. His labour has made his body beautiful. In contrast to Ammu's family, Velutha as a paravan carpenter with his leftist ideology fail to compete against the global modes of production with his hand-made toys. His murder at the hands of the Ayemenem police, is a symbolic death of the indigenous at the hands of a state heading fast towards privatisation.

The indigenous body of the Kathakali performer is also subjected to the violence of capitalized globalisation in the novel. As Kathakali dancer is "planed and polished, pared down, harnessed wholly to the task of story-telling" he is forced to live in destitution and penury in the face of competition from the globalised world. His body is mentioned as "condemned goods" (230). His children do not opt for his art and go on to become clerks and bus conductors. As the narrator explains his desolation, he says, "in despair he turns to tourism. He enters the market. He hawks the only thing he owns. *The stories that his body can tell*" (Ibid.).

The Interconnection of Globalization and the Communalised Nation

"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's familiar."¹⁰

Milind Wakankar in *Subalternity and Religion* has argued that communalism in South Asia was a result of two 'ruptures' in Indian history. First due to the colonial governance where caste and religion-based electorates gave rise to new identity categories, and

secondly, because of the emergence of bourgeois nationalism (Wakankar 41). With the emergence of globalization and neo-liberalism at the end of the twentieth century, other dimensions to communalism have been added. This is done in collaboration with the open market economy in India. For instance, Aijaz Ahmed in *On Communalism and Globalisation*, calls contemporary Hindu communalism as “the failure of the liberal order to offer radical solutions to mass misery” (Ahmed 25). Ahmed calls globalization as a cause of income inequalities and the loss of economic sovereignty. The resurgence of RSS is thus a result of its ability to provide its members or “affiliate (them) a sense of political belonging” (25). Ahmed argues that such battles are fought “in the hope that the people shall...be induced to forget the real battles, namely the oppression wrought by the WTO and their own government” (26). It is this aspect of people’s struggles that has been reflected and expressed in the recent Indian English novels.

Velutha’s fate in *The God* is most severely dictated by Comrade K N M Pillai’s hypocrite designs and deceit. Pillai is clever to separate Velutha’s caste and his political affiliation in front of the police. He indirectly executes the murder of Velutha and raises his voice for the downtrodden only when it serves his own purpose. The failed project of communism in Kerala is shown in all its decadence in the novel. Economic liberalization in the 1990s served the purpose of elite and upper-caste communist leaders such as Pillai in the novel. The old Ayemenem office of the Communist Party, ‘Lucky Press’ where “rousing lyrics of Marxist Party songs were printed and distributed” has lost its all glory and purpose by the time Rahel visits the village as an adult (Roy 13). The red flag at the top of the office had turned old and faded. Comrade K N M Pillai takes pride in his son, symbolically named Lenin, who had moved to Delhi working as a service contractor for foreign embassies.

The Subaltern Studies group¹¹ which dominated literary theory in the end of the twentieth century assumed India to be a “pre-capitalist” society (Chandavarkar 189). For instance, Dipesh Chakrabarty conceived India as a world divided by hierarchies or “strong primordial loyalties of community, language, religion, caste and kinship”, in contrast to the first world countries where egalitarianism has already crossed the pre-capitalist stage of hierarchies (Chakrabarty 68). However, as scholars such as R. Chandavarkar have strongly argued, the sectionalism of the Indian working class was “neither a symptom of a pre-capitalist economy nor a derivative of the bonds of village and neighbourhood, caste and religion”, but it was “accentuated and developed by industrialization” (Chandavarkar 88). Balram in *The White Tiger* is quick to reveal to his upper-caste Hindu employers that their other driver Ram Persad is a Muslim hiding as a Hindu to get work at their place. Embedded in this act is a deep-rooted competition for employment where ethnic identities are pitted against each other for gaining profit. Though he has moments of introspection, Balram still prefers to use Ram Persad’s Muslim identity against him in order to secure better prospects for himself. Mammachi and Ammu’s labour for Mammachi’s ‘Paradise Pickles and Preserves’ in *The God* are unacknowledged and unrewarded by the virtue of their gender. Chacko who neither has skills nor any performance in the factory, claims it as his own by the virtue of being the only man in the family. Ammu is able to see his male chauvinism in separating her and Mammachi from the fruits of their labour. At another instance, Ammu is also severely critical of his “Marxist mind and feudal libido” when he sexually exploits the lower caste working women in the factory (Roy 168).

Conclusion: “History and Literature enlisted by Commerce”

As the shores of Meenachal river in *The God of Small Things* are polluted and transformed into tourist hotel resorts by the late 1990s, Roy explains the strange connection between the history of these lands and the literature being produced on it. Guest houses, ironically called as ‘heritage’, take pride in the oldest house among them because it belonged to ‘Kerala’s Mao Tse-tung’, Comrade E M S Namboodiripad.¹² As Roy calls it, the episode is “History and literature enlisted by commerce. Kurtz and Karl Marx joining palms to greet rich guests as they stepped off the boat” (Roy 126).

The focus of contemporary novels is on migrant workers, class inequality among citizens or the treatment of various ethnic minorities at the hands of the state. While authors like Rushdie or Amitav Ghosh had turned to history to define India, contemporary authors are more concerned with the idea of India as a nation-state in contemporary times. Priyamvada Gopal in her conclusion of *The Indian English Novel* (2009) argued that one of the most visible changes in contemporary fiction in the wake of migration is “the rewriting of the idea of a plural and secular India in the ferocious image of communal and majoritarian forces” (177). She goes on to give references of Gita Hariharan’s *In Time of Siege*, Amit Chaudhuri’s *Freedom Song*, Shama Futehally’s *Reaching Bombay Central*, Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss* and similar others. As also explored in the paper, this shift in the recent Indian fiction towards sectarianism in India is also one of the outcomes of economic liberalization. What Gopal calls a “rewriting of the idea of a plural and secular India” emerges as an outcome of a globalized Indian state (177).

In contemporary Indian English novels, there is an increased awareness of what the nation constitutes for its citizens and it emerges as a draconian concept. In the fiction of the previous century, there existed a disillusionment with only the state machinery. In contemporary fiction, one witnesses a disillusionment with the entire idea of a nation-state and an upsurge in the depiction of its subordination at the hands of transnational corporate interests.

As this paper had set out to explore, Indian English novels after economic liberalization, unlike the postcolonial novels in the twentieth century, are neither nostalgic for their native identity nor are they lost in the moment of Indian independence. Instead, Indian economic position and politics is presented with a sharp focus in the present-day novels. There are a few other recent novels of similar themes that deserve a mention here. Indira Sinha’s *Animal’s People* (2007) and Jeet Thayil’s *Narcopolis* (2012) present a dystopian vision of global south in the twenty first century. Amitav Ghosh’s *Ibis Trilogy* (2008-15) is also a fresh look at the roots of global capital in South Asia.

Notes

- ¹ Robert J C Young, *Postcolonialism; An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2001), p.47.
- ² Scholars such as Arjun Appadurai (1996), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in *Empire* (2000) or other postcolonial critics such as Ali Behdad (2005), have discussed the weakening power of nation-states in contemporary era of globalization.
- ³ To understand the circumstances around economic liberalisation in India, I referred to Amit Bhaduri and Deepak Nayyar's *The Intelligent Person's Guide to Liberalization*, and *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* by Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss.
- ⁴ Partha Chatterjee has also discussed the emergence of Indian nationalism and the nation-state as a "derivative" of European nationalism in *National Thought in the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).
- ⁵ Adiga, *The White Tiger*, p.96.
- ⁶ Appadurai emphasises on the current situation of "postnation" as the new norm which also refers to diasporic nationalisms.
- ⁷ As also mentioned by Arundhati Roy in her essay "Trickledown Revolution", in *Broken Republic* (99-100).
- ⁸ Adiga, *The White Tiger*, p.27.
- ⁹ Goh goes on to differentiate between the old form of capitalism and the new form of capitalism by differentiating between the feudal bodies presented animalistically in Adiga's novel and the smooth and flawless bodies of the overseas Indians in the novel (Goh 341).
- ¹⁰ Paravan is a Tamil caste among Roman Catholics in South India. For a detailed understanding of this caste in South India, I referred to S. B. Kaufmann's "A Christian Caste in Hindu Society: Religious Leadership and Social Conflict among the Paravan of Southern Tamil Nadu", *Modern Asian Studies*, 15.2 (1981), 203-234.
- ¹¹ Adiga, *The White Tiger* p.130.
- ¹² R Chandavarkar explains this group in reference to the wide variety of work produced by scholars based at Canberra, Sussex, and Oxford, in 1970s-80s with a shared purpose to "investigate the history of the subaltern classes" (Chandavarkar 175-196). Following postmodernism in 1980s, class analysis of South Asia was dominated by the Subaltern Studies group. Based on E P Thompson's Marxist historiography of the English working class (1963), Subaltern Studies provided a platform for some historians who collaborated with Ranajit Guha to recover the colonial history of India's subaltern classes.
- ¹³ E M S Namboodiripad was the first Chief Minister of Indian state of Kerala. Namboodiripad was from the Communist Party of India (CPI) who became the first non-Indian National Congress Chief Minister in independent India. Roy explains the politics of communism in Kerala and its failures in detail in *The God of Small Things*, pp.66-70.

Works Cited

- Adiga, Arvind. *The White Tiger*. Great Britain: Atlantic Books, 2008. Print
- Ahmed, Aijaz. *On Communalism and Globalisation: Offensives of the Far Right*. New Delhi: Three Essays Press, 2002. 25. Print.
- Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. 169. Print.
- Bhaduri, Amit, Deepak Nayyar. *The Intelligent Person's Guide to Liberalization*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1996. 22-25. Print.
- Chakrabarty, D. *Rethinking Working-Class History*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1989. 68-69. Print.

- Chandavarkar, Rajnarayan. "'The Making of the Working Class': E P Thompson and Indian History." *History Workshop Journal*, (1994):175-196. Web.
- Chatterjee, Partha. *National Thought in the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986. Print.
- Corbridge, Stuart, John Harriss. *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy*. Ed. Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss. Polity Press, 2000. Print.
- Dasgupta, Rana. *Capital: A portrait of twenty-first century Delhi*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2014. 58-59. Print.
- Deleuze, G, F Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Athlone Press, 1984. 33. Print.
- Ehrenreich, B. *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002. 85-103. Print.
- Goh, Robbie B. H. "The Overseas Indian and the Political Economy of the Body in Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 47. 3 (2012): 341-356. Web.
- Gopal, Priyamvada. *The Indian English Novel: Nation, History, and Narration*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc, 2009. 12, 177. Print.
- Guha, Ranajit. *History at the limit of World History*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003. 55-56. Print.
- Harvey, D. *Transforming Cities: Contested Governance and New Spatial Divisions*. London: Routledge, 1997. 19-27. Print.
- Kakutani, Michiko. "Arundhati Roy's Long-Awaited Novel Is an Ambitious Look at Turmoil in India." *New York Times*. 5 June 2017. Web 20 June 2020.
- Kaufmann, S. B. "A Christian Caste in Hindu Society: Religious Leadership and Social Conflict among the Paravas of Southern Tamil Nadu." *Modern Asian Studies* 15.2 (1981): 203-234. Web.
- Khilnani, Sunil. "Gandhi and Nehru: The Uses of English." *A History of Indian literature in English*. Ed. A K Mehrotra. London: C. Hurst & Co., 2003. 153. Print.
- Mee, Jon. "After Midnight: The Indian Novel in English of the 80s and 90s." *Postcolonial Studies* 1.1 (1998): 127-141. Web.
- Naik, M. K. and Shyamala A. Narayan. *Indian English Literature, 1980-2000: A Critical Survey*. New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2004. Print.
- Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. Gurgaon: Penguin Random House India, 1997. 126. Print.
- _____. "Trickledown Revolution." *Broken Republic*. Gurgaon: Penguin Random House India, 2013. 99-100. Print.
- _____. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. Gurgaon: Penguin Random House India, 2017. 122. Print.
- Rushdie, Salman. "Introduction." *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing 1947-1997*. Ed. Elizabeth West and Salman Rushdie. London: Vintage, 1997. Xiii. Print.
- Tickell, Alex. "'An Idea Whose Time Has Come': Indian Fiction in English After 1991." *South-Asian Fiction in English: Contemporary Transformations/Alex Tickell*. Ed. Alex Tickell. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 2016. 37-57. Print.
- Wakankar, Milind. *Subalternity and Religion: The Prehistory of Dalit empowerment in South Asia*. New York: Routledge, 2011. 41. Print.